

## Nickel City Housing Co-op

by Jennifer Hilburger



### columns

[Edit note](#)

[I'm Right, You're Wrong](#)

[Personals](#)

[The Real World: United Nations](#)

[Your Student Voice](#)

### features

[Hopping off the Bunny Hill](#)

[Nickel City Housing Co-op](#)

[UB Rounders](#)

### literary

[\\*\\*Online Only Poetry](#)

[Poetry](#)

[Weekend Warrior](#)

### pulse

[A Look at UB's A Cappella Scene](#)

[Buffalo Bunk](#)

[Reviews](#)

**\*\*** denotes an  
online exclusive

### Entertainment

### Health

### Support



Megan Miheve

"I only live here for the view," says one inhabitant jokingly of the three-story house located at 208 North Street in downtown Buffalo. The view from the top floor, at approximately 6:30 p.m. this time of year, is one of the closest to New York City view standards you will find in Buffalo; looking across downtown to the prominent buildings with glowing windows.

The five third floor dwellers, along with nine other people, three cats, a tortoise, and fish are the residents of the historic

mansion. If living with fourteen people and a few pets seems unimaginable to you, talking to someone in the house may give you a different impression.

The Nickel City Housing Co-op was formed with intentions of establishing an example in the city of Buffalo, and built upon the basic ideas of cooperation, community, and sustainability.

Just outside the kitchen is an area labeled "Free Store." There are shelves lined with anything from TV remotes, to baskets, to old coffee makers. Reminiscent of the popular saying, "One man's garbage is another man's treasure," these items have been put on the shelves by residents of the house who no longer have a use for them. If they are not picked up by others within a month's time, they are donated to Amvet's. This is but one example of how the people living in the house have a bond with each other as a community and with the Buffalo community.

Mike Schade, one of the founders of the house, graduated from the University at Buffalo in 2000. Unlike the majority of the UB population that moves out of town once graduation is over, Schade and a few other graduates wanted to find a way to stay in Buffalo.

Their project started in 2001, but the house needed to undergo extensive renovations before people started living in it during March 2003. Even today, it is not completely finished. In an effort to repair the roof, Nickel City Co-op is hosting a Drag-themed party on March 5 titled, "Raise the Roof." Admission will be \$5 for those gutsy enough to

dress in drag and \$7 for those who aren't.

Events like "Raise the Roof" are larger examples of what the members do every day. Each of the residents share equal responsibility for everything that needs to be done within and to the house.

"The idea is that if it can be done by us, it is," says Mary, who has lived in the house since June. She is talking about tasks that include just about everything from cleaning to carpentry to cooking dinner, which proves to be quite a challenging duty.

"You have to keep in mind that we are cooking for nearly 20 people on some nights," Mary says, adding that on days that she is scheduled to cook, she has gotten to the kitchen as early as 2 p.m. to begin preparing for a meal that starts at 7 p.m. Although there are many meat eaters that live in the house, the dinners are vegan. This way, everyone is able to eat and still gain the essential nutrients that are provided in a vegan meal.

The food that the members use to cook is mostly bulk, but two times a week, house-elected shoppers go out to pick up other foods that may be needed. Usually, they'll try to get locally grown foods through places like the Massachusetts Avenue Project to promote Buffalo business.

A dry-erase board in the kitchen has a list of the residents side-by-side with their designated chore. The chores are chosen on a first come, first served basis and are held for a month. Dinner is on a two week cycle, which means that each member needs to sign up for a day every 14 days to be responsible for cooking.

Meetings are held every Sunday to discuss issues that members may have or want to bring up. Since equal responsibility is shared both on the personal and financial level in the co-op, this is the time to gather and talk about any concerns as well as ways that members would like to see money spent. These meetings are one of the reasons that the house runs so smoothly and the community is so tight amongst the residents.

Miriam Atkin, a junior English major at UB, moved into the house a few weeks ago and has already taken note of the strong sense of community, describing it as an "enlightened family structure." Having been in Buffalo for three years and having changed residency each year, Atkin finds this living situation the most attractive. Her first year, she lived with eight other people, so she understands the difficulty that comes with sharing space.

"People would just react emotionally to conflicts," Atkin says. In the co-op, though, creating that openness to avoid blow-ups and major conflicts is a driving factor for every member.

The weekly meetings are run so that issues and concerns can be brought up before they get out of control. "You are expected to enter the meetings with the attitude that everyone is free to bring up anything they want," says Atkin.

Atkin also recognizes that this may not be the best option for everyone. "For an only child who is not used to sharing their space, it might be harder to live in this environment," she says. "At first it can

be intimidating because there are more responsibilities and it is more of a commitment than living on your own, but it is an attractive commitment.”

Mary agrees, “Since coming here, my mind has been open to new ways of cooking and many new people. It has broadened my horizons.”

Currently, the Nickel City Co-op is looking for one more member and there are hopes of other co-ops being formed in the area in the near future. To find out more about living in the co-op or the application process, visit the website at [www.nickelcitycoop.org](http://www.nickelcitycoop.org), call 882-6003, or visit the house for dinner. The only prerequisite is an open mind.

---

CREATED AND MAINTAINED BY  
**Sub-Board I, Inc.**

© 2004 - 2005 Sub-Board I, Inc. - All Rights Reserved.





