On Sunday, I was on a bike ride with my son, and we stopped at the Homeless Garden Project. The garden was full of teenagers from Temple Beth El doing volunteer work. We think of the Project as benefiting the homeless, but in so many ways I think the Project benefits the rest of us along with the homeless. It provides opportunities for us to feel valued and generous, and allows so many to learn about growing food.

— Brian McElroy, Driscoll’s

I’ve been thinking a lot about the service and volunteer work—and all the other names it goes by—happening every day at the Homeless Garden Project and want to take an opportunity to sing its praises. I am speaking here in the broadest possible way about giving, helping, using one’s time and energy to help make one’s community as it “might or should be” rather than as it is; about giving that breaks down our common notion of a giver and a receiver. Often at the Project, people are doing “community service” to learn more about their community. Interns are helping out this quarter by tabling, doing farm work, and cooking beautiful meals for our grateful and hungry crew. Trainees volunteer after their paid shifts to devote more time to a favorite project or to teach a workshop at the plant sale. Of course our Board members are all volunteers. Other volunteers include a plumber who does our required annual backflow prevention device testing, a therapist who volunteers weekly at the farm, our bookkeeper, a programmer who advises on technical issues, graphic artists who do newsletter layout, and the photographer who takes most of our newsletter photos. To be part of this wonderful community is truly an unexpected reward of this work.

In my own life and from what I’ve witnessed at the farm, service provides meaning and purpose. One goes into service thinking of what one wants to give, and finds unanticipated gifts—knowledge, friendship, a larger sense of what our community is and can be, a way to apply and extend what one has learned in books, a bodily sense of what usefulness feels like, the loss of rigid hierarchies and borders in exchange for a deep sense of reciprocity. In a departure from this regular column, I thought it might be fun to offer a small quiz. Guess the author of the following quotes. The answers are at the end of the article.

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world. (1)

We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results. (2)

Giving frees us from the familiar territory of our own needs by opening our mind to the unexplained worlds occupied by the needs of others. (3)

If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together. (4)

Genuine politics—even politics worthy of the name—the only politics I am willing to devote myself to—is simply a matter of serving those around us: serving the community and serving those who will come after us. Its deepest roots are moral because it is a responsibility expressed through action, to and for the whole. (5)

We build the road and the road builds us. (6)

To all of you on this road with the Homeless Garden Project, our sincere thanks for your contributions. If you’d like to join us, or to find out more about how you can contribute to the work of the Homeless Garden Project, check our website www.homelessgardenproject.org for details, stop by the farm during open volunteer hours (Thursday and Friday, 10-2), or call us at 426.3609.

— Darrie Ganzhorn is Director of Programs and Operations

Voices from the Fields...

Interview with Deborah. I first met Deborah when I started volunteering at the Homeless Garden Project last fall. Nearly three months later, she showed me how little I still know about the people who welcome me into their workplace every week.

How did you first find out about the Homeless Garden Project?
I was living at Page Smith Community House, and my friend who lived in the house next to me, had previously worked here. She took me out there to show me the garden, and I just thought it looked really nice... really well maintained and they had wonderful rich dirt. We went back and filled out an application and... that's how I got here.

Where were you working before that?
Well, I worked for about 18 years in Silicon Valley as a technical writer. That was very, very challenging... and I guess I just hit the wall. Just, you know, I got stressed and tired out. Not just burnt out but I kind of hit the limit of what I was capable of doing in terms of technical aspects... I consider myself to be a bit more average in the technical field, and the people I'm competing against are the best and the brightest in the whole world. Even though I tried to bend my personal talents, in the area of doing things like websites and online documentation, linking the documentation properly and so on... still there were a lot of people who were just way better than me... and I was exhausted. Just mentally and physically exhausted. So I hit a wall.

