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## COMMUNITY ANIMATION

Tapping public spirit is a first step in building sustainable communities

An interview with Jeff Bercuvitz  
by Robert Gilman

*Reprinted with permission from the Fall 1992 issue of IN CONTEXT: A Quarterly of Humane Sustainable Culture.*

*Communities all over are finding themselves in serious trouble. Municipal budget shortfalls and unemployment are just two of the many symptoms of fundamental shifts in the economic underpinnings of the US and the world. Many people feel powerless to make a difference; communities face the large-scale alienation of their young people; and the groups that are supposed to be helping often are working at cross purposes...*

*With the combined strengths of all segments of the population, this could lead to more sustainable and humane communities!*

*Jeff Bercuvitz is among the pioneers of this approach. He can be reached at Community Innovations, P.O. Box 190, S. Strafford, VT 05070, 802/765-4662.*



Robert: *Could you describe, in broad terms, the kind of approach that you take in communities?*

Jeff: I work with communities in the United States and Canada that face a range of economic, social, and environmental challenges. Not only does that create the necessity for taking more creative approaches to problem solving, but it creates an opportunity to develop solutions that are more sustainable. That is, they're not solutions predicated by outside infusion of financial assistance, but they're based rather on a spirit of creative initiative and leadership within communities and the willingness of the people to take charge of their own destinies.

The crucial building blocks in any kind of community empowerment effort are bringing people together and building their sense of possibility through concrete action. The more we do and the more we discover our ability to have an impact, the more we discover that we have the power to deal with the long-term fundamental challenges we face.

I find a lot of support on all different parts of the traditional political spectrum for this approach. Certainly people who are concerned about environmental and social justice issues can find common ground with our work. At the same time, since we

have a strong emphasis on community self-reliance and on enterprise, we get the backing of people who might traditionally not be supportive of the types of concerns we work on.

R: *How would you begin working in a community?*

J: Generally we get involved when a community faces some particular challenge, some kind of division. Environmental people and business people aren't getting along or even talking to each other; blacks and whites are having some conflict. When we're invited in, we try from the outset to bring a broad range of civic, religious, environmental, and business groups together.

I make a distinction: when people ask if I'm a community organizer I say no, I'm a community builder, perhaps even a community animator. The derivation of the word animator is *animare*, which is Latin for "make more lively, move to action." My work is essentially to help draw out and enliven the spirit of the people and of their place.

So in order to draw out that spirit, replenish that spirit, in some cases help build that spirit, we take a five-step approach: *think big--start small, take stock of your assets, have fun, just do it, and ripple out.*

The first step is to *think big--start small*. That's not the same as "think globally, act locally." The idea is that it's important to help people build momentum and get over a hump of inertia by just doing something. And, starting small can help to build bridges.

I'll give an example. There's a group in San Anselmo, CA, that wanted to give some input on downtown revitalization efforts, particularly with an eye to sustainability and environmental concerns. These people were perceived by the Chamber of Commerce types as old hippies, and their input was unwelcome.

Well, this group decided to start small and do something that was, in and of itself, good for the community. They started a compost give-away program, knowing that a lot of the people who had gardens

and would likely benefit from the compost were those very same power brokers involved with the downtown. Not only did they help deal with a local waste problem with their composting--and help spur local gardening and small-scale food production--but they had a chance to meet face-to-face over a mound of compost with people who had seen them as strangers and adversaries. They built a relationship, and from there they were able to move on to the downtown revitalization effort.

Thinking big while acting small is particularly important now, because some time around the 20th anniversary of Earth Day we crossed a certain threshold. Prior to that, most of our discussions had to do with large-scale institutional change, and governmental and--to some extent--corporate responsibility.

I think that around the Earth Day event we went too far in the other direction--to an ethos of "Forty-nine ways to save the planet while slimming your thighs or trimming your tummy." There's no sense at all of how to connect those small steps with the big picture. There's no sense that there is institutional responsibility and a need for larger systemic change. So the message that I think is really important for us to work on is to reconnect the small steps with the big picture. The small steps are crucial to getting people going, boosting confidence and building bridges, but they are not enough in and of themselves.

R: *It's also a matter of building the momentum of success.*

J: That's right. Also important for success in terms of *thinking big* is to cultivate and articulate a broad vision that weaves together environmental concerns with people's economic, social, and spiritual concerns--and some of their personal pain as well.

For example, participants in the Sunshares Project in Durham, NC, a few years ago wanted to get more recycling going in their community. Instead of launching a "recycling initiative," they launched a "community economic development project." They

got 24,000 households participating and increased the amount of recycled material from 60 to 480 tons.

Perhaps most exciting and most important, they helped spawn 1,000 block coordinators and 29 full-time employees. And those block coordinators are now working on weatherization and water efficiency as well as recycling. That was a good example, I think, of a reframed initiative, where they were able to make some of the connections.

There are a number of environmental initiatives that are now doing that—reframing themselves as sustainable economic initiatives.

