C.A.L.L.

Communities At Large Letter

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES DESK

YAD TABENKIN

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Dear Readers,

It is with great sadness that in my opening words of this new issue of C.A.L.L., I am again compelled to share with you, our readers, the loss of our oldest member of the Desk (both age-wise and in terms of longevity on the Desk), Joel Dorkam.

Joel had been an active member of the Desk up until his passing, sharing his forthright views both in our meetings and in Kaleidoscope, his popular, regular column in this publication. Joel had also been a central figure in the Urfield Circle, an inter-religious and inter-communal group that was established by Catholics from the Integrated Gemeinde and Jews from kibbutzim in Israel. Joel completed his autobiography only a couple of years before his passing, describing his personal journey from Nazi Germany to kibbutz life in Israel. A fascinating read, available in both Hebrew and German.

And on to the current issue of C.A.L.L. (now an abbreviation for Communities At Large Letter). We've got plenty of articles about communities from all over the world, including a couple of historical pieces. I'm especially fond of the piece about the failed community of two people in the USA. It is a rather obscure piece, but I think it captures an oft-ignored perspective of the communal scene. With each 'successful' community that lasts a generation, two, or even more, there are countless communities that don't even get off the ground. This poignant tale is a stark reminder that establishing a viable and sustainable community is a considerable challenge, offering invaluable reward upon success, but with the potential to end in frustration and failure.

A final word on the name change: The International Communes Desk is now to be known as The Intentional Communities Desk. Michael has written a piece about it on the following page and the only thing that I would like to add is that I am quite nostalgic about our original name and am sad to see it go. On the other hand, we live in a different era from the one in which we chose it, and the important work that we are involved in should not be jeopardized by stigmas that we can rise above by a simple name change.

As always, you can send us your suggestions, corrections, contributions and retributions regarding C.A.L.L., to the usual email address,

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What's In A Name?

The International Communes Desk of the Kibbutz Movement was founded in 1976, almost 40 years ago. This April the Board of the Desk met – looked back and then looked forward. Guess what! The world has changed. We decided to change our name to the **Intentional Communities Desk.**

Meeting of the Intentional Communities Desk

The world of communes which evolved from the cultural turmoil of the late Sixties has morphed into movements of intentional community and cooperation. Cooperation and cooperatives embody a modified approach to the idea of "together" as against the neo-Liberal mantra of the "bottom line" and every individual for himself/herself. Communities and cooperatives, urban and rural, are the alternative to a mass society of nuclear (or partially nuclear) families. The word "intentional" signifies the idea of a conscious decision by individuals to join hands and invest part of their life energy, together with like-minded others, in order to create and fulfill themselves in a community which has a value-based message for the surrounding society.

Currently, only a minority of the communities in networks such as the Global Ecovillage Network and the North American Fellowship of Intentional Community are collective in the format of 40 years ago. Eighty percent of the kibbutz movement, the largest collective movement of the 20th Century, is no longer collective. Most of the readers of C.A.L.L., the Communities At Large Letter, do not live in communes in the sense that this word was used in the 1970's. C.A.L.L. has become a call for community and cooperation, a call for social and environmental justice, a call for a world in which community and cooperation ensure a sustainable quality of life for all on Spaceship Earth.

What's in a name? The Intentional Communities Desk continues to further that vision. "Where there is no vision – the people become unruly". (Proverbs 29: 18)

Michael Livni

Not one but two tiny housing communities in Portland are featured over the following pages. Tiny Housing is a social movement where people are downsizing the space that they live in. The typical American home is around 2600 square feet, while the typical small or tiny house is around 100-400 square feet. Tiny Houses come in all shapes, sizes and forms but they all focus on smaller spaces and simplified living.

One Man's Quest To Build Affordable Communities With Tiny Houses

Sophie Weiner
http://www.fastcodesign.com

Andrew Heben thinks that building intentional communities with affordable housing can help bring an end to homelessness.

For more than 10 years, Heben has been working to turn Oregon tent cities into small sustainable communities. It's a smart idea in places like Portland, where the local government has made camping illegal. Spread over 2 acres near the Portland airport, a self-governed "intentional community" has risen (think of it as a mixture between a halfway house and a kibbutz). As the *Guardian* writes:

A top-of-the-line tiny house with RV-like conveniences can set you back $60,000 or more. The 30 dwellings at Opportunity Village, made of prefab donated materials, cost 'around $3,300 a unit.' The savings come from the fact that they are basically detached bedrooms, with no utilities or running water. Cooking, washing and technology use all take place in shared facilities which the village's 35 residents use and maintain in common.

Opportunity Village, Eugene

And a philosophy of mutual aid permeates the community:

Along with common stewardship comes self-government along the lines of direct democracy. Though the agreement with the city of Eugene means that Heben's NGO maintains an 'oversight role' in ensuring the village plays by the rules, day-to-day decisions are taken by residents. Some are delegated to an elected council, and others are voted on directly by everyone. This includes everything from the allocation of resources to basic decisions about who is admitted from the community's long waiting list, and what should happen to those who break the community's rules forbidding drugs, alcohol, stealing, and violence on site. 'We've lost around 12 people who just didn't make it,' he says.

Adherence to the rules comes less from external compulsion than from a shared interest in the community's wellbeing. The ordered provisions, gleaming surfaces, and manicured lawns of the common areas are a product not of coercion, but commitment. Pets are allowed, and "couples can live together," unlike in the more disciplinary spaces of charitable homeless shelters. In a word, Opportunity Village is nice. It's a long way from the stereotypes and clichés that color so much reporting on homelessness.

