Practicing Hope

“...almost every single job involved in gardening has a lesson to teach, a life lesson. From seeding, making soil and watering in the greenhouse, you learn that attention to detail is so important. Life or death for those little seeds depends on your continual watch and care. When you clear and prepare a bed for planting, you work through a very thorough process of clearing the bed, then turning and digging and composting. You are creating a bed for your plants to grow—you realize anything in life is only as strong as its foundation. When you watch the plants grow and grow and bloom—somewhere inside you are growing and blooming too. This begins a foundation of self-worth and respect.” —HGP trainee

Working with our trainees gives me a renewed awareness and appreciation for the value of hope in making change in our world—whether making a personal change, or change on a large scale, such as in an organization or nation. Hope is the belief that something better is possible.

There are several forces at work at the Homeless Garden Project that encourage hope. These include: doing worthwhile and honorable work that meets a basic human need, belonging to a community, and receiving regular feedback about your successes and strengths (whether it’s the seeds sprouting, the flowers blooming, a customer buying your wreath or your supervisor applauding your dependability). I am a firm believer in the value of telling your story as a way of gaining perspective and understanding about your life.

Often, from this perspective and understanding, goals and clarity about the path forward emerge. Hope, though anchored in the present, is future-oriented; it creates energy for planning and action. As Rebecca Solnit says, “Hope calls for action, action is impossible without hope.” Every year we build on our success—growing capacity as an organization, expanding and refining our programs and services.

Each winter, as days get shorter and colder and the garden dies back, we bolster our hope by lighting candles, joining with friends, and giving gifts. Please join us this season at our downtown holiday store. There’s more information about upcoming events on our website. We also hope you’ll join with us by sustaining our work with a financial contribution. Thank you and Happy Holidays! — Darrie Ganzhorn is Executive Director

From the Board: Opportunities to Ripen

A hero of mine, Wendy Johnson said in a book of hers, “When I slow down sufficiently to actually arrive in the garden, I see that everything around me is constantly changing. Alan Chadwick, inspired by Heraclitus, pointed out that you never step into the same garden twice. And when I really slow down, I see that the garden and gardener are changing too, ripening and decaying with every breath.”

This observation in so many ways sums up our experiences over the last twenty plus years at the Project. While our beautiful 3-acre market “Garden” in Santa Cruz remains, the people, the microflora and fauna, plants and winged friends, come and go. Constantly changing and evolving, and as Wendy says, “ripening and decaying.”

And yet, our mission and goals in many ways remain the same and themes built around equity continually rise to the forefront of our daily work. This Holiday season, like so many years before, the Project will once again offer our community the chance to participate in our work by purchasing handmade crafts made by our trainees, staff and local artisans. As former Farm Director, I can assure you that a tremendous amount of work, thought, and intention go in to the planning, planting, harvesting, and ultimately the assembly of our wreaths, candles, and other gift products. The Store is the fruition of much of this amazing work.

Lastly, I want to welcome you all to our Garden. We recently completed construction of our Farm Stand which is open seven days a week and is chock full of fresh, seasonal, and Organic fruits and veggies. While you are there, please, do yourself a favor—take a deep breath, walk around, and reflect on our changing existence. Every moment is a new one, always an opportunity to ripen into something different. As long as the HGP exists, this opportunity for each of us to be something different than what others tell us we have to be will always be a tenet of our work. We hope to see you soon.

— Paul Glowaski farms at Dinner Bell Farms
Voices from the Fields

Higher Education.

"True nobility is that you're better than you used to be." — Wayne Dyer

How did I become homeless? The fire didn't make me homeless. I was already on my way, but the fire was the event that led to homelessness. Along with the medical bills that followed, alienation from family and my depression. But I was already heading towards homelessness before the fire. It seems that in order to learn the hard lessons of my life, I need a hard-core situation. The universe says, "OK, she's not passing the class, so we've got to get serious."

The worst thing in the world happened to me— I became homeless and penniless. I lived in my car for a year. Then I moved into Page Smith Community House as a resident, a place that I had worked for as a homeless service center employee. The gift that experience gave me, after working there and then living there is the gift of learning what boundaries are. If I had had boundaries all my life, think what I could have accomplished.

