

Community Homestead Spring 2020

501 280th Street, Osceola, WI 54020 715-294-3038 www.communityhomestead.org

Mission: “to establish and maintain a community so that people with developmental and other disabilities can reach their fullest human potential”

Living in Community Homestead ~ Malika Obeidi

When I came to Community Homestead towards the end of summer last year, I couldn't possibly know what to expect my life to be like, but the moment I met everyone I knew that I'm surrounded by level-headed people who have their heart in the right spot. Coming as a volunteer from Germany I was confronted with a different language and culture and a totally different social environment. That never was a problem though.

I lived in Morning Glory where I learned pretty quickly that I'm good the way I am and all the times I talked with Christine and Richard made clear to me that I'm about to embark on a new and life changing journey and that I should embrace everything with an open mind.

As the days passed, I bonded with people and made friends. I was always looking forward to the days with Eric and Shannon where we met at farmhouse and played games or all the other late nights with Tony, Sebastian, Yari, Yainet and Fabian playing Dungeons and Dragons. I also look back to all the deep conversations I had with Alex while we were either weeding strawberries or harvesting tomatoes. Being in the garden gave me a lot as well, since Nadine and Adrien taught me things

about gardening I didn't know before. In addition to that I was able to spend a lot of time with everyone. Be it the project of finishing Tournesol with Stephen, Brendan and Scott or playing with Oaken, Elias and Isaac during my housecrew or while weaving a rug. My felting and puzzle crews also were a lot of fun especially when I saw

what cute gnomes Mackenzie and Oscar felted or what nice colors Hannah, Max or Travis S. chose to paint the various puzzles that turned out pretty good in the end. But it's not just that! It's about all those moments where everyone got together for community lunch and potluck to spend time with one another.

I can't say how thankful I am to have gotten the chance to live in such a nice place. A place where there is acceptance and support.

A place where you can grow and become a better person. It's unfortunate that I had to leave earlier than planned, but I know that I can always come back because Community Homestead is part of my life now. A part that is very much appreciated.

Thank you for that wonderful time and for everything it gave me!



Scott, Nastia and Malika

New Arrival ~ Hannah Gregor

My name is Hannah Gregor and I am 23 years old. I come from Spooner WI. I have my brother, sister, and mother and father.

I wanted to do something different apart from the every-day things I was doing since I graduated high school. I was babysitting my brother, cleaning the house, sometimes watching tv and talking to friends online but it was the same thing day in, day out.

Pete, my caseworker and Christy my guardian, told me about Community Homestead. They said, "there are people you would like and activities you like to do and it sounds like it's up your alley". When I came here to start with I thought it was nice but scary because I would not be with my parents. I moved in at the end of October.

Now I live at Morning Glory. Its different from the house I used to live in with my family. It is much bigger. There's lots of fun people. And my brother and sister are not here, and I don't share my room, which is a good thing! I like it a lot.

I really like doing stuff. I do things for the cows with Eric and Shannon, like giving them food. Travis is a friend of mine. He comes for the day. He is funny and he says nice things to me when we work together. I do garden stuff with Nadine and Adrian and I like being around them because



Desi and Hannah at the Mystery Party

they remind me of my Grandparents.

I have learned I can trust people more (some people). I can buy things by myself and keep track of my money now without my parents having to do that, which was weird when you think about it. I have never really had friends except maybe a few in high school but now I have some good friends. Desi feels more like a sister-friend to me. She is odd in a good way and always funny. Nastia is new and she

is really lovely to be around even though she thinks she isn't. She's really nice. I like being around Tony. He is so nice because you can ask him anything, no question is too weird to ask and that is what makes me comfortable. Fabian is funny and Malika has a big personality. Yari is super cheerful and bubbly. They had to leave because they are from Germany and there is Covid. Malika is going to give me her gmail so I can keep up in contact with her until I get my

facebook up again. We can also skype.

I am looking forward to new people coming but I am also nervous because I am scared about meeting new people. I think I am getting a little better at that and I have familiarized myself with people in town when I go with Desi. I go to a Latin American Dance class that is held at the Osceola Intermediate school and the teacher is really nice. I joined the Osceola Library and I take out mostly military books.

The Mystery Party ~ Desirae Peterson

On February 15th Community Homestead held a Chicago's World Fair Murder Mystery Party.

