



# SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY

## *Cultivating Hope, Educating for Change*

### CULTIVATE POSITIVE COMMUNITIES

This annual newsletter offers opportunity to reflect on and share our work, but more so, the web of solidarity that unfolds over a year of programs, visitors, events and relationships. We celebrate the fruitful and diverse community partnerships that result in eighth graders constructing cedar beds and cold frames sown with salad greens, our 7th school garden project, and YMCA campers composting and recycling 90% of their breakfast and lunch 'waste.' A commitment to relationship building brings students from UMASS, Antioch, Keene State and Mount Wachusett Colleges here to our living laboratory. Collaboration makes possible 30 bags of fresh produce for low-income elders, filled to the brim by local teens with the beans, tomatoes, and peppers that they grew. Community is also an al fresco meal with neighbors at the new wood-fired oven on the autumn eve of another wildly successful Garlic and Arts Festival.

There is history, diversity, challenges to navigate and great potential in every community. We are grateful for our partnerships; they are the golden threads in the tapestry of Seeds of Solidarity.



Seeds of Solidarity is honored to be the recipient of the 2007 New England Environmental Education Alliance Award that recognizes 'an outstanding environmental education program that is innovative and creative, implemented broadly, sustainable, has a strong evaluation component, and results in demonstrated action by participants.'



**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.**

# LEARNING THAT NOURISHES

Lunch for 50 is just about ready. Freshly ground cornbread is cooling and awaits homemade butter, a savory three bean chili chock full of vegetables simmers; maple vinaigrette is tossed into a mixed greens salad. New café in town? Upscale caterer? Wait, here come the servers, a group of eight year olds leading everyone in a round of The Garden Song before sitting down to enjoy the lunch they each had a hand in preparing as part of winter adventure week, a collaboration among the Orange Elementary Schools, YMCA and Seeds of Solidarity. The success of this program led the school district to enlist us again during the summer to provide a two-week camp at a local housing complex, free to residents and other children in the community. The Y offered morning swimming and initiative games, followed by afternoons of cooking, gardening, nature poetry and mask making with Seeds of Solidarity summer staff assisted by our SOL Garden youth mentors.

At another YMCA day camp, our 10-session 'Cooking with Local Food' program connects hundreds of kids with area farms as they learn to prepare fresh, healthy recipes. Not surprisingly, when kids grow or cook something themselves, they eat it! Solidarity staffer Annie plugged the blender into our solar powered van to make sunny smoothies with the campers. Renewable energy is not a requirement for this great breakfast drink, but do choose local berries and honey or maple syrup to connect kids to the sweet taste of the early summer harvest.

## Solar Powered Strawberry Smoothies

1 cup fresh strawberries  
1 cup yogurt  
1 cup juice (we like apple or peach)  
1 tablespoon honey or maple syrup

Blend together all ingredients until there are no chunks. Substitute blueberries or raspberries in season for local fruit smoothies through the whole summer.

Makes about 2 servings.



Eighth graders turned chefs and food mile analysts at Mahar Middle School compared local salad mix with a bagged California variety during Massachusetts Harvest for Students Week, and in preparation for installing their own garden beds and mini-greenhouse. Handcrafted cedar beds by The Farmstead were filled with Diemand's compost, sprinkled with a fall sowing of spinach, amaranth, red lettuce and hardy Asian greens, and landscaped with woodchips from Roughcut Lumber, establishing our seventh school garden and affirming great community partnerships.



**W**hile ground rules might be a fitting term for a youth gardening program, we prefer to start each season of SOL (Seeds of Leadership) Garden by brainstorming the values that will enable 20 local teenagers to carry out the mission of our flagship program, to use their hearts, minds and bodies to cultivate food and a hopeful future. As the season progresses the values lettered on scraps of paper—kindness, break bread together, work hard—come to life as these young people wind unwieldy wheelbarrows of compost down garden paths, lovingly transplant tomato seedlings for their own field and distribution to area school gardens, pick buckets of green beans and lemon cucumbers that fill bags for 30 low income senior citizens. After ten years, over 130 teen ‘graduates,’ and thousands of pounds of food grown and donated, we know that the SOL Garden crops that are most precious are the acts of kindness, communication, and caring for each other that flourish each year.

*“I cooked up the beet greens we grew with garlic and they were so awesome and I had so many that I ran up and down the street asking my neighbors if they wanted to taste them...and they LOVED them.”*

Michelle,  
age 16,  
SOL Garden



Seeds of Solidarity was chosen to create the classroom and professional development activities for *Fresh From the Farm: The Massachusetts Farm to School Cookbook*, by Amy Cotler.

Chock full of seasonal recipes for food service directors, download this great new resource at [www.massfarmtoschool.org](http://www.massfarmtoschool.org)



# LESS TRASH, MORE COMPOST

**H**ow did a summer camp successfully divert over one ton of their breakfast and lunch waste—3,600 meals—from the landfill to compost and recycling?

