



# Finding Common Ground

MAY 2024

## Up Front

During our April 27 Community in the Round session, Kimberly Sanchez, Executive Director of Community Home Trust (CHT), gave a presentation about what a CHT is and how it can help provide affordable housing options for members who are interested in building homes in Common Ground Ecovillage.

Their vision is a world in which barriers are removed for those wanting a home they can afford, and all individuals have long-term access to a safe home where they can thrive, work, and grow.

CHT lowers the cost to the homebuyer by:

- granting a land lease around the house (only the cost of the house is included in the mortgage; fees for the land lease are paid directly to CHT)

- having no down payment
- helping homebuyers get mortgages
- limiting a homebuyer's mortgage to 30 percent of the purchaser's available income
- limiting property taxes (because CHT is a non-profit)

There were lots of questions for Kimberly, and no doubt there will be many more. For more information about the Community Home Trust, get in touch with [Becky](#).

Also during the Community in the Round, Paul gave a short history of Common Ground Ecovillage, culminating in a rationale for naming our road after a local resident and activist.

If you missed it, check out the video recording [here](#).



Quaye organized a tour with Annabel Renwick, the curator of the Blomquist Garden for Native Plants at Duke Gardens. The group learned about soil preparation and native plants, helpful information for CGEV.

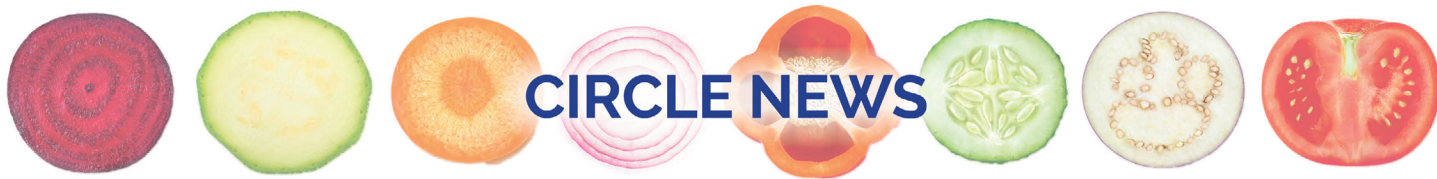
## COMMUNITY EVENTS SNAPSHOT

See the "All About Events" section below for details.

- ◆ **Racial Awareness Reading and Reflection Group**, Mondays, 7-8 p.m.
- ◆ **Golden Hour Magic**, Mondays, 7:15-8:15 p.m.
- ◆ **Heart Share**, May 17, 7-9 p.m.
- ◆ **Community on the Ground**, May 25, 3-5 p.m.
- ◆ **Community Potluck**, May 25, 5:30-7:30 p.m.
- ◆ **Tours of the land by request**, Contact [Lisa](#)

BANNER ABOVE: Lucas gives people a tour of our farm during the Piedmont Farm Tour.





## PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT CIRCLE

We have just filed our application with Orange County to vacate our current Master Plan Zoning and return to base zoning (R1 conventional). This is to enable us to develop an alternative site plan using the Unified Development Ordinance's Flexible Development – Conservation Cluster framework for a similarly compact but smaller and lot-based village layout. This approach is now much more feasible for us given our membership and resources but is precluded under our current zoning.

Approval will be a five- to six-month process. In parallel with our rezoning application, we are continuing in high gear to work out a Conservation Cluster-based site plan, septic layout, and cost estimates so that we can begin to consolidate building and financing plans. Recently our soil-scientist subcontractor spent a day on

the land laying out possible septic fields to make sure we can fit what we need into the tight spaces available. Building location and massing (how building shapes relate to each other) are next up for thorough consideration. Another big issue to be sorted out is parking.

There are tasks in the upcoming processes for everyone! At the April Community in the Round, we shared a document outlining the development-related tasks before us. Check it out [here](#). Please consider stepping forward to help with some of these tasks.

Pod planning (forming co-buying groups and clarifying preferences and possibilities for alternative living arrangements) also needs to continue.

Very soon we will be looking to our likely first resident-builders to make a major financial commitment and begin architectural and other individual and small-group planning in earnest.

