



SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY

Cultivating Hope, Educating for Change

CULTIVATE LOVE



Love and compassion are the most powerful forces available to us all. Yes, the work of Seeds of Solidarity provides practical, innovative and community based responses to food, energy and shelter. And it becomes increasingly clear that the unifying threads in the tapestry of our work are about humanity connecting to each other, the land, and the cultivation of love.

As economic despair takes its toll on local families, our school gardens serve not only as places of nutrition education, but centering and solace as kids hold handfuls of earth and care for seeds sown. A new relationship with a halfway house for incarcerated youth, in need of and with much capacity for compassion, join us on the farm one day a week, and we are all moved. A wellness garden project with our local hospital engages friends new and old in the service of nourishing others while planting a garden for community health and nutrition. While the collective act of growing fresh food is the savory vehicle for our SOL Garden teen program, what keeps youth coming back week after week, year after year is the safe space created for them to be and be loved as they are. As SOL Garden youth leader Malcolm says: "Imagine a place where you can go to forget your life, whatever that may be ... you can exist in a place where nobody's going to judge you, where nobody's going to exclude you; a place with pristine nature ... just a beautiful experience to have."



As you read about our programs and practices within, you'll see that we embed 'essence words' on every page that underlay and reflect the spirit of each story. Knowing that you are reading about our work enriches it, and gives us strength to carry on. And may you in turn be inspired to celebrate and increase love and compassion in your own lives, and through the work you offer this world.



Seeds of Solidarity Education Center provides people of all ages with the inspiration and practical tools to use renewable energy and grow food in their communities.

NOURISHING SCHOOLS

This year, the White House planted a vegetable gardening with a D.C. school, recalling the victory garden cultivated by Eleanor Roosevelt years ago. Engaging kids in learning through gardens is not a new concept but experiencing a resurgence as our society grapples with surges in childhood obesity, hunger and food insecurity, and disconnect from nature in an age of excessive screen time. Through partnerships with eight local schools, Seeds of Solidarity commits to healthy kids and communities by engaging young bodies and minds in the joys of growing and preparing fresh food. What does nourishment through garden-based learning look like?



On a May day, students from Greenfield Middle School walk down the road equipped with shovels, seedlings, seeds and a hand painted plaque, culminating an 8-week “Grow Food Everywhere” program with a community service learning project: planning and building a garden at a shelter for homeless families.

“...Seeing the garden grow and knowing that you can grow your own food was very helpful for residents and staff. We would sometimes have the children go out and pick some fresh vegetables for their dinner.

At times some of the cherry tomatoes did not make it back into the house! ... I have a couple of families that when looking for an apartment, have been wanting some garden space.

**Fran Lemay, Director
Greenfield Family Inn**

A day in the life of our after school programs finds students calculating the price for vegetable seedlings they tended in their greenhouse, bought by family and friends and planted in home gardens throughout town. Later in the season, their peers arrange baskets of peppers and bouquets of sunflowers for their farmer’s market, while a fall session learns to cook harvest delights in preparation for a culminating ‘Fresh from the Farm’ Diner.

The impact that Seeds of Solidarity has had on the Orange Elementary School District's 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Out of School Time programs has been extraordinary ... The program has integrated academic learning—science education as it relates to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks as well as concepts such as interdependence of healthy food, ecologically and economically sustainable practices—with life long learning through their multidisciplinary approach to agricultural education.
**Kjersten Kuhlman,
Afterschool Program Director**



*...you can make really, really yummy things with fruits and vegetables even though I think they are disgusting.
Ben, 5th grader (Thanks for making us smile!)*



**We helped create a great new resource!
Fresh, Healthy and Safe Food: Best Practices for Using Produce from School Gardens.
Find it on our website.**



A WELLNESS GARDEN

At Athol Memorial Hospital on a spring Saturday, Seeds of Solidarity staff, members of the hospital employee wellness committee, and a great group of interested community members gathered to create a wellness garden to promote our respective and collective goals of fresh food for a healthier community. Planning among the hospital dietician, social services, facilities staff, dining manager and Seeds of Solidarity staff led to this day that started with visioning and meetings the preceding winter. Where would be the best location given the planned hospital building expansion project? What crops would the dining manager like to use and introduce his staff to? What potential spots would be best for the garden, providing access to staff, patients, sun and water?

