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Notable Quotes

"Every morning the kids wake up early and fly out the door to play with their friends. The TV is completely forgotten." - *Daniel, a resident of [Muir Commons](#), quoted in [Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach To Housing Ourselves](#) by Kathryn McCamant & Charles Durrett)*

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August 20, 2009

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Building a cohousing community means finding a million ways to answer a million questions. But there's only one way to answer the hardest question of all.
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Arielle shares some of what led her to cohousing as we debut a new feature of this newsletter - Exploring Member profiles.
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Our community is much bigger than it looks - there are "other nations" living among us.
- [Membership Information](#)
Current enrollments, levels of membership, and links to the membership area on our website.

Upcoming Events:

We're looking for players - no, not the jet-set kind of high rollers, but participants for a full scale Live Chess Game on Sunday, Sept. 13, from 2-4 pm at the Farmhouse on 45 Edgcomb Road. Live Chess uses 32 real people as chess pieces playing on a huge outdoor chess board 32 feet square. Ray Estabrook of The Game Loft characterizes the game as "Chess meets Worldwide Wrestling." It is fast, funny, and ferocious... and not to be missed! Chess players of all ages and abilities are welcome to join in the fun. Actual chess experience is irrelevant!

[Been to our website lately? Lots happening there!](#)

Envisioning Community - Barbara & Steve Chiasson



This past June, at the national cohousing conference in Seattle, we had the opportunity to visit several cohousing communities in the Puget Sound area. To get where they are today, the folks living there traveled the very path we find ourselves on now - "envisioning" their communities and gathering the resources to make them real. Asking and answering literally hundreds (if not thousands) of questions like: How many houses will there be? What will they look like? Where will they be situated? How will the grounds be landscaped? What kinds of spaces will there be in the common house?



Answers to these kinds of "nuts & bolts" questions aren't always easy to uncover, but at least they have forms we can visualize. We can list them and sketch them out. *Winslow Cohousing - Thirty units on five acres. Closely spaced. Individual and community gardens. Wise Acres Cooperative - Nine units on seventeen acres. More spread out. Many home-based businesses. A functioning CSA. Bartimaeus Cohousing - Twenty-five units on seven acres. Neatly cropped lawns with cement sidewalks. Spaces for "gathering" nodes.*

Ironically, the most important question we all ask ourselves - *How will my life be changed if I get involved with this?* - has no such concrete answer. The only way to find out for sure is to try it on for size. It's surprisingly simple to do that, and there's zero risk involved. Here's how...

Step 1: Do some research (the Resources page of our website is a good place to start). The more you inform yourself, the clearer it becomes that this way of living together is a really, really smart thing to do.

Step 2: Attend an Open House. Meet the folks. It doesn't cost you anything but an hour or so of your time, there's always something fun happening, and there's free food!

Step 3: Have a in-depth discussion with one or more of the current members outside the context of an open house. Ask the hard questions.

Step 4: Become an Exploring Member. You get to participate in the process and influence the decision-making. Even at this "entry level position," you're having an impact and helping to shape what the community will become. By the time your Exploring Membership expires in six months, you'll know, one way or the other, if Equity Membership is for you. Questions will certainly remain, but *you'll know...*



**Exploring Member Profile -
Arielle Greenberg Bywater**

Ever since I can remember, I've been fascinated by countercultures and subcultures. Watching the



documentary Woodstock on video twenty years after it took place was enough to reduce me to self-pitying, born-in-the-wrong-time tears. As the suburban kid of religious Jewish parents who were also sort of hippie ex-urbanites who also loved tent camping (and took me to Acadia when I was still in diapers), I was brought up in a wealth of interesting dichotomies, and have always been most at home outside the mainstream culture.

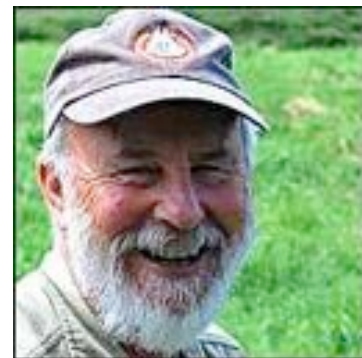
Now that I have a family of my own, I am constantly thinking of how best to live a life that reflects my values and satisfies my desires - which, like my childhood, are full of dichotomies. I want quiet (I write poems) and fellowship (I'm pretty outgoing, especially for a poet). Interdependence and independence. Simplicity and challenge. Freedom and responsibility. Like many people I know, I am striving to live a slower, greener life, but don't have the skill-set or time to homestead - and don't want to spend one more second in a car than I have to. I love pedestrian-friendly, in-town living - heck, I love big-city living! - except when it feels crowded and noisy and unfriendly. I want a life that is affordable, sustainable, and connected to the seasons, the landscape, and the people around me in deep and meaningful ways. Oh, and I want community with like-minded souls who will teach and inspire and enrich me. It's not too much to ask, is it?

