

# From Kabat House

by Sarah Sunseri



I write this the day after returning from the Midwest Catholic Worker Gathering at Sugar Creek in Iowa. Kabat House and our extended community brought 18 people for the weekend. I know that many of us felt proud and excited to be so well represented. Perhaps it signals to us that our community is on the right track and that people feel energized.

Kabat House has become a gathering place of sorts. We have community dinners Sunday through Thursday, which have been going strong for some time now. Two people cook each night, not just people who live in the house. The regular crowd includes some neighbors, a few past guests, and the folks from New Roots Urban Farm. We have also had the pleasure of welcoming a new baby to our community. Emory was born to Trish and Joseph of New Roots at the end of May.

Right now, all of the guests at Kabat House are Spanish-speaking immigrants. It is common for us to have several Spanish-speaking immigrants, although in the past we have also had immigrants from Africa, Mongolia, and Finland, along with men and women who grew up down the block.

I, Sarah, have been living here for a little over two years. Enrique, our resident Cuban, has lived at Kabat House almost as long as I have. We have seen a lot of change. As you might imagine with such a small house, our lives change substantially if one person moves out or in. In the summer of 2007, we welcomed Heather to the community. This summer John and Dan moved in with the men on the third floor. John is a recent St. Louis University graduate, and Dan is a teacher and my partner. Yes, we pack them in.

Along with the McNamee-Griffeth family who live across the street (better known as Finn (3), Ghana (14), Carolyn and Tery), we try to live together as family and community and forge a life that is good and fulfilling.

In speaking about what draws people to community, we have realized that people seek a place where they can live their lives in a way that makes sense: a way that includes others, a way that resists greed and materialism, a way that grows food and rides bikes, a way that welcomes the foreigner.

These desires have drawn an eclectic group of people. The village that exists now on the City's north side is a funny one. It is actually hard to explain without calling it a village. There are a few small communities within the village, including a number of Catholic Worker houses, many current and past workers living in apartments and houses, the urban farmers, squatters, and a few other various radicals.

One of the biggest thrusts in our community is toward being sustainable. Environmental sustainability is finally being emphasized in the world. While this is important, it is not what I mean. The sustainability I am speaking of is working toward a life that people can live for the long haul. This suggests a few things.

One of those is making our living space comfortable. Kabat House installed all new windows this summer. We renovated the living room, the bathroom, and one of the bedrooms.

It also includes adjustments that are more people-oriented. One example is trying to develop better strategies to help our housemates find jobs, as that seems to be a common and difficult request. Another example is to no longer pack guests into the house as we formerly thought we should. Although we do have a full house, we have realized that if there is someone sleeping in the living room every night, we sacrifice community space, which is essential to making Kabat House feel like home.

We welcome all to join us for Sunday Soccer—meet at Kabat House (1450 Monroe St. 63106) at 3:30. Stay for dinner if you like.

In closing, it is now critical that we forge a shared life that includes those in need. We live in a climate of deportation and raids. We must stand in opposition to the idea that some people do not deserve to have their basic needs met because they were born on the wrong side of a fence. A time like this perhaps calls all of us with any guts to go out of our way to feed and aid those in need, regardless of status or documentation. ✦

---

**Sarah Sunseri** has lived at Kabat House for two and a half years and endures merciless teasing from Carl Kabat daily.