A partnership among Seeds of Solidarity, the Athol Area YMCA, Clear View Composting, and the Summer Food Service Program reduced trash and promoted composting and recycling at the Y's eight-week summer day camp. This exciting new initiative built on the success of the North Quabbin Garlic & Arts Festival, where biodegradable utensils and community education result in just two bags of trash for 10,000 people.

What are the key ingredients for a trash free cycle of success? Seeds of Solidarity provided funding for Food Service Director Sherry Fiske to replace polystyrene trays with paper, and plastic utensils with cornstarch. Following breakfast and lunch, counselors and campers lined up to sort their 'waste' into bins colorfully labeled to receive food scraps, paper and utensil compost, recycling, and last and least, garbage. An on-site demonstration compost bin engaged the campers as they charted temperature and layered their pile, while Clear View Composting transported the bulk of the material to their local compost facility, where what would have been landfill trash is transformed into fertile soil.

## COMPOST HAPPENS!

North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival wins 2007 statewide MassRecycle Institutional Award for leadership and contribution to recycling and waste reduction.

### WE DID IT TOGETHER!



*...When campers have something in their hand, they are very likely to ask where is the compost, where is the recycling... and that is exciting...*

— Counselor,  
YMCA Camp



# BEYOND THE GARDEN



**S**eeds of Solidarity partners with local schools to promote school gardens, greenhouses, and related classroom curricula that puts into practice our philosophy, *Grow Food Everywhere*. How do our school garden programs impact children's connection to food and local farms—and their lives? Our research project with third and fourth graders gathered data from pre and post program surveys and student journals to explore this question. Among the findings:

## SCHOOL GARDENS:

- Serve as a safe place for many students, who report they feel calm, safe, happy and relaxed in the garden
- Support student inquiry and connection to the natural world
- Provide fertile ground for reinforcing science concepts and cross-curricular integration
- Spread awareness of local food and farms; 68% of students shared what they learned with family or friends
- Are complimented by a school food culture that consistently includes fresh fruit and vegetables to support healthy food choices

## Journal Entry #3

Here is a list of some local farms we learned about. Design a meal for your family or friends that uses ingredients from all of the farms.

Johnson's Farm in Orange (Maple Syrup)



Red Apple Farm in Phillipston (Apples and Berries)



Chestnut Farms in Hardwick (Grass Fed Meat and Poultry)



Chase Hill Farm in Warwick (Cheeses and Milk)



Seeds of Solidarity Farm in Orange (Vegetables and Garlic)

Diemands Farm in Wendell (Eggs, Chicken and Turkey)

For breakfast I will make apple pancakes with syrup. I will make eggs and milk. For lunch I will have a salad with chicken. For my meal I will make apple pie and ham and cheese sandwich with milk. For brunch I will make a omelet + sandwich. I like making food.

## Journal Entry #5

In words and a drawing, describe your ideal garden. What would you grow? How would it be shaped? Where would it be located?



*"When I am in the garden I am very happy and calm.*

*I like the sound and feel of nature... I feel relaxed by the smell of the flowers. I have a lot of fun in gardens."*

— Third Grader

**DIG IN! — COMPOST AND GARDEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY.**  
Get our full research reports at [www.seedsofsolidarity.org](http://www.seedsofsolidarity.org)



# INSTITUTION TO INSPIRATION

**B**ecoming a living laboratory for colleges and universities was not primary to our initial mission, yet many professors and students are reaching beyond the walls of the institution, striving to bring theory to life. Increasingly, area colleges contact us for site visits, workshops, and presentations. Reflecting on this past year, the diversity of higher education visitors is remarkable and traverses disciplines.

Conservation Biology majors in a Principles of Sustainability course arrive on a cold February day, a field trip sandwiched between lectures on complex versus linear systems and the second law of thermodynamics. In late spring, a community college class studying renewable energy explores the wiring of our off-the-grid solar electric system, three-dimensional learning not found in a textbook. Late summer brings our professional development school garden workshop for teachers. Come fall, we sit in a circle with medical students discussing community gardens as a vehicle to address rising rates of childhood obesity. We close each and every visit with a 'go-around,' and are amazed and deeply touched by words shared after only a few hours spent here. Reflects Karen, a Keene State education student, "I walked away from that experience with more than knowledge; I walked away with a change of heart."



Many students [in my Sustainable Agriculture course] don't enter this class with much hope for the world or confidence that things can change for the better. You show them that it can, with a living example of a farm moving toward radical sustainability.

Without your work, my own would have much less meaning.  
— John Gerber, Professor, UMASS

I like that you took a piece of land that wasn't really in agriculture and made it into an example of the fact that you can grow food everywhere. That's really inspiring.

— Tucker Daniels, UMASS student

The folks at Seeds of Solidarity walk the talk...and show students how [our renewable energy] course content is being done successfully--right now, in their own back yard.

— Tom Montagno, Professor, Mt. Wachusett CC

As a result of this workshop, I will work on making changes at a bigger level—more recycling, composting, reduction of water use in the school.

I may make sustainability and growing a yearlong theme this year.

— Teachers, Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom

Our field trip to Seeds of Solidarity provided an amazing beginning for the study of science in the elementary school year. The students came away with a much deeper understanding of why we want to engage children in the exploration of caring for the earth.

