

SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY

Cultivating Hope, Educating for Change

A DECADE OF CELEBRATION

We first walked the land that is now Seeds of Solidarity on a February morning in 1996. We hiked up and down Chestnut Hill Road, contemplated the sun's access to a potential building site, and followed an overgrown path to a clearing on land some said we could never farm, in a community we knew little about. We took the plunge.

We erected a greenhouse, layered cardboard and compost on fields, raised the first building.

A decade later, we celebrate an economically viable and vibrant family farm, a solar powered homestead that models energy efficiency, a non-profit organization that has engaged thousands of young people in growing food in schools and on our site, and a phenomenal festival organized by neighbors that attracts 12,000 people and ignites the artistic and agriculture power of our region.

A message from the Hopi Elders serves as inspiration and guide. An excerpt reads:



*...Create your Community. Be good to each other.
And do not look outside yourself for the leader.
This could be a good time
There is a river flowing now very fast.
It is so great and swift that there are those that will be afraid.
They will try to hold onto the shore.
They will feel like they are being torn apart and they will suffer greatly.
Know the river has its destination.
The elders say we must let go of the shore,
push off toward the middle of the river,
keep your eyes open, and our heads above the water.
See who is there with you and celebrate...*



We read these words aloud at our Solidarity Saturday visiting days, with UMASS students studying sustainable agriculture, and at a gathering here of 30 amazing youth from half as many countries. It recalls our decision to "let go of the shore" over a decade ago when we took hammer and shovel to ideas and embarked on the journey to create a place of learning, beauty, and solidarity.

Our country, our world is in great need of vision.

We are impassioned and ready for the next decade.
Jump in the river with us.



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.

CHANGE FARMING NOT CLIMATE

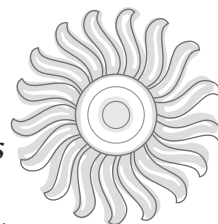
At this time in history, practices that radically reduce reliance on fossil fuels and agriculture's impact on climate change are critical. Seeds of Solidarity's family farm is radiant with no-till methods that sequester rather than release carbon, while generating bountiful soil life and abundant crops for market. Renewable, clean, solar electricity runs irrigation and home, biodiesel powers farm vehicles, and solar hoophouses extend the Northeast growing season from March through December while protecting crops from erratic weather extremes related to global warming.

Truly sustainable farms and equitable food distribution are essential to transform a fossil fuel devastated food system and the eroded health of humanity and the land.

Farming methods grounded in ecological thinking, community-scale economics, and reverence can and must replace industrial agriculture that dislocates peasant and small farmers around the world and wreaks havoc on the climate. As we compose this newsletter, hundreds of peasant farmers from over 60 countries unite in Mozambique for the Via Campesina gathering that happens every 4 years. We honor our sisters and brothers in their struggle for food sovereignty as we recall a sign that we made for our first market garden 25 years ago... "this garden is planted in solidarity with those around the world helping to feed the people."



*"You never
change things
by fighting
the existing reality.*



*To change something,
build a new model
that makes the
existing
model obsolete."*



— R.Buckminster Fuller



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, 165 Chestnut Hill Road, Orange, MA 01364

SOL GARDEN ROCKS ON



Young people who join SOL (Seeds of Leadership) Garden, our after school program for local teens, learn ecologically balanced practices for growing food and how to live with meaning in their communities and on the planet.

WE CELEBRATE

150 teens who have taken part in the program in its history;
Thousands of pounds of food grown for their families and donation to low-income elders;
Youth enthusiasm, perseverance and the SOL community they shape.

Each SOL season starts sowing peas in the cool April soil, nurturing tomatoes and peppers through the heat of summer, then rejoicing in accomplishment upon blending batch upon batch of our signature pesto to slather on hundreds of slices of bread with freshly sliced tomatoes at our Fall Garlic and Arts Festival "Food for the SOL" booth.

Friendships forged, minds awakened, hearts opened, voices of leadership emergent.



"SOL Garden means everything to me. It teaches me how to grow food, it is a way to connect with people and it's made me a much more conscious person. I take the important knowledge I've learned at SOL Garden and



share it with people in other aspects of my life. At SOL Garden we are community, and we take the things we learn back to strengthen our communities. Now, being on the Seeds of Solidarity board is a great learning experience and I'm involved with planning the future of the organization."

**Vanessa, Youth Leader
and Board Member**

Building skills complement gardening techniques learned. This year's group added a deck to the SOL Shack meeting space for reclining and cookie munching after sweaty afternoons picking beans. In the coming year, with hammers in hand we'll make an accessible ramp for the SOL greenhouse.

