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News of the Oaks

by Valerie



In our Covid-safe commune, the first spring-like weather inspired some moments of fun at an outdoor lunch table.

Welcome back to the Leaves! We've celebrated several **holidays** since the last Leaves went out. Late 2020 marked 40 years since our residence Tupelo was built, so we had a combo Halloween / "Tupeversary" celebration with many creative costumes and a dance party in Tupelo's spacious, commune-sized living room. New Year's was a quiet affair with no outside guests—we are basically one giant bubble, as we are in an on-going community-wide lockdown quarantine. And Validation Day, our alternative to Valentine's Day in which all people are validated, not just those in relationships, was more appreciated than ever this year.

In other **pandemic-related news**, several of our oldest members have been vaccinated, for which we and they are very grateful. We also created a "bubble within our bubble" when we set aside one section of one residence so that midwives could come from off-the-farm and assist with the birth of our newest commund Xena Cyrus Phoenix

Baby, moms, and birth team then all quarantined within those rooms for 2 weeks. We felt like 1950s dads looking through the window at this beautiful newborn, and we were glad to be able to finally hold Xena after they all safely emerged. Also, we've begun offering limited, experimental Visitor Periods, using various safety protocols. We look forward to a time when, as the vaccine becomes prevalent, we'll return to a more normal Visitor Program.



In news of our **collective businesses**, Seed Racks (packing and shipping wholesale organic heirloom seeds for our sister community [Acorn's SESE](#)) has been booming this year as more people than ever are planning home gardens for this spring. This somewhat offsets the loss of income from our tofu business, as we suspended production of tofu for several months due to various pandemic-related reasons. Our Tofu Management Team is preparing to start up again soon. And happily, our new tofu waste-water ponds are now complete; they will take the whey by-products that come from the production of tofu, process them and transform them into nutrient-rich liquid that will fertilize the hayfields for our cows.

We offered our annual Art Walk and Craft Bazaar in the autumn, and posted photos of members' artistic offerings on our social media pages ([Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#)) where you can follow ongoing happenings in the life of our income-sharing, egalitarian community.

A Community of Communities

by Valerie



Photo (clockwise from top left): Acorn, Cambia, LEF, Little Flower (Catholic Worker logo).

If variety is the spice of life, then life is good for community living in Louisa. In addition to Twin Oaks, there are several other intentional communities in the county.

How did these all arise? In early 1967, a supporter of the ideas of Twin Oaks donated the land we now live on—that is why we are located here. In the early 90s, we helped found Acorn, as a way of providing a communal living option for the 25 people on our Waiting List. In 2010, two ex-members founded Living Energy Farm, a fossil-fuel-free farm and community. And within the last 5 years, Cambia has sprung up nearby as well. We're also connected with Little Flower, a Catholic Worker community that offers radical hospitality and does various anti-poverty, anti-military and anti-oppression activism. All of these communities are within 10 miles of us, and it makes for a great "community of communities".

The advantages of this inter-connected network are many. Most of the other communities chose to settle here due to proximity to Twin Oaks, in order to take advantage of the social and skill-sharing abilities due to that closeness.

We collectively engage in various cooperative activities, including both work and play. If one community needs a skilled person such as a conflict resolution facilitator, or someone with experience repairing a broken well-pump, they need only look as far as the next community over. In this way we provide mutual aid. We share the work of Acorn's Southern Exposure Seed Exchange business. We have developed a Labour Exchange Program amongst all the communities. It can be fun to spend time working at another community and sometimes very helpful to take a break from one's home community, for example following a relationship break-up or similar community stress.

This broader network also provides a larger social pool and increased options for inter-community friendships and relationships. One family was "bi-community" for a few years and eventually settled into the one community that they decided fit them both best. On major community holidays, we provide communal shuttles and send people back-and-forth, so we can celebrate with each other without each person having to take their own vehicle.

And when it comes to membership, each community has its own unique commune "flavor." If a given visitor interested in communal living isn't quite the right fit for one community, there are several similar-but-just-different-enough options nearby. It's also not uncommon for members to move back and forth between communities either as dual-members, or, if they realize they are better suited to another commune, to make a more permanent move over to that one, while still maintaining their existing friendships and connections.

We know that diversity is strength and we are grateful for these diverse communities that share this piece of earth with us.

Twin Oaks: An income-sharing, egalitarian ecovillage of 100 people supporting themselves on 500 acres.

Acorn: A consensus-based community sharing income generated from the sale of heirloom seeds.

Cambia: Focused on co-creating a culture of social sustainability and harmony that nourishes us as well as the earth.

Living Energy Farm: (LEF) A zero-fossil-fuel education center developing sustainable technologies that are accessible to all, regardless of income.

Little Flower: A [Catholic Worker](#) homestead that practices hospitality and does resistance work around issues of militarism and social injustice.

Not A Twin Oaks POC

by Tomas Andres, aka Flinch of Twin Oaks

It didn't matter that I was foreign born of parents who were foreign born, my family being from south of the border and of the race that prevails there. It didn't matter that I came here not speaking English. It didn't matter how much I've been called by racist slurs while growing up and in adulthood by blacks as well as whites. What mattered to the one who confronted me, who claimed to speak for BLM (which mostly meant for a few other political fanatics who were also here at the time but wouldn't speak with me), was that I wasn't dark enough, that I speak & act "white," that if I can "pass" for white then that's what I am. I was told that community POC were displeased that I'd been speaking out as a POC. I had publicly stated that I hadn't felt any racism living at Twin Oaks, and I'd also spoken in defense of a friend that they didn't like. So the self-styled official POC of the community and their allies decided what I am and am not, in denial of my life experience.

I wish that politics at Twin Oaks was treated more like the way religion is. There is no one single official religion here. No member or group, no matter how influential, can tell anyone else what church they must belong to or which god to worship. Not only that, here no single deity or spiritual faith, no matter how popular, is held as above and beyond question and criticism, as befits an organization committed to diversity and unconventional lifestyle. Nevertheless, different political waves here have tried to silence any voice divergent from theirs, and that's what the current one is trying to do. As ever, it's done with much zeal and popular support, but that's never been what makes something right, no matter how much conviction the believers feel. Why would you want to enforce one single political viewpoint, as if we didn't already know from history exactly what sort of people do that?

Twin Oaks was originally founded as a behaviorist attempt at utopia but soon changed because most of the founders left and were replaced by new members with other ideas about community. Ideals, be they political or religious, express values, what matters to you personally. One of my ideals is that no one should force their values on another, no one should have to conform to another person's beliefs, but that's a surprisingly unpopular ideal here at Twin Oaks, a community of idealists.