

## Reflections From One of Our Founders



*By Gerianne Holzman, President, CGW Board of Directors, and one of the first organizers of the effort to preserve and expand Troy Gardens.*

Food. All living creatures need it, from the tiny amoeba to the most complicated teenager. Over fifteen years ago, neighbors sat around a kitchen table to discuss saving a patch of community gardens. They wanted to keep the gardens for families to grow their own food. No one sitting around that kitchen table ever imagined how much food would be produced from their efforts.

With input from the Northside community, we formed a coalition to gather ideas. One of our first goals was to create a Kids' Garden. If kids could discover how vegetables are grown, their eating habits might improve. Community GroundWorks now serves over 1000 kids every year as they come to "their" garden to plant, harvest, prepare and eat fresh veggies.

Long before "Eat Local" and "Sustainable" became buzzwords, we built a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm at Troy Gardens. No one imagined the quantity of fresh veggies this five-acre farm would eventually produce. It has become a model of sustainability—and one cannot eat more locally than from one's own neighborhood.

The natural areas at Troy Gardens, stewarded by volunteers from Community GroundWorks, are home to deer, rabbits, fox, cranes, hawks and many other creatures. In addition to food to nourish the body, we recognize the need to nourish the soul. The peacefulness of the woodlands and prairie provide habitat for wildlife and inspiration for human life.



As a co-founder and current board president, I thank all the folks who help make this a model of a community coming together around food.

## What's Cooking at Community GroundWorks?

### A HEAPING HELPING OF COLLABORATION



**Many hands make light work cooking flat bread over the wood fired grill in our new Culinary Classroom at Troy Kids' Garden.**

We never thought we could do it alone, and we were right.

Now that our organization, and the project that gave birth to it, have reached ten years old, we are starting to hit our stride. And so are other organizations with similar missions, all of us working with one hand to increase the amount of local, healthful food that is accessible to city-dwellers regardless of our differences, while the other hand teaches people in our communities how to do it for themselves.

Rather than competing with each other, which would result in winners and losers, many of us have made the leap of faith that is collaboration. And in that paradigm shift there are only winners.

Inside this issue you'll see examples of how Community GroundWorks is collaborating with nonprofit organizations and local businesses, schools and community centers, individual donors and hard-working volunteers to fulfill our mission: to connect individuals to urban agricultural and natural lands within a diverse learning community.

Read, and allow yourself to feel hope. We are friends, collaborating our way to a better world.

## NOTES FROM OUR DIRECTOR



By Jill Jacklitz,  
Executive Director, CGW

I admit it—I am a foodie. Cooking is my favorite pastime. It's why I garden. It's how I show affection and it's how I most often choose to express myself creatively. I love seeing how combining different ingredients creates wonderful dishes, sometimes much better than the ingredients by themselves.

I'm also working hard to raise a couple more foodies. Watching my two children meticulously slice fresh-picked apples, grind nuts in the food processor and cook up their own homemade caramel sauce is my idea of the perfect afternoon, even when they don't make quite enough to share with me.

We foodies know that the whole of a good recipe is tastier than the sum of its ingredients. Just the other day I got to help a group of children from the Vera Court Community Center make a batch of pesto in our new culinary arts classroom. These 5- and 6-year-old chefs combined basil grown in our greenhouse with kale and garlic they helped grow in the Troy Kids' Garden.

It wasn't just the ingredients that made that recipe a success. It also required collaboration: a 10-year partnership with Vera Court Community Center, thousands of dollars from generous donors, hundreds of hours from a dedicated group of volunteers, a handful of enthusiastic interns and two highly skilled educators.

Group Health Cooperative of South Central Wisconsin (GHC-SCW) has cooked up an amazing collaboration in their Farm Fresh Produce Program. Joining with Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition and Second Harvest Food Bank, their Farm Fresh Program helps kids in need get access to nutritious, locally grown food.

And this year kids also got garden-based nutrition education from us. Thanks to support from GHC-SCW we worked with kids from the Goodman Community Center and Lussier Community Education Center. The kids learned to grow many of the vegetables they were eating through the Farm Fresh Produce Program. And they did lots of cooking activities too—making pesto, salsa, beet chocolate cake, pickles and wood-fired pizza right in the gardens.