It could be, except, thank goodness, there's this cohousing group. To me, cohousing offers both a very old-fashioned, wholesome vision - kids running through the grass in wild packs! Baking chocolate-chip cookies for sixty people! Car pools! - and a genuinely radical experiment in living, one which offers a downright revolutionary antidote to many of our accepted but misguided American notions about house and home. Even what worries me about cohousing - how I think I would have to learn to be a better listener; how I would be forced to own less and share more; how, as a parent, I might not know where my children were every minute of the day - excites me, because I can see how much I'd benefit from those lessons. And that idea, of a life that is at once more low-key and more challenging than my current condo-unit existence, is just one more dichotomy that feels right on.

Changing Seasons - Mike Shannon

Summer and Autumn, Winter, Spring
Each season of the varied year,
Doth each for us a lesson bring,
If we but turn the listening ear.

- Jones Very, from "Nature Intelligible"



As our cohousing project continues to develop and evolve, let us not forget the kindred spirits who will share this landscape with us. Getting to know and understand the lifestyles of these Other Nations will help keep us in touch with the wildness and significance of this place. A world without wildness would of course be a diminished world for humans. Let us honor these kindred spirits by getting to know them... the crawling people, the flying people, the swimming people.

Early fall is fast approaching. A monarch butterfly drifts through a field of goldenrod. Its course seems random and erratic. Coming to the edge of the field it rises and disappears over the horizon, one participant in the ongoing ebb and flow of life.

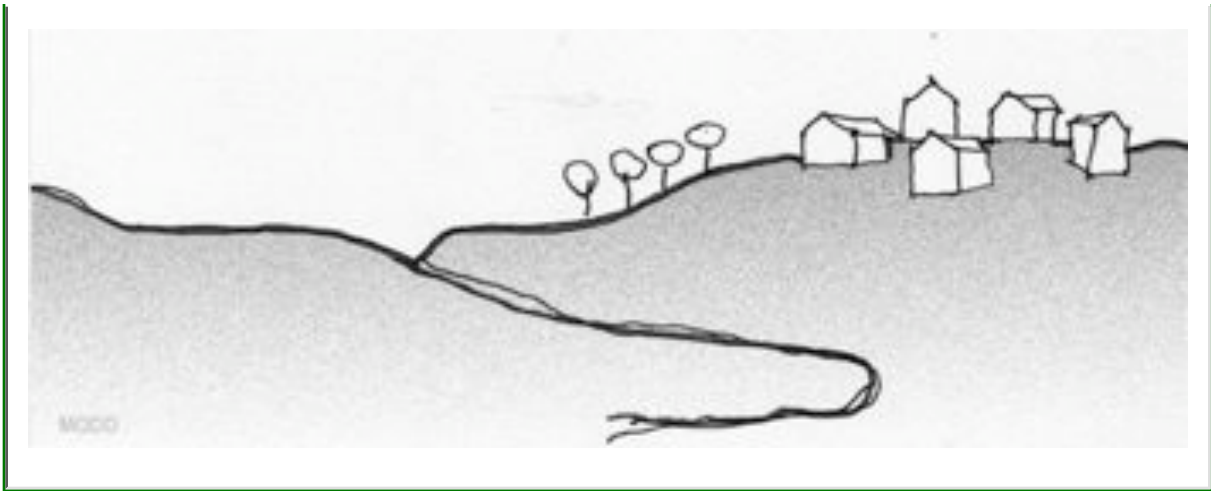
The migration of animals is part of this ebb and flow. It is a widespread phenomenon throughout the animal kingdom. Migrations, such as the monarch's, speak of time, place, sex, birth, death, changing seasons and the demands of survival. For thousands of years humans have marveled at the seasonal appearance and disappearance of living things. The rich folk traditions that once tried to explain the mysteries of migration have today been replaced by involved citizen-science and scientific inquiry. In the midst of our personal lives, in whatever else goes on around us, we remain in awe and are captivated by these seasonal events.

Membership Information

Equity Members are those households who have already committed to purchasing a home in the community. There are currently fourteen of a projected thirty-six Equity members. Exploring Members are those households who have an interest in becoming Equity Members, but are not yet ready to fully commit. There are currently fourteen Exploring members. Friends are those who are interested in our project, but are not members. There are well over four hundred friends receiving our eNewsletter. See the [Membership](#) section of our website for further details.

Our Mission

To be a model environmentally sustainable, affordable, multi-generational cohousing community that is easily accessible to Belfast, includes land for agricultural use and open space, and is an innovative housing development option for rural Maine.



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