



Philmont Market & Cafe Co-op Work Day

It was early 1991 and I had recently moved to Columbia County from New Hampshire with my two young children and their father. When we arrived, we knew no-one here and I was eager to meet people and make friends.

As the nearest village, Philmont was the obvious place to go for groceries, the post office, chiropractor, or a haircut. There were many days when we had a class at Amble Dance followed by ice cream at Stewart's. Not long after, I connected with some families attending the Methodist Church, and although I was not a formal member of the congregation, the Sunday school program for our children became a meaningful rhythm in our lives. The classic church basement, with its large cook stove, became the backdrop for many childhood memories: Halloween parties, baking holiday cookies, dyeing Easter eggs. Here I found the community that I had longed for, and a sense of social warmth and neighborliness.

Over the course of the next two decades, I moved to Chatham with my second husband and saw my daughter and son complete high school. The year my youngest graduated from college, Charlie and I decided to move to Philmont. We had talked about it casually for a couple of years, then suddenly, we found a house we liked. We relocated to the town that had become so familiar to us over the course of 22 years. Not long after we settled in, Charlie joined the Philmont Market & Cafe Co-op board and we made new friends as well as re-established connections with those we had long known.

Perhaps the most memorable day from this time was the Co-op work day, after the main renovation on the building had been completed. Numerous people lent their ladders, paint brushes, and muscle to finish the project. This stands out for me as a day of cooperation- local residents coming together, combining efforts to create something for the benefit of the whole village. Again, I experienced what neighbors can do together, and felt particularly happy to be part of the community that was developing through that work.

By Cate Decker