

# ECO-JOURNAL

Volume 4, Number 3

May-June, 1994

## SPECIAL FARM GARDEN & FOOD EDITION

*There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that heat comes from the furnace. To avoid the first danger, one should plant a garden, preferably where there is no grocer to confuse the issue ..... Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac*

### Flying in formation: aligning our efforts with others going the same direction

by Betty Kehler

Spring is definitely upon us. As I dig out and pot the shrubs, trees and fruit plants in our nursery or as I walk along the rows of sprouting asparagus tips, it never ceases to amaze how radical the transformation from a brown and white world to one that's green and flowered. It is a change that is so welcome, in fact longed for, and to us it seems overdue.

I can't help but wonder if in our lifetime we might experience a similar radical transformation in our region in becoming a more sustainable and self sufficient community and environment. What difference are you making this growing season? It would be interesting to know.

On to another note ... I found an interesting little piece in Acres USA (December edition). It went something like this:

This Spring when you see geese heading north for the summer, flying along in "V" formation, think about what science

has learned about why they fly that way. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the bird immediately following it. By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock can fly at least 71 per cent farther than if each bird flew on its own.

Perhaps people who share a common direction can get where they are going quicker and easier if they cooperate.

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it feels the resistance of trying to go it alone, and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of flying with the flock. If we have as much sense as a goose, we will work with others who are going the same way as we are.

When the lead goose gets tired, he rotates back in the wing and another goose flies on the point. It pays to take turns doing hard jobs for our group. The geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

Finally, when a goose weakens or is wounded and falls out of formation, help

two geese fall out and follow him down to and protect him. They stay with him until he is either able to fly or until he is dead, and they set out on their own or with another formation until they catch up with the group.

If we had the sense of a goose, we would stand by each other like that.

Betty Kehler is an organic grower and proprietor of Plumridge Farm near Teulon. Her farm provides flowering shrubs, shade and shelterbelt trees and fruit plants until the middle of June, asparagus from May to the middle of June, strawberries, raspberries and saskatoons (pick your own in July), apples and plums in August and September, dried fruit (depending on availability) and geese, dressed and frozen in November. (Call Plum Ridge Farm 1-886-3427 for more information).

#### Inside Eco-Journal

The certified organic gardening poster

Building community over geographic distance

Member group profile:  
Meet the Winnipeg Vegetarian Association

New food coop opens

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## Eco-Journal

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# ECO-BRIEFS

## Buffalo habitat on Westminster Avenue

Businesses along Westminster Avenue have a plan to re-landscape some of the boulevards in the neighbourhood, but it won't be with interlocking bricks or gravel.

The group has decided that the most durable and suitable material for the boulevards is, you guessed it, the original indigenous prairie grasses and flowers. What else can withstand foraging buffalo herds by the thousands and long periods of drought? Or in modern urban terms: What requires no weeding or watering and helps preserve our provincial heritage?

The Westminster Prairie Restoration League has partial approval from the City of Winnipeg for their plan to landscape along Westminster in front of Winona's restaurant, Tall Grass bakery (of course), Barchet's Grocery, and the north side between Arlington and Lenore, from XYZ Design to Green Earth Store and Home Security Insurance.

(The Eco-Network office is in one of the blocks that will be included in the project.)

The plan is to landscape with beds of native plants, some seeded and some with seedlings supplied by Prairie Habitats Nursery. The beds will be formed with rough blocks of Tyndall stone. One city department has already approved the plan, and the work was scheduled for this May, but since that approval the group has learned of another department's plan to replace all the sidewalks, which has delayed the plan for now.

That delay isn't all bad and the group is now hoping the city will lay a good bed for their landscaping when the sidewalks are done.

## Update on ...

### Louisiana Pacific Strand Board plant

Never shy about appearances the province's Environment Minister appears to be responding to Louisiana Pacific's June deadline for getting its Oriented Strand plant in Minitonas built. The usual process for environment licensing is that the proponent makes its application and supplies an environmental impact statement, the government advertises the application for public comment, and then based on those comments decides when and where hearings should be held. In this case the government announced a hearing date (and only in Swan River starting June 6) the same day the company filed its formal notice of proposal. The advertisements were in the Saturday paper the next day. Louisiana Pacific has said it wants to pour cement for the footings by mid-June.

The government has followed its past *modus operandi* on the Repap licensing by severing the forestry concerns for later assessment and going ahead with the approval process for the plant even though it couldn't possibly operate without wood.

The coalition of groups fighting the project is organizing the best it can while calling for hearings to be held in Winnipeg as well as Swan River and would like letters to that effect sent to Clean Environment Commission Chair Dale Stewart.

CHO!CES representative Don Sullivan says the group will ask for a federal review of the project and would appreciate letters being sent to federal Environment Minister Sheila Copps.

Continued on next page

**We want to be responsible:** The paper for Eco-Journal is 100 per cent post-consumer (not de-inked) recycled. We distribute a specific portion of our circulation as complimentary copies in stores and restaurants and to prospective subscribers, but we strive not to launch waste paper into the community. Please make maximum use of Eco-Journal before you dispose of it. If you do not have access to recycling we will accept copies at our office and environmental resource centre 867 Westminster Ave. Phone 772-7542 to arrange drop off.



The group is staging a Town Hall session in Winnipeg on June 21 that will include speakers from Swan River, from Dawson Creek (where L.P. has a similar plant) from First Nations representatives and Council of Canadians president Maud Barlow who will speak to the NAFTA implications of the L.P. project.

Opponents of L.P. should check out the Spring issue of Earth Island Journal in which L.P. is included in a story of corporations that have filed Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation. The article by John Sterling says that L.P. sued 78 activists after a nine week protest in 1992 against its plans to cut old growth forest near the Albion river in northern California. The activists are confident of winning the suit, but peeved at the amount of time spent defending themselves in court.

## "Interactive book" urges the grassroots to go for it

**Get a Life! A Green Cure for Canada's Economic Blues** is called an "interactive book designed as a magazine" by its authors (Wayne Roberts, John Bacher, and Brian Nelson) who explain their approach by saying that green economics is happening too fast to publish in the traditional sense of a book. In fact they seem to be contemplating a second issue of their self-published magazine *cum* book in which they propose to add culture to the mix of leftovers, fresh greens and roots in a kind of community borscht.

This isn't C.D. Howe or even Centre for Policy Alternatives economics. This is economic in the sense that economics belong to those who practice it. And green economics is a mix of community economic development/survival ideas from shared farming to marshes for sewage treatment to strategies to fight the "Coca-colonization" of the minds and loyalties of youth.

