



# Alone together





# Introduction



There are so many terms and phrases we've all come to hear frequently in the months that marked the height of the pandemic: "new normal," "uncertain times," "stay home," "flatten the curve." We have been at this for so long, it seems, that these are already entering cliché territory.

The term "alone together" was used in two very different ways, depending on where you saw it. Some campaigns used it to encourage social distancing and staying home because we're all in this together. Others used it to draw attention to those who were already suffering from anxiety and depression, and were now being asked to do so alone. It was used to direct people to mental health resources during the pandemic should they need them.

There were 286 people living in Camphill Village during the COVID-19 pandemic,

which continues. During the more than 100 days the State of New York has been under strict safety precautions, not a single person in Camphill Village had to be alone. Not once did someone have to suffer from fear or anxiety and have nowhere to turn to express those feelings or find support. House leaders, house mates and friends, nurses, mental health counselors, and the freedoms offered by Mother Nature were present every day, just as they were before this public health crisis.

In the colder months, the aromas of baked goods filled our households. We played games and music in our homes to pass the time together. The pandemic followed us through spring and into summer, when we're now tending to the vegetables we planted together from seed. From brisk April morning walks to evenings spent swimming and fishing at sunset in

July, we have remained safe with zero cases of COVID-19 in our protected, wonderful home. While we may have had to physically distance, we never had to distance socially.

This edition of the Village View is different. We did not celebrate the festivals together as we usually do. Some of our workspaces were transformed into quarantine centers should we need them. And socializing was limited to household relationships for several months. This newsletter contains the photos and stories from those who experienced the Village during this historic time in our community.

We are grateful to our friends and families for their patience during our closure to the public. We are fortunate for good health. And we are so glad that we've been able to focus on the good, and be alone, together.



Ernesto Martinez shows off a large mouth bass he caught in the Village. Photo by Matthias Poynder-Meares.



Eliaz Hassell runs with two young calves near the vegetable garden. Photo by Matthias Poynder-Meares.



Kipp Deyo stops to visit the new spring lambs. Photo by Sara White.



Juniper House enjoying a meal in the nice weather. Households were able to forego masks together during the pandemic. Clockwise around the table: Aaron Burstein, Billy McIlroy, Selma Gerhard, Roman Gerhard, Rukin Shivdasani, Beth Wagner, and Tammy Berman. Photo by Emily Gerhard.



Miriam Raymond and Muka Mutale getting excited for an English Breakfast at Ita Wegman House. Photo by Molly Park.



# Musings on a Global Pandemic



by Matthias Poynder-Mereas

As I gaze out from my window to the trees now illumined with a golden sheen from the early evening sun, I think back on my time here and the unprecedented but perhaps, in a strange way, inevitable journey we have all been through these last few months.

I arrived in the Village last November and was greeted by the last few moments of fall and the beginnings of what turned out to be a rather mild winter. I have such wonderful, potent memories from that time. The magic of the cold, dry air as snow descended still captures such peace inside me. It was a time of much activity, and I was out of the Village nearly every week on my day off. The urge to explore and navigate this new wonder-filled land took me many times to Hudson, where I instantly felt an affinity to the place and the people. I went to New York City twice in the first couple of months and will forever cherish the memory of walking through central park in a snow blizzard. The excitement, the anticipation and the feeling of how completely new and fresh this all was while, at the same time experiencing the feeling of home. Of belonging. I am to thank all of you for gifting me this feeling. The encounters I had with you all in the Village filled me with such warmth, kindness and a strong curiosity and eagerness to get to know you all. To hear of your stories. To meet you as brothers and sisters.

