From the Director

“Work occupies so much of our life. It’s not just that we spend vast amounts of our waking hours at work, but it is often through our vocational commitments that we engage the world. Our aspirations, our dreams, and even our understanding of who we are become shaped by the work we do in the world.”

—From Leading from Within, Poetry that Sustains the Courage to Lead

When Paul Lee first conceived of the Homeless Garden Project, his goal was to provide a place of beauty and safety for people who are homeless. As Lynne Basehore Cooper nurtured Paul’s vision into a reality, she asked the men and women who came from the shelter to the Project what direction they wanted to take the Garden. The resounding answer was “We need a job.” In the 2007 Santa Cruz County Homeless Census and Survey, the primary reason given for being homeless was “lost job or unemployment.” This is the most immediate and obvious function of work—to provide for our basic needs.

E.F. Schumacher defines this function of work broadly, “to bring forth the goods and services needed for a becoming existence.” (Small Is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered) He mentions two other functions of work: “to give a person a chance to utilize and develop their faculties” and “to give up their ego-centredness by joining with other people in a common task.”

At Homeless Garden Project, trainees and volunteers have appreciated work for all three of these reasons. Many express gratitude for an opportunity to be productive, or for structure. A trainee who needed to address his alcohol use before returning to the Project, told me of his relief to be back at the Garden: “I had nowhere to go. I just walked around in circles downtown all day.” If you are someone who has worked from 9-5 for an extended period of time, it may be difficult to imagine how wonderful it is to be working-employed or volunteering-after a period without work.

Working together happens regularly at HGP. The harvest is the most visible sign of the success of our joining together in a common task. That teamwork can be very exciting for me when it goes smoothly and we all do our part—maybe something musicians feel when they play together.

Work affords us the opportunities for “practice,” and for actualizing goals such as our goal for a 65 member CSA, or to make 400 wreaths for the holidays—or more personal goals, such as to learn the skill needed to run the greenhouse or do the farm irrigation.

Developing concrete skills and achieving tasks creates self-confidence, that can defend one against resignation. “Nobody wants to hire a single mom on welfare at age 50 with only a high school diploma,” can become, “Well, here I am, one year later, I am the top propagator and in charge of the greenhouse. I propagate many different kinds of plants, pull orders, and help customers…” Both those statements were made by one of our graduates, the second one referring to her new job at a local nursery.

In the larger vision of Homeless Garden Project that embraces community, work also plays a role. Once again, Wendell Berry says it so beautifully, “If it is to cohere, a community cannot agree to the loss of any of its members or the disemployment of any of its members, as an acceptable cost of an economic program... Persons, place and things have a practical value, but they are not reducible to such value; they are not interchangeable.”

Thank you for supporting eighteen years of the Homeless Garden Project’s works. We hope you’ll join with us or continue to join with us to extend the opportunity for training and meaningful, paid work to people in our community who are homeless and want to work.

— Darrie Ganzhorn is Director of Programs and Operations
Greetings—my name is Michael and I have recently been hired as a trainee at the garden project. I have only been working there since April 1, but the environment in the garden has already made a profound impression on me—one that is altogether positive and uplifting.

I came to the project after a 3-year hiatus of off and on homelessness, for the most part camping in my van, staying with friends occasionally, unrooted to any particular residence or locale. Before this time, I had been a housed and productive member of society my entire adult life. A serious physical injury followed by subsequent drug abuse problems helped contribute to a desperate and deteriorating lifestyle.

When a person becomes homeless they lose access to amenities that most people take for granted—privacy, access to personal hygiene (i.e., a private, non-public bathroom), and freedom from the threat of police harassment for simply trying to get a peaceful night’s sleep. The accumulative effect of living with these grinding challenges and threats inherent to homelessness can lead to a state of mind characterized by frustration, resentment, hopelessness, and a gradual but inevitable destruction of self-esteem.

In January of 2007, I made a fateful decision that I had to find a way out of homelessness and hopelessness, or else fall into a dark abyss from which there would be no return— and luckily I chose life instead of the abyss. I was able to kick my drug habit, and have been clean for almost 15 months. In addition, I needed something purposeful to do, so I started to volunteer at Saint Francis Soup Kitchen 3-4 days a week—an incredible place of kindness and light that I would encourage anyone to support.