**Get A Life!** weighs in on just about every environmental issue in Canada and in a cheeky way undermines the conventional wisdom about jobs vs. environment, about mega project "job creation" and about the private about

What it doesn't do is outline a central theory or set of principles to govern policy or economics. Some of the ideas are related rather uncritically but that's how you make soup, you try a bit of this and bit of that, as long as it has onions and beets and garlic, it will work. It may not be given four stars by the gourmards on the academic left, but that has its appeal too. Too often the left or progressives or whatever the resistance calls itself these days, has wasted all its energy on arguing about theories that will not be implemented (and would probably scare all of us if they were).

**Get A Life!** is as decentralized as its message. Just do it. Food coops or co-housing or shared farming or whatever works in your town. The corporate juggernaut that goes by its various trade names — globalization or competitiveness or free trade — is so far off the rails that any efforts at alternatives deserve encouragement.

Keep it simple and keep it clean, just keep it, because regaining control over even a small part of the "economy" is what it's all about.

**Get A Life! A Green Cure for Canada's Economic Blues** is available from **Get a Life Publishing House**, 2255 Queen St. East, Suite 127, Toronto, Ont. M4E 1G3. One copy is available for perusal at the Manitoba Eco-Network Resource Centre 867 Westminster.

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# Calendar of events

**May 28:** MANITOBA ECO-NETWORK ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and POTLUCK DINNER at St. Paul's Anglican Church, 830 Point Road and North Drive in Fort Garry (east of Pembina Road). Business Meeting from 1 to 3, includes elections to the Eco-Network Steering Committee, selection of our delegate to the Canadian Environmental Network and an information swap between member groups. Vegetarian Potluck starts at 6 p.m. and includes the 1994 Environmental Awards ceremony, a dessert auction and a presentation on the future of Manitoba parks by Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. Donations for a silent auction are requested. Phone 772-7542 for more information.

**June 3 and 4:** Manitoba Council for International Cooperation Annual General Meeting workshops and banquet.

Banquet, Friday at 6 p.m. at the Franco-Manitoban Centre begins with an Eritrean dinner and includes keynote speaker Pat Mooney, entertainment by Licanantay and a silent auction. Tickets are \$25 from MCIC, 786-2106.

Workshops take place at the Mennonite Central Committee offices on Plaza Drive and start on Friday afternoon with Focus on our Future: Building on 20 years of Cooperation from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday schedule includes two workshops – Focus on Alternatives from 9 to 11 a.m. and Focus on Access and Equity from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. – and the MCIC business meeting from 1:30 to 4 p.m.

**June 4:** Manitoba Wilderness Caucus meets 10 a.m. at McBeth House Centre, 31 McBeth in Old Kildonan to discuss endangered Spaces agenda and action. For a complete agenda or to arrange to attend call Gaile at 944-9593.

**June 7:** Marquis Project Annual General Meeting, 7:30 p.m. Brandon Public Library Multi-Purpose Room (basement) at 7th and Princess. Guest Speaker Karen Lehman from the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy in Minneapolis will address GATT and NAFTA effects on farmers in the Americas and in particular the peasants of Chiapas. Phone Marquis 727-5675 for more information.

**June 14:** Tree for All workshop on Dutch Elm Disease. Learn all about Dutch Elm Disease and the elm guard program. What can we do to protect our elm trees? (Picture Winnipeg without our elms!) 7 to 10 p.m. Norwood Community Centre (Walmart and Lawndale). For more information call Coalition to Save the Elms 832-7188.

**June 18:** 13th annual PEACE WALK 12 noon at the Manitoba Legislature. (Peace worship at St. Stephen's, Broadway and Kennedy at 10:30 am). This year's theme is "Celebrate the Diversity of Community." Speakers, entertainment and displays after the walk down Broadway to Smith, Smith to Portage, Portage to Memorial and back to the Leg. to get involved in planning, or to get a display table call Project Peacemakers 775-8178.

**June 21:** Tow. Hall on Louisiana Pacific Oriented Strand Board development, Room M-31 University of Winnipeg 7:30 with

speakers from Concerned Citizens of the Valley, Swan River, L.P. Dawson Creek opponent Shane Hartnell, Swan River First Nations representatives, and Maud Barlow speaking on the NAFTA connections to this proposal. The video "Ill Winds" about Louisiana Pacific's Dawson Creek plant, will be shown and there will be an opportunity for a question and answer session with the speakers. For more information call Don Sullivan at CHOICES a Coalition for Social Justice, 944-9408.

**June 24-26:** 12 Annual Festival for Peace, International Peace Gardens. Families from both sides of the border meet to discuss ideas and action for a more peaceful home, community and world. No admission (donations welcome). Bring your own food and camping gear. Park entrance fees and camping charges apply. Workshops on sustainable housing, economic conversion, mediation, cooperative games, a drama workshop and more. Call Marcia at 1-728-2504 or in Winnipeg call Toby or Robin 783-8094.

**June 28:** Tree for All Elm Walk. Take a walk through the neighbourhood and learn how to detect Dutch Elm Disease. (We will have a crash course on tree identification as well). 7 to 9 p.m. Meet at Robert A. Steen Community Centre 980 Palmerston. For more information call Coalition to Save the Elms 832-7188.

**August 23-29:** The Future of Northern Forests sponsored by Taiga Rescue Network and Western Canada Wilderness Committee Alberta in Edmonton (the second International NGO and Indigenous Peoples and Nations Conference on Boreal Forests): Cultural and Biological Effects of the Consumption of Boreal Forest Products" still has conference positions open for Canadian boreal forest activists. The conference includes sessions on Indigenous Peoples of the Boreal Forest, Scientific Perspectives and Challenges, boreal site Visits, Environmental Perspectives on Trade and Consumption and Post Conference tours of Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan and Peace River, Alberta. For more information or to register call Claire Ashton, WCWC, 403-433-5323 (email [wcwcab@web.apc.org](mailto:wcwcab@web.apc.org)).

## REREAD

### Chlorine not so clean

The movement to eliminate chlorine-based chemicals from industrial and other processes is growing. A recent Greenpeace report "Chlorine Human Health and the Environment: the Breast Cancer Warning" adds its weight to the debate that ensued when the International Joint Commission recommended phasing out chlorine on the Great Lakes. The January-February issue of Multinational Monitor writes that the World Health Organization's cancer research agency has classified 59 organochlorines as causing cancer in humans or animals. Bleaching, widely used pesticides like atrazine, and the feedstocks for polyvinyl chloride (PVC) are all implicated in breast cancer.