Everyone had a role in the party, Hannah Gregor and I had the roles of two sisters who were having their "coming out" debut into Chicago's high society community. Everyone played their roles to a "T". The children had a great time during the party in my opinion.

I think the most amusing moment during the party was when Alex (playing the role as the wife of the murder victim) threw herself to the floor wailing in grief from hearing the news that her husband (the murder victim) was dead. Everyone tried so hard not to laugh but it was so funny because no one was prepared and Alex's acting caught everyone off guard and no one could call up a proper reaction for a few seconds. At the end of the party it was revealed that it was the wife who murdered her husband.



Tony, Shannon, Linda, Isaac

The New House ~ Mary Elmquist

We all in Community Homestead have awaited with great anticipation the completion of the new house. Well, it has happened! As things stand at present with the Covid Virus shut downs, dates and days run into each other so there is not an exact date when we moved. Asger and the animals, two cats and a dog, were the first to move in and sleep and then, a week later Mary moved.

Within days, the stay-at-home was enacted and our house, for now, runs separately from everyone else. This odd schedule has given us a wonderful opportunity to establish the household, to create the different spaces, to build shelves and so on.

When we were searching for a name for the house we knew the name had to do with the sun because of all of our solar panels. The usual names came up; Sunnyside, Sun View, Sunshine; they all have been used over and over and particularly for retirement homes! Although this house has been built as an elder-friendly house, those names just didn't seem to fit. We finally landed on Tournesol, the French name for the sunflower.

Learning to Love a House ~ Brendan Bennet

It's hard to love anything right away. For a lot of people, especially me, the first thing I tend to notice are things that I don't like. However, Alex, Desi, Steve, are three things that I do like, and we are now living together in Evening Star. Alex and I have been together for some amount of years which she graciously reminds me of when I ask, but I do know it's substantial. Desi has lived with Alex and I since she came to Community Homestead. Steve, for those of you who don't know him, is an older gentleman with a playful heart and helpful spirit. Technically he's been waiting for us at Evening Star for several months before we moved. The four of us make a good team living together, and we enjoy a healthy amount of laughter.

A house is a dynamic thing and you can't expect to like everything right away. Not to mention this is an older house, and anyone who has lived in an older house is aware of the multitude of funny things that can come with it. Personally, funny old houses are all I've ever known, so it's just a matter of getting to know this one. In love, whether people, animals, or objects, you take it as it is and learn to love it in its entirety. This means loving the quirks, oddities, and nonsensical parts. As you grow with things you love, both you and they may change.

When we moved in, as is common to people moving into a new house, we wanted to change things, and we had a good list: Clean the carpets, paint the walls, paint more walls, tear out the carpets in the other room, knock down

This is a very beautiful house, filled with light, and has a very harmonious atmosphere. It has not had an easy journey to build it, and it has been a long one. Many people have been involved in its creation, beginning with a small building group of Richard, Chelsea, Tony, Asger and Mary. We would meet weekly or as needed. After we created a plan with all the things we needed, Richard ran with it to make it into a solar and net zero energy house, found builders and contractors, and carried all the headaches. This house would not be what it is without him. Then came various builders and then the last six months saw our own community builders taking over; Steve Brackett, Brenden, Steve Fons, Joel, Scott, Alex Hanson, Shannon, Sebastian, Oscar, and various German volunteers. Once a week, Gary Schauls came to help and everyone made it very much a community effort.

We are deeply grateful to have our home blessed by so many. We lived in Evening Star for 17 years and now Brenden and Alex, Desi, and Steve have moved in and already made it their home with creativity and joy. We look forward to having them as neighbors.



Brendan, Alex and Desi

a portion of a wall, install a new stove, install a new toilet, paint the kitchen cabinets, and a load of deep cleaning. This work order ranged from absolutely necessary, to, "hey that would look nice", to everything in between. Not a single chore has gone through without everyone who lives here pitching in in some way. In turn, that's deepened our friendships and our friendship with the house. As a group, we are making it our house.

Mary and Asger Elmquist, two of the past residents of this house who saw to its well-being have said to me many times before, during, and after our moving in, "we love that house". One morning I woke up, and this house which has windows on nearly every wall was spilling light through it. It was warm and very quiet. Nobody else was awake and the cats weren't pestering me for food. Not all of the furniture was set up so there was plenty of empty space around my body. I could feel the shell of the house protecting me beyond that space. It was a very serene and peaceful moment where I noticed some special energy which I came to recognize as the house's. At that moment, I started falling in love with this house.

