

# 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/Fall 2008**



## Progress on the Farm By Brenda Dolling

Whole Village celebrated its sixth year quietly this summer. Animal care, garden planting and building maintenance kept us too busy to organize parties. With a 20 year farm plan as a long term guide, developed collaboratively with Brad Peterson, members met over the winter around the masonry heater to create a more detailed short-term plan.

Our new three year plan helps us to budget, find needed equipment and carry out new projects in an orderly fashion. Highlights of farm development this year include infrastructure improvements, new food gardens, growing of grains, and a collaborative model of management for the CSA project now in its 7<sup>th</sup> year.

With the return of Shane Snell, who helped build Greenhaven, we have been assisted with greenhouse repairs, a home-made masonry heater for one greenhouse, and many other repairs and upgrades on infrastructure. Shane's creativity, artistic skills and commitment to sustainability have resulted in exciting plans for redesigning a drive shed, tool shed and workshop, not to mention education and outreach.

To take another few steps toward self sufficiency we planted and harvested oats and barley for our poultry on 10 acres in the east field. Underseeded clover will fertilize the soil and be harvested as hay next summer. Thanks to our good farmer neighbours, Carl Martin and David Meek, new fields were prepared and planted, then harvested in the fall. Our barn is now well stocked with plenty of food for fowl, hopefully to last for 2 years. The baled straw from the grains is already providing mulch for gardens and bedding for animals.

Edible perennial gardens were expanded on our path toward feeding ourselves. New gardens were planted for more raspberries, blackberries, rhubarb, asparagus and currants. A quarter acre of strawberries planted in 2007 provided us with enough fruit to eat, preserve, give away and sell this summer. Wandering plants were transplanted to another field and shared with young, local farmers.

In order to increase our food production while mimicking nature, a

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forest garden has been created west of Greenhaven. A few acres of meadow have been cultivated and planted with the first of many edible plants. Food for humans and animals is expected in a few years as the oaks, plums and berries grow among buffer trees like tamarack and windbreaks of pine, maple and spruce. Next year will see the nut trees added and, when enough shelter is available, the less hardy fruit trees and shrubs. Also, one thousand native trees were planted in April to total over 10,000 trees planted in windbreaks, shelterbelts and wildlife corridors throughout the farm.

Our WV chickens faithfully produced delicious, healthy eggs all season, while Natalie experimented with raising ducks for eggs and meat. Aerron's cattle produced milk for the community and his flock of 13 sheep enjoyed the pastures, as well as breaking into the chicken coop for a taste of grains from time to time. There's a rumour about work horses coming but we'll have to follow up on that next year. Jamie faithfully tended the apiary, harvesting the bees sweet stores of honey in early October.

Much of the farm work would have been impossible without the generous help from participants at work bees and the dozens of volunteers and WWOOFers who also add so much youthful spirit and good will to the community. We salute all of you and thank you sincerely for helping to develop our precious ecovillage.



The stork makes a delivery to Whole Village. Baby Gabriel being held adoringly by mother Maggie.

## CSA Season in Review

By Adrienne LaChapelle

CSA is an acronym for community shared agriculture. This model of sustainable farming connects food consumers with producers and helps to re-localize the food system and improve food security at the community level.

The CSA model at Whole Village is unique in that the Whole Village community supports the CSA farmers in many different ways. Whole Village has created a safe environment for aspiring farmers and gardeners to live and farm the land. It provides the infrastructure and equipment for a farm enterprise as well as offering room and board to the CSA managers. For many young farmers, the prospect of buying or renting land and starting a CSA operation is cost prohibitive. Whole Village purchases nine shares from the CSA at the start of the season as well as a number of winter shares. In addition, community members preserve and can surplus produce from the garden and put it up for winter. Also, Whole Village creates an opportunity for volunteers to visit and participate in the work on the CSA through workbees and the community's participation in the WWOOF (Willing Workers On Organic Farms) program. The support that the Whole Village has provided to the CSA managers and the opportunity to live and learn alongside community members is a unique example of the CSA model.

The 2008 growing season started back in

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Smith helps Natalie tend to her Muscovy ducks.

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early April with a bit of uncertainty. Whole Village community members were eager to see the CSA continue. After some discussion and consideration, last year's CSA manager, Aerron Kirby, and the two apprentices, Graham Corbett and I, Adrienne La-Chapelle, decided to co-manage the CSA. This type of non-hierarchical, consensus-based management style seemed appropriate in the context of Whole Village and the intentional community evolving here.

The 2008 season was eventful, bountiful, challenging and successful. We were fortunate in that there was plenty of moisture to produce healthy crops but lower than average temperatures meant that some of our heat-loving crops did not produce as abundantly. But all in all, it was a good growing season. With Aerron's skills and experience combined with Graham's and my novice enthusiasm, we were able to build on the success of the 2007 season. With 42 CSA shares and a stand at two weekly farmers markets we had plenty to keep us busy.

Selling at local farmers markets has been an excellent complement to this year's CSA. Especially at harvest time when the bounty from the garden offers more produce than the share members can absorb. In addition, the interest in local, organic food is growing and market-goers are keen to purchase produce grown locally rather than imported from afar. Markets and special events also offer an occasion to showcase Whole Village to the broader community and educate people about community shared agriculture in general. We participated in the Erin's Farmers Market, Feast of Fields, and the Erin Fall Fair.

