

groundviews



REACHING SOLID GROUND

Healthy food for heart & soul

See story, pp. 2 & 3

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Brilliance... Kindness... & Persistence...

Yee ha! and thanks to country radio station KMPS which recently feted our Housing Department staff with lunch and a live band... A toast to Chris Gerke and Chris Martino of Nickerson Street Saloon who teamed up with Manny, Roger, Mat and Andy at Georgetown Brewery on a benefit for Solid Ground, as well as the good folks at Dad Watsons who held their third fundraiser for us... Our 2007 Community Fruit Tree Harvest volunteers harvested more than 10,880 pounds of fruit this Fall! Laurie and Shira Becker alone picked more than 300 pounds. Rich Kemp of Westlake Associates arranged to have 16 plum trees picked near the Seattle Business Center. Steve Tracy, Susan Ernsdorff, Michael Wolf, the entire Burpee family & Carey Thornton provided stellar service picking, mapping, storing and organizing the harvest... Two green thumbs up for Nancy Krivanka and her son Kailas Brooke Krivanka for their efforts at Marra Farm this year... We wish a fond farewell to Aiko Schaefer, who has served as Director of our Statewide Poverty Action Network for more than 10 years. A passionate and skilled organizer, Aiko has received awards and recognition statewide for her work to eliminate the root causes of poverty – and her work here has been truly brilliant!

PROGRAM NEWS

From the Ground Up

Apple Corps scores! \$17,500 in Community Services Block Grant Innovations funds from the state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) have been awarded to Solid Ground's Apple Corps, a pilot program bringing a nutrition, health and fitness curriculum to six elementary schools in Seattle. "These funds will help us reach more children faster," said Aviva Vickstrom, Apple Corps Program Manager. In its first year, the Apple Corps has placed AmeriCorps volunteers at Concord, Van Asselt, John Muir, Emerson and T.T. Minor elementary schools, as well as with Mission Delicious and the Cascade People's Center.

Hunger Fellows join Solid Ground. Emerson National Congressional Hunger Fellows Brad Johnson and Katherine Chen will work with us through February. Brad is developing and implementing a community food security assessment among seniors and people living with disabilities residing in Seattle Housing Authority buildings. Katherine is conducting a feasibility assessment in the Rainier Valley to set up a neighborhood growers' market and develop a neighborhood Food Action Council to generate attention about food access issues in this community.

REACHING SOLID GROUND

Healthy food for heart & soul

Since Marilu Garcia and her husband moved to the U.S. from Mexico City 10 years ago, she's struggled to adjust to the some of the cultural differences between how people shop, as well as what foods are available in Mexican *mercados* compared to American grocery stores. In Mexico, Marilu says, people shop and cook every day, and everything is fresh — the vegetables, fruit, fish and meat.

But here, she says, “All the people is working, working, working, working, working — and don't have time to cook. And it's usually, go to the store and buy food already made and they put it in the microwave and that's it. I don't like that one! I'm getting fat, you know?” she laughs.


Also, there are some mystifying choices in the States. “Here, I have different vegetables than in Mexico. When I go to the store I say, ‘Well, what I make with these things?’ ” Case in point: purple cabbage. “What is this?” she used to wonder. Since participating in Operation Frontline's *Comience por Comer Bien* (“Start by Eating Right”) cooking and nutrition class series for families with young children, Marilu now knows, “I put it in the salad, and it's great, it's good, and very healthy.”

With two young daughters, Amber (10) and Paola (3), healthy eating has become even more important to Marilu in recent years, but there was one difficulty: “I don't like so much cooking! And I needed new recipes for my daughters. I have a little problem with the youngest one. She don't like to eat so much. She like candies and cookies and all this stuff, but I don't like it she eat a lot of them.”

Marilu found some solutions in Solid Ground's six-week Operation Frontline class series held at the Northshore Family Center where Paola goes to preschool. Operation Frontline is a partnership between Solid Ground and Share Our Strength (SOS), a national anti-hunger organization. Using the volunteer skills of professional chefs and nutritionists, Operation Frontline offers a range of cooking and nutrition classes for low-income people struggling to cook healthy meals on a budget. Marilu says, “Oh, this class is *wonderful* for me, for study! New recipes. I have the recipes in Spanish too, and it's great for me.



Marilu Garcia in her kitchen, making a healthy granola recipe she learned in “Start by Eating Right” class.



