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Our big project these days is transforming the space that served as our Hammock Shop for many years into our new Seed Rax Offices. Since the fire last March spelled the end of the Hammocks business, we have put renewed energy into our Seed Rax business, the wholesale arm of Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, the [heirloom, organic seed business](#) owned by our sister community Acorn. The space is being renovated with new flooring, walls, and spaces for sales and marketing work (see the Seed Business Trade Show article below), seed storage, packing seeds, boxing and shipping and other needs.



Hammocks to Seeds

People are excited to move into the new work-space, which will be more centrally-located in the community.

In other business news, our Tofu business has transitioned out of the worker-owned co-op model that had been adopted during 2024 and once again Twin Oaks is making tofu as a community business. We're also continuing to develop several new community businesses, including textiles, ceramics, online education and potentially a new video game.

One of our talented fiber artists here just premiered their latest work. Ari sewed this art quilt that depicts a view of one of our buildings, complete with small details such as the laundry rack for drying clothes, the solar panels on the roof, and the fig bushes in the yard. They also featured a number of their other works hung up temporarily and we had our own little art opening evening event.



One of our members, Adder, made the choice to donate a kidney to a stranger. A couple of months after the operation, Adder traveled to Washington DC to meet the recipient in person.



Erik (left, recipient), Adder (right, donor)

A group of Oakers have been meeting for weekly mindfulness practice. Each week there is a meditation session, followed by a reading (from various Buddhist practitioners and authors) and dharma-sharing, where people present can share what they have taken from the sit or from the reading. There was also a meditation class to introduce these practices to members who are new to them.

And it is the time of year when we create our twist on Valentine's Day. We choose to celebrate "Validation Day", as we believe all people are deserving of extra love, not just those in relationships. We hand-make a card for each member and people can write affirming and caring messages to each person. We hand them out at dinner on Validation Day and complete the day with a dance party that night. We also have the "Creatures Game", in which members can express various types of interest in each other eg. Ants—I'd like to have a work date with you, Cats—I'd like to cuddle with you, etc. This is an opt-in activity, so allows members the amount of privacy or connection they would like.

“If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want To Be In Your Revolution” by Miles



One of my favorite things about Twin Oaks is the free experimentation that is possible in a supportive affirming environment.

Before joining this community, I never really considered myself to be a “dancer” at all, because I had always felt too self conscious, uncoordinated and awkward.

However, thanks to several of my friends in the Twin Oaks Dance Crew, I was able to overcome some of my own insecurities and self-limiting beliefs about what I was capable of. The Twin Oaks Dance Crew were very kind and patient with me, and even let me pick the song that we would dance to. I picked a song called “Nails, Hair, Hips, Heels” by one of my favorite artists, the Queer Black icon Todrick Hall.

Not only was I able to learn this relatively challenging choreography dance (and have a lot of fun doing it), but I was also able to perform the dance on stage with the rest of the crew at our county's local talent show “Louisa's Got Talent” (I'm the one in red)

https://youtu.be/-8Xm_RvLexg

Even though we didn't win, and even though there definitely were certain moves that I could have performed better on stage, I'm still overall very happy and satisfied with how the performance went. I'm actually still surprised that I was

even able to do such a thing at all, and I really feel like this experience has increased my confidence and my willingness to put myself out there in ways that I used to find intimidating.

I mentioned that the artist whose song we danced to is considered to be an icon in the queer Black community. This is an important detail to highlight given the political situation in the United States right now, where both queerness and Blackness are so explicitly under attack by a hostile government.

Our resistance to fascism will need to take many different forms, a diversity of tactics will always be our strength. One such tactic is to share love and express joy in spite of all the rising hate in this country. So, there is another dimension to my public participation in such a visible event, in a small rural town, as a queer Black person resisting those who would wish that people like me didn't exist. I see this as a way of maintaining hope and revolutionary optimism that we will never be erased. Of course, there are many other forms of resistance to fascism that are necessary as well, which I am also participating in... However, to paraphrase one of Twin Oaks' favorite historical anarchists Emma Goldman, who, when rebuked by one of her comrades for her love of dancing (as it was considered unbecoming for someone promoting the anarchist cause at that time period), she responded with:

“If I can't dance, I don't want to be in your revolution!”

Seed Business Trade Show by Erin

I recently attended two trade shows representing Southern Exposure Seed Exchange (SESE), a business owned by our sister community, Acorn. Twin Oaks manages the wholesale side of the operation. Trade shows provide us a space to cultivate partnerships with garden centers, nurseries, and stores potentially interested in carrying SESE seed racks.

This communal business requires labor in every aspect, such as gardening, seed processing, packing, shipping, and sales. When I moved here in November, I didn't picture myself at a trade show booth but I feel drawn to do work that contributes to our community's needed income and I appreciate the variety of that labor. At present, SESE is our main source of income.



Zi and Erin strike a pose at the trade show, Zoe at background left

Our journey to the first show began with an unexpected challenge. We got in the van excited to go, but found it was stuck where parked in the frisbee field. One of the many great things about communal living is knowing help will arrive. River showed up on a tractor to pull us out, while our neighbor met us with mugs, tea bags, and a kettle of hot water. It was quite a pleasant experience waiting for a vehicle to be freed from the snow.

At the trade shows, it was fun to meet existing customers and hear their positive experiences selling and planting SESE seeds. It felt good to connect with new people interested in what makes SESE unique—as a worker’s cooperative

partnering with local farmers who steward and save high-quality, open-pollinated, heirloom, organic seeds. Many attendees appreciated the idea of investing in locally grown seeds they and their customers could continue to save. I learned a lot from these conversations and appreciated how in-person interactions fostered authenticity without having to feel overly “salesy.” It was motivating to witness that our passion for gardening and seed saving made a lasting impression. In fact, attendees from previous years fondly remembered us as “the freaky seed people,” known not just for seeds, but also for our dance moves. We hoped for a dance-off with other vendors, but maybe next year!

I left feeling empowered to take on new responsibility and was grateful for the opportunity to bond with my cos. Yet, being away was slightly destabilizing and the experience sparked an unexpected longing to return home, something I hadn't felt before moving to Twin Oaks. My small living group, Tupelo, isn't just home to me and seventeen others, ages 3 to 72; it also serves as a key space for the seed racks business (at least until it relocates to the former hammocks shop). I returned feeling happy about the connections we made and was welcomed home by lovely drawings from the five-year-old next door before retreating to my room to recharge.