

Hundredfold families try hand at Christmas tree biz

CO-HOUSING COMMUNITY FACES CHALLENGE OF RUNNING SEVEN SPRINGS TREE FARM

It is common for a family to own a Christmas tree farm in south-central Pennsylvania. Dozens of family-operated tree farms dot the countryside across Adams Electric's service area.

It is quite uncommon for eight families to own and operate a Christmas tree farm, but that is what is happening at the Seven Springs Tree Farm, located along Old Route 30 near Orrtanna in Franklin Township, Adams County. The 80-acre spread is operated by Hundredfold Farm, a co-housing community underway on Adams Electric's lines.

This diverse group of people has committed time, money and energy to creating a safe, pedestrian-friendly, sustainable community for themselves and their children. They hope the project will last for a hundredfold years, thus the name.

The tree farm has been a mainstay in the area for years, providing trees to wholesalers, and to individuals and families who wish to spend a day in the fresh air cutting down their own Christmas tree, or taking home a pre-cut or potted one. When Hundredfold selected the farm as the perfect site for their co-housing project in 1999, the group suddenly found itself in the Christmas tree business. Hundredfold will continue to operate the business while looking for other potential business opportunities that are natural extensions of community co-housing developments.

A seed is sown

One immediate priority is to start a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm so the next seeds to be sown will be those for organic fruits and vegetables. Plans include growing produce for the community itself and the sale of memberships to residents of the community at large who wish to do likewise.

"Never in our wildest dreams did we

By Duane Kanagy
Communications Coordinator



PREPARING THE HARVEST: Bill Hartzell, a founder of Hundredfold Farm, tags a Christmas tree to indicate that it has been sold. Hundredfold owns and operates the Seven Springs Tree Farm, located along Old Route 30 in Adams County, the future site for a planned co-housing development.

think we would own a tree farm, but what we are learning here is easily transferable to other enterprises" said Bill Hartzell who manages the tree farm on a daily basis. Not one for traditional corporate labels, Bill is also the "president" of Hundredfold and is one of the originators of the co-housing project.

"My wife Sandy and I have sown the seed for co-housing, but the entire group is tending the garden," explains Bill.

Co-housing is popular because it gives people a sense of community in a society that fosters isolation, Bill adds. "Many people change jobs on average every seven years and move to areas where there are few friends or extended family members nearby," he says. "We represent a real community to those people."

Care for the environment

Bill and his wife have always cared deeply about the environment and wanted to create a community of like-minded individuals. A biologist by training, Bill performed environmental work for an electric utility in Washington state before he and Sandy moved to Adams

County, where she was born and raised, in the mid-1990s.

The co-housing community idea took root in mid-1998, as other families joined Bill and Sandy in developing and articulating the goals and vision for a co-housing community. The search of land began in earnest in April of 1999. More than two dozen sites were examined before the Seven Springs Tree Farm was selected.

A new sense of community

Co-housing attempts to overcome the alienation of modern housing subdivisions in which few residents know their neighbors, and there is little sense of community. Co-housing developments are characterized by dwellings with private living space combined with nearby community-shared facilities. This can be a building with a large common dining area, kitchen, meeting rooms and recreational facilities.

The actual proposed construction site for the Hundredfold dwellings is a five-acre plot near the top of a ridge where 15 individuals homes and the common



house will be blended into the landscape.

Everything is designed for energy efficiency and "low impact" living. The octagonal shape of each house takes advantage of passive solar energy and a greenhouse filter system is being developed to handle wastewater from the project.

Bill and Sandy had encountered co-housing developments in other parts of the country. This type of housing began in Denmark in the late 1960s, and spread to North America in the late 1980s. There are now more than a hundred co-housing communities completed or in development across the United States.

However, Pennsylvania is not known for co-housing, an idea more attune to urban and suburban parts of the country. In fact, Hundredfold is the first in the state, despite attempts by other groups in Philadelphia and the State College.

"Success depends on timing, who is involved and the energy of the group," says Bill. "We give credit to those who reached out to Heartbeat Cities for help." The group enlisted the help of the co-housing construction management firm in obtaining approval for the project from government and regulatory bodies. Fortunately, the approval process is now over and the project is moving forward.

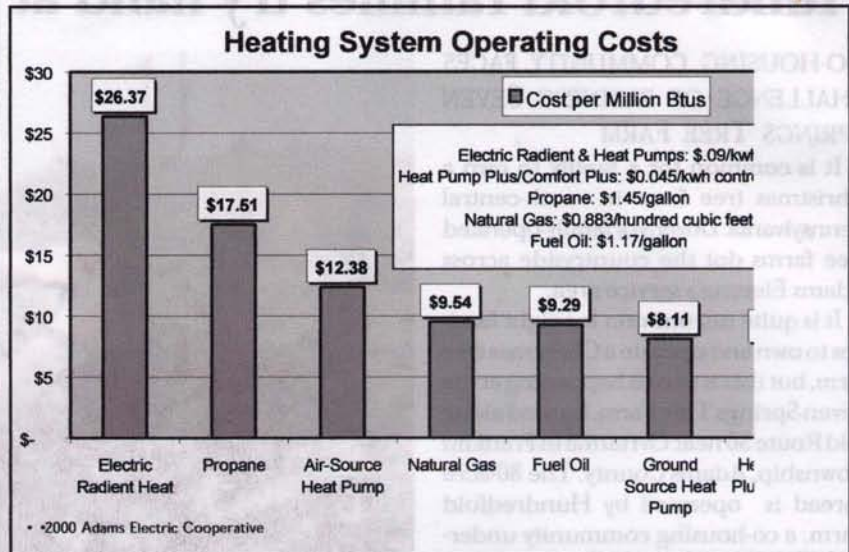
A self-selection process

There is not one ideal individual, couple or family suited for co-housing, Bill explains. "We use a self-selection process," he says. "We ask interested people to come, hang out and see how we work. Each person has to decide for themselves if co-housing works for them."

Those who have decided the idea works for them include a retired professor, a past Peace Corps volunteer, an attorney, a family therapist, a librarian, a school teacher, a multi-media artist, a social worker, a CAD designer and a massage therapist and several children.

"We are looking for more people who are up for the adventure," Bill says. "This involves a lot of hard work, but it is incredibly satisfying."

You can discover more on the Web at www.hundredfoldfarm.org or by calling (717) 334-4488.



New heating system? Compare the costs

Selecting the right new heating system for your home depends on many factors, including how much heat a particular fuel can deliver and the estimated cost to install the system.

The heat content of various fuels can be measured in British thermal units (Btus). The chart above lists seven heating systems and the estimated cost per million Btus to operate each one. **A fuel with a high heat content that is delivered by a high-efficiency heating system will have a low cost per million Btus.**

The cost per million Btus informa-

tion must be compared along with the estimated cost of installing each system in order to select the right heating system for your home. As you can see, a particular heating system may be inexpensive to install, but may have a high operating cost. It may also be among the cleanest and offer the highest level of overall comfort and convenience.

Remember: Operating and installation costs will vary depending on the region in which you live and the time of season. Also remember that your system's annual operating cost will be lower if your home is well weatherized.

