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News of the Oaks

Epic Changes. According to Twin Oaks legend, the **reason we are named “Twin Oaks”** is that way back in 1967 the founders were sitting around trying to decide what to call the community. Everyone had their own clever idea and the group couldn’t agree. Then supposedly one person said, “Look over there, there’s a huge double-trunked tree right beside the main building, we could call ourselves “Twin Oaks”, and in true commune fashion, that was the only name that everyone could agree on, and thus we came into being. As with most legends, it’s difficult to say where the truth lies, but the next chapter of that legend unfolded this winter, when a mammoth storm knocked over the apocryphal, eponymous twin oak tree.

No-one was hurt although it did land on and crush the courtyard kitchen. It was one of the original buildings from 1967, and actually if we had to choose any building to get destroyed and need a renovation, it would be a pretty good choice. A few months on, work is nearing completion. We also took the opportunity to move Milk Processing (where we make cheese and yogurt) which

had previously been housed there, out to the Dairy Barn, so less transportation of milk is needed.



Photo shows fallen tree and then renovations in progress.

We Do Art. Summer hosted our annual **Art Walk**, with a number of members showing their work including collages, stuffed animals, drawings/paintings, and a musical performance.

We Do Business. We sent members to two different **trade shows for Organic Seeds** this winter, which garnered many new sales for our Seeds Business. Unfortunately one of our (vaccinated) members contracted covid there, the first time we've had a member get covid. He did not have a bad case, he recovered and quarantined off-site and came home healthy.

We Do Politics/Culture.

- We have several working groups **addressing racial justice issues** at Twin Oaks, working on projects such as anti-racist study/action groups for members (using "Me And White Supremacy" and "The Token"), creating a BIPOC Community Access policy, creating a racial justice orientation for

incoming visitors, incorporating anti-racist education in our homeschooling, and more. Several visitors have used our BIPOC Travel Fund that we created last year.

- We've continued our long communal historical celebration of **Validation Day**, our alternative holiday on February 14th, in which all people are validated and appreciated, not just ones in relationships.
- **Ira**, a longtime Oaker and Acorner, was inducted into the NASCO North American Students of Cooperation Hall of Fame nasco.coop a network of co-ops across the US and Canada, for her work founding Acorn and other egalitarian communities, her work with Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, her activism as a board member of the Organic Seed Alliance seedalliance.org and founder of the Heritage Harvest Festival heritageharvestfestival.com

We Do Science? We had several public “experiments” involving putting Mentos™ in a full bottle of cola, shaking it up, and watching the ensuing huge, 15-foot-high explosion in the yard. Home-schooling at it's finest.....

Serenity Food Sovereignty Festival

June 24 – June 26 2022

Organized by Serenity Community and Ujamaa Farming Alliance

Located at the Twin Oaks Conference Site



Twin Oaks is happy to be hosting a BIPOC-centric Food Festival at the Twin Oaks Conference Site <https://facebook.com/events/s/serenity-ujamaa-bipoc-vegan-fe/1032156120842469/>

The organizers of this event tried in 2021 to hold this gathering, but pandemic safety concerns canceled it. With a bit of luck, this year will be different and we will have a BIPOC-centric Food Festival that will include camping, childcare during workshops, performances from BIPOC musicians and artists, and more!

Info Sessions will include:

- Workshops specializing in foods which celebrate BIPOC heritage and culture from this region and beyond
- Workshops on mutual aid, communal living, food sovereignty, and activism

- Capoeira demonstration by Macaco of Liberation Arts
- Workshop on "Spirituality of the Soil" by Micheal Carter, Jr. of Carter Farms in Fredericksburg, VA

Vaccinated participants can pay on a sliding scale at this eventbrite link:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/serenity-ujamaa-bipoc-vegan-festival-tickets-269969966437>

But what if I am not a BIPOC person? White people who understand what it means to be an ally to BIPOC, and come to a BIPOC-centric event in a respectful manner, are welcome. What that means is the event is designed primarily to serve the BIPOC community and present it's culture. White allies wishing to attend should be more focused on listening and supporting our causes. For example, if you as a white ally attend a workshop, it would be good to hold off on your questions and comments until all the BIPOC participants have asked their questions and made their comments. Recognize that this means sometimes your questions won't get answered because there is not enough time.

Over a dozen Oakers are helping with social media, site preparation, cooking, child care, and logistics. Learn more about Serenity Community for Justice and Peace, our new neighbors! by contacting them at Serenitycmt@gmail.com

