

## **Imani Farm/Village Terraces Cohousing Neighborhood at Earthaven Ecovillage**

### **Work Exchange Positions**

If you're receiving this orientation letter, you've probably seen our listing online at [idealist.org](http://idealist.org), [organicvolunteers.org](http://organicvolunteers.org), or [earthaven.org](http://earthaven.org).

Thank you for your interest in us. We've tried to spell out the details of this opportunity clearly here so that you'll know what you're applying for. Please be sure to ask questions if they are not answered in this letter.

#### **Introduction**

Work exchange positions at Earthaven Ecovillage are available by making an arrangement with a host individual or a neighborhood within Earthaven. Work exchange positions at Earthaven Ecovillage are an opportunity for individuals to learn about life in an ecovillage. In a nutshell, you offer your labor, skills, and some fees in exchange for food, private indoor accommodations in our beautiful home, shared living space and facilities (shared kitchen, library, bath, neighborhood land), participation in an educational opportunities in the form of a weekly class, and access to all that Earthaven has to offer including 300 plus acres of Appalachian woodlands, community living, social events, a profound democratic governance process, and an ongoing process of ecological and conscious modeling. Work exchange positions also offer you a deeper understanding of what its like to live in an “off the grid” intentional community dedicated to sustainable living.

#### **About Earthaven**

Earthaven Ecovillage is an intentional community dedicated to caring for people and the Earth by learning, living and demonstrating holistic, sustainable culture. On 320 forested acres, Earthaven now supports 65 full members, and a steady stream of visitors and students. Although we are surrounded by babbling creeks and natural beauty, it is a primitive scene, and there is a significant amount of building construction in process.

#### **About our Neighborhood and Farm**

Village Terraces is a neighborhood within Earthaven. It is Earthaven's first cohousing project. Imani Farm is a farm project adjacent to Village Terraces Neighborhood. In addition to the ecological and spiritual values that we all share at Earthaven, we at Village Terraces are especially committed to open and honest communication, raising plants and animals for food, and cooperative living. We feel that we are doing important work that is on the cutting edge of cultural, ecological, and social transformation.

#### **Learn More About Us**

We highly recommend reading up about Earthaven on our website [www.earthaven.org](http://www.earthaven.org)

and taking a visitor tour of Earthaven on any Saturday (10:00 am). You must make a reservation in advance for the tour by calling (828) 669-3937. To learn more about Village Terraces visit [www.earthaven.org/village-terraces](http://www.earthaven.org/village-terraces) and to learn more about Imani Farm visit <http://www.earthaven.org/farms-gardens/Imani.php>.

### **What You Will Give**

Work exchangers agree to work 32 hours/week for Imani Farm/Village Terraces plus 4 additional hours/week for Earthaven which totals 36 hours per week. The length of stay can be from 3 months to 1 year. In addition to the hours above, you will be responsible for cooking and cleaning shifts in whatever kitchen you participate in, food shopping for yourself, and chores that are considered part of the maintenance of your daily life.

We suggest that you come with some extra money for personal expenses, such as special foods, gas, car insurance, toiletries, or medical expenses. You will also want to have some spending money for events at Earthaven such as special dinners, concerts, dances, etc. You are asked to not make additional work commitments during your stay, as you will need to conserve your time and energy.

### **What You Will Receive**

- The opportunity to be at Earthaven as a supporting member/resident for the length of your exchange which includes access to most Earthaven meetings and events, all of Earthaven's social events, and much of our 320 acres of land.
- The opportunity to participate in a cutting edge project (on many fronts) and help us build a culture that is hopefully more sane than the one we've come from.
- Earthaven Administration, Membership, and Facilities fees, will be covered.
- An opportunity to be a significant part of our lives and our neighborhood.
- A private indoor space in our beautiful timber-frame home (camping space is also available should you prefer to be outside).
- Access to Neighborhood common facilities and systems (heat, electric, water, kitchen, bath, grounds, toilet, etc).
- \$55 per week food stipend.
- A weekly class on topics such as herbalism, shamanism, consensus, women's studies, etc.

### **Work Description**

While the duties and responsibilities overlap, we find the work generally falls into four distinct categories. You will be doing some of all of these jobs, sometimes working on your own and sometimes working with us (members) or other wexers and interns.

