



# SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY

*Cultivating Hope, Educating for Change*

## GROW FOOD EVERYWHERE

**G**rowing, buying, and enjoying food close to home connects our bodies and spirits to the source of our sustenance and those that cultivate the land. On family farms, urban community gardens, schools and suburban ex-lawns-growing food everywhere antidotes the industrialization of our food, "fossil food" that travels an average of 1,500 miles from farm to table. The vision of food growing everywhere recalls the Victory Garden effort during World War II when 20 million Americans grew 40% of the produce consumed in our nation. Let us reclaim a landscape of food self-sufficiency. Growing food everywhere vitalizes our communities.

At Seeds of Solidarity, solar greenhouses extend the growing season from March to December without the use of fossil fuels. Three greenhouses encompass a 100 by 100 foot plot of barren land turned into productive soil through intensive composting and no-till methods that invite worms to build and aerate soil. Each week for nine months, 40 varieties of salad and cooking greens are harvested for restaurants, markets and schools—equaling 64,000 servings of fresh, nutritious greens that travel 15 rather than 1,500 miles from farm to table.

Not everyone will have a farm, but anyone can build soil. Promotion of living soil is the foundation for abundance at Seeds of Solidarity, and in the gardens and greenhouses we have created with six local schools. Living soil is what we teach in our after-school program and what over 25 apprentices and interns have carried to other farms and community organizations. Visitors are struck by the "cardboard technique" we use and promote: lay cardboard on sod, cover with mulch, and you've invited worms and microbes to churn sod and cellulose into fertile land. Transforming marginal land is the future of agriculture; turning local resources into abundant soil gives birth to beautiful food and community vitality.



**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.**

# LINKING KIDS WITH LOCAL FOOD

The year is 1856. What would your family have in order to make a batch of homemade corn muffins from scratch? This is the question of the day as a kitchen full of eager children take turns grinding dried corn into cornmeal then mixing in local maple syrup, eggs, and butter.

Over 75% of kids ages 6-11 do not eat the minimum three servings of vegetables or two of fruit per day—and of those that do eat their veggies, 60% come from either potatoes or tomatoes. This summer children at a YMCA camp, area recreation program, and local housing complex—over 400 kids in all—cooked, tasted, and appreciated the diversity of fresh food available from local farms. With Seeds of Solidarity educators Annie Kleffner and Casey Beebe, they blended up strawberry smoothies and painted organic cotton canvas bags to fill with veggies from the farmer's market. Many tried (and liked!) unfamiliar foods like pesto pasta, and eggs scrambled with spinach and garlic. Other days they navigated nutrition labels or sampled culinary traditions of diverse cultures. Says Annie, when they identify the source of each product and help to measure and mix the ingredients, even the pickiest of eaters will try a warm corn muffin topped with home made honey butter.

Cooking up learning and taste for fresh, healthy foods continues in classrooms with our contribution of cooking carts to three elementary schools. With the last of the fall spinach planted and school gardens mulched for winter, young gardeners turned chefs made batches of acorn squash soup and butternut muffins, tasty reminders that local food provides year round learning in the garden and the classroom.



*Working in collaboration with Seeds of Solidarity, our campers are exposed to foods, cultures, and information that they might not ever have the chance to experience. The children learn the valuable life lesson that healthy foods are fun and easy to prepare, and can taste great too!*

Vanessa Delorey,  
Athol Area YMCA

## Seeds of Solidarity Garden & Greenhouse Partnerships

Athol Royalston Regional High School

Athol Royalston Regional Middle School

Swift River Elementary School, New Salem

Butterfield Elementary School, Orange

Dexter Park Elementary School, Orange

Fisher Hill Elementary School, Orange

*Last week we had a salad with lettuce from our greenhouse. It was amazing to know that we had grown that food.*

8th Grader



# CULTIVATING WELLNESS

In 2006, a new federal requirement mandated school districts across the nation to develop Wellness Policies that respond to the rise in childhood obesity, adopting goals for nutrition and fitness. Seeds of Solidarity partnered with Kelly Erwin, Farm to School expert, convening three gatherings that brought together over 80 superintendents, food service directors, health educators, parents, teachers, students, farmers, physicians, and community agencies representing six school districts to cultivate fresh school wellness policies. Hint for success: season dialogue with a local meal of farmers market spinach and butternut lasagna, deviled eggs, grass fed beef, field greens salad, and maple ice cream.

Our semester long “Reading, Writing and Wellness” course for area teachers and school nurses featured great guest speakers. Dr. Steven Martin from the Community Health Center spoke on the impact of obesity and food insecurity on learning. Rebecca Bialecki of the North Quabbin Community Coalition offered ideas for linking with food assistance programs and Chef Gail Beauregard transformed a school kitchen into a dumpling factory, leading a delicious class on multicultural recipes.

## Fresh Excerpts from Local School Wellness Policies

Schools will provide nutrition education that includes... taste testing, farm visits, and school gardens.

The district shall continue to promote farm to school connections and buy locally grown fruits and vegetables as a priority and whenever possible.

