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Dear EEFC Community,

Ever since I lived in the Berkeley Student Cooperative system as an undergraduate, I have been looking for a community that could compare. We were responsible for all aspects of our house, including cooking, cleaning, maintenance, self-governance, and throwing really great parties. I have tried to replicate aspects of this community in subsequent living situations. Turns out, it's pretty easy to find people interested in throwing parties. The less glamorous, more difficult aspects of taking care of a community? Much harder.

I stumbled into the EEFC community while living in New Haven, Connecticut. I was friends with the saxophone player in Orkestar BAM, New Haven's best (and, coincidentally, only) Balkan band. On her recommendation, I went to my first Golden Festival. My mind, accustomed to meagre Western offerings of minor pentatonic scales and 4/4 time signatures, simply could not process what was going on. But my ears had "seen" the light, and there was no going back. By the end of the evening, I had joined Orkestar BAM – despite not having played the trumpet for 13 years – on the promise that I could "just hide in the back of the horn section" while I figured it out. Well, my friend was the only other horn player, so you can guess how that went.


I got better though, and soon enough I started dating, and eventually married, the singer. She led me to my first Balkan Camp in Mendocino. The people I met there displayed such great generosity, good will, and willingness to help others – all while throwing really great parties! I had finally found the community I was looking for.

And now 2020. A year that seems determined to test the very concept of community. I will admit that my expectations for virtual camp were pretty low, but then this community just blew me away again. The attendance was amazing. The participation was amazing. The music was amazing. And although we could only interact as individual squares on a screen, I was still moved to see all the wonderful people who make up this community singing, dancing, and having a great time. What was most impressive to me, however, was that despite the demands on everyone's time, trying to juggle a job (or jobs, or finding a job), childcare, eldercare, healthcare, etc., so many people volunteered their time and effort to make it happen. Not once, but twice. This is the kind of community I want to be a part of, the kind of community that can face adversity, step up, and find ways to make things work.

With the concurrent chaos of the pandemic, unprecedented wildfires, hurricanes and floods, a national struggle for racial justice – and a very consequential national election – it can be hard to decide how to allocate our limited resources. All these causes are important, and more people just need more help now. This year, more than ever, we should be committed to supporting the well-being of communities we care about, whether that means volunteering more time or donating more than usual.

All I can say is, I know I owe this community a lot. It has been the single largest influence on my post-college development musically, romantically, and culturally; all, without question, for the better. And I know I'm not the only one. That's why I know I can count on us to support our EEFC community as we navigate these strange, strange times together.

With Love and Friendship,


Adam Waite

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