Heben's idealism was inspired in part by the Occupy movement, where Heben saw homeless and non-homeless citizens alike working together on a shared goal. That's not to say that he thinks tiny houses will singlehandedly solve rampant problems of affordable housing and homelessness. As Heben says in the first line of the profile, "I never said that this was *the* solution to homelessness. It's one experiment, we need more."

Simply Home: A tiny cohousing community grows in Portland

treehugger.com
By Kimberley Mok
May 29, 2015

It appears that a tiny house boom is well underway, and along with it comes a smattering of emerging tiny house communities. Whether they are tiny or otherwise, it takes a lot of work to keep an intentional community together. Sometimes, despite the best of initial intentions, they can be waylaid by ideological differences, or poor governance. But when it does work, the rewards can be great: a sense of belonging, purpose and togetherness from being part of a community can give life much greater meaning.

Tiny house design consultant Lina Menard is part of Simply Home, a tiny house community that recently got off the ground in Portland, Oregon. Based on a cohousing model, Menard and five others share a backyard, one-third of an acre in size, in addition to sharing the 1,450-square-foot "Big House" belonging to the land. So far, the members of Simply Home, whose ages range from 28 to 50, have been planning various amenities like a communal garden and even a hot tub.

So how did Simply Home Community come about? Menard told us that someone from a "sub-committee" of tiny housers were in the neighbourhood, looking for land to build a tiny community, and found this large lot with an existing house. An offer was made, and the property is now owned by two individuals from the community. However, there are plans to change ownership to a multi-member LLC (Limited Liability Company).

And Menard goes into greater detail about how life with a combination of tiny houses and one "Big House" works: There's a big house, where we have three people living, and currently we also have a guest room. Everybody in the community has full access to the big house kitchen, dining room, living room, bathroom, and laundry. That works out really nicely because we can have game nights, we can host dinner parties, we can do movie nights, and when we do have guests, they can stay in the guest room. Then we have four little houses on the property that are basically acting as "detached bedrooms" – a little space of our own.

It seems that the cohousing model is working well: each resident has their own private space, but many facilities and responsibilities are shared. There's a huge spectrum of how sharing and communality can happen in any intentional community, and it appears that the cohousing concept is a good fit for the residents here, giving them a balance of privacy but still allowing them to share resources and efforts.

Greece: Community Building in Times of Crisis

http://gen.ecovillage.org

At Skala Ecovillage, a network meeting of grassroots projects from all over Greece brought ideas, actions for change, community building, and hope as Anna Fillipou writes in her moving letter.

Dear Friends of Skala Ecovillage,

Next Sunday, on 20 September, elections will take place once again in Greece. After Tsipras put Greece in the third international bailout and austerity measures, the political party Syriza has split into two parties. The demands of a radical overhaul of the Greek economy, including major reforms of health, welfare, pensions and taxation, that was the only way to ensure Greece remained in the eurozone, bring many people to even deeper despair.

But the issue which moves us more than anything else, is the situation with the refugees. Lesbos, Kos, and all the Greek islands on the East coast are on the verge of an explosion, as refugees crowd onto Greek islands. Greece is the southern gateway for Europe. The island of Lesbos (with 85,000 inhabitants), is currently hosting as many as 25,000 refugees in its capital alone. The television shows scenes of chaos with the refugees crowding the island's port with a cruise liner being pressed into action to transport newcomers to the mainland.

Athens' caretaker government, which has made the handling of the crisis its top priority, ahead of general elections on 20 September, said it was also stepping up emergency aid, dispatching doctors and medical units to the islands. We, in Greece, are very familiar because of our history with the issue of being refugees. We know this pain so intimately. All my grandparents were refugees and the same with the grandparents of Nikiforos. We grew up with their

history. It is very painful to experience again this shame of Europe and of the humanity in front of our door again and again.

In between this political and social situation, in the middle of the hot Greek summer we ran our Community Gathering from 22-28 of August, and the big Network Meeting 29-30 of August.

One of the most important questions about the crisis is, how can we live together in ways that allow us to manifest the change? How can we create sustainable projects, where people can live with dignity? How can we create realistic models in crisis areas, and everywhere, where the alternatives can be experienced, where the taste and the smell of the new perspective of life can touch us so deeply that it awakens our longing for community and cooperation with life?

Many people in western countries live very isolated and alienated from each other. When we come together, we need a safe place where we can again allow ourselves the experience of being related and connecting, with ourselves, with nature and with other human beings.
In the Community Gathering in SKALA Ecovillage, 40 adults and 10 children live together, work together, learn together and have shared skills, knowledge, inspiration, feelings, joy, worries and, of course, celebration.
One part of the gathering was a practical one, with the permaculture design and the biogas system. The other was the social aspect, the community, trust building and possibilities of real understanding as a precondition for every cooperative interaction.

Some of our guests from Germany asked us "but how can you celebrate and dance and sing, when you are in such a difficult political and economic crisis?" The

answer is that in Greece, and maybe generally in the South, the people know in their heart, that the really important things in life are untouchable by the crisis and by politics inside and outside Greece. Our music, our dance, our coming together is our way to resist.
In circles of trust, sharing touched our hearts deeply. Men and women came together and dared to open themselves without fear of judgment. Even the children made their own circles and spoke from their hearts or asked courageous questions to the parents, like: Am I your child? Or why you are not with my father anymore?
Many people felt at home here in SKALA and I think that this is one of the core characteristics that the South can bring to the network. The feeling that you

are welcome, you are accepted, and you can breathe out again before the next action, has a significant healing effect in the human soul.