Your readers may be familiar with a Wilderness Society report, *The Wealth of Nature*, which focused on the greater Yellowstone ecosystem. Instead of just arguing for the importance of environmental integrity, this report demonstrates how more jobs are dependent upon—and created by—a healthy ecosystem than by extractive industries. So by talking in economic terms, they're reaching out to a broader range of people.

I'm focusing on the importance of reframing issues as one key part of *thinking big*. And it's not that people necessarily need to think in economic terms. There are land preservation initiatives, particularly around urban areas, that have been reframed as community-building or educational efforts.

One good example would be the Intervale Community Farm in Burlington, VT, where not only do they have a subscription farm on land that they were trying to preserve, but they have a program for court-referred youth to work on composting; they do outreach to older people in the community; they use the facility as a business incubator for agricultural-related ventures; and they have parties and special events on the land.

R: *So it's not that the whole-system approach is morally better; it's that taking that approach leads to a much higher chance of success and ongoing sustainability.*

J: That's right. Sustainability is the key word because, if we don't have a broad range of people involved, we won't have sustainability either of effort or of political support.

*Taking stock of your strengths* is the next step, and that goes right to the core of my work, which is to help people discover how they can make better use of everyone and everything to enhance their community's vitality and sustainability.

An important part of taking stock of a community's strengths is to know that there are certain internal resources in a community. These are goods, in the broadest sense of the term, that are either free or have been paid for once, and other things we already have: skills, land, maybe money, and so on. Then there are also what are called external inputs, which we have to purchase.

A way to explain it is in the context of a farm system. There is a whole range of available resources, including sun, water, nitrogen, minerals, energy, and seed, and in most cases, the farmer can decide whether to use an external resource, such as synthetic fertilizer, or an internal resource, like nitrogen-fixing plants.

The point is not to forgo all sources of outside help, but to make sure that external inputs are introduced in such a way that they do not unnecessarily diminish the value and vitality of the internal resources. There are a lot of resources in our communities that we can draw on; for example, we can involve younger people, instead of defining them as problems.

R: *Can you give me some specifics on how you get a group of people to take stock of its strengths?*

J: I often have community members compile an "associational map" which lists the formal and informal groups that could participate in a revitalizing effort.

A fascinating example came up last week when I was in Alberta. One of the participants in the workshop—a leader of a native reserve—said, "Oh,

we don't have any groups in our community that we can draw on."

He met with three other people to brainstorm about who gets together now in the community and how these "groups" can be used to meet the community's goal: job creation. They talked about young people who get together and drive all-terrain vehicles, which seems to the adults to be a terrible nuisance. And then his eyes lit up, and he said, "Well, maybe we could work with the young people to set up a rally; maybe we could work with them to run trail tours."

That ties into the next tool, which is to develop a "People Pages," a list of skills and abilities that different people have. Older people are one of our greatest untapped resources. One way, among many, that older people can help their communities and themselves is to share their wealth of knowledge about their community's history. That history can sometimes give clues as to what can be done today. There have also been successful efforts developed to make use of the business acumen of retired business people.

Financial resources are also important to take stock of; it's important to see where the money is coming from and where it's going. It's also critical to work on import substitution, to keep more dollars recirculating in the local economy.

The broad point is that we have a lot of assets that we fail to see; we miss them right before our eyes.

The third step is *have fun*! I believe that unless one's efforts to improve the world replenish oneself, those efforts are not likely to be sustainable over time.

It's particularly important if we're trying to reach out to other people and get them involved, that there's something in it for them. I usually encourage groups not to have meetings but to have parties. Serve food—it's as basic as that if you want to have people turn out. My motto is, "When in doubt, celebrate."

One group decided to do what they really enjoyed, which was bicycle riding. They invited some other people to ride with them, and then they started community "Bike to Work Days." This became a major event in Boulder. The critical mass of people who were biking became a potent political force with enough clout to push for bike lanes, bike paths, and other amenities. Now several other communities are putting bike racks on the sides of buses. Those larger efforts, which are so important for the sustainability of our communities, often grow out of activities that somebody just likes to do.

The next step would be *just do it*. Often when there is something we want to do, we set up a task force or we call someone to ask permission. I'm a big believer in the importance of taking direct initiative and not giving someone else a chance to say 'no.'

There are myriad examples of such efforts. Carolyn Morrison, in San Francisco, had to walk by a place called Hooker Alley, a trash-strewn lot filled with bottles and so on. Every so often someone would call the city and say "clean it up!" and the city would clean it up. But it's almost a law of physics that as a trash-strewn lot is cleaned up, a vacuum is created that sucks more trash back into it. So that's not a sustainable solution in any sense of the term.

The next suggestion was to build a fence. It may have been unsightly, but it had one salutary effect—it created a new recreational opportunity in the community: Trash Put, where people would throw their trash up over the fence.

When Morrison looked at this lot she imagined a community garden with younger and older people of different ethnic backgrounds gardening together.

Instead of asking, how do we clean up this lot, Carolyn did something that not only solved an immediate problem, but created something better. She asked her young neighbors to help clear out some of the rocks and clean up the trash. Then she talked to some mostly older people, who didn't have space to garden, and they just planted a garden.

