



December 2010

## Dear Friends,

The cool temperatures, pristine air, and beautiful blue skies remind us of the time we arrived in Virginia one year ago. It is interesting that this state is called “the land of milk and honey”; there certainly are many beekeepers here and lots of cows grazing on beautiful, rolling hills.

It may seem like it’s been a while since you’ve heard from us—the last paper newsletter that we sent out was a year ago. Due to ecological and economic considerations we have focused on sharing our updates electronically via email and the web. We encourage you to visit [spikenardfarm.org](http://spikenardfarm.org) and click on the *Newletters* tab to review *past* & subscribe to *future* updates.

## The Swarm Moves to Virginia

We are deeply grateful for Terry Brett’s invitation last year to join his vision for a Biodynamic farm and co-housing community and to make land available for our honeybee sanctuary. With his help, 25 acres of land embedded in a beautiful and safe surrounding for the bees has recently been secured with our signing a 99-year lease.

One friend compared our move to *swarming*, and what seems at first glance to be a disruption of a unity, turns out to be an act of rejuvenation for both entities: the swarm sets off for a *new* home lead by the *old* queen while the *new* queen builds up the *old* hive with the remaining colony. We are deeply satisfied that the farm in Illinois is now run as a *for-profit* enterprise, having received the organic certification that we had striven towards. Meanwhile, in September 2009, our honeybee sanctuary, the heart of our non-profit organization, moved to Virginia with three 53-foot trailers loaded with bees, hives, chickens, plants, tools, furniture, and farm machinery.

## Organizing the Swarm

Downsizing our monthly budget by 2/3 let us adjust to the economic downturn and gave us a grace period to re-structure and focus on the needs of the bees. We have also been able to establish local connections with the culture, climate, and people. Still, together with old and new friends, visitors, volunteers, school classes, co-workers, and board members, in 2010 we:

- refined our vision and mission and created a 5-year strategic plan
- evaluated and identified revenue streams (e.g. we anticipate launching an *Adopt-a-Hive* program in early 2011)
- began building our organization to allow Gunther to focus on using his *knowledge, experience and teaching skills for the bees*

## Growing the Hive

Our accomplishments were not limited to the administrative front; many friends aided the sanctuary’s land and educational efforts and with them we:

- planted 5 acres to clovers for perennial bee forage and to improve the soil
- established a small orchard & a vegetable garden
- presented 5 workshops on *Biodynamics* in collaboration with the *Josephine Porter Institute* (located 15 miles from us)
- held numerous beekeeping workshops and talks in Virginia, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, New York, Illinois, Massachusetts, and North Carolina

## The State of the Queen

Out of his participation in the Social Venture Network’s fall conference, Gunther was asked to write an update





on the current honeybee crisis. Over the winter, he will complete this task and we will share it far and wide.

Fortunately, 2010 has seen much progress in spreading the word about the *unfortunate* situation of the bees.

Spikenard has been at the front of the call for action:

- Early this year, screenings of the film *Queen of the Sun* started—we were part of its first showing in Portland, OR. People seeing the film are deeply moved by the *plight* as well as the *importance* of the honeybee. This documentary has received numerous awards and is slated to be released to DVD next Summer. We are very grateful for the magnificent work that the filmmakers Taggart Siegel and Jon Betz have done for the bees and are honored to be part of it.

- Another film making the rounds in which Spikenard Farm's work is featured, *Vanishing of the Bees*, also brings a powerful message. This film focuses upon the detrimental effect that our poison-laden agriculture is having on our precious planet, especially on the extremely sensitive pollinators.

- In 2011, we will be tackling making an initial DVD on our sustainable/biodynamic beekeeping practices. We put the project on *Kickstarter.com* with the help of James Vincent, our video-maker, and have successfully raised \$12,000 in half of the time allotted. *We are so grateful and happy for all the support!*

In 2011, we will continue this momentum through the more effective use of engaging communication tools via social networking (just like the bees), our website, and other outreach activities.

