

## ***Whole Village Newsletter***

### ***Winter 2003***

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

### **How do we Make Decisions at Whole Village?**

#### ***Decisions are made by the Community, using a Consensus-building approach***

Whole Village is an ambitious project that requires members to make a multitude of decisions; from finances to farming, the scope of decision-making is broad. As well, the community is committed to using consensus building to make these decisions. So, in practical terms, how do decisions get made?

The whole community meets twice a month—at what are called Meetings of the Round. Members, subscribers, and associates attend them; as well, they are open to any individual who has attended an orientation session. The purpose of these meetings is to make decisions regarding specific proposals that are brought to the community by our Mandate Groups or by individuals.

#### ***Mandate Groups Provide Leadership in Decision-Making***

Mandate groups meet regularly to discuss the nuts and bolts work of the project. They function like committees and are expected to report in writing to the Meeting of the Round. As well, they bring forward proposals to these meetings when there is a need for a community decision to be made. These proposals are circulated with the agenda ahead of the meeting.

#### ***Consensus Building is an Inclusive Process***

All proposals come to the Round at least twice. The first time a proposal is presented, the discussion is structured so that all individuals are encouraged to express their opinions. The group is first asked to brainstorm about the proposal, keeping an open mind to it—how would this work? Next, the participants are asked if there are any concerns about the proposal. These are brought forward and discussed; modifications may be made to the proposal in response to a given concern.

When all concerns have been expressed, discussed and addressed, there will be a formal call for consensus. The meeting facilitator asks “Are there any other concerns?” If none are expressed, the minutes record that the proposal was “consensed.”

If no consensus is reached, the proposal is dropped. Only a full member has the right to block consensus. The original proponent may decide to re-formulate it and bring it back to the community at a later date.

### ***All Proposals Must be Ratified***

Proposals, once “consented” at a meeting, are brought forward one more time at a later meeting for “ratification.” This time lag allows the individuals in the community to give additional thought to the issue at hand, and provides an opportunity for new concerns to be raised. A proposal can be reshaped as a result of new concerns that come forward at this time. Once ratified, the proposal can begin to be implemented.

## **Whole Village’s Mandate Groups Focus on the Details of the Project**

***Legal and Financial*** Carries the responsibility for all matters related to finances, approval of sweat equity arrangements, legal matters, and contracting with various service providers (e.g. farmer, architect, etc)

***Farm/Land Stewardship*** Determines how the 200 acres of land will be used. Stewarding our natural resources and creating a sustainable farming operation are the two main land use issues discussed by this group.

***Community Dynamics*** When individuals live and/or work in community, their differences can create challenges. This group is charged with ensuring that interpersonal issues are addressed in an honest and constructive manner

***Education*** This group is developing a vision and plan for educating others, drawing on the community’s skills and experience with alternate technologies and land use.

***Communication*** Is responsible for getting the word out about the project. This includes informing our neighbors, nearby communities, our associates, supporters, and the media as well as other environmental groups.

***Strategic Planning*** Is responsible for facilitating long term planning—I.e. identifying priorities, setting long-term goals for the project and creating time lines for achieving these goals.

***Membership*** originally developed membership policies and processes for bringing in members. They now ensure that the community adheres to these practices.

## **On Bee Keeping: Notes from A Neophyte**

By James LaTrobe

I am lucky to have received training from Bill Dincov, a third generation beekeeper; he has an intuitive grasp of what is going on with each hive. As a beekeeper in training, I have learned the importance of understanding as much as possible the bee’s habits, moods, methods, organization and life cycle. Each hive is a different colony with it’s own strengths, weaknesses and personality. Bees are wild beasts and cannot be domesticated although they accept the hives we supply them and usually submit quietly to our opening and rearranging their home in order to harvest their honey.

Last June Whole Village purchased fifteen mature hives from Bill and bought another four “nucleus hives” that contain mostly bees in the egg and pupa stage of development. We have harvested over 2,000 kilos of honey from these hives—a successful crop by any bee keeping standards.

Our aim is to keep each hive strong and also to maximize the amount of honey we remove. Bees in this age are very stressed, plagued by the tiny Varroa mite, which if left unchecked can weaken

and then kill a whole colony. As well, agricultural pesticides have had a debilitating effect on bee colonies and there are at least three other diseases that can be fatal. The challenge we will face in the coming year is to keep the hives healthy, relying as little as possible on the use of miticides and antibiotics— substances common in contemporary bee keeping. This is a goal that is in keeping with our intent to do organic farming at Whole Village.

I have discovered that I enjoy being around bees— sensing the bee-yard air full of fieldworkers flying up from the hives into the sky and then swooping back in again; seeing the thick cluster of bees on the outside of the hive on hot days; the sight of returning fieldworkers full of nectar hovering unsteadily before they land; lifting a frame out of a hive to admire their hard work—a comb that is an interesting mosaic of cells of capped and uncapped honey, pollen and developing bees.

### ***Whole Village Welcomes Farmer John***

Whole Villages are enthusiastic about their recent decision (in October) to hire John Hall as the new Farm Facilitator. John brings 20 years of farming experience to the project. He is committed to helping the community realize its dream of developing a sustainable—and profitable—organic farm. His boundless energy has already had a significant impact in helping to move the project forward.

The farm/land stewardship mandate group has reviewed the original farm plan with John, made modifications based on his input and finalized activities for 2003. Plans for this year include building two additional greenhouses (John finished our first one in November—see photo on page 3), expanding this year's CSA (vegetable) garden, boarding horses and “green manuring” another 60 acres.

### ***CSA Garden to Expand in 2003***

At Whole Village we share the economic responsibility for producing our own organic vegetables, using a system called Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). This year is our second year of operation and we intend to expand the CSA garden—first by making salad greens available to members year round and secondly by increasing the number of members share to be sold. Using the new greenhouse facilities, we have begun harvesting baby greens and intend to continue this practice so that greens will be available for purchase on a weekly basis throughout the year.

The goal this year is to sell 45 membership shares and expand the garden plot to provide produce to meet the needs of this larger group. A membership share will cost \$600 and will entitle the shareholder to receive a box of produce (enough for 3-4 individuals) on a weekly basis from June to early October. Individuals who are willing to pick their own produce each week will be able to buy a share for \$450. CSA Memberships are open to all and will be sold beginning April 1, 2003. Call the farm to inquire about purchasing your share.

## ***Join Us on the Farm***

Have you attended an orientation session? Do you want to learn more about the Whole Village project? Are you interested in meeting the Whole Villagers? Do you want to get more involved—see what is actually happening on the farm? Then plan to attend one of our society events or lend a hand at one of our regular weekend work parties. You will find an up to date schedule of events on our web site [www.wholevillage.com](http://www.wholevillage.com). If you want to come out to an event, call the farm and let us know to expect you--that way we will be better able welcome you!