This was a key part of SLUG, the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners, which produces 500,000 pounds of food a year, much of which they make available to homeless shelters and sell to finance seniors' activities. It was a wonderful example of thinking big, but also taking direct action, rather than just throwing one's arms up in despair.

*Rippling out*, the fifth step, means, for example, asking a neighbor or friend to bike with us, as they did with "Bike to Work Days."

An example that comes to mind is the "Daily Bread" project. A woman named Carolyn North wrote a letter to the editor of the local paper, saying that she wanted to deliver food from local restaurants—fresh food that would otherwise be wasted—to local food shelters. A couple of people got in touch with her, and they contacted some restaurants and phoned more people. Soon, they'd started a terrific program that later grew to include stores, bakeries, and so on.

Then they started a gleaning program to gather some of the fruit that would otherwise fall off the trees and go to waste. This *rippled out* further still, and they started a farm that—besides producing food—became an educational center.

This isn't to say that one just urges people to do things and crosses one's fingers. There's a lot we can do within our communities to spur this kind of action.

R: *Can you give me some examples?*

J: One can create an umbrella under which people can do small things, but feel connected with each other. Some communities give awards for community improvement efforts, or offer mini-grants or technical support to people who want to take some initiative to enhance social and environmental well-being.

At Community Innovations, we work on building a foundation for ongoing community improvement efforts. We can help people build bridges to other

groups, build a spirit of enthusiasm, and get a sense of their own power by actually accomplishing specific tasks.

These efforts don't claim to solve long-term problems. But communities can only tackle the bigger problems if a broad range of people sense that they can do something and are willing to work together. The good news is that this process is starting to take place in communities large and small, urban and rural, black and white, throughout North America.

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## The Challenge of Conflict

by Julie Mazo

*Reprinted from the Spring 1995 issue of Communities: Journal of Cooperative Living.*

*Julie Mazo has lived at Shannon Farm since 1989, and has been working with conflict resolution as a mediator since 1967. She can be reached at Shannon Farm, Rt. 2, Box 343, Afton, VA 22920.*

Animal rights activist Herb is outraged by Allan's provocatively stated preference for an omnivore diet. Lou worried that the influx of new members will destroy the community as an extended family, and Betsy fears the community becoming an exclusive and exclusionary enclave. John is a vocal advocate of borrowing money to purchase additional

land for the community, while Susan values the community being free of debt.

The experience of interpersonal conflict is almost universal, unless we choose to live in isolation. All interactions hold the potential for expression of our very human differences, and therefore provide fertile ground for conflict. It may be that intentional communities generate even more conflict than impersonal, mainstream environments. It's not that communitarians are more contentious, but rather that the enmeshing of our lives makes our differences more readily apparent, and joint decision making highlights them. When people live, work, and play together, and determine together the use of common resources, interpersonal disputes and opposing positions about community actions are to be expected.

This being so, communities have a special need for conflict-resolution and problem-solving skills. As a mediator and facilitator by training and profession, I've spent decades helping people to deal effectively with conflict, and have trained countless others in the valuable skills of the field. This background should come in very handy, right? Well...not necessarily. The longer I live in community, and the more history I develop with other members, and the more invested I become in group issues, the more challenging it becomes to exercise my skills. Sometimes it seems that life as a communitarian would hold fewer frustrations if I knew less about conflict resolution. In case this raises any eyebrows, let me explain.

In the world outside of my community, I automatically shift into "mediator mode" whenever I deal with conflict. The attitudes and approaches of mediation fit like old, comfortable shoes, so well have they been integrated over the many years. It's second nature for me to empathize, yet remain neutral; to hear contradictory stories without judgement. I clarify communication, redress power imbalances, ensure that positions are heard and understood, and engage all the many other skills of mediation. In short, my detachment from the content (the "what")

of the dispute enables me to effectively facilitate a process (the "how") for its resolution.

At home, it's different. Even with no personal axe to grind when mediating a dispute between two members, my relationships with them carry the potential to compromise my neutrality—and therefore my effectiveness. Sympathy or antipathy, whether conscious or unconscious, can affect the balance which a mediator needs to contribute to the process. It's not enough for me to exercise caution that I don't express or demonstrate bias or judgement. I must also guard against the tendency to over-compensate; that is, to swing too far in the opposite direction when my personal feelings are engaged.

Disputed community issues are even more problematic. It's rare that I don't have my own view about "right" and "wrong," since community decisions influence my life. Naturally enough, I have a personal stake in what the community chooses to do. When the community is polarized by a contentious issue, I can walk into a meeting telling myself, "OK, this time you're going to stay cool." Hah. It doesn't take much for me to find myself drawn into heated partisanship. This tends to compromise my ability to listen and respond to opposing views with openness and sensitivity. Advocacy and objectivity don't combine well. More often than I like to remember, post-meeting reflection has left me regretfully aware of missed opportunities to put into practice my large repertoire of peacemaking skills.

My goals (and perhaps yours) are to be a responsible, effective agent for resolving differences in my community, and to strengthen community support and community skills for dealing with differences constructively. Are these goals achievable? Yes, I think so. It will take more discipline than I manage to practice consistently, but a more harmonious community is surely worth that effort. And there are things we all can do to encourage movement in that direction.