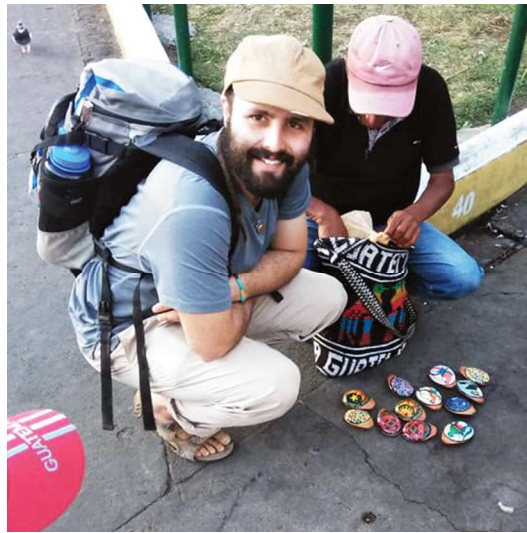
Guatemala Adventure

~ Tony Bodelson

In the end of February, Kelly, Scott, Oscar, Janette, Brendan and myself took a trip of a lifetime down to Guatemala to visit Caitlin, a good friend of mine as well as the community's. We were there for ten nights, spending most of them in Guatemala City, in a fancy AirBnB.

We spent the first couple of days catching up with Caitlin and exploring all that the capital city had to offer; wonderful food, beautiful museums, delicious cuisine, wonderful art, some tasty treats, exciting markets, and did I mention that the food we had was amazing? When asked about the trip, Kelly said, "We stayed in a nice vacation house. The guy was really friendly who let us stay there. We went on a boat ride and stayed one night on bunk beds. I had a new drink with beer and tomato juice. I had chips and Guacamole."

We also took some time to go check out the old capital of Guatemala, Antigua. This is where we did a lot of our souvenir shopping, as well as took a tour of a coffee plantation, a macadamia nut farm, a local weaving and a few more museums. We could have easily spent our whole trip in Antigua. Oscar had fond memories when asked about the trip. "Brendan did most of the driving. He kept going around in circles because the highways are different from ours. We went to a coffee farm and a hazelnut farm. Brendan was a hard bargainer. When we went to the markets this woman would hold out fabric things and Tony would



say, "don't touch the fabric" so Brendan wouldn't buy it. But Brendan always touched it. We all cracked up laughing. Everyone who went on that trip got a photo book!"

I asked Janette what her favorite part of the trip was and she got quiet and thought hard before answering "Maya museums" which we visited many of while we were there. We saw a lot of traditional Mayan weaving, a lot of pictures and some active Mayan ceremonies being performed. We also spent a morning visiting Ixcihme, an old Mayan capital which was filled

with ruins where we could walk around and really get close to some of the old architecture.

We spent an overnight at this beautiful lake, created between several volcanoes, called Lake Atitlan. After a long drive, and a few boat rides we stayed at a hostel right on the lake. Scott said that his favorite part of the trip was the lake. "The camaraderie and being together as

a group was nice. It was nice to be able to hang out and chat with people and see new things." We were able to boat around and check out a few of the towns right on the lake. They all seemed to have their own personalities, but they were all beautiful.

By the end we were all exhausted and ready to come home to our own beds. All in all, it was a beautiful trip full of cultural exploration, site seeing, relaxing, and did I mention great food? We had such a lovely time and look forward to what the future can hold for our next grand adventure.

*Top: Brendan-don't touch the fabric!
Middle: Oscar, Kelly, Janette, Scott
Bottom: Tony expressing himself*





Nastia and her photos of animals around the farm



First Week at Community Homestead ~ Nastia Baerg

Monday was the barn in the morning.

With cows, feeding them, put them outside for about 1 hours and then bring them in again

I took the extra food to the calfs pen and feed them

Afternoon, I was with Richard doing a gas thing to put it in the greenhouse. And we cleaned up the mess we made.

Orchard was on Tuesday morning

I put raspberries in dirt in the ground. I cleaned up the sticks. I scuba dived in the recycling to get some boxes for the orchard.

The afternoon was in the barn.

I was cleaning up the cows and play with the cats. I feed the cows some grain and some minerals too.

