

Seeds Of Leadership (SOL)

Youth Garden Program Newsletter

TERRA NOVA GARDEN @ MORSE HIGH SCHOOL. SUMMER, 2007

Eight teenage interns helped cultivate and celebrate the first SOL Summer season in the Terra Nova Garden at Morse High School from July 10th–September 1st. With funding from the San Diego Women's Foundation, Morse High School's Terra Nova Academy was able to hire a Part-time Garden Teacher/Coordinator as well as pay the youth interns an educational stipend for their work in the garden.

The eight Interns hired for this Summer were Angelo Haines, Daniella Garcia, Antonio Layna, Edda Galinda, Josh Smith, Carmelita Tolentino, Steven Huerta, and Sarah Izazaga. Their ages ranged from 14 to 18 years old. Together they learned how to grow organic vegetables, herbs and flowers in the 4,000 square foot Terra Nova Garden, as well as develop leadership skills in teaching others about creating a more sustainable food system.

Each day began with a Morning Circle at 8am in the outdoor classroom consisting of strawbale seats beneath a shady crepe myrtle tree. We began with a group game or warm-up, and then introduced the week's theme- such as *responsibility, leadership, community, honesty, communication*, and so on. Each participant kept a notebook, and was encouraged to take down observations in the garden and notes from group and workshop discussions.

Garden zones were assigned to each youth, and rotated throughout the 8-week session. Youth were responsible for checking their zones after Morning Circle, including the Greenhouse, the Compost Area, the Worm Bin, Perennial beds, and various Vegetable and Herb Beds. They then returned to the Circle to report back what work needed to be done in the garden that day, and we assigned tasks accordingly.

The SOL Crew helped to plant various varieties of bush and pole beans, eggplants, heirloom tomatoes, peppers, radishes, chives, spring onions, lettuces, zucchinis, basil and many culinary herbs. They learned how to double-dig a bed and add organic soil amendments such as compost, rock dust and kelp emulsion.

They learned how to propagate seedlings in our brand new greenhouse. They learned the fine art of composting and vermi- (worm) composting as well as installing each bed with a t-tape irrigation system. They also learned how to check the garden for water needs, operate the irrigation system, and how to water by hand.

After working in the garden, SOL youth returned to the shady outdoor classroom to participate in one of many leadership skills workshops on various topics such as public speaking, sustainable agriculture, community building, financial literacy and food justice.

We were also lucky to have guest speakers come visit us in the garden. First we had Shannon Oliver from la Milpa Organica Farm come to speak to us about bee keeping. He even brought some honey and bee pollen for us all to taste. Then we had Tia Anzellotti from the San Diego Hunger Coalition come to talk about hunger issues in San Diego, and then engaged kids in writing letters to their senators about increasing access to food stamps for low-income San Diego families. We also had Jason Jarvinen from the International Rescue

Committee come give a talk on Financial Literacy, and all the SOL kids got their own Financial Literacy Notebook to bring home with them following the workshop.

Another exciting occasion was when Jim LeBlanc, a talented woodworker came to assist our group in the building of a three-bin composting system out of reused wood palettes. This is a great addition to the Terra Nova Garden- as compost is the heart of a sustainable, organic garden. On the same day, a volunteer from the Willow Glen Farm working group came to make a video about the kids building the compost bin, then interviewed them about why composting is so important. It was a very hot, but fulfilling August day for all.

The SOL Crew went on a couple of field trips this Summer, which they commented in their post-program surveys as some of their highlights of the Summer. The first was a collaboration with Crawford High School's garden program at a Community Dinner in City Heights. The two youth groups cooked up a meal for City Heights community members and then served a free meal to everyone in the park, complete with live music, a puppet performance, and a showing of the film, *Super Size Me*. The next day, the SOL Crew met up again with the Crawford High kids for a Youth Summit on Food Justice and Sustainable Urban Agriculture. The two groups played team-building games, made popcorn and fruit shishkabobs, watched films about food justice issues, and discussed how youth can be a part of the larger discussion around creating a more just and healthy food system in San Diego. It was a lot of fun and very informative for all who participated!

Another fun field trip was out to La Milpa Organica Farm in Escondido, where the kids learned how a small organic farm works, and how delicious locally grown produce can taste! They helped prepare for a farm potluck, enjoyed talking with Farmer Barry Logan and the other growers who live and work there, watched a great film about insects,

Microcosmos, slept out under two big, beautiful oak trees, then helped load up the van for farmer's market the next day. For many of the SOL kids, not only was this their first visit to a farm, but also to a Farmer's Market, where they helped to sell the produce and keep the tables well-stocked. The customers at the Hillcrest Farmer's Market were delighted to meet the SOL Crew and at the end of the day, all were tired but satisfied with the good work they had put in to get locally-grown food to people's tables.

The first 8-week Seeds Of Leadership session in the Terra Nova Garden at Morse High School was a resounding success, as teenagers were inspired to use their hearts, minds and bodies to cultivate food and a more hopeful future. The next SOL Crew will get the opportunity to sell produce from a farm-stand on campus, and give back to the community by teaching others what they have learned. The first SOL Crew laid down the foundation for a successful program through all of their hard work in getting vegetables planted, and a compost system built. As each youth participates in the program, we will see changes in perceptions around growing food locally and reclaiming urban landscapes for food self-sufficiency. Growing food everywhere can vitalize our communities.

Congratulations to the first graduates from the Seeds Of Leadership Program!

What is SOL?

**It's HARD WORK and honest satisfaction
Of growing tomatoes, greens, eggplants,
and many other vegetables and herbs**

**It's providing HEALTHY FOOD for people
who don't have access to fresh food
markets**

**It's high school YOUTH and volunteers
and FARMERS and food justice activists
and ELDERS**

**It's planting a GUAVA TREE with kids
from another high school and then
COOKING A MEAL together**

**It's an adventure in RESPECT for the
land, for oneself, and for others**

**It's GROWING FOOD in the city and
teaching others to do the same**

**It's touching base with our agricultural
roots and FINDING HOPE FOR THE
FUTURE.**

**What does it take, does anybody know?
It takes a little SOL for everyone to grow!**