

Roots and Wisdom, a youth agriculture and community service program, brings together urban, suburban, and rural Schenectady County youth to grow organic vegetables for donation to local food pantries and for sale at area farmers' markets. The program teaches its participants about sustainable agriculture, hunger, nutrition, and diversity. Roots and Wisdom's participants, through hard work and community service, create genuine change by helping county residents in need.

dig ideas

Number 5

Fall 2007 A seasonal publication of Roots and Wisdom

PHOTO/TIM TEAR

"I love this program. I feel lucky to be working with Roots and Wisdom and doing something worthwhile with my summer. Roots and Wisdom has allowed me to discover the leader within me. It brings out qualities in me that I like and will carry with me to college. Roots and Wisdom has shown me that I can make a difference." —RACHEL N., 2007 SUMMER YOUTH PARTICIPANT

What's Your Veggie?

Each year, Summer Growing Program participants plan and carry out activities to raise community awareness about the many benefits of eating locally grown food. This summer, one of our most successful events was "Veggie Theatre," a series of skits created and performed by our youth, highlighting the importance of eating locally.

Throughout Schenectady, audiences learned that local food is fresher and tastier than non-local produce (on average, most vegetables travel more than 1,500 miles to supermarkets); that buying locally grown food supports the local economy; and that local food can be prepared in new and interesting ways.

The youth composed a catchy piece called, "Veggie Rap" which was wonderfully received by people of all ages! The plays were presented at the St. Luke Farmer's Market on State Street in Schenectady. An encore performance was held at the downtown Farmer's Market near the steps of City Hall.

*My name is Ariel and I like BRO-CCO-LI
Green and leafy, it looks like a tree
But don't be fooled by its strange exterior
It makes strong bones to make a healthy interior*

*What's your veggie? What what's your veggie?
What's your veggie? What what's your veggie?*

*My name is Rachel and TOMATOES are my thing
Red and round, they make my mouth go zing
When you get sick and sneeze and wheeze
Tomatoes help your body fight disease*

*What's your veggie? What what's your veggie?
What's your veggie? What what's your veggie?*



PHOTOS/DEBBIE FORESTER



Summer Growing Program participants presented "Veggie Theater" at the Downtown Schenectady Farmers' Market this summer.

The Edible Playground

Roots and Wisdom is delighted to be working with the Mont Pleasant Neighborhood Action Coalition and the City of Schenectady to revitalize Orchard Street Park. The park recently received a much needed face-lift, and now has new playground equipment. Water access has been established, and approximately one-third of the park has been converted to garden space, ready for planting in the spring. Perennial plants for the garden border are being donated by a park neighbor.

We are pleased to be creating a fun, safe place for children to play and learn in an urban environment. In partnership with Eat Well Play Hard, a New York State and Cornell Cooperative Extension Project, we are working with local day care providers, after school programs, and neighbors to develop park youth programs centered on garden education. We look forward to hosting part of our 2008 Summer Growing Program in the Orchard Street Park.



PHOTO/DEBBIE FORESTER

Mont Pleasant neighborhood children planted cover crops in the new garden this fall.

Summer Reflections

Twenty-five Schenectady County youth and three college crew leaders participated in the 2007 Summer Growing Program. It was a full and interesting six weeks. Before the summer program ends each year, we ask participants to tell us what working for Roots and Wisdom means to them. Here are some of the responses we received this year.

"I feel like I made a difference in the universe, and I have never felt that before." —ANGEL E.

"Roots and Wisdom taught me a lot about myself and I learned a lot about vegetables and the environment." —RACHEL E.

"It meant a positive environment, making my parents happy, meeting new people, and continuing to make a dent in the universe." —ELIAH B.

"I've learned to be able to talk with other people and not to be afraid to share my ideas. I've learned how it isn't difficult to change things for the better in my community." —STEPHANIE C.

"I learned to embrace a diverse community of youths....It amazed me how different Schenectady is than Niskayuna....I don't have an interest in being a farmer, yet I know eating local food will be a part of my everyday life." —ALEXIS K.

"During Roots and Wisdom I found an amazing emotional outlet in the garden. I've felt the happiest and calmest I have been in a long time." —JESSICA C.

"Over the summer I've made many friends and learned new things that can help me in the future." —ANTHONY A.

"It was awesome." —JEREMY S.

“I loved being outside all day and getting to know people in the relaxed and informal environment that a garden creates. It made me feel like a part of the community, while teaching me so much about the earth, myself, and humanity in general.”

