

Visit to village inspires change

Eco-village stands strong with stick, plastic tubing, bales of straw base

Dancing Rabbit is everything I had hoped for — and more.

For the uninitiated, Dancing Rabbit is an eco-village just outside the town of Rutledge, which is about an hour northeast of Kirksville. An eco-village is a type of intentional community, wherein all participants usually agree to live a certain way and share resources. At Dancing Rabbit, members agree to live sustainably and make decisions via consensus, among other things.

As an environmentalist and part-time resident of northeast Missouri, I had heard about Dancing Rabbit on multiple occasions and it had taken on a rather mythical status in my mind. Saturday, I finally had a chance to visit Dancing Rabbit and learn about how to live more in union with the earth.

Although there are many different facets to Dancing Rabbit and daily life there, the two tour guides who led the group I was with focused on the local

architecture. The living spaces at Dancing Rabbit are anything but conventional. I saw and touched homes made from any combination of metal sheeting, wood, bales of straw, soil, sand, bits of concrete, plastic tubing, netting and glass. One home was a converted grain silo and one of our tour guides lived in a gutted school bus to which she had attached a new roof and a small greenhouse. The tour guide pointed out that because each home is unique to the individual or family that lives there and many of the houses have specific names like "Aubergine" or "Thistledown," visitors know exactly whose dwelling they are entering.

Gardens were a common feature to most of the homes I saw, some of which looked rather haphazardly planted. Tomatoes seemed to be a popular choice, as were garlic, onions and basil. Our tour guides said most of the food members eat is sourced on-site or at another intentional community, Sand Hill, which is just down the road from Dancing Rabbit. As a cooking enthusiast, I was especially thrilled

Commentary



Chris Boning

by the ingenuity demonstrated in the construction of several energy efficient ovens scattered in buildings around the village. A number of outdoor kitchens that I saw also were pleasing — there just seems to be something more natural about cooking outdoors.

Because of the focus on architectural design and creativity, it appeared to me at first that an individual had to be quite smart to make it at Dancing Rabbit.

However, as one of my friends pointed out, it's not that the residents of Dancing Rabbit are of superior intelligence, it's just that they are utilizing knowledge that otherwise has been lost or ignored, especially in America. For example, some of the homes at Dancing Rabbit employ passive heating, or a system of using the heat generated by appliances and bodies to keep houses warm, which is popular in Scandinavia and Germany but generally not in the United States.

Overall, Dancing Rabbit was quite inspiring. The variety of homes dotting the landscape accentuated the idea that there are many ways of living and utilizing the earth's resources in a conscientious way. In addition to using materials directly from the earth, many members equipped their homes with solar panels and a few even had wind power capabilities. The village's community center, where members can use a conventional shower, wash clothes, play board and video games or use the Internet, is also almost completely powered by solar panels.

As far as eco-villages go,

Dancing Rabbit is rather notable because it was featured in one of the first episodes of the MTV series, "30 Days," in which participants experience a way of living dramatically different from the lifestyle they usually maintain. The Dancing Rabbit episode memorably included a native New Yorker who threw a tantrum when no meat could be found in the village.

Speaking of New York, one of the original founders of Dancing Rabbit is now the dean of sustainability at New York University.

A group of idealistic men and women who had recently graduated from college founded Dancing Rabbit. As one of our tour guides described the young individuals who established the village, I couldn't help but think those men and women sounded a lot like myself and my friends who took the tour on Saturday. Although I might not go on to start an eco-village after I graduate, it still gave me hope that I can do something great and change the world in some small way after my time at Truman has finished.

Suicide opens door to unanswered questions

Suicide isn't an easy thing to talk about, so I'm going to discuss the issue as delicately as possible.