What's even more alarming is the role that large chemical companies are playing in the "search for a cure." MultiMonitor reports that "Imperial Chemical Industries one of the world's largest chemical producers, co-founded and is the sole funder of the national U.S. Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The event focuses on breast examinations and never mentions carcinogens ... ICI is also the producer of tamoxifen .. which is being tested as a preventative measure. (for cancer treatment)."



## Shared Farming finds support for shift to sustainable agriculture

Farmers are still being forced off the land or to compromise their soil in the name of "competitive" industrialized and export-driven agriculture that pays the farmer a tiny part of what consumers actually spend on food. Meanwhile poverty in Canada deepens and food banks are the way many receive their food. Faced with a food system that obviously isn't working some farmers are turning to a way of selling their produce directly to the people who eat it.

The first shared farm in Manitoba (also known as community shared agriculture) Dan and Wilma Wiens market garden in St. Adolphe, started three years ago. Now there are at least eleven shared farms in Manitoba and many springing up in Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario and New Brunswick.

Consumers contract in advance for produce from the farmer who grows the food and delivers it once a week to a neighbourhood depot. The direct link allows the full price of the vegetables to be paid to the farmer. Considering that "six companies account for over 80 % of all food retail sales... (and) 12 companies control production of over 90 per cent" of supermarket products) shared farming is also about reclaiming our food source. Often it also allows for consumers to elevate their involvement in their own basic needs by working on the farm. Most shared farms are still accepting sharers for the '94 growing season. The produce they supply and the share prices and amounts vary.

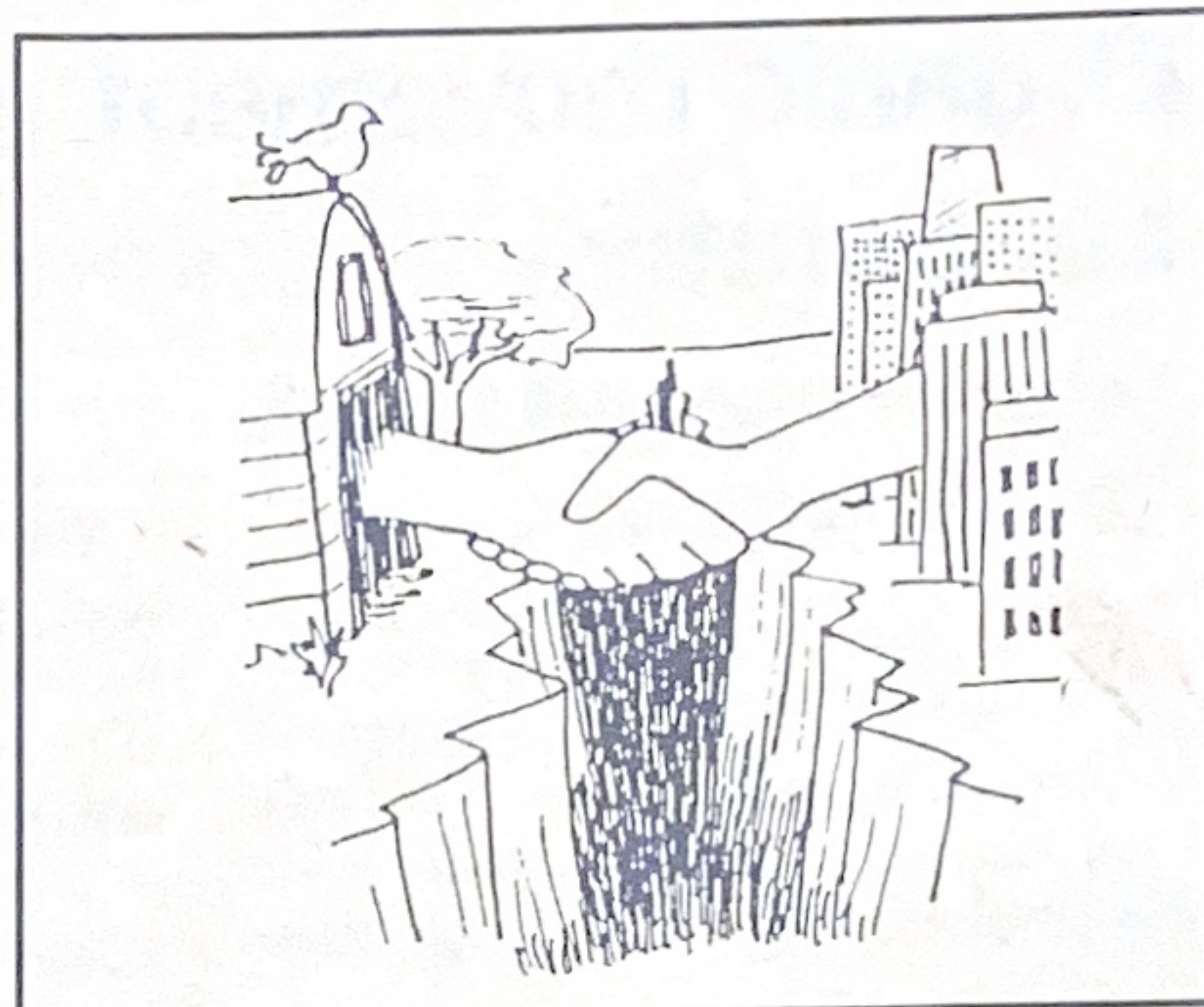
Country Gate Gardens, Brandon

Contact Menno Isaac -- 1-728-2909. Delivers Brandon

Earthshare Ag. Coop of Central America (in Iles de Chenes) Jim Becta 832-4197. Delivers various Wpg. loc.

Garway Organic Farms, Stuartburn, Marc and Dawne Summersfield, 1-425-3522. Delivers Lindenwoods.

Grange Sur Seine, La Broquerie, Gerry & Kelly



Dube -- 1-424-5566. Delivers St. B. and St. Vital

Gregoire Gardens and Greenhouse, St. Jean, Rolland & Brenda Gregoire - 1-758-3455. Delivers St. Norbert

Our Farm, Portage la Prairie, Les and Diane Doherty 1-428-5507. Delivers Wpg and Portage

Page Family Farm CSA, Portage la Prairie  
Contact Bill Page 1-428-3400

Red Gate Farm, Wawanesa, Rhonda Barr & Wayne McLennan, 1-824-2350. Delivers Brandon.

RAE Gardens, Lockport, Robert Fryatt -- 757-4513  
Delivers Anywhere in Wpg.

Twin Creeks Shared Farm, St. Adolphe, Dan or Wilma Wiens--255-7027. Delivers various Wpg loc.

Wolseley Community Garden, Gardenton, Sandra Conway--1-425-3627. Delivers Wolseley.

