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News of the Oaks

by Valerie

50th Anniversary: Twin Oaks just marked its 50th Anniversary with a commune-sized celebration welcoming over 350 ex-members back to reminisce and catch up on each others' lives. Highlights included our in-house dance band performing one song for each year we've been here for an epic 50-song set, and also one of the original founders returning to tell the story of how it all came to be. More news to come in the next issue.

Pop Culture on the Commune: We name all of our vehicles and we now have our first van with a name from Harry Potter. Our new black 15-seat van is called the Night Bus (or is it Knight Bus? Many debates ensued; we think possibly it was spelled differently in the British and American versions of the book). Also, our main Easter celebration included the second annual Jesus Christ Superstar sing-a-long! And some people went to our local progressive country church for their annual Easter Egg Hunt.



Photo of the Night Bus

Twin Oaks in the News: In the last few months, we've been featured in numerous print and online publications including Friends Journal (Quaker), Lesbian Connection, Sagewoman (Pagan), Richmond Magazine, and we had a BBC film crew here for a day featuring us in documentary about Utopias, which will air later this summer.

On the Internet: Congratulations to the Commune Life Blog on it's one-year anniversary! <https://communelifeblog.wordpress.com/> (MAKE THIS LINK to the name Commune Life Blog). It's focus is life in contemporary income-sharing, egalitarian communities, significantly but not limited to the communes of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities, of which we are a member. Twin Oaks is regularly featured on the blog.



Commune Dads Blog by Keegan



Two Dads And Their Babies

Almost nobody cares about philosophy, but people love babies.

adder and I, being huge nerds and new parents, routinely found ourselves staying up late, passionately engaged in rambling discussions on the intersections of parenting, philosophy, and science. It eventually struck adder that this format was ideal for a podcast: good friends with good rapport discussing a topic of common interest in a unique setting. Microphones were purchased and Commune Dads (<http://www.communedads.com>) was born.

So far adder has been the mastermind behind most episodes. He listens to a few other parenting podcasts (Mom and Dad are Fighting is his favorite), and keeps an eye out for articles or research of interest. Major topics so far have included sharing, grandparents, and technology use, and we're excited to do future episodes with our coparents as guests to discuss feminism and homebirths.

It's been a remarkably successful show so far -- our audience is mostly still friends/family, but that network is fairly large since we live on a commune. We tend to get interesting feedback almost every episode: a listener's question about our veganism provoked a lengthy discussion about values and child autonomy, a fellow communitarian said that she was reconsidering her computer use in light of our tech episode, and adder's mother gently chastised us about our grandparent episode.

We release a new episode every other Friday, so if meandering conversations about diaper rash and commune life are your thing, give us a listen.



“Let’s Do The Numbers”