“My husband is diabetic, and I need to cook the special things for him. ... This is why I try it, right now, while the girls are young, teaching healthy things for them and for my husband too.”

“My husband is diabetic, and I need to cook the special things for him. You know in my family, my father had diabetes too, and my brother too, and this is why I try it, right now, while the girls are young, teaching healthy things for them and for my husband too. I decide: cook for everyone the same. I started cooking and eating right.”

In addition to learning how to use previously unfamiliar vegetables, she now understands the greater nutritional value of red vs. green peppers, for example. And she learned that the corn oil she has always used is not as beneficial as canola and olive oils, which can help reduce cholesterol levels.

She’s picked up some useful skills too — such as how to partition a whole chicken. In Mexico, the butcher would cut up a chicken for her. Here, it’s more economical to buy a whole chicken, but before taking the class, she would “make a disaster of the chicken” and you “couldn’t tell what was what.”

Her shopping habits have definitely changed as well: “So much, yes!” She describes some useful tips she’s learned: “Don’t go to the store when you are hungry! Before go to the store, I eat and... I put everything what I needed in a list. And read the labels! How much calories it is? How much healthy it is? Pepsi or the colas? I say, ‘Wow! So much, so much sugar in there.’ And my husband learned too. He liked so much the soda...but we say, ‘That is no good for you.’ And he listened to us, my daughters too! And he don’t buy them anymore, only waters.”

Even though she avoided the kitchen as a young girl, food preparation is important to Marilu’s Mexican heritage. She looks back fondly on a beautiful tradition: The whole family sitting and making food together. Everything was communal, and they’d laugh and sing and talk as the children played nearby. But, laughing, she says, “The mothers cook with the unhealthy oils and sometimes, oh I don’t like it! But you know, it is good when you taste, oh my goodness, it is good!”

Little by little, Marilu is “trying her hardest” to blend what she learned from her family in Mexico with the things that she’s learning here. She also wants her daughters, who were born here, to learn about American foods. Paola, the picky eater, likes the healthy foods Marilu learned to make in class — smoothies, salads and English muffin pizzas. “But at times I try to mix, to have delicious things that are from Mexico.”

Marilu had such a good experience in class that she now feels better about cooking. She explains, “The thing what is hard for me is cooking, you know. But I try it, learn and learn... I like it, you know! And it’s easy for me now, cooking.”

And she has a strong desire to share what she’s learned with her family and friends. In the coming months, she plans to be an Operation Frontline volunteer — and maybe even organize a future class, in Spanish, for Mexican families living in her apartment complex. “I have learned a lot of things. I have new recipes, and healthy things! Thank you so much for this opportunity. It is great I have these classes, and I have the recipes, and I have the ingredients too for...practice in home.”

COMMUNITY NEWS

Cool / Not Cool

Cool: The Bush School's Diversity Speaker Series is a great resource for the local anti-racism movement, bringing in world-renown speakers such as Angela Davis, Dr. Shakti Butler and Frederick Gooding. Most of the free monthly events take place at the school (3400 E. Harrison Street). To RSVP or for more information, contact Dr. Eddie Moore Jr. at 206.326.7731.

Not Cool: The Cascade People's Center's funding from the City of Seattle is slated to be reduced, which means the well-loved family center might have to close. More than 6,000 people a year have relied on the Center for the past decade, 87% of them low-income. If it departs, the Cascade neighborhood would lose more than an important institution — it would lose an integral part of its soul and spirit.

Cool: Check out our new web site at www.solid-ground.org. The redesign includes program and event calendars, more news, improved job listings and many other enhancements.



Abby Morgan, Operation Frontline 2007 AmeriCorps VISTA & Community Fruit Tree Harvest volunteer, with some of this year's harvest bounty

TAKE ACTION

Enough about Us, What about You?

Seeking community members for Board. Solid Ground's Board of Directors is recruiting low-income people, people of color and people living with disabilities — including former clients of Solid Ground or other nonprofit agencies — for two-year terms. We seek folks with experience in: community leadership, fundraising, low-income housing development, advocacy, marketing and/or public relations. For more information, contact Beth Minker at bethm@solid-ground.org or 206.694.6860.



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1) Down-to-earth perspectives. 2) Real people's stories.
3) Solid Ground's newsletter, published six times a year to highlight our efforts to create a just and caring community, free from poverty, prejudice and neglect.

Reasonable accommodations for disabilities made on request.

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