

Down on the Farm

From the Executive Director

Growing Kindness...



Photo by: Paul Schraub

Spring is a time of incipient change, growth, and development in all sorts of ways. As the sap rises through the trees so people and other animals become more active and energetic; full of the potential each new year brings. Working at the farm gives our volunteers, crew members who are homeless, and staff members a great method of being in touch with this annual renewal. Even as you read these words, the tiny green shoots of newly emerged kale, beets, and lettuce are pushing through the sandy soil of a long-ago beach and if you watch carefully you can see them growing a bit more each day.

Although infrequently thought of as a cultivable crop, human kindness is another thing that Homeless Garden Project seeks to propagate and multiply. I believe we can all do with more kindness in our lives whether it's directed inward or outward. In this fast paced world full of anxiety and stresses, we could benefit tremendously by taking a few moments throughout the day to be nice to ourselves. Maybe that means enjoying the sweetness of chocolate, catching up with a friend, admiring the waves breaking, or the achievement of one item on the to-do list. Many studies in the biological and psychological annals also point to the manifest benefits of being kind to others as well. Altruism is reemerging as a potent force in science and popular thought that is a welcome antidote to the idea of selfishness as being humanity's motivation.

Rick DelVecchio, a journalist with San Francisco Chronicle, writes that, "the capacity for positive states varies among individuals, but anybody can improve with practice. Meditation, smiling and positive thinking help. Forgiveness is critical and, like meditation, is a trainable skill." Fortunately, by being actively involved with Homeless Garden Project every one of us can reap the physical and emotional benefits of increasing the amount of kindness we give to ourselves and others. Now if only we can find a physician to write a prescription for volunteerism.

— Dawn Coppin, Executive Director

Hello! Community of the Homeless Garden Project...

I can't tell you how happy I am to be working with you all in this beautiful and productive space. In fact, I have admired the Project for a number of years and the example it has set in urban agriculture and community development.

My grandfather, Paul Devine, was a farmer in Indiana during the last century and offered me my first experiences in the fields and barns of the Midwest as a child. After working to end homelessness in Vermont, I returned to the same work as my grandfather and began working in agriculture. I am a recent graduate from the Apprenticeship in Ecological Horticulture at the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems at UCSC. I have spent the last five months farming with Jered Lawson, Nancy Vail, and Cooper Funk along with many other central coast community members at Pie Ranch, an educational farm that serves high school students in the San Francisco Bay area. Pie Ranch grows wheat, berries, apples, and squash, ingredients that fill the pies of Mission Pie, our sister pie shop in San Francisco. Pie Ranch recently began another exciting project: Community Supported Eggriculture which will help to add fertility to the soils of the farm and nutritionally important food to the people of our community.

Working at Natural Bridges Farm with Patrick, the entire staff, trainees, and countless volunteers will be no doubt be a humbling, exciting, educational, and ultimately empowering experience for both myself and the people around me. I have much to learn within horticulture and I am also looking forward to sharing the skills and knowledge I have acquired with those around me. The values of the Homeless Garden Project— food justice, greater sustainable development, the healing power of farming and working together in an outdoor environment— are personal passions that I will carry everyday as I work with you all. I believe that housing and nutritionally valuable food are rights that we all have as citizens of our local and global community. Although we alone cannot end homelessness and change our food system, I believe that we at the Homeless Garden Project are offering a sustainable vision for the future.



Please come down to the Farm and say hello. I look forward to meeting and working with you all here in the coming seasons. Thanks!

— Paul Glowaski, Assistant Garden Director

Voices from the Fields...

It Took Three Years to get this article

The Homeless Garden Project is really a good thing. They gave me the opportunity to do something to try to better myself. I was having problems finding jobs and they gave me the opportunity to express myself, to show what I can do. I was a drug addict. Fortunately, I decided it was time for me to stop. It was April Fool's Day of 2004. I just celebrated my third year of being clean.

