



SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY

GROW FOOD EVERYWHERE!

AWAKEN THE POWER



A day searching for words to convey the stories of a year in the life of Seeds of Solidarity ends with dusk beckoning a walk on the farm. Out of nowhere flows into brain the classic Seuss quote, “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.” Pollyanna maybe, but deeply true.

Our vision and programs build on the foundation that caring and resiliency dwell within us all, though weathered to varying degrees by personal hardship and the social and environmental times. Poverty, war and homelessness are overwhelming for an individual or small few to counter; the beauty of growing food in our lives and communities is that it literally just takes a seed, and most anyone can do it. To germinate actual seeds and those of possibility, we provide materials, acquired knowledge, and a lot of faith in the power of the people. This belief informs our renewed mission statement:



Seeds of Solidarity awakens the power among youth, schools, and families to transform hunger to health and create resilient lives and communities.

Four year-old girls race to buckets of compost to fill their own daycare center garden. Patients at a health center harvest what they need from raised beds abundant with vegetables at the entry, a free prescription for self-nourishment. An agriculture class from a community college circles around the solar panels with energizing inquiry, then harvests heirloom flour corns and beans, crops

rich with culture and endurance on our farm and worldwide. SOL Garden youth leaders share life dreams at the first young men's retreat on the farm, coupled with building skills, sweaty hikes, and a pot of their own tomatoes cooked to sauce over the fire. An 'interdependence day' guerilla garden planting on the public edge of an abandoned eyesore of a lot in the center of our town brings thumbs up from passer-bys and a summer of sunflowers and tomatoes, with signs inviting anyone to 'harvest when ripe' and not one uprooted by vandalism.

All of these are done with and for our community and in solidarity with those around the world who, in the face of environmental devastation and social injustice, still claim the faith and fortitude to stay awake, care, and be the change.

GROW COMMUNITY



Our Grow Food Everywhere message is infused throughout our teaching, from school garden workshops to weekend retreats and seasonal public tours. We connect people-unifying events with real work, cultivating community and food at the same time. During National Volunteer Week, we paired springtime garden workshops with plantings at a converted factory, community health center, library, parenting agency, and middle school. One poignant event included planting a peach tree for peace after the tragic events of the Boston Marathon.

Healing and fresh food for all; reaching across diverse sectors of the community with beautiful, delicious gardens to make the right to real food true for all. Our current focus is gardens for family childcare settings; they often serve as a constant in the lives of families in



transition or without stable housing or jobs. A caring provider can reach many children and families at once, and weave garden learning, fresh produce and cooking activities into the children's day. Participating providers build gardening skills and share joys and challenges with each other, plus our youth leaders engage in service as they prepare the wood for new garden beds, then visit each site during the summer. We love provider Tracy's story about how young children in her care refused a bowl of salad until they realized it was from their own garden, where they prefer to graze on



the leafy greens, untouched by dressing. In 2014, we'll double the participating family childcare garden sites and carry out research with them in order to share widely the abundance and impact of Grow Food Everywhere gardens on low-income children and families, educators, and the greater community.



BODY AND SOUL/SOIL

Healthy soil and a healthy gut have a lot in common. At their best, both are rich with beneficial microbial life. Yet so much of the industrialized food produced and consumed is stripped of life, grown in soil that is treated as nothing more than a substrate for synthetic fertilizers rather than a sacred and living entity. With similar indiscriminate disregard, overuse of antibiotics and antibacterial soaps have wreaked havoc on the beneficial bacteria in the human body, where too, balanced flora is so vital to overall health.

The magnificent world of microbes has been assaulted from soil to gut, so much so that even western medicine has turned to implanting the feces of healthy individuals into those whose flora is all but eradicated. Not good. Bacteria beat us here, being among the first life forms on earth. There are 10 times as many bacteria as human cells in the body. Most are harmless or beneficial, and many live in the large intestine to comprise our gut microbiome. A living soil too, is rich in beneficial bacterial and mycorrhizal fungi, with each gram of soil containing millions of each.