The "New" Berry Grove ~ Chelsea Wagner and Sandra Volberding

In October, our family moved across the street to the old farmhouse at Berry Grove. We went through an intense few weeks of house projects, and then Sandra moved in right after Thanksgiving. Sandy, who alternates between ever the optimist and ever the pessimist, is very optimistic about our new home today!

Sandy what was moving like for you?

I like moving!

Leaned about fish I like.

What does moving have to do with fish?

I like fish. I like em. I like the room I live in.

And your fish live there too?

(Smiles, nods.)

So what else would you tell people about Berry Grove?

It's beautiful! Not yet, but it will be. Oh boy.

Wednesday morning was Garden

I put the seeds in the dirt and their names are Red Russian Kale and Lacinto Kale and washed the wooden trays

Thursday was Garden in the morning

I put seeds in dirt and made more squares mud to put more seeds in

Afternoon was barn. We have a cow going to have her baby soon. I was cleaning a stable and putting new bedding in.

Friday was:

Orchard in the morning I dug some plants. I was taking some sticks to the fire place

Afternoon was Richard.

We did the syrup and he was funny and I was cleaning up for the syrup.



What do you look forward to?

Being out doors. Being out more often. More sunny weather. Memorial day, roasting em. (hot dogs)

Sandy, what is different about living at Berry Grove?

Just lovely as can be here. I love it!

Maple Syrup Season ~Richard Elmquist

In a continuous effort to improve our sap collection, this year we installed a 1500 foot Main Line. This would deliver our sap closer to the farm and save us driving through the muddy field access road. In "Mud Season" this always destroys both the road and the field edge which is rough on the vehicle, creates ruts that last for years and causes all sorts of erosion.

The Main Line is a high density tube that we strung up between 4 and 8 feet above the ground. A high tensile wire reduces sags and (pre-Covid 19), all of Morning Glory, Steve

Brckett and his boys, Alex Brendan, Desi, Mark Dustin, Hillary, all came to lend a hand, clipping brush, stringing up the tube and worrying with me about if it was all really going down hill.



Desi, Hannah, Malika, Hillary, Kelly and Oscar

We rearranged some of our tap lines, and ended up with 630 taps. This might seem a lot but we have mainly Silver Maple Trees on a dry, north facing, hillside so the sugar/tap ratio is pretty low. We do our best!

The best thing about Maple Syrup is that it gets us all out in the woods in the early spring. A sense of camaraderie and community is out there when teams of people are out tapping, sometimes out of sight but always within hearing, chatting and laughing, and experiencing the coming of Spring.

Almost everyone was out there at one time or another, and we ended up making

90 gallons of maple syrup which is double as much as last year. We also broke our record of 63 gallons. So all in all, really good news!

Coming and Going ~ Christine Elmquist

In this season of goodbye it takes a bit of effort to think of all the lovely people who we have met in the last six months. So these memories shine well: Batyah, Amar, Theresa, Fabian, Lauren, Hibernia students, Julian, Luca, and Lucas who were here last summer as well as our day crew; Blake, Danny, Karin, Josh, Max, Jackson and Doran, joining our regular community members. It is hard not to think of last summer without wondering what the next one brings!

As fall arrived our year-long volunteers Maresa, Janice and Niels returned to Germany, and Malika and Yainet arrived to begin their gap year with Fruende while Yari came for 6 months with IJGD. Fabian, who we now consider our international commuter volunteer, returned for six weeks. Zach Grand also came back for a month between his studies in India and his Fullbright in Argentina. Peppered into all this were the weekly efforts of our local volunteers, Cheryl Beardslee, Lynne and Gary Schauls, Lois Peterson, Maureen McElrath, Jane Campbell, and Peggy Geskerman. And now, with

our international volunteers recalled to Germany amid a lot of angst and unhappiness, and no school groups for the first time in 25 years, we are down to our carrying group and no visitors or volunteers at all! (gasp)

We still hope that although Covid forced some to leave, Americans may come as, in turn, they find Covid has limited their international options. We are singing, "Don't cry for me Argentina" under our breath in hopes of Zach's return and are guiltily elated to hear previous volunteers Batyah Selis and Charlotte Howland's plans have been derailed so they are coming here instead. Claire Scanga who was here 2 summers ago also responded to our call for help. Add to that the unexpected arrival of Maya Celander back home for the summer. Hearing all this is like hearing the galloping of Covid Cavalry!

Idealistic, practical, community, garden, baking, fun-folks, step on up. This is an opportunity for you! Summer or a year, let's explore.

