



*sustainability,*  
education  
*and harmony*



BY KATIE LAWRENCE  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DICK BLOOM

Pennsylvania's first co-housing community continues to grow in Orrtanna



**f**rom old Route 30, Hundredfold Farm is little more than a dirt road up a steep hill. But Orrtanna locals know that the farm is a project 10 years in the making—the preservation of a tradition that’s existed in the community for generations.

Part co-housing village and part eco-community, Hundredfold Farm serves two purposes for the six families who live there: a place of enrichment and kinship between neighbors through a cooperative existence and an environmentally sustainable lifestyle through conservation, earth-friendly development and alternative energy sources. The Silver Springs Tree Farm, where Orrtanna families have selected their Christmas trees for years, continues to operate under the care of the Hundredfold community after they purchased the land in 1999.

Lenny Mazza, a resident and spokesperson for the community, is quick to point out that Hundredfold Farm

serves more than the people who live there. “We serve as an example for others of how ordinary people can make a difference,” he says.

Co-housing, in its simplest form, is a community that arranges both private living quarters and shared common spaces, encouraging more spontaneous interaction than you might find in your typical modern neighborhood. Originated by a group of Danish families dissatisfied with their neighborhoods in the 1960s, co-housing is a way for residents to have more active participation in the way their community is developed. Like Hundredfold Farm, most co-housing communities are arranged much like old villages, with town centers circled by farmland and open country. Here, the organic tree farm and community garden surrounds the cluster of homes built on six of the 80 acres.

Each home site occupies one acre of land. “Originally, this land was subdivided for one house every 10 acres, but that doesn’t foster much of a community,” says Mazza. Co-housing is a great way to preserve open land and create a more sustainable way of life, he explains. Through intentional design, residents cross paths in their daily lives, make connections and foster friendships. “It’s similar to the way a condo community works,” says Mazza.

Around each home are walking paths that, Mazza points out, are big enough for emergency vehicles. They snake further down the hill to the Common House—a shared laundry facility, mail pickup and conference area. This is a shared space, where Hundredfold hosts events, parties and community meetings.

Situated on 80 acres in Orrtanna, Hundredfold Farm provides kinship and an environmentally sustainable lifestyle to its residents. (right) Hundredfold Farm residents Lenny and Lorraine Mazza relax at home.





A greenhouse housing a water treatment system is an eco-friendly feature of the property.

"The things that we share are things that make sense to share. We have one tractor; we share lawn mowers and tools," says Mazza.

Residents also share in every community deliberation. "We have complete resident management, so we make all of the decisions for ourselves where the community is involved," explains Mazza. "We govern by consensus; we iron out everyone's concerns before moving forward—as opposed to voting, which is more based on majority. Our decisions are based on the minority and agreement."

What Hundredfold Farm residents agree most upon is their dedication to energy saving, waste reduction and general care for the planet's health—and, in turn, their own. "It's simply something we have to do if we want to continue living on this planet," says resident Pat Hammann. She, along with her husband Lou, daughter Sandy Hartzell and son-in-law Bill Hartzell, were the original organizers of the community.

Mark Knight, who aided in the community's search for land, funding and local government consent, says the site they chose is perfect for their

environmental motives, even if by default. "When the community first got approved, we drilled wells, and there wasn't a very high volume of water," says Knight. "So instead of giving up on what was an otherwise appropriate property, we said 'How do we solve this problem?'"

The solution is an impressive water treatment system, filtered by a variety of plant life—an artificial wetland inside a greenhouse. This water can be used to flush toilets and water the garden and common areas after it's treated. "This system has a great track record, it's designed by the same Pennsylvania specialist that created the filtration system at Penn State," says Knight.

Other local specialists were hired to help with energy-efficient modular homes, customized to fit each resident. "We really tried to use the services of local companies, because it benefits the community at large," says Mazza. Solar energy powers each home, while south-facing windows and insulating materials throughout help to hold in the warmth during the winter and keep it cool during the summer. "It's so efficient. It's always comfortable in my house," says Mazza.

## How Hundredfold Farm got its name

In keeping with their goals of sustainability, education and harmony, Hundredfold Farm was named after a poem written by an anonymous Chinese poet in 420 B.C. "This poem really describes our objectives for this community," says Mazza.

*If you give a man a fish, he will have a meal.*

*If you teach a man to fish, he will have a living.*

*If you are thinking a year ahead, sow seed.*

*If you are thinking ten years ahead, plant a tree.*

*If you are thinking one hundred years ahead, educate the people.*

*By sowing seed once, you will harvest once.*

*By planting a tree, you will harvest tenfold.*

*By educating the people, you will harvest one hundredfold.*



Resident Bill Hartzell chats with a group during an open house at the co-housing community.

Considering rising oil prices and indications of poor water availability in the region, Mazza figures the ground they have covered will help future neighborhoods and building projects. "We're not experienced in building a community like this, but we did our research, we sought the aid of people who were experienced and we feel very passionate about what we're doing," says Mazza.

"It wasn't always easy," says Knight. "It's an unusual project for Adams County—there aren't too many condos, and this is the first co-housing community in Pennsylvania." Many people were disconcerted by the community's label. "For some people, 'co-housing' sounded a lot like 'commune.' There was a certain suspicion that we were hippies or survivalists. But I think the tree farm created a wonderful interface with the community."

Bill Hartzell, manager of the Silver Springs Tree Farm, agrees. "Come tree cutting season, everyone in the community does what they can to nurture the business," he says.

Many of Hundredfold's residents, including the Hartzells, discovered co-housing by chance. Bill Hartzell found a post for a co-housing project interest meeting in a Seattle newspaper and

decided to attend. "When he came back, he was very excited," says his wife, Sandy Hartzell.


While they could wave hello and greet their neighbors at their previous residence, the Hartzells found themselves without an infrastructure. "I couldn't call on them when the truck broke down, and I didn't have any family out there [in Seattle]," says Bill Hartzell. Co-housing filled that void.

But they still missed their family. Sandy Hartzell explains how her mother, Pat Hammann, called with a proposition—if she and her family moved to Pennsylvania, her mother would buy a farm where Sandy Hartzell could grow organic food for the family. "But I liked what I was doing in Seattle," Sandy Hartzell says. "Then I realized I could keep what I had and still move to Pennsylvania."

The Hartzells took a moment to ponder the disadvantages of co-housing. "All the disadvantages can also be advantages," says Sandy Hartzell. "You can imagine living with the people closest to you—there are both, just like a family."

Bill Hartzell agrees. "We're very close, so like a brother and sister will say things they wouldn't normally say to other people, so do we. Some of those things are mean, but a lot of them are nice," he says.

More than 10 years later, the Hundredfold Farm is still growing. "Eventually, we'll be able to use the water treated here for just about every household use," says Mazza. "We'll renovate the common house at some point, too." Four building sites are still available, and three homes are currently in developing stages.

"We realize there are always going to be people who prefer not to live in communities and neighborhoods, but it works great for us and for what we were looking for," says Mazza. "We welcome anyone who's interested to visit and meet everyone." 

### Visit Hundredfold Farm

For more information on current members, becoming a member or to view renderings and photos of the Hundredfold Farm, visit [www.hundredfoldfarm.org](http://www.hundredfoldfarm.org). The site also has directions and instructions on how to contact Hundredfold Farm to schedule a visit.

### Still have questions?

Call 717-334-9426 or send e-mail to [info@hundredfoldfarm.org](mailto:info@hundredfoldfarm.org).