I applaud the University Counseling Services for sponsoring workshops with an open discussion about its causes and consequences and how to prevent it. In case you didn't know, last week was National Suicide Prevention Week. Suicide is a scary issue — aside from being the 11th leading cause of death in the United States, it's the third leading cause of death among 10 to 24 year olds. That's us. Even scarier? According to surveys conducted by the UCS, 10 percent of Truman students who responded to the survey have considered attempting suicide in the past year.

Questions concerning the whys of suicide have been floating around in my brain a lot recently. Suicide has been an issue that's hit home with a surprising number of my friends. This summer, I worked on the Theatre Department's show "S.O.S.," which focused on a college kid rebuilding his life after his dad's suicide. The UCS's QPR (Question-Persuade-Refer) program, I can't help but feel a twinge of sadness when I think about someone taking their own life. Why did they do it? Could they have been stopped?

Experts have identified a variety of biological, psychological and environmental factors that increase suicidal inclinations. Depression is a major factor in 65 to 90 percent of all cases of suicide. Some modern researchers even suggest that there is a genetic predisposition to suicidal behavior, standing apart from depression. Life events, such as sexual orientation and the strength of interpersonal relationships,

also provide insight into the causes behind suicide. Even where you live (rural vs. urban) or your economic condition can be predictors. But of all factors, hopelessness is a leading contributor in moving from depressed thoughts to suicidal actions. But life is not hopeless.

As a general rule of thumb, your genes only make up a portion of who you are. Yes, if you have a parent or other close family member who has been depressed, you are more likely to suffer from depression as well. It has the same effect as diabetes or cancer passing through the bloodline. So I can understand the terror associated with these biological implications. You might feel despondent — like if this illness wants you or is already floating around in your DNA, it will get you.

But, at least 50 percent of who you are, if not more, is within your control. It's the classic nature vs. nurture argument, and for decades psychologists have argued about which has more influence: your biological disposition or your environmental upbringing. The most contemporary understanding, to my knowledge, is that it's a nearly even split. Although your genes naturally predispose you to certain setbacks, your life experiences and choices determine whether these actually will be realized within you.

You do have a choice. It's not hopeless. If you're upset with where you live, move. If it has to do with work, get a new job. You are what you make yourself — you create the reality within which you live your life. But sometimes it's hard for someone to see that.

Commentary



Elizabeth Necka

That's the other thing — it's an illness. I have to admit that even though I know this, in bouts of anger or sadness I've spoken out about the injustice and selfishness of suicide. It's not fair that those still here are left wondering if the suicidal person ever loved them at all. But it's not like that — with suicide, they're only looking for a solution to their problem, but certainly not trying to hurt anyone in the process. In interviews with suicide attempt survivors, nearly all accounts agree: Escaping the seemingly insurmountable problems of this life is only a momentary relief. In the actual act, it's terrifying to realize what you're going to be missing and most are left thinking, "I want to live."

This is where you come in. When your roommate has the flu, you give him medicine to make him feel better. When your

Where to turn 24

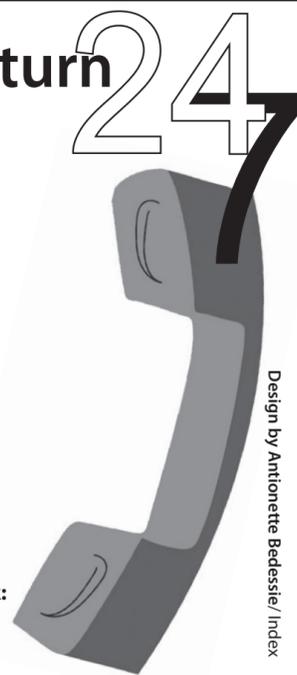
Suicide Prevention

Many places in Kirksville and around the area offer counseling and other services for those contemplating suicide.

University Counseling Services - Traditional working hours from Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. or call at 660-785-4014. After hours call 660-785-5621

There are also several non-regional options that anyone can contact.