We have enjoyed attending markets and special events and getting to know share members, regular customers and fellow farmers. Ideally, a CSA would form the cornerstone of community life. Just as most people have a family dentist, doctor, lawyer or accountant everyone should have a family farmer. Food is a central and intimate part of our lives and this common thread can bind people to-

gether and create community.

The work in the garden has been challenging and rewarding. The bonds of community and the many hours of work contributed by volunteers from Germany, Brazil, Japan, New Zealand, Canada and the U.S have been an indispensable part of a successful season. With hundreds of hours, hard work and dedicated help from volunteers and community members, the CSA planted over a hundred varieties of vegetables. It was a formidable task keeping varieties in order, but diversity is the hallmark of a vibrant CSA operation. Diversity creates stability and acts as a safeguard against the numerous challenges of farming.

Part of the diversity represented by the CSA this season was the practice of farming bio-



Aerron, Adrienne and Graham in the fields

dynamically. Biodynamics combines "biological" agriculture with an understanding of "dynamic" ecological systems. The "dynamic" part of the practice takes a broader perspective to enhance metaphysical aspects (the life forces) and natural rhythms (such as planting seeds during certain lunar phases). Graham, Aerron and I were all very interested in biodynamic agriculture but did not have a lot of ex-

perience putting it into practice. To begin we participated in a course offered by Titia Posthuma through the Rudolf Steiner Centre and the Biodynamic Society of Canada. With this, coupled with excellent counsel from Johann Kleinsasser and Cory Eichman, and time spent pouring over the *Stella Natura* calendar and other resources, we crafted an approach that worked for us and the gardens.

We had another opportunity for learning from our participation in CRAFT (Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training). This is a network of organic farms that offers hands-on learning opportunities for farm interns during the growing season. Once a month, a different CRAFT farm hosts an educational seminar on a different topic including crop rotation, season extension and draft animals. Whole Village hosted the CRAFT day in September and we had the op-

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portunity to showcase the CSA gardens. We were pleased with the turn out and the opportunity for learning.

We are just approaching the fall equinox or Mabon. This is the traditional harvest or thanksgiving festival. It is a time when day and night are of equal length. This is a time for feasting, rejoicing in the labours of the season and enjoying all the blessings of community. From this vantage point it is satisfying to look back on the 2008 growing season and to feel that it has been one of challenges met and lessons learned. The physical and metaphysical fruits of the harvest are bountiful and we are grateful for this.

## An Ecovillage Activist Returns

By Shane Snell



Time has passed quickly since my first visit to this community, five years ago, when I arrived with a friend to help mulch some trees. During that first visit, speaking with a small group in the farmhouse, I shared a detailed vision of a future Ecovillage Training Center (ETC) for Ontario that I had designed after discovering the Global Ecovillage Network on the Internet. It was clear to me, even back then, that I wanted to help promote this extremely potent movement, which I believed could facilitate the deep cultural changes we need to make this century. Earlier this year, in February, I was once again in front of the group with another 'big idea', but this time with much more experience, knowledge and focus.

In the interim, Whole Village had hired me as a core member of the Greenhaven building team in 2004, resulting in a life-changing experience as I lived and worked in this community for over 16 months. I then maintained connection with the group while I researched other similar projects across the U.S. and Canada. After two years of traveling and work-exchanging, wherein I documented over 100 eco-projects, I returned home last November and immediately submitted a proposal to Whole Village to coordinate a program for education and outreach.

I moved into the Whole Village farmhouse when approval was given to pursue a long-term

plan for an Ecovillage presentation tour. By that time, I had already initiated a dialogue with Phillip Penna of the Ontario Environment Network (OEN), and soon we were discussing possibilities for an organizational partnership. Working with Brenda, and the Education Mandate Group at Whole Village, we designed a Collaborative Agreement with the OEN to deliver the presentation to dozens of environmental groups across Ontario. We had also decided to apply for a grant from the Trillium Foundation to help finance the program. Phillip and I worked hard during the spring, with help from our respective groups, to complete the Trillium application, bouncing e-mails back and forth and writing many documents. Just a couple of days before the July 1<sup>st</sup> deadline, and after I had spent some very long days in front of my laptop screen (including one 23-hour marathon!), we assembled the package for submission.

The project was named the Ontario Sustainable Communities Initiative (OSCI), and it had some really exciting ideas! We had devised a program budget to tour the presentation to over fifty environmental venues in 2009, create a user-based Ecovillage website, and run a full schedule of Sustainable Community Design and Development Courses, to be held at Whole Village in the second year of the program. We were preparing to train others in the skills needed to start new Ecovillages and to activate an OSCI Network for project collaboration. Everyone involved seemed to be really pleased with the finished product, and so we then waited for a response from Trillium.

Now a resident Associate Member, and full-time volunteer on the farm, I am so grateful to Whole Village for the opportunity to be here! I have not had difficulty finding ways to help out, as this community continues to evolve. And although Trillium did reject our application earlier this month, I look forward to meeting this challenge by exploring new options with the OEN and maintaining my immensely beneficial relationship with Whole Village, where I am quite happy to continue my role as an Ecovillage activist - and dream up many more big ideas.