## MEMBERSHIP CIRCLE

Membership Circle members engaged in conversation with many visitors during the Piedmont Farm Tour on the weekend of April 20-21. An updated information sheet was created for the occasion.

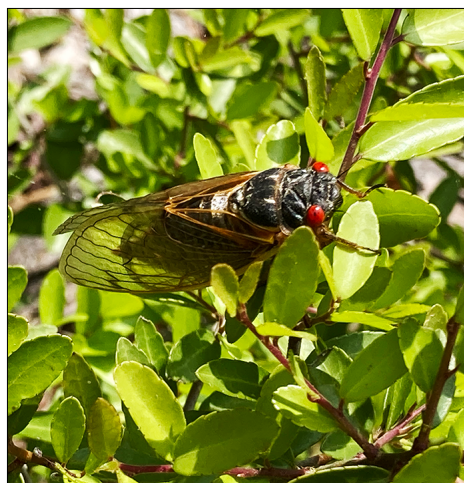
Big thanks to Amy and Krystal Leach Smith, Ruthie Halberstadt and Jennifer Raum for organizing a family camp-out following the potluck supper on April 27. It was lovely to see friendships growing among the kids.

Instead of holding monthly Fresh Take Information Sessions, we are preparing the same information in video format. This will be available on our website. Two of the segments are done, and a third is being edited.



Abigail plants an herb garden.

*Photo by Hope*



A cicada perches on a Yaupon Holly tree. Spring 2024 is expected to have the largest cicada spike in 200 years.

*Photo by Hope*





*Photos by Robby*

Randy plants a fringe tree (left) in honor of Theresa Jensen before she leaves for a two-year stay in Guam. Theresa adds dirt (center) to the tree's site while Jane and others look on, and (right) Theresa smiles while her fellow community members toast her and wish her well.

## **MEMBERSHIP, continued**

A fringe tree was planted near the bee hives on the land in honor of Theresa Jensen, a former member of the Membership Circle, before she left for a two-year stay in Guam. We wish her all the best and cross our fingers that she will return and come live with us in the community when she returns!

After the monthly Community in the Round meeting, we had our regular potluck. That was followed by a fire circle replete with s'mores and then a campout initiated by families with kids. A relatively sleepless night ensued, but the morning brought a great potluck breakfast. Once the parents had coffee and tea, they shared the children's joy as they visited each other tent by tent, explored the life cycle of the cicadas happening all around them, and then moved to the farm to harvest (and eat) snap peas and carrots.



Ruthie watches kids (left), and Yamuna harvests carrots from the farm (above) during a campout April 27 on the land.

## **GOVERNANCE & COMMUNICATIONS CIRCLE**

G&CC is collaborating with Membership Circle to draft Community Agreements for Common Ground members to discuss, alter as needed, and consent to. These agreements will be divided into the two broad categories of social/cultural (led by Membership Circle) and systemic/administrative (led by G&CC).

Please check out our Common Ground Community Forum. You'll find important community discussions, information sharing, and ways to get to know your fellow Common Ground members. If you're having any trouble with the forum or with any of our technology (such as OnlyOffice, RiseUp, commonground.eco, etc.) reach out to [support@commonground.eco](mailto:support@commonground.eco).

If you're interested in contributing to the work of the IT Task Group, please email [IT@commonground.eco](mailto:IT@commonground.eco). (Note: You don't have to be a techie ...)



A honey bee dines on kale flower nectar.

Do you have news or pictures to share?  
Send them to Roshana at [roshanamail@gmail.com](mailto:roshanamail@gmail.com).



## LAND STEWARDSHIP CIRCLE

The Piedmont Farm tour was a smashing success! The garden and barn space are looking better than ever and almost 200 guests came out to tour our farm operation. Many heap praise on us for our efforts to create stronger community and agriculture locally. Many thanks to everyone who showed up to the beautification work party the weekend before!