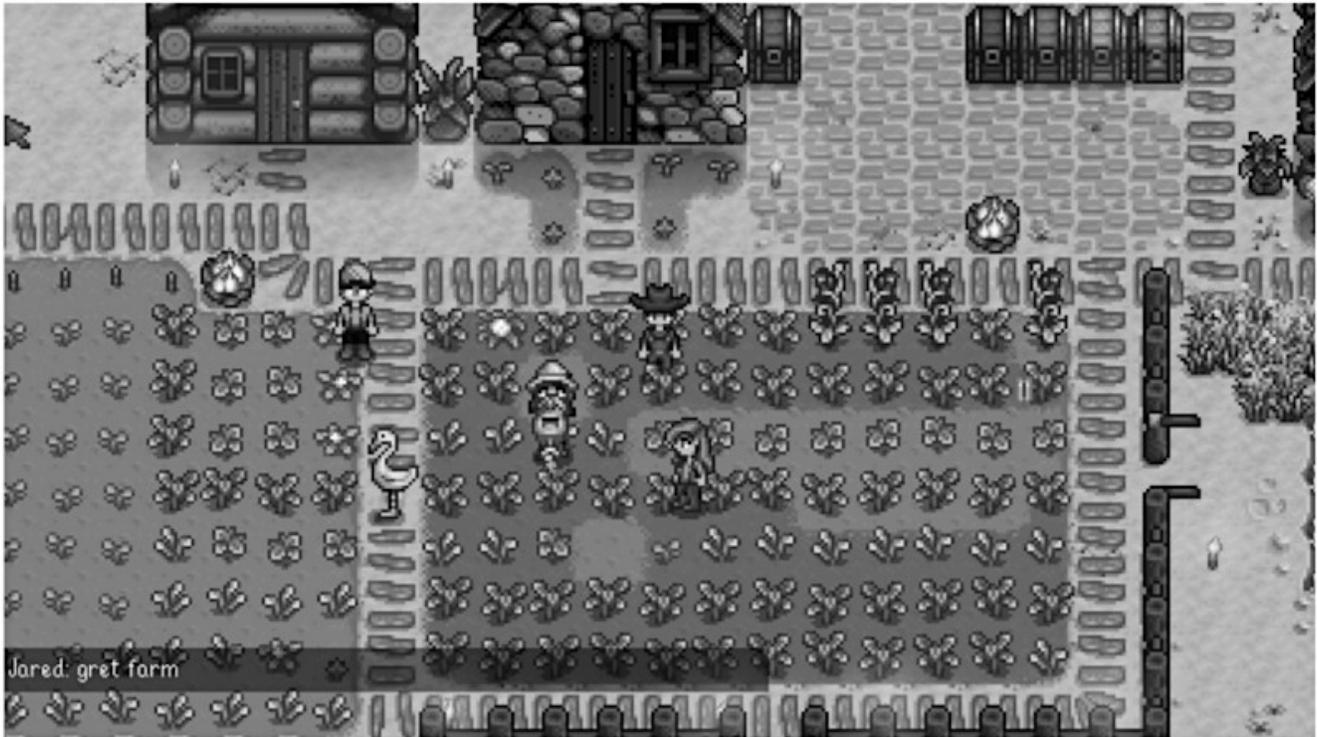
Stardew Valley and Community

-by Stephan

Note: Stephan's original article is much longer and better! You are encouraged to read it here <https://runninginzk.wordpress.com/2021/02/21/want-to-start-a-community-first-play-stardew-valley> or below is an edited version for our readers of The Leaves:

Communards sometimes think "hmm...what should I do to relax after a long day of farming, foraging, cooking, crafting, and raising animals? Oh I know: Pretend to do all these things!" Enter: Stardew Valley...

Stardew Valley is an adorable simulation game in which you inherit your grandfather's farm and make it into a productive part of the community. There's also a "co-op" mode. This got me thinking about the similarities between the game and real-life communal living.



Screenshot of a co-op farm setup

Founder's Syndrome. The first thing to decide when going to co-op mode is whether or not to start a new farm or invite people to one you're already on. This can lead to what we in the communities movement call "Founder's Syndrome." Basically, many communities are founded by one person, and it can become challenging as they try to attract new members who have different ideas.

In Stardew Valley, if you invite people to join an existing farm, it can be beneficial because there is already an income base and less start-up labor, but can also be challenging if the founder is resistant to the suggestions of other players.

Income-Sharing. The default game mode is income-sharing, so whenever a player sells a parsnip or buys an upgraded axe, this affects the total money available to all players. This sounds idyllic in theory, but what happens when 3 people want to each get a bigger backpack for 4000g each but you only have 5000g? Do you talk about your purchasing desires together and approve each transaction? Do you keep track of 1/3 of the income each? Decisions, decisions!

Group Decision-Making / Division of Labor. There are several quests in the game that require various items. How are you going to spend your precious time? Are you all going to be all-around balanced communards or is one person going to be in charge of crops while another gathers resources from the mines?

All of these things can be discussed to your heart's content. Sound like a lot of work before you even get to the work? Welcome to community life!

Mods. One of the great benefits of Stardew Valley are the fan-made modifications, aka "mods"

Multiple Spouses: While not everyone in community is polyamorous, ethical non-monogamy is generally more accepted in income-sharing and egalitarian communities since relationships can be untethered from housing and economics. The Multiple Spouses mod allows you to marry multiple people, live with multiple people, and more!

Diverse Stardew Valley: You might notice how white most of the characters are in the original Stardew Valley. This is unfortunately not unlike many intentional communities founded by white folks. You can add the Diverse Stardew Valley mod. This mod adds ethnic, cultural, gender identity, and body type diversity to the original characters.

Conclusion. There are certainly many ways in which Stardew Valley is not anything like real-life community, from dungeon monsters to magic teleportation, but playing in co-op mode does require that folks practice the most central parts of community living: communication and cooperation! It might also reveal things about yourself and others that would be really good to know prior to actually living together. Oh, and don't forget to also have fun while you're at it.