Do you ever walk away from a meeting saying to yourself, "Yuck, that was awful!" or "Wow! Why can't it be like that all the time?" Whether the pro-

cess is satisfying, frustrating, or somewhere in the middle, there's much to be learned by taking time to reflect as a group on what we've just experienced. For example, when during the meeting did we feel positive or negative, and why? Which comments left us feeling more open and flexible or more rigid and defensive? Can we identify the nature of the statements that influenced us one way or the other? Did we feel that the group heard and truly understood our position? If not, what was missing for us? Was there enough space to say what was on our minds? Did it feel safe to put forth our views? If not, what would have helped us to participate?

These kinds of questions can stimulate a useful evaluation. Answers will deepen both individual and group awareness, provide feedback, and generate insight that can improve future meetings. Since we are all experts about our own experience, expertise about group dynamics is irrelevant for an evaluation process to be worthwhile. Everyone's input is valuable. As consciousness grows about the kinds of participation that influence the group in positive or negative ways, the potential for constructive participation expands. That's what we're after.

To develop and spread skills take a course in mediation or in group dynamics to enhance your knowledge base. Your community probably includes others who don't like the way conflict affects the group. Bring in a trainer, or organize a study group for you and other interested members to learn what you can do on your own. The more people are exposed to the skills of managing conflict, the greater understanding and support there will be for your efforts, and the quicker the community's style of handling differences will become more satisfying and comfortable. As communitarians know, it's fun to work towards a common goal with others.

If you identify with my struggle to disengage from the content in order to be more effective with process, give yourself permission to observe and take notes on what's happening during a heated discussion. Good observation requires the use of eyes and ears, not mouth. The paper and pencil in your hands

for note taking can do wonders as a reminder to reserve your content opinions for another occasion.

Pay careful attention to both verbal and nonverbal language and write down enough detail to help you remember particular moments. Thoughtful observation can increase your personal sensitivity to the nuances of what escalates or reduces hostility, exacerbates or soothes hard feelings.

Observations can also be offered to the group. For example, during a discussion you might interject, "I thought Ann was talking about A-B-C, and Joe's comment seemed to be about X-Y-Z. I'm confused about what we're trying to accomplish." As you think it would be helpful, you present your observations to achieve clarification, understanding, etc.

Another useful occasion for presenting observations is during evaluation or debriefing after a meeting. You might share with the group the tension you began to feel at a certain point, or express that, "It seemed to me we lost our focus when...Did anyone else experience it that way?" You're not criticizing, blaming, or judging, but simply offering your perception. Including a question with your observation opens a door for others to reflect on what was going on with them during the meeting.

Many good models for process observation are available. Visit your local library to research "group dynamics," or write to me for references. As other community members become intrigued by what you're doing, they can become observers, too. This would not only multiply the insights, but would allow you to trade off. That is, you observe for 15 minutes, then Joe takes over so you are free to contribute your thoughts about the issues in dispute.

In preparation for an upcoming meeting, tell someone else who will be present about your intention to remain detached from the content in order to focus on the process and ask her/him to keep an eye on you. If it becomes necessary, your partner can send a nonverbal message from across the room to serve as a signal that what you just said sounded to your partner like advocacy.

An interesting outcome of partnering: just knowing that our partner will be giving careful attention to our behavior helps us stay in the role we have chosen for ourself. The partner can also provide feedback and help us fine-tune our efforts for the future.

However much you know about resolving conflict, and however well you use your knowledge, it may be that an especially difficult issue calls for an external person with appropriate skills. An outside consultant comes with a good measure of authority and credibility by virtue of having been invited, and communities are often more willing to accept process guidance from an outsider than from one of their own members.

When I am invited to another community in the role of outside consultant, I walk in "clean" of direct experience with the issues or investment in any particular outcome. The group's assumption of my neutrality gets us off to an easier start. To be effective, I then have to demonstrate that I have what it takes to help the group accomplish its purposes.

Eliminating differences is not the goal. Even if that were possible, their absence would deprive the community of the richness that diversity brings. The challenge is to work with the whole spectrum of opinions and views to arrive at a resolution that respects all positions and can be accepted by those concerned. To meet that challenge requires skills to help other sides walk in the shoes of the opposing parties and thereby gain a greater appreciation of the other's experience. It requires nurturing the perception that mutual satisfaction is more desirable than having winners and losers. It requires stretching ourselves, reaching beyond our habitual patterns, learning new skills, and using them mindfully. It can be done. Let's do it!

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## Dimensions of Community

Edited from a recent talk given by Ernest Morgan

My father, Arthur Morgan, was concerned all his life for community. In 1940 he started an organization called Community Service, where the emphasis is on the importance of small communities such as villages or towns. He stressed the concept that the small community is the seedbed of civilization. It is in the face-to-face contacts of small communities, where people know each other, that good social qualities tend to emerge. In a small community, if you're a phoney, everybody knows it; if you're a wise and generous person, everybody knows that. So what you are encourages you to be your best.

