

Communities Magazine

www.communities.ic.org

Insights from Editor Chris Roth

1. How do you characterize your readership?

Our readers are a mixture of people living in intentional communities, establishing more community and cooperation in their neighborhoods and workplaces, seeking more cooperative ways of living, and/or simply curious about community and communities.

2. Who writes for your publication? Where do you get your stories?

Community members, community seekers, community visitors, people with specialized knowledge, academic researchers, and others all contribute. We send out a quarterly Call for Articles to those who've expressed interest, and authors send us material. It's important to note that we do not pay for articles--instead, we provide a year's subscription or four copies of the issue in which an article is published. Also, publication is far from guaranteed--we receive more material than we can publish. We also ask writers to send us their article ideas first, before starting or sending the article.

3. If you were to give one or two bits of advice to a freelancer hoping to break into your publication, what would you say?

Familiarize yourself with the Writers Guidelines and if possible look over a copy of the magazine to get a feel for what we're looking for.

4. What is a mistake you typically see new writers (or writers in general) make?

Some writers write too abstractly for our publication, or emphasize opinions, theories, and analyses. We want to hear about real-life stories.

5. Speaking specifically of travel articles in your magazine, what kinds do you look for? Can you tell me a little bit about your own needs? How would you characterize your publication's travel coverage?

We don't cover "travel" per se. However, some writers base their articles on their experiences traveling to different communities or participating in a traveling community venture (like a peace march, a service-oriented bike ride, etc.).

6. What, in your view, separates an OK travel article from one that's truly inspired?

Factors include how much the writer cares about the subject, how well the article is written, how compelling the story is.

7. Do you have any pet peeves when it comes to travel writing?

No--but as I said, we don't really publish "travel writing." Articles that came across as being "touristy" would really not fly--we want the perspective of someone who gets involved in some way in a community or group, even for just the short period of a visit, with an attitude of a participant rather than a spectator.

8. Think about the writer you most like to work with... what makes him or her so special?

Reads the Writers Guidelines! And also writes well about topics that will be appealing and relevant to our readers.

9. Many of our writers have skills in other areas as well as travel writing. What other columns and features for your magazine are you always seeking? Consulting the submissions page on our website (communities.ic.org) and the Writers Guidelines will give a more complete answer than I can give here.

Writers Guidelines

Communities magazine is a 76-to-80-page quarterly exploring sustainable intentional community living and creating community where you live now. By "community" we mean organized neighborhoods (sometimes called "virtual communities"), ecovillages, cohousing neighborhoods, urban or rural group households, artists' collectives, housing co-ops, income-sharing communes, retreat and conference center communities, back-to-the-land homesteading communities, ashrams, meditation centers, convents, and monasteries. We also publish articles about creating community in the workplace, in worker-owned or buyers' co-ops, in nonprofit or activist organizations, and in neighborhoods. Communities is published by the Fellowship for Intentional Community, the nonprofit which also publishes the Communities Directory (www.ic.org).

Our magazine covers what people are learning about how to live cooperatively, how to solve problems peacefully, and how individual lives can be enhanced by living, working, and/or sharing together with purpose and intention. We seek articles on seeking to join a community; starting a new community; community living and why people choose it; creating community in your workplace, apartment building, or existing neighborhood or town; descriptions of what's difficult and what works well; news about existing and forming communities; or articles that illuminate community experiences—past and present—offering insights into mainstream cultural issues.

We're especially seeking articles that touch on some of the following issues about your topic:

- What have you learned? What worked for you? What didn't work? What will you do next?
- Seeking a community to join: researching, visiting, choosing, and/or the first steps in the membership process
- Starting a new community
- Creating more community in your life where you live now—e.g., at work, with friends, in your neighborhood
- Communication and process issues in community; conflict and resolving conflict
- Membership issues in your community (new members joining, people leaving, etc.)
- Raising children in community
- Growing older in community
- Love relationships in the context of community
- Permaculture or other sustainability practices in community
- Economic issues in community.

What we're seeking: We accept articles, interviews, and occasionally poems that are particularly relevant to an issue's theme. We are interested only in writing that directly or indirectly relates to intentional communities or to some aspect of cooperative living or an organized neighborhood. This is important—we reject many pieces from people who have never seen the magazine. (If possible, please read an issue before sending us your work. Sample issues, \$8 postpaid, are available from store.ic.org or from Communities magazine, 138 Twin Oaks Rd., Louisa, VA 23093; 540-894-5798; order@ic.org.)

Please send your idea first: Before you start writing your article, please email the editor (editor@ic.org) with your story idea. We may be able to give you feedback on how to shape your article to give it the best chances of fitting into an upcoming issue. We also appreciate knowing in advance that an article will be submitted, so that we have a better overview of the material we may be considering for publication..

