

Our World

Community Cooperative

Living for a Sustainable Future

Issue Number 3



Meetings

We meet the first and third Thursday of every month.

@ 6:00 P.M.

For more information, phone Darren at 542-3379.

One Step Closer

OWC's vision to unite the community and create an easy and effective method to create positive change together is one step closer to being realized.

We now have a system in place on our web site (ourworldcommunity.org) where OWC members can identify, understand and begin solving issues using the "highest thought process." The highest thought process is an interactive brainstorming and prioritization process that naturally flushes out decisions so that the best proposal (the one that has the most votes) floats to the top. The best proposal is the one that is used. As new and better proposals float up to the top then those ideas replace the ones that no longer work. This system provides a fast, convenient, reliable and inexpensive

way to generate ideas, draw awareness to other viable options, conduct polls and implement solutions. Public input is key to success using this effective operational tool.

Everyone's voice is essential and necessary. In order to receive input from people who do not have access to the internet, the following three options can be implemented: a volunteer phoning committee, a buddy system where people can buddy-up with someone who has the internet and public internet usage through such means as the library.

Become a member and participate in this interactive decision-making process in our community by signing up online, free of charge, at ourworldcommunity.org or by phoning Darren at 542-3379.

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Who Are Those People?

We have received a lot of comments and feed back over the last few months from a cross section of individuals in our community. We were at first puzzled, then amused by what some people actually thought OWC was. For example, we've been told that we must be one of those 'right wing' organizations because in our first Newsletter we ran a story about meeting and discussing local issues with the Honorable Mr. Stinson of the new Conservative Party.

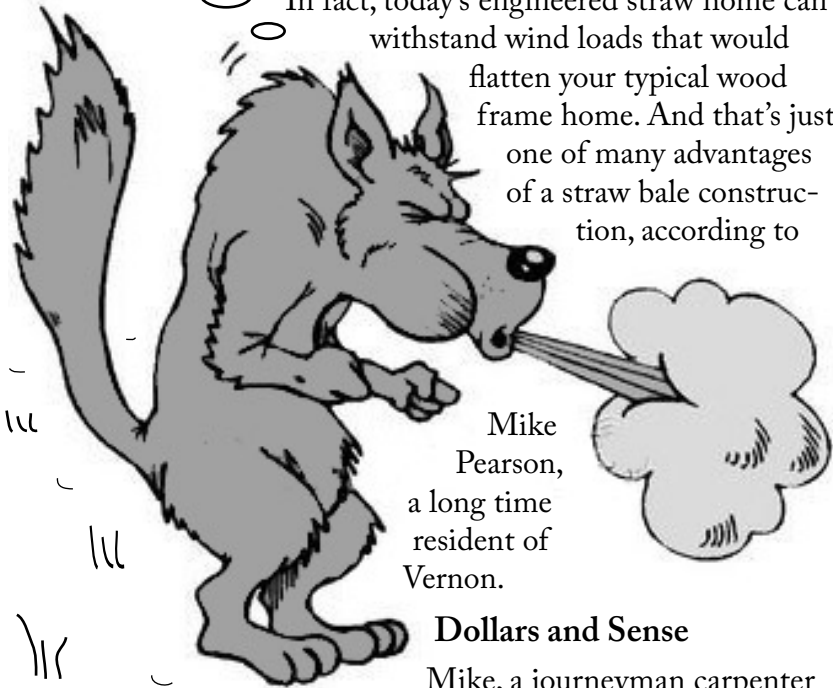
Others felt strongly that we must be 'left wing' environmental types after they saw a

story on recycled paper alternatives in our Second Edition. The truth of the matter is that we are neither, we are both, and we are everything in between. That's Right! (or left) We welcome and embrace all individuals and their opinions, especially if they can offer practical, sustainable solutions to problems facing our communities.

So, if somebody asks you who are those people, you can tell them that we are a radically moderate, bi-winged, liberal, neo-conservative group. Or, you can simply say we are people that CARE for our community.

I'll Huff and I'll Puff and

Oh, how I long for the good old days



Mike Pearson, a long time resident of Vernon.

The “Once Upon a Time” little piggy that lived in a straw house may have feared the huffing and puffing of the Big Bad Wolf, but oh how times have changed. In fact, today’s engineered straw home can withstand wind loads that would flatten your typical wood frame home. And that’s just one of many advantages of a straw bale construction, according to

Dollars and Sense

Mike, a journeyman carpenter of twenty-five years and an avid straw bale enthusiast, is determined to dispel all myths about straw bale construction. His extensive home building background and concerns for escalating heating costs has led him to one conclusion; straw bale houses make dollars and sense.

Mike is convinced that every prospective new home buyer should give serious consideration to building with straw. Mike states, “The benefits are just too good to overlook.” How good you ask? How about having your home warmer in the winter, cooler in the summer, and being able to reduce your yearly energy bill by fifty percent or more. Mike claims it’s all possible if we just start to change our thinking a little when it comes to house building materials.

That thinking Mike is referring to has been gaining momentum in avalanche

proportions south of the border. Studies recently conducted in Arizona, California, Kansas, and other regions has prompted rethinking of building regulations throughout the Southwestern United States. Government officials sat up and took notice when the results of the research concluded that straw bales have exceptional insulative, sound and fire barrier properties, and make excellent building materials.

