Youth Programs Update

SLUG Teens Take on New Challenges

“What I’ve learned at SLUG is how to be a grown up. They taught me how to get a job, how to act at one, and how to keep a job. I’ve learned how to garden and landscape at a high caliber. I know how to speak out loud at a speaker. But the main thing I have to say is I’ve learned how to live an adult life.”

— Richard Roth, YGI Intern

As we prepare to harvest the crops of our fourth summer season, it is exciting to see SLUG interns completing ambitious projects at the Farm and creating the foundations for positive and healthy futures. The St. Mary’s Urban Youth Farm has become a model for urban agriculture and youth employment. Now an institution in the neighborhood, the Farm is known both as a location for job training and opportunity and a source of fresh organic produce for the community.

The overwhelming response to our outreach this summer (110 teens interviewed for 70 jobs!) was a clear demonstration that, contrary to the image often presented in the media, urban youth are motivated to work and to contribute to their communities. When teens are presented with an interesting and rewarding alternative, where they can learn new skills and provide food for their community — they step up to the challenge.

A different kind of summer job

Working at the St. Mary’s Farm, teens are presented with a unique job experience — unlike their peers who may have worked over the summer babysitting, sorting mail or delivering newspapers, the SLUG teens built a pond, restored native habitats, grew vegetables and cared for fruit trees. The multitude of projects going on at the Farm create a rich learning and working environment. And because they do all the work themselves, the teens can step back at the end of the day, look at the hillsides, the recycled materials area, or the community garden, and take pride in a job well done.

This summer youth interns assigned to the Farm’s crop areas learned techniques to maximize food production under the guidance of Urban Agriculture Coordinator Kathi Colen. A former instructor at University of California at Santa Cruz’s Farm and Garden Apprenticeship program, Kathi introduced new plant species to the teens, from purple potatoes to companion plants which attract beneficial insects.

In addition to tending crops, this summer the SLUG crew broke ground on a bee deck, which will house several hives of bees provided by the San Francisco Beekeepers Association. Once the hives are up and humming, the teens will learn to care for the bees and harvest the honey, which will be processed and packaged for sale through Urban Herbs. The teens are also growing tarragon, jalapeños and garlic, all earmarked for Urban Herbs vinegar and salsa production.

In connection with SLUG ecological restoration projects in other parts of the Bayview (see Habitat Conservation Update), teens at the Farm are rejuvenating the Farm’s creek and pond, and propagating native plants to attract birds and butterflies. Meanwhile, one group is focusing on major landscaping improvements in the front of the Farm. This hardworking crew cleared out construction debris, reorganized the materials recycling area, and planted flowers in the entryway.

In completing these projects, SLUG interns reap the rewards of succeeding in a job where they learn concrete skills, work hard, make friends and contribute to the surrounding community. With the knowledge and confidence they gain at the Farm, they are prepared to take on many other challenges in their lives.

Visitors are always welcome to visit the Farm during open hours, which change seasonally (call to confirm). Come by to check out the impressive results of the SLUG teens’ hard work!

— Laurie Belton & Rachel Brathinsky

In July the teens installed an 8,723 square foot pond liner which will make it possible to keep the pond full year round. Species to be introduced include...
SLUG Update Fall 1998
building community through gardening and greening

At the Farm this summer I worked on the pond restoration. At first we had to pull all native plants out and put them in flower pots. After that we fine-tuned the pond by pulling out all the weeds. Then we put the liner on the floor of the pond and put the gravel in. I learned a great deal from SLUG. I finally accomplished something worth being proud of. The one thing I am proud of is that I'm helping a community better understand the balance of nature.

— Antoine Wagner, age 15

1998 Accomplishments
16,637 hours worked by 111 youth in 6 months of SLUG's Youth Internship programs.
20 youth participants in Log Cabin Aftercare Program.
42 Green Team workdays.