I had a striking experience of this in the Middle East. I was called over there in 1949 to help administer Palestinian Arab relief in the Gaza Strip, and I had a chance to get acquainted with the three different types of Arab culture, all with the same language, same religion, and same ethnic background.

The first of these, the Bedouins, were nomads. They didn't live in settled villages. The Bedouins would steal the shirt off your back. One of my colleagues was visiting a Bedouin sheik in his tent one day. When he came out of the tent, the wheels were gone from his jeep, and the sheik was outraged. To steal from the sheik's guest is like stealing from the sheik himself! "You dig those wheels out of the sand and put them back on the vehicle!"

Another culture was that of the town or city people. There I had an interesting experience. I was walking down the street with a friend in Cairo and I had a penlight in my jacket pocket. My friend noticed that and said, "Hey, take that out of your outside pocket and put it inside your jacket. Someone will brush against you and it will be gone." You can see that Arabic cities are not too different from American cities in that respect.

The third culture was that of the village people, known as the Fellahin. I had a staff of about 20 of



them in the food center I administered. They were friendly, industrious, honest and responsible. I could leave money on my desk overnight. You couldn't imagine a nicer bunch of people to work with. So those were the three types of Arab culture. It was dramatic, the difference between the village culture and the culture of the people who were not exposed to the village environment.

Along that same line, I heard about an Austrian inn that had gone on for many generations under the management of one family. What was it about that family, that it was able to carry on successfully for several generations? Sociologists found out that there was a tradition in that family that the young man who would inherit the inn should marry a peasant girl. Their strength and stability came from the culture of the village.

In Gaza there were 52 of us on the Quaker/UN team which administered relief for 200,000 refugees. We had 1400 Palestinian employees working for us to help carry this out. Our team was made up of people of a variety of religious backgrounds, a broad range of ethnic backgrounds and different nationalities. It was about as diverse a group as you could find. Yet, we developed a strong sense of community and it didn't happen by accident. The American Friends Service Committee planned it that way. Each evening we ate supper together and after supper we sang songs from an international song book. Then one of the group would give a talk about his or her life and work. We developed a strong sense of community within our group, which was very important because the emotional tensions of our work were tremendous. The real testimony to that community feeling occurred 42 years later when a reunion was held near Philadelphia. Almost all the survivors of that team showed up, which was really amazing.

Growing up as Arthur Morgan's son, I had an impulse toward community. When I was 21 I went into business by starting the Antioch Bookplate Company with another student. It's still going, under the leadership of my son Lee, and is now called the Antioch Publishing Company. When it grew to the point where I had a goodly number of employ-

ees, I developed a policy of taking newly hired people on a tour of the office and plant. I would introduce them to everybody, and explain to each what job the other person would do. I tried to make this a community. Each employee had a key to the plant and was free to come in and use the equipment for any personal or nonprofit work he or she might want to do. We developed a very strong bond of community. I didn't want to just have a bunch of hired people, I wanted them to be colleagues.

I remember once one of our workers in a responsible post in the office left us to take a better paying job elsewhere. After a while she came back and said "Money isn't everything." We had a comparable experience with our older people when they retired. They were forlorn at being separated from their little community, so we arranged part-time jobs for them, so they could continue to be part of our group. People would be in there in the evenings or weekends, constantly coming and going with their activities. They liked coming to work. It was a matter of creative experience, an experience of fellowship in which they weren't just hired hands, they were members of a group. It is a great tragedy of most American economic life that people work just for the money. That is akin to slavery. It doesn't have to be that way. You *can* have the community spirit in the workplace, which makes your working hours and your working associations happy and creative ones.

Another incident in Arthur Morgan's career shows his concern for community. In 1913 there was a disastrous flood in the Miami Valley at Dayton. Thousands of homes were flooded, many of them destroyed, hundreds of people drowned. My father was called as an engineer to devise flood control for this valley. This was a tremendous challenge that had never been done before. After long study, he arrived at a solution. They would build five huge dams which would create big dry reservoirs sufficient to store the waters in times of flood. He could find no other way to protect Dayton from floods except to move the city up into the hills. However, it was going to take several years to build those dams and each dam had a large force of people

working on it. This created a need for housing for these people.

The conventional arrangement in those days, and probably still is, was to put up tarpaper shacks for the workers. But near each construction site, Morgan selected a woodlot and put streets through it, curving the streets to save many trees. His wife, Lucy Morgan, a talented house designer, designed four sizes of house, all simple, functional and attractive. They built these houses along the streets in the woodlots. They mixed the four sizes of house, painted them different colors, and put them at different angles to the street. When they finished it had style but no uniformity. It was a charming village.

A work force was hired. Those villages cost a lot more than tarpaper shacks. However, the quality and stability of the work force was so high that it actually saved money. People came there with their families and stayed for the entire duration of the job. There was almost no turnover among the labor force. Again, it was thanks to the application of the principle of community in daily life that helped to keep a stable work force.

Another dimension of community relates to education, to school. Because my father was an engineer we moved around a good bit while I was growing up and I attended nine different schools. With one or two exceptions, none of those schools were communities. It was every person for himself. You looked out for Number One and put the other guy down if you could. It was a very poor environment for developing healthy self-esteem, which is very important, not only for the individual, but for society. Our rampant individualism, greed and exploitation derive in large part from the lack of self-esteem that people have. It affects our whole society.