The other gift that I received is the privilege of understanding something closer to the truth of what homelessness really is— having both lived and worked at Page Smith and Rebele Family Shelter; and having sat on both sides of the desk I learned about poverty, disability and addiction. I gained 'life coursework' by having lived and worked there; I know I'll do service in this area in the future.

In the past, my main motivator was fear of failure, but I'm not afraid anymore. In the past, I have been very critical of myself. One of my coworkers told me "I would never talk to anybody how I talk to myself." I wonder who it is that talks that way to me, it's the most cutting voice in the world. I'm getting better now. I have faith that my life is going to be OK.

I've gotten sturdier— that's what the HGP program really does. When I first came to HGP, the program was really about emergency intervention for me. At first, "I couldn't recognize an opportunity if it hit me in the head." Then I started saying, "I love this. I really dig it. I want to know more." The program offers space to heal, to hope, to see something will work. I am beginning to recognize that there is hope for the future. I've been part of making change in two ways— bringing awareness to stereotypes of homelessness and the food movement. The food movement is, at core, a reevaluation of how we feed ourselves which means to question everything we do. Food is at the core of our health, future, success, and harmonization. I can't think of anything more foundational. Our work with food shows me that there is hope.

— Mary Burick is a recently-housed second-year HGP trainee.

One of the most important things I think parents can give their children is self-confidence. To say, "Go forth in this world— It's OK to be you." I am learning that now about myself. When I hear that critical voice now, I catch it. I tell myself, "You're a good person, you have a good heart." I never took advantage of another person, even when I was desperate.

The last thing I let go of after becoming homeless was the belief that "if you just work hard enough, you'll get it done." That was an axiom in my life. I had a death grip on it. There's unfairness in that belief, but there's also arrogance. An arrogance to believe "Oh, you're that powerful?" and then when things were falling apart, unfairness when I believed I just wasn't working hard enough. Questioning these beliefs is brand new for me, as is letting go of the omnipotence. I feel like through my experience of homelessness, I've earned another degree. This degree is towards service, something I've always wanted to do.

Thanks to Jon Kersey, Raphael Solomon, and Dana Forsberg for photos used in this newsletter.
Swanton Loop Challenge

- 33 riders
- 50 miles
- $9,186 raised for HGP

Sean Holman of Velo Cruz attended HGP's July SUSTAIN dinner. There he conceived of the idea for the Swanton Loop Challenge. Sean says, “If we’re going to be out there riding, it has to be for more than ourselves.” Velo Cruz is a unique cycling community that partners with local organizations to bring awareness to social and environmental causes. Stay tuned for Swanton Loop Challenge 2012. See the video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QYBeUpm-Xs

Thanks to Velo Cruz and all of our October SUSTAIN dinner partners!

Voices from the Fields

HGP Trainees on Gratitude:

Joan Coleman: This whole Project means a lot to me. I come from a substance abuse background and something that another trainee has said really has stuck with me, “Working with the earth is the best way to heal the guilt and sadness that goes along with a history of drug abuse.”

Don L.: I’m grateful to be alive, grateful to see all the diversity we have here at HGP and for what we are able to get done. Our work means a lot and you can take it anywhere you want. I’ve been so much of a loner! Now I feel a part of something important.

Eugene: I’m grateful for the farm and learning how to grow food. For the healing, I am also coming from a substance abuse background and learning to grow food and take care of something else is valuable. I’m grateful for the patient, compassionate, kind, caring staff. I’m sure I wouldn’t have been able to get healthy again and learn and work without HGP. There should be more places like this.

Janet O’Brien: It’s been a really wonderful journey. I’m grateful to have friends again. I’m really excited for March 2012 and the beginning of the growing season. One of the highlights of my time here has been sowing seeds. I want to do everything better next year now that I’ve seen the whole cycle!

Donate online: www.homelessgardenproject.org

The ride was followed by a SUSTAIN dinner at Natural Bridges Farm cooked by Chef Sebastian of Oak Tree Ristorante and featuring Natural Bridges Farm organic produce.
Voices from the Fields

Volunteer Profile
Mike Dunklee

Why are you involved with HGP?
I am involved with HGP because I can actually see how the Project creates change in the community, not only through the trainee program but all the educational and awareness projects. The garden is the only place I have found in Santa Cruz where individuals from all aspects of the community come together to share in a common experience. It's something very special.

