



400 Ramsell Block Club, and other community members. (The 400 Ramsell Block Club, founded to organize security walks, clean-ups, and picnics in the park, has been the driving force behind the park's renaissance). Since the present grade of the park's entrance is very steep, SLUG will construct a ramp to provide easier access. In response to community concerns for the sensitive native plant restoration efforts, SLUG pledges to pay special attention to this project during construction.

A founding member of the 400 Ramsell Block Club, Peter Vaernet, says, "One of the most important lessons we learned [working to save Brooks Park] is the importance of neighbors working together to achieve results. We must take responsibility for what happens on our block. Our neighborhood is a mirror of us."

### ST. MARY'S URBAN YOUTH FARM

The Farm continues to receive widespread recognition as a successful and innovative bio-intensive urban farm. This year, SLUG staff is maintaining the Farm's primary goal, to provide adjacent neighborhoods with fresh food and job training, while exploring opportunities to become a national educational center for organic gardening and food production, composting, recycling, and native plant restoration.

The Farm bustles with spring activities. On a typical day, teen interns display master gardening skills in the vegetable crop and orchard areas; engineers and conservationists provide pond-water retention system consultation and surveying services; SLUG crew members build a "compost education" amphitheater; a rabbit munches on some lettuce; school groups participate in a native habitat restoration exercise; and community gardeners drop-off pruning remains to be chipped into mulch. All of these activities (Editor's note: Almost all - who let the rabbit in here?) are made possible due to generous funding support from the Mayor's Office of Community Development, the Mayor's Office of Children, Youth, and Their Families; USDA's Natural Resource and Conservation Service Team, SF Recreation and Park Department, the Educational Foundation of America, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Soon a windmill will be erected at the Farm, to recirculate pond water and irrigate portions of the site. SLUG is very excited about this project, and we look forward to the day when the St. Mary's windmill will become not only a dramatic symbol of our unique Farm, but perhaps even join Coit Tower and the TransAmerica Building as a San Francisco landmark!

### SOMA GARDENS

This one year-old sunny garden appears to provide ideal growing conditions for plants and aesthetic inspiration! Inevitably, the eyes of SOMA's passers-by are drawn to the planter boxes overflowing with flowers and vegetables, "pink flamingoes" or other garden ornaments, and a mural which serves as a colorful backdrop.

SLUG and the S.F. Recreation and Park Department will soon add the finishing design touches to this colorful garden with an attractive metal fence and entry arch. The design was hammered out and approved by SLUG, the S.F. Arts Commission, S.F. Recreation and Park Department, and community gardeners. As the construction phase draws to a close, we wish the SOMA gardeners many productive and creative years in their patch.

Stay tuned for future SLUG greening projects — no matter where you live, chances are we're coming your way!

*(continued from page 4, column 1)*

*Kywanna Reed, a Sunnydale resident for the last year and a half, plans to use this experience as a chance to earn some money while gaining job skills to move out of the housing development. Other crew members — those who have lived here longer, perhaps their whole lives — have a different vision in mind: they're committed to staying and restoring Sunnydale to a thriving community.*

*Michael Jones, for instance, remembers his childhood neighborhood of the seventies as a safe and beautiful place to play outdoors. Now, with practical experience gained from on-the-job training, he's driven to return Sunnydale to its once-attractive state.*

*Anthony, who is so charismatic that it's no wonder he's well-known in the community, is emphatic about showing-by-example the younger residents what they can do with their home environment. "All it takes is a little initiative," he grins. He's also interested in furthering the project through expanding Sunnydale's recycling program.*

*The SLUG team's efforts are generating an overwhelmingly favorable response throughout Sunnydale and beyond. At times, collaborating with crew members from a similar success story in the Double Rock neighborhood has fostered inter-community relationships. When Sunnydale's crew needed some extra hands to help prepare the Community Center for planting, members of the SLUG Double Rock team offered their support. Since then the two crews have participated in fun SLUG outings. Acknowledging rival tendencies, Sunnydale's Shelia Hill remarks that "Our landscaping and gardening jobs give us a chance to work with people from different neighborhoods and different communities."*

*What next for SLUG's newest fleet of landscapers and gardeners? "Let's keep on going," Anthony says, empowered by a positive response from the residents. "Lots of folks are asking me, 'When are you coming up and doing my area?'" And LaShan Bennette adds, "We're making a definite improvement and we want to get others involved so there will be less loitering and more respect for the community. Come out and see what we're doing!"*



Laying sod at the Sunnydale Community Center ▲

# “In Their Own Words”

SLUG's youth programs provide opportunities for teenagers to earn a paycheck, contribute to their communities, learn skills, and spend their free time productively and safely. Teens also discover a group to belong to, adult mentors to look up to, and a whole support network to turn to when they need help or guidance. Society has downplayed the importance of these opportunities and this support, choosing instead to pour resources into punishing youth once they have taken a wrong turn. Teens working at SLUG are building healthy futures for themselves and the city.