Article content: Although we're looking for practical information and brief overview how-to's, articles need not be all facts—it's best if they're vivid and lively. And while we're definitely interested in success stories, we would also like to hear about the difficult times, the failures (and why), and the challenges of dealing with community living.

Our contributors: We want to hear from anyone with a story to tell: community members or seekers, writers, budding writers, people with specialized knowledge, or academic researchers. Write about your community, cooperative venture, or neighborhood, or one you're familiar with, or about several, comparing and contrasting.

Writing style: We value the personal touch: We're seeking articles where we can see, hear, and feel the people you're writing about. What did the scene look like? What did you or the people you're writing about feel when they made that decision? How did they respond to the result? What did they say? Please help the reader feel as if he or she is meeting these people on the page.

Instead of abstract, academic pieces in which the writer outlines ideas and concepts, we seek articles that include descriptions, examples, and anecdotes to tell a story.

Create a "lead": In longer pieces, the "lead"—the first paragraph of the article—convinces the reader that your article is interesting enough to read. Be as vivid, concrete, and visual as possible. What did it look like? Any sounds? What did people say? Alternatively you could use an anecdote, including dialogue, to set the scene. The second or third paragraph can give the overview and/or state your main point; the lead paragraph is what gets the reader's attention.

Your experience: We would particularly like to hear how you personally may have been affected by your experiences. How have your opinions been changed, validated, or surprised? How might your story help others who are living in or interested in communities?

Advice from our publisher: Laird Schaub, Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), the nonprofit that publishes *Communities*, recommends the following as elements of a good article:

Tell a story. Give enough specifics to make it easy for the reader to join you in your story. Do not give so many details that your story loses momentum. You want it to be vivid and to flow.

Questions to address:

- What challenges did you face?
- What did it feel like?
- How did you figure out how to respond?
- What obstacles did you encounter in trying to deal with the challenges?
- How well did your response deal with the challenges?
- What did you learn?
- How were you and others changed by this experience?

Length: 300 to 2500 words (We very occasionally use longer articles.)

Include specifics: Please include the context of the community or group you write about (size, location, purpose, how old, how many people, values, etc.). Include anecdotes, examples, and stories to illustrate your points. Please give specific facts, rather than general facts. Do include quotes, and brief bits of dialogue, if possible.

Please write in the active voice, rather than the passive voice, and replace passive construction with active construction whenever possible. ("Community members built a strawbale house" rather than "A strawbale house was built by community members.")

We welcome your suggestions for sidebars (shorter sections within the article set off in a box).

Author bio: Please also include two to three lines of autobiographical info. (where you live, your interests, community affiliations, contact info. or website if you choose to share it, etc.).

Author photo: If possible, please also send a photo of yourself to accompany your bio.

Permission: We endeavor to present a diversity of views on community, including controversial or critical views, yet we hope to do so in a respectful and cooperative manner and prevent antagonistic back-and-forth dialog in our letters-to-the-editor section. If your article may generate controversy or strong reactions, or if the group(s) would want the chance to review it, please share your draft with group members to get their input before sending it to us. If you are unable to do this, we will attempt to contact them ourselves to offer a chance for response. If you and group members cannot agree upon a version, and you and we still decide to move forward with possible publication, we will offer the group(s) a chance to share alternative perspectives via a sidebar or letter to the editor. An alternative in some cases may be making the group(s) anonymous or pseudonymous. We generally do not allow authors themselves to remain anonymous or pseudonymous.

Likewise, before sending us your article, please be sure individual community members specifically named in your article do not object to being identified or to your descriptions of them. If they do object, please make alterations and/or offer them a chance to respond.

Article format: Please email your article to editor@ic.org as an attachment in ".doc" format. Copyediting preferences: 1) single-spaced within paragraphs; 2) one space, not two, between sentences; 3) double -space between paragraphs.

Photos: Please see our website (<http://communities.ic.org/submit.php>) and/or contact our Art Director (layout@ic.org) for our Photo Guidelines. We're seeking high-resolution digital photos or hard-copy photos or snapshots of people and/or communities to illustrate your article.

We will assume that any people in your photos have already given you permission to appear in Communities magazine—or you already know they will be fine with it. If you think this will be a problem, please take care of it before sending us photos. Thanks very much.

If you can't provide photos to accompany your article, please let us know that when you submit it. We may still run your article, but will need plenty of time to arrange illustrations.

Your submission may not be published: Because we have more submissions than we can use, we will select the best-written, those that best fit our theme or other specific article needs, those that best complement the other stories in the issue, those that are least repetitive of recent Communities pieces, and those with the most relevant, helpful information. We may edit, shorten, or not use your article, or publish it in a future issue.

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"Copyright [year], [your name] and Communities magazine. This article first appeared in Communities: Life in Cooperative Culture, [date]; for further information on Communities: communities.ic.org."

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You can stay up-to-date with future themes at communities.ic.org or by contacting editor@ic.org. (Guidelines updated 06/15/09.)