

BECOMING A MEMBER OF BRYN GWELED

WHAT IS BRYN GWELED?

A community in the truest sense, Bryn Gweled is made up of a diverse group of people who share a vision of a way of life. In fact the name itself, Bryn Gweled, means "Hill of Vision." We are an intentional community of people, young and old, who have chosen to live together on our wooded oasis and work cooperatively to maintain the place we call home. We are economically independent of one another, working at a variety of occupations outside the community and purchasing and maintaining our own homes.

In existence for almost 70 years, Bryn Gweled is home to about 75 families on 240 acres of collectively owned property in Bucks County. Our beautiful woods are a habitat for foxes, owls, deer, hawks, and many other species of animal and plant life. We maintain walking/cross-country skiing trails through the woods for the enjoyment of all. We share an organic community garden, a community swimming pool, tennis courts, a soccer field and a community center where many activities are held. All of these are enjoyed and maintained by our members.

Bryn Gweled is a non-profit corporation owned by its members, each of whom is expected to contribute in some way toward the maintenance of the community. There are no paid officers, managers, or maintenance people. Our volunteer and elected committees manage and administer all aspects of the community. One way we do this is to have once-a month Saturday morning work parties where tasks are accomplished, accompanied by good food and socializing. Later in the day, we have a covered dish supper where one can enjoy the company of

friends and neighbors while sharing an interesting variety of foods.

We have a regular monthly meeting where community business is conducted. There is an elected Board of Directors with officers of the corporation. We govern ourselves by a form of democracy, and we value a consensus-based decision making process. We firmly believe in equality among all people, and all of us have an equal say in community decisions. We do not have a group religion or political affiliation; our beliefs are as individually different as we are. As a group, we strive to be open to diversity of opinion and culture while at the same time working in harmony for the common good.

There is an extensive membership process, which includes visits to the homes of many of the residents. We feel that this process not only allows us to get to know you better, but also allows you to find out for yourself if this is a way of life that you would choose. Bryn Gweled is not just a place to live, but also a way of living. Along with the freedoms of ownership and self-governance, comes a greater set of responsibilities on the part of the people who live here. All of our lives are intertwined in some way with one another. We have to know, trust, and depend on each other in ways that people living in more typical neighborhoods do not.

BEING A MEMBER OF BRYN GWELED

There are millions of homes in the United States - there are less than 75 in Bryn Gweled (BG). Buying a home in Bryn Gweled comes with many rewards,

but also with restrictions that you won't find elsewhere. Members are expected to actively participate in the governance and maintenance of the community.

Before buying a home in Bryn Gweled, you must go through a membership process that can take many months to even begin, and many more to complete. The seller of the house has no control over this process. You may enter into an agreement to purchase a BG house after submitting your formal application for membership, but this agreement must contain a clause that the sale is contingent upon your becoming an "approved applicant" as per our by-laws. There is a chance that you will not successfully complete the membership process and that you will not be able to purchase the house. You also need to disclose to the Housing Committee that there is an agreement so they can remove the house from the market.

In Bryn Gweled, you do not own your land. Once accepted by the community through a vote process, you are able to purchase a house and sign a 99 year lease with the corporation for the land. You also purchase a share of the capitalization of the community. When you leave, you sell this share to a new member for what you paid for it (and no more). You get no capital appreciation on the land. When determining the value of Bryn Gweled homes, real estate appraisers use comparables from outside the community and then deduct the value of the land. A house in Bryn Gweled can be more difficult to sell because you can only sell to people who have passed the community's membership process.

The community has a few reasonable restrictions on how you can develop your land. Perimeter fences are not allowed, and the community must approve all other improvements.

The plus side of choosing to live in Bryn Gweled is a sense of community that is often lacking in modern life. You will know all of your neighbors through the membership process and working with them on committees to run and maintain the community.

Bryn Gweled is one of the most successful intentional communities in the United States. This document is by no means a comprehensive list of the responsibilities and benefits of living in Bryn Gweled. If you choose to proceed with our membership process, you will have plenty of time to learn more about the community through attending our meetings, participating in our activities and through meeting with individual members.

STEPS TO MEMBERSHIP

To begin, you need to attend two business meetings within the last twelve months. You are strongly urged to begin attending activities and work parties, as well. Then, at your request, the Membership Committee will visit your home to answer any questions you might have. A copy of the BG brochure, by-laws, handbook, questionnaire(s), and financial questionnaire will be given to you.

You will be asked to complete and submit a questionnaire and essay for each applicant, plus one financial questionnaire per family. You will also be asked for a credit report, one for each individual. The essay and application will be

shared with community members, but your financial information is reviewed only by the current President, Treasurer, and Membership Committee Chairperson. The financial questionnaire is then destroyed and your credit report will be returned to you. We want to ensure that you will be financially able to purchase a home in BG before you begin what can be a lengthy process.

Upon the recommendation of the Membership Committee, your questionnaire(s) and essay(s) will be read before the membership at a closed meeting, and an agent will be assigned to schedule visits with BG members.

Your agent will schedule visits with all Bryn Gweled families (meetings with 2-3 families are usually arranged). These meetings occur in families' homes and offer the opportunity for us to get to know you as well as for you to meet us individually and have your questions answered.

At the completion of your visits, your application will be read once again at the closed portion of a monthly business meeting, and ballots will be distributed. Approval requires a 4/5th positive vote of the BG membership.

A positive vote means you have attained "Approved Applicant" status, allowing you to participate in committee activities and attend both open and closed business meetings. You will not, however, be granted the right to vote. "Member" status is attained when you lease a lot or purchase a house and upon payment of a \$50.00 per person entrance fee. Member status grants you the right to vote, to hold elective office and to have keys to all BG facilities.

Membership Committee
Roma Dockhorn, Chair
215 357-3857



BRYN GWELED HOMESTEADS

An Intentionally
Cooperative Community
in Bucks County, PA
Since 1940

Membership Process

For more information, please visit our website at www.bryngweled.org and/or call a member of our publicity committee at 215-953-8884.