



# Cohousing in Corvallis

An E Newsletter from CoHo Cohousing  
in Corvallis, Oregon

Issue 14 May 2006



Remember when your best  
friend lived right next door?

## Living in a "Giraffe Community"

All CoHo neighbors (owners AND renters) commit to learning and using non-violent communication (NVC), also known as compassionate communication. Nonviolent communication reflects Ghandi's sense of nonviolence or "Ahimsa" meaning "do no harm." NVC is a collection of simple, effective steps and techniques which help create and support connection, cooperation and satisfaction. This empathy-based philosophy and communication model was developed by Marshall Rosenberg, a psychologist and educator.

From the NVC website ...

*"NVC is a clear and effective model for communicating in a way that is cooperative, conscious, and compassionate.*

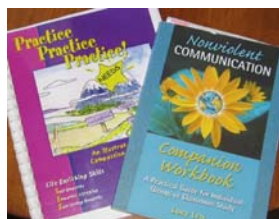
*NVC guides us to reframe how we express ourselves and hear others by focusing our consciousness on what we are observing, feeling, needing, and requesting."*

*Through its emphasis on deep listening—to ourselves as well as others—NVC fosters respect, attentiveness and empathy, and engenders a mutual desire to give from the heart. The form is simple, yet powerfully transformative."*

NVC is sometimes described as "the language of the heart." The giraffe was selected as a symbol of compassionate communication because it has the largest heart of any land animal. The giraffe's long neck provides a far-reaching, overall perspective and also suggests a willingness to "stick your neck out" and take risks.



In many settings, folks learn NVC and then attend a "practice group" to keep using and improving their NVC



skills. In CoHo, a 13-week NVC class has been offered several times by Juva, a member of the community. The CoHo NVC class gives members the bonus of connecting more deeply with their neighbors while learning a new skill. Members can also learn NVC through shorter weekend workshops or ongoing study groups with different instructors. CoHo has held practice groups and there is an open practice group in Corvallis.

Juva describes how early CoHo members decided to adopt NVC as a membership requirement. "The founders were initially interested in NVC because it supports our Vision and Values, such as our goal for communicating opening and honestly. When Denny and I joined the group, we taught an NVC class and the group endorsed it 100%. In our own lives, we have used NVC for 15 or so years, raising our kids (oh, were we glad to have these skills when they were 13, 15 and 17!), in our own relationship, and in our work (teacher and mental health therapist)."

"It is now a very basic agreement between us all that NVC is learned and used. Not just the communication tools, but the belief that we have the ability to contribute to the joy between each other and within the community by being willing to explore the feelings and needs behind our communication and behavior."



"NVC changes our interactions dramatically. When tensions arise, as they will, we know we can drop into the formal NVC to help us sort out the feelings and needs. When I, as an individual, can't sort it out, I can call on any other community member to help." Group members tease about being able to open their front door in CoHo, holler "I need a giraffe" and have skilled, supportive neighbors volunteer to help with a dialogue.

One member, a self-described engineer by education and practice, says "One of the useful outcomes of our use of NVC has been my somewhat unexpected willingness to listen to people who don't use analytical reasoning as the basis of their decisions. Several times in general meetings, as the tension is rising, and my dissatisfaction at folks not seeing the logical outcome of the information being discussed is peaking, someone will say, 'I don't understand the need behind this issue.' And the conversation suddenly switches. When we talk about the needs that we are trying to meet, the solution usually becomes apparent."

NVC is also a valuable tool in basic problem-solving. One member commented--"I'm not new to NVC, but I'm new to the community. In one of the first meetings I attended, the community was tackling a challenging issue. As the needs behind various options were explored, peoples' attitudes shifted. There was no rush to a solution or lobbying to recruit folks to a specific point of view. What impressed me most was how respectfully people listened to each other."



NVC isn't just about conflict resolution. NVC is a part of CoHo meetings, workshops, and celebrations. In our home selection process, folks listed not only the homes they preferred but also the needs behind their choices. Prior to requesting documents from our attorney, the Finance Committee identified the needs to be met by the documents. At our Winter Wellness Retreat, we flip-charted page after page of appreciations for needs being met (one need was the completion of NVC training by most of the current members).

One member of the current NVC class exclaimed "What I love the most about learning NVC is that it takes the guilt and blame out of communication. NVC has also helped me to learn how to communicate in a more positive way. I wish I had learned NVC years ago!"

A final very exciting facet to NVC in CoHo--our kids will grow up in a "giraffe community" and hopefully develop communication skills that will enrich their lives and the lives of others. See giraffes Rachel and Shoshana in action at left!



For more info on nonviolent communication...

*Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life, and Speak Peace in a World of Conflict: What You Say Next Can Change The World* (books and tapes) by Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D.

*Nonviolent Communication Companion Workbook: A Practical Guide for Individual, Group or Classroom Study* by Lucy Leu

## Welcome Weekend June 3/4 Saturday/Sunday

Welcome Weekends include a variety of events open to local and out-of-town visitors—cohousing presentation and overview, land walk, vegetarian potluck, brunch, and community meeting. It's a great way to see if CoHo is a fit for you. Check our website calendar for events and dates, then RSVP so we know how many folks will be attending and can let you know if there are any last-minute changes. We can help with local transportation and housing.

Brenda and Den (pictured at right with Judy) decided to join CoHo after attending a Welcome Weekend this spring.



## Member Close-Up



Since joining CoHo in the summer of 2004, Nancy has been on the Design & Development (D&D) Committee, Landscaping Committee, (a subcommittee of D&D) and the Facilitation Committee. She is also CoHo's unofficial "compost queen" (pictured at left with a compost bucket at the Winter Wellness Retreat). Nancy is looking forward to the casual and convenient social connections in CoHo (anyone for a game of cribbage?).

Nancy has been struck with "plant fever" and was recently spotted in a nursery saying "I'll take one of those and one of those and one of those...."

Nancy and her canine kids, Bandit and Jennie, had fostered a dog (a black beauty named Tex) since November. In April, Tex moved to his new "forever home" in Portland. Nancy's only complaint is that Tex doesn't write often enough--would it be asking too much for Tex to get his own blog to stay in touch???



## Is it time to make your dream of living in community come true?

The clock is striking 8, marking the time that 8 homes are still available in CoHo!

This clock is on the Benton County Courthouse in downtown Corvallis. Built in 1889, it is the oldest active courthouse in the state of Oregon.

## To find out more about CoHo Cohousing

Website: <http://www.cohousing-corvallis.com/index.shtml>

Email: [info@cohousing-corvallis.com](mailto:info@cohousing-corvallis.com) (answered by Mike Volpe) →

Phone: Juva DuBoise @ 541-908-5882

Susan Hyne @ 541-753-4453 ↓

Susan expressing NVC appreciation for rain gear on a rainy day.



Juva wearing giraffe ears with Zeekie wearing jackal ears.



Mike and Steve sharing an NVC moment.

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