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**Troy Gardens is  
located on the 500  
block of Troy Drive on  
Madison's Northside.**



## TROY FARM FEEDS PEOPLE IN THE WINTER, TOO

Troy Community Farm operates primarily as a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) organic farm. Members join the CSA in the spring, and pick up their share of produce once a week from our farm stand in front of Troy Gardens. Farm managers Claire Strader and Jake Hoeksema design the yearly farm plan to provide a reasonable amount of each vegetable for the CSA members, and more, as they sell vegetables to the general public at the stand as well. If and when all that extra harvest comes in, the farm sells vegetables in bulk for customers to preserve by canning, freezing and dry storage.

Bulk tomatoes are popular every year. “We offer both first quality fruits at our wholesale prices and seconds which are much cheaper and great for processing and preserving,” Claire says. “Most years we offer broccoli, green beans, tomatillos, and carrots. This year we also offered basil (for pesto), kale, and edamame. At the end of the season we also offer some crops for dry storage. Though the list changes a bit from year to year we usually have butternut squash, garlic, carrots, and beets. Some years we also have onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and leeks. Most everyone who buys these bulk crops is

already part of the CSA, but we do have some non-CSA folks get in touch with us also.”

Switching one’s home menu to good and local food involves learning some preservation skills, especially where winter locks up the soil for half the year or more. Claire includes brief notes on freezing vegetables along with the recipes in the weekly newsletter that accompanies each share. Claire and Megan Cain, manager of Madison FarmWorks, an offshoot business of Community GroundWorks, are teaching a new class this fall on preserving the harvest which covers freezing, dehydrating, and root cellaring. More and more people are embracing these old methods; and many of the customers looking for bulk vegetables in fall already know how to preserve them.

“People who buy the bulk vegetables want to be able to eat food from the farm into the winter,” Claire points out. “They buy the vegetables in the height of the season when they are at the best and also at their lowest price and preserve them for use when the farm is done for the year.”

### We Salute Our Supporters!

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## CULINARY ARTS OUTDOOR CLASSROOM



**Under the shelter of the culinary arts classroom, kids from Vera Ct. Community Center chop basil and kale to put on pizzas that they'll bake on a wood-fired grill.**

Garden, this new covered area provides shade and protection from the elements for kids and adults who work and learn at the gardens.

The structure is open on all sides, allowing for free movement in and out, as students choose what they want to learn through the various stations of the garden program. Stainless steel work tables stand at one edge of the structure, where gardeners can work out of the sun, cleaning and preparing the harvest they have grown and collected on stainless steel work tables. Equipment such as a bicycle-powered blender, solar oven, solar dehydrator and hand-cranked grain mill have been acquired, and will be kept safe from the weather under the roof of the classroom. With this protected area for equipment, we will be able to expand the types of activities we can offer for students to explore the natural environment.

The roof is constructed from green metal, matching the roof of our passive solar greenhouse, some 150



**This bike won't get you very far, but it will make great pesto in the blender on the back!**

One of our most eagerly wished-for improvements at Troy Gardens has finally been built: an outdoor culinary arts classroom!

Located at the northern edge of our Kids'

feet away. Young gardeners use the greenhouse throughout the growing season, and the design of the two structures is harmonious.

Funded in part by a generous matching grant from an

anonymous donor through the Madison Community Foundation (MCF) and a grant from American Girl Fund For Children, a component fund of MCF, the culinary arts classroom has already become an important shared resource for everyone who uses Troy Gardens. The same anonymous donor previously provided funding to allow us to install a potable water line and drinking fountain in the classroom, another important milestone for our project.

The structure was built by volunteers, led by foreman Michael Carlson with a crew of about a dozen. Renoco LLC volunteered their time to install the roof.

Jill Jacklitz, Executive Director of Community Groundworks, is enthusiastic about the special facility. "Cooking in the garden is one of the best ways for children to develop an appreciation for healthful food," she says. "Our new open air outdoor classroom at the Kids' Garden gives children space where they can experiment with the food they grow while learning about alternative energy through human- and solar- powered equipment like sun ovens and bicycle blenders."