All so soon it was late February and March was just around the corner. I had



Matthias Poynder-Mereas smiles for a selfie during golden hour at the Village swim pond.

one amazing day in Hudson where I spent the day eating, journaling and soaking up the springtime sun. It was heaven. Later that week lockdown commenced and the Village closed its doors. It's amazing how fast everything can change. I felt strong. I embraced being in the Village and took the house on walks around the forests. It actually felt nice to be more contained. Having had so many years of traveling and living with uncertainty, I felt well equipped for this. In the past I had wished to stay at home all day but always felt guilty that I wasn't out there living life to the fullest and doing everything I could to maximise experiences. This whole pandemic took the pressure off. This would be a time to work with stillness

and quiet while the whole world was sent to their rooms and think about their actions. I remember that there was something quite wonderful in the air. Earth could breathe a little deeper. Nature sighed a sigh of relief. Humans paid the price but just look at what we as humans had done to our planet. Somehow, for me, this all felt like a rebalancing. A strengthening. I wanted to use this newfound sense of strength to help and uplift others who were really struggling with the measures. The distancing. The question for me was: how could I extend that closeness in a way that took the measures into hand? How could I live every day at a distance while still extending closeness?

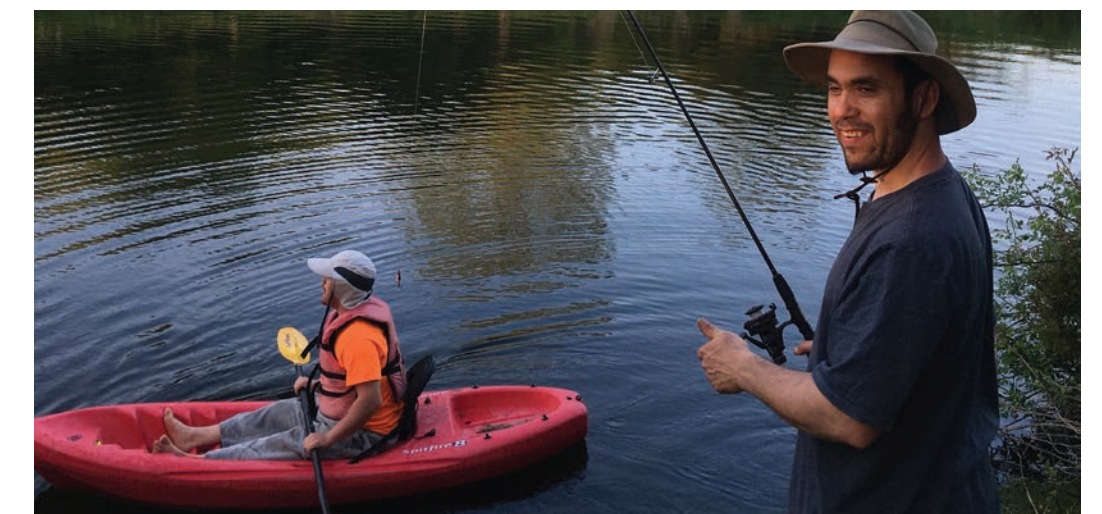
What was clear to me was that we are surrounded by such incredible beauty. This Village is so rich with life. New life was sprouting everywhere. Why would I need anything else when everything was right here already around me? As a village, we already live our lives connected. We are an ecosystem. To be here at this time was such a gift. A true blessing. So often it is easy to miss a good thing when you have it.

Looking back, I remember physically distanced table tennis matches filled with laughter. I remember evenings drawing and doing art together in the house. Afternoons spent kayaking in the swim pond and bonfires warming our sun drenched, pond water-soaked bodies. Long walks through the woods where this feeling of kinship seemed to emerge like the shafts of light falling through the branches. I remember the gentle callings from nature, which asked us to respect, honour and truly love our home, ourselves and each other.