Lock Down ~ Christine Elmquist

A community under a “Stay at Home” order requires a lot of thought and, like most people, a cloud of little losses, and a search for the silver linings.

Alert to the cluster of high-risk friends we have with us, people who are elderly and have underlying medical conditions, we were quick to respond to the oncoming pandemic. First thing to lose was our thriving and happy Day Program. Our community members, Terra, Alex, Jon, Christina, Max, Stephan, Clark and the two Traveses, who all live with their families in the local area, could no longer come. That was a huge loss.

Our social life which orbits every business in town plus the library came to a screeching halt, and I use my words wisely. No more Special Olympics. No more hanging with town friends. This took a while for some to work through the grieving process and accept that no one was to blame! Now, a once a week masked forage in town is completed by one person, usually Tony, on behalf of the community. And yes, people make sure they press their \$5 and a request for Jolly Ranchers into his hand on Monday night as well as requesting necessities like cornstarch and cabbage!

And then our wonderful young German volunteers were called home by their governments, which was really sad. And then our incoming international volunteers started having to cancel. Not only was this emotionally tough, it adds to the practical challenge, how to do all of this without their efforts and sparkle.

The rest of the community assessed the various “bridges” we have into the larger community and set about minimizing exposure. Our two houses with children formed a separate “pod” to support each other with child-care and distanced themselves from the rest of the community. We

all moved activities out of the community center. Now any inside activity takes place for, by, and within an individual household. Our community work continues within



Alex, Oscar and Yari

“we are sequestered in Paradise. I don’t think we have anything to complain about”. He is right. Alex noted that she has an acre for every square foot her apartment dwelling friend in California has. We can ramble the woods together but apart. The days are warming up and we can do outdoor yoga. We discovered pod campfires: every house

with its own fire, S’mores and bread on a stick 30 feet from the next fire. Our households, five of them newly shuffled the week before the state orders, are getting the opportunity to discover their team identities intensively.

We are tuning into the increasing light of the days, the waking up of the earth and the excitement of all other creatures awaiting summer right around

the corner (apparently birds and squirrels are not obsessed by CNN). And yes, like many people, we sit on a bubble of anxiety, worrying about loss of income in our already shoestring budget, about how we will manage if no volunteers come, about people here getting sick, about loved ones in harm’s ways, about our main street, and neighbors and all their economic worries! Phew! However, we pull ourselves back to today, the day we are given, and wow, what a day we have. Nature and community give us so much hope.

If you would like to be “sequestered in paradise”, contact us! We offer room and board and a great learning experience for people who love meaningful and hard work for a common cause. Lots and lots of homesteading skills: garden, farm, food, and people related!



Bruce finishes a s'more

Covid-19 changes everything.

Donate April 28

- **Free Money:** every donation on this day can unlock a \$100 prize and counts for a \$1,000 prize.
- **Double it up:** We have a matching grant that doubles your dollars
- **And Double is AGAIN!** Help both Community Homestead and people affected by Covid 19. Every donation you make on this day sustains our community, AND buys donation food boxes from our garden, bakery and orchard for those that need it right now through People Loving People.

Click the GiveBig button on our website

As for our apartment goals: we are safely tucking those away, along with all the funds allocated already, safe for us to pick up in the future. It's okay. Someday, hopefully soon, we shall get back to that. right now we need to make sure we are all here, secure and sustained and ready to continue opportunities when we all come out the other side of this.

Some background

No one is paid for their work. We receive room, board, use of facilities and \$100/month personal allowance. We rely on our food production, our craft sales, and our dairy farm to keep the lights on and, in the past 25 years have fundraised only for expansion. Like our neighbors, we work hard and it builds us as a team, this forty people of all ages and abilities, to know that we all count in the effort. It is a simple life that serves us all well - it is a lovely life. However, there is no room for budget cuts, and little trimming that can be done.

Here is what we are up against in 2020:

- loss of day program funding: \$5,00/month (24% of operating)
- loss of craft markets: \$16,000/year (6% of operating)
- loss of farmer's markets: \$19,000/year (5% of operating)
- loss of event income: \$13,000/year which goes directly to capital.

How to help:

- **Buy** at the online store www.communityhomestead.org/shop We can ship anything except bread, and deliver anything in the Osceola area.
- **Donate** online through Give Big on APRIL 28



Thank you to our Donors 8/2019-4/2020

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