### From the Network News File ...

## Building Healthy Community Networks Conference: Holistic action elusive but within grasp

Sixty to a hundred people sampled from a smorgasbord of community development alternatives and ideas at a conference co-sponsored by the Manitoba Eco-Network in May.

Reclaiming the Spirit of Community: Tools for Action in building Healthy Community Networks co-sponsored with Healthy Communities Winnipeg, looked at integrating health, environment and community economic development and began with sharing the ideas and alternatives that are already in place. Common areas for networking include democratizing decision-making, self-reliance rather than dependency on institutions and their agenda, and holistic planning for a better community.

Two dozen resource people related their perspectives and described their organization's efforts in the morning sessions. In the afternoon participants were grouped into workshops to explore

ways of creating synergy between group and individual action.

This wasn't the first conference in Winnipeg to look at the connections between social justice, social service, environment and community development groups and it probably won't be the last. A lot of groups and individuals are circling the same issues or the same strategies in different areas and are slowly putting together the whole picture. It's one thing to know that others are having similar experiences and have common goals but its another thing to really understand.

To the extent that more people will be moved, by this conference to join with efforts like co-housing or food coops or to take responsibility with others for urban forests, and then relate it back to their other efforts, it was a useful exercise.



# Organic movement expanding with second organic cooperative opening in Winnipeg

## Local growers will benefit from expanded market

by Toby Maloney

Corydon Avenue's first Italian grocery in the Winnipeg neighbourhood that came to be known as Little Italy, is being succeeded by the area's first organic whole foods store.

Sunflower Community Market Coop opens at 664 Corydon this month after Emilio Nucci, known as the "mayor" of the neighbourhood decided to retire.

The new store is supported by a core of members who paid \$100 for member shares, a small business loan and private investment and is quickly involving itself in the affairs of the neighbourhood.

Paul Chorney, Sunflower's General Manager, says the new coop will work

hard to be part of the community, with education, outreach and innovation.

The centrepiece of the store's June 1 opening is an organic farmer's market at the rear of the store on an empty lot (corner of Jessie and Hugo). The plan, which still requires some approvals -- "98 per cent confirmed" according to Chorney, will enlist eight local shared farms to market their produce on Saturdays. The shared farming aspect is a nod to the store's cooperative structure and a mandate to encourage and promote local production as much as possible.

The store will have small play area for children, a customer service counter for questions about food preparation etc. and cooking classes run out of a combination kitchen, staff room and resource centre.

ganic with the hope of being able to eliminate the "non-organic" altogether. Another innovation is to stock herbs in capsules to preserve freshness, as well as in bulk. The capsules themselves will be in bulk, however, in order to eliminate the vitamin bottle-type packaging that goes with supplements.

## Local Organic History

Chorney has a long history in organic coops as a founding member (in the 70's) and later manager of, Harvest Natural Foods Collective on Westminster. Chorney remembers the start of Harvest, out of the remnants of Agassiz Coop, as a buying club functioning with member labour only. Harvest started from the ground up, gradually building to a full storefront operation. A few dedicated members worked full time as volunteers for several years before Harvest decided on a blend of member labour and paid staff. The thriving store has been looking at expansion including possible involvement in a second store, but Chorney and the core group from the Corydon area had a good opportunity and went for it without Harvest participation.

Sunflower is still "hoping for a friendly co-operative relationship" with Harvest and its members, and indeed its key supporters were also active members or even board members of Harvest.

## Sunflower the sequel

The new coop can claim a bit of coop history, at least in name and location. An earlier "Sunflower" coop established in 1981, was located right next door but suffered two destructive fires and never made the transition from a member buying group to a storefront. The second fire wiped out what was left of the member's energy and the attempt was folded.

The new effort starts on a different footing than either Harvest or the other groups, with share capital and a bank loan

## Organicizing the coffee crowd

And, in keeping with the flavour of the neighbourhood's high concentration of Espresso Bars, Sunflower intends to stock ten different blends of organic coffee. Coffee isn't exactly high on the list of health foods or local agriculture, but if the community is drinking it then maybe it should at least be organic, figures Chorney.

Sunflower intends to experiment a little, including organically raised chicken, despite the high representation of vegetarians in the organic market. Chorney also says the store will open with exclusively or-

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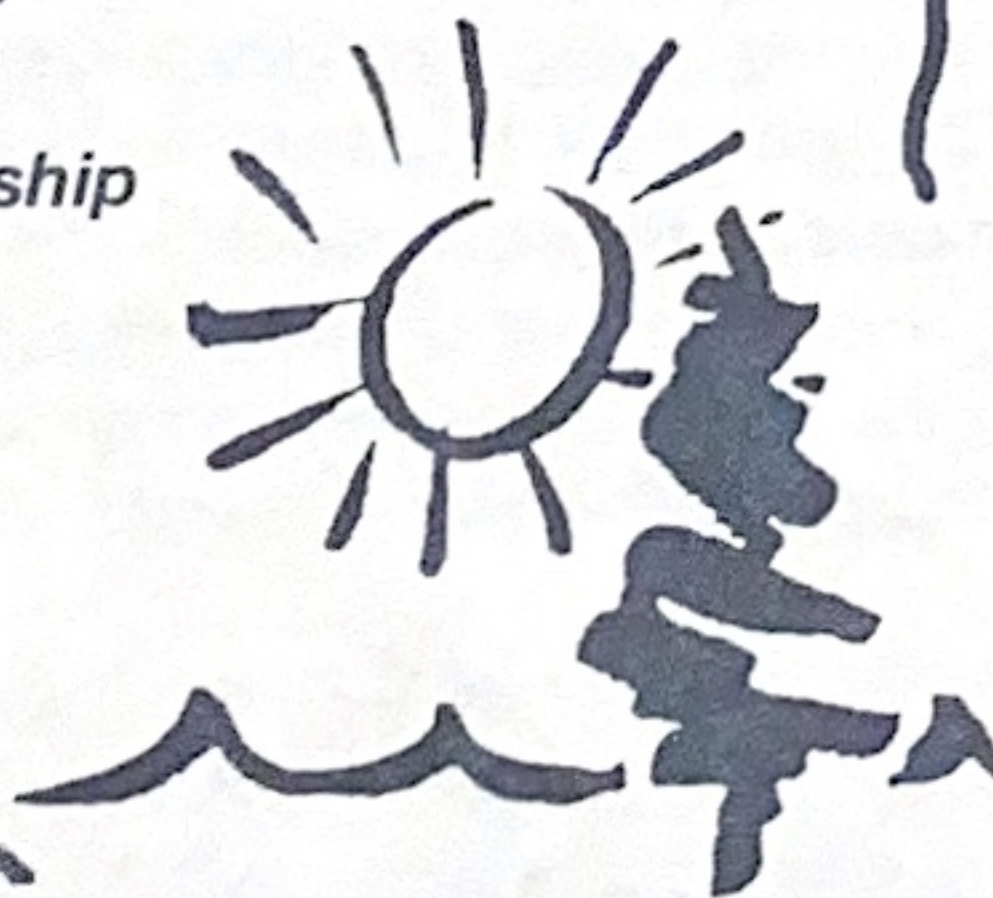
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and a business plan ("based on conservative sales projections"). That's partly reflective of the improved climate for this kind of store -- all over North America organic stores are flourishing as consumers make the switch to organic.

