



Summer 2008

# Finding Solutions Newsletter

VOLUME 13 Number 2



## THE VALUE OF SCHOOL GARDENS: TEACHING CHILDREN HEALTHY LIVING & LIFE-LONG NUTRITIONAL HABITS...

By Jane Hirschi

**A** red tomato picked from the vine... carrots and potatoes dug from the earth... a cucumber, crisp lettuce... a sweet strawberry. Is it really impossible for so many American children to *not* know the flavor of these elemental foods? How can we adults give all children the opportunities to pick food out of the garden for themselves?

It is not impossible to change the way children in America eat, nor should we limit our imaginations about the many ways that gardening can be reintroduced to the public school arena. In Cambridge, Massachusetts the public school department has welcomed the efforts of a parent-led nonprofit organization called CitySprouts to create and maintain gardens in its elementary schools. The city recently has seen measurable success in tackling nutrition and health problems in young people, and CitySprouts has been recognized as part of the turn-around.

American children are suffering a health crisis, one that comes from, and is exacerbated by poor nutrition. Many children, especially those in low-income families, don't have adequate food for health even when there's enough food on the plate. In Massachusetts, an estimated 27% of children – 1 in 4 – are likely to not have access to the more expensive, naturally nutritious food we all need for health. Fresh fruit and whole vegetables cost more than chips, fries, and soda. Whole grains cost more than processed grains. Corn and soy fillers lower the cost of food-- and they replace nutritious ingredients. The health crisis however strikes children from all economic backgrounds. The USDA reports that fast food was the main food source for 29%-38% of children in this country. According to data from the Healthy Eating index, a national survey of children's diets, only 5% are eating a diet that meets the USDA guidelines for nutrition and variety. Research shows that eating habits developed in childhood and adolescence persist into adulthood. There are serious health effects from a poor diet. High blood pressure, obesity, type II diabetes-- these are all diseases that are correlated with poor nutrition, and for the first time in this country significant numbers of children are suffering from them.

School gardens can provide an important role in addressing this crisis in children's health. Children eat what they know,

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### *About this issue...*

*Cambridge, MA is the birth-place of an innovative parent-led non-profit organization called CitySprouts. Jane Hirschi (pg.1) shows how student's participation in school gardens does more than just introduce them to "good" food.*

*Why is there a world food crisis? Bill Ayers (pg.3) provides some of the answers and also provides some possible solutions. He points out the danger to all of us if we don't address the problem now.*

*Not all education about hunger and poverty needs to take place in a traditional classroom setting. Judy Huynh (pg.5) outlines her experience with a "club" formed by five people who are either teachers or retired teachers and continue to "make a difference" in the world. She shares many sources they use with young people.*

*Rev. Maria Flanagan (pg.7) asks "Am I my sister's keeper?" She introduces us to her family and through their experiences answers the question.*

*Finally, a very special offer to readers (pg.7) of this newsletter for a chance to save \$8 when purchasing the KIDS' Teacher Guide, Finding Solutions To Hunger: Kids Can Make A Difference.*

*Enjoy,*

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and through school gardens children of all economic backgrounds have the opportunity to taste fresh fruits and vegetables they've grown themselves. CitySprouts is a school garden program in eight public schools in Cambridge, MA. We see everyday that children will eat what they've grown – and in fact really enjoy having that opportunity.

CitySprouts' mission is to develop, implement and maintain beautiful, resource-rich school gardens in collaboration with public schools. In our program in the Cambridge Public Schools, CitySprouts has developed a model for nutrition education, an introduction to food and where it comes from, and a resource for public education that reaches deep into the community.

The CitySprouts program serves over 2,500 students enrolled in eight of the Cambridge K-8 public schools, and hundreds of children and adults through our after-school, and summer youth internship programs. Staff garden coordinators work 12 hours weekly in each school, April through November. These garden coordinators are the liaison with teachers, and also with parents, grandparents, and others in the community who make up the volunteer 'maintenance team' for each garden. Last year we counted over 1,000 children's visits to our school gardens outside of school time (after school and in the summer), and nearly 500 visits by adult family members or volunteers. CitySprouts school gardens are a vital part of the neighborhood. "I have come with my children who absolutely love it. I have one child who doesn't like fruits or vegetables. Since planting and harvesting them here in the garden, he is actually trying things," comments a CitySprouts parent and volunteer.