by adder

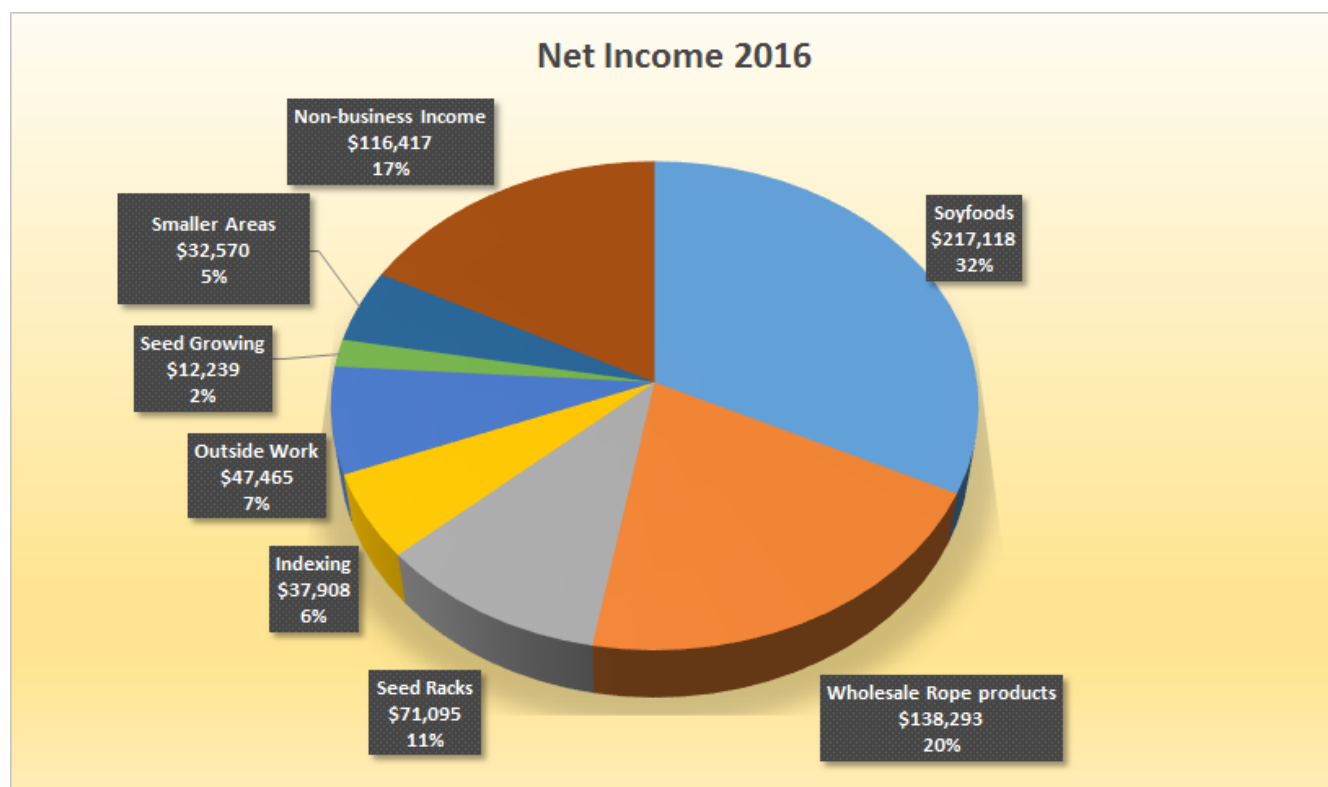
From where does Twin Oaks money come, and where does it go? As the economy of Twin Oaks grows more and more diverse, this becomes a trickier question to answer. We support a lot of different projects here, and have quite a few ventures bringing in the money needed to fund those projects.

Income: The question of where our money came from used to be easy to answer: the hammocks business brought in the vast majority of it. When Pier 1 dropped Twin Oaks as a customer in 2005, we had to invest our time, money, and other energy into other income work. Now the hammocks business represents only 20% of the community income. The soyfoods business, now producing tofu, tempeh, and vegetarian sausage, was quite small at the time. But it was poised to grow and it grew by leaps and bounds. Now it is our largest business, but it does not dominate our economy the way hammocks once did. Together, soyfoods and hammocks still make up only half our income. The rest has been picked up by smaller areas, new and old.

