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"Being with a variety of people on a day to day basis, from our point of view, enriches the experience of life!"

Eco-Community Seeks LGBTQ Members

DANCING in DIVERSE MEADOWS

By LYNN MCNICOL
AND EUAN BEAR

Meadowdance is a community-in-the-making that reveres diversity – which is why they're looking for members of the lgbtq communities to come join them.

Currently, the community's 12 members, both adults and children, are living in a dorm at the now-defunct Goddard College in Plainfield while they fine-tune plans to build an ecovillage on 200 acres in Marshfield.

While the living arrangements and ideals of Meadowdance are perhaps more reminiscent of a 1960s-style commune, the community supports itself with two 21st-century computer-related businesses. Diversity is one of those ideals – welcoming people of all types of backgrounds, including gays and lesbians. There are no gay or lesbian members or "seekers" (potential members staying with the community while considering joining) currently at the community.

"All people who share the philosophy of the community are welcome, regardless of what

world groups they belong to," declares the group's membership policy.

Before the building of their eco-village can begin, Meadowdance will need to obtain approval from town officials and raise enough money for construction. According to Marshfield Town Clerk Bobbi Brimblecombe, the group has not yet applied for the needed permits. A presentation by the group at a Design Review Board meeting was received with skepticism by board members, she said. "There was skepticism that the plan as presented by the group's representatives would comply with the Town Plan," she said.

For now, the cramped quarters of the rented dorm at Goddard shelters members as well as visitors, plus an assortment of pets, including three cats, an iguana and a hamster.

In the dorm, members have their own rooms, but computer workstations take up part of the space. Meals are shared. Leila, at 17 the elder teenager at Meadowdance, cooked dinner one evening recently, serving a Thai noodle dish to the vegetarians and omnivore members and a guest; others gathered in the

small living room to talk. Later on, Sebastian, 12, wandered in to show off his new snowboarding jacket. Outside, snow lay more than a foot deep in the early evening dark.

Meadowdance envisions a nurturing lifestyle in which members support each other financially and emotionally. The secular community says it respects individual religious and spiritual practices. Community finances are shared, while members have their own spending money.

Nuts and Bolts

That personal stipend or allowance is "quite little at the moment, consonant with the frugality we've been practicing since we started up," wrote Luc Reid, a spokesman for the group, in response to an email query: \$58 per adult per month as an entertainment, clothing, and personal expenses allowance. "Presumably over time as we build up our economic strength we'll be able to increase it," he added. "The money comes from our business earnings, as does the money for everything else."

The group also shares its noncommercial workload, using a

point system to keep track of time each member works.

Members are not required to work for Dragonfly, the community's software testing business, or Wordsworth, their typing and editing business – although currently all adult members do.

Adult members are guaranteed basic needs such as housing, food, health care and transportation as long as they meet the work requirements of 45 hours per week plus community "chores" – cooking, clean-up, shopping, and learning activities with the children. They may also work outside the community if they wish to make more money for themselves.

The group's members strive for their vision of a sustainable lifestyle. The group shares one washer and dryer, and two cars get them around. Plans for the future Meadowdance community include construction of highly energy-efficient homes and a community center. Members also envision future gardens using permaculture and organic growing methods.

Meadowdance emphasizes the creation of a nurturing environment in which to raise

children, and plans to open its small community school to outside children in the fall, said Sue Morris, a Meadowdance founding member. According to Luc Reid, There are five children just now, with three more coming this summer. One is not of school age yet; two attend Twinfield, the local public school, and there are two schooled primarily within the Meadowdance community.

The group's vision of equality includes a group consensus process meant to take everyone's concerns into consideration.

Meadowdance is open to prospective members and hopes to rent another building from Goddard in the near future to accommodate the group's growth. Currently a straight community, Meadowdance members made a point of inviting readers of *OITM* to consider joining them.

Diversity in Belief and Action

Why would we – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer people – be interested in joining this community?

"Ultimately the things that might be attractive about Meadowdance to some mem-

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