CitySprouts staff work with teachers to integrate the program into the curriculum teachers already use in the classroom—last year, 74% of the teachers in the garden schools reported using the garden for teaching at least once, and as much as 20 times for science, math, social studies, history, literacy and art. This means learning that includes the traditional skills we associate with these academic subjects, and also digging, making compost, planting and eating the fruits of one's labors!

CitySprouts engages the school food service staff with garden activities that link to the vegetables served in the cafeteria, and by encouraging children to try the new, healthier menu items such as butternut squash. Dawn Olcott, the

school nutritionist said, "As the school food service offered other new vegetables, it became evident that the kids in the garden schools were more willing to try new vegetables and more kids liked the new items."

In the summer, CitySprouts leads a youth intern program in the school gardens. Thirty-three youth (ages 11-14) completed the summer internship last year, and we plan to have spaces for 40 youth in the summer of '08. We also celebrate the growing season at the CitySprouts city-wide Harvest Festival where over 700 kids and adults each year meet farmers, eat great food made by local chefs, and make cheese, pasta, apple cider and vegetable "stone soup" themselves.



celebrate the growing season at the CitySprouts city-wide Harvest Festival where over 700 kids and adults each year meet farmers, eat great food made by local chefs, and make cheese, pasta, apple cider and vegetable "stone soup" themselves.

CitySprouts is a program that has an impact on Cambridge children's lives but, equally important, we're developing a model for integrating nutrition awareness in the public schools. Because we've been able to partner with so many parts of the school—classroom teachers, the science department, the physical education department, the school food service—we've demonstrated a model that has applications for nearly any public school system. We've built solid relationship with the community who support City-

Sprouts through financial and volunteer contributions. We've shown that a school garden program can grow from the community it serves. In 2007 the City of Cambridge was awarded the Innovation in Prevention Award from the US Dept. of Health & Human Services in November 2007 and CitySprouts was featured as an important part of the campaign to reduce childhood obesity. Garden programs are a critical component of improving health.

### **A Growing Solution**

CitySprouts started in one school 8 years ago; it came about and grew in answer to a societal need, but also in response to children's deep enthusiasm about being engaged in growing good food. All children deserve this basic experience: eating food they've grown and picked themselves out of a garden. School gardens give kids these opportunities, and should be a part of public education everywhere. Children eat what they know. School gardens give kids the opportunity to know good food.

*Jane Hirschi is the Executive Director of CitySprouts. She can be reached at [jsmillie@citysprouts.org](mailto:jsmillie@citysprouts.org). For further information, go to [www.citysprouts.org](http://www.citysprouts.org).*

## WHY IS THERE A WORLD FOOD CRISIS?...

by Bill Ayers

We see the headlines almost every day: “Food Riots in Haiti”, “The Price of Rice Doubles”, “Mexicans Can Not Afford Tortillas” and dozens more. Rising food prices are devastating for the poor of the world who spend most of their available income on food in order to survive. The world is experiencing its worst food crisis in decades, not in one or two drought prone countries but in a growing number of countries all over the world. Why is this happening?

US media usually mention the growing middle class desire for more meat in India, China and other traditionally poor countries. This creates a loss of land that was previously growing grains and vegetables and drives up demand (hence driving up prices) for corn, soy, and other commodities. This is certainly a factor in the current world food crisis, but there are many other reasons for the crisis. One of them is the huge expansion of subsidized agrofuels such as ethanol from corn, with fuel crops replacing much needed food crops in the fields. Another factor is rising oil prices which increases the cost of farm inputs from fertilizers to transportation.

