



# The Whole Villager

*Whole Village is a Sustainable Farm Community*

We are a group of people from a variety of backgrounds, singles and families, who have come together to build an ecovillage, creating an ecologically and environmentally sensitive farming community based on biodynamic principles and practices.

The Whole Villager is our newsletter, designed to keep our associates and friends up to date about our project and to help them develop stronger ties with our farm community. We plan to share information regarding community living, sustainable agriculture and land stewardship to promote our mission, vision and guiding principles.

**Winter 2007**

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## **Greenhaven – Final Occupancy at Last!**

**Brenda Dolling**

“Just a few more weeks...” we kept saying. But the finishing details for Greenhaven, our eco-house, took so much longer than expected. After most members had moved in during the spring of 2006, the Whole Village crew continued to install cupboards, flooring, trim and paint as the contractors finished off their final jobs. Electricians, plumbers, tilers and others were called in to finalize their contracted work. Members complained of dust and noise but were happy to be inside their own suites at last. There were finishing details in each suite that were the responsibility of the respective owners. Finishing cabinets, painting trim and doors, installing closet shelving were completed, giving members more of an appreciation for the work done before. The common areas also needed member teams to paint, varnish, organize and clean.

Furniture, dishes, pots and appliances that would not be needed in our suites were donated to the communal spaces. Creating a smaller ecological footprint is easier when many share tools, spaces and furniture. During the summer and fall only Mikey and Mark were left to finish off the many details like roof caulking, flooring transitions, satellite and internet hook-ups, as well as finishing the barrier-free washroom. After much discussion and planning, Mark and Mikey designed and built a colourful and attractive interior finish that many have commented on as a feature of Greenhaven. Our guest washroom has pizzazz! As this newsletter goes to print the last job is being completed – shingles on the fire wall by Frank, our newest volunteer and farmhouse resident. Costing can be completed and the new phase of maintaining Greenhaven is beginning. Systems such as the engineered wetlands must be monitored. Electrical use is being documented in order to reduce and conserve. Cooking and cleaning schedules are helping spread the work around.

It's a pleasure to announce that construction is over after two and a half years. Members are enjoying the home they have planned and worked for over the past six years, including intensive landscaping efforts this past summer to prevent soil erosion, keep weeds in the gardens to a minimum, create windbreaks, a garden kitchen, herb spiral and clothes lines. Thanks to all our contractors, consultants and workers who have contributed so much to the planning and building processes. Everyone involved has gone the extra mile to produce a one-of-a-kind ecological house that may be a model for green, communal living for others.



## Another Cycle Ends

Lucie Bouffard

CSAs all across North America who would not exist without the apprentices and the many volunteers who give freely of their time and energy to the whole process of growing nourishing food for sustaining humanity.

The end of the gardening season is here; following nature's rhythm. All slows down now and the gardeners too, as they welcome some well-deserved rest. Living so closely with the natural flow of what each season brings is an experience I cherish. It enables me to attune my whole being to my surroundings and brings about in me a feeling of connectedness and purpose. The febrility of the Spring, the intensity of the summer work, the joyous collecting of Fall's bounty and finally, the quieter and more inward looking time of Winter as all around us is asleep, renewing itself.

I truly feel privileged to do this kind of work.

Each season brings with it different challenges. This year as we expanded our CSA (we doubled the acreage), the work has mainly been centred on meeting the demands of such an expansion. It meant that we had to do lots of advertising to recruit more members in order to meet our budget, we had to prepare new land and we had to design an efficient irrigation system. Not an easy task for one garden manager and, yes, I struggled through it all but it has been a very rich learning experience.

Despite it all, I am pleased with the results. We have had an abundance and a variety of beautiful and tasty produce all season. We have been able to bring nourishment to so many people using healthy agricultural practices and to me, this is very satisfying.

Oh, for sure there is room for improvement! In future years, I would like to see this wonderful food to be more largely distributed, especially for example to people of all different economical classes. I would like to make sure all the produce is used either by various methods of preserving (and possibly selling these products) or by making weekly donations or by attending farmers' markets. Eventually, as the CSA reaches a point of efficient and smooth running, it would be then appropriate to make space in welcoming our members to become more involved in the garden. Because, after all, isn't it the main idea behind Community Supported Agriculture? Isn't it to connect the people with the farmer and the piece of land where their food is grown? All in good time, all in good time.

Visions, I do have plenty as far as what a CSA could be. But it takes time and help to build and put into place. I would like to thank all the people who have already done so much for this project to exist. The Village members with their help in weeding, harvesting, researching. The commitment of our 2 apprentices who worked alongside me, 10 hours a day for 6 months to learn about gardening in exchange of room and board and a modest \$300 a month as pocket money. Without their dedication to learning through hard work, we could not do this work in a sustainable fashion. There are thousands of

I consider myself very lucky to do this work amid a community of people such as Whole Village. I do not own the land but I was given the opportunity to work with this land and freely use the equipment and infrastructure available. Most importantly, I was given the chance to put into practice what I had learned as an apprentice myself and to figure out more and more what I would like my own relationship with the land to be. Already, I have begun a reflection on how I would do things differently in the future, my beliefs and values shifting in response to the many challenges I faced.