I worked for the Park District in Illinois for nine years in the 80's. I wasn't quite homeless. I worked for the township so they would pay my rent—I worked nine four-hour afternoons in the greenhouse. In the mornings, I was going to school and getting my GED. After work, I worked for the guy who ran the greenhouse at his house. He paid me \$3.50/hour—minimum wage at that time in Illinois. I was building a little gazebo that was to go over the wishing well at the greenhouse for the chrysanthemum show. I volunteered for two weeks to finish the gazebo because otherwise it wouldn't have been done on time. He told me I should be at the mum show to meet the Park District officials—little did I know that would get me the job working for the Park District.

At that job, I learned how to set up beds and make everything uniform in planting so rows were straight and visible from all directions. It was so much fun doing that. I used to race with my coworker to see who could finish planting first—neither one of us won. I learned a lot of patience working there. I had to do a lot of PR, supervise lots of people, including juveniles. I'd go down on weekends to supervise kids doing workathons—it was kind of cool. I still find myself thinking about that greenhouse every once in a while; I kind of got attached to that job too, until I had to quit.

Fast forward to 2004. I left Sacramento so I could get off drugs. I had no idea where I was really going. I stopped in Santa Cruz to say goodbye to some people I knew. Before I had the opportunity to see both my friends, I started working here at the Homeless Garden Project. One of them died before I got to say good bye, the other one lives in Boulder Creek.

I left Sacramento on March 31 on my bike. I woke up April 1 on Market Street in San Francisco—woke to a brand new pair of socks on my bike, probably left by an outreach worker. That day, I rode into Santa Cruz. I was sitting in front of 7-11 when a guy

I knew in Sacramento rode up on a bike and told me about the Homeless Garden Project. He was going to volunteer so he could eat. I decided I was kind of hungry and I wanted to do that too. I volunteered for three or four days and then asked Craig for a job and he said, "Yeah, we'd like to have you work here."

To someone just starting at the Homeless Garden Project I would say, "Give it a try. You might like it." It's kind of a fun job, the work itself is fun, the people are fun, you can work in the mud and get all dirty; after you're done, you can stand up and look at the bed that you planted or weeded and you can see what's there. It makes you feel good. Weeding is a big job and it's still fun. I had no plan when I got here. I just wanted to make some money so I could get off the streets. I knew it was going to take awhile. Being homeless is not an easy task either. After working a little, I developed a plan. I figured three years would give me enough time to get experience under my belt, a different kind of experience.

Working at the Garden for three years, I got to where I was feeling like... it's my garden.

Working at the Garden for three years, I got to where I was feeling like... it's my garden. And I wanted to take care of it and make it look the way it's supposed to look and it was really fun... taking care of the ducks—watering and feeding them, preparing them to go in at night; I'd holler for them and they come running, they know it's time to go in for the night. A lot of people at the Garden, because I'd done the three years, they treated me like a supervisor. I can't forget Rose, she's the best. She cooks on Tuesday as a volunteer. She's done it pretty much the whole time I've been here.

Now that I'm graduating, it's onto my new job—Pacific Ground Cover and Nursery. I'm really enjoying my new job and hoping it'll become full time. Presently, I work 32 hours per week. One more day would make it full time, or two—I'd be happy with two. My next goal is to save enough money for an apartment or a small room—hopefully by my birthday I'll be off the street—August 29. I don't feel like I've changed. My attitude has changed a little, but I know that happens with me sometimes. I'm dealing with the public a little more, so I have to. I'm trying to get off the street. I try to look nice.

Thanks to the Homeless Garden Project for giving me the opportunity to make something of myself again—sincerely.

Morris Bores graduated April 25 and moved on to his work with Pacific Ground Cover.

If you have any housing or room leads, please call Darrie at 426-3609 extension 2#.

Voices from the Fields...

