

Youth Internships: Changing with the seasons

YOUTH PROGRAMS UPDATE

Each year, SLUG Youth Programs provide more than 100 San Francisco teenagers with the chance to take on the challenges of paid employment, education, career development and



Alonzo Simpson and Shawn Brown learned the value of hard work this summer at the St. Mary's Urban Youth Farm. Our photographer caught them during one of their breaks.

community service. Our youth tell us their favorite parts of the program are making friends with other teens, learning about gardening, helping the community, and earning their own spending money. And, as the city changes, these opportunities are even more important.

As low-income housing disappears and the cost of living rises, it is becoming increasingly difficult for families to survive in San Francisco. The success of our neighborhoods depends on the strength and empowerment of our young people. SLUG is helping youth meet their financial needs, while providing essential job training, social service referral, and educational support. We empower youth to improve their own lives and contribute positively to their communities.

We are responding at the grassroots level to the educational needs of youth as well. An overwhelming majority of the teens in our programs cite finishing high school and getting into college among their greatest concerns. In response, SLUG has increased the focus on academic support. This week I learned how to stake out the beds and plant pepper plants. The work is important to me because I get to feed the community and also learn more about plants and gardening.

—THAO PHAN, YOUTH INTERN

port this year, expanding our tutoring program and educational workshops.

My work is important to me because I feel like I'm doing something positive on my own, and it makes me feel like I'm an independent person. I'm earning money on my own, and I'm working hard for it.

—CARLINA WILLIAMS, YOUTH INTERN

WORKING IN THE GARDEN

SLUG continues to build upon the horticultural training which is the foundation of our youth programs. This season, YGI youth developed positive workplace behavior as they worked together gardening and landscaping at the St. Mary's Youth Farm and the Double Rock Community Garden. Whether harvesting and distributing potatoes in the late summer or planting cover crops for the winter season, our staff was consistently impressed with the cooperative effort and enthusiasm that the SLUG teens displayed in their projects. And as always, Alemany and Double Rock residents were pleased to receive the fresh fruit and vegetables cultivated by SLUG Youth Interns.

In the fall, 25 youth worked at the Farm after school and on Saturdays, planting strawberries, onions, and fava beans. The teens learned the basics of composting, seed saving, and beekeeping, spending lots of time and energy to ensure productive soil, a bountiful garden area, and buzzing bee hives. The youth interns also developed job

training and leadership skills while working on a variety of landscaping and restoration projects.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT AND EXPLORATION

This year we are strengthening the academic support and tutorial service component of SLUG's youth programs. When they returned to school in September, youth interns received after school homework assistance on a weekly basis. Interns were required to maintain a 2.0 GPA, and studied with staff during program hours to keep their grades up. In educational workshops, teens were challenged to examine issues ranging from food security to recycling to STD prevention, and reflected upon these topics through reading, writing, and discussion.

I feel wonderful because I am helping the community and the ecosystem by making it cleaner. I'm also showing people that kids are doing something good, and that stereotypes are wrong.

—WALTER PINELL, YOUTH INTERN

The Youth Department is anticipating continued success as we look towards the winter program, which will expand, as it does every winter, to include 20 new teens in the Woodside Landscape Internship based at the Youth Guidance Center.

—MOLLY SCHUBERTH



Youth intern Carlos Morales and Department of Children Youth and Families representative Tom Martin share a laugh on stage at the summer YGI graduation.

This summer the Youth Department bid farewell to Director Terrell Smith, who guided SLUG interns for 5 years. Terrell is moving on to start his own business, Cutting Edge Landscaping. Andre Alexander served as Interim Youth Director this summer. Noelle Stout is currently the Interim Youth Director. Molly Schubert is now the Youth Programs Coordinator.