It's in the home, and particularly during the school years, that this problem needs to be addressed. One of the things we have done at the Arthur Morgan Junior High School at Celo, N.C., is to address that problem. The school is run as an educational community. The kids take part in decision-making and in the work. They are members of the community.

They are encouraged to affirm one another instead of tearing one another down. I recall a girl who went here for the three years and then went on to high school. She came back for a visit and I asked her how she found the transition. She said she found it very difficult. I asked her, "In what subjects?" She said academically it was no problem. The difficulty was going from a place where people cared about each other to a place where no one cared about anyone but herself. So community has a vital role in the development of a healthy personality and of good relationships, both social and economic.

Now the fourth dimension of community that I want to discuss is the application of community in urban settings. Before I was shipped out to Gaza, I was housed for two or three days in a neighborhood in Philadelphia known as Powellton Village, which was a mixed black and white neighborhood. It had started to tip, the blacks were moving in and the whites were moving out. It was becoming socially unstable. It happened that a number of the staff of the American Friends Service Committee lived there and they took hold of this situation to form a black and white community, very successfully. It became a desirable place to live, with very good social conditions and a lot of community activity.

A similar situation occurred in Chicago, near the University, in the Hyde Park-Kenwood area. There again it was a white neighborhood that was tipping and turning black, and the whites were packing and moving out. Well, the 57th Street Friends Meeting had a Social Order Committee involved in social issues. It moved into that situation and brought the people together in homes to meet and get acquainted. It pulled that area into a very successful community and the flight of the white people stopped. White and black people can get along well together.

So we have cases in two different cities where the function of community was developed in response to an urban situation. That is a lot better response than putting more police on the streets, building bigger prisons and having tougher sentences. Community is not the only factor, of course, that is

needed to meet our urban situation. However, it is one of the factors that needs to be developed and invoked to solve the problems of our cities and of our society.

Celo Community was also a concept of Arthur Morgan's. He was approached back in the 1930's by a wealthy manufacturer in Chicago, Henry Regnery, who asked if he had any suggestions about something worthwhile he might do with some of his money. Arthur Morgan had always felt it would be a good idea to get some land and start a community of people who would come together for that purpose. So he sold this idea to Regnery. They sent my brother, Griscom Morgan, who was then a young man, to locate a site. He cruised around for about six months looking for land where the climate was good, the social setting not too bad and the land not too far from urban centers. Sure enough, at Celo they found a 1200-acre tract about 60 miles from Ashville and decided to buy it in 1937. The community didn't do very well at first but after World War II some young conscientious objectors from Civilian Public Service camps, who had vision, moved into the community. It was they who introduced the land trust concept.

Now, just to emphasize the importance of land trust, let me point out that a few decades ago, 60 percent of American families got adequate housing for 25 percent of their income. Today, only the richest 10 percent can get housing for 25 percent of their income. The exploitation of land is one of the key problems of our society. The land trust principle is one approach to helping people acquire land on which to build. Celo now operates on the land trust concept. We don't own our land. We buy holdings. If you join Celo Community (we have a waiting list of about 20 families) you don't buy land in Celo, you buy a holding. The title to the land is held by the Celo corporation and you can't exploit the land. You can't cut a tree over six inches in diameter, build a house or put a driveway or powerline through without the approval of the Property Committee and General Meeting. The Community isn't repressive, it doesn't impose on people. It rarely objects to what people want to do, but it does guar-

antee a responsible, non-exploitive use of the land. You can't take the land ownership with you when you leave and you can't speculate in land and exploit it. That's one of the principles. There are other factors too.

My father had an analogy which he called "human uranium". He said that there is enough uranium in a cubic yard of granite to blow up a mountain, but the particles are inert because they're separated. You get them together in a critical mass and you can blow up the mountain. It's that way with people. People with strong social concern, lost in the mass, tend to be ineffective. Bring a bunch of them together in a critical mass and things happen.

In Celo, for instance, members of the intentional community started a co-op store. Now 80 percent of the members of that store are from outside the community. We had several Quaker families here and they started a Friends Meeting. Most of the attendees of that Meeting come from outside Celo Community. In addition, a group of our people started what they call Cabin Fever University. It developed and now a large part of the people and much of the main leadership comes from outside Celo. We also have a number of craftsmen in the community who got together and started a store to sell their merchandise. The majority of members are now from outside the intentional community. It is when the human uranium comes together in a critical mass that things begin to happen.

These are some of the dimensions of community which are important considerations for a stable society. The family and the small community are the basic universal phenomena from which society grows for good or ill.



## **Community Service Conference**

**October 20-22, 1995**

**Conflict Resolution in Community:  
Achieving Consensus**

This fall our Community Service Conference will be on "Conflict Resolution in Community: Achieving Consensus." It will be held Friday evening, Oct. 20th through Sunday noon, Oct. 22nd at the Outdoor Education Center in Glen Helen, a 1000 acre nature preserve belonging to Antioch College in Yellow Springs.