How did my experience change through this pandemic? There was a deepening of connection and kinship. Somehow this brought us all together. Not so much in a physical way of course but in a larger, energetic way. Many of the answers this very pandemic asked for, we have been tending to in this village. Caring for one another. Coming together in ways that go beyond just physicality. Tending to and nourishing our earth, each other and our surroundings. Seed sales

skyrocketed in Turtle Tree as I was right in the midst of all that. Everyone, it seemed, suddenly knew the importance of growing. Phone conversations I had over the phone to customers filled me with a sense of connection and sincerity that showed me it was completely possible to still feel connected and together in these physically distanced times. Walls between people broke down and the business of everyday hustle and bustle allowed a place within us to be accessed. The question was, could we sink though the surface panic and be touched by this stillness? Could we use this time to really take a real look at the reality of the world and even our own lives and see if there are changes that need to be made? Adjustments. What is really important to us? Every decision we make leads to our shaping the future whether that is choosing to watch a movie or going for a walk. Every decision is a vote for the kind of world we want to create.

I am reminded of a time when I was on a train in England on the way to the west coast. It was heavily raining and people were glued to either their phones or a book. Headphones in. Netflix on. Suddenly, the train came to a halt and we were informed over the speakers that the track ahead was flooded. Gradually people began to put their phones away, unplug their headphones and the whole carriage started talking. We faced each other and we laughed. We were delayed in our journey, but somehow the crisis had worked its magic. This may not be an obvious truth right now but we are all in the midst of an epidemic of loneliness. The darkest corners of loneliness are the cause for the biggest crimes. Loneliness breeds a feeling of being disconnected to one another. This pandemic invited us in a very powerful way to become familiar with our own sense of loneliness. To find the light of connection, even in physically distanced times.



Taylor Jones kayaks in Fountain Hall Pond while Ernesto Martinez fishes on the shoreline. Photo by Matthias Poynder-Mereas.





# Home, Family, and the Great Outdoors

by Susan Williams

As a parent of a villager at Camphill Village, I have never felt more fortunate and blessed to have my son Tony Bacon living in this rural community! During COVID there are several examples of day programs that have closed down for the developmentally different, leaving families at loose ends for support and structure for their loved ones. Also I am aware of two families in my sphere where their loved ones with special needs have been restricted inside group homes with no access to the outdoors. Another acquaintance's brother died from COVID exposure in a group home. We can only guess that these incidents are a fraction of the sad stories out there. In contrast, Camphill Village has—through extraordinary measures—been able to maintain a wonderful daily life for the villagers.

Camphill Village acted quickly and efficiently with devising safe protocols

within the community and by restricting access to the roads into the Village. It has been enormously challenging with fewer volunteers (many were called home internationally at the start of the pandemic), with more responsibilities such as keeping supplies and deliveries sanitized, instruction with safe distancing practices, and providing meaningful days to the villagers whose workplaces were deemed non-essential. I feel so fortunate to have Tony deemed an essential worker as a farmer at Camphill. It would have been extremely difficult for Tony to manage without this daily dose of the great outdoors and the land work projects.

We have had a family Facetime every Tuesday with Tony, and I am so uplifted to see my strong, healthy son beaming with happiness on the screen. He has had a wonderful daily rhythm and seems to have hit his stride as a farmer and member

of this rural farm community. Without life's usual distractions of people coming and going, Tony seems less anxious and so focused on his life and work projects at Camphill. Where so many institutions and group homes have been in "lockdown," Camphill Village has been able to function happily, allowing all to participate in the great outdoors and the continuum of life on a farm.



Tamarack House out for a walk in the woods of Camphill Village. Left to right: Amanda Balducci, Alexandra Laskaris, Linda Gradman, Stevie Gibson, and Tony Bacon.



Tony kept up with his Estate crew work during the pandemic.



Peak country life means leaving your farm to visit another! Tamarack House after picking strawberries when the state began its reopening phases at nearby Thompson-Finch Farm. From left to right: Alexandra Laskaris, Tavius Sims, Amanda Balducci, and Tony Bacon.



Tony relaxes near the Fountain Hall pond in early summer.