Sixteen Years of Stories

Morrie can be kind of gruff, a man of few words, exceptionally stubborn, (he would say set in his ways, old school) and makes very corny jokes. We've been sitting in my office, which sports a new door— installed by board chair Jim Lang and son-in-law Brian— so that I can now have private meetings with trainees. Morrie will be graduating within a month or so and we've been discussing his job search and the extra job he's working now which may become permanent. He's had his beard trimmed and is shaving the rest daily, trying to keep his appearance up. He leaves "where he stays" (he is still technically homeless) while it is still dark and rides an hour on his bike to his job, stopping for coffee on the way.

I've received surprising news and good news from Morrie quite a few times. I heard when he got his license (was only going for ID and decided may as well just get a license). I received a heartfelt apology that I would have never expected; I heard his stories of working at the Sinnissippi Greenhouse. I understand he is proud of

working at the Sinnissippi Greenhouse. I understand he is proud of the work he accomplished there and he enjoyed it. I understand he has his own code of honor and he follows it closely.

He gets up to go and we schedule our next meeting. It suddenly occurs to me, that he is really leaving the Project. Though I am beginning to get used to Morrie's surprises, nothing could prepare me for what comes next from this notoriously private man of few words. I ask him if we could do an interview for the next newsletter, and he agrees, saying, "That'll take some of the pressure off me for the thank you letter I've been feeling I need to write to the Project."



So what do you say about 16 years at a job full of stories like this one? I could tell stories of how exciting it was to get the Project's CSA Program going, the first downtown Holiday store, moving out of the Pelton garden or having Mike Williams give us garden space near our old workshop saying, "If I'd known you could use it, we could have done this a lot sooner." The Homeless Garden Project is an idea I have believed in since I first heard of it. And that idea lives on though we constantly try to improve our execution of it, or adjust to changes-in land, facilities, staff, finances, the surrounding economy and community.

"All sorrows can be borne if you put them in a story." I have been tempted to say nothing about my work here at HGP because most of the stories are someone else's story to tell. Over the years, they have been told, working in the beds at the Garden, or here in the newsletter. Those stories are the real work; my story is of being a witness. I do not think it is possible to tell one's story—the grimy mistaken events, the despair, where one thought one was headed, what one loves or is good at, the great joys and hopes— without feeling the value of one's life. I think through telling, we sort, we begin to understand and to see.

My titles at HGP have included Social Services Coordinator and Worker Services and Community Outreach Director, but regardless of my title, the essence of my work has remained the same. I work with trainees to set and meet their goals and to connect them to resources in the community.

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Photos in this issue were taken by Paul Schraub, Jennifer Chen and Jon Kersey— thank you!

Voices from the Fields...

Since 2000, about 180 people have participated as paid employees in our training program. We keep in touch with some people and some keep in touch with us. One great part of my job is when people who used to work here approach me in town and say something like, "I thought you would want to know that I have a house now and I'm working at..." Or invite me to a graduation ceremony—at Janus or a college or training program. The progress that some people have made is in getting better connected to services or getting back in touch with their family. Looking through a list of people who've worked here, I begin to list what some of those people have done or are doing since they left: Published a book, work at the University, drive a bus, work at a nursery, got Social Security benefits, attended Cabrillo, play piano semi-professionally, moved back East and started a family, attended training and works at a pharmacy.

“Charity, vertical, humiliates. Solidarity, horizontal, helps.” (*Eduardo Galeano*) This has been a guiding principle for my work at HGP. Empowerment, jobs, self-determination, opportunity, responsibility—these are all key to solidarity. I have seen that mostly, people know the answers to their own problems. My job is to get people talking about what they want, to raise and sharpen questions and to trust people to come up with their own answers.

“Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?” (*Mary Oliver*)

In doing the searching and sifting and condensing necessary to write this article, what I most want to say is this: To me, the value of a life—these lives, each life—is infinite. And that value translates directly into the value of the HGP.

—Darrie Ganzhorn

*So what do
you say about
16 years at a job
full of stories like
this one?*



Tribute Gifts

A tribute gift to the Project is a great way to show your support of our programs while honoring the generous people in your life!

