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Community Living

By Lori Myers

Leonard Mazza and I stroll down a slightly worn path, bordered by blue wildflowers and overgrown grasses swaying in a cool breeze. "Watch out for the poison ivy," he warns. I tell him that as a child I used to practically swim in the stuff without any ill effects, and he replies that it never bothered him either.

In fact, nothing much bothers Mazza these days. He smiles upon recalling the people who thought he was crazy to sell his bustling chiropractic practice in New Jersey in 2005, pack up his Bucks County home and come here to Hundredfold Farm in rural Orrtanna, Adams County. It's a cohousing community, established by Bill and Sandy Hartzell and Lou and Patricia Hamman. In such communities, residents make a commitment to living as a community and actively participate in its operation. In addition, Hundredfold Farm's small group of earth-friendly residents seek to live a sustainable lifestyle.

As we walk on, he's anxious to show me a particular impressive panorama, a sight that convinced him he belonged here. We pass by all sorts of "ooh" and "ah" scenery, until he stops and gazes out at the rolling hilltops and row upon row of deciduous trees that Hundredfold Farm grows and sells to the public every holiday season. We stand in silence admiring this view that he just can't get enough of — one of the reasons he and his wife, Lorraine, a freelance graphic designer, decided to make a life here.

"This is sheer beauty," he muses. "It's a bucolic setting, peaceful. Since we've been



PHOTOS BY SARAH GREEN

In cohousing communities, residents make a commitment to living as a community and actively participating in its operation.

living here, my wife's blood pressure has dropped 10 points. We go to sleep to the sounds of the crickets and wake up to the sounds of birds."

Those birds now soar over the cluster of seven homes that will eventually grow to a maximum of 14. The 80 acres here include 25,000 Christmas trees, a garden nurtured by residents and a newly built greenhouse where wastewater will be purified by aquatic plants.

According to Mazza, the cohousing concept began in Denmark. Hundredfold, which is located about seven miles from Gettysburg, is one of about 185 cohousing communities in various stages of completion in the United States. It harks back to communities of old, in which neighbors banded together, knew each other's names and histories, and waved to each other as they passed by. Along with the tranquil setting, Mazza came here for the earth-friendly technology, faithfulness to recy-



cling and energy efficiency, and utilizing of resources in a sustainable way.

"If we cut down a tree, you have to grow another one in its place," he says. "If you educate people, we've accomplished a lot more than if we had done this just for ourselves."

But what surprised the Mazzas are the social aspects of Hundredfold Farm. In their 10 years in Bucks County, the couple barely knew who lived around them. At Hundredfold Farm, they know everyone. When an issue that affects the community is brought up for decision, all residents have to agree. Even one dissension is cause for further discussion.

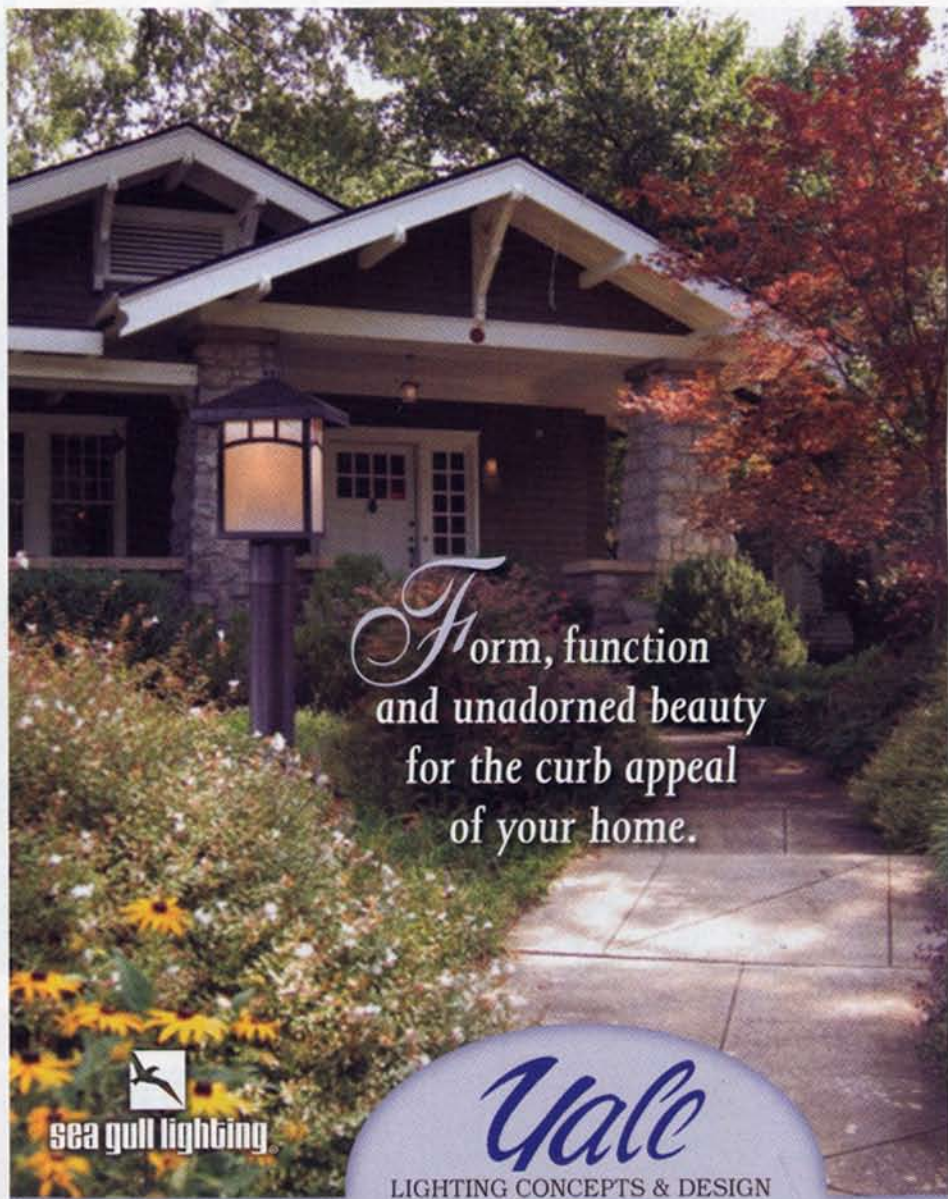


Leonard Mazza (left) walks through the greenhouse that houses Hundredfold Farm's water treatment system. Thirty percent of the water used in the Adams County cohousing community is treated and reused, utilizing aqua plants and holding tanks.

"When it comes down to what is good for the community, people change their minds," muses Mazza. "It feels like a close-knit community; you respect each other."

Mazza works a few days a week as a chiropractor at a holistic health center in Gettysburg. He plans on trading in his gas-guzzler car for a plug-in hybrid or bicycle, and residents are considering getting golf carts to move around the farm. But whenever Mazza is walking up the long driveway to his home on the hill, he finds himself singing that old Irving Berlin lyric, "Heaven, I'm in heaven / And my heart beats so that I can hardly speak / And I seem to find the happiness I seek" It's probably safe to say he considers himself a member of the nearby flock of chirping birds.

"I have to pinch myself," Mazza says, as we make our way back down the path with images of the majestic vista in our memories. "I'm one of those lucky people to have found this place and live here." *



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