With conversations held and local Clearview compost delivered, the group bonded readily as we wove mini-lessons on the cardboard method, raised beds, and approaches to seed sowing with...doing it! Those not filling the cedar beds with soil and seed prepared five-gallon bucket gardens for participants to take home and tend with their choice of heirloom tomato or succulent pepper seedling. By the end of the morning, three garden beds sporting kale, tomatoes, salad greens and basil seedlings were in place and ready to flourish. Which they did!



"The Wellness Garden has served as a visual reminder that each of us can easily take steps to improve our nutrition and raise quality food. The project inspired the employees and patients of Athol Hospital to have conversations about gardening techniques, ways to prepare the food and ideas for future projects."

Bonnie Frank Hume, Coordinator of Social Services
Athol Memorial Hospital

Under the watering, weeding and harvesting hands of the hospital employee wellness committee and weekly stewardship visits by our SOL Garden youth leader Michelle, the harvest was ample and the hospital dining staff reports plentiful pesto served. Celebrating the savory success, hospital outreach staff offered tastes of kale with citrus dressing to their booth visitors at the Garlic and Arts Festival, bringing this pilot partnership to a delicious culmination for the year, and cultivating a healthy path to what we hope will be more wellness garden partnerships with other area public health facilities in the years to come.



The Wellness Garden was made possible through the enthusiasm and support of Athol Hospital, Seeds of Solidarity and a grant from the Garlic and Arts Festival.



SOL GARDEN: Surviving and Thriving Together

For over a decade now, the SOL (Seeds of Leadership) Garden program at Seeds of Solidarity has inspired close to 200 young people to cultivate food and a hopeful future. The experiences of community that emerge at SOL Garden are powerful and lasting. We held our first Earth and Spirit retreat for youth this year, born out of the idea to create a village for a weekend where young people could step out of their day to day lives, and engage fully and deeply in positive activity together—gardening, preparing meals, hiking, dialogue, and personal contemplation.



It is a challenging time in the world to be coming of age; youth are well aware of environmental and human suffering, and economic challenges locally and globally. To survive and thrive in life young people must develop internal strength to get through hard times personally, as well as vision and practical skills to provide for basic needs such as food, energy and shelter. SOL Garden engages youth in cultivating food and knowledge, and it also becomes a powerful place for them to realize their inner potential and open their hearts and minds towards more loving and wise ways of living together on this planet.

WORDS FROM THE SOL:

You come here and it's like whatever is stressing you out vanishes because you know you have all these people here to support you and grow food with.

Vanessa

I learned how to physically do things that I didn't know how to do otherwise, like building a manual pulley because the electric pump broke, and learning how to build a greenhouse. I feel confident that I can actually do stuff on my own ...

Phil

... SOL Garden is unbelievable and tremendously important. It pretty much carved out the life I have right now ... There were people at SOL Garden who actually cared about what I had to say.

Shawn

I will, from now on, make my choices in light of their sustainability.

Grady

COOKING
REAL FOOD

GLOBAL
AGRICULTURAL
TRADITIONS

FAIR TRADE
AND JUSTICE

SUSTAINABILITY
AND
STEWARDSHIP

... are among the 'Enlightment Activities' – as SOL youth leader Phil calls them – that we explore each week before we don gloves and grab shovels to work the land together. Look for our revised SOL Garden curriculum on our website in 2010. May it inspire youth and their adult mentors to cultivate food and a hopeful future in many more communities.