There are climatic changes that have been intensifying for decades; these have been talked about but not effectively addressed. The region of the Sahal just south of the Sahara Desert used to be a significant food producing region in

Africa. Desertification that is partially man-made is the cause of its long time decreasing production. Large parts of China and the Asian countries of the former Soviet Union are suffering from the decline of food-producing resources such as water and arable land, and extreme pollution is limiting their ability to produce healthful food. In many other countries including the U.S., farmland is being lost to development with potentially devastating effects on food production.

The last set of causes is perhaps among the most devastating and preventable. It is the growing destruction of family and community agriculture and its replacement by agribusi-



ness and corporate farms. Small and medium sized farmers are seen as an annoying anachronism. They are forced by government policies, economic coercion, and terror tactics to leave their land for the cities and most often wind up in dire poverty. Yet millions of small-scale farmers

throughout the world are proving that it's possible to grow food sustainably when supported by sound government policies, appropriate technologies, and their own agroecological wisdom practiced through the ages. There are a number of positive actions that can protect and enhance the

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KIDS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE® FINDING SOLUTIONS NEWSLETTER  
A PROGRAM OF WORLD HUNGER YEAR (WHY)

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world's food supplies and support farmers.

## INCREASE WORLD FOOD RESERVES

World food reserves are dangerously low and must be sustained and diversified, with an emphasis on strengthening or creating reserves at the national and regional levels. Sufficient food must also be available for rapid transportation to areas that are unable to feed themselves in times of crisis. The world's major food producing countries must come to agreements to rebuild reserves, and ensure that food aid supports and does not undermine local farming.



## ELIMINATE DUMPING CHEAP FOOD ON POOR NATIONS

A recent example of bad agricultural policy is the dumping of cheap U.S. corn into Mexico, which has severely harmed Mexican corn farmers. Many thousands have lost their farms and migrated north in search of jobs, and now that corn prices have soared, people in Mexico cannot afford the most basic food of their diets, the tortilla. The tendency is for powerful countries and corporations to dictate to poorer countries and especially peasant farmers and not respect their crucial role in their countries' food supplies.

## INVEST IN LOCAL FARMERS

There are several ways that small farmers can prosper. The first is to help them secure the legal rights to their land, affordable credit, the means of production and access to markets that pay them a fair price. They also need the freedom of organizing to promote and protect their rights. International agencies and national governments must invest fairly and wisely in farmers in order to build local food self-reliance as well as provide a safe ongoing food supply for the world.

This current food crisis is devastating for millions throughout the world, but it is only a foretaste of a much larger and deeper crisis to come, as the multiple factors of unsustainable agrofuels, peak oil, energy crises, and climate change intensify. We must be aware and act accordingly.

### Resources:

- [Fueling Disaster: A Community Food Security Perspective on Agrofuels](#), by the International Links Committee of the Community Food Security Coalition
- [Pouring Fire on the Food](#), by Eric Holt-Giménez, Food First
- [Food Fights](#), by Laura Carlsen, Center for International Policy
- [Grains Gone Wild](#), by Paul Krugman, *New York Times*
- [UN chief calls for review of biofuels policy](#), by Julian Borger, *The Guardian*
- [Grist's Virtual Reality](#), by Tom Philpott

*Bill Ayers is Executive Director of WHY. He may be contacted at [Bill@worldhungeryear.org](mailto:Bill@worldhungeryear.org)*

### KIDS Advisory Board

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**Rev. Marta Flanagan**- Unitarian Universalist Minister and a Spiritual Director

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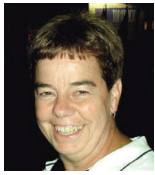
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**Velma LaPoint**- Associate Professor, School of Education, Howard University

**Ava McCall**- Professor and Department Chair, Curriculum and Instruction department, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.

**Melanie Motter**- Teacher and co-founder of the Satinwood Band



## TEACHING ABOUT HUNGER THROUGH NON-FORMAL EDUCATION...

By Judy Huynh

**E**arlier this year, I embarked on a new experience in global and cultural education with young people in my community. Four of my friends and I began a new 4-H club called World Wide Kids that focuses on learning about global issues. 4-H is a youth development program where young people develop knowledge and skills in various project areas through experiential learning.