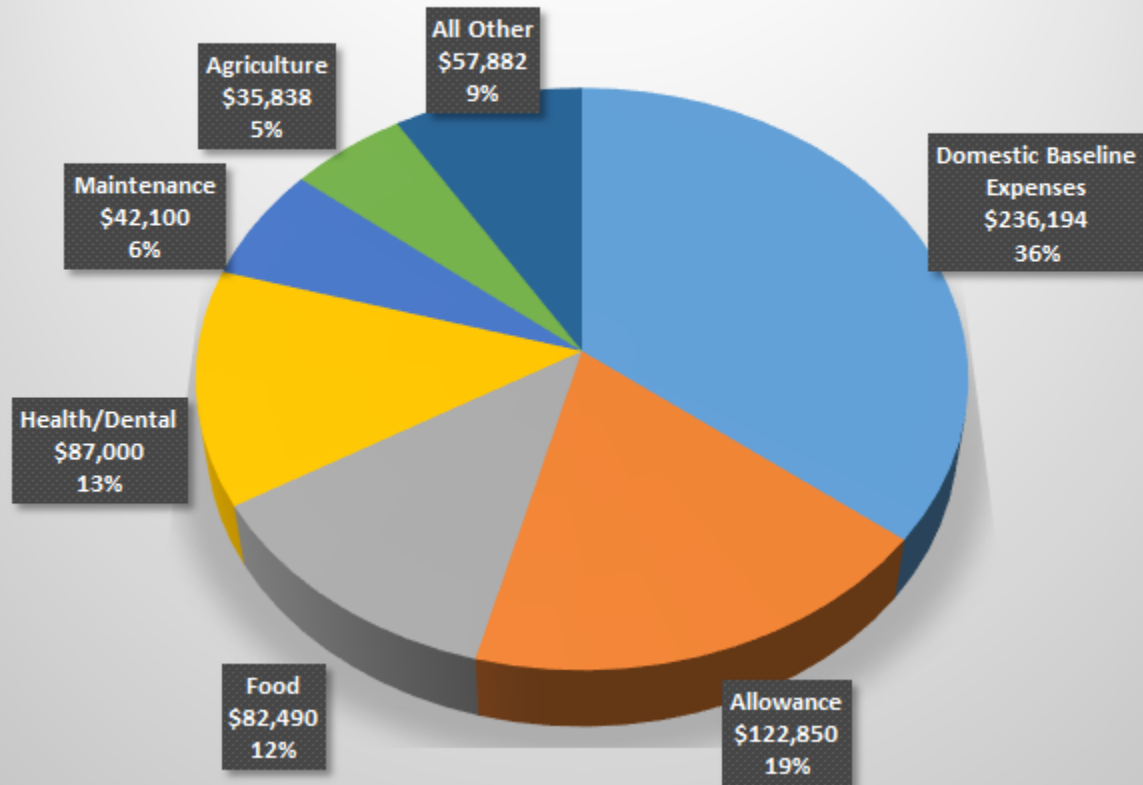
To determine how much income we have available to spend, we subtract certain baseline expenses from a given year's income and make that much available for domestic budgets the following year. So the net income from 2016 is accounted for in the 2016 baseline expenses, coupled with the 2017 domestic budgets. Baseline expenses include a variety of necessary expenses that are hard to set firm budgets for: energy, community vehicle use, insurance, taxes, and so on.

Expenses: The greatest single expense area is allowance: 18%, of community income goes to individuals' \$100/month allowance. Food and health are the next biggest, with various baseline expenses, maintenance, and farm-related areas following up. On the charts, most areas are not even listed by name: most have budgets less than \$5,000. There are over 50 of these areas. In so many of them, a little bit goes a long way. With a few hundred to a few thousand dollars in each area (and a lot of hard work), we can keep our kitchens clean, keep our yards beautiful, fund activism, educate our children, maintain our offices, and so much more.

Twin Oaks has a lot going on. Day to day, it is hard to fully appreciate all the different jobs people are doing to take care of the community, let alone keep the perspective of where our resources go. Taking a look at the numbers can shed valuable light on our community.



Spending of 2016 Income (domestic baseline '16 + budgets '17)



Upcoming Events

Twin Oaks Queer Gathering



≈Join us August 4-6, 2017 for a weekend of queertranstastic fun, learning, workshops, networking, revelry, and more! This is our first year hosting the Queer Gathering at Twin Oaks Community in rural central Virginia, and we invite you to come participate as an attendee, workshop presenter, and/or performer. The gathering will be a safe and supportive camping event for queer folks and allies of all ages to come together, skill share, make art, build community, dance, and organize.
<http://twinoaksqueergathering.org> Is there something you'd like to see happen? Email us at queergathering@twinoaks.org and let us know!

Twin Oaks Communities Conference



Communities Conference

Join us Sept 1 - 4, 2017 for a weekend of workshops, community-building and culture creation! Learn about intentional communities from cohousing and co-ops to communes and ecovillages. We'll explore issues such as group-decision making, diversity in community, intentional relationships and sustainable living. In addition to structured workshops and sharing circles, there will be plenty of time to network, swap stories and play together at beautiful Twin Oaks Community. Registration fees include food and tent space or indoor accommodations (additional fees for indoor). Held Labor Day Weekend, we welcome both community seekers and members. <http://communitiesconference.org/>