— Judy Lister, Professor, Keene State

Seeds of Solidarity can create a workshop or presentation designed specifically for your class or conference. Give us a call!



# THINKING OUTSIDE THE <sup>energy, ego, cardboard</sup> BOX

The current globalized system of agriculture requires ten calories of fossil fuel energy to deliver one calorie of food energy. Conventional and organic industrial agriculture assume an unlimited supply of oil, consuming fossil fuels for fertilizers, transport, and packaging. Repeated tilling releases CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere, contributing to global warming and erratic weather patterns. A perfect storm is brewing and we as farmers must be prepared.



The time has come to recognize our limits.

*How do we reduce reliance on fossil fuels?*

*Build soil on marginal land in order to grow food everywhere?*

*Can we farm in balance with nature and ourselves?*

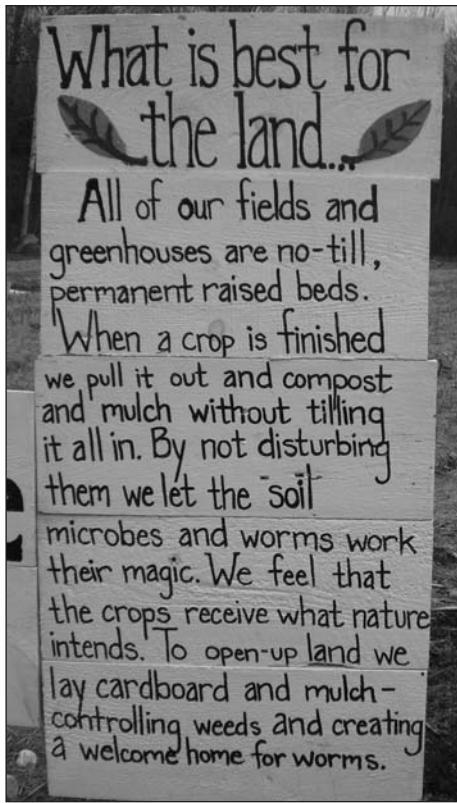
*Cultivate sustainability in our techniques as well as our mindset?*

These are questions we think about as we farm, and share with those that visit.

**Growing food** on a human scale. **Building living soil** on marginal land, on farms as well as lawns, lots, schools. **Breaking the cycle** of reliance on fossil fuels. **Content farmers** in healthy,

loving relationships with family, friends, and themselves. A financially viable and gratifying profession so young people want to become farmers. Each season, **the soil richer than when we began**.

There are others thinking outside the box: two of our favorite resources are *Small Farmers Journal* and *Acres USA*.



*The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops but the cultivation and perfection of human beings.*

— Masanobu Fukuoka,  
One Straw Revolution

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.

Seeds of Solidarity Education Center • 978-544-9023 • [www.seedsofsolidarity.org](http://www.seedsofsolidarity.org)





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## FROM OUR TABLE: *Food for the Soul*

**W**e gather around food. The eve of the garlic and arts festival, Doug lights a fire in the bread oven he crafted on site.

Someone slices a patty pan squash, another slathers olive oil on a chicken, sprinkles fresh thyme on flatbread before offering to coals in the earthen dome. Though there are directional road signs to put up, a few more chairs to place at the

new music stage, there is also time, savory time, to sip red wine from jelly glasses with neighbors. Breaking bread in community is deeply nourishing, transcontinental, cultural and spiritual.

Visitors sometimes ask us if we think about living in

community, meaning an intentional community. We do, we respond, it is called a neighborhood. We are blessed to live in a remarkable neighborhood. We do simple acts for each other like feed cats, resourceful things like sharing the fee for a portable band saw to mill boards for sheds or stairs. And we bring multilayered dreams to life, manifesting an arts and agriculture festival that attracts 10,000 people. Mostly, we have cultivated the knowledge that in good times and hard, we have created an infrastructure to support each other and share skills and resources. Of all of the pieces of sustainability that we explore at Seeds of Solidarity—growing food, using renewable energy—this is perhaps the most significant element and it is available in every community should we recognize and prioritize its pivotal role in the fabric of existence.

**Please join our circle of supporters. Secure donations can be made on-line at [www.seedsofsolidarity.org](http://www.seedsofsolidarity.org), or access a printable form. Call us about automated monthly contributions.**

**Please spread Seeds of Solidarity—every contribution is valued and meaningful.**



### Expanding the Circle

#### JOIN US IN 2008:

**Solidarity Saturday Tour:**  
June 14  
**Supporters Day:**  
July 19  
**School Garden Workshop:**  
August 14  
**10th Annual Garlic and Arts Festival:**  
Sept 20-21  
**Solidarity Saturday Tour:**  
Oct 4

Seeds of Solidarity Education Center Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our 2007 education programs are made possible through grants from the Green Leaf Foundation, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, MA Society for Promoting Agriculture, LMG Supporting Foundation, New England Grassroots Environment Fund, Crockett Fund, Belay Foundation, and Individual Contributions.