

Down on the Farm

From the Director



Stamina

n. Physical or moral strength to resist or withstand illness, fatigue, or hardship; endurance.
[Latin *stamina*, pl. of *stamen*, thread, thread of life spun by the Fates; see *stamen*.]

“Surviving is important. Thriving is elegant.” —Maya Angelou

When I listened to the County Board of Supervisors discuss health and human services budget cuts for fiscal year 2008/2009, I began to think about stamina. The County of Santa Cruz, through its Community Programs provides grants to many local nonprofits (“The Human Care Alliance”) in a government-nonprofit partnership. The Homeless Garden Project receives less than 1% of our funding from this source, but our trainees rely on others of these services to meet their needs—dental care, housing, temporary shelter, health care, counseling, food pantries, recovery services, training, to name a few. For the past 17 years, I’ve referred trainees to these services.

For those of us who do not have to rely on services for low-income people, it may be difficult or surprising to realize that accessing these services can be time consuming and can require perseverance, patience and understanding. Cuts to these services would make access more difficult; some are slated to be cut entirely. These services are already in high demand and short supply. In the very first days of the Homeless Garden Project, Lynne Basehore Cooper, the founding director, understood that job training and transitional employment was just one piece of the puzzle for someone trying to leave homelessness. The HGP operates in a larger service environment and our success—the success of our trainees—is tied to the health of that environment. These other agencies and services are partners to us.

**A speaker at the hearing, Nancy Kling illustrated this wonderfully:
(All of the text and services in bold below were proposed to be cut.)**

For 12 years, I camped out, homeless in Santa Cruz. I did not want to “drop out” and I didn’t like it. I didn’t work or pay taxes or participate in any sort of civic or social life. I had not received a diagnosis and I didn’t know I had a mental illness. I didn’t know where to look for help; I ended up in jail and the mental ward and the emergency room not really understanding why.

*In 2004 I met Martha Arredondo of the Puentes team. She helped me off the street and into transitional housing; a kind of probation housing to see if I could pay my bills. **Puentes** also offered me work. I accepted gratefully. Then **Stepping Out** helped me move in my own studio in 2005. I volunteered for the Homeless Garden Project for Christmas and I began to see Dr. Teverbaugh of **County Mental Health** and he prescribed **medication**. I attended **therapy** with Christie Nichol at Emeline complex. At **Mental Health Client Action Network** (MHCAN). I made friends and networked with others, taking self-help classes and participating in peer support groups—all geared toward recovery from various life challenges, such as severe poverty and mental illness. Also, I attended Cabrillo College and received a B- in American Sign Language.*

*Currently I work for **In Home Support Services** (IHSS) providing health and homecare for a disabled lady. I have joined the long-term care workers union SEIU. I also vote now. I count this success as “beating the odds.” But this progress cannot be maintained or improved upon without affordable housing. In 2006 I paid Social Security Income back \$1800. In 2007, I earned \$5160 and paid Social Security back \$2580, and then I paid my income taxes. 2007 SSI checks amounted to \$7200. My total income for 2007 was \$9780. How many of you can imagine living on less than \$10,000 a year?*

The Board of Supervisors voted to maintain funding levels for Human Care Alliance programs. I did not attend the funding hearings for County Health Services Agency or Human Services Agency, so I do not know the status of some of the programs Nancy mentioned in her talk. These services that Nancy outlined so well—their presence or absence—impact an individual’s well-being; services play a critical role in helping individuals to meet goals, find sustainable housing and participate with their community in a meaningful way. The impact of services on an individual affects family, friends, coworkers, and often the entire community. My experience at the Homeless Garden Project has taught me in so many ways that “no man is an island.”

If you are reading this article, you are also part of the environment within which HGP strives—with our trainees—to succeed. Thank you to the many, many community members who donate time, money, or services: giving of themselves in unique and thoughtful ways that benefit the entire Homeless Garden Project community.

—Darrie Ganzhorn is Director of Programs and Operations

Voices from the Fields...

Turn around in Santa Cruz.

I found out about the Homeless Garden Project when I was staying at River Street Shelter. A counselor made me aware of the Project. I heard about it one evening and came by the next day. Being at the Project, Tuesday through Friday, 9-2, I am getting the benefits of hands-on training, experiencing crops from seed to growth to harvest, and the efforts of team work.

I am learning about crops that come from many places in the world. I heard a story about a seed that was smuggled into the US in a sandwich. We have great lunches-one of the best things about the lunches is that volunteers care enough about us to take time to prepare lunches.

I never realized that ducks have a job-they're volunteer employees, and the cats are too. The ducks' job is to eat snails, to look pretty, and to expect to be taken care of. The ducks really work together-they're always there when the soil is newly turned. The cats play their role with gopher control.

