Introduction
My proposal for a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) was to write a compilation of creative non-fiction stories based on the theme of community and grounded in direct experience.

In that spirit, during June of 2007, I spent three weeks living with the New Meadow Run Bruderhof Community in Farmington, PA.

The Bruderhof are an intentional community who center life around family and faith in Jesus — most prominently the teachings of ‘love thy neighbor as thyself,’ nonviolence, faithfulness in marriage, and compassion for the poor. Sharing all things in common, members work to live a faith and a lifestyle that values every member and always thinks of the common good.

My intention was not to research the Bruderhof specifically but rather to witness community in action and the values central to living with a genuine spirit of community.

During my time, I lived with a host-family and experienced life as a Bruderhof woman my age would.

Daily life included:

- cooking and cleaning in the communal kitchen
- working in a thriving wood-shop
- harvesting vegetables in the 13-acre organic garden
- sharing meals and meetings with over 200 people
- singing, praying, and dancing frequently
- learning the history of the Bruderhof Community
- joining the youth group, Shalom, in service work
- engaging conversation & asking endless questions

Upon returning, I formulated eight cornerstones that I determined were foundational to the health, integrity, and sustainability of the community.

Unity

My Summer (SURF) was grounded in the idea of community in action.

During June of 2007, I accompanied three Bruderhof women to the New Meadow Run Community in Virginia, with the goal of learning and sharing. On June 23rd, the Women’s Retreat, “Tree of Life: Love and Care,” brought together women of all ages to learn, laugh, and share.

The Bruderhof’s, the people of community extend beyond people to include the soil, earth, community of which people are only one part. The Bruderhof’s Tool, illustrating a lifestyle that encourages the human population to live in harmony with the non-human population, is based on values and beliefs that sustain the community, the environment, and each other.

In this community, health, sustainability, and the land are valued. The Bruderhof’s commitment to sustainability is evident in their everyday practices.

- Commitment to Nature
- Commitment to Community
- Commitment to Youth
- Commitment to Unity

For the Bruderhof’s, the definition of community extends beyond people to include the soil, earth, community of which people are only one part. The Bruderhof’s Tool, illustrating a lifestyle that encourages the human population to live in harmony with the non-human population, is based on values and beliefs that sustain the community, the environment, and each other. The Bruderhof’s commitment to sustainability is evident in their everyday practices.

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Unity

In the Arms of the Community: an exploration through creative writing

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In the Arms of the Community is a writing compilation consisting of eight stories based on my time living with the New Meadow Run Bruderhof Community. Each story illustrates a value that I observed as central to a thriving, active community. My hope is that these stories inspire the reader to 1) encourage conversations with what we want our own communities to look like, 2) challenge us to learn from other examples of community in our world, and 3) celebrate and value our already dynamic UNH and Durham community.

References:
http://www.churchcommunities.org
http://auroraquantum.com/SwiftSearch?searchterm=bruderhof...