We asked the teens to write about how they grow through their involvement with SLUG. Here are the teens' thoughts about leadership, personal support, and how their internships mean more than just a job:

## YOUTH GARDEN INTERNSHIP (ST. MARY'S URBAN YOUTH FARM)

“SLUG...helps me to stay off the streets, and away from drugs and the wrong crowd that likes to do the wrong things. At SLUG we help each other when we have trouble or can't understand something. SLUG helps the community out.”

— Jasmine Jones

“When I first started working with SLUG I was only 14 with nothing to do, so I was in it for the money, but after months went by I grew to understand what SLUG was really about. SLUG is about helping each other, caring, and understanding one another. So now it's been 3 years I've been working with SLUG and I am a crew leader. My job is to make sure that everything is falling

into place. In order for me to do that I need help from the people on my crew. That's where team work come is at, because without team work there's no good completed job....SLUG has helped me through good and bad times, and if I couldn't count on them then I couldn't really count on anyone. If I ever needed anything, all I would have to do is bring it to someone's attention and they will do their best to see to it that I have it.”

— Tonya Rochell



“SLUG is a good learning experience for me....If I am doing something incorrectly, my supervisor or peers help me to make things right because whatever I do I want to do my best at it. I like the work I do and they give me a lot of support at school to do better. Everything is always positive. I started last summer and my supervisor said that I have come a long way. I have matured a lot and I am taking great responsibility. I think SLUG has been a very good impact on my life.”

— Kyndra Williams

## WOODSIDE LANDSCAPING INTERNSHIP

“This job is designed to keep me physically fit. It also teaches me how to work with other people. I have learned skills that will make me a little better worker. I am learning to communicate with others and talk about my problems. I'm also learning how to think before doing things. This job is making me think about what life is all about.”

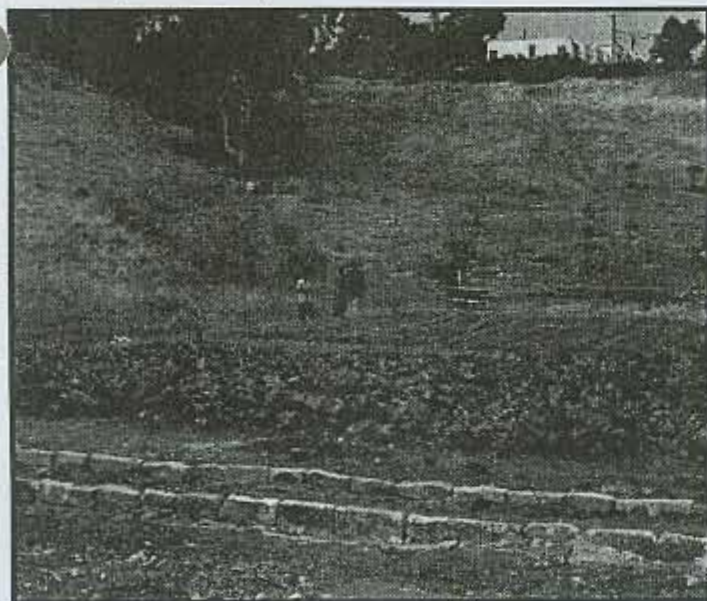
“...this job also teaches me a lesson in life. I like the way the job stresses schooling even though I personally hate school. I know without it I'll be another statistic for people to laugh at and that's not good....this job is a great program, the pay could be better but that's not important. I would recommend this job for anyone who isn't afraid to get their clothes and hands dirty.”

— Fred Ratliff

“I love my job because I love working with nice and understanding people and I'm also learning things about plants and trees. The people that I work with are cool. Sometimes when I've got things on my mind they make me forget them. They make me laugh, they joke around. I like the supervisors because they know what's going on with the schools, and if you don't understand something right away they try and teach you the best ways to do things.”

— Irma Sanchez

The St. Mary's Farm, from afar — San Francisco, or Central Valley?



(above right) YGI intern Alonzo Stephens mixes cement to pour the floor for the new Compost Education Center at the St. Mary's Youth Farm. The youth really enjoy working with the adult crew members and learning new skills from them.