

Shii Koeii Community
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January 15, 2018

Dear Community,

We're back from our sabbatical RECHARGED, REJUVENATED AND FIRED-UP to provide food for our community and support the next generation to do the same!

To make this happen, we need your financial support today!

In the newsletter which follows, we hope you'll enjoy our reflections and stories from the road, our tales of how the journey inspired our dreams for Shii Koeii's future.

In 2018, with your support, Shii Koeii will

- Provide high quality, low-cost organic food to the people of Huerfano County;
- Mentor three apprentices in farming and aspects of management;
- Develop relationships with refugee agencies in Colorado to explore welcoming one or more refugee families to join us on the land;
- Improve on our model of simple, sustainable living;
- Support the farmers markets in La Veta and Gardner; and
- Continue to support the growth of sustainable agriculture in Southern Colorado.

As you'll see in the newsletter, we will be making some changes this year in order to continue at a high level of production while also keeping our health and a sense of balance. As a result of some of those changes, our operating costs have decreased and our expected income from the farmers market will decrease.

Our total operational costs for 2018 we estimate at \$17,500. The last page has more details.

As usual, the majority of our income will result from farmers' market sales, but we also need your support.

Please, will you help us resume our good work in service to the wider community?

By February 5th, we need to raise \$6,000.

Enclosed is an envelope in which you can send us a check made out to "Shii Koeii". You can send us a donation paypal to paypal; our account is dogbuckeye@yahoo.com Or, you can go to our website www.shiikoeii.org and make a credit card donation via Paypal. Let us know if you need a tax deduction letter.

Happy New Year, and may 2018 bring us all good health, a kinder, more just world, and true peace.

For the land,

Mark Schneider and Val Phillips

The Sacred Practice of Hospitality, by Val

One of the guiding principles of Shii Koeii has been that we embrace precarity. We seek our security in relationship—with land, with animals, with other people—rather than from money.

For most of the past year, we intentionally made ourselves more vulnerable than usual. Itinerant strangers in someone else's culture and/or country, usually not knowing the language, we intentionally put ourselves in a position wherein we would be fully dependent upon family, friends, and total strangers in order to know what it feels like to be so fully at someone else's mercy.

Our family and friends welcomed us with tremendous love, honoring us with such plentiful good food, comfortable beds and thoughtful, wonderful conversation! Our relationships were strengthened, refreshed and renewed. We are forever indebted to their generosity and kindness.



We were grateful to visit Val's Uncle George and Aunt Rosemarie. Uncle George passed away not long after our visit.

But the hospitality we received from complete strangers, in foreign lands, took our breath away.



Our dear friends, the Ockels-Derencourts, at home in Kentucky!

Lost in Mainz, Germany, last summer, we could not have been introduced to the city in a better way. As we were trying to figure out which direction to go, an elder carrying a bicycle introduced himself warmly as Harold, and then explained in perfect World War II-era English exactly which buses to take to get where we needed to go, when they would arrive, and how much they would cost.

We were grateful for this, but he took it several steps further. He waited with us until the first bus arrived, got on board, explained to the driver where we were trying to go, and waved us on our way.

We made it to our first stop fine. Then as we were crossing the street to get to our next stop, Harold sped past us on his bicycle and met us there, repeating his kindness for the second bus! He had even managed to grocery shop in the time we'd been on the first bus!

On the edge of the Scottish highlands, we found ourselves stranded in a lovely village after missing

the only bus leaving that day for the town where we were staying that night. Desperate, Val brazenly asked a driver stopped and waiting for a Highland Games Parade to pass if we could hitch with him to the next town. His name was Richard, and he not only welcomed us aboard warmly—doubtless a bit taken aback by this weird American woman—he insisted on driving us all the way to the place where we were staying and refused to accept any money for gas.

In Japan, we encountered an extraordinary couple, Tsuneto and Akiko Tokunaga. Now in their mid-to-late 70s, the Tokunagas were children during World War II, and witnessed first-hand the devastation wrought by the

U.S. firebombing every major city and most minor cities in their country. Yet they not only welcomed us with considerable warmth and gave us our own bedroom to sleep in and living room to use, they served us the most delicious, huge, dinner and breakfast we experienced on our whole trip (and that's saying something because the food in Japan is incredible).

Tsuneto and Akiko made a special pilgrimage some years ago, during which time they were shown hospitality along their path. Since that time, in an effort to give back, they have opened their home to hundreds of strangers from around the world. In addition to free hospitality sites like couchsurfing, they have listed themselves on AirBnB, not to make money, but to attract more guests. On AirBnB they charge the absolute minimum the company will allow them because they are doing this out of a sacred passion for hospitality, and a desire to meet their fellow humans from around the globe.

The people of Greece are famed historically and internationally for their hospitality to the stranger. When we traveled to Greece in November to work with refugees, we saw first-hand how well-earned this reputation truly is.

The people of Greece are suffering profoundly under austerity measures imposed by the European Union to service their debt to folks like Goldman-Sachs. On the island of Chios, 8 km from Turkey, there are no jobs, and people struggle to provide for their families' basic needs.

Yet it is Greece that bears the brunt of the refugee crisis engendered by 16 years of war in Central Asia and the Middle East, and ongoing post-colonial strife and poverty in Africa.