The five 4-H leaders of our club, all teachers or retired teachers, attended Heifer University for Educators two years ago, where we learned important lessons about hunger and poverty and were inspired to do whatever we could to make a difference in the world. We hope to share our passion with the young people we work with and to empower them to change the world. I'd like to share some of the resources we have been using in our club and encourage other adults to become involved with teaching about hunger in the classroom or through one of the non-formal education groups such as 4-H, Scouts, Campfire Girls, church youth groups, etc.

The major project for our club this year will be hosting an International Dinner to raise money for Heifer International and to educate our community on the issues of hunger and poverty in the world. In preparation for this, we have been using a variety of curriculum materials at our meetings. At our first meeting we did "Now Hear This!", an activity about ecological footprints around the world. This activity came from Facing the Future People and the Planet ([www.facingthefuture.org](http://www.facingthefuture.org)). At our next meeting, we did "Fishing for the Future", an activity to introduce the concept of sustainability. This activity came from Engaging Students Through Global Issues, another Facing the Future resource.

At another meeting, we used the lesson "Eating the Way the World Eats" from Finding Solutions to Hunger, an excellent resource from Kids Can Make a Difference. This activity allows students to experience firsthand how unfairly food is distributed in the world. We will continue to use lessons from Finding Solutions to Hunger and from the Facing the Future resources. In addition, we will use activities from some of the Population Connection resources ([www.populationeducation.org](http://www.populationeducation.org)), such as Multiplying People, Dividing Resources – Global Math Activities, Sharing a Small World, and Counting on People. I have used all these resources in my classroom when I was teaching and found

them to be excellent and the students really liked them.

Our club has chosen to work with Heifer International in their effort to end hunger and poverty in the world, and we will be using many of Heifer's resources. We have watched The Promise, a video about their work, and will be using other resources from Heifer later in the year. New Global Education Resource Kits will be available from Heifer this fall, and I know they will be very exciting. (Curriculum materials from Heifer are available free through their website – [www.heifered.org](http://www.heifered.org).)

Our club members have access to computers and the Internet at most of our club meetings, so we have participated in the Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger forum on iEARN (International Education and Resource Network – [www.iearn.org](http://www.iearn.org)). There we are able to dialogue with other young people all around the world about hunger issues. We have also been on the Free Rice site ([www.freerice.com](http://www.freerice.com)) where the 4-Hers can improve their vocabulary while donating rice to hungry people.

One last resource that I have used with my 4-H club and I would like to recommend is the DVD by Annie Leonard called "The Story of Stuff". You can watch it at [www.thestoryofstuff.org](http://www.thestoryofstuff.org). It's for sale for a small fee, and Annie encourages you to make as many copies of it as you want to distribute to your friends. As described on the website, "The Story of Stuff" exposes the connections between a huge number of environmental and social issues, and calls us together to create a more sustainable and just world. It'll teach you something, it'll make you laugh, and it just may change the way you look at all the stuff in your life forever."

Our young people are our future. It's up to us to provide the opportunities for them to learn about the issues of poverty and hunger and to empower them to change the world. KIDS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

*Judy Huynh is working with "The Box" team doing professional development in service learning ([theboxwebsite.com](http://theboxwebsite.com)). She may be contacted at [jhuynh@ioniaisd.org](mailto:jhuynh@ioniaisd.org) or [judyhuynh@hughes.net](mailto:judyhuynh@hughes.net). She is a member of the KIDS Advisory Board.*



## AM I MY SISTER'S KEEPER?...

By Rev. Marta Flanagan

**M**y grandmother grew up in Peru. The family lived on a hacienda just outside Lima. Marta shared a bedroom with her three sisters.