"I think it's become mainstream ... more and more people are becoming aware of the need for healthy food"

Chorney said. The store will peg its summer hours to the neighbourhood's active street life to start, by being open seven days per week and from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekdays (9 to 7 on Saturday and 12 to 5 on Sunday).

"We're hoping to start strong," explains Chorney. If the volume doesn't justify all those hours than the store will adjust, he says.

The new operation opens with as many as seven staff members, most of them part time and has sunk a large investment into renovations and equipment. For that reason it will need to operate at a higher volume and market itself more deliberately than might have been appropriate ten years ago.

But the grass roots approach to the farmer's market and the cooking classes should help keep the store tied to its roots in neighbourhood development.

"I think we're educating people about foods and organics ... and that's part of marketing," Chorney said.

While the organic movement is gaining wide ap-



peal, coops in Canada tend to be struggling. Chorney says the coop aspect isn't well understood and educating about coops during the 150th Anniversary of the Rochdale Coop in Britain will be part of the store's mandate.

That isn't the only learning experience happening over at Sunflower. Some surprises in the renovations meant replacing the flooring -- the store opted for a parquet flooring made of waste wood -- and fixing a toilet led to demolishing and replacing the whole washroom.

The surprises involved with learning to be your own general contractor has delayed the soft opening for the store slightly. The coop had been targeting mid-May, but is comfortable about opening the door in early June instead.

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# Re-defining the food system: What is food security?

by Marny Fyfe

- Knowing that your next meal is coming and from where!
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- Self-reliant, diversified, vibrant, resilient local and regional farming and fishing sectors dedicated to appropriate use of resources, enhancing rural environment, and providing healthy food.
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system which provides many alternative outlets for choices for buying and selling food such as stores, markets, coops, community-supported agriculture groups, buying clubs, etc.

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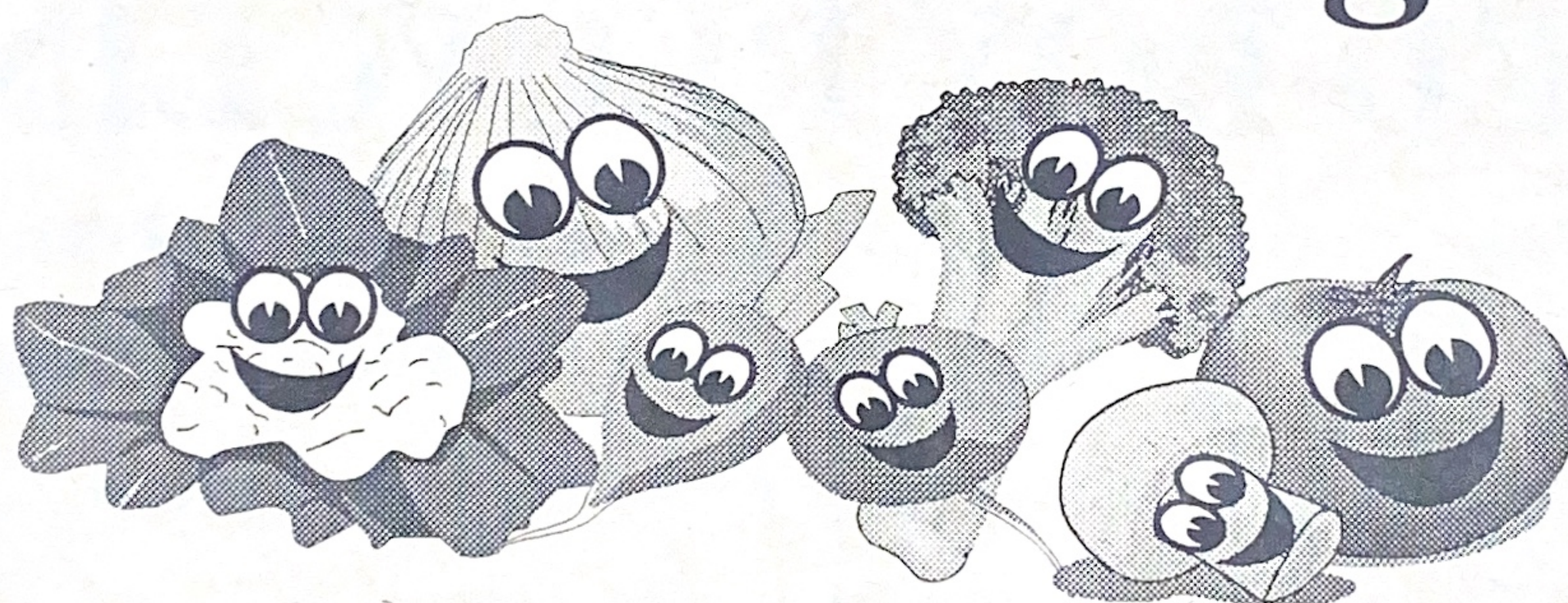
If you are interested in creating a vision and working for food security in Manitoba, call Marny, World Food Day c/o Manitoba Council for International Cooperation 786-2106.



## Sunflower

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# Introducing the 100 per cent certified organic, four-colour, all-season gardening poster

An new educational effort by the Organic Producers Association of Manitoba, a group that ordinarily concerns itself with promoting and certifying organic agricultural production, targets home gardeners as part of the solution to widespread biocide use.

"A seasonal Guide to Gardening Organically" is a four colour poster with more information than you could imagine would be crammed onto a 25 inch piece of paper. The poster follows the seasons to provide a holistic checklist of practices and suggestions for better garden practices from preparing the soil and raising beds to collecting seeds and planted cover crops.

Synthetic chemical pesticides, widely used in small vegetable gardens are usually harsh and expensive solutions for minor insect and weed problems.

The cumulative impact of conventional yard and garden pesticides is considerable. They put beneficial insect and birds, small mammals and pet at risk, and can jeopardize human health when administered improperly or applied without precaution. There are also problems from pesticides "drifting" to neighbouring properties and problems with waste disposal.

