



# 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 quarterly 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.

**Summer 2007**

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## **New CSA Gardener for 2007**

**By Amanda Kirby**

This March, Aerron Kirby was hired as the new CSA Gardener at Whole Village. Aerron comes from a small family farm just outside Brantford, Ontario, called Devon Acres. Here, Aerron has spent the past 15 years building a Community Supported Agriculture operation alongside his father. With things changing on the farm at home, and a desire to be connected with a community of people interested in sustainable living, Aerron and his wife Amanda have made their way to Whole Village.

While Aerron grew up in the country, his father wasn't originally a farmer and Aerron never envisioned himself becoming a farmer either. As a child, Aerron read Tom Brown's books and became intensely interested in naturalist and survival skills; such as identifying wild plants and their uses as food or medicine, fire and shelter-making, tracking animals, and other traditional practices. Aerron believes it was the many hours spent out in the bush in his childhood learning about plants and animals that turned him into the environmentalist that he is today.

Due to his strong connection with natural places, Aerron became committed to environmental causes even as a child, during a time when environmental issues were first entering the public consciousness. Aerron later became politically active with environmental clubs and naturalist groups in his teenaged years.

When Aerron was nearly finished high school, his father read about the CSA style of farming in a magazine and thought that he might try it, and soon Devon Acres became one of the first six CSA farms in Ontario, and the first in Brant County. In the first years of the project, Aerron would help after school and during the summer months. This evolved into a permanent partnership once Aerron had left high school.

Through many years of experience farming in the CSA format, Aerron has learned much about how to run a small, self-sufficient, mixed farm. Besides the vegetables grown for the CSA, Aerron and his father raised rare breeds of

livestock including cows, sheep, pigs, chickens, ducks and turkeys for meat, milk, eggs and wool. For the last ten years, Devon Acres was without a functioning tractor as Aerron and his father began working with two Belgian draft horses for all farm work.

Farming organically was never a question for Aerron. In fact, he shies away from the term “organic-” arguing that it does not go far enough toward sustainability. Aerron prefers to talk about “ecological farming” which includes organic farming techniques as well as practices that lessen fossil fuel use and technological dependency.

Aerron is excited to help establish a sustainable farm system at Whole Village. He hopes to protect and improve farm ecology and create a diverse, closed-loop farming system that can help the community move towards self-sufficiency. To that end, Aerron will be bringing eight of his own cows up from his family farm in Brantford to provide milk and meat to the community. He is also discussing the possibility of bring other livestock as well.

Aerron is enjoying the appreciation, many helping hands, and support that he receives as a farmer working within an intentional community. He feels lucky to be part of the Whole Village, and hopes that his role as CSA Gardener will evolve into a long term partnership.

## Our New Masonry Heater By Jayne Kulikauskas

We make decisions by consensus at Whole Village. While I see this as a good thing, sometimes I find the process slow and frustrating. That is how I was feeling when we were trying to come to a decision about a building a masonry heater in Greenhaven.

There was agreement in principle that we should do it. We wanted something to supplement the heat pumps that are our main heating system. Since this requires electricity, we also wanted a way to provide heat in case of a power failure. A masonry heater is a sort of high efficiency wood stove. It burns at higher temperatures than a conventional wood stove or fire place, creating less pollution. The masonry component gives it a high thermal mass, allowing it to provide heat after the fire stops burning. This means using less wood and spending less time maintaining a fire. We could all agree that a masonry heater was desirable.

We were not, however, reaching a consensus. There were concerns about the expense and questions of priority. There are many projects that we would like to accomplish at Whole Village. Some members were not yet convinced that building a masonry heater ought to be the next project to receive attention. There were, however, two members in particular who were convinced. Mary MacEachern and I believed that we should be going ahead as soon as possible, in order to start receiving the benefits of a masonry heater while it was still winter. We decided to split the cost between us and provide it as a gift to the community. This resolved the remaining concerns so that we could reach consensus on the decision.