After a very moving week, we moved to Open Space, 29-30 of August, where about 70 adults from 7-8 different nationalities, 6 Ecovillages, 2 ecological farms, and 8 initiatives for sustainability with the guidance of Irini Kourdaki (Agnanti Vegoritidas), Thomas Anemos (Oikologika Choria) and Zisula Kourdaki (ZEGG, Germany) with the tool of Open Space came together, shared knowledge, experiences and visions and discussed various issues.

The people asked us to remain on the path of creating hope and not to give up. Everybody understands that the world is in a major transition, and that the ecovillages can offer realistic alternatives and hope.
We have understood that we need inspiration as much as information and exchange and most of all we need to come together with a common vision of care, friendship and compassion.

Thank you all for your cooperation and your support!

The team of SKALA Ecovillage

More: www.skalaecovillage.com

At Bryn Gweled Homesteads, intentionally making a community for 75 years

By Alan J. Heavens, Inquirer Real Estate Writer, Philly.com
April 27, 2015

Thomas Fetterman (left) and Larry Spungen, with Pearl, at the pond at Bryn Gweled Homesteads in Upper Southampton. Residents collectively own and maintain its 240 acres.

A chilly Saturday did little to stop the march of progress at Bryn Gweled Homesteads in Upper Southampton.

There was a crowd at the tai chi class in the community center. Upstairs, Bill Dockhorn, his wife, Carol Wengert, and Jerry Smith sifted through 75 years of documents. Bart DeCorte worked in the community garden. Louise Kidder was off to her kitchen to make sourdough bread to be served later with jam made from the 60 quarts of blueberries her husband, Bob, picks each year in their yard.

Bryn Gweled - "hill of vision" in Welsh - is an intentional community of 75 families, homesteading on 240 acres that are collectively owned and maintained by its residents.

An intentional community is designed to have a high degree of social cohesion and teamwork - that is Bryn Gweled, celebrating its 75th anniversary.

Residents share an organic community garden, a swimming pool, tennis courts, a soccer field, and a community center.

Houses here - many designed by architect-settlers who were students of Frank Lloyd Wright - sit on two-acre lots leased for 99 years, since all the land is held in common.

Residents are as new as last autumn, such as Brian and Kristen McBride and their three children, or as original as Bob Dockhorn, who arrived here as an 8-week-old in 1941, moved away as an adult, and then returned.

"We thought the whole world was like this," Dockhorn said about growing up in Bryn Gweled. "Everyone called everyone else by their first names - even children and adults." They still do.

Hans Peters arrived with his parents in the 1950s at age 3, and, like Dockhorn, moved when he grew up and returned.

"There were more children around - we were a homogeneous group age-wise, but there is much more age diversity today," said Peters, whose father built many of the homes.

Bill Dockhorn has lived in the house his parents built when they and 11 other Philadelphia families pooled $18,000 to buy foreclosed farms for $75 an acre in "the country."

The founders welcomed everyone, while "all around them, people were being excluded because they were African American or Jewish," said resident Jenifer Davis.

Bryn Gweled Homesteads Community Center

"One reason for our success is that we don't demand anything from anyone," said Ed Kramer, who is Bryn Gweled's new president.

"We only ask for a few hours on the first Saturday of the month, two or three hours working, a two-hour meeting, and a potluck supper," said Kramer, an artist who grew up in Mount Airy and has lived in Bryn Gweled with his wife, Beth, more than 30 years.

"Our chief underlying value is tolerance," he said.

"It is a friendly mix of community and individuality," said Peters. "You have considerable privacy, but you can do your own thing."

They want to kill off our way of life, says London commune facing eviction

A pair of close communities have clung on in an upmarket area since the 1970s, but may soon be victims of the housing crisis

Jamie Doward
6 June 2015
www.theguardian.com

"Come the zombie apocalypse, we'll be OK," declares Siobhan McSweeney as she surveys a pile of toilet rolls big enough to supply a small village.

(Left to right) Siobhan McSweeney, Karen Grace, Keith Soutar.

She gazes around a ground-floor room at 44 Islington Park Street in north London – four Victorian properties knocked into one, a stone's throw from Upper Street, where sugar-free delis compete with gluten-free delis for the City banker's pound. There are shelves laden with large packets of pasta, boxes of tea bags and enough sundry staples to see out a sustained siege. Nearby, a dozen bicycles nest in racks.

The building could be mistaken for a university hall of residence, but the place that McSweeney and 17 others call home is one of only two remaining communes that were established in London in the early 1970s by a former Franciscan friar, Greg Moore.

"He was so taken with what it was like to live communally that he decided to set up a housing association so that people with varying kinds of needs could live together and help each other," said Chris Murphy, who lives at the second commune, the Crescent Road Community in Kingston upon Thames, home to 21 adults and three children.

Moore's big idea, that vulnerable people such as recovering drug addicts and ex-offenders would live side-by-side with those who did not have problems in a network of communes, continues to this day.

Keith Soutar, a retired social worker who has Parkinson's disease, talks emotionally about the support he receives in the Islington commune. His fellow residents, who prefer the word community to commune, had railings fitted so that he could move around safely. They organised a rota to help him get up in the mornings, cook for him regularly and remind him to take his medication. One housemate designed "pit-stops" out of old shelves and cushions to make Soutar's journeys from room to room easier.

Peter Keserue and Rick Mantha at 44 Islington Park Road.

Sylvia Bayliss, who has lived in the Kingston commune with her sister, Jan, for 37 years, credits the commune with helping her to overcome chronic shyness. "When I moved in with all these people I thought, oh my God, it's quite scary. Gradually I got more confidence. It really has helped me."