*The more children are involved in growing, harvesting and eating foods from their own gardens, or farms that they know from the local area, the more they will learn to love the taste and know the health benefits of fresh foods.*

Sherry Fiske, Food Service Director

Cafeterias will strive to model environmentally sound practices in order to educate students and staff about reducing waste, composting, and recycling.



Nourishing our community with beautiful food is core to our SOL Garden youth program. Fresh fruit crisp concluded the four course meal teens prepared for 50 at our annual youth and elders dinner. The SOL garden bounty was also transformed into 500 plates of pesto and harvest minestrone for the Garlic and Arts Fest.



# PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES

*Because of SOL Garden, I think about my health, what I eat, how I live my life. I think about the world and how I have a choice to be an active citizen. I think about small things I can do to make a difference and big ideas that could change the world.*

—Kacie  
SOL Garden Alum



*I take my students to Seeds of Solidarity because they represent a practical alternative to life filled with anger and despair and a world addicted to ever-expanding consumption that so many young people have come to understand as normal. Seeds of Solidarity offers them hope.*  
—John Gerber  
Professor

*Visiting Seeds of Solidarity helped me to come up with an idea for a Green Program in Afghanistan. We can use Seeds of Solidarity's example to work with our community.*  
—Afghan Literacy Educator



## Youth Leadership

SOL [Seeds of Leadership] Garden inspires local teens to use their hearts, minds, bodies to cultivate food and a hopeful future. After-school and during the summer 20 teens each year learn to grow food, work as a team, think outside the box. Free to local 14-19 year olds through contributions and grants. They give back to the community by teaching others what they learn, planting gardens in schools and providing fresh produce to families and low-income elders.

## Farm-to-School

Growing gardens and greenhouses with six local schools and cooking programs at summer camps to promote fresh food for families and school cafeterias. Students learn to prepare and eat food they grow and from local farms. Teachers learn to connect gardens to their curriculum. Cultivating wellness and healthy communities by linking schools, agencies and farms to bring fresh local food to children and their families.

## Community Building

North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival co-founders, begun in 1999. Organized by neighbors ages 7 to 87 to celebrate art, agriculture and community. Two days + 120 vendors + 140 volunteers + 11,000 people = 2 bags of trash, 25 bags of recyclables, 49 of compostables. Festival and education programs unite and bridge diverse communities. Contributions from supporters sustain our work.

## Outreach & In-reach

Solidarity Saturday visiting days and workshops, tours for colleges, schools, organizations, and youth groups. Off-site, inspirational presentations, workshops and keynotes at conferences. Visits to schools and events using the SOL Patrol energy van, equipped with solar panels and run on biodiesel, teaches about sustainable agriculture and renewable energy.

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



Seeds of Solidarity Education Center, 165 Chestnut Hill Road, Orange, MA 01364

# We need your help to spread Seeds of Solidarity.

**NEW! Make a  
secure contribution  
on-line at:  
[www.seedsofsolidarity.org](http://www.seedsofsolidarity.org)**

*We had a class that let us try out lots of different kinds of veggies and stuff. We could taste the difference right away...you wonder why anyone would want an old tired apple when they could have a fresh one.*  
—Fifth Grader



*I have never been so sure as a teacher that I was making a difference. Once you build a connection the possibilities are endless. This is the work I want to do.*  
—Casey, Intern



## Farm

Self-supporting farm provides locally grown, organic greens and tomatoes to restaurants, food co-ops, and schools, grown from March through December using solar greenhouses. 16 varieties of seed garlic are grown and sold to make the North Quabbin the garlic capital of the northeast. Solar electricity powers buildings and irrigation; biodiesel fuels delivery truck. Reclaiming and transforming marginal land into highly productive fields by hand and with local resources.

## Apprenticeships & Internship

Farm Apprenticeships from May to October train new farmers and community food activists. Education Center internships offer college students career development in environmental education and leadership through sustainable agriculture programs with youth. Mentoring, on the farm, in schools, for the community.

## Publications & Consulting

Cultivating Hope, Educating for Change through curricula resources and consulting. A teaching kit and guides for school gardens and youth leadership. Two CD-Roms for educators: What Fuels your Life? compares vegetable based with fossil fuels. School Food: Rude or Renewed depicts "Farm to School" options. Consulting: program and professional development for schools, organizations, farms; designing and teaching college courses. Newsletters and articles capture the Seeds of Solidarity vision and stories.

Seeds of Solidarity Farm is financially self-supporting from sales of produce. All funds from grants, foundations, and individuals directly support the education and outreach programs of Seeds of Solidarity Education Center Inc., a non-profit, 501c3 organization.



# INTERNS AND APPRENTICES

## A GLOSSARY:

**APPRENTICES** work on Seeds of Solidarity Farm from May til October, learning from farmer Ricky through immersion in all aspects of the farm—soil building, seed sowing, harvesting, marketing, greenhouse building and construction.

**INTERNS** work with Seeds of Solidarity Education Center and director Deb. They help run our SOL Garden program for teens, teach gardening and cooking classes in schools and summer programs, and learn non-profit management.

