



The Green Link: Jobs & Education

By Christopher Cook

SLUG recently launched a dynamic new program which realizes one of its long-standing goals — combining job training and education to make urban agriculture an avenue of economic and educational opportunity for **San Francisco Housing Development** residents.

This Education and Economic Development Program is a collaboration with **City College** and the **San Francisco Housing Authority (SFHA)** for 26 women and men ages 18-40. Over a five-month period, residents from **Alemany** and **Potrero Housing Developments**, along with SLUG Crew members, will attend specially-designed horticulture and landscaping courses at City College, develop an urban farm, and put their skills to work in paid jobs which will bring the benefits of landscaping, gardening, and beautification to the **Alemany, Potrero, and Sunnysdale** communities.

Designed to address residents' immediate and long-term needs for employment and education, the program is part of SLUG's ongoing commitment to make educational opportunities, as well as economic and ecological sustainability, a reality for Housing Development residents. "It's a big opportunity for many residents to get back on their feet," says SLUG Director Mohammed Nuru. "They want to learn. They want to be given the chance."

The program's Community Farming Project, an exciting new step for SLUG, introduces paid interns to agricultural techniques and ecological issues, while providing them with employment skills and opportunities. Twelve program members, six each from **Alemany** and **Potrero**, are developing a 3 acre farm in **St. Mary's Park** which will yield a wide variety of crops, including grains, corn, an entire salad vegetable mix, honey, and cut flowers. Interns will also develop business skills, and, through visits to Bay Area farms and nurseries, will be exposed to the farming and horticulture industries. Discussions and workshops



Trainees Prepare the St. Mary Site

on urban agriculture, community development, and ecological history are being incorporated into each day's activities.

This hands-on training parallels the interns' work at City College. In classes designed specifically for this study group and financed by the SFHA, participants learn about landscape maintenance, irrigation, pruning, and soil care, as well as business planning, market research, and contracts. The long-term vision of these projects is to give trainees the tools necessary to either start their own small scale business, or to obtain a landscaping job.

SLUG will spend an ample amount of time fine-tuning the program to ensure it truly helps these communities achieve ecological, social and economic sustainability. SLUG is very grateful for the help and support provided by the SFHA and City College staff, as well as Tiki Hadley, of the **Alemany RMC**, and Nosisi Mbuti and Karen Huggins of the **Potrero Housing Development**. SLUG is proud and grateful to work with so many courageous and dedicated people.

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