#### **Construction/Building**

You will help us with building projects at our home. Some work will be sanding, painting, staining, and if you have an aptitude

for more detailed work, opportunities abound. We primarily utilize lumber as we live in a forest and this is the material most available to us. You will work alone and with others, primarily with Mihaly, a long-time builder and facilities manager at our neighborhood and at Earthaven. You will likely learn natural and conventional building techniques on-the-job.

### **Homestead/Farm**

You will help us with homestead and farm chores, land clearing, gardening, small projects related to homesteading, food production including butter, cream, and yogurt, animal care and slaughter (mostly of our chickens which happens 3 times a year), landscaping, perennial management, and various other duties. Creation of agriculture land is an ongoing task at Earthaven. This involves clearing land, felling trees, hauling and stacking brush, amending soils, and seeding. It's likely this will be a part of your agriculture experience here.

### **Utilities Management**

Living off the grid takes a lot of responsibility in terms of monitoring power, adjusting functions, creating and processing firewood (for our boiler which provides heat and hot water for our neighborhood). You will help our neighborhood with our off-grid systems management and maintenance by assisting us in our day to day lives.

### **Garden Assistant**

We have a year-round garden including vegetable beds, raspberry trellises, cold frames, perennial and orchard gardens. These all need planning, planting, care, watering, mulching, harvesting, and weeding. You will help with any and all aspects of our growing food together and learn from us and with us.

### **Additional**

In all cases there is further potential to learn about alternative energy, earthworks, farming, chainsaw handling, management, conflict resolution, and alternative living. Other duties can include clearing/forestry work, firewood work days, maintenance tasks, food prep, child care. Experience is not as important as good work ethic, good attitude, and physical stamina/strength.

**If you have skills in working with a chainsaw, sewing, or art, please let us know. We are very interested in putting these skills to good use!**

Your work hours are Monday through Thursday 8:30 to 5:30 with some flexibility needed throughout.

### **Attitudes and Values that are Essential**

- Self-motivation
- Good Listener and communicator
- Shows up on Time
- Takes responsibility for own actions
- Willing to Learn
- Sense of Humor
- Follows through on responsibilities
- Adaptable
- Humility when learning a new culture
- Committed to reducing, reusing, and recycling
- Conserves electricity, water, and petrol-chemical use
- Dedicated to supporting local economy when buying

### **Daily Life at Earthaven**

Earthaven Ecovillage has a complex social, economic and political environment. You will receive a comprehensive orientation as well as a handbook. Please read the handbook and questions in order to get oriented towards the culture here. Expect that deeper understanding will happen over a period of time. We expect you to:

Read the “New Roots” Handbook

Attend an Earthaven Tour – Saturday mornings at 10:00

Attend a Council Meeting shortly after you arrive

Staying at Earthaven is an adventure! Earthaven is off-the-grid and derives its electricity from solar panels and a small hydropower station. Please be prepared to conserve energy and resources while you are staying with us. Some noticeable differences to prepare for include: no outdoor lighting at night, restricted water use for bathing, and no porcelain toilets. Our drinking water comes from fresh springs on the land and is not treated with chlorine. We do have filtered water available and encourage you to bring your own water bottle to carry with you at all times. People at Earthaven often follow the pattern of the sun – early to bed early to rise – so we ask you to respect the quiet in the evening. Enjoy the symphony of the frogs and the crickets!

There will be extra time during the week for you to relax and get to know others in the community. We encourage you to understand Earthaven beyond its natural buildings and beautiful setting. Consider taking the time to talk with founding members to learn of this community’s rich history. Discover how our alternative currency, the Leap system works. Attend our Council and see how we make decisions by consensus. You will also observe a variety of evolving cultural customs and processes that enhance our connection with the Earth and each other. We encourage you to ask questions when you don’t understand and to respect Earthaven village life.

## **Managing Expectations on Your End**

Please don't come with an expectation that this is the "simple-life." Yes we are close to nature because we work outside almost every day. This translates to hard work, sometimes extreme weather, and need for physical strength. You might do repetitive work for a while although mostly days are varied. Taking responsibility for our lives requires more work than most of us "suburban refugees" are used to. You will get in shape. You probably won't lounge in the hammock all that much.