We've launched a new element of leadership and community engagement, SOL Garden stewards. Youth leaders cared for gardens at three schools and our town library during the summer months, co-hosted a daylong event for five inspiring youth agriculture organizations, plus pressed cider and organized composting at other area farm-based festivals.



SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS SPAN SEASONS

Our gardening and local foods cooking programs with seven schools, a summer camp and our town library flourish, and our after-school initiatives now extend to three school districts.



SPRING:

Sowing and growing, tastes of local farms, raising [toppings for] a pizza garden



OUR FAVORITE SCHOOL GARDEN SUPPLIES:

Cowpots:

a Connecticut family dairy farm recycles manure into peat & plastic free seed starting containers.
www.cowpots.com

Hand seed sower:
cheap, and great for small seeds and hands
—and it's one of farmer Ricky's favorite tools.
www.johnnyseeds.com

Pea greens!

They grow fast, spring and fall. Snip and add to salads.

Cedar garden beds kits
from our friends at
The Farmstead:
www.gardenraisedbeds.com



SUMMER:

Very berry solar smoothies at the YMCA camp, school yard harvest and farmers market.



FALL:



Planting 2008 seeds for Massachusetts Harvest for Students Week in September (we exceeded our goal, planting 5,072 at seven schools for great late fall salads!) Students in three after-school programs learn to prepare harvest dishes: hand-ground cornbread, homemade applesauce and squash soup, then culminate the 8-week series inviting parents to sample their recipes at a 'farmers diner.'



COOK WITH KIDS!

BUTTERNUT APPLE SOUP

Peel and cube a **large butternut squash**. Steam or boil cubes until very tender, reserve water for later. Dice **1 medium onion**, **2 cloves of garlic**, and **2 apples**. Sauté in **2 T. butter or olive oil**. **Curry powder** can be added to taste if desired. Blend $\frac{1}{2}$ of the cooked squash with $\frac{1}{2}$ of the onion apple mixture and some of the reserved water. Repeat with remaining ingredients. Place puréed mixture in soup pot and season to taste with **salt and pepper**. Thin to desired consistency with water or vegetable **stock**, **milk** or **coconut milk** and heat to serve.

GROW FOOD EVERYWHERE

We support and are energized by the promise of growing more food in all our communities- urban, rural, suburban- at schools, on lots, lawns, roof-tops; decentralizing food production by inspiring more people to garden and farm in schools and communities. While our efforts remain rooted in our region, increasingly, we work with other school districts and community organizations to help them to forge partnerships to Grow Food Everywhere.

Seeds of Solidarity led a summer institute on Martha's Vineyard. The feedback from our teachers was so positive. Everyone felt very listened to, supported, and encouraged and each of the 20 participants has gone on to develop innovative, wonderful lesson plans that they are implementing this year.
Noli Taylor, Island Grown

The training in North Adams really helped teachers and community organizations to understand how our program could look. Until that time, we were still in the planning phase, and the idea of a school garden was still fairly abstract. Your presentation made it all more "real"!

Jennifer Munoz, REACH for Community Health

People who view our new garden [at the McKay lab school on campus] are amazed that we established it without plowing under the old grass. Without the Seeds of Solidarity workshop, we never would have imagined we could get started with just cardboard, straw and compost (and a little muscle power). We meant to start small but we were so inspired we put in an 18x 40-foot garden AND two raised beds AND two compost bins made from old pallets. We provided hundreds of dollars of produce (tomatoes, squash, zucchini, basil, cucumbers, beans, flowers, and pumpkins) to low-income kids and their teachers.

Dr. Chris Picone, Fitchburg State College

DIG IN! — Compost and garden in your community. Get our full research reports at www.seedsofsolidarity.org

Bring Grow Food Everywhere™ trainings to your school district or community organization. Contact: Deb@seedsofsolidarity.org



BUILD COMMUNITY

Beet juice ink inscribes translucent circles of acorn squash with the word strength, carrots with hope, sweet potatoes with gratitude. At our annual fundraising brunch, guests choose—and then eat—slices of inspirational vegetable paper made by board member and artist Phyllis Labanowski.

We expand our circle of supporters while celebrating what we do and envision.

We enjoy many circles, including Solidarity Saturday visiting days, plus a special one for those who sustain our work. We receive wonderful visitors: a local factory worker inspired by the festival, looking for more resources; a health care advocate from Dharamsala, gathering ideas to start an educational farm in India. Colleges come for workshops to enliven their studies: a social justice course from Keene State, ecologists from Antioch, plant and soil science students from Mount Wachusett Community College and UMASS.