Elizabeth Gering, one of our Kids' Garden co-ordinators, emphasizes the importance of having a pleasant, shady spot where kids can enjoy what they're doing. "They look down into the gardens and see all the plants," she says, "and they have a place to rest when they get hot. They love it." The classroom was constructed to take advantage of the angle of the sun, providing optimum morning shade, as that's when most of the kids' programming occurs.



**It takes strength and speed to turn the wheel of the hand-powered grain mill, and the reward is a tender pizza crust.**



**Chao Yang**

The Culinary Arts Outdoor Classroom's first event was our annual Savor the Summer celebration in August.

With support from Madison's Evjue Foundation, we presented a combination cooking demonstration/free feast on a quintessentially hot summer Saturday afternoon. Lao, Hmong and Cambodian community gardeners prepared several of their favorite dishes, using vegetables they picked from their plots that morning.

Hungry and curious, neighbors, gardeners and guests gathered around tables while the Asian gardeners described what the dishes were and how they prepare them. Even better, they taught us what the various dishes

mean in their cultures, like the delicious broth made from what most Western gardeners would consider weeds, which one would prepare to impress one's future in-laws; and they shared information all gardeners want to know: where they get the seeds and how they grow the ingredients in their gardens.

To complement the menu, volunteers from the Northside Farmers' Market prepared a buffet line of award-winning chili, sweet beet stew, pasta salad and ice cream, so that north and south, east and west were all part of this free community feast.

## TROY KIDS' RECIPE: FRESH GARDEN PIZZA



1. Start with tortillas, or grind wheat berries in the hand-crank grain mill to make flour, and make dough from that.

2. Make pesto on the bicycle blender. Ingredients: basil (from the garden or the greenhouse), garlic, kale, olive oil and parmesan cheese.

3. Cut up tomatoes, onion, broccoli, kale, and whatever else is ripe in the garden.

4. Spread the pesto on the pizza crusts (several small pizzas are easier than one huge one), top with cut-up veggies, add a bit of cheese, and place the pizzas on the grate of the wood-fired grill to bake until done.

5. Share with everyone!



## Dane County Timebank

**Timebank members—donate some of your Timebank Hours to us. We'll use them to pay volunteers for helping out on the land and in our office. It's easy to do online at [www.danecountytimebank.org](http://www.danecountytimebank.org).**

**Open the My Account page and choose the Deduct time box under the My Hours tab. Designate Community GroundWorks as the Service Provider.**

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Collecting prairie seeds (photo provided by Madison Audubon Society)

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## GOOD FOOD GARDEN PARTY

In our nation, where too many people have too little to eat, we and others who embrace what Growing Power's Will Allen calls the "good food revolution" envision urban farmers and gardeners putting food on the table from fields and plots like those at Troy Gardens. In our neighborhoods where, ironically, poor nutrition leads to childhood obesity, we envision healthy, resilient kids learning to grow, harvest and cook good food, in an outdoor classroom like the one we've built at Troy Gardens.

In our culture, people accept abuse of the earth's resources because they have no relationship with the natural world. We believe relationship is the basis for respect, and so we foster personal, beneficial relationships among people and the natural world—where everything that sustains life originates.

It's what we've been doing for ten years now, and so we threw a party to celebrate.

Chefs from eight distinctive Madison restaurants prepared twelve separate courses to feed 150 guests, who paid a premium price that will support our organization in the coming year. Local companies and nonprofits sweetened the deal by sponsoring the event. After an elegant, volunteer-staffed Good Food dinner at one long table on the land, a free Garden Party began, as the Madpolecats played their rollicking music from a hay-wagon stage under the full moon.

We chose 9/10/11 as the date for the Good Food Garden Party, not only because it was easy to remember. We were quite aware that our tenth anniversary was also the tenth anniversary of something very bad.

Ten years ago none of us knew what the "new normal" would be. In the weeks that followed the attacks of 9/11/01, an awareness of being part of a community began to fold us all together. We were one America, no matter our ancestry. Together we resolved to increase our self-reliance, and reduce our need to import food, energy and goods from distant places. From tragedy, loss and anger something else was born: a solid determination to support life, to take care of ourselves.