We'll acknowledge your gift promptly by mailing a beautiful card of our organic flower farm to the individual, family, or organization that you are honoring or remembering. (Please remember to send their addresses!) For gifts of \$50 or more, we'll also send your tribute person a pair of 10" handmade beeswax candles created in our workshop program. The gift amount is not included with the card or candle. You'll receive our grateful confirmation of your gift for tax purposes.

Recent tribute gifts made to the Homeless Garden Project:

In Memory Of:

The F.O.G. — Joseph Matheny
Joe Juneau — Margaret and Donald Fitzgerald
Mildred Kaplan — Rose Kuras
Gertrude Levine — Muriel Salmansohn

In Honor Of:

Patrick and Uncle Larry — Valerie and Sean Sinnott
Cole Cottin's Graduation — Caitlin Brune
Wendy Herlosky — Working Assets
Rose Kuras — Ilse Rowe
Caroline and Bruce Manildi — Lisa Buck
Ralph Morgan — Woutje Swets
Jean Ellis Potter — Anna Tarleton Potter
Sam Stein — Susan and Jerry Gordon

Enjoy a great meal while supporting
the Homeless Garden Project!

Invite a friend to join you at
River Café & Cheese Shop
Tuesday, July 17—

415 River Street., Tel. 420-1280 • www.rivercafecheeseshop.com

Our Partners-in-Dining donate a portion of your entire bill to the Project during the listed dates. Invite a friend to deliciously support our farm programs!

Mark the date and bon appetite!

THANK YOU to our Partner-in-Dining: Charlie Hong Kong on Soquel Avenue for their recent all-day event on Tuesday, May 8!

Feed Two Birds with One Worm...

Donate to the 2007 CSA Fund and the value of your gift doubles. Your support will fund our job-training courses at the farm and allow us to provide healthy organic produce to low-income families.

**Give to the CSA Fund
and help provide shares
to:**

Walnut Avenue Women's Center helps women improve their life situations. WAWC will distribute some of their shares during their Friday Night Food Pantry to clients who are victims of domestic violence; children in their daycare center will enjoy the rest of the organic produce.

The Live Oak Family Resource Center's Home Visiting Program and their Information & Referral Program serve mainly low-income, mid-county Latino families. These families encounter many challenges including isolation, lack of English skills, crowded housing and chronic underemployment. The availability of locally grown, fresh produce is key in assisting them to improve their diets and stretch their meager resources.

We're also donating organic flower shares to one other local agency. **The Hospice Caring Project** provides expert medical treatment and compassionate support to individuals and families facing life-threatening illness. The Hospice will receive weekly bouquets of flowers from our farm to distribute among their 80 patients and their families.

Your support of the CSA Fund reaches out beyond our farm to families throughout Santa Cruz. Please note on your gift that you would like it to go to the "CSA Fund."
Thank you!

Time to sign up for CSA!
CSA Brochures and Order Forms
are now available on-line:

www.homelessgardenproject.org

or: 426-3609, extension 2#

Ask about You-Pick Shares!

First pick-up: Friday, June 8



The Homeless Garden Project

P.O. Box 617 • Santa Cruz, California • 95061

See our Web Site: www.homelessgardenproject.org
or call us at: (831) 426-3609

Be an active supporter:

- _____ \$1,000. Friend of the Garden
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- _____ \$ 250. Sower of the Garden
- _____ \$ 100. Supporter of the Garden

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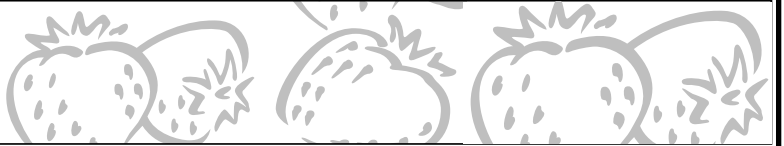
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National Global Youth Service Day

Thank you to all of the volunteers for coming
out and supporting us!

