

Lettuce Ink



Lettuce Link connects low-income communities in Seattle with fresh organic produce, gardening information and resources to grow their own food.



Growing Community

Lettuce Link needs seeds

to distribute to limited-income families so they can grow their own healthy food.

Tips? 206.694.6754
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Diane Ley, a motivated and determined resident of College Place Apartments transformed her community with seeds and plant starts from Lettuce Link. During our visit early this fall, she thanked us for the help and proudly showed us her garden. It was creatively suspended in a plastic swimming pool away from the local pests.

Diane walked us through the whole complex, beaming with pride in the success of her neighbors' gardens. She first took us to her Iranian neighbor's home, who came out and showed us her Persian cress or "shahi" and strawberries. Walking past front yards packed with cilantro, tomatoes, lettuce, squash, and beans Diane told us that in the previous year, there was not a single plant to be seen aside from ornamental perennials.

We were shocked to hear that it was Diane's first year gardening. "People were having problems with eating right," she said between meeting neighbors. "People who are on a budget need a solution that will last longer." She mentioned the sentiments of friends who wanted to address their weight problems and

illnesses but could not afford to make change. "When tomatoes cost \$3.99/ lb they cannot afford to [eat well] *and* pay the rent."

As we walked from door to door, children and neighbors were elated to see Diane. "When I first moved in here, people didn't talk to each other," she noted. Offering gardening assistance, seeds, and starts created a community.

This was not easy. Diane faced racism, pests, distrust between neighbors, limited gardening experience, and health problems. Despite these difficulties, with just a little help from Lettuce Link, she has created a dynamic community that is healthier, more connected to each other and to the earth.

~ Brinda Sivaramakrishnan

Inside this issue:

- Cascade Gives 2
- Marra Farm 3
- Fruit, fruit, fruit! 4



Diane Ley and current property manager, John Osborne

Cascade Gives

Arriving at the garden gate, Brinda and I saw a garden illuminated by the sun, projecting the most beautiful colors of fruits and flowers. Among the tall plants stood Jo Jo Tran awaiting our arrival. Jo Jo is a gardener that touched our hearts with his stories of giving, his enthusiasm and his kindness.

A long and narrow space situated at the back of the P-Patch is where Jo Jo and four other gardeners have invested their time for the past several years. This area is Cascade's Giving Garden, where Jo Jo and his team grow and donate fresh produce, herbs and flowers to the nearby Orion Canter and the Immanuel Lutheran church. They do this without reservation. Jo Jo's philosophy is about 'giving without weighing,' that is giving for the sake of giving instead of for recognition. For the record, Cascade does track their donations.

Patients from Fred Hutchinson, condo residents, passersby will step in to admire the garden. Interaction with people from various ethnicities, class and gender has given Jo Jo insights into different ways of gardening and the experience of garden healing. He once eased the boiling temper of a homeless man who followed him into the garden by sharing delicious fruit with him.

Though currently a man of many jobs, Jo Jo's dream is to purchase three acres of land to cultivate organic food for the needy and heal traumatized souls who cannot find peace in their lives.

~Joyce Chen & Brinda Sivarakrishnan



Jo Jo Tran

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Lettuce Link is a program of Solid Ground

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Programs/Nutrition/Lettuce](http://www.solid-ground.org/Programs/Nutrition/Lettuce)



Formerly the Fremont Public Association

Farm-to-School Movement is Growing

Farm-to-school is a win-win situation, local farmers growing food for local schools. Farmers have work and the money stays in the local economy; our children eat FRESH locally grown lunches and snacks; and it reduces global warming by eliminating cross-country and cross-world transport. For years citizens nation-wide have been meeting and organizing to make changes in farm and school policies. For the past three years, Lettuce Link has been part of the local discussion, along with teachers, parents, food service directors, farmers, small business people, public health officials, WSU extension and other concerned individuals.

In 2007, we helped create a toolkit for parents to create wellness and nutrition committees, which is a first step to procuring farm fresh products. The toolkit is being edited now and we hope it will help get more fresh produce to more children.

There are many ways you can get involved. To contact and participate in our local group, email f2sconnections@lyris.cahnr.wsu.edu. Farm-to-School is one of four legislative priorities pertaining to global warming of the WA Environmental Council for the '08 legislative session. To find out how you can help, check out: <http://www.environmentalpriorities.org/> ~Sue McGann

Internship Experience

When I heard that I was required to do an internship to graduate from Central Washington University, I was both scared and excited. I never could have known the lasting impact it would have upon me.

Growing up, I had pretty much anything I wanted. I did not have to worry about putting food in my belly, gas in my car, or clothes on my back. Also, I grew up in a place where people were from the same background as me. My internship gave me my first opportunity to work not only with a diverse group of people, but people that would forever influence my life.