What would you say are the things you really excel at— your talents and/or passions?
I like to write. Sometimes I can be good at organizing things, and I think I have a talent for being able to oversee things from the very top level. I mean, in just a few minutes of looking at a project I could tell you where the weaknesses and the strengths were, and in a writing project I could give you a timeline. I could give you an off-the-cuff answer of how long it's going to take to produce a certain kind of documentation, and I was very accurate with it. My bosses were surprised at how accurate I could be.

What have you learned from working here?
I already knew a lot about gardening when I got here. And despite that, I found that there's a heck of a lot that I don't know. I learned about gardening from doing it with my parents, from the time I was very small, because my parents came from a generation where just about everybody had some tomatoes and stuff in the back yard. But I'm just jaw-droppingly amazed at how much Paul [Glowaski, Garden Director] knows, and when I go out there and I work with him I learn a lot from him. Not only just in how to do gardening, but also... he's a very calm person, and that helps me because I can get too frazzled at times.

What is your favorite part of working at the garden? Being in the sunshine. Being in a large, wide-open space outdoors. And just the camaraderie of working with the people there... because we're all going through difficult times and, once you get to know people a little, and they accept you, it's really nice. It really is a very relaxing place and we really try to keep it... what would be the word? Peaceful. We get a lot of people that get up there and they just stand there and just go "ahhh. It's peaceful, isn't it?"—and it really is.

What have been your biggest challenges working here? Umm... okay, I might throw you a bit of a curve ball here. I have mental illnesses. Not all are stress-related. And... sometimes I can't work for a while. Sometimes I'm off work for two or three weeks at a time. At this place they accept it, and they encourage me that if I really need it, that I can take the time off. They have helped me tremendously to... give myself the time that I need to pull myself together, to get the psychological counseling, the medicines, and all that, and when I have a real strong need for something, whatever that is, they're here to help me. And in Silicon Valley I'd just lose my job. So it's a different world. It's really different to have somebody who accepts me.

Anything else you want the readers of our newsletter to know about the Homeless Garden Project that they might not already know? It's just a rhythm of work that I think a lot of people have not tasted before in their jumbled lives, to see their own efforts come to fruition in a way, like that... to look and go "oh, I planted those squash, and I helped water them every week to make sure that they grew". And for me it's so very different from writing, I write books about computers, and by the time the thing is published it's almost out of date. They're already working on the next version of software. When I come here, and I grow vegetables, and we eat them, that always feels like something worthwhile to me. The vegetables, they've done their job. They've nourished the people, and that's a really good feeling.

Deborah, thanks so much for sharing this with me.
Melanie Butler, a volunteer at HGP conducted and transcribed this interview with Deborah an HGP Trainee.

Photos in this issue were taken by Jon Kersey and Suzy Hunt.
Sharing work and meals, pride gained from a job well done, friendships with other trainees, respect and support from staff, visits from student groups and volunteers, and connection to other programs and services were all described as creating an environment that contrasts sharply from the frequent mistreatment experienced in other settings. The bottom line is that there aren’t many “safe” spaces for unhoused people in Santa Cruz. HGP is one of them.

We want our findings to help raise awareness of the hardships facing formerly and currently homeless people and to advocate for needed services and policy changes. Obviously, affordable housing, quality health care, well paying jobs, and strong education and training programs are a must. Equally important is the elimination of sleeping and camping bans and other practices that criminalize people based on their economic status. In a society in which discrimination is all too common, our findings show how incredibly important “safe” spaces, like HGP, are.

References

Heather Bullock is an associate professor of psychology and director of the Center for Justice, Tolerance, and Community at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Shirley Truong is a graduate student in the social psychology program at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She also participates in HGP’s Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program and volunteers at the farm.
The Hancock Challenge

For information about making a pledge to the HGP, contact Darrie Ganzhorn at 831.426.3609.

Voices from the Fields...

The Hancock Challenge

Get a Big Lift-off!

The Hancock Challenge to stabilize income flow for the Homeless Garden Project throughout the year (see last issue), got off to a great start!