Resource people will include Julie Mazo from the intentional community at Shannon Farm, Afton, VA, and Marianne MacQueen from Yellow Springs. Julie has been dealing with conflict resolution in community since 1967 and Marianne has been head of the mediation program in Yellow Springs for a number of years.

Friday night Julie Mazo will give the keynote talk on "The Challenge of Conflict in Community." Participants will divide into small groups to brainstorm kinds of conflict situations they have encountered in their communities. They will select a situation or two to report to the large group which will discuss with Julie and others possible approaches for constructive handling of the conflict situations as reported by the small groups.

Saturday we will continue with both small and large group sessions to learn further about mediation skills, creative approaches to group problem solving and consensus building. There will be plenty of opportunity to practice mediation skills, debriefing and role playing and to learn experientially. Please save the dates of Oct. 20-22 and join us then. It will be a great time to meet old friends and make new ones.

We will have a conference brochure ready in July. Write or call if you have not received one by the middle of August.

## **KOINONIA—A Bold New Effort**

Koinonia Partners is a Christian organization seeking to be a demonstration plot for the Kingdom of God. For almost 25 years our primary focus was on construction of homes for low-income families, and over 190 homes were built. Much of our efforts for the past three years has gone into the restructuring of Koinonia's partnership, leadership, and business operations.

Now [we have] a new focal point. We are ready to take another leap of faith and begin a new stage of our journey. "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). Koinonia firmly believes this; therefore our new focus will be on the youth of the community and abroad. We already have a very successful Child Development Center for children ages 1 to 5 years. Our mission now is to expand our work to ages 6 to 18 years. Statistically, there is a high percentage of children who are brought up in a single-parent home without the moral support that is needed to interject a good foundation for their long journey in life. As we see these growing problems of young people all over our country, we feel more than ever the importance of a creative strong youth program. Koinonia was the ideal place to pioneer low-cost housing. We believe the time has come to give that same kind of leadership in youth work. In our immediate area there are more than 50 youth, mostly African-American.

We will work with them first, knowing that a successful program here can work like our housing program worked in the past, which expanded and had good effects beyond our immediate neighborhood [through Millard Fuller's "Habitat for Humanity"]. So our challenge is "Dare to be different; choose to succeed." Our goal is to make a difference in the lives of our youth. We think we can do this by helping them stay in school through family crisis, being positive role models and most of all by helping them develop Christian and moral values.

In the coming years we hope that you will join us in this bold new effort in clearing a path and broadening the horizon to make the future of our youth filled with hope. Please join us in this effort to save our youth, the best investment we can make for the future of Koinonia and the rest of the world.

In a real sense the banner of hope that has been flying at Koinonia is now also flying in five groups that have grown out of Koinonia: Habitat for Humanity, building homes around the world; Jubilee Partners, in Comer, GA, ministering to refugees; and three which focus on ministering to prisoners and their families and on reform of the penal system: Ed and Mary Weir's New Hope House; Barry Burnside's Victim Offender Service, a ministry of the American Mennonite Fellowship; John Cole-Vodicka's Prison and Jail Project, a ministry of the Oakhurst Presbyterian Church in Decatur, GA.

The Partners here at Koinonia would like to invite you to join us as we continue to demonstrate compassionate life styles... Even though we continue to change and grow there are still other ministries and operations that must stay intact. We are concentrating on farming and the mail order business as major avenues to generate needed financial support to our ministries. Koinonia still endorses a vibrant volunteer program and we are seeking volunteers to work in many different aspects of Koinonia.

We extend an open invitation to visit Koinonia to experience community life-style. Accommodation can be made by simply calling us at (912) 924-0391 to make a reservation to be our guest. If a visit is not possible we would be more than happy if you would allow us the opportunity to send someone to speak to your church or community group concerning Koinonia and the mission and vision established by Clarence Jordan in 1942 which is still very much a part of Koinonia today.



## Book Reviews

*Rebuilding Community in America*, by Ken Norwood, AICP and Kathleen Smith; Shared Living Resource Center, Berkeley, CA; available from Community Service for \$24.50 plus \$3.00 S&H.

by Teni Bannick

This book is a must for anyone in the home design industry. It is even more so for anyone contemplating or looking to create or revitalize community. It should be required reading for anyone entering the city planning field or anyone in city government.

Norwood and Smith make a case for a way of life centered on community without isolation from the broader global context. There's much here that many of us have considered, or even attempted, with varying degrees of success and frustration. Norwood and Smith put it all in one accessible place and format. They make a very strong case for a newly realizable and sustainable American dream.

They offer no one way to accomplish it, but the constants modeled are cooperation, inclusion and commitment. This is not a book about utopia, although some very desirable descriptions may seem idyllic. It is an empowering tool for imagining an ecologically sustainable America, and that is a significant first step.

*Teni Bannick studies and practices ecologically sustainable design in Oxford, Ohio.*

*Communities Directory*, published by Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC); \$20 individual; \$30 institution, \$3.00 S&H.