Working with the Lettuce Link's gardening and nutrition program also allowed me my first chance to work directly with children. It was a challenge but it made me grow as a person and made me appreciate the skills and knowledge I can share to help improve the lives of others.

I really stopped and thought about my priorities when I met a woman that received seeds and plant starts from Lettuce Link to grow food because she couldn't afford to buy it. This was something that I had never heard of. Not being able to afford to buy food? This really made me aware of my privileges and has shaped what I want to do with my life.

Conducting cooking demonstrations, helping coordinate the Fremont Fair, Taste of the Nation, and Baby Boost fairs has also opened my eyes to community health and community involvement. It is amazing how many people are willing to volunteer to improve their community.

My overall experience was amazing. I came into this internship just thinking I was finishing up my last stretch of school and ended up gaining a great sense of personal growth and accomplishment that I had never felt before. ~Kami Yingling



Kimberley and Kami cooking up fresh vegetables at Marra Farm

Marra Farm Fall Fest 2007

Fall Fest at Marra Farm showcased a potluck, gunny sack races, pumpkin painting, and aerial acrobatics! For the past 8-years, Marra Farm has partnered with the King County Farm Tour to and invited people to come and learn about one of only two historical farms left in Seattle (the other is Picardo P-Patch). The vision of the Farm Fest is simply a community celebration of the harvest bounty. Festivities this year included a potluck complete with donated grilled salmon, games for kids that included painting pumpkins, gunny sack races, hand pressing apples to make apple cider, and even an aerial acrobatic performance!

Around 100 guests came to celebrate on the fourth Saturday in September. This event, as always, could never be possible without the volunteers and donors who contribute their time and resources. Seattle Works, an organization that organizes groups of volunteers between the ages of 20-30 years old,

sent a hard working and creative team to help with set up and the kids activities. Team Mason, originally a Seattle Works team that regularly volunteers with Marra Farm provided the most unique Fall Fest entertainment to date—aerial acrobatics!

Operation Frontline and Charlie's produce donated 100 pumpkins and Little Rae's Bakery donated freshly baked cookies for the event. Food donations and gift certificates were also generously donated by Central Market, Essential Bakery, QFC, and PCC. All of these treats, the community coming together and the volunteers made for another great Fall Fest celebration.

~Holly Doran



Rolling in the pumpkins!

You Make it Happen

It adds up! Getting together to pick fruit

We did it again. This time, we had a part-time staff person to lead the way and what a difference it made! Lettuce Link, Seattle Tilth, and outstanding volunteers successfully kept tons of fruit from going to waste by gleaning neighborhood fruit trees and donating the fruit to low-income families. Along the way we also made new friends, ate together, discovered new neighborhoods, and laughed a lot.

This year the Community Fruit Tree Harvest project harvested five and a half tons of plums, pears, Asian pears, apples and grapes. That is 7,500 more pounds than last year! The fruit was delivered to more than forty agencies, food banks, meals programs, shelters, senior centers and housing facilities.

The volunteers who made this project go were a hard working, smart and dedicated group of people who stepped forward with unique contributions—in addition to picking fruit! Susan donated her garage for fruit storage, Don advised us on how to pick, Didi made countless deliveries, Michael created maps, and Steve was always available to scout, just to name a few.

All of their contributions added up to a large achievement. It really made a difference to people's lives. The pleasure in receiving fruit was evident in so many faces.

Commitment is strong to continue and expand what we did this year. Lettuce Link is looking for grants, partnerships, or donations to support the coordination and a number of volunteers are starting up neighborhood-based harvests. If you have ideas for funding please contact us. ~Whitney Cochran



From the Office

One of the greatest things about Lettuce Link is the community of people who get their hands dirty to get real food to real people. It is hard to see volunteers, staff, and interns go after working closely together with them for a season or two, but it is heartening to see them move on to do great things to continue transforming the world into a better place.

Everyone one of you who has grown your own food, pulled weeds, picked fruit, given healthy food to others, you are transforming the way people eat, the way people perceive food, and our relationship with each other.

Thank you to all of you who have given your time, talent and financial resources to help Lettuce Link in our community work. Also a big thank you to Food Resource Network Federation ▪ USDA ▪ McClendon's Hardware ▪ Seed Corps ▪ Nash's Organic Farm ▪ City of Seattle ▪ Otto Haas Trust ▪ P-Patch Trust ▪ Backyard Greenhouse ▪ Ferguson Foundation ▪ Jeffris Wood Foundation ▪ Burning Foundation ▪ Sidney Fund ▪ Swanson's Nursery ▪ Neighbor to Neighbor ▪ McKenzie Foundation ▪ Hugh and Jane Ferguson Foundation ▪ City of Seattle ▪ Microsoft ▪ Edwards Mother Earth ▪ Raab Family ▪ ~Michelle B. Benetua

In the night the cabbages catch at the moon, the leaves drip silver, the rows of cabbages are a series of little silver waterfalls in the moon.

~ Carl Sandburg