I have gotten support in all ways which I may not have had so readily available if I were doing this work on my own land. Many thanks, in all gratefulness.

I, for myself, am embarking on a new personal, much desired venture; that one of becoming a mother.

My life companion Mike and I are expecting a child for the beginning of May. Talk about changes! At this point, we are unsure about our future here at Whole Village. The next 2 months will bring, we hope, more clarity about the best next steps for us to take.

We shall keep you all posted!

Many blessings, Lucie



## It Changed My Life

### Kris Dimnik

I had just finished my 8 month intensive Landscape Horticulture degree in Vancouver and was looking for work when a friend of mine sent me a link from the Goodwork Canada website advertising a position for a gardening apprentice on a biodynamic farm in Ontario. I figured it was way out of my league as I have always lived in big cities, never been to a farm and, I should mention, my first career was in the fashion industry in Montréal.

Despite these factors, I managed to land a phone interview with Lucie, the head gardener at Whole Village, and I figured it went pretty well, even though I have to admit there was some embellishing on my part. For example, when Lucie asked if I could handle working in extreme heat and humidity I said "Of course!" I didn't go into detail about the fact that 1.) I had never worked a hard labour job and 2.) I became completely useless in Montréal during the summer. I only worked in air conditioned environments and having no air conditioner at home, would spend the rest of the day after work lying on the bed too hot to barely have the energy to whine about the heat. How did I feel about cooking for the group once a week? Would I be ok to sleep on the couch or in a tent? "Well I don't have a tent but I guess I could try it. And I am not very good at cooking but I can try." I didn't mention that 1.) Most of the time I spent outdoors was walking to work in the exhaust filled, bug sterile environment of the city 2.) My 'cooked' dinners consisted of cereal and popcorn, sometimes toast.

I managed to get the apprenticeship and landed in Toronto, where my sister picked me up from the airport and we went shopping for the things that I thought I would need on the farm. I was so nervous about the fact that I had 2 huge suitcases. "Last years apprentices camped outside the whole summer just to be out in nature and I am sure they came with just a backpack. I have luggage. A hard covered suitcase! And the last time I slept in a tent I was five and it was in the backyard! They are going to think I am such a wimpy city girl." I cried to my sister as she tried to talk me down. She lent me her sleeping bag and never having owned a sleeping bag of my own, I felt at least a little more rugged.

I arrived at Whole Village around 10 pm May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006 so out of shape I was barely able to lift my hard covered suitcase out of the car. Lucie was in the Great Room of the old farm house and she graciously welcomed me and showed me my room. I was so relieved that I had my own room with a window and a door! I mumbled some stuff about all my stupid stuff in my two huge suitcases and Lucie said "That's all you brought?" More relief.

The reason I wanted to come to Whole Village was to learn how to grow vegetables so I could move back to the city to teach people how to grow their own food though rooftop and community gardens. I also figured I could kill two birds with one stone by conquering my fear of bugs but I really had no idea about the concept of community nor could I imagine the steep learning curve that I was about to embark upon or how Whole Village would change my life.

The next day I started work in the gardens. There were these little black flies that buzzed around our heads as we worked. They fly straight into your eyes and your forehead and mouth, if you open it to talk. I was completely miserable and I decided then and there that the person who outlawed DDT was evil and I started wondering how I could get my hands on some. I decided that after work I would do a search on the internet for DDT suppliers and smugglers. This brings me to my next challenge, the isolation factor. No buses, no metro, no café's no 99 cent pizza or repertory movie theatres within walking distance and no internet. Well, there was dial up, but I didn't even know that dial up still existed and, boy, was it slow! Whole Village is too remote to get cable internet or wireless. I couldn't even get cell phone service. Talk about living in the wild!

The other challenges I faced coming from my cushy middle class big city life were solar showers, composting toilets, community living and did I mention the bugs? Mosquitoes, wasps, mini bees, honey bees, bumble bees, spiders, aphids, cucumber beetles, black beetles, tomato horn worms, cut worms, potato worms, grubs, lemon ants, regular ants, black flies, white flies, deer flies, regular flies and my most dreaded, earwigs. Baby steps. Baby steps was (and still is) my mantra.

I left Whole Village on November 13<sup>th</sup> with a fling of my hard covered suitcase into the trunk of the car with the grace and ease of a prima ballerina. I can lug sacks of carrots and potatoes or push a wheelbarrow full of pumpkins and squash. Although I am still occasionally alarmed by some bugs and will let out a high pitched scream, it is now less frequent and I no longer mutter about the miracle of DDT. I cook decent meals (I have witnesses) and have mulched 150 foot rows with hay bales during 49 degree (with the humidex) heat.