# Interview



## Breaking through the Boredom: An Interview with Cathy Fleming

Cathy Fleming experienced the spring with housemates from Argo House, where there were many boring days in the beginning.

“We were bored at first, but then we got through it,” Cathy said, adding that Sam and Nadege, the house leaders there, were a very supportive presence in the home. “Things were stressful, people were angry and annoyed. But Nadege told us to hang in there and we would do stuff.”

Cathy said they would take walks together and bake, since households weren’t socializing with each other, and several workspaces were closed. Typical rules were dispelled on Wednesdays for a bit of television watching.

“It was pretty boring,” Cathy says. “I was so bored. We went for walks sometimes, we just hung out with each other. I was a little scared but not a lot. I was just annoyed mostly.”

Eventually, as the Capital Region began its phases of reopening, Argo House was able to leave the grounds of the Village, and partake in a popular pick-your-own pastime.

“We started to do fun things,” Cathy says. “We went strawberry picking one day at Thompson-Finch [Farm], and we made strawberry jam.”

The Village was also able to welcome Cathy’s brother Jim for a socially distant lunchtime visit, as well as her sister Maryann and brother-in-law David. Cathy’s looking forward to seeing family more as the summer progresses.

“I think things are getting a lot better you know? People are going on vacations, there are things opening now, restaurants, stuff like that,” she said. “I’m looking forward to going on vacation, swimming, and seeing my brother mostly.”

Her brother Jim wrote that while he was concerned about his sister’s safety, there was comfort in knowing the Village had closed its borders to the public.

“What if Cathy were to contract the COVID-19 virus, how would her care be arranged? Would she feel isolated and/or frightened to be off on her own if in quarantine? Who would be available to her?,” he wrote. “I had an amazing conversation with Nadege, who made it clear that she and Sam had discussed contingencies. She assured me that she would be an engaged and present source of care for Cathy if Cathy were to become ill.”

While it was reassuring to know Cathy’s physical health was a priority in the Village, Jim says that knowing Cathy had the outdoors at her fingertips was also a benefit.

“I never had concerns about Cathy’s access to the outdoors, fresh air and her ability to move around because of the Village campus. I don’t discount the reports nationally that folks with disabilities were locked down more than the Village,” he wrote. “We know that Cathy enjoys a good iced coffee drink in the summer and that was a no-go for a while.”

Jim said it was a thrill to be finally able to visit Cathy at the Village Green, and that he made a point to impart the importance of continuing to be careful, as we are not all out of the woods just yet.

“And I have also been coaching her and urging her to coach others that Villagers are in a new, unique position. They are the owners of this new freedom to visit with family and friends and to leave the Village,” he wrote. “I urged her to remember that comes with more responsibility to embrace precautions that weren’t needed in quarantine. I told Cathy it is important to realize that this isn’t over and we all have a community responsibility—so be sure to be diligent.”



*Cathy Fleming stands near the garden outside her home in the Village.*



# Snapshots



Mishka Zuckerman enjoys some lovely spring weather in the grass. Photo by Sarit Ronen.



Lulu Viets and Lindsay Johnston working together in the Village Co-op in April. Photo by Julie Boothroyd.