### *Our Human "Worker Bees"*

- We are very happy to introduce a new staff member, **David Hosey**, who joined us mid-November as our beekeeping assistant. He is an

experienced beekeeper, has finished a gardening internship on a biodynamic farm, and comes with great enthusiasm for our approach of working with and for the honeybees. Next year, with his help, we will intensify our research into the biodynamic part of our sustainable beekeeping methods.

- **Bob Bower**, formerly at *Angelic Organics* and now at *Hawthorne Valley Farm*, is assisting us part-time with the development of our organization and finding the resources needed.

- **Vivian Struve-Hauk** has been managing the administrative needs of Spikenard as well as guiding and deepening the therapeutic aspect of beekeeping and becoming a greater part of the teaching side of the venture.

- We are very grateful for our bookkeeper **Ruth Yachimski** who makes sure that our books are in good standing.

- \* **Admin Service** has provided us with another year of good support for our website and social network outreach

### *The Sanctuary's Bees*

Even though we had a strong, long winter with lots of snow here in the Blue Ridge Mountains, the bees took the move very well and winter losses were slight. The spring brought many surprises in what they were able to gather from their surroundings and the feared "forage summer hole" was filled with ample white clover and plantain growing in neighboring pastures. Our honey harvest was good, considering that we left the bees all the honey they need for their own winter supplies. And is it ever delicious! Some has already been sold at the Christmas market in Floyd.





### *A Great Opportunity for the Bees for 2011*

This past summer a unique opportunity arose: a brick farmhouse on 8 acres, *adjacent to the land we are leasing*, was going into foreclosure. Winding down to the Little River, these 8 acres are an ideal location for us to develop a beautifully landscaped sanctuary: with bee forage; with educational stations showcasing different bee hives; and with a house for office, staff, interns and guests. To buy us time to raise funds, our local friends and neighbors along the Little River, *Woody and Jackie Crenshaw*, bought this parcel and are holding it for the Spikenard Farm and Honeybee Sanctuary. We are deeply grateful for their help! In late winter we plan to go on a \$400,000 capital campaign to acquire and build-up this property. Our past experience taught us that to *own* a piece of land, not to just *lease* it, is very important for safely building up the sanctuary. A wonderful gift of \$20,000 toward the acquisition of this property was already made.

The location is ideal from several viewpoints: it is close to the beautiful *Blue Ridge Parkway* (2.5 mi), making it easily accessible for people visiting the sanctuary; and, being at the heart of this piece of the Little River Valley, it would protect the bees with pastures and woodland. Our vision for the much-needed Spikenard “Center for Sustainable Beekeeping” includes therapeutic offerings, retreats, longer school class visits, and workshops for adults. Our hopes and plans to strive toward this goal are nourished by the many connections and relationships developed in the past 14 years all over the US, where many groups and individuals have been inspired by our approach and insights.

**SPIKENARD FARM** 

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### *Our next steps forward...*

These accomplishments, in just one short year, were only possible with the devoted support of our board members, the generosity of many individuals throughout the country, and the great help we received from a number of foundations.

We can say that all the important steps have been accomplished in this first year in Virginia, and now is the time to take a big step into the future with the building of the staff and the sanctuary.

*This means that we need your support in hiring more co-workers who will help with the diverse tasks at hand in the administrative and physical realms. For our expanded operating budget we will need to raise \$140,000.*

*We warmly thank you for your interest, for your past and present support and want to appeal to your generous heart to help us continue and expand this important work.*

For us it is exciting to witness the growing grass-root shift toward a new, urgently needed paradigm—one that develops trust in the future instead of fears, one that cares and nurtures instead of controls and manipulates. Aren't the honeybees leading the way as the best example we can imagine?

*We wish you a wonder-imbued Holiday and a courageous, vibrant and healthy 2011.*

*Gunther, Vivian, David, Ruth, Bob and our Board of Trustees*

*Hans Bartges, Kenneth Levy, Michael Steinrueck, and Candyce Sweda*



# SPIKENARD FARM

*With heart-felt gratitude we herewith acknowledge the foundations and individuals who have supported our work in the past 13 months.*

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