Despite, or maybe because of, all the changes and challenges I have faced, I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to have had this experience. This was the best and by far the most fulfilling job I have ever had in my life. I have never felt so appreciated by my 'clients' (the members of the CSA) or by my 'boss' (the members of Greenhaven and Lucie). For the first time in my life I was not watching the clock or making sure that I punched out at the last minute so as not to be taken advantage of by "The Man". This summer I didn't mind the overtime and the long hours. I had the most pride and gratification in my work that I have ever had and I finally felt relieved that my hard work and energy were perpetuating positive outcomes and making a difference. I felt as if a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders as I no longer felt like I was contributing to the problem but rather to the solution. I have gone through emotional boot camp these last six months but deep down I have this sense of peace and relief that there is another way and it is possible and accessible to do something good. I have always believed that every little bit counts and that one person can make a difference - I just never knew how. Whole Village has showed me there is an alternative to life as I knew it. As I wrote this article, I realized how worried I was at the beginning of what others would think and I could guess that this prevents people from trying new things and facing new challenges but I believe that I have proved that if I if I can do it, anyone can! This experience has changed my life for good! (picture on page 4)

## My First Summer at Greenhaven Bev Trounce

### June, Week 1

Since February, when we were granted occupancy in this new, environmentally friendly communal house, I have been living in my new home. I wish I could spend time pulling weeds and planning the landscaping around my suite but we need a Whole Village mortgage and I have been working with Mairy and Tom to find a bank or credit union willing to lend us several hundred thousand dollars. Community Supported Agriculture is the main activity on our farm but besides growing vegetables, we have bought 50 baby chicks, barred Plymouth Rock and black Sexlink (heritage breeds), to lay eggs for our use. Hopefully, the 6 baby Muscovy ducks will eat lots of flies, which can be a nuisance on a farm. Four people work together to care for the chickens and ducks.

### June, Week 3

The summer solstice is here and the rush is on to be ready for the first Community Supported Agriculture pick up tomorrow. We need an irrigation pump for the CSA gardens and a gravity wagon for the grain off the east field. Jeff and I will attend an auction sale at a farm near Midland. The weeds are growing, but I have managed to draw up a plan for the landscaping around my suite based on Christopher Alexander's *A Pattern Language*. I imagine an outdoor room under a trellis on the south side of my suite near my front door. With so much work to do and meetings to attend, I wonder when I'll have time to sit in the shade under my trellis.

### July, Week 4

We have volunteers working in the gardens and on landscaping around our new house. One volunteer is a young woman with her 20 month-old son who is working alongside the gardeners and helps the landscaping team. I admire her determination, patience and good humour. WV members have decided to organize daily tasks for children and teenagers living here. We think they need to learn what work is required to live on a farm and we want them to know we depend on their help. When I see Angela and Thomas running and playing, I remember I must put air in my bicycle tires and go for a ride.

### August, Week 3

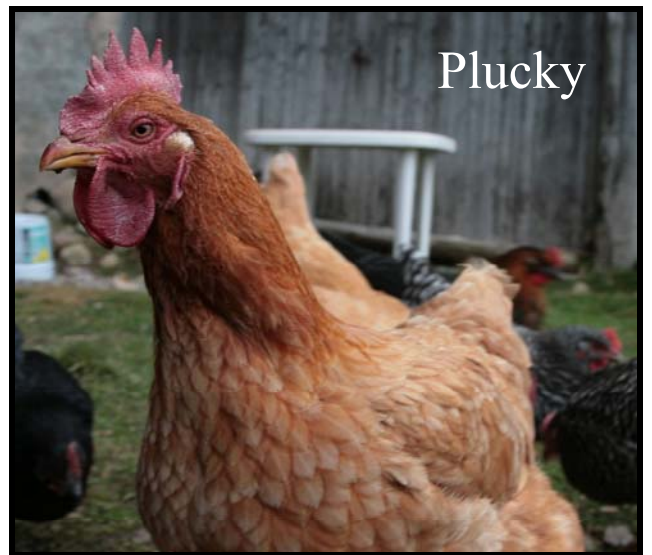
Already there are signs of autumn – cool nights, lower light levels and mist patches over the low lying areas. Jeff has left for New Orleans to help with the reconstruction of a friend's house over the next six weeks. It's time to harvest the peas, oats and barley off the east field to provide chicken feed for the winter. Luckily, I have found a gravity wagon near Midland. The farmer will transport it to us along with the tandem trailer Jeff and I bought at the auction sale in July. As we have no expensive harvesting machinery, we depend on a local farmer to harvest our grain. Our efforts to obtain a mortgage for Whole Village Co-operative are successful. We can retire the mortgage used to buy the farm, pay off the construction loan, concentrate on living together in our new ecological house, running the farm and Community Supported Agriculture gardens.



Bev



Kris



Plucky