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NEWS OF THE OAKS

by Valerie

We want to give a big Thank You to our sister community East Wind (in Missouri) for sending out their resident butcher and a crew of people to help us with our meat processing this winter. We learned some new butchering techniques and have been able to eat more of the beef cows we raise here as a result.

MUSIC NEWS:

Reynaldo has been hosting monthly Open Mic Nights, and members have been sharing their talents including a song signed in American Sign Language, a fictional alternative-reality political radio broadcast written and read by Sky, and a song from the upcoming musical one of our members is writing about Twin Oaks—this song was about tofu, and very cleverly and dramatically performed by Summer and Rowan (Rowan grew up here eating—or not eating—tofu, and is now 20).

Also Trout has started a Saturday morning Kids and Adults Sing-Along, primarily for kids 5 and under, but everyone is welcome and they've been singing up a storm.

PEOPLE NEWS:

After an uncharacteristic lull in our member-



ROOF REPAIR-PEOPLE AT WORK



PHOTOS OF WOMEN'S MARCH IN DC BY AMY

ship (we ran through the Waiting List and actually had openings for new members for the first time in several years), we now have a crop of ten new members who are doing a great job stepping into some of the empty shoes here. We're back at Pop Cap with a Waiting List again, more in the Flow than the Ebb once again.

And several van-fulls of people headed up to DC for the Women's March in late January. As an entity, the community is apolitical, but many members participate in social justice activities as their own individual selves.

INFRASTRUCTURE NEWS:

Our lone original building on the property (dating originally from the 1940's) has been getting an external and internal face-lift. We're putting on a new roof, and refinishing the walls and floor in one of the main offices inside.

Dueling Social Calendars: Sometimes it's hard to choose—recently on a single evening, we had a guest presenting a "Gender Theater" performance, a talk and brainstorming session on Sustainability at Twin Oaks, and those both happened on our



PURL'S HAND-CRAFTED CHAIRS

Purl (Sean Samohey) has lived at Twin Oaks for 15 years. One job he does here is build chairs by hand for use in our kitchens and living rooms, and for sale to the general public. The money he earns from this work is part of how the community supports itself, and this is a good example of how people can integrate their personal interests and skills into the fabric of community life.

How did you start hand-crafting chairs for Twin Oaks?



WINDSOR CHAIR MADE BY PURL

I was already making chairs for the community in 2008, when there was a power outage, and I got inspired to continue working by hand, with no power tools. I have a small workshop here that is tiny and quaint and full of hand-tools and projects-in-process. I have a strong value of producing for ourselves what we use in our daily living. I value making things using a smaller carbon footprint, by using hand-tools (some power tools too) and using locally- and



ROCKING CHAIR UNDER CONSTRUCTION

sustainably-harvested wood, including oak, walnut, poplar and hickory. I often use milk paint for color and tung oil and paste wax for the finish.

What kind of chairs do you make?

I make a lot of Windsor-style chairs, some ladder-backs, and sometimes related furniture like rocking chairs, stools, and occasionally a table. I've learned a lot from my teachers, including Peter Galbert, Elia Bizzarri, Curtis Buchanan, and Harvey Baker at Dunmire Hollow community for building tables.

One fun chair I made is for my daughter, who is now 8. I made it when she was 5, and I intentionally constructed it with extra long-legs. Every year, as she grows a little taller, we cut an inch or two off the bottom of the legs, so it's again the right height for her to use sitting about our kitchen table.

Where are the chairs featured and how do people find them to purchase them?

I demonstrate hand-crafted chair-making at various events. I was a FolkLife Fellow Master Chair Maker with The Virginia FolkLife Festival, I've done displays at the Heritage Harvest Festival at Monticello, at our regional Field Days of the Past, and I've sold at the Charlottesville Farmer's Market. I participated in Francis Cape's woodworking



LONG ROCKER WITH ROOM FOR BABY TO LIE DOWN AND ADULT TO SIT. THE PROTECTIVE BARS IN FRONT ARE REMOVABLE

FEMINIST THINK TANK: PAST AND FUTURE

by Stephan Nashoba

The Feminist Think Tank (FTT) group at Twin Oaks began in fall of 2015 in response to concerns about inter-community boundary-crossing issues. It's gone through some changes since then and has recently re-formed. Originally, our Process Team was tasked with looking at the Sexual Assault and Harassment Response Policy and organized a focus group meeting of women to help guide the process. This group continued to meet and ended up discussing all sorts of feminist issues at Twin Oaks, gradually inviting some gender-non-conforming folks and men to attend every other meeting. Over time, the group became more focused on events and activism in the community.

