



Serving the People Body & Soul

Community Services Unlimited Inc.

2008 Achievements & Vision for Growth and Development

Growing Healthy (GH)

Growing Healthy is a **culturally rooted, experiential, nutrition education program** that engages youth in urban farming and other food centered learning, as a way to build awareness about food access and environmental justice issues impacting their communities in order to develop critical thinking skills. As part of this process youth learn how to adopt a healthier lifestyle and are simultaneously engaged in hands on work that transforms the present food environment to facilitate eating more fresh local foods. The program operates at three sites: John Muir Middle School, Normandie Avenue Elementary School, and the Expo Center where we work with pre-school children, students of all ages, teens and seniors. Each program site includes an urban mini farm that is maintained and created with student/parent/teacher engagement. Curriculum includes cultural food history, growing, harvesting, tastings, food prep, food politics, water, land, petroleum, community research and resulting project implementation

2008 Achievements

A lot of data has been collected as part of a final project evaluation we are creating for the Network for a Healthy California and CSU's larger organizational evaluation. This data is currently being analyzed and will be included in a four-year retrospective report for the Network, which will be made available once it is ready. Briefly however, about 260 youth have been directly engaged in this weekly program in 2008. Each year the students have created an end of year project, the final projects for Normandie and John Muir for the 07/08 school year will be posted on our web site.

Links to CSU's Vision

- Demonstrates the superior taste of local food and opens young minds to foods they have never before thought of eating
- Instills an early love of fruits and vegetables
- Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables
- Teaches young people about the cultural aspects of food and agriculture – connects them to their own cultural histories and those of their peers
- Teaches young people how to grow food
- Engages young people in proactive community education and organizing projects aimed at making positive change in their community.
- Provides a training opportunity for From the Ground Up interns and apprentices who assist in program delivery
- Food grown at GH sites is distributed through the Village Marketplace

Vision for Growth

- To train existing professionals (teachers, etc) at each site to implement the curriculum and learning activities on their own in order to increase the impact and reach of the program. The train the trainer program (see below) would meet this need and has arisen as a direct response to requests from agencies we work with
- Maintain and deepen our direct engagement at current sites as a model and hands on ongoing engagement/learning tool for us to constantly improve/build the program and add new elements and layers, for example solar power and grey water projects

From the Ground Up (FGU)

From the Ground Up is a youth training and apprenticeship program for 14 to 23 yr olds (roughly, not limited by age) that trains youth in all aspects of CSU's work, from growing, to harvesting and retail, to office work and community research. In addition, youth receive computer and money management training, engage in dialogical exchange, group work and inter-personal problem solving. Interns complete special projects like the Young Faces of Los Angeles Photo Voice Research project (report available upon request) and the Tree of Life project where youth work with community residents to care for their fruit trees in exchange for harvesting fruit that is used in CSU's other programs. The program offers 6-8 week internships in the summer and winter. Those who successfully complete the internship can apply for longer 1-2 yr apprenticeships. CSU recruits staff from the pool of youth apprentices.

2008 Achievements

- Seven young people successfully completed an eight-week summer internship and another 7 completed the eight month Youth Empowerment Project
- Two interns continue working with CSU as apprentices, with a third getting ready to apply
- For the first time we had two youth of only 12 years old on the program, they were outstanding in their applications and exemplars to other interns
- Winter interns class completed a photo voice research project, published a report with their findings and hosted a reception to present their research and findings to the community
- Three interns were interviewed on the radio show "Some of Us are Brave" on KPFK talking about their project and CSU's work in general.

Links to CSU's Vision

- FGU youth help maintain urban farms, grow and harvest food, run produce stands, create value added products and assist with GH program in addition to carrying out research projects.
- Teaches skills in growing and preparing foods and exposes young people to new foods in order to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables.
- Youth learn basic problem solving skills and critical thinking, usually, for the first time
- Builds basic skills needed by individuals to function as assets to themselves, their family and their community
- Trains young people from the community to run CSU's programs so they can be hired as CSU staff in the future