A seasonal Guide to Gardening Organically was developed to provide gardeners with information and alternatives, and meet the need of a growing number of people who want simple concise and affordable information about environmentally responsible solutions. The project to produce the poster was designed and coordinated by Andrea Downey-Franchuk of EnviroScribe Consulting.

The poster owner can refer to the guide through the Spring, Summer and Fall seasons for practical advice about preparing the garden, planning, garden ecology, summer maintenance, harvest, saving seeds and preparing for winter. User-friendly instructions are offered with resources for further research.

The poster is set on a backdrop of an organic garden, painted

in watercolours by Rhian Brynjolson.

OPAM put the project together with support from the Ecological Agriculture Project at McGill University (which runs an organic gardening/agriculture hotline through the growing season) the and the Canadian Organic Growers with technical advice from Dr. Stuart Hill, Rhonda

Barr, Mary Perlmutter, and Elizabeth White.

## Checklist of holistic practices a primer on organic gardening through the seasons

The project was supported by Thomas Sill foundation, the Harmony Foundation, Manitoba Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, Harvest Natural Foods Collective and Investors Group. The partner organizations have received a supply of posters to sell in order to raise funds for reprints or other educational projects.

The poster is available at the Fort Whyte Center in Winnipeg for \$7 or by mail order from the Organic Producers Association of Manitoba, Box 929, Virden, R0M 2C0 (\$10 including shipping and handling). For more information call 284-6416.

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# The Environmental Significance of a Vegetarian Diet

by Dennis Bayomi and Paula Shadid

**T**ry to imagine North America a hundred-and-fifty years ago. Forests were lush and green. Wildlife was abundant. Rivers and lakes were clean. The air was unpolluted and the soil was healthy.

What happened?

Many environmentalists will readily acknowledge that in our haste and selfishness to build automobiles and highways, skyscrapers and shopping malls, factories and power plants, we've managed to slowly destroy our natural environment.

However few of us realize that the typical North American meat-centered diet based on intensive industrialized livestock production is at least as much to blame for this destruction.

Consider these startling statistics:

- 260 million acres of U.S. forest have been cleared to sustain a meat-based diet.

- Eighty-five percent of topsoil loss is directly attributed to livestock agriculture.
- Half of all the water consumption in the U.S. is used to produce livestock.
- Nearly a billion tons of waste are produced by cattle each year.

When one looks at statistics like these, it comes as no surprise that a meat-centered diet, unlike a vegetarian diet, takes a tremendous toll on our environment.

## Impact on Forests

In the past century, millions of acres of healthy forests have been cleared in North America to make room to support livestock agriculture. Land devoted to producing feed for livestock and for grazing continues to decimate our forests.

Since 1967, U.S. forests have been lost at an alarming rate of one acre every five seconds. Between 1967 and 1975, 70 million acres of forest land in the U.S. were

lost, over two thirds of this as grazing land for livestock.

10,000 pounds of green beans or 40,000 pounds of potatoes can be grown on an acre of prime land. On that same acreage, only 250 pounds of beef can be produced.

On the other hand, every time one of us switches to a pure vegetarian diet, nearly a full acre of land could be returned to forest.

## Impact on Soil

With the substantial clearing of forests for the growing of feed crops and to provide grazing land for livestock, the quality of the soil has deteriorated significantly. Over-grazing is especially harsh on topsoil.

The U.S. Soil Conservation Service reports that over 4 million acres of cropland are being lost to erosion in the U.S. every year. Annually topsoil loss amounts to more than 5 billion tons in the U.S. alone, with 85 percent of this directly attributed to livestock agriculture.

## Impact on Water

Producing livestock consumes vast amounts of water. When you include the water needed to grow crops to feed livestock, as well as the water used in slaughterhouses and food processing plants, about half of all the water consumed in the U.S. is used for livestock production. The next time you consider buying a steak for dinner, remember that 2500 gallons of water are used to produce just one pound of steak.



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Switching to a vegetarian diet saves enormous quantities of water. In California for example, it takes less than twenty-five gallons of water to produce an edible pound of potatoes or tomatoes while it takes over 800 gallons of water to produce one edible pound of chicken and over 1600 gallons for an edible pound of pork. It takes up to a hundred times more water to produce a pound of meat than it does to produce a pound of wheat.

In addition to the fact that producing livestock uses a great deal of water, it is also important to understand that it has a significant impact on the quality of water in surrounding areas. Cattle produce nearly a billion tons of organic waste each year, much of which in the United States runs off into the groundwater and surface water, contaminating wells, rivers and lakes.

One would be remiss not to mention the negative impact that fishing has on the environment. Large-scale, commercial fishing can have a devastating effect on fish stocks and on the rest of a marine ecosystem. One need look no further than our Atlantic coast for evidence of this.

#### Impact on Energy

When it comes to energy consumption, most livestock production is very inefficient. Seventy-eight calories of fossil fuel are expended to produce 1 calorie of protein from beef compared with only two calories to produce the same amount of protein from soybeans.

Energy-inefficient fertilizers are used to combat the effects of soil erosion caused by overgrazing while large quantities of energy are required to provide the water necessary to sustain animal agriculture. In the late '70s, an American scientist David Pimental calculated that if the whole world ate according to U.S. agricultural practices, the planet's entire petroleum reserves would have been exhausted in 13 years.

#### Impact on Air and the Atmosphere

The quality of our air and atmosphere are adversely affected by the huge amounts of waste produced by livestock. A typical egg factory, with 60,000 hens, produces 165,000 pounds of excrement every week. A pork operation, with 2,000 pigs pro-

duce four tons of manure and five tons of urine every day. One cow produces as much waste as 16 human beings.

As well, the methane gas produced by livestock waste has been linked to global warming. Cattle ranching in Central and South America has been cited as a major cause for the destruction of much of the remaining tropical rain forests. This likewise has links to the

*Nothing will benefit human health and increase the chances for survival of life on Earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet.*

*Albert Einstein*

problem of global warming.

#### Ethical and Health Concerns

In this article, we have looked only at the environmental reasons for why a meat-centered diet is inappropriate. These reasons by themselves are very worthy reasons for adopting a vegetarian diet. When you also consider the ethical and health reasons for choosing a vegetarian diet, it becomes especially difficult to rationalize a meat-centered diet.

Five billion animals live short, unhealthy and unnatural lives of suffering and confinement and are butchered for meat every year in the U.S. One need only visit a slaughterhouse to get some idea of the pain and agony these animals must endure.

The pain, though, isn't limited to the animals.