What type of projects/activities are you currently involved with for HGP?
I am a member of the events planning committee, organizing and working farm-to-table dinners, as well as planning Partners in Dining Events.

What’s your favorite veggie from the farm?
The best Veggie, in my opinion, has to be the Asparagus. Just crisp, juicy, and delicious.

Donor Profile
Patrice Boyle

Why are you involved with HGP?
I initially became involved with the HGP in order to help establish the new home/farm at Pogonip, that was more than 10 years ago, I believe! I stayed on as a board member and volunteer. Obviously, it captured me in a deep and abiding way. I stayed involved for many reasons — the big one is the people who work there, all of them. Another is that I learned that making a difference on a human scale is a very nice thing — and that is something the Project does very well for everyone involved.

How are you currently involved with the HGP?
I buy flowers from the garden for my restaurants, which I pick up weekly at the office, sort of my own private restaurant-flower CSA. Also, I am a donor.

What’s been special to you about the Project over the years?
I've learned that we are all “trainees” and further, that having one's humanity recognized is a very powerful thing. The open, accepting and responsible nature of the HGP leads one, at least this one, to be a little easier on ourselves and others, and ultimately, to be able to try to act out our better selves.
HGP is partnering with Bauman College and their WellFed Curriculum to offer a six week nutrition and wellness program to HGP participants.

Our Bauman College interns (L to R: Makenzie Collins, Rachel Klaif, and Erica Wielt) were motivated to share information about the nutritional value of crops grown by HGP trainees. Bauman College seeks to improve personal and community well being by teaching people to eat well to sustain health and support recovery from illness and injury. A significant part of their work is to teach whole food nutrition to organizations such as the Homeless Garden Project, that are interested in creating a culture of improved health and sustainable living.

HGP 2012 Calendar is out! Get your copy at our downtown Holiday Store. Thanks to Naomi Silverman and Bob Carlton Graphics for their design work to create this calendar. (See the full color calendar in our online newsletter or at our Holiday Store).

Thank you to our Corporate and Business Sponsors for 2011

• New Leaf Community Markets
• Santa Cruz Mountain Brewery
• Gayle's Bakery and Rosticceria
• Mesiti-Miller Engineering
• Redtree Properties
• Renee's Garden
• Santa Cruz Tire and Auto
• Shen's Gallery and Imports, Inc
• Saturn Café
• Staff Of Life
• Barry Swenson Builders
• Eli Lilly

Thank you to Jay Paul Company for donated use of our downtown Holiday Store!

Our next newsletter will feature a listing of:
• Our Partners In Change Business Supporters and
• Business Donors to the SUSTAIN Dinner Series.

Recent tribute gifts made to HGP

A tribute gift to the Project is a great way to show your support of our programs while honoring the people in your life. We’ll acknowledge your gift promptly by mailing a beautiful card of our organic farm to the individual, family, or organization you are honoring or to the appropriate person to receive remembrances. (Please remember to send the address!) For gifts of $75 or more, we’ll also send your tribute person a pair of 10” handmade beeswax candles made in our workshop. The gift amount is not included with the card or candle. You’ll receive our grateful confirmation of your gift for tax purposes.

In Honor Of:

— Rose Kuras' 80th Birthday! – Congratulations, •—
  Ilse Rowe and Annie Poodle

— Luke Jensen — Karen Hovekamp

In Memory Of:

— John Gusman — Shannon Miller
  — Milton Meyer — Gary Silverstein

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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 • Printed on recycled paper.

Fill this out and send in. Thank you for your support!

Be an active supporter:

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$500. Cultivator of the Garden
$250. Sower of the Garden
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Homeless Garden Project
Holiday Store

Gifts

We're downtown for the holidays!
On Pacific Avenue between O'Neil's & Verizon (110 Cooper Street)

Open Now-December 24
10am-8pm • www.homelessgardenproject.org

Give a Gift and support the Homeless Garden Project

With donations of $30 or more to the you may choose to receive an original gift card designed by local artist Erika Perloff — the perfect way to share your generous donation with a friend or loved one. Donate now, while supplies last. Info: 426-3609 1#

(See the full color card in our online newsletter or at our Holiday Store)