Dermot Cahalane, who has lived communally since 1971, concedes that the lifestyle does not suit everyone. "It's not perfect but, in the main, it's an ideal way of living in this day and age with all the alienation."

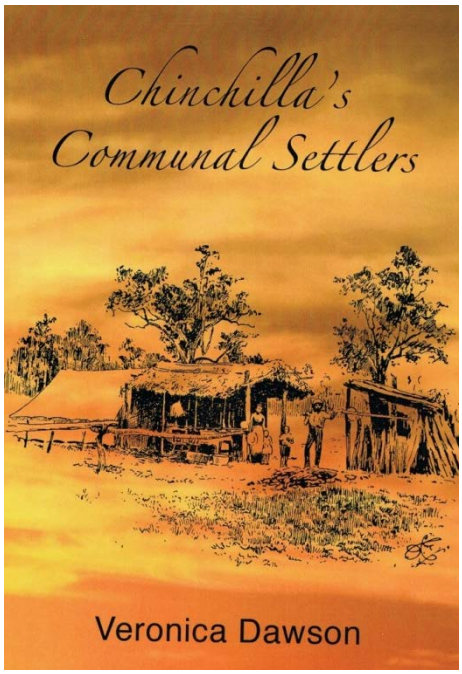
One Housing Group (OHG), the housing association that owns the two properties, disagrees. Last month it wrote to the communes' residents saying it intended to "decant" them. Many now fear that the quaint-sounding phrase means they are to be evicted with no offer of alternative accommodation. But even those likely to be offered somewhere else to live do not want to leave their communal way of life.

"There's a wealth of knowledge, a wealth of abilities here," said Rick Mantha, who has lived in the Islington property for more than a quarter of a century. "There's people who can fix a car and people who can put up a website; there's an amazing interaction of people. Whatever you need, you can find it by knocking on doors around here. It's a brilliant model that more people should adopt."

Indeed, the residents believe communal living – popular in cities such as Berlin – is the antidote to an increasingly overcrowded, overheated world. "Economically it makes much sense," said Karen Grace, who has lived in the Islington commune for five years. "We are a model for a different kind of community, a supportive community. We are a dying breed. This is the time to save this kind of community, not to get rid of it."

Chinchilla's Communal Settlers

Queensland has a rich, complex and, in many ways, quirky history. One of those particularly quirky and little-known aspects of our history is that during the 1890s Queensland had well over 2000 people living in government-sponsored communes! Three of these communes were near Gayndah, three near Roma, two near Gympie, one near Springsure, another near Barcaldine – and three near Chinchilla.



Veronica Dawson has spent years researching those three near Chinchilla: *Mizpah*, *Industrial* and *Monmouth*. They were very different: Most *Mizpah* members were Salvation Army members from Brisbane; many *Monmouth* members were Roman Catholics from Ipswich; while *Industrial* commune started off as a Union-sponsored project. But all members were the same in aspiring to live together in communal harmony, avoiding capitalist problems such as poverty and unemployment.

Veronica's family were founding communards at *Mizpah* in 1893, and after the commune collapsed her family remained on the land, retaining the name *Mizpah* for their farm. Veronica grew up surrounded by tales from her grandparents and other elderly people who had been children on this would-be utopian commune.

Chinchilla's Communal Settlers results from Veronica's many years of painstaking research not only into the land-use, newspaper reports and government archival history of *Mizpah*, *Monmouth* and *Industrial*, but also into members' family and oral histories. She has tracked down detailed information about almost all the communards, and has located many descendants and their photographic records. These human stories add colour and emotional depth to her excellent narrative.

Chinchilla's Communal Settlers is well-written, carefully indexed, well-illustrated with photos, sketches and maps, and is a very accessible and readable account of one of the strangest episodes in Queensland history. This book can be read as a scholarly text, as local and/or family history – or just for the enjoyment of her excellent writing.

Dr Bill Metcalf

Copies of this book may be obtained from the author at: veronica.dawson@bigpond.com

They Built a Commune but No One Came

By PENELOPE GREEN
May 16, 2015
Nytimes.com

They slept in the barn their first winter, on a straw mattress with antique linen sheets and a feather tick. There was no electricity, heat or plumbing, so they made their own candles, used a chamber pot and drew water from a spring.

They were born Michael Colby and Donald Graves, but once there, on 63 acres in the Mahantongo Valley, a bowl of land in central Pennsylvania, they changed their names to Christian and Johannes Zinzendorf and called themselves the Harmonists, inspired by a splinter group of 18th-century Moravian brothers who believed in the spiritual values of an agrarian life.

Their ideals were lofty but simple: They would live off the land, farming with Colonial-era tools, along with a band of like-minded men dressed in homespun robes wielding scythes and pickaxes. They would sleep in atmospheric log cabins and other 18th-century structures that they had rescued from the area and that they began to reconstruct, painstakingly, brick by crumbling brick and log by log.

But what if you built a commune, and no one came?

It turns out it's not so easy to cook up a utopia from scratch. There are 1,775 so-called intentional communities listed in the Fellowship for Intentional Community's United States directory: eco-villages, pagan co-ops, faith-based retreats and everything in between. But how do you advertise, organize and thrive? "Don't ask us," Johannes said. "We failed that class."

It was a raw, bright afternoon in April. Christian and Johannes, or to be accurate (stay with me here) Zephram and Johannes (Christian changed his name again when he realized the hoped-for brotherhood was never going to materialize, and his new last name is de Colebi), are now 65 and 64. And they have reconfigured their life here for the third time in three decades.

