



News of the Oaks  
Our Newest Artist  
We're Baaaack! Summer Events

## News of the Oaks

by Valerie

The theme of this "News of the Oaks" is **Emergence**.

We have continued our emergence from the pandemic by once again offering all 3 of our **summer events**! See the article below for more on those.

We've entered a new era of internet with **higher-speed access**, making it easier to be virtually-connected in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although a number of Oakers have issues with/analysis of Elon Musk's empire, we have to admit that we are enjoying our new internet....



*We've had a bumper crop of figs this year!*

After years of internally struggling with this, we have finally **abolished our Age Cap Policy**. Now adults of all ages are able to apply with the same process.

A group here has formed an 8-week study group meeting around the ideas raised in writer adrienne maree brown's book "**Emergent Strategy**". We are using these ideas as a lens through which to address current issues happening in the community.

And in **aspirational** emergence news, we are continuing our gestational work moving towards a community more grounded in racial justice issues and also increased population. This time of lower membership has meant more struggles in ways, but also it provides a liminal time in which change may be more possible as we are re-creating ourselves in various aspects. We have re-formed our Racial Equity Teams and are continuing to host visitors to bring in new members. Please contact us through the website [twinoaks.org](http://twinoaks.org) if you are potentially interested in coming for a visit.

## **Our Newest Artist**

by Grace

I pulled up to Twin Oaks just in time for dinner on June 3rd, exhausted by my last three-day-long drive. I was greeted with welcomes and a fireline of folks who helped me load my possessions into my new home. Grace here, Twin Oaks' newest provisional member, reflecting on my transition back into community.

Since 2020, I spent a pandemic year and a half based at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in Missouri, supporting myself as a painter and traveling to visit and consider other communities, including Twin Oaks for the November 2021 visitor session. Before my visit at Twin Oaks, I had agreed to take on a job as a scenic artist and Residential Life Coordinator on a challenging semester-long independent feature film from January to May 2022. I then spent the month of May in a whirlwind of miles, traveling across the US visiting friends and family and retrieving a carload of paintings at Dancing Rabbit's Reunion before finally landing at Twin Oaks.

And I immediately developed a summer cold overnight. I tested negative for COVID twice over the course of a week and worried that it was an allergic reaction to mold in my room. The realities of living in an un-airconditioned building in the heat and humidity of Virginia's summers hit me like a hot slap.

But the cold blew over by the next week, and as I started to improve, I realized it's just so good to be grounded and to have a home address again, to register to vote, to apply for health insurance.



*Grace with some of her art on display in ZK*

I choose to live in community because I find re-villaging an effective means to combat global climate change, the patriarchy, and the late capitalist machine. Dancing Rabbit was my community for a long stretch of time in my nomadic life, and moving there helped me treat my severe eco-anxiety -- it gave me hope. It was a difficult decision making the move to Twin Oaks instead, but here, I am effectively treating my anxiety about lack of money -- I am no longer worried about whether I can afford to house, feed, and insure myself. At this stage, in this economy? Twin Oaks is a blessing and an interesting experiment with my life.

There were also just more pros for Twin Oaks on my pro/con list. The social scene is full, and there are creative events, gatherings, and dance parties weekly. The work is varied and interesting -- I've learned to make hammocks

and am enjoying hanging out with the youngest members of the community and calling it childcare. The proximity to cities like Richmond and Charlottesville means I have access to a first-rate art market and continue my art career. We're an hour and a half from both the mountains and the beaches. And it is just so lovely to wake up every morning surrounded by these tall, majestic trees.

For how long will it work for me? We shall see. Might it work for you? Apply to visit Twin Oaks and see for yourself. Hope to see you here.

**We're Baaaaaaack! Conferences & Gatherings this summer.**

By Keenan



*Lunch at the Twin Oaks Conference Site*

Twin Oaks' first Communities Conference was in 1968. There has been a Communities Conference every year since then until...covid. In 1985 Twin Oaks added a Women's Gathering and then in 2015 a Queer Gathering. These are movement-building events where people gather together and go back to their lives inspired, supported, and networked. After a two-and-a-half year hiatus in which some organizers have left, could we still pull it off?

Twin Oaks' conference site is a wooded area at the far end of Twin Oaks' property. What would this hiatus mean for getting the site itself prepared? There was an additional conundrum, due to covid, Twin Oaks is at a low ebb in membership, there isn't a lot of labor to spare for organizing any events, but on the other hand these events have always been a way that future members got their first taste of community.

If we did manage to pull it together, would people show up? Would requiring people to test for covid discourage too many people? Or, after being isolated for so long would there be a hunger for community and a flood of eager future communards overwhelm our ability?

We arrange the events from the smallest to largest to allow for a gentle ramping up of the facilities.

The Queer Gathering was held in early August. This was expected to be a modest (in only one sense of the word!) affair. Around 30 people showed up. People played in the woods, swam in the river, and had a fun time. The community breathed a collective sigh of relief.

Two weeks later was the Women's Gathering. Since 1985, the Women's Gathering size had fluctuated wildly from 150 women down to a mere handful. About 40-50 women showed up— a small, manageable, successful gathering.

Two weeks later again was the Communities Conference. Around a hundred would have been a good turnout for the conference. Over 150 people showed up! And we managed it! Overall the event went well: The weather cooperated perfectly. Everyone was fed; the cooks made massive amounts of food. There was enough parking, camping, and port-o-potties. But most importantly, connections were made, information was exchanged, hope was generated, and lots of people left feeling uplifted and inspired. This is a reminder of why we do community and why we hold these events.