

# With devotion to nature and education, Cité Écologique wins local and international supporters

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COLEBROOK — An “ecovillage” is thriving on a large parcel near Piper Hill Rd. La Cité Écologique grows organic food, runs off of solar power, and is firmly rooted to the idea of protecting the earth. Recently, Salmon Press received a tour of the property's farming land and solar production areas. Tour guides included the wife and husband team of Leonie Brien and Pierre Forest, as well as Marie-Josée Vaillant. They discussed the *Ecovillage*, PAGE A9



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Scenes with rolling hills, farm buildings, and trees are the norm at La Cité Écologique in Colebrook. The varied work at the “ecovillage” focuses on protecting the environment and teaching local as well as international visitors.

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## Ecovillage

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principles behind the ecovillage while describing the partnerships and programs that make the varied operations tick.

Brien coordinates the learning center that is the heart of the ecovillage concept. Throughout the year, a variety of programs welcome people from near and far.

During the tour, Brien noted a family from China currently at the ecovillage. The family is learning a great deal about organic agriculture, which avoids using chemicals in the production process.

Vaillant said the Chinese family offers an example of the "education tourism" that can be possible for those staying at Cité Écologique.

In addition to a variety of workshops, "We also offer 'green' weekends during the summer," Brien said, with lodging and food options for those participating.

From French language immersion to permaculture, yoga, and farming, Cité Écologique is offering people from the region and the world a chance to reconnect with the planet without sacrificing social interaction.

"We want to provide the model of sustainability," Forest said, as he stood surrounded by solar panels.

The ground-mounted array sits near several ecovillage buildings.

In total, the ecovillage has more than 180 kilowatts of solar power.

Certain structures in the ecovillage also use solar thermal technology, which can heat and cool structures.

Area students have found an enriching experience during school visits to Cité Écologique. Letters from Stewartstown Community School and the White

Mountain School in Bethlehem were shared during the tour.

"We had 11 students for a week," Brien said of the White Mountain School visit last year. WMS is known for its sustainability studies program and keen devotion to protecting the environment.

The ecovillage grows a variety of crops. Wood from hardwood trees helps grow mushrooms. As Brien explained, holes drilled in the wood are used to plant the mushrooms, which "can produce for five years from the log."

Fields of garlic, berries, and other foods dot the rolling hills across Cité Écologique. Brien also mentioned the concept of a "fully edible flower bed," which is another part of ecovillage ideas.

Crop rotation, an important practice "to help your soil stay healthy," as Brien said, is another principle key to the ecovillage.

Greenhouses offer further potential for growing crops at Cité Écologique.

Forest said the ecovillage makes the most of the trees that bless the land. Tree planting is another interest area of the enterprise, with a variety of species added to the earth to ensure the diversity central to the ecovillage concept.

With "hands on learning and experimental learning," Forest added, Cité Écologique wants to show the power of respecting the land.

Farm animals are another part of Cité Écologique. Brien pointed out the 50 chickens used for laying eggs. The ecovillage supplies the product to regional farmer's markets and food co-ops in Colebrook and Littleton.

Vaillant is President of Kheops International, one of the companies

that is a partner of Cité Écologique. Like other parts of the ecovillage, the Kheops International building, near Route 3 and Piper Hill Road, re-

ceives a lot of electricity from the sun.

Kheops International is just one of several businesses that have been created as a re-


sult of Cité Écologique. Combined, the businesses support about 40 local jobs, Vaillant said.

Cité Écologique began in Colebrook 13

years ago. For more information about visiting, internships and the history of the site, go to: <http://citeecologique.nh.org>.

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