**I**n the past 8 years we've mentored over 25 apprentices and interns. We love the diverse ways their experience at Seeds of Solidarity becomes part of the tapestry of their (and our) lives.

Mark is a lead carpenter for an eco-building firm and Rebecca a teacher. Hannah is education director for the Federation of Massachusetts Farmers Markets. Rowen studies, saves and spreads seeds of her Mohawk heritage. Kacie completes her sustainable agriculture degree with a thesis on Farm to School programs in Vermont. Jen runs Woven Roots Farm with husband Pete. Meg is designing a student farm for a community college, and Caroline brings no-till farming to an urban community organization in Southern California. Apprentices and Interns bring much energy to Seeds of Solidarity—and we in turn are inspired as they spread seeds that spring forth food and hope in other communities.



*Growing food is only the beginning. The apprenticeship provides the opportunity to grow on a spiritual path, learning to live in harmony with not only nature but oneself.*

Caroline

*I base many of the education programs I develop and teach as education coordinator at Land's Sake Farm on my internship at Seeds of Solidarity; I use what I learned on a daily basis.*

Mary

*We gathered a huge range of new knowledge from how to grow plants and treat the earth, to how to be valuable members of a community. As important as the specific skills we learned, we gained new perspectives from which to view our own lives.*

Mark and Rebecca



# COMMUNITY

The 2006 Garlic and Arts Festival was the largest to date with over 11,000 filling the Forster Farm fields on our first gorgeous weekend in 8 years. Festival attendees purchase beautiful art and locally grown wares directly from those that create them, resulting in several hundred thousand dollars in economic support for regional artists, farmers, community organizations, and local businesses as a result of the festival. With everyone at the festival composting and recycling, the weekend event generated only 2 bags of trash with 49 of compostable materials and 25 recyclable! We are honored that nationally renowned singer-songwriter Dar Williams played to benefit Seeds of Solidarity's youth programs as part of her Echoes Initiative that helps community-oriented organizations gain financial support and media exposure.



## How to Throw a Trash Free Party for 10,000 (or 10)

- Dragonfly icon: Create fun, bold receptacles for compost and recyclables
- Dragonfly icon: Make entry signs declaring a trash free event
- Dragonfly icon: Enlist an enthusiastic volunteer to stand by receptacles and educate
- Dragonfly icon: Dine on cornstarch based utensils and paper or tree free plates (event vendors graciously comply)
- Dragonfly icon: Encourage healthy competition to collectively make no trash
- Dragonfly icon: Find an ally for support (like we do with Franklin County Solid Waste District)
- Dragonfly icon: Have a farm or other site ready to receive those bags of glorious compost
- Dragonfly icon: Cover compostables with soil, plant with squash in spring
- Dragonfly icon: Repeat the trash free party every year



You might not hold a festival, but why not get all your friends and family "trash free" kits for their next office party, picnic, or family reunion?

Find compostable utensils, cups, plates, bags:

In our region:  
[www.mansfieldpaper.com](http://www.mansfieldpaper.com)  
(413) 781-2000

A mail order source:  
[greenearthofficesupply.com](http://greenearthofficesupply.com)

Learn about cornstarch utensils: [www.nat-ur.com](http://www.nat-ur.com)



*The Garlic and Arts Festival is a neighborly, fun community event, and at the same time it embraces the most forward-looking, important aspects of sustainability. I'm happy to be part of a festival that strikes such a harmonious balance.*

Dar Williams





## SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY EDUCATION CENTER

*Cultivating Hope, Educating for Change*

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## FROM OUR TABLE

### *Living Lightly in a Heavy World*

**I**t is 10 years since we initiated Seeds of Solidarity. We've worked hard to create a productive self-sustaining farm, a non-profit organization, a home for family and friends, a festival with our neighbors. Knowing all these pieces, folks utter the well-meaning phrase "you must be busy." How should we respond? Do we affirm a societal notion that equates busy with success and conjures image of a frantic pace? Or pause and reply that the days are full but not busy, hoping our response will bolster our own quest for balance? How do we stay present when society says stay busy? We want our young apprentices, interns and visitors to witness a farm, workplace, and lifestyle where time for reflection and rest is valued so that they are inspired to carry on this work rather than run the other direction. We ask ourselves and others how to live sustainably in our ways of being and relationships as much as our outward actions. We look to the next decade of solidarity with precepts for living lightly in a heavy world.



**Grow Food *Everywhere***

**Energy...Use Less, Renew More**

**Create Community with Neighbors**

**Balance News Intake with *Positive Action***

**Prioritize Love, Play, Family and Friends**

**Livelihood *with Integrity***

**PACE OURSELVES.**

We don't have much time,  
we'd better ***move slowly***.

Seeds of Solidarity Education Center Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our 2006 education programs are made possible through grants from the Green Leaf Foundation, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, USDA Community Food Projects, US Dept. of Health and Human Services Community Food Nutrition Program, and Individual Contributions.