In our first year, we accomplished many things:

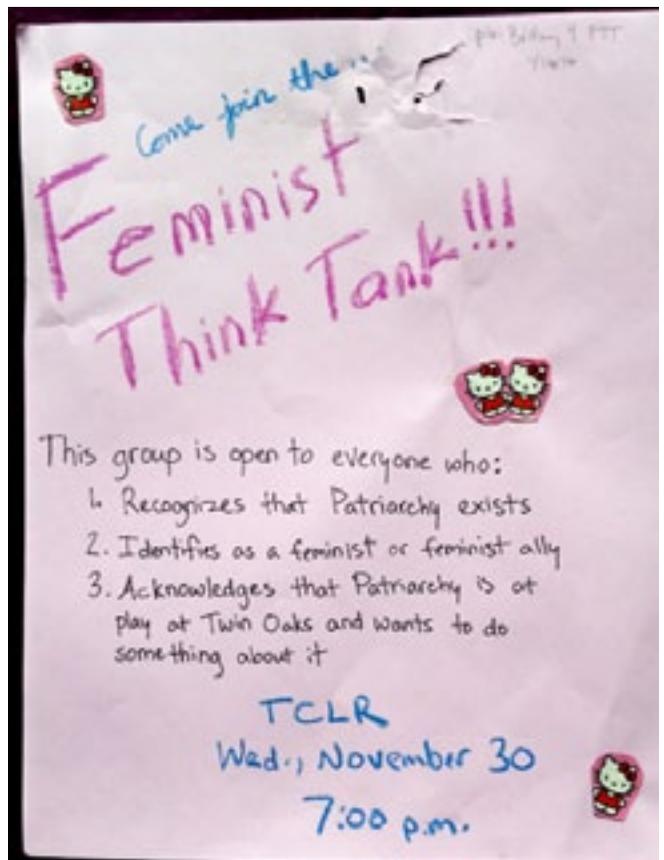
- Movie showing

PURL (Continued)

art project in which benches from historical and contemporary intentional communities were re-constructed and featured in his book "We Sit Together: Utopian Benches" and at a gallery in NYC. I also often connect with people, either other artists or people who are interested in my work, on social media and by word-of-mouth.

What are your ideas for the future?

I want to continue making chairs for people to use in their everyday lives. I've worked



- Play reading
- Two consent workshops
- Feminist dance party
- Feminist creek walk
- Reviving monthly Women's Tea for female visitors



Feminist Think Tank (Continued)

- Two men's meetings
- Women's (and mixed) tool-using workshops
- Introducing the Values Oreo to the visitor program
- Supporting racial justice at the women's gathering
- Supporting the "Visiting our Visions" program
- Supporting the Zine Discussion group
- Publishing an article in Geez magazine about living and working together in community despite having differing individual philosophies of Feminism
- Sparking conversations with other communards
- FTT e-mail list to share additional resources, articles, etc
- Bringing together folks from different social circles
- Helping to increase focus on the Bylaws on a community-wide scale

As with many regular meetings at Twin Oaks, the original group dwindled in attendance over time due to a variety of reasons (people leaving the community, scheduling conflicts, general attrition, interpersonal conflicts, political differences, etc) and so we decided to revamp the group this past fall 2016. The new incarnation of FTT now meets every two weeks and is open to anyone of any gender who:

1. Acknowledges the patriarchy exists



2. Identifies as a feminist or feminist ally, and

3. Recognizes that patriarchy is at play at Twin Oaks and wants to do something about it

Since re-forming the group, we've organized another two consent workshops prior to the 2017 New Year's Eve party, designed and distributed fingerbooks about consent expectations for the New Year's Eve party, had several folks participate in the Women's March on Washington, and have continued to discuss our Sexual Assault and Harassment Response Policy.

Ideas we have for the future include a Consent Tea Party, consent fingerbook for Validation Day, increasing men's support around the Women's Gathering, more feminism 101 programming and educational opportunities, better bridging of issues between Twin Oaks and the outside world, doing more outside activism in order to gain connections and resources, re-inserting Twin Oaks into radical circles, dealing with the perception gap between how men and women see feminism at Twin Oaks, a feminist discussion group, and more. While Twin Oaks is certainly less sexist than mainstream society, we're definitely "not utopia yet" and need to continuously strive to improve our culture at Twin Oaks and the world at large.