Not surprisingly, the first pledge came from someone whose name has been synonymous with championing the homeless, along with Paul Lee and Page Smith, for the past 15-20 years: Rowland “Reb” Rebele. As a significant donor to the Hancock Challenge, we asked him a few questions about his involvement with the Homeless Garden Project.

How did you first get involved with homelessness in Santa Cruz County?

I started getting involved with the homeless population through my church in 1984. Paul Lee, Paul Pfotenhauer and Page Smith started the Citizens Committee for the Homeless (CCH) and from that developed the Interfaith Satellite Shelters where each participating church provided a night every week of shelter and food for homeless persons. My church was one of those. The churches served 40-50 people a night. We’d take people in, cook them dinner and bed them down for the night. Then we would make bag lunches for them for the next day. The Homeless Garden Project initially was a training and nutritious food component of CCH, and eventually split off. So I have been involved a long time.

Recently you made a substantial contribution pledge to the Hancock Challenge... what was your thinking about this decision?

Nonprofit organizations need sustaining help. They have to find sustainability. Their needs don’t go away; salaries don’t go away. There are different ways to do it. They can do it by getting regular government funding, but this is not very secure. The key is getting regular contributions. I am very impressed with the commitment of this gentleman (Quentin Hancock). This is a very impressive matching grant. It creates an important funding model that will inspire commitments from others, and has from me.

What might you say to others who are undecided about participating in the Hancock Challenge?

People who are undecided need to know this is a good project. Growing up I was very fortunate. I had a good family, an education and a good start towards being successful. I always thought this somehow should go back to others. W e need to be grateful, no matter how our good fortune comes about. A person doesn’t need to be a Christian to understand the good sense in giving back!

In your life, what are you most passionate about?

I want to leave a legacy that will endure and continue to help people.

We want YOU!

We are excited about expanding our Board of Directors, and some of you may be interested in joining! This is a volunteer position. We are looking for people who:

a) love the mission of the Homeless Garden Project;
b) have time to commit to attending meetings and participating in organizational functions (roughly an average of 6-8 hours/month);
c) have a commitment to helping the agency achieve financial security, especially in raising public awareness and financial support;
d) like to work as part of a team
e) get excited about helping others in need and giving back to the community.

If this sounds like just the thing for you, please contact us at:

woutjes@homelessgardenproject.org or abbeyea@homelessgardenproject.org for additional information.

We’d love to hear from you!
Make a difference... buy a share in your community!

The story of Homeless Garden Project’s CSA Fund

One of the ways that the Homeless Garden Project helps support itself is through the sale of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares. This is where members of our community purchase shares in the garden. These shares consist of certified organic vegetables, fruit and flowers grown on the farm. There is approximately 12-14 pounds of product in each weekly share, and shares are purchased by the growing season.

The Garden offers “scholarship shares” whereby the weekly boxes of fruits and vegetables are purchased by an interested community member and donated to local organizations such as the River Street Shelter or Hospice of Santa Cruz County. This provides their clients with nutritious, wholesome, organic food and uplifting organic flowers.

It’s a win-win-win situation! HGP benefits from the sale, which supports its programs, the recipient organization benefits by receiving organic food and flowers, and the donor benefits by receiving a good tax deduction—not to mention the good karma and feelings that come with giving!

We are happy to help you make a difference in your community while supporting at least two worthwhile community organizations, all for the price of one good act: buying a share. Please call us at 831-426-3609 extension 2# to make a difference! Or donate online at: www.homelessgardenproject.org/Donate.htm#csa

