



SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY

Cultivating Hope, Educating for Change

GROW RESILIENCY



Plantings of sacred Narragansett corn inscribe a labyrinth at the lower end of one of our fields, near where the moon rises. As the corn grew over the season, many walked the labyrinth. Local youth in our SOL Garden program circled tentatively first, then ran with laughter. Those that gathered for our Earth and Spirit retreat and couples workshops walked in solitude, integrating. Visiting groups of college students ventured in after a tour and work project under the sun.

One way of approaching a labyrinth is to contemplate a question while walking in, and see if a response greets mind and heart on the way out. Unlike a maze, there are no choices or blocked routes; the path is presented, so you can focus on whatever arises while placing one foot in front of the other. A favorite quote from the Dalai Lama is written on a sign nearby this space of contemplation and beauty: "The more you are motivated by love, the more fearless and free your actions will be."

As our annual newsletter is crafted, the Occupy Wall Street movement declares that we the people reclaim the soul of a system gone awry. At the essence of Seeds of Solidarity's vision and programs is the cultivation of resiliency, ways of being that make lives and land vibrant and strong.

Ricky pens a note to those that visit our farmstand: 'The revolution of today is self-determination, not dependence on a system drunk on oil and run by greed and fear. May we all be empowered to grow our own food and produce our own energy.' We must no longer relinquish our economic integrity or cultural and community knowledge to a system that oppresses. In strength and in joy we take back the power—righteous food, pure energy, physical and spiritual wellness for ourselves and for everyone, in each of our communities.



RESILIENCY
re-concentrates power closer to home. Resiliency grows as our spirits are engaged through practices that awaken, and as our hands remain close to the earth, and as we insist on freedom and justice for all.



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.



GROW FOOD EVERYWHERE

A vision of community food resiliency that we've cultivated for several years came to exciting fruition this year with the launch of our new Grow Food Everywhere for Health and Justice initiative. Our community suffers from hunger, childhood obesity and economic despair. In uplifting response and towards wellness for all, we created raised bed gardens that provide nutrition education and real food for anyone in need at our local community health center. A 'cardboard method' garden provides for a food pantry, and we begin plans for more gardens at a converted factory that houses a food co-op, artists, and social service agencies. And, the first six of twenty low-income families received raised beds that by season's end were bursting with salad greens, tomatoes, cukes and beans. Fresh food for all, one household at a time.

Each family's garden journey began with the arrival of community resources: locally milled lumber, a truck filled with rich soil from Clearview Compost, and a crew of enthusiastic Seeds of Solidarity staff and youth leaders from our SOL Garden program. After helping the recipient family create the garden then fill it with seedlings grown at SOL Garden, a youth leader visited the family through the summer to share their acquired gardening skills. At the end of the season, families and youth leaders united at Seeds of Solidarity for a celebratory meal and workshop on season extension, receiving a 'mini-greenhouse' of hoops and cover to extend their abundant crops and much-needed nourishment of their family well into the winter.



I know I have the skill set from SOL Garden to help my community grow food, and I plan to do so in the future.

Cassandra, Youth Leader



Patients were really thrilled to have the opportunity to pick their vegetables right after seeing a doctor or nutritionist. I'd often take them out to the gardens with a bag, and off they'd go. We have a lot of folks with great need and they were very happy to be able to get some extra food ... and I was happy at the prospect of our patients eating more vegetables and perhaps less poptarts. The simple addition of more fruits and vegetables to our diets can make a huge difference in overall health.

*Mary Sieruta MS,
Registered Dietician, Community
Health Center of Franklin County*



FOR HEALTH AND JUSTICE

Working with Seeds of Solidarity I've learned that practical alternatives exist. What a gift to see the compassion and joy and curiosity that inspire these mothers and children to plunge their hands into the soil! ... Grow Food Everywhere is sowing Inspiration where the lawns of Fear have grown too long.

Catherine, Intern-turned-staff

"I'm diabetic, my 14 year old son is pre-diabetic, and my 9 year old daughter is gluten free ... being able to provide a variety of fresh vegetables to both my children is not only a benefit financially but helps me meet my personal goal of opening the door to the wonderful world of fresh, clean foods to my children."

"I don't have the money to buy fresh foods...a great benefit of the garden is having fresh foods for my children that are not filled with chemicals from mass producers."



before



creating



abundance

"Now I would like more garden space! I'm excited to grow more winter plants like kale."