Vision for Growth

- To expand the number of youth participating in the internship and apprenticeship programs annually
- Hire staff dedicated to the FGU program in order to accommodate high demand among youth.
- Deepen the financial literacy aspect of the program
- Create and implement specific components of the program that are gender oriented
- Work with other agencies, such as the Los Angeles Opportunities Industrialization Center and Coalition for Responsible Community Development, to place young people who go through CSU's intern program, but do not want to continue as apprentices or have interests in areas that we don't serve, in meaningful jobs
- Expand partnership with other groups such as Blazers after school program, who provide skill acquisition and mentoring in areas such as literacy improvement or interest in architecture
- Increase partnerships with these and other agencies to facilitate cross-fertilization of youth in the various programs to foster their exposure and growth
- Create an alumni association, so youth who have been through these programs can act as models and mentors for incoming youth. Also, to track what alumni do after leaving CSU

Village Marketplace (VM)

The Village Marketplace (VMP) is a food retail and distribution program through which CSU markets foods grown at CSU's mini-farms and from local farmers to the community. The program includes produce stands, a produce bag subscription program, processing of value added products (such as dried herbs, jams and pesto and packaged green salads and fruit cups), and catering that supplies healthy snacks and meals to local organizations and/or schools (mostly vegan, low sugar and sodium, and local, seasonal, produce oriented). The program integrates CSU's multiple local food system projects by involving youth who participate in CSU's Growing Healthy and the From the Ground Up apprenticeship programs. It provides an opportunity for youth to learn business and marketing skills and to be introduced to the idea of a local food based economy.

2008 Achievements

- Number of families participating in weekly produce bag subscription program increased from 20 to 40.
- Presence of weekly produce stand at the EXPO Center has begun to impact the outlook of EXPO staff on local, healthy food. A few are now bag recipients and some purchase snacks for youth in their after school programs from the stand
- Hired and trained a local home gardener to manage the EXPO mini farm and the produce bag subscription program
- Catered healthy valentine day fruit and chocolate snack along with educational materials to 6 local schools serving approximately 800 students
- Catered two events at a local non-profit library

Links to CSU's Vision

- Food used is grown at CSU urban farms supplemented by direct purchasing and donations from small regional farmers - directly links urban to rural and builds a market for family farms
- Increases access to and the affordability of local and organic produce in the community thereby increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables
- FGU and GH youth help run produce stands; learn business and marketing skills, create and use their own outreach materials
- FGU youth assist in food preparation for catering
- Builds confidence and seeds the idea of self-sufficiency and sustainable community economic development; keeps dollars in the community
- Income supports CSU programs
- Makes use of previously unused and underused community resources – such as commercial kitchen and vacant land at EXPO Center
- Catering demonstrates that healthy food can be just as satisfying as conventional fare

Vision for Growth

- Expand production at CSU urban farm sites; have begun this process by hiring a farm manager for EXPO
- Build a technical assistance program to support corner store conversion to healthy food markets
- Supply converted markets with produce from CSU's urban farm sites and local farmers, and CSU's value added products
- Build relationships with local government agencies, such as city council offices or local re-development funds to secure grants for corner store conversions
- Create a food handling and chef training program in partnership with another local non-profit and the EXPO Center and as an additional piece of FGU training
- Expand youth produce marketing using CSU Veggie Bus as a distribution vehicle

- Recruit staff through CSU training program to run for profit catering business that employs community residents and generates income for CSU

Veggie Bus

CSU has converted a full size school bus to run on vegetable oil. CSU's "Veggie Bus" is covered with a full size mural that was designed and created with community engagement that depicts CSU's work and partners. The inside of the bus has been converted to include storage for produce marketing and distribution. The bus serves as a demonstration vehicle for alternative fuels, provides transport for student/community field trips, and in the future will be used as a mobile produce stand and for distribution vehicle to support the Village Marketplace program.

2008 Achievements

- Completed bus mural
- Completed engine modifications and repairs
- Secured funding to finish all conversion work and to host a formal launch scheduled for April 2009

Links to CSU's Vision

- Seeds idea of need for alternative fuels and raises issues of over-reliance on petroleum
- Conversion process was used as a community training to build technical engine conversion skills among community residents
- Uses otherwise waste oil that would pollute water or land fills
- Encourages partnerships between restaurant owners and CSU and discourages illegal dumping of used oil
- Potential collection and distribution method for other vegetable powered vehicles
- Provides vehicle to support Village Marketplace program distribution and for a mobile produce stand