How can we restore life in the soil and in our bodies?

Over the years at Seeds of Solidarity, we've sought to disrupt the soil life as little as possible through organic no-till farming techniques, and observe what happens when we use cardboard mulch to feed the worms, who in turn reproduce like crazy, aerate, and leave nutrient rich castings. Beneficial soil bacteria are nourished by the worm activity, making more nutrients available to plants and suppressing soil disease, along with the brilliant web of mycorrhizal fungi.

Akin in importance to promoting a living soil ecology, people can promote their good gut flora with cultured and fermented foods. The fabulous raw goat milk kefir and yogurt from our neighbor's growing goat dairy rocks our world. A cup of miso broth a day, or some fermented kraut or kimchi that you can make yourself as done by cultures throughout time is great food and medicine.

As we use hands to work the soil—on our farm, in our community—we grow food in solidarity with the 80% of the world's farmers who do not use machinery. Then, instead of a squirt of green antibacterial goo, hands washed leisurely in warm soapy water is a very nice meditation. For those of us in the world with the benefits of hot flowing water, this practice is a gift. We get to feel the sensual qualities of the lather wash away a good day's work with the earth, and then our hands are ready to prepare and eat a beautiful meal with others.



SOL REACHING EXPERIENCES

The 15th season of our flagship SOL (Seeds of Leadership) Garden program got off to a bountiful start. Seeds of tomatoes, peppers and a strong new circle of 25 SOL youth were all sown on our first program day in April. The season grew abundantly with guest presenters, weekly donations of SOL Garden fresh produce to the local food pantry, two earth and spirit retreats (one for just young men, with a young women's planned for next year), and lots of cooking and good eating, including our signature pesto summer lunches plus specials like raw kale salad and chocolate beet cake.



Community mentors, scientists, artists, and local food businesses enrich our learning as we cultivate food and a hopeful future:



From The SOL Garden Blues

I got the SOL Garden blues
and I'm cooking with Soul
Working together's
...gonna fill the bowl.

Together we work the fields,
of open hearts and minds

Together you and I, will bond
human kind

We'll build immunity, and start
a strong community!

Lou's Upcycles **taught** us to transform trash into cool, fused plastic shopping bags

Deb Chamberlain **inspired** self-care and wellness techniques

Carrie Petrik Huff **energized** thinking about food and climate change

Michael Skillicorn **shared** stories of fair trade activism

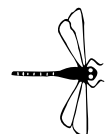
Dan Rosenberg **fomented** our knowledge of fermented foods

Amanda Brown **showed** us a new lens to understand insects

Phyllis Labanowski **guided** 'Gardens not Garbage' art.

And, SOL staff Jacqueline Strauss **elicited** amazing SOLful poetry, Nikki Sauber **agitated** ideas for citizen advocacy, Angelo helped us **improvise** with theater, and Ricky kept us **constructive**, building greenhouse doors and a porch roof for the SOL Shack meeting space.

Written by the SOL Garden youth with musician Katie Sachs and performed at the 2013 North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival! Listen to the whole tune at seedsofsolidarity.org/sol-garden/



LIVE ON

We initiated SOL Garden in 1998 knowing that teenagers in our region were in great need of positive activity given the economic despair and geographic isolation they face. Each year, we witness young people opening their hearts and minds, and contributing to society with fresh energy as they cultivate food and community. Years later, be they artists or activists; machinists or mothers, farmers or firefighters: the program impact on over 300 SOL alum gives us strength to carry on!



Vanessa, SOL 2006
(and current board member)

*“SOL Garden introduced me to a way of life that was so practical, by encouraging community and sustainability through things that are readily available to us. It helped me keep my perceptions open as a young adult and influenced my career pursuits. **I hope to one day have my own farm applying the same concepts I learned at SOL Garden.**”*

— Ethan, SOL 2008
(and long-time volunteer)



Sarah, SOL 2003
(with son Caleb)

“It has been 13 years since I started SOL Garden [in high school with Dave, now my husband!]. [Since], we have always made an effort to eat healthy and have our own gardens.