YOUTH WISDOM

To survive and thrive in life one must develop internal strength and resources to get through hard times personally, as well as vision and practical skills to provide for basic needs such as food, energy and shelter. Everyone needs a safe space to realize inner potential, share joys and fears with others, and open our hearts towards more loving and wise ways of living together on this planet.

These words are from the description of our Earth and Spirit retreat for youth, but the intention is core to all aspects of our SOL (Seeds of Leadership) Garden program, with 250 local young people having experienced and carried the teachings into their lives since it began in 1999. Over the years, the power of a safe and healing program setting has become so apparent that this year we made this goal explicit to the program, introducing a 'Healing and Thriving' theme. Summer SOL mornings we tended and harvested the gardens, then spent afternoons inspired by local artists and healers. For some youth it was the tai chi or yoga sessions that centered and grounded, others found internal resonance crafting instruments of found and natural materials. Workshops on naturopathic and herbal medicine provided simple self-care remedies and working with clay emerged the artists within. The grand finale—a majestic celebration art installation at the North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival bridged engineering, elements, elegance, and empowerment.



Yes, SOL youth grow and share abundant food and knowledge. They make more informed choices, like Angelica who says, "I used to eat chips and cheetos...but now I go towards a vegetable like cucumber instead." In addition, the SOL soul work for these young people—and us staff—might be the deepest gift of this program.



Our curriculum "Food for the SOL: Food, Justice, and Community Building for Youth" is now on our website! Download it for free.





Our Solidarity Saturday tours, workshops for couples, and Earth and Spirit Retreats unite skills for food and energy sustenance alongside techniques to weave reverence into our daily lives. How does one prioritize practices that nourish and celebrate when our society does not value personal moments to pause, and space to connect deeply with others?

When I entered this program I was a “wild kid,” I didn’t know how to be quiet or patient. This program has been a blessing to get to know myself.
—Nicole

You have no idea how good it feels to be around people that really accept you and who are really down to earth. I feel very calm and cared for when I’m here—I think everyone does.
—Sam

It’s helped me to find—no, unleash the person I am inside... SOL Garden has brought out the real me.
—Dave

Each week I find my inspiration in the lives, thoughts, and questions of the kids. Their energy fuels my own creativity in imagining the world as it should be and my place in creating it.
—Carrie, staff

TRY THIS CREATIVE PRACTICE offered during the equinox and solstice by celebration artist and board member Phyllis Labanowski that we adapted for our workshops and retreats:

CREATE A LAND MANDALA

THIS is a beautiful way to connect to a familiar or new place, honor a changing season, or open a workshop by *establishing sacred space*. It can be done by a small or large group, in a field, forest

- or city lot. Everyone takes a short, quiet walk to gather some natural or found **objects that speak** to them (you can also do a short meditation together first). At the **sound of a bell**, all return to the chosen, central spot. Something is **placed as center** (by the facilitator, or maybe the eldest or youngest) then **others place** their items in turn as moved, to co-create a mandala (a Sanskrit word that means circle). It is nice to **gather** and **form** the mandala in **silence**, then people may choose to share something about what they offered. Leave the **mandala** in place as a **gift to the land**.



RECLAIM FOOD AND COMMUNITY

Seeds of Solidarity farmer Ricky Baruc does not use a computer, but he writes a 'cool blog.' This year we expanded our farmstand, installing a solar electric system to power a fridge in order to better serve our community with fresh food while reducing personal energy and fuel required for deliveries. In the spirit of refrigerator door communication—that place of lists and poetry, kid's drawings, quotes and love notes, Ricky provided friends and customers with a hand-written journal of a farmer's thoughts.

EXCERPTS FROM THE 2011 COOLER BLOG:

JUNE 8 — The greens are medicine, growing in a balanced soil, never tilled. The model of small stores and farmstands throughout every community is the future. In order to bring economic sanity back we must purchase from our neighbors—then we will really know where our hard-earned money is going. Let us all work to keep money in our own communities so it can support all our life-affirming visions vs. all we see on the news.

Be well and may you walk in peace, Ricky

JUNE 28 — Localizing our economy and community! For years I went off farm to deliver produce. It was enjoyable at first but the last few years, no fun. May we all find ways to make 'our living' close to home.

P.S. the tomatoes and eggplants are really coming along

JULY 18 —

Back from speaking on Monhegan Island, Maine. In the late 1800's that small island grew 80 acres of food—today very little is grown but the movement is happening. If you are not already powering your home off a renewable energy source—solar, wind, hot water—get going, start planning. Islands are feeling the pressures of what is happening all across the planet—be prepared! No other creature would live so far away from their food source as we do.