Our full season intern, Kai, arrived in April and has immediately settled into the swing of things on the land and in the garden. From Kai:

*"Hi, I'm Kai Madrone, the new farm intern here at Full Table. Wherever I am in the world and my life, I'm all about living on land, in community ... so I'm grateful to have found Common Ground and all the wonderful like-minded, like-hearted folks who are here."*

*Through the years I've gardened and happily supported my local farmers in Oregon, Colorado, and*



*Baja, México, and I'm so inspired to be on the farm here—delving deeper with life-long interests of organic food, permaculture, sustainable building, regenerative agriculture, communal living, and cultivating a more intimate relationship with the land. I love that we're all connected*

*via these beautiful vegetables. Come stop on by the farm and say hi sometime!"*

## CIRCLE MEETINGS DIGEST

### PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

**Tuesdays, May 7 & 21, 6:30-8:30 p.m., mostly via Zoom, but trying to meet more in person.**

RSVP to Anthony with subject P&D: [weston@elon.edu](mailto:weston@elon.edu)

### MEMBERSHIP

**Tuesday policy meetings, May 7 & 21, 3-5 p.m. via Zoom, with task meetings on alternate Tuesdays.**

RSVP to Lisa with subject "Membership Circle": [LBerley@yahoo.com](mailto:LBerley@yahoo.com)

### GOVERNANCE & COMMUNICATION

**Thursday, May 9, 7-9 p.m., Zoom**  
RSVP to Quai with G&CC in the subject line: [quaifranklin@gmail.com](mailto:quaifranklin@gmail.com)

If you're interested in observing or helping with G&CC work, please send your request to [gov-com@commonground.eco](mailto:gov-com@commonground.eco).

### GENERAL CIRCLE

**Sunday, May 12, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Zoom only; and May 26, 2-6 p.m., Zoom and in-person at the Nest**

**in Mebane.**

RSVP to Becky with subject "GC", 2 days in advance: [Blaskody@gmail.com](mailto:Blaskody@gmail.com)

Come and observe to find out what's happening with all Circles at CGEV and how you can be involved.

### LAND STEWARDSHIP

**Tuesday, May 14, 7-8:30 p.m., Zoom and at the Barn.**

RSVP with subject LSC to Doug: [dr.tobagopepper@gmail.com](mailto:dr.tobagopepper@gmail.com)



Rachel and Doug bring tarps in from the field (left), while Bubbles finds a place to watch all the action (above) during the Barn and Farm Beautification Day, getting ready for the Piedmont Farm Tour.



## ALL ABOUT EVENTS

### GET INVOLVED

- ◆ All events are in **Eastern Time** and open to everyone unless otherwise indicated. **You must RSVP** for details and last-minute changes.
- ◆ **COVID Policy:** For your safety and others', bring a mask in case it is needed. At CGEV, we protect those most vulnerable.
- ◆ **Accessibility:** At this stage in our development, terrain is unpaved and uneven, and restrooms are not wheelchair-accessible.
- ◆ **Google Calendar Link:** [CGEV Calendar](#)
- ◆ To **add or change an event**, email Ren at [ren.enberg2@gmail.com](mailto:ren.enberg2@gmail.com)

### TOURS OF THE LAND

Are you a new Common Ground member or a curious person who is thinking of joining? We regularly hold tours of the land on the 4th Saturday of the month at 1:30 p.m. **(May 25)** You can also schedule a tour at an alternate time.

Contact Lisa at and put "Request for Tour" in the subject line: [Lberley@yahoo.com](mailto:Lberley@yahoo.com).

### RACIAL AWARENESS BOOK GROUP

Membership Circle  
**Every Monday, 7-8 p.m., Zoom**  
Contact Lisa to join with subject "Racial Awareness Book Group": [lberley@yahoo.com](mailto:lberley@yahoo.com)  
Our current book is *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi. This group was formed in 2021 to help increase our awareness and understanding of racism in its many forms. This is a safe place to learn together. The weekly format helps build trust and a habit of paying regular attention to this work. Please join us!

### GOLDEN HOUR MAGIC

Land Stewardship Circle  
**Mondays, 7:15-8:15 p.m.**  
RSVP to Lucas: [lucas.babinec@posteo.net](mailto:lucas.babinec@posteo.net)  
This could be a shared yoga practice, nature appreciation, or any other activity that encourages us to be present with the wonder of life around us and within us. Contact Lucas for more info.