Bouquets to Hospice

"Bread feeds the body, indeed, but flowers feed also the soul."
— The Koran

Each week during the summer months, Hospice of Santa Cruz County receives a very welcome delivery of beautiful fresh-harvested flowers from our friends at the Homeless Garden Project—thanks to donors to the Homeless Garden Project’s CSA Fund. “It’s amazing how a simple bouquet of flowers can bring so much joy and happiness to our patients and their families,” says Catherine Parry, Hospice nurse, “we are so grateful to HGP for their generous donation, there’s a lot of love put into each and every bouquet”. Nurses, social workers, chaplains and volunteer visitors take flowers into the homes and facilities where patients live. “We’re so appreciative of this opportunity to bring caring support from our community into these homes; our families are so touched that they are remembered,” says Shirley Sapena, Hospice social worker. “Our intent is to make each and every patient feel special, the beautiful bouquets help us do that.” One particular patient she remembers commented how she felt like a queen with all the attention she was receiving from Hospice care, and she had never felt like that before.

A Hospice chaplain, remembers this particularly touching story of a patient who had once been an avid gardener. "Joe welled up with tears, saying he had never received flowers from anyone before this. He visibly brightened when he held the bouquet, recalling many happy memories of tending gardens." Thanks to the generosity and support of the folks in our community who support the Homeless Garden Project, uplifting bouquets are distributed weekly among our 125 patients and their families.

Hospice of Santa Cruz County provides compassionate presence and professional expertise for individuals and their families confronted with end-of-life issues. Since 1978, Hospice of Santa Cruz County (formerly called Hospice Caring Project) has brought comfort to thousands at their most vulnerable stage of life. Visit our website: www.hospicesantacruz.org or call (831) 430-3000 for more information on hospice care, transitions, grief support and volunteering.

Recent tribute gifts made to HGP

In Honor Of:
Sudha Rajamani— Jamie Daughtery
Laurie Hauer— Nancy Sugars

In Memory Of:
Jan Larson— John and Ann Dizikes
Rosalie Kraft— Paul and Jeanette Johnson, Joyce McLean,
Beverly Lynds, Torria Nelson-Weeks and Nancy Sugars
Dore Bodenheimer— Kristine Holerman

Thanks to our special angels in the business world:

- Driscoll’s donated Light Brown Apple Moth traps, monitoring and control expertise, plastic mulch and bought a scholarship share
- Sweetbriar donated persimilis
- Mission Printers
- Lush Cosmetics
- Adobe Systems
- North Coast Vision
- Renee’s Garden
- Barry Swenson Builder for use of Natural Bridges Farm
- Employees at Morgan Stanley, Kaiser Permanente, Union Bank and Edison International
- Earthbound Farms
- Automatic Data Processing
- New Leaf Community Markets
- Santa Cruz Community Credit Union
- Ron Slack and the Good Times
- Bob Carlson Graphics
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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

❏ My Donation is enclosed    ❏ Bill Me

Bill My □ Visa □ Master Card

Card No. __________________________________________
Exp. Date ____________________________
Signature __________________________________________
Name __________________________________________
Address __________________________________________
Daytime Telephone __________________________

HUMAN RACE A SUCCESS!
Board members, staff and volunteers were able to raise nearly $4,000 in the Human Race to benefit the Homeless Garden Project this year.
Thank you to all of you who sponsored us!

CSA shares update!
Community Supported Agriculture

CSA shares are available!
Organic vegetables and fruit fresh from our farm to you!
• Weekly basket through October 22
• Eat healthy
• Support organic agriculture
• Support our local economy
• Support HGP’s job training program
• Prices are pro-rated

3 ways to begin: • Buy a share online
• Download our CSA brochure and send it in
• Call 426.3609.2#

HIRE an HGP Graduate

• We provide on-the-job training, a formal lecture series in organic horticulture and life and work skills to people who are homeless. This nationally-recognized program has created a career path for dozens of graduates since its inception in 1990.
• Participants develop a wide range of interests and work experience and can be in the program for three years. The training program takes place in an organic market garden that runs an 80-member Community Supported Agriculture program, plant sales and a value-added workshop that produces gift products for sale.

Hiring a program graduate benefits your business with an experienced, motivated employee and creates openings for new trainees.

contact: Darrie Ganzhorn 426-3609, ext. 2#