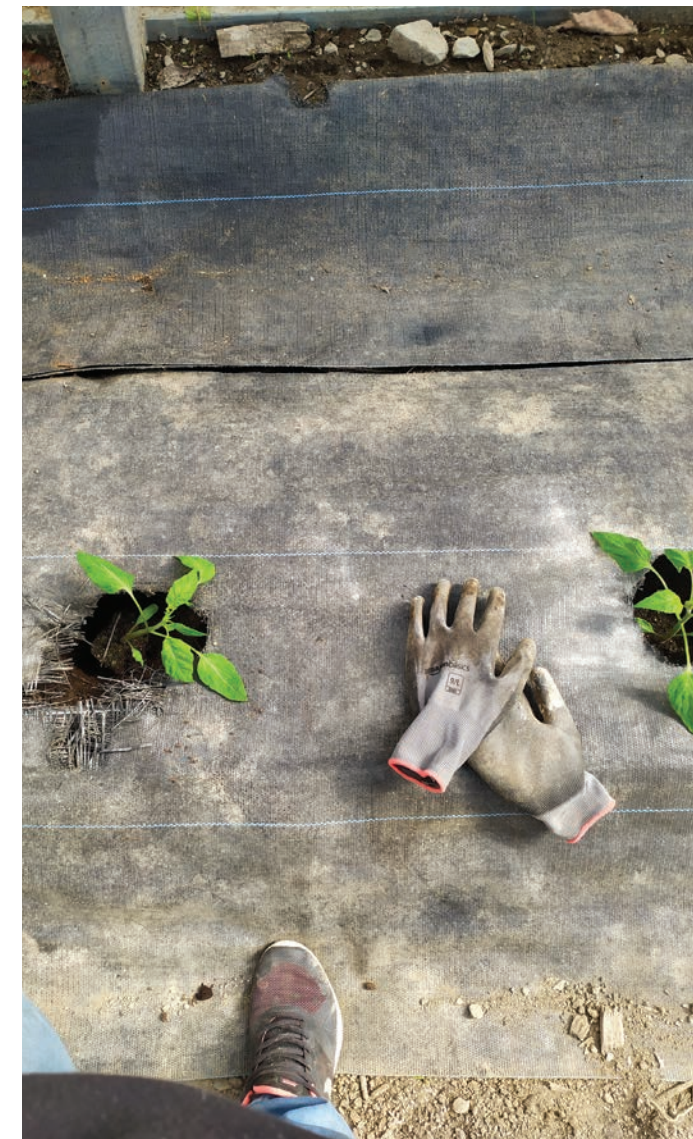
Caspar von Loeper, Mimi Raymond, and David Wadsworth weave together on a lap loom. Photo by Molly Park.



Julie Boothroyd is one of several who turned their efforts to sewing masks for the community during the pandemic. Photo by Roman Gerhard.



Laura Meza Assia and Paula Levai prepare pizza boxes in the Village Bakery.



Gardening gloves resting next to young transplants in the vegetable garden. Photo by Michelle Rodriguez.



Natalia Posso Rojas (left) and Michelle Rodriguez (right) harvest greens in the Village vegetable gardens. Photo courtesy of Michelle Rodriguez.



Gabriele Park (left) and Muka Mutale (right) pass the time weaving in early May. Photo by Molly Park.



# Snapshots



*A family of gnomes showed up in the Village without warning. They accepted poems each day from residents of the Village to pass the time. Photo by Julie Boothroyd.*



*Jeff Mill harvests flowers in the Healing Plant Garden in late summer.*



*A package of masks we received from our generous friends at the Dam Foundation in South Korea in May.*



*Walks in the woods and by the swamp were a popular pastime during the pandemic. These spring trout lilies and ferns were photographed by Roman and Emily Gerhard.*





# Snapshots



Camp Hill Road was completely redone during the pandemic. We now have speed bumps and a trail to safely walk our dairy cows. Photo by Kerst de Jong.



Hair salons were closed during the pandemic. Magdalena Szewczykowska gives Maria Logan a haircut in their home. Photo by Matthias Poynder-Mereas.



Clara Soubry proudly presents a cake she baked at Kaspar House. Photo by Tatiana Casas.

# Donate



**Don't forget to donate!**

**Please consider contributing to our Annual Fund before the end of the year!**

**Just under half of Camphill Village's funding comes from the state. The rest comes from private sources, including donors like you.**



Ben Bruschke returns his wheelbarrow to the barn after collecting compost for the pigs.



# Camphill Village Copake

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*Cover Photo:  
Shady Kodsi and Makiko Yoshida  
on their wedding day in the Village  
during the summer solstice.  
Photo by SaraMae Kline.*