The value of the training program to me is the experience and knowledge and the overall rewards of gardening and farming-to see how useful the soil, the land can be in meeting our basic needs for food. This is the first time I've seen a seed taken all the way to the table from the land. There is a partnership between me and the land; a partnership between all that gather, all that participate.

As I watch the garden grow, I see myself growing also by staying in one place, rooting myself, grounding myself. I'm testing my faith in relationships, learning and practicing trust. I'm growing in my recovery.

Danielle Long, a SC County Mental Health Outreach worker and SCPD officer, Eric Peabody, advised me whenever I was ready to get clean and sober, they'd be there for me, lead me to help. I was camping in the woods and the streets were killing me. Winter didn't bother me, even freezing cold temperatures, I just knew there was a better way to live. They helped me get into Janus last August. So I have almost one year of sobriety as I write this. It took thirty years to get here.

The foundation of my recovery is Janus. Janus led me to a Sober Living Environment (SLE), everything that goes with living clean and sober. The River Street Shelter and Page Smith Community House support my recovery by providing structure, one-on-one counseling and group meetings. The job gives me something to do that's productive, to avoid idle time, to allow myself to experience life on life's terms-the lives of the people at work, of the plants and the 9 lives of the cats.

At fifty years old, I didn't think I'd find myself interested in going farther in an educational experience. And this has been awesome. I've had the hands-on experience, the schooling and lectures that allow me to collect the knowledge of people that have been at HGP and I've met people from all over the world.

— Al McDaniel is a first year trainee.

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Voices from the Fields...

Like any great story

Aileen Joy was a Homeless Garden Project intern from January-June through UCSC's Espirit de Corps class. This speech was given at the College 9 Volunteer Recognition Ceremony in early June. Aileen won the Platinum Student Recognition Award from the Student Volunteer Center.

As many of you are leaders in our community, you may be familiar with our organization and the work we do. For those of you who aren't as familiar, the Homeless Garden Project has been in Santa Cruz since 1990. We're an organic farm, store, and a training program for homeless and low-income people, enabling them to learn skills from landscaping, irrigation, natural pest management, composting, agriculture, retail, healthy cooking, etc. The list continues. Perhaps most importantly, those who come to work at the garden also learn community skills, like working as a team.

The work at the garden also critically involves building our local community, bridging a lot of gaps in the community and enabling many groups that wouldn't otherwise socialize, to meet and share food and experiences. Though we are the Homeless Garden Project, in reality, we also serve so many other people. In my time at the garden, we've had volunteers and workers from every social group, school age children, families, foster homes, and of course college students to name a few.

With a few exceptions, most of our interns tend to come from community studies or environmental studies-the work at the garden is naturally connected to the work of both of these majors. I remember having a conversation with some of the crew and a Feminist Studies intern about what it means for a woman to be in farming and how the work of our garden relates to Feminist Studies. We came to the conclusion that the work of the HGP enables many groups of people, including women, to do things they have come to believe they can't. As a woman, working in the garden has taught me to take leadership roles and undertake heavy manual labor. Definitely for me this has been an eye-opening experience in believing in myself and what I am capable of.

I personally am a Literature major, one of few, if any, at the garden. My work as an intern has taught me a lot about many of the things I learn in my literature classes. If we think of the garden

as a narrative, there is a natural metaphor in farming for all the kinds of growing that we do. Of course we grow delicious fruits and vegetables. Our community supported agriculture (CSA) shares enable people like you to have a share in the great produce we grow or to sponsor a local low-income family or organization to have healthy food. But one of our greatest and perhaps lesser known "crops" are people.

Like any great story, the garden has built characters that are deep, rich, and complex. A boring story has flat, archetypal characters that are one-dimensional. The garden has taught me and so many other people about the complexities and individualities of homelessness and poverty. The characters in this garden's narrative are not the stereotypes many in our community have been led to believe in.

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In my role in the garden, I do a lot of tasks. I work in the nursery, on the farm, in our store and at our plant sale; and I prepare meals. I have learned everything from how to make soil to the principles of biodynamic farming. More importantly I've seen a lot about our community, how domestic violence is tied to homelessness, how sustainable farming is critical to the health of our environment, and how healthy food has become, for many, a commodity and not a right.

When I first started there in January, I didn't know how to transplant. I couldn't water properly. I didn't know a lot. When I say I learned how to make soil, I didn't even know that soil was a product gardeners made. I thought it was naturally occurring. However, everyone took time and really taught me so much. I find myself thinking about the people of the garden and how they react to difficult situations when I'm faced with a problem because I admire them so much. The staff and the crew do so much for this community, and they don't do it to receive accolades but because they really genuinely care about their work. I really want to thank them for all they do for Santa Cruz and all they've done for me, trusting me and giving a lot of opportunity for growth.

— Aileen Joy, UCSC Intern.



Photos in this issue were taken by Jon Kersey and Carol Buse. Thank you!

