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October 2019

# Cohousing Now!

## Warning! Wasps!

by Karen Gimnig

I saw this sign on a recent visit to Pioneer Valley Cohousing. It was positioned beneath a large and beautiful wasps nest, and though I didn't see any actual wasps, I was grateful for the warning to proceed cautiously and also to have my attention drawn to a bit of nature's beauty that I might otherwise have overlooked.

I was struck by the difference between this very cohousing approach to wasps and what I would expect in other communities where an exterminator would be called. It feels really right to me to make space for other creatures, even if they might harm you. We can do a lot of damage when we focus only on protecting ourselves.

I saw it as a metaphor for another aspect of community. When we live closely with one another, there are times we get waspy. We get tired or anxious or overwhelmed. We get impatient, or short tempered. We forget to assume good intent and we speak sharply and hurt each other. When we are on the receiving end of all that, it's easy to feel stung. I'm asking myself, what is the social equivalent of a wasps nest and a warning sign?

I think one piece is that a little waspiness is bound to happen. It's a natural thing that we get stung once in a while. It's not fun, it hurts, and it doesn't mean we have to exterminate the person doing it, or even necessarily exterminate their behavior. We humans are pretty resilient. Wasps don't generally kill us, and neither will an occasional bout of waspy behavior. Sometimes the thing to do is to take heed of the warning signs and give some space.

Of course it helps a lot if the person feeling waspy gives warning signs, particularly signs that are reasonably pleasant. Perhaps they walk with their head down, or don't

make their usual level of eye contact, or maybe they even say, "I'm not up for this today." Or, "I'm feeling waspy, this might not be the best time to talk to me." As usual, I'm going to claim that everyone involved in a situation has the power to engage in ways that make it better. Naming your needs when you aren't your best self is one side of that coin.

The other side is about what happens when you lean in with someone who is feeling waspy. Sometimes you just get stung, it is true. But also, there is beauty there. In the midst of irritability, truths get spoken, vulnerabilities revealed, opportunities for growth identified. When you lean in to someone at their worst, you defy any internal story they may have about being unlovable or unworthy – the very story that is likely the source of the waspiness. When you show up with someone and pay attention to their needs more than their behavior, sometimes the most beautiful relationships form.

When you see wasps and warning signs in your community I invite you to consider your options. Notice whether you are feeling allergic, or merely vulnerable. Ask yourself if this is a moment to go searching for beauty despite the risk. And when you do get stung, try to keep in mind that this is a natural way of things that is bound to happen from time to time and shouldn't dissuade us from being there for each other.

## Giving Tuesday

**W**hy does the association need my money?

To put it simply, we rely on your financial contributions so that cohousing can thrive. CohoUS is committed to providing resources that help cohousing grow into a stronger, more diverse movement. We are asking for your help so that we can continue to provide low- and no-cost online resources and a record-breaking number of scholarships to our national conference. While we receive some funds from conference tickets and paid services, individual and community donations are essential to maintain the level of services we provide.

Everyone involved with cohousing benefits from the work of the association.

**F**orming communities have access to tons of information to guide them on their way, advertising on our website and enews and other opportunities to connect with prospective members.

**E**stablished communities learn from one another through CohoUS's communication tools, including WebChats and the cohousing.org website. The directory and classified ads help replace departing homeowners with cohousing newbies who are passionate about cohousing.

**S**eekers learn about cohousing and find their new communities. The movement as a whole benefits from the nationwide publicity we support.

**P**rofessionals get introduced to clients through many of our activities, not to mention finding opportunities for collaboration.

With such a broad array of services, we need the support of everyone in the cohousing movement to keep our programs going. Even better, donations to our Giving Tuesday campaign will be doubled by an anonymous donor. There's never been a better time to contribute to making the world a better place one community at a time. [Click here](#) to Donate now. [Thank you!](#)

As a part of our Simple Series 2020:  
**CohoUS's first ever online conference**

Coho US's first ever online conference will be on a topic that is at the forefront of conversations about how to expand cohousing in the United States. We will gather from around the nation to discuss this challenging and vital topic in the cohousing movement.