Crisis Hotline: 800-356-5395
National Hopeline Network: 1-800-SUICIDE



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girlfriend gets a cut, you put Neosporin and a Band-Aid on it. When your friend has been acting down for weeks and isolating him or herself, you ask about it. Show your friend there are reasons to live, and persuade him that there are other ways to work out his problems. Refer her to more experienced help. Be open to talk about it — don't pass judgment.

Last year, an acquaintance of mine was found cutting herself in one of the residence hall bathrooms. Someone notified an SA and got the girl help. Of 500 people who were restrained from jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge, only 6 percent of them actually went on to kill themselves. This means that 94 percent of them went on to live, all because someone reached out to them and helped them through a tough time.

It's going to be an awkward

conversation. You don't want to ask someone if they're thinking of offing themselves. But suicide is rarely "out of the blue." Taking those steps to show someone you love them can mean saving their life.

Luckily, in the past 18 years and thousands upon thousands of Truman students who have walked this campus, only one has succeeded in taking their own life. Maybe it's because those who considered or attempted it had a friend to help them work through it. I'd like to think that we can make such a difference, and I hope you do, if you ever know someone contemplating suicide.

On Oct. 22 at Truman, mental health activist John Kevin Hines will appear at 7 p.m. to discuss the topic of suicide. Hines is one out of 29 people to have survived jumping off of the Golden Gate Bridge.

Clingy people lack sexual appeal

BY ANNE REBAR
Columnist

"WHY WON'T SHE LEAVE ME ALONE!?"

This is the text I received today from a male friend and all I could do was shake my head. The text was in reference to a girl who had not taken hints that my friend was not into her and had continued to throw herself at him daily via phone calls and text messages.

My first reaction was to feel sorry for the girl, but my friend had been open and honest about his feelings — or lack thereof — and intentions — strictly casual — and yet, she had the ill-conceived notion she could somehow change his mind. Thus, on second thought, and at the risk of sounding callous, she had it coming.

Her constant calling and texting were counterproductive, as she succeeded in pushing my friend from the "interested in casually dating" territory to the realm of "please, just leave me alone."

I have seen this happen time after time and, admittedly, have been guilty of committing this dating faux pas once or twice myself. Being "too available" is a surefire way to take any chance at a relationship with someone and flush it down the tubes. Lately, an alarming number of these instances have been brought to my attention.

"Part of the excitement when you first start dating someone is the mystery and uncertainty. Does this person like me? Will I hear from him today? When will I see them next?"

When I say you shouldn't be "too available" when dating, I do not mean you should be turning down offers for dates and ignoring the phone calls and texts of your current romantic interest just to make him or her sweat. That's just a silly high school game. I mean you shouldn't be overzealous and overbearing to the point of bordering on desperation. Desperation is not sexy.

Although it seems that most often it's girls making this mistake, boys do it too. A friend of mine is currently in a predicament with a certain boy whom I've taken to calling the "Puppy Dog." My friend met this boy a while ago and, at first, found him to



be a suitable casual dating partner with the possibility of leading to more. Unfortunately, the shiny possibility of a new romance wore off, and his incessant calling and asking to come over became tedious and unbecoming. She immediately let him know that their relationship would never move past being a casual thing. Despite saying he was OK with this arrangement, he still is seriously interested in her and continues to be at her beck and call.

On one hand, it makes me kind of happy to see that it's not only girls who subject themselves to this kind of emotional masochism. On the other hand, his puppy-like way of obeying her every command is a bit depressing. Not only did it effectively extin-

guish all romantic feelings my friend had for him (where's the fun in dating someone who bends to your every will and command? It's a relationship, not a dictatorship), but he is wasting his emotional energy on someone who is not romantically interested in him when he could just cut his losses and try to find someone who is.

Part of the excitement when you first start dating someone is the mystery and uncertainty. Does this person like me? Will I hear from them today? When will I see them next? If a person comes on too strong, the mystery and uncertainty is taken away and the only feeling left is predictability. Predictability is boring.