

A Vision For The Commons Davistown Rising!

by Maia Campoamor

The mission of Davistown Commons is to strengthen our rural communities, support our local economies, and provide a venue for the exchange of local skills and resources.

It is winter. Trees are covered with snow. Dozens of people come to a general meeting to create a community space in our rural town. Over fifty farmers, gardeners, bakers, artists, craftspeople, parents, babies, administrators, and teachers pack into a small house and the counter is laden with food. Folks fill their bowls and we begin to dream. Many voices are heard, many ideas exchanged, many visions shared. We are at the beginning of a long journey.

It is spring and birds are chirping. The sun is shining and bulbs, risen from their winter hibernation, have transformed into blossoming flowers. Folks gather at an old farm for the Davistown Commons Local Resource Celebration. Our neighbors have brought big bags of greens grown in their backyards. Slowly, the greens are combined into one large bowl, becoming a beautiful salad, a portrayal of our unity, cooperation and vision. We are neighbors sharing food, thought and inspiration.

It is summer and the blackflies are out. Local farmers, bakers and mushroom hunters converge in the parking lot of a corner restaurant and help erect a village of tents. Fresh veggies, mushrooms, maple syrup, meat, bread, jam, fruit and soap fill boxes and baskets. Our neighbors arrive on foot, by bike and in cars. They fill their bags and stay, having meaningful exchanges with the farmers and each other. This small farmers market, in its second year, has an apparent flow of mutual support between farmers and community members.

It is autumn. Leaves have turned orange, red and brown. Wood stoves are cranking and the season's harvest has been brought into the cellars and pantries. Folks gather at our local grade school for the 2nd Annual Davistown Commons Community Harvest Supper. We share food raised and prepared by over 25 local farmers and families. In the corner local musicians strum their instruments. Behind the scenes volunteers wash dishes. At the tables neighbors converse. In the hallway children play. In the middle of an "economic recession" we have an incredibly successful dinner and fundraiser. The funds will support the Maine Migrant Health Program, and the Davistown Community Farmshare, which helps



graphic: Mark Poirier



low-income folks in our community access local and healthy food.

It has been over a year since our first official Davistown Commons gathering. Our vision and direction get clearer and our passion grows stronger. Our mission is to strengthen our rural communities, support our local economies, and provide a venue to exchange local skills and resources. We are an autonomous organization, voluntarily working to meet the common economic, social and cultural needs of our communities.

The organizers are bound together by values that have long fueled the activities and exchanges of our rural community: honesty, democracy, equality, reverence for the land, respect for our neighbors, community solidarity, self-sufficiency, local control over resources, social, ecological and economic justice and sustainability. Our actions and commitment are based in a belief that through cooperation, mutual aid, and ecological protection we can create just, fair and sustainable economic structures.

Ultimately, we aspire to create a community space that helps facilitate the exchange of life's basic necessities, primarily food, but also education, childcare, shelter, healthcare and community. This could be a cooperatively-owned food store/cafe, as well as a venue for community meals, meetings, educational workshops, children's activities, farmers markets, and more. It would decrease our dependence on non-renewable, outside resources, increase our local food security, stimulate our local economy and be an invaluable contributor to the vitality of our community.

In the meantime, the Davistown Commons represents not an actual location, but an ever-evolving vision. That vision takes many forms and as the seasons change so do the activities and evolution of Davistown Commons. What guides us daily is a deep-seated belief that there are healthy and sustainable alternatives to the consumer-driven, individualist culture that currently dominates our society. By strengthening our relationships with our neighbors, exchanging local resources, promoting education, and acting out of mutual aid, cooperation and generosity, we believe we can thrive, and create a model of a self-sustaining community.

Maia Campoamor is a mother, farmer and community organizer in Montville Maine. She grows food for her community and organizes locally as part of a larger struggle for social, ecological and economic justice.