



## Innisfree Impressions

**Reflections from people who visited Innisfree during our 40<sup>th</sup> year: for the very first time and for the first return visit in nearly four decades.**

*John Kelly is a local writer. See his entire piece about his visit to Innisfree in this fall's Albemarle Magazine.*

It's not often that you can travel a few short miles and arrive at a place that is like nowhere you've ever been before. Innisfree, located on 550 of the most spectacular acres in all of Albemarle County, is that kind of place.

Innisfree is the renowned lifesharing community founded in 1971 by a small group of parents in Maryland, DC, and northern Virginia who had the courage to dream and the power to imagine a place in the world for their children with intellectual disabilities at a time when hope, for them, was firmly attached to a question mark.

What they started 40 years ago stands today as an example of what can happen when people live and work together toward a common purpose, more mindful of what pulls them together than what splits them apart.... At Innisfree, 40 years later, there really is no place like home.

*Terry Noyes was a Volunteer at Innisfree in 1971, during the months when Innisfree was planting the seeds for our now 40 year old Village.*

I want to tell you how amazed I am at all this community has accomplished. You have taken this place way beyond what I thought possible; extra-ordinary dedication and damn hard work by all.

Innisfree has weathered all the little storms of the early years. I'm so delighted by the persistence of the village, the clarity of vision and the wonder of people's lives. It works! What a commitment by those of you who have stayed to bring Innisfree through these 40 years. It's exciting to come today and see our earliest dreams in action.

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Photo by Jack Looney



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## Down on the Farm ---

### Then and Now Forty Years on Walnut Level Farm

**T**here is a reason Innisfree Village is not urban. Innisfree took root and grew into a healthy community, not in spite of its natural environment, but in many ways because of it. Our land is a rolling 550 acre farm. This glorious natural environment provides sustenance, peace and serenity -- and occasional drama. (Skunks and snakes and bears! Oh my!) The protective embrace of these hills fosters a unique sense of place that nourishes our appetites with food and feeds our souls with beauty.

In the early Innisfree years, Joe Coleman had a few hogs and managed a beef herd on the property, which he had done since his arrival on Walnut Level Farm in 1950. From the very beginning of Innisfree's tenure on this land, activities have included



*Little piggies having dinner*



*New spring lambs 2011*

coworkers and volunteers. The hippies and the farmer collaborated in interesting ways. Hay

season did not need to be announced. A growing anticipation would build as Joe first mowed, then raked the hay. By the time the sound of the bailer kicked in, folks would assemble around the field to move fresh bales to the barn.



*Loading hay onto conveyor circa 1989*

Miriam left her post in the weav-ery to stack hay. Jake, in his trusty golf cart, would drive Philip from one bale to the next for lifting onto the wagon. Heyward loved to set bales on the conveyor and watch them rise to the hayloft. Pete Marshall often drove the tractor, carefully outfitted with a mask to control his hay fever.



*Collecting hay in the field*



*Jake drives his golf cart*





Robert Burrows gathered the eggs from our first flock of chickens. John Dickinson gladly collected their feathers, storing them in a huge wooden box in his bedroom! However the first iteration of the present day chicken operation began with an idea --

Connie Welsh wanted to build a movable coop, and add egg collecting as a regular chore. Although he "thought it was a crazy idea," Joe tore apart an old hay wagon to provide a base with wheels, and then stood back to watch the project unfold. As Connie and Kieran started

building the coop, other materials miraculously presented themselves at the moments they were needed -- compliments of Joe who matched their anticipated needs from within his unique filing system of assorted farm materials. Once the coop was completed, things were set in motion. The mail order chicks arrived, survived a power outage and grew into egg producing hens.



*Heyward satisfied with a full bucket of eggs*



*Chris cleaning and sorting eggs*

The present day egg enterprise is made up of larger movable coops, which were purchased from a neighboring farm shortly after Peter and Debra Traverse were hired as the new Farm



*Robert collecting eggs*

Managers. The parade of coops, tractors and pick-up trucks with flashing lights, edged ever so slowly along Route 810, bringing the birds to their new home with us. The new coops are moved weekly to fresh areas of pasture, providing forage for the birds, while they return the favor in the form of fertilizer. We now sell eggs

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*The Farm (continued)*

regularly to vendors in Charlottesville in addition to providing eggs used for the Village.

This year, in the official farm work station, Connie works collaboratively with Peter and Deb to identify work opportunities for our farmers that are productive, safe, rewarding—and FUN! As we look to the future, we are excited by the opportunities our natural resources, when used wisely, present to us.

*Innisfree Impressions (continued)*

### Thoughts on lifesharing at Innisfree by two long timers

*Nancy Chappell came to Innisfree with her young son, Alex in 1992 and stayed for nearly 18 years.*

*She's back again now as our Medical Coordinator.*



I arrived at Innisfree looking for a larger family with whom to belong. We found that and more. These experiences

in lifesharing make up a rich family life and have provided us with a large family of friends as well as memories to last a lifetime.

Photo by Jack Loney



**Wes Andrews**  
is the Associate  
Director at

*Innisfree, spending the better part of 26 years here raising his children and managing our finances.*

Consider yourself a very fortunate person if you find that special place in your life, that gives you the incredible, internal sense of 'belonging' ..... ..because I surely do, and I am so fortunate to have found Innisfree. I remember when I look back at those special moments, when I was honored to be able to care, support and just 'be with'

some of our coworkers during their final moments...



**Come To The Village**

**Holiday  
Open House  
December 10th  
10am-5pm**

**Call ahead to join  
our wreath-making  
workshop**

**434 823-5646**