Save the date: February 22, 2020  
**An Affordable Conference  
on Affordable Cohousing**

We have hosted one full year of WebChats! Here's what's coming next:

Wednesday, Nov 6  
**Katie McCamant**  
The Stages of Cohousing Development

Monday, Nov 18  
**Karen Gimnig**  
Personal Growth: The most important reason for cohousing.

5pm PT, 6pm MT,  
7pm CT, 8pm ET  
<https://zoom.us/j/202941610>

[Full WebChat Schedule](#)

[View Recordings](#)

## CohoUS

### Save the Date!

CohoUS Annual Report Monday December 2, 2019  
5pm PST/ 6pm MST/ 7pm CST/ 8pm EST

## Blog

### We Welcome Your Stories

Some of our favorite blogs are stories by

people just like you. Tell us about your favorite community experience, your biggest learning, the beautiful thing your neighbor did. We'd love to share it. Submit to: [karencohous@gmail.com](mailto:karencohous@gmail.com)

## Cohousing Across the Country

This summer I drove from Atlanta, GA to Anacortes, WA, which is to say, I moved home. As I crossed the country, I engaged with as much community as I could. I'm sharing that journey here in seven parts with gratitude and lessons learned. ~ Karen Gimnig

### Part 1 of 7 - The Beginning

The beginning of any journey is the departure. So it was for me as I drove away from five years of living at East Lake Commons. Cohousing has touched me, changed me, become a piece of me. Driving north I had time to reflect on how my community had broadened my perspectives, honed my understanding of consensus, and taught me about myself.

ELC was my introduction to cohousing, my testing ground, my introduction to the best and some of the worst that cohousing can be. These are a few of the lessons I learned there:

[click here](#) to read more

### Part 2 of 7 - Long Trails and Great Ideas

Cohousing begins with great ideas, hard work and risky investment in shared dreams. Sometimes the vision and the effort deliver cohousing in a matter of years, sometimes it's longer. My first community stop as I traveled from the SouthEast to the NorthWest was with Carol and Tom Braford of Arizmendi Ecovillage in St. Louis, where they have held and nurtured a vision of community, yet to be realized, for two decades.

### Part 3 of 7 - Cohousing Working Well

As I made my way across the country, I paused for nearly a week at the half way mark, Boulder, Colorado, a mecca of cohousing. There I was welcomed by my CohoUS teammate (and boss), Karin Hoskin for our Staff Retreat (more on that in the next post) and a happy reprieve from long drives. What struck me about Karin's home community, Wild Sage, was all the examples of typical cohousing practices that build really wonderful community.

[click here](#) to read more

[click here](#) to read more

#### Part 4 of 7 - Staff Retreat

You may not know that the Cohousing Association has no actual physical office. Each of the paid and unpaid people who work to bring you services from the association provides our own office space. The great thing about this approach is that we get input and participation from all over the country. The down side is that we almost never work together in person. Thus it was a true delight to have four full days of collaborative work in the same physical space with Karin Hoskin.

[click here](#) to read more

#### Part 5 of 7 - Solidarity Collective in Laramie WY

Cohousing isn't the only form of intentional community alive and well in the US. We have much in common with other groups that choose to live together, share resources, and support one another in life's endeavors. One path toward affordable options may be to follow the lead of communities who share more and hold more of their property in common.

[click here](#) to read more

#### Part 6 of 7 - Wasatch Commons

My final stop on my cohousing tour, was with Wasatch Commons in Salt Lake City. It seemed fitting to end my visits with one of the longest standing communities in the US. Wasatch recently celebrated 20 years of life together. That long history of working together shows in so many ways.

[click here](#) to read more

#### Part 7 of 7 - Arrival

Arriving in my new home, surrounded by beauty, but not living in cohousing, I have much to ponder. The big question is this: Is it possible to live a community life without (for now) living in cohousing? This is the experiment of my next few years, and I believe I will find that answer is yes.