Recent tribute gifts

made to the Homeless Garden Project

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:

David T. Midkiff — Lori Fukuda and Mario Singleterry

In Honor Of:

Adam Brunner's 25th birthday — Linda Clevenger and Seth Brunner

The wedding of Susan Abercrombie and Jerry Lentz — Joan Domin-Hentges and David Hentges

Rose Kuras' birthday — Marcia Kaplan-Mann

Steve Shoub — Peter and Jeanette Katzlberger

Katherine Beiers — Ellyn Schwartzmann

Evy Cambridge — Amy Garrett



Thank you to our generous business supporters!

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Perforce Foundation
Redtree Properties
Safeway
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Staff of Life
Wheel Works

Employee Giving and Matching Gift Programs

Edison International
McAfee
Morgan Stanley
REGrid Power

Kaiser Permanente
Microsoft Matching Gifts
PG & E

Continued on inside page...

Voices from the Fields...

Business Supporters continued...

Gifts from Organizations

First Congregational Church of Santa Cruz First Friends Church
First United Methodist Church Illini Alternative Spring Break
Inner Light Ministries Knights of Columbus
Monterey Master Gardeners Naomi and the Courteous Rude Boys
Omega Nu Pacific Collegiate School
Resource Center for Nonviolence Resurrection Church
Resurrection Women's Guild Santa Cruz Live Oak Grange #503
Skyland Community Church

Natural Bridges Farm

Barry Swenson Builder



ALBA Big Creek Lumber
California Certified Organic Farmers
Driscoll's Franchi Seeds
Freewheelin' Farms Johnny's Selected Seeds
Koppes Plants Prather Ranch
Renee's Garden

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Caress Day Spa Eco Goods
Many Hands Gallery Om Gallery
Pacific Edge Paper Vision
Santa Cruz Gymnastics Center Santa Cruz Roller Palladium
Tahoe Biltmore The Craft Gallery
Village Yoga

CSA Scholarship Program

Kombucha Botanica

Restaurant Guild and Partners In Dining

Bittersweet Bistro Black China Bakery and Cafe
Café La Vie Cloud's
Engfer's Pizza Works India Joze
Kianti's La Posta
Ristorante Avanti Soif Wine Bar
Woodstock Pizza

Thank you to the businesses and organizations that support our work. We will feature foundations in our next issue. If we have omitted your business or organization, please notify us so we can correct it.
darrieg@homelessgardenproject.org

If you have a BIRTHDAY...

...you can help support the
Homeless Garden Project.

One of our donors asked friends to donate to the Homeless Garden Project in honor of her 80th birthday. She brought in a handful of checks one day to our office. I asked her if she'd like me to mention them in the tribute gifts. She preferred that I mention her idea so others HGP supporters might be able to celebrate their birthday this way. So here you go Janice! And *thank you*.

You can buy our fresh flower bouquets.



at the Food Bin
and the News Café
on Mission Street.

Special Volunteers Needed...

Please check our website for details:
www.homelessgardenproject.org

Knit a Scarf for the HGP Holiday Store!

This year we'd like to expand to include knitted items for babies and kids! But we'll be delighted to accept whatever you knitter's imagination comes up with—

Scarves • Hats • Blankets

Proceeds will benefit the Homeless Garden Project. Over the past years, knitters have earned almost \$10,000 for the Project. Please complete items by November 15. For more information contact Mary Edmund at 426-3609, extension 0# or email: mary@homelessgardenproject.org

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
_____ \$ 500. Cultivator of the Garden
_____ \$ 250. Sower of the Garden
_____ \$ 100. Supporter of the Garden
_____ \$ Other

My donation is enclosed Bill Me

I'd like to pledge \$ _____ quarterly monthly.

Bill My Visa Master Card

Card No. _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

Daytime Telephone _____

Or, make your donation on our website: www.homelessgardenproject.org

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Enjoy a great meal while supporting
the Homeless Garden Project!

Upcoming Dates!

Invite a friend to join you at

Soif

105 Walnut Avenue, Santa Cruz

Tel. 423-2020 • Open 5 -10pm

September 17, 2008

Our Partner-in-Dining will donate a percentage of their day's sales to our employment training programs.

THANK YOU to our Partners-in-Dining: *Café La Vie* and

Woodstock Pizza for their recent event and their support!

Come to the Homeless Garden Project's Store
From Our Garden

Looking for
a gift?

Look what's at the
Homeless Garden Project Store:

- hand made ceramics
- herb infused vinegars
- lavender shortbread cookie mix
- lavender potpourri and bouquets
- locally made soaps
- herb salts
- local CD's
- fresh flower bouquets
- No Enemy T-Shirts

Wed, Thurs 10-2, Fri, 10-6 • 30 West Cliff Drive, next to Depot Park
831.426.3609 • www.homelessgardenproject.org