Seven people could be adequately fed with the grain and soy needed to produce the meat, poultry and dairy products eaten by the average North American each year. Today over seventy percent of all the grain produced in the U.S. goes to feeding livestock. These are chilling statistics when you

consider that millions of people will die this year of malnutrition.

The most common cause of human death in North America is heart disease and studies are increasingly linking heart

disease to diets based on animal products. Just think how much suffering, both human and non-human, could be spared if we adopted vegetarian, rather than animal-based diets.

The most profound and meaningful way you can make a difference to the environment, to the animals, to your health and to the health of fellow humans is to adopt a vegetarian diet. The final decision rests with you.

*Dennis Bayomi is President of the Winnipeg Vegetarian Association. Paula Shadid is Earth Day Coordinator of the Contra Costa Vegetarians in Contra Costa county, California.*

## Thinking about a Vegetarian Diet?

The Winnipeg Vegetarian Association is a non-profit group devoted to encouraging and fostering vegetarianism in Winnipeg.

Founded in October 1993, we offer members social and educational opportunities to learn more about vegetarianism and to share their experiences with others.

If you are thinking about adopting a vegetarian diet or are a vegetarian and would like to learn more about the Association, call 889-5789 anytime or write:

Winnipeg Vegetarian Association  
Box 2721  
Winnipeg, MB  
R3C 4B3

The Vegetarian Starter Kit, available through the Winnipeg Vegetarian Association, is an excellent resource for anyone considering a vegetarian diet.

Longtime vegetarians as well as curious non-vegetarians will find lots of good information in this 15-page booklet produced by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine based in Washington, D.C.

Many vegetarian cookbooks are available in the Winnipeg public libraries.

The April/May 1994 issue of the Winnipeg Vegetarian Association newsletter "Winnipeg Vegetarian" contains a reading list of books available in the libraries.



# Building community over a distance to relieve isolation and provide support

*Editor's note: A prerequisite for sustainable agriculture is viable community. With most of prairie agriculture firmly entrenched in an industrialized export-oriented corporate model much of the economy of rural areas is transitory — payments come in from the Wheat Board or agriculture support programs and go right back out to Chemical companies, banks, and equipment manufacturers leaving little to circulate in the local economy. The rural population drains into the city taking with it the viability of local bakeries, hardware stores, schools and community services. At the same time suburban sprawl and ex-urban migration from Winnipeg takes concrete and asphalt further and further making commuter settlements out of former communities and farms.*

*Organic farmers, homesteaders, families pursuing subsistence models of agriculture and community-based businesses are seen as marginal to this economy and can be isolated from their neighbours and one another. Bioregionalists believe that rural areas should be repopulated, not with ex-urban development, but with self-reliant communities. One group is exploring ways of removing the barriers that exist to this by developing community over a geographic distance:*

## Taking action with our lives

by Janine Gibson

An eclectic group of city and country folks have been meeting over the winter with the assistance of the Organic Producers Association of Manitoba, Marketing Groups. We met and eat together. We get to know one another, who needs what and who produces what. We know that when we choose to trade or sell within the group we are doing more than making an economic exchange.

The choices we make in how we live, create our lifestyles. The more information we have on the consequences of our choices the more we can act from a personal place of integrity that supports our values, and in an increasing way, builds sustainable rural community.

Twenty families are on our contact list and have asked to be informed of all planned gatherings. They live in the Interlake, in Winnipeg, southeast of the city and at the edge of the Whiteshell. Members are welcome to initiate get-togethers at their own conven-

ience and I have agreed to help with phoning. I have done two group mailings since we formed.

These included information on successful small farming/market gardening, phone numbers, mailing addresses and lists of what members have to trade or sell, as well as what members need. The need category includes everything from friends to organic meat to labour for construction bees.

Since October 1993, we have met three times as a large group and I have participated in five other discussions with various group members (average size five people) for a total of eight meetings. We made it clear to each other that responsibilities to our children and our livelihoods came first and when people can't come to invited meetings we are supportive of that choice. We did not want what we felt was primarily a community support group to add guilt to people's lives.

Families often have small children and operate farms, market gardens, or homesteads. They appreciate calls to both invite them and catch them up on discussions, when for health and time reasons they have not attended.

Our discussions have ranged over many topics. Soil management, the varieties in soil that our members are working with, weed control techniques, experimental barrier methods for quackgrass restraint, cover crop experiments and results, discussions of what grows best in particular locations, orchard management, use of animals for weed control, use of hydrogen peroxide for health, how animal manures are composted and used, experiments with manure worms, and cattle/human waste, greenhouse management techniques and technology, transplanting tips and problem solving, community shared agriculture experiences, and new market development.

We've also discussed or provided an ear for the whole range of emotional and social support topics like parenting skills, alternative health care, relationship communication, home schooling efforts, political and social analysis, alternative diet choices (foraging wild crops like nettles for greens) and how to make better and more wines!

There have been eggs trade for manure worms, raspberry canes for labour, and plans made to work together in the future. All members are committed to calling others on their list when they need what is offered. In that way it is true to say that we have developed new markets for our members produce by creating connections between families.

We recommend readings such as Holistic Resource Management Books by Allan Savory and Biosphere Politics by Jeremy Rifkin. Sharing resources takes many forms, as does working for more equitable and sustainable lifestyles.

We are living in times that isolate people. There is so much change happening around us. Our gatherings have brought people together in an atmosphere of shared values and efforts. We will continue to meet in different ways and strengthen our connections both to the land and to each other.

Janine Gibson lives at Northern Sun Farm Cooperative south of Steinbach and can be contacted by phoning 434-6018.

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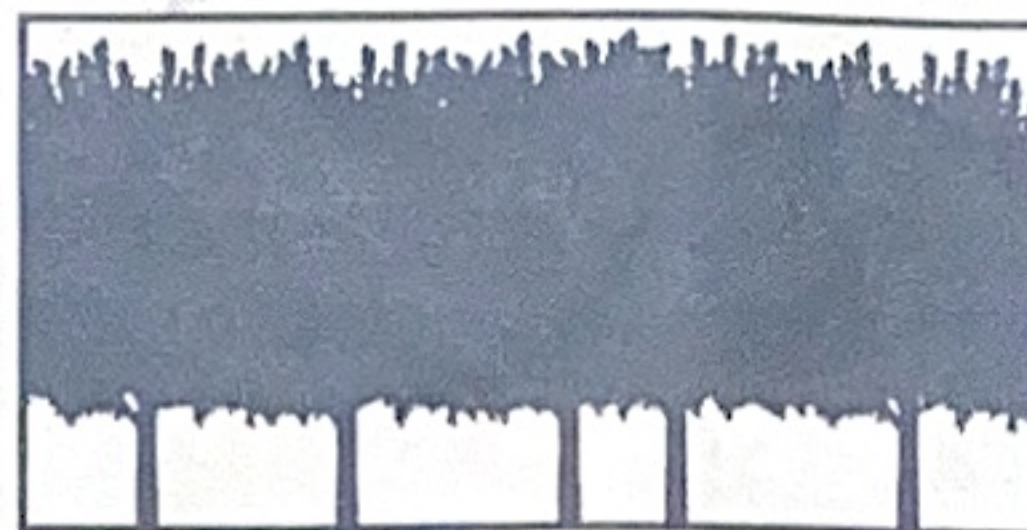
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# Earth Corps developing community through gardening on vacant commercial lots

by Toby Maloney

Earth Corps is expanding its impact on the West Broadway neighbourhood of Winnipeg and its all positive. What started as a community garden project to clean up some vacant lots and involve more people in gardening has spilled over into a force for organizing the community.