YES IN MY BACKYARD

and front yard, urban lot, rooftop, schoolyard, brownfield, prison



The surge in consumer attention to fresh and local is a long time coming. At the same time it is increasingly difficult to grow crops due to erratic weather patterns and related disease and pest problems wrought by climate change. And, the pressure on farmers to grow food for the masses can be too much, particularly small scale organic farmers – a profession that while glorified by the local food frenzy, has not yet been able to balance work and economics with personal sustainability. During the farming season, many well meaning people start conversations with “you must be so busy” as if this is a good thing. We know this is part of the reason that young folks don’t follow

in their farming family footsteps, and too many enthusiastic farmers burn out young. They may have a business plan for the farm but not a sustainability plan to balance work with relationship or emotional and spiritual health.

With the growth in people wanting local food, we are coming to the point where it is not feasible to depend on farms and farmers to produce for all. How can more people participate not only as caring consumers, but engaged producers?

To build local food self-reliance, we need accessible, affordable and yes, fun practices that mimic nature, help decentralize food production and involve more people in cultivating the earth in order to ‘Grow Food Everywhere.’ We use cardboard on marginal land to foster worms, microbes and mycorrhizal fungi that decompose the cardboard and build a fertile soil ecosystem. In addition to an astonishing increase in nutrient-rich worm castings (poop), using cardboard as mulch helps balance moisture, keep weeds down, and create no-till carbon sinks that retain rather than release CO₂ into the atmosphere. Cardboard, a readily available waste product, is key to opening up and improving plots of land in order to grow food throughout our communities. This coming year, we will carry out research to delve more deeply into the impact of the no-till cardboard method on soil and plant health.

As we strive to participate in farming as a sacred act we are growing traditional and resilient crops such as Hopi flour corns, and experimenting with ancient wheat and grains for their beauty, nutrition, and towards year-round food self-reliance. This year they remained stoic while more sensitive vegetable crops succumbed to a season of very erratic weather. And, it is an honor to grow these crops in solidarity with small farmers around the world.



More than ever, we aspire to use our farm as a model and sanctuary to support more people in connecting with fresh food and the earth that it comes from, and to teach people to cultivate food in their lives and communities—food grown not just by farmers, but by us all.



RESILIENT TOGETHER



Visitors have asked if we ever considered living in community, (meaning a co-housing or intentional community). “We do” we reply, it’s called a neighborhood. We recognize that we landed in an unusually skilled and self-reliant neighborhood and community, but remain awed by the power of what can happen when neighbors share resources, stories and dreams. Together we created the North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival, then channeled the rhythm and energy of working together to do more year round, including a shared ‘Grow Community’ field of beans, grains, and crops for animal forage.

After 11 years and thousands of hours of volunteer effort, the festival is completely financially self-sustaining and now makes mini-grants to support local art and agriculture projects. This year, these included funding for a hospital wellness garden, a performance artist at our elementary schools, an on-site educational permaculture garden, and a marketing workshop for local artists.



The words

of some of the organizers, ranging in age from 10 to 88, speak to an event that has become more than a festival, but a celebration of living in community.

To me the festival is a celebration of reunion and the recognition of love and labor.

Levi (age 10)

A warm harmonic of the ripples this weekend creates, this festival is how our neighborhood became a community...

Rachel

community together diverse growing, learning, lasting We are the change.

Home
Ursa

The festival brings out the best of rural New England. It is of the people, by the people and for the people...

Hugh

INTER-DEPENDENCE



SPREADING SOLIDARITY

Reach Out

We provided over forty **Grow Food Everywhere** trainings and presentations this year! We shared strategies for community based responses to adolescent obesity with medical residents at a community health center, co-presented with a Brazilian peasant movement leader on agriculture and climate change at a national conference, and provided day-long trainings for public school teachers on food and sustainability. We love to nourish visions and share practical ideas with other communities, school districts, and organizations. Contact us about a training or workshop for your school, organization, or community!

"...We were thrilled with the enthusiasm your presentation sparked in the K-12 educators participating in the workshop. Many left ready to start integrating some of the material you presented into their lesson plans, and a few are ready to put down cardboard and start a school garden! Thanks again for helping us engage and enliven the sustainability education community in this region."

