



**ClydeFEST celebrates spring**  
Page 3



**ONLY ONLINE**

▶ Randy Voller's address to Chatham leaders

▶ Jeff Davidson on staying on task online

▶ Tim Keim on water for the future

**Staturary museum opens**  
Page 5

## Cohousing offers new model of development

By Camille Armantrout

Cohousing is a new model of housing development that is catching on all around the country. This wave of conscientious development offers a mix of affordable green housing, walkable neighborhoods, open space, gardens and community.

Cohousing is in stark contrast to the McMansion method of development wherein 40 single-family homes are built, each in the middle of their one allotted acre with no shared space between them. The typical cohousing project utilizes those acres differently, choosing instead to preserve common open space for its residents while offering them an opportunity to live in community.

The definitive quality of a cohousing project is the participation of the residents themselves in the physical design of the neighborhood.



Pittsboro cohousing group explores developing a residential community with open space and a farm.

Cohousing projects can become anything their residents want them to be, from high-density urban oasis to nature preserve to farm.

In our area we have more than a few cohousing communities, including Arcadia and Eidergreen in Chapel Hill, Pacifica in Carrboro, Eno Commons and Soltera in Durham and Blue Heron Farm in Pittsboro. New projects are springing up all over.

In fact, a group of people is currently in the process of planning out a cohousing project in the Pittsboro area. Their focus is on affordable housing, sustainability, green architecture, energy independence, open space and agriculture.

By building smaller units (think affordable) and increasing the density (think community) this group hopes to free up acreage for hiking trails and a farm.

**COHOUSING** continued on page 7.

## Let the mixed drinks flow — Chatham's economy will grow

By Jeffrey Starkweather and Randolph Voller

On May 5 Chatham residents will have an opportunity to voice their support for jobs, increased revenues without new taxes, and expanded restaurant and retail choices. On election day and during early voting (April 16-May 2) you can vote for mixed beverages to be served in hotels, restaurants, private clubs, community theaters and convention centers in Chatham County and its municipalities.

Supporting this referendum, our committee, entitled Positive Revenue Options (PRO), is using a pro-business approach similar to last year's successful referendum in Asheboro. Among the leaders of the Asheboro effort were North Carolina Commerce Secretary J. Keith Crisco, former President of Asheboro Elastics Corporation, and Randolph County Chamber of Commerce President George Gusler. Likewise, early PRO committee members include many business and community leaders such as the Chatham County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) Chair, Joe Glasson, former state representative Edward Holmes, and Pittsboro Town Commissioners Clinton Bryan, Hugh Harrington, and Chris Walker.

Chatham County needs tools to combat our serious economic challenges. For example, Siler City Mayor Charles Turner recently reported that his town has lost over 1,500 jobs since 2005. Today a majority of every retail dollar spent by Chatham residents fills the coffers of businesses outside our county. A significant amount is spent in neighboring counties and towns which offer mixed-beverage sales in dining establishments. Passing the mixed beverage referendum will level the playing field and provide Chatham with the opportunity to create more jobs and increase retail sales.

As Chatham's EDC board members, we have been working with many others for the last two

**MIXED DRINKS** continued on page 8.



**REFERENDUM on Mixed Beverage Sales**

**Voter registration deadline:** April 10

**Election day:** May 5 at county-wide precincts

**One-stop, early voting:** April 16–May 2  
Monday–Friday: 8 am–7:30 pm  
Saturday: 10 am–2 pm  
Only at Pittsboro Board of Elections Office, 984 Thompson St., Suite D, Pittsboro (across from the YMCA, but on the Thompson St. side of Platinum Commons)

For more info, call Board of Elections at 545.8500

## Farmers in search of healthy dirt

*If everyone in the village gives a thread, we can make a shirt for a naked man.*

– Russian proverb

By Judy Hogan

As an American writer participating in a Durham-Kostroma Sister Cities exchange in August 1992, I spent ten days in the village of Gorka in Russia. Mikhail and Katya Bazankov normally spent their summer holiday with Katya's brother, and that year I was included, although there was risk involved. We were some kilometers from the nearest town, water was drawn from a local well and carried in buckets. The electricity went off occasionally, and the telephones rarely worked. They were worried I might get sick. They certainly fed me well, meat three times a day, fresh eggs, and milk. I remained quite healthy. They themselves were recovering their health from the long Russian winter in urban Kostroma.



Nadya Belikh works in her village garden in Kostroma, Russia.

They preserved food, both from the large garden behind the house and from the surrounding forest. The village women gathered wild herbs, mushrooms, and raspberries. Hens with chicks wandered near the traditional Russian farmhouse (isba). Their milk cow was collected mornings with the other village cows to graze the lush grass near the river. The men went off in a three-seater motorcycle to fish.

In 1917, 98 percent of the people were illiterate and lived in farming villages, originally part of great estates. They'd been serfs until 1861. After the Revolution everyone was educated (100 percent literacy in 1990), and many worked in factories and at desk jobs. In the 1930s these villages had collective farms forced upon them. The most prosperous peasants (kulaks, who had farm animals) were targeted. Resisters were killed, their homes destroyed. Mikhail indicated where such a destroyed village had been, but he wouldn't show me this continuing source of suffering.

The most nostalgic Russian song was "Maya Derevnya" ("My Village"). More than half the villages were lost through collectivization, Stalin's purges (25 million), deaths (25 million) in the Great Patriotic War (World War II). Yet all the Russians I've met since 1990 return to their village or to a small plot, often with summer house or dacha, on the outskirts of the cities, to raise vegetables and harvest fruit and berries. Their economic crisis since they adopted Capitalism in the '90s forced them to grow food.

Their summer farming methods are very similar to our organic methods—using animal manures, tilling crop residues back in, and spreading wood ashes from the isba's huge wood-burning stove or from a dacha's smaller stove.

**RUSSIAN DIRT** continued on page 6.

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