Vision for Growth

- Rent out Veggie bus and driver to other entities as income generation
- Use existence of bus to build the CSU bio-fuels collective that collects and distributes recycled oil and trains others in and provides engine conversions
- Develop a conversion-training manual based on notes and photos from bus conversion
- Organize more community-based trainings in engine conversions and alternative fuels
- Create a veggie fuel pick up point for converted vehicles as an income generation

Growing Healthy – Train the Trainer

The GH train-the-trainer replication program will train teachers, after school, summer and other youth program staff to be able to implement CSU's Growing Healthy program independently at their sites. The program will be offered through a series of trainings that will start with a session that will set the context for the program within the landscape of obesity prevention and nutrition education needs, priorities and laws at district, state and national level and the history and current state of the global food system. The program will offer hands on training on the implementation of CSU's GH curriculum and the development of garden based nutrition education intervention sites to implement CA grade

linked standards. It will provide a curriculum outline as well as specific lesson plans and most importantly leave participants with the ability to adapt and or create their own.

2008 Achievements

- This program is in its early development phase and was not implemented in 2008
- CSU has been asked by Los Angeles Conservation Corps to train 80 after school program staff
- CSU is planning to offer a training for teachers at CSU's current GH school sites in 2009

Links to CSU's Vision

- Expands the reach and impact of GH program through horizontal growth
- Transfers skills and knowledge to others in the community

Vision for Growth

- Document and publish the Growing Healthy curriculum
- Create a train the trainers manual
- Provide fee-for-service trainings to generate income for CSU while expanding program reach

Organizational Development & Strategic Planning

2008 was a notable year of growth for CSU. With unrestricted support from the Kellogg foundation, AEPOCH and other major donors CSU has been able to set up an office in the community, increase wages for our valuable staff, hire additional staff and invest in training, and organizational evaluation and planning in order to grow CSU in a strategic and sustainable way. Our focus all along the way has been to grow while maintaining the heart and soul of the organization, which is expressed by the dedication of volunteers who have built CSU to what it is today. We continue as ever to value the work and talents of volunteers and those who provide many types of critical in kind support.

2008 Accomplishments

- Initiated strategic planning process with board, staff and community (to be completed in 2009)
- Four staff participated in a two day learning exchange with The Food Project in Boston
- Four staff participated in a North America Feeding Ourselves Sustainably Community of Practice event hosted by the Berkana Institute in Boston
- Two staff participated in an international learning exchange in Zimbabwe through the Berkana Institute
- Initiated organizational evaluation process (to be completed in 2009)
- Opened CSU office with demonstration garden developed in partnership with Sat Naam
- Hosted 12 major volunteer work days in partnership with Rockcorps, City Year, LA Works and all our community partners
- Hosted community service hours for 6 local youth
- Hosted a UCLA intern
- Provided interviews and information to 5 graduate students to support their research in public health and planning; began to request and received reciprocal support

Vision for Growth

- Increase number of individuals serving on CSU board of directors and create specific guidelines for board membership
- Hire a staff person to run the FGU youth programs
- Take volunteer organization to the next level

Fundraising

CSU is continually working to increase the base of support for our programs by establishing and deepening relationships with new foundations and donors and creating new income streams.

2008 Accomplishments

- Hosted an informational brunch for potential donors to learn about CSU
- Submitted 13 funding proposals to foundations and major and corporate donors
- Held more than a dozen informational and exploratory meetings with potential funders and partners
- Began developing relationships with potential partners Los Angeles Opportunities Industrialization Center and Coalition for Responsible Community Development and exploring coordinating fundraising and organizing for joint programming
- Hosted four food parties that raised more than \$2000.00
- Increased income through VMP program through increased produce bag subscriptions, farm stand sales and catering contracts
- CSU Executive Director, Neelam Sharma, honored by Councilwoman Jan Perry's office as part of the City of Los Angeles' Earth Day 2008 celebrations
- Completed shooting for a 7 minute documentary to promote and seek support for CSU's work, in partnership with supporters and USC students needing service hours

Vision for Growth

- Increase individual donor income through annual appeal and increased outreach
- Increase frequency of food parties and other fundraising events
- Expand base of foundation and corporate donors
- Increase fee-for-service income through trainings and workshops for community residents and professionals
- Increase income from Village Marketplace program
- Explore engine conversion and alternative fuels as a possible income stream
- Complete editing of 7 minute CSU documentary
- Plan and shoot a longer documentary about the deep impact of CSU's work