

# The Leaves of Twin Oaks

## NEWS OF THE OAKS

by Valerie



BEAU

Welcome **Beau**, the newest Twin Oaker! Beau Loving Duggan was born to **Aubby** on May 24, 2014. His middle name is a reference to the Loving family, who challenged laws against inter-racial marriage in the 1960's.



MARIONE

Farewell Marione:

**Marione** Cobb lived at Twin Oaks for many years. She loved singing, political activism, cooperative games, and house cleaning. Marione died May 16, 2014. We'll miss her dearly. More than ever, Twin Oaks is a good place to live and it's also a good place to die. Marione had many people around her, and a lot of help, as she faded from this life. Many people gathered to sing to her during her last days. She died at her Twin Oaks home and was buried here. All of her final arrangements were handled by members of our community (without calling on outsiders from the "bereavement industry"). Her last wishes were to be buried at Twin Oaks and to have a lot of singing at the Service. We sung at the gravesite and also at the reception following. We miss her very much.

The Twin Oaks kids put on a play delightfully entitled "**Freegan Town**". The plotline involves a fictional community called Freegan Town, a book called "The Ancient Art of Dumpster-Diving", and two members who break away from the community and form a capitalist community down the road. Let's hope that life does not imitate art in this case.

Two of our members got married in April. About 100 people, including Oakers and family and friends from off-the-farm, gathered and processed

through the woods. It was a rather informal affair: out in the forest, we all formed a large circle and, holding hands, we wound ourselves into a giant spiral hug, with **Sabrina** and **Dustin** at the centre. Then Sabrina called out "Okay we're married!" and we all went back to the community for an afternoon reception and dance party later that evening.

It's not every day we have a giant crane at Twin Oaks, lifting gleaming stainless steel equipment 100 feet in the air. But that is what happened earlier this year when the equipment for the upgrade to our **tofu business** arrived. The arrival followed on the heels of our Tofu Manager taking a business trip to Germany to observe similar equipment in use by another soyfoods company (called "TofuTown").



DUSTIN AND SABRINA'S SPIRAL HUG



NEW EQUIPMENT FOR THE TOFU BUSINESS

One of our members, **Summer**, put on a concert that she called "Blue Moon". This was her own rendition of two full-length albums: "Blue" by Joni Mitchell and "Pink Moon" by Nick Drake, with herself on guitar and voice.

Other Random News: We celebrated **Validation Day**, our alternative version of Valentine's Day in which every person

receives appreciation, not just those in romantic relationships. Our Garden Manager **Pam** sold the first 5,000 copies of her book "Sustainable Market Farming", featured in the last issues of the Leaves. We recently bought a new (used) car as one of our 20 community vehicles—important things to know about this: we name all of our vehicles, we live on Vigor Road, and the car is a hybrid. The obvious name presented itself: Hybrid Vigor, which won the naming party in a landslide victory.



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# If I Can't Dance To It, It's Not My Revolution

by North

One of the most fantastic traits of the culture here at Twin Oaks is that we are a culture that appreciates and celebrates music. From our toddlers clapping and singing in their weekly music lessons, to the choir that formed to sing for a recent funeral for one of our eldest members, music is a deep-rooted part of life here at Twin Oaks.

Currently there is a real abundance of quality musicians at TO. The Tupelo music room is the practice space for several of our bands, and over the last few months it has gotten quite a bit of use. The All Request Dance Band kept things really fun and funky at Acorn's Land Day in April, and Subliminal Massage, a Sublime tribute band, played as well. Charlie's Steel Erection, a three-piece rock-and-roll band, christened our tofu expansion building before any equipment had moved in, by playing a great set of their original music. All of these great bands are made up of Oakers and are great examples of how important sharing is at TO. They share everything from instruments and practice spaces to bass players and drummers.

The diversity of musical styles here is also quite noteworthy – we've got rock bands, dance bands, bluegrass players, klezmer musicians, vocal choirs, classically trained cellists and pianists, and recently we had

what may become an annual Irish music event. One of our members who plays in an Irish band in Richmond invited his bandmates and their musician friends out to have an Irish jam session here at the Oaks. The result was an awesome night of music with an extraordinary variety of instruments; flutes, fiddles, guitars, bass, accordion, drums of all sizes and types, and no shortage of beautiful voices as well. It was a great event that we'll probably repeat next spring if not sooner.

Plans are also underway for reviving the Oakstock music festival this September. In 2012, members organized and put on a fun and successful all day music festival. Our conference site, where our annual Communities Conference and Women's gatherings are held, was transformed into a music venue with two stages that stayed occupied with great live music throughout the day. This year's Oakstock will follow the same model and has a lot of potential to be a really fun event. There's certainly not a lack of talent.

We're participating in and building an alternative to mainstream society and it's wonderful to know that there's going to be a good soundtrack.



# Gender-Neutral Pronouns in “Co”mmunity

by Stephan

One of my favorite things about Twin Oaks is the existence and frequent use of gender-neutral pronouns. Gender-neutral pronouns are alternatives to saying “he” and “she.” Gender-neutral pronouns were likely introduced in the world simply to refer to someone without revealing that person’s gender (for privacy, gossip, or mystery), I find them very useful as a genderqueer-identified person who doesn’t want to fit into either of the binary male/female boxes in society. Here at Twin Oaks, our neutral pronoun of choice is “co/cos/coself.” For example, “Co went to cos room to get coself a clean shirt.”

There have been several attempts at introducing gender-neutral pronouns into mainstream society over the years, the most popular being singular “they.” In the non-binary/genderqueer community (folks who don’t identify as following male or female gender roles), other pronouns such as “ze” have some usage. However, some folks don’t like these alternative pronouns because of grammatical reasons, because they sound awkward, or because they’re just difficult to use since people aren’t used to them. I like “co” because it is already in general use (at least here on the farm), it’s easy to say, and it’s distinctive, so it doesn’t get confused with other pronouns.

An interesting grammatical thing that people at Twin Oaks now do is using “co” as a noun in situations where someone might say “person/people/one,” in addition to being a pronoun. For instance, “Cos just wanna have fun” or “Could some co please pass me the policy binder.” I’m not aware of any other pronoun being consistently used in this way. As far as I know, no one else outside of the communities movement, or outside of Twin Oaks, for that matter, uses “co” as a pronoun at this time.

I’m curious to see if perhaps this pronoun can catch on in mainstream society because everyone (not only gender outlaws) can benefit from having a gender-neutral pronoun that is in common usage. When people talk about others using a gendered pronoun (“he” or “she”), listeners place stereotypes and assumptions on the subject. Gender-neutral pronouns can help minimize these gender assumptions and help others get to know people for other characteristics. While Twin Oaks has not yet developed the perfect society in which there are no judgments based on gender, the use of “co” does help minimize stereotyping and contribute to a more egalitarian community.