Earth Corps volunteer David Delorme, who gardens with his family on a lot owned by Sooters on Maryland, says that this year Earth Corps gardeners will be working the land on 15 separate lots, including a large lot on Sherbrook, totalling two and a half acres.

## Community building overshadows economic or environmental benefit

While environmental benefits are at the back of everyone's mind the project "serves a lot of different purposes. The kids needed a cleaner spot

to play and we of an age to bored with playground, the wasted space made the neighbourhood look unkempt and now the neighbourhoods serve as a meeting spot.

"We're protecting and preserving the neighbourhood, Delorme says.

Twenty to 30 families have signed up for plots but there are a lot more volunteers and this year one big member going by the name of Mulvey School. Mulvey's 190 students will all get out into the gardens in the neighbourhood under the supervision of teachers and Earth Corps coordinators.

"The school is really behind it 100 per cent. It's going to get the kids out and get some community spirit happening."

Delorme already knows that neighbourhood kids are supportive of the gardens because of last years experience. The gardens saw next to zero vandalism last year while there was a lot of interest from youths who dropped by to supervise and to sample some of the produce.

This year the kids will get a chance to pitch in.

## Getting to know each other

The school involvement is exciting because it is providing a positive forum for volunteers and neighbourhood gardeners to get know the kids rather than over some conflict. Delorme is hoping, weather permitting, there will be some produce for the students before summer break, but he's also hoping some of the students will stick with their class plot through the

Continued on next page

## Food security resources Groups and contacts working on food gardening and agricultural issues

Organic Producers Association of Manitoba, 1-748-1315 (certifying body and marketing coop/farmer and public education)

World Food Day/Manitoba Council for International Cooperation  
Contact Mamy Fyfe 786-2106 (food security)

Janine Gibson/Northern Sun Farm Cooperative, 1-434-6018  
(rural support network)

Harvest Natural Foods Collective, 877 Westminster Ave. 772-4359  
(organic food coop/public education)

Sunflower Community Market Coop, 664 Corydon, 475-1459  
(organic food coop/public education)

Earth Corps, 772-5074

(community gardens, inner city community development)

Wholesome Food Buying Group, Dan Schafers, 831-8522  
(coordinates organic buying clubs)

Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council, 477-4483  
(immigrant agriculture)

Marquis Project, 1-727-5675  
(Development issues)

Neechi Foods Community Store, 586-5597

(worker coop, outreach/education, inner city economic development)

Winnipeg Harvest, 982-3663 (foodbank, public education)

Interlake Citizens for a Clean Environment/Pesticide Watch  
Interlake Group, contact Ellen Francis, 1-376-5133 (raising concerns about hog barns/herbicide and pesticide use)

Winnipeg Vegetarian Association, Dennis 789-3725  
(education/promotion about vegetarian/vegan diets)

Green and Growing (public education about organics) 452-9748

Shared Farming: for a list of shared farms in Manitoba see page 5  
Manitoba Eco-Network: (public education, contacts, resources)

## More Reread ...

### Don't "dangerize" cycling

Bicycle helmet Laws took a knocking in a recent issue of *Imagine: Journal of World Without Cars*. Physician Thomas J. Demarco's article "Don't Kill the Egg that Lays the Golden Egg: why the medical community should cease support of mandatory helmets for cyclists" was reprinted from the Canadian Medical association Journal. Demarco argued that the medical profession is "dangerizing" an otherwise healthful activity by stressing headgear protection over structural changes to transportation policy (ie. safe cycling routes, automobile abatement, traffic calming measures). Demarco quotes estimable authorities Henry David Thoreau ("There are a hundred who would hack at the branches of evil for every one who attacks the root") and T.J. Freewheeler ("Forcing cyclists to wear helmets is like merely giving aspirin to a headache sufferer whose underlying pathology is a brain tumour. Bicycle accidents are not a disease, they're only symptoms of a "tumour" called driving.")

Demarco suggest facetiously that motorists could also reduce head injuries if they wore helmets and ended by saying "Cycling is not a problem—it is a solution. We should not be discouraging it by advocating laws that will drive cyclists from our roads."



summer. Earth Corps still has some bikes left from its bike project a few years back and is offering bikes for garden labour. In any case the whole school will be welcome again at harvest time in the fall.

Since the lots hosting the gardens, most of them commercial lots that have been vacant for years, aren't exactly Class 1 agricultural land the undertaking means a lot of work just to prepare for planting, restoration really. First the lots need to be cleared of litter, concrete building materials and large stones. Topsoil is imported where possible and the digging is done by hand.

Still Delorme says his plot "was pretty productive last year. We pulled out boxes and boxes of tomatoes."

Delorme says that scrounging up a truck and tractor is in the works for the work of restoring the lots but an even bigger need is for gardening tools. The group is down to just one hoe, and four or five decrepit shovels and sure would appreciate donations of any unused tools in your basement or shed.

#### Building the soil

One new development this year is some well composted manure from Assiniboia Downs racetrack. That should make the job of scratching up some vegetables a little easier. The gardeners are composting vigorously to build the soil on the lots.

Local Body Shop stores have made the Earth Corps community gardens their pet charity. A percentage of T-Shirt sales is going to Earth Corps and some volunteer hours from Body shop employees



will keep help keep the garden project well maintained through the season. About ten hours a week of volunteer time will go to the project from the Body Shop employees.

Delorme is philosophical about the possibility that the lots will be sold after putting so much work into them.

"If it gets sold from underneath us let's hope some housing goes in there. None of us really owns land, anyway — we're just borrowing," he says.

*To donate tools or to volunteer for the Earth Corps Community Garden project call 772-5074 or drop by one of the gardens.*

### The Manitoba Eco-Network, P.O. Box 26007 Winnipeg, MB R3C 4K9

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