The 25 buildings that dot the landscape are mostly dormant, save for Zephram's house and Johannes's house. The two have been living separately, so to speak, for a decade, individual housing being an unlooked-for boon when their commune went to pieces and they ceased to be a couple.

They've sold most of their antique tools, save for a handful, which they've added to the collection of furniture, housewares, paintings, textiles and other Pennsylvania Dutch relics they've amassed over the years. The two have turned the whole lot — thousands of artifacts — into a museum, filling the cavernous barn where they spent their first winter with exhibits.

Johannes and Zephram met in the 1970s at a gay-consciousness-raising group in Salt Lake City, where both were attending college. They were each dabbling in various spiritual practices: Zephram was circling around the Wiccans, attracted by their earth-centered rituals, and Johannes was sampling Hinduism.

When you're gay, Zephram pointed out, it is not always the case that traditional religions will welcome you. So alternatives beckon.

Salt Lake City was changing, they said; they could see their future mapped out there, and it was not an appealing one. "Successful urban gays, buying property, having cultural weekends in San Francisco," Johannes said. "Save us."

Inspired in part by the Mormons, they began to turn over the idea of starting an intentional community in a rural setting. But how to organize? What would be the guiding principle? They toyed with creating a gay Scottish clan (Johannes is from Texas and Zephram from Maine, and both have Scottish forebears) or starting their own version of the Radical Faeries, a vaguely pagan, spiritually based queer counterculture movement from the mid-1970s.

They moved to Bethlehem, Pa., that hotbed of Moravian culture (crafts and agriculture, mostly), where Zephram worked as a teacher and Johannes as a reporter. There they learned of a curious local offshoot of a brotherhood started in Europe in the 18th century.

Its leader was the charismatic son of a patron of the Moravian Church,

who believed in a spiritual communion through sex and agricultural practice. It was not a wildly popular concept 300 years ago, and contemporary rural Pennsylvania was perhaps not the best place to resurrect its tenets, even with the sex part edited out. Also, as Johannes pointed out: "Neither one of us is very charismatic. That was a problem." But they were young and eager. They bought 63 acres for $63,000 in Pitman, a tiny community in Eldred Township, and they began to rescue period cabins and structures in the area and move them to the site.

Filled with Colonial zeal, they bought an antique letterpress and began printing brochures to advertise their concept. Dressed in their homespun linen garments, made from flax they had planted and sewn themselves, they set up tables at gay-pride festivals, living-history farms and farming museums. "People would look at us and say, 'Oh, so you're gay Amish?' " Johannes said.

They did get a few takers: a man who was interested in the culture of the early German settlers, but preferred to observe its customs rather than pitch in; a guy they called "the Primitive man," who set up a lean-to on the property and wore loincloths in the summer (he stayed the longest but turned out to be mentally ill).

Then there was the man who brought his accordion and offered to play while they worked. Indeed, the farming chores seemed to mystify most of their would-be brothers. "Everyone just wanted to watch us work, and that got old real fast," Johannes said.

"We weren't good at being able to explain the spiritual part, either. People would say: 'Let's write down your philosophy. Let's create some commandments.' But that didn't come naturally. When we tried to explain our beliefs — spirits living in springs, the earth as mother — people just thought we were weird."

Farming the Colonial way requires lots of hands. While Zephram worked full time as a teacher in a neighboring town, which paid their mortgage and costs, Johannes was alone on the farm, having been fired from his reporting job.

"I wasn't able to do two full-time jobs at once," Johannes said. "I remember the first time I cut hay, seven acres that had been planted by the previous owner. I'm there with my scythe, and I started cutting, and I quickly realized that what made the brotherhood we were emulating successful is that they had 88 men, and we were only two." Yet the work was holy to him, he said. "I loved getting out there."

They had cattle, sheep and goats; turkeys, geese, ducks and chickens;

and cats and dogs. A pair of oxen, Star and Bright, took over the plowing duties, with a handmade plow the local auto mechanic would fix when the oxen grew balky and mangled its metal parts.

Their older neighbors were impressed by their work ethic and shared their folklore and practices. "These Dutch couples in their 80s had lived the lifestyle we were living," Johannes said. "They didn't care who we were, they just saw how hard we worked. They taught us how to broadcast seed, how to tie the corn shocks to dry the corn." And how to sharpen their scythes on the stone walls that Zephram had built.

Johannes Zinzendorf feeding cattle in their early days on the farm.

There were moments of incredible joy. The day they completed the reconstruction of what they called the community house, an 18th-century log cabin with a marvelous peaked roof that they rescued from an industrial park and that took 10 years to remake. Eating outside with the animals. ("They were like our family," Johannes said. "But they did eat all the flowers.")

But there was menace, too. This rural township was not overwhelmingly welcoming to two young gay men and their dreams to populate a fledgling farm. They always knew when the bars closed. They would hear engines revving, and the shouts would begin: "We're going to kill you." "Go home." Johannes took to sleeping in his truck, hoping to chase the perpetrators and write down their license-plate numbers. One night, a cow was shot.

Eventually, self-sufficiency and exhaustion trumped the Colonial lifestyle. They put in a satellite phone, dug a well. Harvesting by hand gave way at first to Star and Bright's efforts, and then they sold the team to buy a tractor. They bought a generator and power tools, including a jigsaw. "That was fun — we put gingerbread trim on everything," Johannes said.

They tried wind power, then solar. "You might get 40 minutes a day, and then it would crash," he said. "Lightning storms would hit and blow up the transformer." Four years ago, they hooked up to the power grid.