Alex Chernov, a friend and neighbour of our community, runs a business that makes masonry heaters. He was the obvious choice to do this work for us. He helped us to figure out what design and appearance we wanted, as we discussed this as a community. Since the heater was going to be a gift from Mary and me, we made the final decisions with input from others rather than using consensus process. Since questions of esthetics are one of the areas in which we find it most difficult to reach consensus, this probably saved me more feelings of frustration.



As it was, we were able to choose our design relatively quickly. There was still some delay while Alex completed other projects and became available. Then came the noisy, dusty weeks of construction. Finally, the masonry heater was finished and ready for use – while it was still cold enough that we wanted to.

I often think that our name, Whole Village, describes an approach to life. We do not look at things in isolation, but as a whole. Getting a masonry heater has been about far more than providing heat. It has become the focal point of our common living room, making the room more attractive and inviting. This, plus the physical warmth, led to people spending more time in this room than previously. It is now a room where people like to read, knit, make music, and just be around each other, so we have more spontaneous socializing.

We also benefited from the opportunity to observe a craftsman at work. This was not only inspiring to me personally, I could see how my children spent hours watching Alex. It was clearly a wonderful experience for them. As well, many of us had a chance over this time to get to know Alex and his family better, strengthening that relationship. I have also appreciated the new skills that I have been acquiring. I have learned to operate the heater and have learned to bake sourdough bread in its oven section too. I have even learned how to chop kindling (though I haven't got the hang of splitting logs yet).

Our masonry heater has given us warmth, beauty, inspiration, education, and built up our community relationships. As far as I am concerned, it was worth all the discussions, delays and dollars.

Pictured: Mary, Alex & Masonry Oven



## Peter's Dreamland

By Shantha Viswanathan

Parameswara Viswanathan, fondly named Peter by the Whole Village community, a retired teacher, was one of the suite owners of Green Haven. He lived with his wife, Shantha, in Sudbury.

Peter was a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, a strong minded, no-nonsense man in his sixties who practiced his strong principles. Peter's childhood days were spent with his grandparents in a small village surrounded by rice paddies and tropical trees like palm, coconut, mango and banana.

As he was facing retirement, he envisioned settling down on a farm, practicing organically with heritage seeds, keeping sheep, chickens, etc. When searching the internet, he came across Whole Village and decided that it was for him. He attended some meetings, even though it was difficult to travel regularly from Sudbury to Caledon.

When the construction was about to begin he was thrilled and started packing his seed collections, gardening articles, one sided papers and became prepared to come. He thought of moving in July 2005 or at least August even if his unit was not completely finished. He dreamt every night of being at Whole Village. He loved the land, the trees the wildlife, the pond, the turtle. This was his heaven. Green Haven was his dream too. His dream, unfortunately, stayed as a dream.

On June 4, 2005 while having a picnic with his family including his two sons, Sundar and Hari, and friends, Peter's canoe toppled over and, as a result of the extreme cold temperature of the water, he got a shock induced heart attack and died in minutes. He never had a chance to stay even one day in his new home.

So, we are planning a memorial garden near Green Haven with a small pergola. There will be a place to sit and enjoy the rippling water in the pond. The garden will be planted this summer with trees, bushes, berry plants, clay pots, flowers and climbers. If anyone has any of these to contribute, thank you.

## Agnes Jeanette Vandergang

1958-2005

While Agnes will be remembered for her many interests and talents, including gardening, it was her strong belief in the value of resolving interpersonal problems that has inspired her memorial at Whole Village. Within a circle of cedars, a bench with a plaque, stone & bush will be placed where people might discuss their differences.

A service, within the circle of cedars, will be performed on the anniversary of her birthday, June 4<sup>th</sup> at 11:00am to commemorate Agnes' special qualities and contributions for which we, at Whole Village, are very grateful.