It has helped us to teach our three kids about growing tasty organic foods.

Without SOL garden, I’m not sure how we would have learned this and been able to pass it on”

— Kirby, SOL 2001
(and former board member)

“SOL Garden instilled a sense of responsibility in me that motivated me to become an educator.

[Founders] Deb and Ricky are living proof you can succeed in doing what you love especially when your passion is to live a more sustainable and beautiful life.”

— Kacie, SOL 2002
(and years later, intern)



Phil and Michelle,
SOL 2007
(and ‘just married’ 2013!)



Ray, SOL 1999
(originator: ‘Food for the SOL’ tagline)



We are thrilled to be among the innovative arts and science programs recognized and funded through the MA Cultural Council YouthReach program, that celebrates its 20th Anniversary in 2014. Learn more and read success stories at massculturalcouncil.org/programs/youthreach.asp



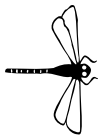
With many young people having made SOL a part of their lives, and us theirs over 15 years, there are many opportunities for joy as we witness their marriages, children, family, work, and lives evolve. And our hearts break over losses to the SOL community. We grieve the untimely loss of SOL alum Amber Simmington this year in a car accident.



PARTNERSHIPS TO CELEBRATE

This 15th year of our programs inspired us to refocus and fortify for the next phase of our work.

We held a dynamic gathering of board, community members, donors, partners, and participants at the start of the year to reflect on our mission and programs, and affirm and envision partnerships that enhance visibility and support. Warming winter events included participation in the first ever region-wide Valley Gives Day, followed by our 5th Annual North Quabbin Food Forum, then subsequent seasons of happenings and partnerships both orchestrated and magical. Springtime fun and fundraising was had at The Gill Tavern as beneficiaries of their trivia night. Our board, volunteers, and youth leaders gathered in full force for a Soup and Games Night benefit at Hope and Olive Restaurant, where raffle items included heirloom tomato seedlings and kits for our signature Grow Food Everywhere garden beds. In the summer swelter, we created and showcased a magical marble machine at the Green River Music Festival and then at our North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival, encouraging folks to 'make big change with small change' as their \$2 donation garnered a marble to drop and indicate support for our program of their choice, and a raffle chance to win a Samuel L. Scherer bowl crafted of trees from our road.



MAKE GARDENS $\frac{1}{2}$ GARBAGE.

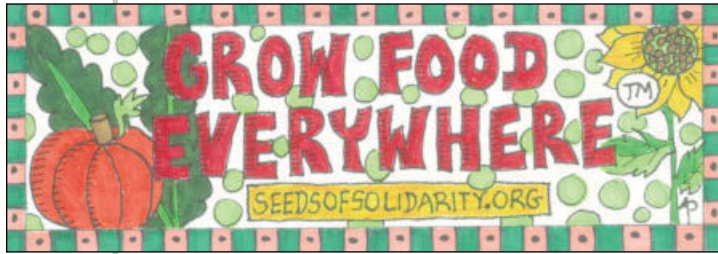


LOCAL

After each Garlic and Arts Festival, neighbor Bruce hauls a trailer of 100 big bags of materials from the weekend to Clearview Compost, where owner Rick skillfully layers the food scraps, paper, and chipped plant-based utensils. In a year's time they become fertile finished compost, essential to our ability to implement gardens throughout the community each year. At this year's festival, our SOL Garden youth worked with celebration artist and board member Phyllis Labanowski to create a 'Gardens not Garbage' installation to explain the process to festival-goers and invite them to creatively vote on sites for upcoming Grow Food Everywhere gardens.



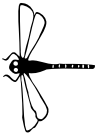
REGIONAL



Life Alive Urban Oasis and Organic Café now offers beautiful Grow Food Everywhere stickers to customers at their Eastern MA restaurants, with each donation directly supporting Seeds of Solidarity. It all started when Annie, a wonderful visitor to our Solidarity Saturday sent us a gift of a

'Grow Food Everywhere' design inspired by the tour. Enter Life Alive owner Heidi, who sees the image while chatting over lunch in our farmhouse, and offers to share it from her restaurant counters to spread the word. And, we are excited about plans to provide gardening workshops to Life Alive staff in the future, to complement their skills cooking and serving great food with learning to grow.