Good luck and enjoy the process

TUESDAY AUG 29 —

We survived the hurricane of 2011. Many farms did not fare well. When I was looking for my first farm 25 years ago the place to look for was river-bottom land. Now river-bottom land gets 100-year floods, three years in a row! Things have changed and we must adapt. Farming up in the hills, cities, suburbs—making soil is the future. May all neighborhoods everywhere come together to create resilient and healthy communities.

In solidarity, Ricky





SEPTEMBER 18 — Life without petroleum is coming to a neighborhood near you. We must prepare, in a loving way, not from fear. This is a good thing as the so-called first world lifestyle is killing the rest of the planet. May this neighborhood be an example of food resiliency in the post petroleum era.

Enjoy the peppers

OCTOBER 11 — If we asked people, "would a garlic and arts festival work in Orange" 14 years ago, most folks would have said no. If we asked could we sell lots of produce out of a serve-serve stand out here, what would people say? The message is follow your hearts and dreams!

Thank you all, Ricky



NEIGHBORS

RECIPE
for a
Community
Food
Forum

FEEDS
the
PEOPLE

Adapt &
Season as
desired

Every winter we host a Food Forum at the Orange Innovation Center (a creatively renovated tapioca factory) for people who live or work in the nine towns in our region. It is a do-able and gratifying organizing project that draws from cultural and community knowledge, and builds skills and unity. Cook one up in your community.

TAKE ONE central and conducive gathering space

FILL WITH about 60 people who heard through local media, agencies and word of mouth.

ADD ONE friendly volunteer to welcome people who arrive, another to receive potluck lunches.

STIR IN an opening activity to relax and connect the group.

DIVIDE GROUP IN FOUR roughly equal portions (by their own choice) into break-out sessions led by community members prepared with a food, farming, energy, building, or organizing skill to share.

LET IDEAS RISE for about 1 hour.

MIX all back together for a potluck lunch.

SEASON lunch with a short film, DIY activity, or facilitated conversation

RE-DIVIDE MIXTURE for another round of (same or different) afternoon workshops.

BAKE UNTIL GOLDEN with a culminating activity that integrates, and inspires next steps.





SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY EDUCATION CENTER

Cultivating Hope, Educating for Change

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THANK YOU:

Guest Artists, Healers,
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Amy, Sam, Leslie, Mark

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FROM OUR TABLE: RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

Vietnamese Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh offers: "To practice Right Livelihood (samyag ajiva), you have to find a way to earn your living without transgressing your ideals of love and compassion. The way you support yourself can be an expression of your deepest self, or it can be a source of suffering for you and others."

This ancient Buddhist principle of Right Livelihood resonates with the global movement for economic localization, a call for re-creation of our communities as productive and caring centers. In our own quest for 'Right Livelihood meets Localization,' what we create on our site and teach in our programs is informed by the intention to reduce negative impact on the earth and human suffering, and emphasize practices that foster caring relationships and simple fulfillment of basic needs. Let's gather outside the oppressive box of fear and believe in, experiment with, remember ways of thinking and living that are creative, meaningful, and fair! At this time, we encounter many writings and individuals expressing a coming, necessary transformation in consciousness, a reclaiming of truth and collective ways of being. There are hopeful happenings on the grassroots horizon worldwide from which to gain inspiration and momentum. Within many cultural and spiritual prophecies, 2012 holds great meaning as a time of transition. The economic distress and unhappiness disrupting our communities and society strengthens the great need for ancient wisdom, shifts in consciousness, and functional, simple strategies at this time.



JOIN US IN 2012:

Feb 25: North Quabbin Food Forum

June 9: Solidarity Saturday Tour & Workshop

June 15-17: Grow Food Everywhere (Omega Institute, omega.org)

July 6-8: Earth and Spirit Retreat for Adults

Aug 16: Grow Food at Schools

Aug 18: Living your Green Dream: Workshop for Couples

Oct 20: Solidarity Saturday Tour & Market

Dec 1: Annual Zydeco Dance Party Benefit

14th Annual North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival (dates and info, garlicandarts.org)

Contact us for more info on our programs



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We value and need your support. Every contribution is meaningful.

Please return the reply envelope with your gift or make a secure donation at www.seedsofsolidarity.org.

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