Above the door to their bedroom was a transom, a small window opened by a wooden pole with a hook at the end. One morning ten-year-old Marta tried to open the transom. The wooden pole knocked out the windowpane. The glass shattered onto the floor. The four girls quickly swept up the evidence and discarded the glass. A short while later Marta's mother came into the room. She asked, "What happened to the transom? The four girls looked surprised, "What transom?"

My great grandmother called in father. The four girls sat on the foot of their beds. Father roared, "Who broke the transom?" The girls looked down. Father declared, "If no one confesses, then all of you will be punished." Father stared at them. Finally the tension broke. Marcel, then eight years old, Mati's younger sister, spoke up. "I did it," Marcel said. My grandmother, who had broken the transom, said nothing. Marcel took the punishment.

My grandmother would tell this story with a mixture of guilt and admiration for her younger sister. Marcel stepped forward choosing to take the punishment for all.

Am I my sister's keeper? Am I my brother's keeper? This is an age-old question. In the story of Cain and Abel, Cain murders his brother, Abel. God asks Cain, "Where is your brother?" Cain replies like the four girls sitting at the foot of their beds, "What transom?" Cain says, "I don't know where Abel is, "Am I my brother's' keeper?" It is the incriminating evidence that he is responsible for his brother's demise. Over the centuries Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper" has been transformed into an affirmative principle. We are keepers of one another, guardians.

We live in a culture that values rights over responsibility. We celebrate the Bill of Rights, our freedom to speak, to gather, to pursue happiness. But nowhere do we outline our obligations and commitments. Where is our Bill of Responsibilities? We prefer to speak of the individual rather than the community. We celebrate the image of the self-reliant individual out on their own. We pay homage to the idea of the rugged pioneer venturing forth on the frontier.

But what about the barn raisings on these very same frontiers, the community helping those new to the land or those whose barn burned down?

To be responsible is to respond to others, to answer their call. Our word "response" is derived from two Greek words, one of which is the root of our word "promise." Being responsible is a way of keeping our promises, of living up to our covenants, and our principles.

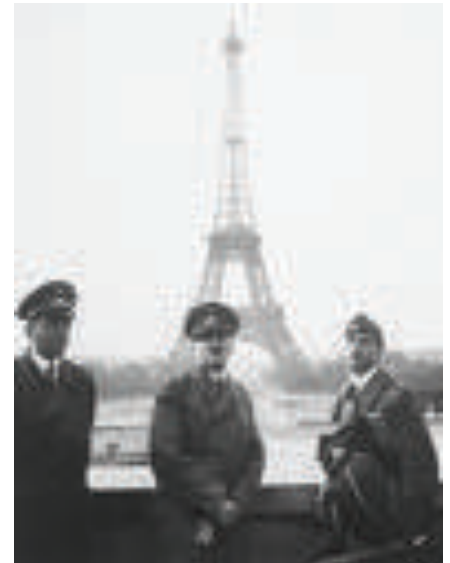
There are times we evade our responsibility. We think of ourselves as regular folks scrambling to pay rent or the mortgage and looking forward to the weekend. But is that enough?

I ask, for what are you responsible? What do you include among your cares? Do the responsibilities you choose make you proud?

My great Aunt Marcel chose her sisters to be her responsibility. In the incident involving the broken transom Marcel would take the blame even in her innocence for her sisters.

What ever happened to Marcel? As an adult she lived outside Paris. In 1940 the Germans invaded France. Marcel joined the French Resistance.

One summer day in 1942 Marcel and her cousin Anna were brought into the Gestapo headquarters in Paris. The Nazis questioned her but they could get nothing out of Marcel. Finally they released her. Anna and Marcel left the Gestapo headquarters. They began to cross the street. Suddenly a German jeep sped by and hit Marcel. Marcel lay in the street bleeding. Anna ran off. A German officer stepped out of



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the jeep. He said, "Anyone who approaches this woman will be shot as a traitor." The officer stood guard over Marcel lying on the pavement. Marcel lay in front of the Café de la Paix. A waiter inside was a member of the resistance. From the cafe he made a phone call. The resistance was afraid Marcel would speak that she would name names, as she lay on the ground wounded. And so the call went forth. Members of the resistance walked anonymously up and down the street. They pretended to be shopping or just passing by. They could not stop and offer Marcel any consolation. In whispers they spoke of shooting her as an act of mercy. But no one dared. The German officer stood by watching, ensuring that no one aided the dying woman, using her as an example to all others.