[click here](#) to read more

## In the News

### **The Case For Cohousing: Where Responsibilities Are Shared And Life Is A Little Less Lonely**

*by Ben Brock Johnson -  
Cognoscenti - Oct 2019 - photo*

**'We Need Each Other':  
Seniors Are Drawn to New  
Housing Arrangements**

*by Paula Sparn - The New York  
Times - Oct 2019*

Alan O'Hashi, 66, a documentary filmmaker, and his partner moved into the architect-designed Silver Sage Village cohousing community in Boulder, Colo., in 2008.

Though he enjoyed living in the 16-unit development, which like most cohousing communities operates legally as a condominium, Mr. O'Hashi didn't become a true believer until 2013, when pneumonia sent him to a hospital and then a rehab facility. He came home in a wheelchair.

"All of a sudden, people were bringing over food and calling to check on me," he recalled. "It's the secret sauce of cohousing, this notion of community, of shared values."

[click here](#) for full article

*Mary Kraus Architecture*

I love telling people I meet that I live in a hippie commune. This is a lie. Or really it's a joke, designed to prompt questions that I'm eager to answer. I actually live in a cohousing community, and not only is it far from weird — I think it should be a lot more common.

...

While I worried their neighbors might be a little too close for comfort, my parents were thinking about much bigger things — like how to diminish their carbon footprint to combat climate change. They were also adamant about avoiding the retirement communities where they'd watched their own parents slowly shuffle into whatever comes next. They wanted to live out their days around like-minded people of all ages, and cohousing's particular form of community living fits these priorities.

[click here](#) for full article

## Classified Ads

### Forming Communities and Communities Seeking Members

[Heartwood Commons](#)  
[Tulsa, OK](#)

[Evans Oaks Cottages](#)  
[Silverton, OR](#)

[Sunnyside Village](#)  
[Marysville, WA](#)

[Oakleigh Meadow Cohousing](#)  
[Eugene, OR](#)

**[Rocky Corner Cohousing  
Bethany, Connecticut](#)**

**Homes for Sale**

**[2 Bed/1.5 Bath  
Townhome Pleasant Hill  
Cohousing in SF Bay area,  
CA](#)**

**[Two homes for sale at Wolf  
Creek Lodge Senior  
Cohousing in Grass Valley.,  
CA](#)**

**[Homes in Prairie Hill  
Cohousing Iowa City, IA](#)**

**[Homes in Fair Oaks  
EcoHousing in Fair Oaks,  
CA](#)**

**[Homes in Nubanusit  
Neighborhood & Farm  
Peterborough, NH](#)**

**[4 Bed/2 Bath in Trillium  
Hollow Portland, OR](#)**

**[7 Condo Homes in Bull  
City Commons Cohousing  
in Durham, NC](#)**

**[Homes in Juniper Hill  
Commons in  
Harrisonburg, VA](#)**

**[Lots and House in Stowe  
Farm Cohousing  
Community in Colrain, MA](#)**

**Homes For Rent**

**[2 Bed/1.5 Bath Home for  
rent in Pleasant Hill Cohousing  
Pleasant Hill, CA](#)**

**Cohousing Professionals**

**[McCamant & Durrett Architects  
The Cohousing Company](#)**

**[Caddis Collaborative](#)**

**[Fitch Architecture  
& Community Design](#)**

**[Cohousing Solutions](#)**

**Directory - Find your community now!**

[Click Here](#) for the **Cohousing Directory**

If your community has not created a new and accurate listing for the new website, please do that now. As part of that process you will need to create a new user account which will allow you to update your directory listing and access other website features.

## **Huge Heaps of Gratitude to our new Association Supporter:**

### **Caddis Collaborative**

#### **Thanks for reading**

**Cohousing Now!** provides news and events on Cohousing... Now! provided by The Cohousing Association of the United States. Please forward to your friends, communities, and other lists to spread the word about cohousing!

The Cohousing Association is funded by donations from people like you. Thanks so much for your support.

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karincohous@gmail.com  
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