The 1998 Summer Crop grown by the Youth Interns at St. Mary's Farm (a partial list)
- 2 rows of corn
- 65 cucumbers
- 65 eggplants
- 48 jalapeno peppers
- 48 tomatoes
- 315 lettuce plants
- 2 rows of collards
- 65 zucchini
- 48 bell peppers
- 260 dry beans
- 260 green beans
- Over 1200 potatoes of several varieties, including:
  - Yellow Finn
  - Russian Banana
  - All Blue, Red Lasoda

Julio Pinell is 18 years old, and has been with SLUG since May. After graduating from Log Cabin, he participated in the Asian Neighborhood Design carpentry program and worked at SLUG at the same time. He is now an assistant in the Community Gardens and Maintenance Department.

Taking a Break, Supervisor Carlos Mims, Assistant Canton Mims and the Woodside Landscape Interns keep the grounds of the Youth Guidance Center in tip-top shape!
Habitat Conservation Update

Department is Born!

Saving our natural resources while creating jobs and learning opportunities for urban youth and adults. Restoring wildlife habitats, growing native plants, producing compost and teaching conservation.

I am delighted to report on our newest department - Habitat Conservation. Some of our projects are new and some have been long in the making, but they all focus on deepening and healing our connection to each other and to the natural world. Through creative urban restoration and conservation programs we link environmental and social justice needs, and strengthen the web of life we all depend upon for our survival. Please join in this effort by getting involved with some of our programs described below.

Bayview Hill Natural Areas Management Program

Making the world safe for native plants (and birds, bees and schoolchildren!) is all in a day's work for SLUG's restoration team on Bayview Hill. With the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department, Brett Harte School and the Native Plant Society we are protecting some of the City's most diverse and threatened native grasslands.

Youth Conservation Leadership Program

Attention ducks, geese and catfish: Housing soon available at the St. Mary's Farm pond and wetlands - space is limited! Thanks to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the hard work of garden-intern Youth Conservation Leaders and SLUG crew members at the Farm, hundreds of schoolchildren and thousands of birds, bees and butterflies will have a new place to live (and/or learn). Come on out to see!

Wetlands, Pier 98 and Bay Trail Projects

SLUG has begun an exciting journey towards restoring the southeast waterfront with dozens of community groups and government agencies. And there is still time to get involved in this vital work. We will be helping the Port of San Francisco with wetlands restoration and public access improvements at Pier 98. The Conservation Corps, San Francisco Beautiful, local agencies and several other groups are working on the Bay Trail Project, extending over six miles of the Bay Trail in the coming year.

Log Cabin Ranch Nursery

SLUG crews and residents of the Log Cabin ranch youth detention facility in La Honda have been propagating a storm at our native plant nursery. Look out for our Spring Plant Sale now in the planning stages. (For more on this program, see page 18)

SLUG Soils and the SF Landscape Brush Chipping and Composting Program

With generous grants from the Materiils for the Future Foundation and the San Francisco Recycling Program, SLUG Soils and Compost is building the base of its future success. We bought a tractor and fixed up our dump truck and are now building a pad at the Farm for making mountains of compost for sale at local outlets. And don't forget about our brush drop-off at the Farm on Saturdays, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. or our mobile chipping service for large landscapes. Questions? Give us a call!

Carl Grimm

1998 Accomplishments

10 new jobs created.
350 youth engaged in native grassland and wetland restoration and education.
70,000 square feet of native grassland on Bayview Hill cleared of French Broom.
5,000 square feet of coastal prairie planted and maintained at St. Mary's Farm.
17,500 native plants propagated at Log Cabin Native Plant Nursery.
42 tons of brush kept from landfill by Chipping and Composting Program.

After creating wetland habitats at the St. Mary's Farm, we had planned to re-introduce the San Francisco Fork-tailed Damselfly to its restored habitat. Before we had the chance, we were delighted to discover that the Damselitt (Ischnura gemina) re-introduced itself. This beautiful insect will help reduce mosquito, aphid, and leafhopper populations at the Farm.

Restoration team members strike a pose after a long day of pulling French Broom from native grasslands on Bayview Hill. From left to right: Franciska Fullbright, Juan Gonzales, Damar Simmons, Dyeshia Sampson, Ebony Phillips and George Keni.