Rising Energy Costs

“With increased demand and dwindling supply, home heating costs have only one way to go and that’s up. And that’s not good news for the average family,” says Mike. Who could disagree. Natural Gas rates have risen three times since 2001, for a whopping 116 percent. Recently, BC Hydro called for a revised rate increase of nine percent for hydro rates in the coming 2005 year. With trends like these who could overlook the money saving benefits of an energy efficient home.

Jobs Not Threatened

Mike also knows the importance of bringing home a decent paycheck to his family, and would never take that opportunity away from his fellow forestry or carpentry workers. “Straw bale homes pose no threat to anyone’s job, especially loggers and construction workers,” assures Mike. “Just about the same amount of wood is used in building a straw bale home that’s used in a traditional wood frame home.”

Mike is convinced the only threat to anyone’s bottom line would be to the North American’s energy conglomerates that reap huge profits from selling non-renewable energy reserves to all of us. He unapologetically expresses little sympathy for any loss they would incur.

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Straw Facts:

- Straw bales have exceptional insulative, sound and fire barrier properties.
- Straw bale homes are 25-30% more energy efficient than Canada Home Mortgage Corporation’s **R2000** home.

Community in Action

Food Security and the Good Food Box

(A joint effort project put together by Food Security Action Committee and the Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan.)

Access to adequate amounts of nutritious food is key to individual and community health and safety. However, for many families and individuals living in the North Okanagan the reality is that their incomes do not allow them this basic right. Recent changes to provincial levels of support for families and individuals in need are increasing the problems low-income households face when trying to meet their nutritional needs. The community is being called upon to heighten its efforts to help support families and individuals who are struggling to feed themselves and their children.

The Good Food Box is a volunteer-run, produce-buying cooperative that is designed to help people with low incomes access fresh fruits and vegetables. Partici-

pants in the program pool their money, which allows the program to buy high-quality produce at wholesale prices. Whenever and whenever possible, the program purchases the produce from local growers. The cost of each food box is currently \$10.

During this year, they would like to expand the Good Food Box program from its current focus, which is strictly low-income individuals and families, to include all residents of the North Okanagan. At present, some 600 households purchase a Good Food Box on a regular basis. The program coordinators would like to see this amount double by the end of this year to ensure the long-term sustainability of the program, as well as to introduce more and more area residents to the joys of healthy eating!

For more information, call Diane Fleming, coordinator at 545-7617 or Donna Antonishak, Community Nutritionist at 549-5715.



Car Pooling

Canadians reliance on the single occupancy vehicle (SOV) as their preferred choice of transportation continues to contribute to global warming. According to Environment Canada, overall transportation represents the largest single source of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for 27% of the total. Car pooling is a simple way for individuals to take part in the climate change challenge while saving money, reducing congestion and conserving energy along the way. A free web-based carpooling service is now available throughout the

Okanagan from Kelowna, through Vernon to Salmon Arm. Just go on-line to register at www.carpool.ca. Make new friends! Save money! Help out the planet!

Please register now - a critical mass is needed to make this program viable. The goal is to have 100 carpools operating in our community by the end of 2004.

For more information contact: Janet from SENS (Sustainable Environment Network Society) at janet_changinglanes@yahoo.com

Our World Community

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Where to Buy Recycled Paper

In our last issue we discussed the importance of using recycled paper. For those people who would like to purchase 80% recycled paper at a reasonable price, SENS, the Sustainable Environment Network Society in Vernon, sells 500 sheets for \$7.50.

You can purchase the paper at Hodge and Associates, 2905 Suite A 30th Ave., Vernon. Phone 542-4048 and ask for Nick. Please bring exact change.



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A big Thanks to Erynn for designing and hosting OWC's web site

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In fact he claims that local farmers would gain the most benefits by having a new cash crop from what normally would be considered agricultural waste from growing grain.

They Look Marvelous

When I asked Mike if a person would have to sacrifice the visual aesthetics of their home to reap all the benefits of straw bale construction, he was quick to answer absolutely not. "At first glance you can't tell the difference between your typical home and one built from straw," Mike replied. "The only thing a person would notice upon inspection is that the walls are thicker. There is no difference in the appearance of the house, inside or out."

A Man On a Quest

There is no question Mike is determined to expose all the misinformation about straw bale construction. If you want to know how determined he is, just ask his wife Connie. She'll tell you that Mike spends most of his free time talking to any person, group, or agency that will listen. When he's not speaking, he's busy getting his hands dirty helping someone build their dream home out of straw. Mike is confident that with every straw bale house built, there will be another satisfied home owner anxious to spread the good news about its advantages.

Keeping the Wolf at Bay

For the "Once Upon a Time" little piggy

who didn't have to worry about escalating home heating costs the solutions were simple. He could build his house out of brick or move to a new neighborhood that didn't have a resident Big Bad Wolf. If only it was that easy for us.

Electricity and natural gas are both commodities, freely traded throughout North America and the world. With increased demand and dwindling supplies, the outlook for stable home heating costs isn't a rosy one. So, is straw bale housing the solution for keeping more of your family's income out of the grasp of energy profiteers?

After spending a day with Mike, I'm more convinced the answer may be yes. In the end, a house built of straw may be the best protection against the Big Bad Wolf pounding at our door.

Keith Bowman

Mike Pearson and the author, Keith Bowman, are both active Committee Members for Our World Community. If you would like to know more about straw bale construction, there are a number of good publications available on the subject. Of course, if you start your project and hit a snag, Mike would be happy to work you through it.



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