It was at Saint Francis that I met the wonderful Paige, a Monday volunteer at the kitchen who has been connected with the Homeless Garden Project for some time. She encouraged me to apply, so I did, and much to my delight I was hired by Paul and Karalee. Which brings me back to the beginning of this little tome, namely that the weeks I have worked at the Garden Project have already been profoundly uplifting. Let me try to explain why—

First of all, as far as I am concerned, there are certain qualities in life that are impossible to quantify, qualities that cannot be bought or sold—among them are love, honor, respect, wisdom, and hope. The Garden Project amazingly manifests all of these qualities in abundance.

There is the love of the land, the soil, and the plants that are being nurtured and grown, as well as a bond of kindness and respect among those working in the garden. Our mother Earth is honored by nurturing her soil without the use of poisons. There is wisdom in the nature and essence of the Project as conceived by its founders and guardians—that the trainees and interns who chose to work in the field of organic, biodynamic agriculture actually have an opportunity to do it. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Homeless Garden Project provides hope for those in a difficult situation, people who are making a sincere effort to reclaim and rebuild their lives, by offering employment and training in a loving and supportive environment.

I encourage anyone in the community to get involved with the garden in any way they are able, whether it be volunteering their time, donating materials, donating money, or investing in the garden through buying a CSA share. It is truly a worthwhile enterprise!

—Michael is a trainee at the Homeless Garden Project
If you’ve visited the Homeless Garden Project within the past few years, you may have found yourself wondering: Who the heck is that guy at the garden wearing the hardhat and tool belt ordering me to get to work? And who’s that other guy sitting on the garden path throwing woodchips and yelling excitedly at the top of his lungs? And how about the guy who walks to the restroom every 15 minutes? He’s always touching everything, grunting to himself, pulling his dentures in and out of his shirt pocket, and asking me where I was born. Are these guys with that group out there sitting in the plastic lawn chairs eating a snack and drinking juice? Who the heck are these people, and where do they come from?

They come from Laurel Street Center—an organization based in Santa Cruz that works with developmentally disabled adults. No kids, just adults age 18 and over. The Center serves thirty consumers (the currently required p.c. term for this population) with various diagnoses. Some of the consumers’ disabilities are instantly apparent. Others, you may never realize they even have a disability. Laurel Street is a day treatment facility only, not a residential facility. No one lives at the Center. All of the consumers live elsewhere, whether that be with family, friends, or in a group home.

Laurel Street Center has various vocational outing work sites around the area. To name a few, some of the consumers work at Grey Bears Recycling Center. Others work at the County Human Resources offices assisting in the compilation of various paperwork packets. Some of our groups walk along the beaches to clean up litter. Others work at a local soup kitchen helping to prepare and serve meals each day. And, of course, there’s the Homeless Garden Project. The ideal purpose of these work sites is to encourage good work habits, to introduce various life skills and social skills, etc., so that one day perhaps the consumers may each find actual employment in the real world. The reality, however, is that it’s mostly about increasing the quality of life for consumers, providing them with opportunities and experiences that might not otherwise be available.

The definition of “quality of life” varies widely with each individual. For some of the consumers, the opportunity to put in a couple of hours of hard work each day—to shovel, wheel barrel and spread woodchips on a garden path—gives that person a real sense of responsibility and value. For others, the simple chance to go outside, walk around the garden, socialize with the garden staff, get a little fresh air and sunshine and exercise is a highlight to their day and a huge improvement to their lives. Even though that consumer may not be down on his/her hands and knees digging in the dirt participating in the actual labor of gardening, the Homeless Garden provides a unique safe place to stretch and grow and feel welcome in their community. Their job is simply to spread the sunshine in the world. Could it be that there are a few lucky people who’s value may not rest within the ability to wield a shovel or a rake, but simply to spread the sunshine?

So, the next time you’re out at the Homeless Garden Project, take a moment to track down the Laurel Street crew and introduce yourself. If you’re there in the morning, you can’t really miss them. They’re a very special population of folks who wear their hearts on our shirtsleeves, and they love nothing more than to meet new people and make new friends. Guaranteed with the slightest provocation, you will be immediately encircled by bright smiling faces eager to vigorously shake your hands, introduce themselves repeatedly, and give you their best grand tour.

—Larry Davis is a counselor at Laurel Street Center.

Their job is simply to spread the sunshine in the world.

Photos in this issue were taken by Jon Kersey and Paige Concannon.
Voices from the Fields...

Feed 2 BIRDS with 1 WORM!

Your contribution will support
- The Homeless Garden Project job training program and
- Free shares—a portion of each week’s organic harvest of fruits, vegetables and herbs—to low income families and individuals.

Homeless Garden Project will donate shares to:

- The YWCA Children’s Center
- The River Street Shelter
- Pioneer House
- Transition House
- The Hospice of Santa Cruz County

Donate online or send in your donation with the coupon on the back of this newsletter. Please help us reach our goal of 25 shares. We have raised funds for 19 shares!