One of those who walked up and down the street and who passed Marcel dying was her older sister, my grandmother, Marta.

Marcel died on that street.

In Paris I go to Café de la Paix, near the Opera House. I sit at a table and watch the cars on the busy street. It is my vigil. In my meager French asked, "Café de la Paix? Resistance?" A waiter proudly told me of how the resistance had been organized, right here under the Gestapo's nose. Today the former Gestapo Headquarters across the street is a German Bank.

Marcel did not die alone. Long ago in a hacienda in Peru as a young girl my grandmother watched and learned what it means to responsible for another. And she told her grandchildren who told others.

Am I my sister's keeper? The answer is yes.

*Marta Flanagan is a spiritual director and minister emerita of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Portsmouth NH. A graduate of Smith College and Harvard Divinity School, she begins an interim ministry in Montpelier VT in the fall. Recently she rejoined the KIDS Advisory Board.*

## A SPECIAL OFFER FOR KIDS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE (KIDS) TEACHER GUIDE

WHY's Kids Can Make A Difference (KIDS) program was highlighted in Fall 2007 issue of *Teaching Tolerance Magazine* in an article examining a common approach used by schools across the country: donation drives divorced from the communities they intend to serve; little or no education about the root causes of poverty. To find a model that breaks this mold, the author turned to KIDS. The program was highlighted as an example of how to turn food drives into vehicles for social change.

The KIDS program has as its centerpiece an innovative teacher guide, *Finding Solutions To Hunger: Kids Can Make A Difference*. More than 5,000 books have been sold worldwide since the guide's first edition in 2001. The 251-page guide provides interactive lessons designed to challenge and engage middle and high school students as they explore the root causes of — and solutions to — domestic and international hunger. Students will examine colonialism, contemporary development projects, the media, famine vs. chronic hunger, the working poor, and more. The guide also offers helpful examples of community service projects.



You can receive free shipping for the KIDS' Teacher Guide, *Finding Solutions to Hunger: Kids Can Make A Difference* and a free one-year subscription to the KIDS' Newsletter. **To take advantage of this offer visit [www.kidscanmakeadifference.org](http://www.kidscanmakeadifference.org) click on Teacher Guide and learn more about the guide and to complete the order form. Make sure you enter the code why140 in the promotional code box. This offer expires 12/31/08. Cost of the teacher's guide is \$26; the \$8 shipping fee is waived with this offer.**

# KIDS TEACHER GUIDE AVAILABLE

## Contains Updated Statistics & Resources

### ***Finding Solutions To Hunger: Kids Can Make A Difference*** ***by Stephanie Kempf.***

Uplifting, engaging, interactive and challenging lessons for middle and high school students on the root causes of and solutions to domestic and international hunger. Examines colonialism, contemporary development projects, the media, famine vs. chronic hunger, the working poor and more, as well as valuable ideas for how kids can make a difference in their community, and in the world around them.

**Price... \$26 + \$8 shipping. Includes free one year subscription to the KIDS Newsletter!**

**To Order... Send check, purchase order or Visa Mastercard or AMEX number to:  
KIDS, 1 Borodell Avenue, Mystic, CT 06355  
(860) 245-3620, (860) 245-3651 FAX**

**“If I were a teacher struggling to help students remain human in a sea of cynicism and self-absorption, I would grab onto this book as if it were a life raft and use it to bring my class to shore.”**

*Joan Dye Gussow, Professor Emeritus,  
Teachers College, Columbia University*



A Program of World Hunger Year

**1 Borodell Avenue  
Mystic, CT 06355**

The purpose of **Kids Can Make A Difference®** is to inspire young people to realize that it is within their power to help eliminate hunger and poverty in their communities, their country, and their world.