Tsuneto, Akiko, their granddaughter with us in Imabari, Japan



CESRT Volunteers breaking down a "raft" used by migrants to cross from Turkey to Chios

We were privileged during our time in Chios to work with the Chios Eastern Shore Response Team, founded a few years ago by an extraordinary Greek single mother named Toula. Staffed entirely by volunteers from all over the world, and run on a shoestring budget of donations, CESRT meets every raft of refugees which arrives on Chios with warm clothes, food, and basic medical assistance, and, perhaps most importantly, kindness.

Doing the work that really should be the responsibility of the EU, the UN, or the huge, well-funded international relief agencies, CESRT—a group of ordinary people like you and me—undertakes to fulfill that sacred of human responsibility, welcoming vulnerable strangers to a strange land.



With 2000 people living in a UN refugee camp built for 800, many are left to cobble together shelter, or else sleep on the cold ground.

All of these experiences have inspired us to consider what we, at Shii Koeii, might do to better welcome not only our loved ones and friends, but also the 'stranger.'

With the advice and support from a dear friend who has worked herself for many years supporting the resettlement of refugees, we will spend the coming year exploring whether Shii Koeii may begin to host refugee families and individuals as they adjust to a new life in a new country and culture. We will work on developing relationships with refugee resettlement agencies in Denver, and educating ourselves regarding refugee needs and required services.

We will also explore with the people of Huerfano County whether this is a responsibility they wish to share with us, to welcome these strangers in need to our communities, our towns, our schools.

It is our profound desire that we may begin to give back some of the invaluable and inspiring hospitality we received around the world during the past year.

Still Trying to Find My Way Back Home, by Mark

A year ago I was exhausted, burned out from what I perceived to be the failures of the last couple of years. I was mad that young people that joined us as interns were mostly not able to fulfill their commitments. I was becoming bitter towards young people and cynical towards our aspiration to grow our intentional community. The seemingly incessant drama with all of the demands and responsibilities had worn me down. I questioned if I was in the right place. I started to reexamine what keeps me here. Is it passion? Necessity? Obligation? Maybe I was the one who was broken?

I am profoundly thankful to the greater community for supporting us to take time off this past year. Being able to mostly lay down the seasonal and many of the daily responsibilities and stresses has been a healing salve. That said, time away and physically being away created a different appreciation

for this place. But first I questioned this place. I wondered if there were some place that our model might work better. In our travels I saw some beautiful places, met thoughtful people, and pondered if I could embrace a different culture, and would they embrace us. The nature of much of the world is so transient, maybe we just transplant ourselves like a tomato plant in the spring soil?

Fortunately humans are truly perennials, even though our economy and government treat us otherwise. It is shocking each time we move and takes many years to integrate into that new place. And that's when I realized something astounding. This place and many



Cuban farmer, our host and Mark near Vinales

of her relations want me to be here, need me to stay here. This place holds us, provides for us.

Ten years ago I thought we would come here and be stewards of this place, be of service to the land and the people. When in fact this place is primarily a steward of us. It provides security, safety, nourishment, and a constant presence we can count on.

I have always wanted to be of service to my community. Even more so, I have needed a place and people I could count on. What I found this year is that my community provides a great service to us: A mutual relationship where we provide food and the community provides not just the financial means for us to exist here, but the care and affection that relationship gives.

My last epiphany I realized was the need to embrace what is, rather than what I think it should be. Are people super excited to join us here at Shii Koeii as live in residents? No, and that may be the case the rest of our lives. Do young people today thrive on keeping commitments and loyalty? Some do, but for most it's a challenge (though they have many fine other attributes). So inviting young people here with the expectation that they'll always keep their commitment to Shii Koeii is a form of insanity, when we already know the answer. So why not adjust our system so we won't collapse without interns and fight hard for what we have!

When I let go of expectations and unrealistic wants, I feel a relief in my body. Suddenly the chaos of my thoughts of how to exist here dissipate. We will survive and at times thrive here because we are a part of this place, we are of service and the land and people of this place will mutually take care of us.

Thank you for being part of our community, for taking care of us, and allowing us, hopefully, to continue to take care of you!

Mark, our friend Dan and Val getting blown away on top of a hill in Scotland



Shii Koeii in 2018

With what we've learned, we are making some changes to create balance. We're hosting less interns and apprentices, giving more time to relationships. We're purchasing a rototiller.

For the farmers markets, we will be there every week at both with our normal array of vegetables. We will be bringing soft raw goat cheese, but not hard cheese. Each week we'll bake sourdough, seeded wheat loaves, and roasted chili cheddar breads. We are taking a year off from laying hens.

We appreciate your support in helping us in this transition year.

Shii Koeii's Budgets

	2018 Planned	2017 Actual	2016 Actual
Garden & Animals	\$3,980	\$1,800	\$7,450
Apprentice/Interns	\$3,850	\$4,100	\$7,750
General Operating	\$5,245	\$5,700	\$9,820
Resident Stewards	\$4,425	\$3,500*	\$4,600
Total	\$17,500	\$16,100	\$29,625

*This includes Shii Koeii's contribution to all our traveling in 2017. Ask us how!!