Community GroundWorks embodies that spirit to this day. If you are a member of this ten-year-old endeavor, thank you. You are who we are. We celebrate all we have accomplished together. And if you are a new friend, welcome. Thank you for being here.



**Amber Gray, CGW Natural Areas Coordinator, one of the volunteers serving supporters at the Good Food Garden Party.**

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**Just Coffee**

**Our great volunteers!**



## OASIS IN A FOOD DESERT: FARLEY CENTER'S "GREEN CART"

In any good kitchen, many hands make light work. Collaboration has been the engine of our work since we began with Troy Gardens over ten years ago. So we're very glad to collaborate with a new nonprofit, The Linda & Gene Farley Center for Peace, Justice and Sustainability ([farleycenter.org](http://farleycenter.org)).

The Farley Center has created a farm incubator on the land of Gene and Linda Farley, located in a stunning valley near Verona. Through the farm incubator, new farmers—most of them immigrants and people of color—are supplied with land, tools, education, and marketing support. Currently ten acres are cultivated by a group of families, including six farm businesses that sell produce.

As an offshoot of the farm incubator, the Farley Center has established Green Carts to sell fresh vegetables in "food deserts"—two low-income Madison neighborhoods where big groceries are absent and access to healthful food is almost nonexistent.

The man with the cart in the Allied Drive neighborhood is Charles Rayford. He's a single father who lives in the neighborhood, and he's no stranger to the business. "I've been growing all my life," Charles says. "I grew up in Arkansas!" As an adult he moved to Chicago, where he sold vegetables out of a pick-up truck that he drove into the vast housing projects. It was so easy, Charles says. "Those buildings had 20 floors with 80 apartments on each floor, and no groceries. All I had to do was pull up in front of one of them and holler. I sold out in a matter of minutes every time."

Six days a week Charles sets up his cart on a vacant lot at the corner of Allied Drive and Verona Road. Most of the produce he sells comes from the Spring Rose Growers Cooperative, another project of the Farley Center. Tropical fruits like oranges and bananas are donated by Madison Fresh Market, one of many local businesses that support the good food revolution. Charles is paid a living wage, and proceeds from the cart go back to the Farley Center to buy produce from Spring Rose Growers Cooperative for the cart.

Charles knows his customers, if not by name then on a deeper level. On a recent afternoon, Charles greets an elderly lady riding by in a power wheelchair. "Hello, Nana," he chirps. She eyes the basket of greens in front of the cart, three bunches about to wilt, but still with life in them. Shrewdly she looks at Charles. "Those greens are almost no good, can't sell them, can you?" she says. "You're right," Charles says. "You can have some, no charge. Next time you'll buy something." The lady says she'll take them all. Charles says no, "I got to share with others in the community." He gives her one bunch, and says "Come back next time when you get your check."

A young girl comes along next on her little bike with training wheels. "Look what I can do!" she says, as she executes a tight 180° turn. Charles praises her riding ability; he knows her. She rides along, watching him watch her, and then wipes out. Gets right back up and on the bike. As she rides past the cart, she says, "Can I have some grapes?" Charles gives her a small sprig of grapes. Off she rides, a fearless child who has a friend in the neighborhood who sells good food.

Others approach. Everything they ask for, Charles has. Charles accepts WIC cards and Farmers Market Checks, and soon the cart will have an Electronic Benefits Transfer machine, so that people can swipe their food stamp and debit cards.

"This is the opportunity of a lifetime for me," Charles remarks, "to start up my own business selling fruits and vegetables, especially in a minority neighborhood where I live." The Farley Center helped him get the proper licenses, insurance and instruction, and most importantly, brought him into all the relationships with growers he will need to succeed. "They feed me," he says of the Farley Center, "and I feed them," he says of his customers.

"Only improvement I want to make is to put my name on the cart one day!"



**Charles Rayford**



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**Our programs are made possible by donors like you.**

Contact Kate Sullivan (page 2) to learn more about these options for giving. Please visit our website at [www.communitygroundworks.org](http://www.communitygroundworks.org) to make your donation today.