

## Youth Update

Engaging youth and young adults in meaningful employment and education opportunities. SLUG provides mentorship, inspires leadership, delivers job training and placement, and promotes sustainable community development.

### SLUG's Youth Internships: A Parent's Perspective

Ruthell Dorham, mother of SLUG Youth Intern Gordon Dorham, wrote us following the 1997 Internship graduation. We share her moving words to convey "how SLUG has supported [her] family and what it brings to the community."

"For two summers, I have driven my son to [and] from work at the Alemany Farm. Each day I took note of the faces of the teenagers and young adults just arriving at work. Some looked a little sleepy, and others looked as if they didn't really want to be there; yet they were there. For many of these teens and young adults this was perhaps the first real opportunity they have ever been given to demonstrate their ability to work hard and to feel what it is like to have their work or achievements recognized and appreciated. As a result, some of these teenagers and young adults have already begun to feel a sense of hopelessness, considered dropping out of school, or decided that they could not succeed in college. The contrasting smiles that I saw on the faces and the laughing and talking that was going on...upon my return... demonstrates that working in SLUG's youth program represents the first step of a one thousand mile journey in the opposite direction. Why?

I believe the answer lies in the philosophy of high expectations, encouragement, and support that seems to represent SLUG. A noted author, Jawanza Kunjufu, says, "You can not educate a child that you do not love." Last summer, [Youth Department Director] Terrell Smith worked directly with my son Gordon. Gordon was barely fourteen when SLUG hired him. Being the youngest and coming from a different neighborhood than most of the teens, he had a desire to be accepted. Terrell's expectations that the children be prompt, committed, and demonstrate respect for others, created a work environment that fostered equality, support, acceptance and personal growth. Also there was not one day when Terrell failed to validate or encourage Gordon. The validation Gordon received that summer helped to reassure him that his hard work was appreciated and that his ability to work hard meant that he has the innate ability to succeed inside and outside the classroom.

SLUG is far more than an organization that provides summer jobs for youth and beautifies undeveloped land in the community, SLUG helps to develop and foster the qualities in youngsters that lead to future success. On behalf of my son, and all of those in the community who

have been helped by the work SLUG does, I would like to say thank you for bringing real change to the community.

Sincerely,  
Ruthell Dorham "



Youth garden intern Irma Sanchez prepares young plants for planting.



1994 — 1997  
DEPARTMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

371 TEENS EMPLOYED

46,613 HOURS OF YOUTH  
EMPLOYMENT

52 GRADUATES OF THE CITY  
COLLEGE "HORTICULTURE AND  
CAREER DEVELOPMENT"  
CURRICULUM

400 POUNDS OF COLLARD GREENS  
GROWN AND DISTRIBUTED FOR  
FREE BY SLUG INTERNS

25 PUBLIC EVENTS AND SPEAKING  
ENGAGEMENTS ATTENDED BY  
INTERNS

*In 1997, youth interns  
grew over 1,000 pounds  
of potatoes at the St.  
Mary's Youth Farm!  
Teens distributed the  
harvest door-to-door in  
the Alemany community  
in August.*

*"Teenagers without job  
training are grown ups  
without jobs"*

*Rashad Tyler,  
age 14, YGI intern*

# encourage