The FIC, a network of communitarians promoting communication and understanding about and among intentional communities, proudly announces the release of its long-awaited new edition *Communities Directory* (ISBN: 0-9602714-3-0). It is now available for shipping from Community Service.

"It is the most comprehensive and accurate reference book ever published on community living," says Kirkpatrick Sale, author and bioregionalist.

This new edition is a 440-page 8 1/2" x 11" paper-back, sewn for long-wearing use. Using the same format as the best-selling first edition, the Directory lists 540 North American communities, plus 70 on other continents--making it far and away the largest, most comprehensive guidebook to communities ever produced.

It is easy to use, includes maps, cross-reference charts (alphabetical by community), and a large index for finding communities by areas of interest.

There are thirty-one articles covering various aspects and issues of cooperative living and an alternative resources and services section with over 250 listings.

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*Community Tools*, by A. Allen Butcher, Fourth World Services, Denver, CO; available from Community Service for \$8.00, postpaid.

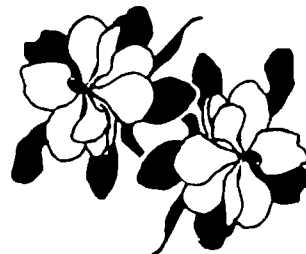
Allen Butcher has revised and expanded his former booklet by this title. The new edition is a collection of resources on communitarian values and history and contains useful references for those who are interested in designing or managing a community.

The references listed range from the idea and design of a community, to legal resources for incorporation to child care and education. Butcher also includes information on specific types of communities, such as gender specific or spiritual communities.

## Readers Write

### About Community Service Newsletter

Here is a copy of our book, *Non-Money*. We want to encourage group use of the book (as in study groups or neighborhood start-up committees). Keep up your good work on that newsletter. What Community Service is doing is needed now more than ever. *Olaf Egeberg, Takoma Park, MD*



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Notice to Members

Due to increased postage and weight of our Newsletter, the Post Office now charges us .50 for every Newsletter returned to us with a corrected address if you have moved or if you are temporarily away. Then we have to pay .52 to mail the Newsletter to you again first class.

We appreciate it if you can tell us of your change of address before the Post Office does. If we learn of your change of address after your membership has long expired, we will take your name off our membership list and put it on our general mailing list.

### Job Opening

Pleasant Valley School, Decorah, Iowa, is seeking an experienced primary school teacher for a multi-age (grades K-2) classroom. This is a small, pro-

gressive, independent school (ages 4-12) committed to child-centered learning, community building, and collaborative decision-making. The position is half-time, but may become full-time. A teaching certificate or its equivalent is required. We are looking for a teacher conversant with integrated whole language curricula, the arts, and conflict resolution techniques. If you are interested, send a current resume, a statement describing your philosophy of education, and names of three professional references to: Pleasant Valley School, 1591 Manawa Road, Decorah, Iowa 52101, phone: 319/382-0406.

### **Mondragon Cooperatives Spain Study Tour** November 3-13, 1995

Explore democratic worker ownership in a globalizing economy in Mondragon Spain and at other Spanish co-ops. Join with people from growing networks of North Americans concerned about the economic sustainability of our communities. Learn from the dynamism of the Mondragon cooperatives within the "Basque Social Economy" and of the challenges presented to its worker owners by the coming of the European Economic Community. Limited to 20 persons; \$2600 (participants meet in Madrid) Contact: Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center, 215 E. 14th St., Cincinnati, OH 45210 Tel:(513)579-8547, Fax:(513)579-0674.

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#### **Membership**

Membership is a means of supporting and sharing the work of Community Service. The Basic \$25 annual membership contribution includes a subscription to our quarterly Newsletter and 10% off Community Service-published literature. Larger contributions are always needed, however, and smaller ones will be gladly accepted. Community Service is a nonprofit corporation which depends on contributions and the sale of literature to fund its work so that it can offer its services to those who need them. All contributions are appreciated, needed and tax-deductible. Due to added postage costs, foreign membership, including Canada, is \$30 in U.S. currency.

#### **Have Your Friends Seen The Newsletter?**

Please send the names and addresses of your friends who might enjoy receiving a sample Newsletter and booklist. If you wish specific issues sent, please send \$1 per copy.

#### **Editor's Note**

We welcome letters to the editor (under 300 words) and articles (700-2000 words) about any notable communities or people who are improving the quality of life in their communities. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you wish the article returned. The only compensation we can offer is the satisfaction of seeing your words in print and knowing you have helped spread encouraging and/or educational information.

#### **Editor's Note #2**

We occasionally exchange our mailing list with a group with similar purposes, such as the Arthur Morgan School at Celo or Communities Magazine. If you do not wish us to give your name to anyone, please let us know.

#### **Address Change**

If there is an error on your mailing label, or you are moving, please send the old label and any corrections to us. It increases our cost greatly if the Post Office notifies us of moves, and you will not receive your newsletter promptly.

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*You can tell when **your** Community Service membership expires by looking at the month and year in the upper left corner of your **mailing** label. Please renew your membership if it has expired or will expire before 6/95. The annual **membership** contribution is \$25. We do not send individual reminders to renew.*

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