In the wake of the unrealized brotherhood, they tried artists' retreats, residencies and other

gatherings. Worn out, they decided their empty commune would be a hermitage. "We would be hermits, each in his hermit house," Johannes said.

Now, they raise only poultry, because the birds are easier to take care of. They turned the bunkhouse into a library; along with a collection of local religious texts, there is a prodigious array of "Star Trek" paperbacks. (In anticipation, they christened it the Brokeback Bunkhouse, and decorated its crossbeams with saddles.)

Zephram retired from his teaching job and began painting. "We try to live in the spirit," Johannes said. Some days are easier than others.

Then one day in early 2012, their turkeys vanished. They found them beaten to death, their body parts strewn over a field and a bloody crutch tossed nearby. It had been years since Zephram and Johannes had been threatened. The viciousness of the attack stunned them. Though they say they know the assailant, no one was charged with the crime. Yet something shifted after that day. "People came up to us and apologized," Johannes said. "It traumatized not just us, but the town."

Jim Hepler, a sixth-generation farmer and Pitman native, called it a turning point. "When they arrived, people said, 'Oh, no, we've got a gay community beginning here in the valley, and it's going to be awful,' " he said. "That wasn't my feeling, but there was tension. Here we are 30 years later, and it's still two men minding their own business." The turkey beating, he said, "was an awful thing." "It was senseless, and it was bad," he continued. "I think the community came together then in support of them."

Johannes and Zephram have rebranded themselves, too, as curators of the Mahantongo Heritage Center (that's the barn with its exhibits), open to the public from May through October. Zephram paints vibrant animistic canvases in his studio; Johannes frets about the maintenance on their copious collection of structures. In a tour of the property accompanied by their enormous bellowing turkeys (they have replenished the flock), he pointed out the peeling paint on the window trim of his hillside house.

"It was a dream, and it was a good dream," Zephram said. "Though it broke our spirits that we had no one to share it with. Now, it doesn't matter that we didn't have brothers. It doesn't matter if the place survives. We carry it with us, in the moment. The work we did. What we felt. Star and Bright and all the animals.

"It's not a lonely place. It's just jumbled."

Is communal living making a comeback?

http://www.chicagobusiness.com
March 20, 2015
By Danielle Braff

A year and a half ago, 30-year-old Gunes Henderson and her family moved from their house in suburban Aurora to a mansion in Hyde Park. Henderson and her husband, both translators, share a loud, busy house with their two children and 13 people, including five children and a newborn. She and her family have two rooms to themselves, all sharing a bedroom and using their other room as a library and living room. The family shares a bathroom with another unrelated adult.

John R. Boehm Gunes Henderson, her husband and their two children live with 13 people in Hyde Park.

The Hendersons didn't know their housemates before finding them online and moving into the 21-year-old community. "We wanted our kids to be around more people and to feel like they had more of an extended family here," she says, "to be with more people, to cook together."

While it's commonly thought that communal living ended with the hippie era of the 1960s, it's still happening. Intentional communities—defined as people who live together on the basis of explicit common values—stood at 1,055 in the U.S. as of 2010, up from 325 in 1990. Those are the groups recognized by the Fellowship for Intentional Community based in Rutledge, Mo.

Twenty-five of the 30 communities in Illinois are in Chicago, says Laird Schaub, the group's executive secretary. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2000, 83,500 households contained people who were unrelated but living together in Chicago. That number jumped to 93,500 in 2013.

"Cooperative living is not new, but it's changing," says Brigid Maniates, office manager and bookkeeper at Qumbya Housing Cooperative in Hyde Park. While

multigenerational living used to be the norm, people looking for co-housing situations today don't mind living with strangers as long as they have the same intentions, she says. “People are looking for that sort of community,” she says. “The American dream was that everyone lived in their own homes, but now there seems to be a readjustment.”

The movement is exploding because baby boomers are tired of the capitalistic, individualistic way they've been living and are craving a more sustainable, community way of life, says Joani Blank, 77, of Oakland, Calif., a former board member at the Cohousing Association of the United States, based in Durham, N.C.

At Qumbya, the community is split into three houses scattered throughout Hyde Park, and members range from young children to retirees. It started in 1988 with 15 people and has grown in the past 25 years to more than 50, Maniates says. The co-op is looking for a fourth house.

John R. Boehm Daniel Koll, Jonah Block-Johnson and Corrigan Nado-Nichols share a meal at Qumbya Housing Cooperative in Hyde Park.

Communal vegetarian dinners are served six nights a week, and the group usually has brunch together once a week. People pay for food, which is purchased communally ($150 to $180 a month per person), and cooking chores rotate. Rents range from $300 to $500 per room.

In Chicago's Gage Park neighborhood, five people are taking the communal approach a step further, sharing not just meals and chores but work as well. Consensus Chicago was founded a year and a half ago by an architect, a painter, a carpenter and two artists—a single man, two single women and a gay couple.

They have rehabbed a 6,500-square-foot building in the Southwest Side neighborhood to occupy as a work/live space. “There is no separation between work and life,” says Joshua Gunty, a freelance event producer, audio engineer and Consensus' founder. “I like living where I work, and we can accomplish more together. The way the art world is going, it really takes a team.” They negotiate the distribution of money that comes in according to who brought the business in and who did the most work on it.

The stateliest commune in England

By Vaishnavi Brassey
12 Jun 2015
Daily Telegraph

Kings Weston House has appeared in Jane Austen novels, been occupied by secretaries of state and is now the site of a very opulent exercise in communal living.