Silent auction!

I remember talking with Darrie on the phone the morning after the kitchen burned down. My immediate response was, “Is everyone okay? Did anyone get hurt?” After being reassured that no one suffered any physical harm (except for the bed of kale next to the kitchen), it dawned on me that all of us—HGP staff, trainees, volunteers, and community members at large—were hurt by this unfortunate event. It was the one of the first moments that my commitment to my work community caused me to shed tears. I realized how passionately I feel about this organization and the people I work with and I decided to do something proactive about it all.

My idea came from an original desire to have a “Day of Healing” where community members could come together to show their support for the Project, both by their physical presence and through monetary contributions. We are grateful to those who already showed a tremendous outpouring of support and are helping with rebuilding. I feel we have made our way as an organization towards healing from the fires, but also know that, in order for the success of this project to be realized, we need continued support from our friends and family (in the larger sense). After speaking with staff, interns and trainees, we decided that hosting a silent auction made the most sense. Taking my job as director of our newest program, Cultivating Community, to heart, I liked the idea of asking our larger community to contribute what they had to offer—goods, services, talents—in an effort to help us thrive.

As a result, on Saturday June 21st from 2-5pm, we will be indulging in “Solstice, Strawberries and Silent Auction” out at the Farm. We invite you to bring a blanket to sit on while you enjoy an affordable lunch prepared with farm-fresh produce by local chef Joseph Schultz of India Joze fame, strawberry shortcake made with our infamous berries, refreshing drinks, and wonderful music all while basking under the summer sun at the farm. The Silent Auction will feature trips to Lake Tahoe, yoga packages and jewelry, among other items, to bid on. We envision this as an opportunity for people to be outdoors, learn a bit more about where their food comes from, chat with their neighbors and have fun, all while supporting our wonderful organization. We look forward to seeing you there!

On-line credit card bidding for select items will start in early June and close Friday, June 20th at 5pm at: www.homelessgardenproject.org. Bidding on all items will resume at 2pm at the event. All bids will close and be final at 5pm on Saturday June 21st.

— Layla Aguilar is the Director of HGP’s education program—Cultivating Community.
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:

Linda Caruthers
— Susan Buxton
— Linda Covell
— Sandra Harder
— Phyllis Hardin
— Susan Kankel
— Susan Sommer
— Doris Tabari
— K. Franklin

Opio Toure
— Susan and Marc Mangel
Peter Kerlin
— Joanne Matuzas
Jean Stewart
— Barbara Cokelet
— Patrick Teverbaugh

Florence Teverbaugh

In Honor Of:

Joe Brune’s 74th birthday
— Caitlin Brune
Christine Reyes Brune’s Anniversary
— Caitlin Brune
Kimmy Imlay
— Elizabeth Imlay
Robin Imlay
— Elizabeth Imlay
Susan Orrett
— The Yoga Chicks

Thank you to our generous business supporters!

We do Wedding Flowers!
We grow a wide diversity of organic flowers. Interested? Call Paul or Karalee at Natural Bridges Farm, 423-1020

Special Volunteer Needed.
We are looking for a dedicated person to provide technical support for our computer network.
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 want my donation to go to the Scholarship Program
Bill My  ☐ Visa  ☐ Master Card

Card No.__________________________
Exp. Date _______________________
Signature ________________________
Name ____________________________
Address __________________________
Daytime Telephone_________________

Enjoy a great meal while supporting the Homeless Garden Project!

Invitation to Join:

Café LaVie
429 Front Street, Santa Cruz
Tel. 429-6746  Wednesday, June 18
Our Partner-in-Dining will donate a percentage of their day’s sales to our employment training programs.

Woodstock Pizza
710 Front Street, Santa Cruz
Tel. 427-4444  Monday, July 7, 4-9pm
Please bring in a flyer or mention the Homeless Garden Project when you come.

THANK YOU to our Partners-in-Dining: Clouds
for their recent event and their support!

Upcoming Dates!

Come to the Homeless Garden Project’s
SOLSTICE, STRAWBERRIES & SILENT AUCTION
Saturday, June 21 • 2-5 pm
at Natural Bridges Farm

Bid on: Tahoe Trips, Jewelry, Art, Yoga Package and more!

Affordable lunch prepared by: Jozseph Schultz of India Joe’s fame!

Bask in the summer sun at the Farm and enjoy music and berry tasty treats.

426-3609  www.homelessgardenproject.org