## **Toilets and Showers**

One of the most noticeable differences about life at Earthaven is our composting toilets. We believe strongly in returning our fertilizer to the Earth and for this reason, there are a number of outhouses for public use. You are encouraged to pee anywhere (except near creeks, springs, trails, and paths) and to poop in the toilets. We use our processed "humanure" on fruit and nut trees. Our outhouses generally do not smell due to our process of separating the pee from the poop.

## **Pets, Animals, Food Choices, and Wildlife**

Earthaven has a strict pet policy and we ask that you do not bring pets here under any circumstances.

Some people at Earthaven raise chickens, rabbits, ducks, goats, sheep, cows, and pigs for some of our food, as well as some vegetables. If you have concerns about our raising of animals for food, please let us know.

Vegetarianism is comfortable and natural to many in an "alternative" lifestyle. Some here at Earthaven have chosen this path and others have chosen eating meat as part of a deeply nourishing food program. In fact a majority of people here eat meat. You will no doubt share a kitchen with meat eaters. If this concerns you, please let us know.

Earthaven is also home to a diverse mix of flora and fauna; there are many poisonous plants and snakes and we ask that you respect our biodiversity. If you are extremely allergic to poison ivy, bee stings, or snakes, we ask that you come prepared.

## **Time Management during your Work Exchange**

36 hours per week commitment will keep you busy. We generally conform to a schedule that works for your own personal rhythms and at the same time have hours that we're available for focalization. Please be sure to bring a calendar to Earthaven, as you will have commitments you need to remember.

Also please note that living and working at Earthaven is a primitive adventure. Just living here without modern conveniences takes a lot more energy and time - in essence it is like a part time job in itself. In addition to your 36 hours/week, you will also have meal preparation and cleanup shifts to carry your part of kitchen responsibilities.

We can't guarantee that there will be the means to earn additional money at Earthaven, however temporary jobs do occasionally come up, especially in the spring and summer

months.

Please don't consider looking for work outside of Earthaven as this has proven again and again to be unsustainable for work exchangers.

### **Heartshares (Talking Stick Style)**

Your work exchange places you in a circle of people committed to honest communication, direct languaging, and body-centered awareness. We may sit in a circle for an hour each week and pass a “talking stick,” giving each of us a chance to speak our truth. Living at Earthaven Ecovillage can be challenging at times for all of us and it’s important to create the space and time to share feelings that arise as we are working together. If you have a concern about your experience here, bring it to us. Talking stick is one opportunity to bring up concerns.

The intent of a talking stick is to:

- Check in about logistics about your stay and work here
- To share our truth about our deeper experiences and feelings
- Reduce the amount of resentment that builds up when frustrations are not expressed
- Offer a means to collectively resolve communication challenges

### **Contact Info**

If you come here, as a work exchanger, your contact info would be: 8 Hut Terrace, Black Mountain, NC 28711. There will most likely be a community phone that you will have access to. We ask that you use your own calling card for long distance calls. CELL PHONES DO NOT WORK AT EARTHAVEN as we are located in a mountain valley and the signals do not transmit well. There is internet access at Earthaven's Trading Post for an additional charge.

### **What to Bring**

There are beds, dressers, a desk, and electricity in the room you will be sharing. Also our common facilities are well equipped. Heat is mostly consistent although you'll want to bring warm sleeping gear.

- Warm Blankets or Sleeping Bag
- Calendar/Personal Datebook
- Alarm clock (battery-powered)
- Slip on Shoes (most indoor spaces at Earthaven require shoelessness)
- Rain Gear
- Work Shoes/Boots
- Flashlights and batteries (LED lights are more efficient)
- Water bottle
- Natural Insect Repellent or long sleeves and long pants that protect your skin from biting insects

#### **Optional:**

- Pocket knife

**Next Steps**

1. Read this letter thoroughly and check out our information online.
2. Fill out the application form and send it back to us by email.
3. Send us a photo with your returned application form.
4. We will be in touch within two weeks, and we will let you know if we'd like to schedule a phone or in-person (if you're close) interview

**If you have any questions about the work exchange position, please email us. We look forward to hearing from you!**

**Lee Warren for Imani Farm and Village Terraces Cohousing Neighborhood  
at Earthaven**

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