'All the surveyor could say was, "Don't buy it! It's a money pit. This is going to be the end of you," ' Norman Routledge recalls, but he was already in too deep. In his pursuit of Kings Weston House in Bristol, Routledge, a businessman, had visited numerous banks, sold shares in his security company, put his house on the market, borrowed from family and solicited investment from friends. 'The reason for doing all of this has always been to save a fantastic building from a dubious future,' he says.

Completed by the architect of Blenheim Palace, Sir John Vanbrugh, in 1719 with a crown of castellated chimneys, Kings Weston was the seat of the Southwell family, secretaries of state for Ireland for three generations. But it was sold off in the 1930s and fell into decline. The house was used as a hospital, stripped of all ornamental fixtures to become a school and later converted into police offices. By 2010, the Grade I listed 'national treasure' languished in desuetude, with five of its eight roofs leaking.

Routledge's idea was to start restorations and invite a group of people to live with him as part of a 21st-century shared-living solution to stately-home sustainability. The boiler was on the way out, so lodger number one moved straight in: Neil, a plumber. 'There were pipes going through the cornices in the

state rooms,' Routledge remembers. 'Concealing the entire central-heating system took a year.'

Last month, after two years of cleaning and lead-roof repair, the scaffolding came off to reveal a creamy Bath-stone facade. For the internal building work, Routledge employed two experienced builders and four apprentices, and one of the latter, Heidi Tremlett, ended up becoming the lead interior designer. This summer she will be getting married at the house – one of 30 weddings booked for the season. The commissioning of a Blenheim-inspired mural in the Vanbrugh room resulted from a fortuitous meeting with Karen van Hoey Smith in the local pub. 'Turned out she was an art broker and knew more about my house than I did,' Routledge says. Their future plans include the ongoing restoration of the Southwell family portraits.

The new residents include a doctor, a film editor, a solicitor, a property developer and a landscape architect. The Rambert-trained dancers Josh and Rosie came to a party at the house and asked to use a room as a rehearsal space. Before long, they, too, moved in, with their four-year-old son, Solomon.

Potential housemates are chosen carefully and there is a three-month trial. They eat together once a week and there is even a dinner gong but, given the scale of the place, mobile phones are more practical. One resident, who previously had her own harbourside flat, admits, 'It has completely changed my attitude to shared living. I initially thought that was a strange thing to do because I was an adult. Now I love it. I don't think humans are designed to live by themselves.' Routledge agrees. 'You see so many people growing old on their own. That's no fun.' His eyes light up as he contemplates ending his days in style. 'We've got a doctor. We ought to get a nurse too I suppose.'

Change of address -The Kibbutz goes urban

By BARBARA BAMBERGER
Jerusalem Post - June 27, 2014

The idea of establishing a kibbutz in a city might seem like a contradiction. But as standard kibbutzim move towards privatization, a new model is popping up in cities around Israel. It is fueled by the belief that kibbutz values – democracy, social justice, love of Israel – offer real solutions to social problems, and that the best place to effect change is from within. To this end, the Dror Israel Movement recently purchased a derelict corner lot in the struggling Shapira neighborhood of Tel Aviv, and is poised to begin construction on the first building specifically designed to function as an urban kibbutz. Dror Israel is made up of adults who grew up in the Labor Zionist youth movement Hanoar Haoved Vehalomed (NOAL). Originally from Rishon Lezion, Eli Shamsian, 36, joined NOAL at the age of 13. "The movement recommended that instead of going to a kibbutz, we consider going to a city. We agreed and went to Tel Aviv, where we ran programs for young people."

Shapira corner lot(top) with architectural rendering of the Tel Aviv kibbutz (below)

In 1999, Shamsian finished the army and remained in Tel Aviv to help found the original kibbutz. "I believe in the idea of contributing," he says. "There's something in me that's suited to living in a group. The 'together' allows for a greater contribution – as long as the goal is shared." Much as in the standard model, city kibbutznikim live communally, pooling salaries and resources, but instead of working in agriculture, they work in a variety of informal and formal educational capacities. The 1,200 members of Dror Israel's "Educators' Kibbutzim" serve 100,000 people in 158 locations around the country. Shamsian remembers the first group of kids he mentored. "We caught three 14-year-olds red-handed,

painting graffiti on the NOAL building [movement headquarters]. It was obvious they were bored. We told them, 'Come tomorrow and we'll give you paint. Paint over the graffiti and we'll give you a room here where you can hang out.' They came back the next day and painted," Shamsian laughs. "So we gave them a room, and a connection began. The group grew to about 15 kids, mostly from the former USSR, living in Shapira. We'd go on trips, do activities. They joined NOAL and went into the army. Today, they're parents; they have families. I'm still in touch with most of them." Today, in Tel Aviv and the surrounding suburbs, 110 kibbutznikim serve approximately 4,500 youth and adults, designing and implementing programs in community centers, schools and military facilities. "The pioneers who founded the first kibbutz, Degania, were building a country," says Shamsian. "One hundred years later, the country exists – but society has other issues to address. We see ourselves as the new pioneers; our Tel Aviv kibbutz is the new Degania. "Currently, the Tel Aviv kibbutz consists of rented apartments scattered throughout the city. It is an expensive and inefficient way to live. Dror Israel believes that having a permanent, physical base within the community they serve will enhance their ability to take action. In one such instance of mobilizing to serve the community, years ago they heard that 15 to 20 busloads of Sudanese were headed toward Tel Aviv. "We understood they would be dumped off in the middle of the city and we were there to meet them with food and clothing," Shamsian says. "We saw there were a lot of teenagers. Without any framework, they could easily become criminals. We drafted resources and opened a school for them. Eventually, the state took responsibility and we closed the school. It was never meant to be a permanent solution, but because we were right there, we were able to provide an immediate one." According to Guy Zuzut, youth coordinator for the city's department of youth and young, one out of every three Tel Avivians is under the age of 25. In the past, the municipality didn't provide any programming for residents from after high school, until they became parents. But in recent years, his department has extended services towards non-parents in the upper age bracket. "Our goal is to provide meaningful activities. We've opened a network of neighborhood youth centers; a professional staff offers holistic treatment – it's not just about afterschool clubs," Zuzut explains. "We give them a physical place where they can come in and spend time, and offer relevant activities aimed to attract and draw them in.