GLOBAL



We first met Kus Kura Indigenous NGO founders Jose Carlos Morales and Leila Garro on travels to Costa Rica in 2008. We carried them a gift of a solar panel for their Kan Tan Educational Finca on the ancestral lands of Jose Carlo's family in the community of Boruca,



Costa Rica. where indigenous youth gather from throughout Central America. Our connection grows, and their visit to Seeds of Solidarity this year enabled us to connect them with local friends and indigenous elders, plus germinate plans to co-create a group trip in winter, 2015 to study traditional indigenous agriculture and foods in their beautiful homeland.



Partnerships generate service vibrancy and generosity.





SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY EDUCATION CENTER

FROM OUR TABLE: *The Choices We Make*

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Farm and Spirit
Phyllis Labanowski
Art and Ceremony
Ann Marie Meltzer
Bookkeeper

THANK YOU:

Volunteers: Pat, Lisa,
Diane, Gail, Carrie,
Catherine, Jennica,
Mary, Kacie, Ethan,
Ya-Ping, Heather
The North Quabbin
Garlic and Arts Festival
Organizers & Volunteers
Tax Preparation:
Gerald Hersch
Newsletter designed by
Lynne Rudié
Graphic Design

They will never grow food on that land. Who is going to show up for a festival on a field in middle of nowhere? Do those solar panels really work? So we heard, directly or word of mouth when we started out. A lifestyle of 'outside the box' choices has not been easy, but we wouldn't have it any other way.

The North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival celebrated its 15th year in 2013. The initial idea was not paired with a business plan or corporate sponsors but with conversation and vision among neighbors. A needs assessment would never have predicted its phenomenal success. The volunteer organizing committee brings heart and hammers to planning and set up year-round. Community spirit pervades all aspects of the festival and is what attracts thousands along with the handcrafted art, farm and food wares, and vibrant entertainment and education; people feel the power of 'we can do it.' Years ago, dairy farmer George Hunt was delivering a load of manure to our farm. Looking up at our home-scale solar panels he asked, "do those things really work?" At this year's festival, the Hunts went on stage along with Pequigog Energy, whose idea for a local renewable energy business was sparked during a conversation at the festival. It was a moment to celebrate the Hunts' multi-acre solar farm newly established on non-tillable land, having refused a land sale to Walmart.

Everyone can consider their own sphere of influence, and how to best exercise choice in personal, community, national, or global domains. It all matters. Creativity and courage require daily practice, and doubt and discouragement will knock. But in these times, waiting for top down or internet-based solutions to make our lives and communities better doesn't feel promising or inspired. Big or small, we all have the power to take creative risks, to make choices towards more resilient lives and communities, supporting each other and with as much love as we can muster.



PLEASE SUPPORT & SUSTAIN SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY:

JOIN OUR ENEWS and blog at seedsofsolidarity.org and to get our calendar of events and monthly updates.

USE & SHARE our free resources and videos on our website.

BRING US to teach a workshop in your community.

Read our 5-star **REVIEWS** at Greatnonprofits.org.

Make a tax-deductible **CONTRIBUTION** to support our youth and community Grow Food Everywhere programs.

EXCITE FIVE MORE people to contribute; they trust you!



Seeds of Solidarity Education Center Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our 2013-14 education programs are made possible through grants from the Green Leaf Foundation, Waite-Bennett Fund of the GWCF, MA Cultural Council YouthReach Program, MA Service Alliance, Cardinal Brook Trust, Personal/Planetary Healing Fund of the CFWM, Frances Fund, Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of MA, Hannaford Supermarkets, and Contributions from Individuals like you!!

**We value and need your support. Every contribution is meaningful.
Please make a secure donation at www.seedsofsolidarity.org.**