We expand outward. We 'sowed seeds of solidarity' at a number of conferences this year, including a keynote panel at the New England Farm to School gathering and as a plenary speaker at the Community Food Security Coalition Conference. Seeds of Solidarity founders journeyed to Costa Rica, establishing a relationship with Kus Kura, an amazing organization that protects and cultivates sacred land of the Boruca people and serves as meeting place for indigenous youth leaders from throughout Central and South America. Kus Kara founders Jose Carlos and Leila Morales received our gift of a solar electric system to help brighten their remote farm and education center, already so luminous with their wisdom and vision.



A piece on Seeds of Solidarity was published in 'Dear Paulo, Letters from Those who Dare to Teach,' a recent book by Dr. Sonia Nieto (Paradigm Press, 2008). We are honored that Sonia is sharing royalties between Seeds of Solidarity and Teaching for Change, a wonderful source of multicultural books and teaching materials (so go buy a copy!)

*Thanks to super cyber efforts by board member Dan Radin, Seeds of Solidarity tee shirts, buttons, and publications can now be purchased at:
www.cafepress.com/sowingseeds*

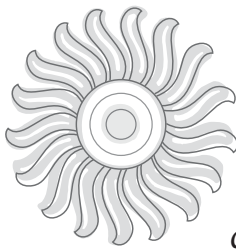
*Yes we can!
¡Si se puede!*



GROW COMMUNITY

As winter made its way toward spring, a dozen neighbors gathered on Sunday afternoons. Cups of tea in hand, we shared ideas for increasing our collective food and energy self-sufficiency. Rachel brought goat cheese, Doug his desire to bake more bread in the recently built wood fired oven, Stefan research on solar hot water, Lydia and Jim, seed for Hopi and Abenaki corn. As the year closes, the roof is on Bruce and Rachel's new goat barn, the solar panels are up at Stefan and Nicole's, the first blue corn breads and tortillas have been shared around, and we are stronger together.

On the fall equinox, the North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival celebrated its tenth year (12,000 people and 3 bags of trash!). The manifestation and evolution of this event is testimony to the power of neighbors working together with care and vision. It has brought vitality and renewal to our community that, though ripe with history and beauty, has struggled with economic despair for decades since the region's prime agricultural land was flooded in the late 1930's to create a reservoir for Boston's water supply, followed by loss of the mill economy to the forces of globalization in more recent years. The festival is a dynamic model of grassroots community revitalization, strengthening local economy and culture, and a celebratory gathering place for families from all walks of life.



"Too much negative emotions; more festivals, more picnics. Festivals are the answer to peace around the world."

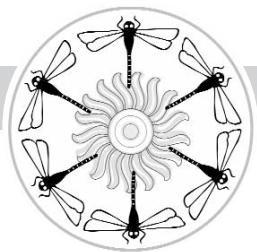
—The Dalai Lama



"The Festival that Stinks"
has a great web site!

Get the whole bulb at:
www.garlicandarts.org





SEEDS OF SOLIDARITY EDUCATION CENTER

Cultivating Hope, Educating for Change

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FROM OUR TABLE: *Co-Founders offer Food for Thought*

DEB:

"To survive and thrive, our children must have skills to grow and prepare food. Over 100 years ago, educator John Dewey proclaimed the importance of school gardens. When young people work the earth with their hands, a core instinct is awakened. There is exhilaration and pride in tasting something they have nurtured; a calming of soul from moments focused sowing seeds. Change must happen in our communities—schoolyards abundant with gardens—and it must happen through a shift in the larger food system that prioritizes fresh food in our nation's cafeterias. As an educator, I believe all children having access to pure and fresh food, and the power to know how to grow food, is a basic human right."



RICKY:

"Food is not a commodity. Food is our life force, our connection to the earth. At this juncture in humanity where we must re-envision our food system it is the time to bring the original wisdom keepers of the land to the table. Before Columbus there was a truly sustainable food system here on Turtle Island. We need to bring spirit into the conversation. As a farmer, what I see missing in the articles and conversations surrounding food, is the spirit of the land, all that is not seen, the sacredness that connects food to the larger universe."

"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."

—Albert Einstein

Please Give.

We need and value your support.
Every contribution is meaningful.



Return the reply envelope
with your gift or
make a secure donation
at www.seedsofsolidarity.org.



JOIN US IN 2008:

Solidarity Saturday Tour:
June 13

Supporters Day:
July 18

School Garden Workshop:
August 13

...and more!

Seeds of Solidarity Education Center Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our 2008/09 education programs are made possible through grants from the Green Leaf Foundation, Frances Fund, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Cardinal Brook Trust, Mass Cultural Council Youth Reach Program, Massachusetts 2020, and Individual Contributions.

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