K. Christianson, Office of Campus and Community Sustainability
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Tour, Learn, Retreat

This year we added afternoon workshops to our Solidarity Saturday visiting days. The crowds flocked to our June 'No Till Gardening for Life' session, and our October open house celebrated neighborhood self-reliance, learning from neighbor Stefan's waste oil heated woodshop, then caravanning to the wood fired oven built by Doug that warms hearts as well as crusty breads.

Spread the Word

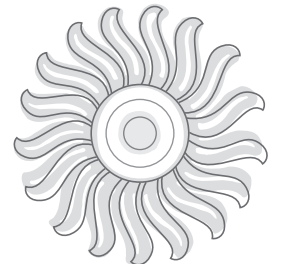
Current Seeds of Solidarity publications and tee shirts are available at:
www.cafepress.com/sowingseeds

LOOK FOR THESE ON OUR WEBSITE IN 2010:

A Seeds of Solidarity film created by videosforjustice.org

Our revised Food for the SOL curriculum for youth programs

A guide to No-till Gardening with the Cardboard Method



JOIN US IN 2010:

Solidarity Saturday Visiting Days:
June 12, Oct 23

5th Annual School Garden Workshop: August 12

North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival: Oct 2 and 3

Contact us for more info about:

Earth and Spirit Retreat for Adults: July 9-11

Earth and Spirit Retreat for Youth: August 20-22

First Annual Fundraising Dinner on the Farm!

Ben Barnhart photo



Seeds of Solidarity is honored to receive the 2009 CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture) Local Hero Award!





SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY EDUCATION CENTER

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FROM OUR TABLE: *Deeper than Green: A Change of Consciousness*

The words of musician Peter Tosh 'Everyone is crying out for peace, I don't want peace, I want equal rights and justice' are a call to go beneath the surface of solutions to reveal and heal the roots of oppression. As with social justice, ecological oppression cannot be shifted solely

by 'greening' existing environmental problems without deep change. Without an accompanying shift in consciousness and increase in reverence there is a danger of 'green' becoming overused or consumed by profit desires until it becomes murky and without meaning. Sadly, many innovative agriculture and energy ideas are initially marginalized by the mainstream, then co-opted and capitalized until they lose their soul.



At the onset of the U.S. environmental movement, Lynton K. Caldwell, a principal architect of the 1970 National Environmental Policy Act said "The environmental crisis is an outward manifestation of a crisis of mind and spirit...there could be no greater misconception of its meaning than to believe it to be concerned only with endangered wildlife, human made ugliness... pollution...these are part of it, but more importantly the crisis is concerned with the kind of creatures we are and what we must become in order to survive."

Our work at Seeds of Solidarity, ever inspired by our roots at the New Alchemy Institute, has walked a cutting edge of environmentalism, community building, and creativity. Our next phase ventures to unite the physical and spiritual more fully. We will continue to share practical skills for self-sufficiency, and as critically and equally, support others in not simply adding more layers in order 'to green' food, energy and shelter, but to also unlayer the beliefs and patterns that inhibit change. We offer new programs for such work at Seeds of Solidarity in 2010. Earth and Spirit Retreats will combine practical skills with contemplative experience to explore the deep green transformative work of how to live on the planet, with ourselves, each other, and with nature more harmoniously. We are excited for this next phase of our work and hope you will join us through support and participation.

Seeds of Solidarity Education Center Inc. is a non-profit 501(C)(3) organization. Our 2009/10 education programs are made possible through grants from the Green Leaf Foundation, Frances Fund, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, MA Cultural Council Youth Reach Program, Massachusetts 2020, Cardinal Brook Trust, Hannaford Bros, Green River Brew Fest, and Individual Contributions.

We value and need your support. Every contribution is meaningful. Please return the reply envelope with your gift, make a secure donation at www.seedsofsolidarity.org or call us to arrange automated monthly contributions.

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