### MONTHLY HEART SHARE

HeartWeavers Subcircle  
**Friday, May 17, 7-9 p.m., Zoom.**  
Organizers and co-facilitators: Ren Enberg & Quai Derr, [Heart\\_Share@commonground.eco](mailto:Heart_Share@commonground.eco)  
Come and get to know other members on a much deeper level as we practice both compassion and vulnerability. This month's theme: Identity and Belonging: Are These My People? We'll explore how important this is to each of us in the context of community..

### COMMUNITY ON THE GROUND (formerly Community in the Round)

Governance & Communications Circle

**Saturday, May 25, 3-5 p.m., Zoom and in-person at the Nest in Mebane.**

RSVP to Becky, subject "COG": [Blaskody@gmail.com](mailto:Blaskody@gmail.com)  
These all-member meetings are reliably informative and connecting for all involved. We'll speak to what's most relevant when the time comes and follow the meeting with a potluck supper. You'll get to know each other and learn a lot! Make it a habit to come to these events.

### COMMUNITY POTLUCK

Membership Circle  
**Saturday, May 25, 5:30-7:30 p.m., location TBA.**

Watch for an announcement or contact Lisa: [lberley@yahoo.com](mailto:lberley@yahoo.com). No RSVP required.  
Potlucks are our time to break bread together and socialize, play, sometimes chew over the Community on the Ground meeting content. Please bring something to share. Typically vegetable dishes predominate, but all



Randy and Jane load a truck with stuff to dispose during the Barn and Garden Beautification Day.



## EVENTS, continued

sorts of foods are welcome. Just bring a list of ingredients or jot them down when you come. Location will either be on the land or at an indoor location.

Watch for an email announcement.

### SAVE THE DATE!

**Wellness Retreat for CGEV folks,  
Saturday, June 15,  
9 a.m.-3 p.m., on the land**

Connect with your bodies, yourselves, and the fruits of the land with movement, teas, foraging, and more.

More information to come — contact Shannon for details: [shannontrudeau101@gmail.com](mailto:shannontrudeau101@gmail.com).

## MEMBER HAPPENINGS



The whole family pitched in to plant a Southern Magnolia tree (left) atop their new baby, August's, placenta. A Red Maple tree (right) is planted for Wesley.

*CGEV Members may list their events not sponsored by CGEV Circles as an FYI. Supply title, date, time, location, links, and description.*

**Ruthie Halberstadt and Kenny Montgomery planted trees in honor of their little ones,** Wesley Winter Montstadt (3 1/2 years old) and August Orion Montstadt (10 months old) in April, with Hope, Paul, and doting grandparents (Anthony and Amy) in attendance. In keeping with indigenous traditions, the children's placentas were placed at the bottom of the growing pit to nourish the trees and connect the children to the land. Wesley's red maple was planted near the pavilion and fire circle, and August's magnolia was planted near the pond.



**Melanie Yukov is bringing her Herbalicious Explorations classes to Old Mill Farm in Durham!** These classes are open to those 7 years and older (exceptions made) with a focus on Herbal Mocktail Creations! May 11th is our next date followed by June 13th. Three spots are open for May and June.

The classes are held from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Saturdays. For more information, visit [root2risewellness.org/herbaliciousexplore](http://root2risewellness.org/herbaliciousexplore) or contact Melanie at [info@root2risewellness.org](mailto:info@root2risewellness.org).

July, August, and October classes are slotted to be at Common Ground. Stay tuned!

## OUTSIDE EVENT

**Advanced Beginners Chainsaw Course, May 16, 8:30-4:30 p.m.**

### Forest Stewards Guild

We are excited to announce that we are hosting this course in partnership with the Treeist and Carolina

Land and Lakes RC&D on May 16 at Lake James State Park! We are limited to 20 people, so sign up now.

For more information and to register, visit: [foreststewardsguild.org/event/womens-chainsaw-workshop-advanced-beginner/](http://foreststewardsguild.org/event/womens-chainsaw-workshop-advanced-beginner/)



Baby August enjoys playing in the red soil on the farm.