Dror Israel Kibbutz members

We target every segment of the population: Jews, Muslims, Christians, the disabled and people with special needs." The youth movements, of which the Scouts is the largest, provide programming and volunteer manpower. "We also utilize kids serving in Nahal and Shnat Sherut [pre-army service]," says Zuzut. "In addition, we have six paid employees from the Educators' Kibbutz. They run four of the youth centers, serving 500 to 600 youth. They are the only movement with whom we have this kind of relationship. "For me, the group is really special. They're fresh and refreshing. They don't think conventionally. They care about society; they want to contribute. And there's continuity – if one finishes, someone else can take their place." Zuzut agrees that a permanent kibbutz building will benefit the city. "We'll concentrate all the start-up minds together," he says. "This could be the 'Silicon Valley of education' in the community." Directly behind the ornate Nouzha Mosque on Jerusalem Boulevard in Jaffa are two school buildings – one Arab, one Jewish. One small room off the shared courtyard houses all of NOAL's activities in Jaffa. It is open during school recess, for afterschool activities and during school holidays. Sharon Raz is the school's director of afterschool care. "It is very important that NOAL is here," she says. "The informal educational activities they run expose these kids to more than what they get at home – and teach them about values and relationships. There are real connections between the counselors and the children. If someone has a problem, the counselors are there to provide an answer, other than what the teachers give them."

Soundos Daka, 17, has been in the movement for two years. She is planning to continue after high school. "It's not always easy to come here; there are always other things to do," she says. "But we simply love it. I've learned what it means to be together, I've learned how to deal with children." "The movement is a world in itself. When I was in ninth grade, 1,500 of us kids went on a seminar in the North. We slept in tents, had parties until 5 a.m. and we learned how to be counselors.""When we go into schools in our [blue] shirts, everyone knows who we are and gets excited to see us," says Omar Hamoudeh, 17. "Our goal is to change society, end racism and educate children, to teach them patience and strength." His brother, 15-year-old Muhammad, is also in the movement. They will both participate in a new project involving both the Tel Aviv and Jaffa groups, in an effort to destroy boundaries and stigmas. And next year, for the first time in Jaffa, five high school graduates will participate in national service offered to Arab and religious youth. While living at home, they'll work in schools and run movement activities. "There are tons of kids who want to take part," says Dror Israel counselor Jonathan Kershenbaum, 22. "Some don't know it's open to everybody.""Counselors came to my school and explained what the movement is," says Mariana Jahan, 13. "I was convinced to try it out. I got to

know new kids, and now I come two to three times a week." Because there is only the one small room, youth activities have to be carefully timed. The movement has been in discussions with the city for two years to get a larger meeting space, but still has no answer. Back on Jerusalem Boulevard, Shamsian says he worked in Jaffa for several years. "When you hear them speak, it might not be clear there are real hardships here – poverty and crime, and parents aren't always supportive of their children. But these kids want to be a part of Israel, and it's like we open a door for them and say, 'Come in; be Israeli. Be a part of us.'"

Beit Dror, Jaffa

Yifat Karlinsky, 39, joined NOAL as a fifth grader in Kfar Saba. Today, she occupies the role of Dror Israel manager in Tel Aviv-Jaffa. "We no longer wait until people come to kibbutz. Kibbutz comes to them," she says. "We take part in the formal educational structure as well. We work in every single school in Jaffa, including Dov Hoz School for at-risk youth, where the students have all dropped out of the regular framework. They get 12 years of schooling plus a vocation – like computers or computer graphics. When they go into the army, they often work in their field." While she's at work, Karlinsky leaves her baby in Dror Israel's childcare facilities, located in Jaffa on the grounds of a former school. Beit Dor accommodates 0-2 year olds and is adjacent to the preschool, which is open to non-movement 2 to 4 year olds. Her older child attends their afterschool program. "We're not '60s hippies," she says. "We're normal people who choose to live together. The strength of 'together' is stronger than the individual. We see ourselves as very much part of the community. Our present living conditions are hard on us." Architect Eden Barre has worked with Dror Israel since 1999. "The design for the Tel Aviv kibbutz was based on a hierarchy of private-to-public spaces. For instance, there is a person's private room. Then several of these rooms are situated around a living room, which is also a meeting space – just like a family home. Then you have a lobby, which is an additional meeting room for a larger group. On the ground floor and in the basement parking area, when you remove the cars, there are more and larger meeting spaces." "We tried to straddle the fine line between residential and public. And we tried to insert the language of modern Bauhaus, which is at the root of Israeli architecture." The building will house 40 kibbutznikim. Residents of Shapira are in the lower socioeconomic bracket, but the neighborhood is in the earliest stages of gentrification. Barre says the kibbutz is undergoing the exact opposite. On a plot where someone might build a three-story private home, Dror Israel is planning a home for 40 people.

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