—ARIEL S., 2007 SUMMER YOUTH PARTICIPANT

Garden Bounty

The following was written by Stacy DeBritz, 2007 Harvest Share member

Roots and Wisdom Harvest Share has provided my family with far more than a plentiful table. Walking through the fragrant rows of the garden, identifying plants, picking the fresh vegetables, and weighing the delectable produce provided my young children with an agricultural experience a few short miles from our home.

The staff and volunteers of the program brightened our day with enthusiasm for their work, extensive knowledge of the produce and how one prepares it. They have broadened our thinking about what we eat and where our food comes from.

Each week as we left the garden, we took an exquisite vase of flowers to our homebound neighbor. The bounty of the Roots and Wisdom garden is not contained by its borders. My youngest son (five-year-old Luke) summed up the experience best when he said, “Mommy, I can’t wait to work for Roots and Wisdom when I grow up!”

Community Connections

Among the many visitors to the Fehr Avenue Neighborhood Garden this summer were two youth groups: the Jessie T. Zoller School English as a Foreign Language summer program and the City Mission Summer Youth Adventure Group. After lively ice breaker games led by Roots and Wisdom’s summer youth, our young visitors were given tours of the garden, learning first-hand about growing vegetables and healthy eating habits.

Throughout the spring and fall, when our summer program is not in session, various community groups and individuals play a critical role helping in the garden. We enjoyed working with the following organizations: the New York State Office of the American Association of Retired People, Schenectady County Community College Science Club, Cornell Cooperative Horticulture Job Training Program, Rosendale Elementary Brownie Troop 430, Center for Disability Services, and

Union College Ozone House.

If you have a school, office or community group that would like to participate in a program in one of our gardens, please contact us at info@rootswisdom.org. Come have fun, get dirty and make a difference!

Wish List

- garden tools • gloves
- 5-gallon buckets (clean) • recycled grocery bags
- cutlery • web page designer

518-372-1622 x286 or info@rootswisdom.org

With a little help from our friends...

The familiar phrase “farming is in her blood” suitably applies to Kristin Peterson, one of our dedicated Roots and Wisdom volunteers. Kristin grew up on a 180 acre farm in Iowa, which has been continuously cultivated by her family for more than 125 years.

Having recently relocated to the Capital District with her husband, Kristin found Roots and Wisdom through VolunteerMatch.org, a website dedicated to bringing volunteers and non-profit organizations together. The rest is history! We are genuinely indebted to Kristin for her four months of service, commitment and hard work in our gardens.

Kristin credits Roots and Wisdom with “helping me do some meaningful work, having the chance to be outdoors, and meeting new people. It has prompted my husband and me to change some of our habits, and make a more conscious effort to buy produce that’s grown locally, in season, and organic.”

Roots and Wisdom gives special thanks to our Fehr Avenue neighbors Marilynn and Dave Coutant for their continued generosity, good will and refreshing pitchers of iced tea!

For information on giving opportunities at Roots and Wisdom, please contact Christine Horigan at 518-372-1622 x286.



Eggplant in the garden.

PHOTO/CARRIE FOSTER



PHOTO/DEBBIE FORESTER

2007 Summer Youth Program participants

Roots and Wisdom’s mission is to engage the diverse population of Schenectady County—particularly youth—in serving their community through the support of a sustainable local food system. Participants will experience personal growth and development leading to positive social change.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schenectady County provides educational incubator services and acts as Roots and Wisdom’s fiscal agent.

Financial Supporters

Roots and Wisdom gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the organizations and agencies that provided funding to the program from October 2006 through September 2007.

Community Groups

Caduceus Garden Club
City Mission of Schenectady
Concerned for the Hungry
Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church
First Reformed Church of Schenectady, Easter Offertory Collection
First Reformed Church of Schenectady, Mission & Benevolence Committee
First Unitarian Society of Schenectady, Special Sunday Collection
First Unitarian Society of Schenectady, Daytime Women’s Alliance
Grace Lutheran Church
Rosendale Elementary School
Brownie Troop 430
Rotary Club of Schenectady, Inc.
Schenectady County Community College Science Club
Union Presbyterian Church, Women’s Association

Business Donors

Middle Line Farm
Northface Landscaping
Soluna Yoga Studio
Two Spruce Pottery
Woodleaf Farm

Matching Gifts

Dell Foundation
GE Foundation

Corporate and Community Foundations

Stewart’s Foundation
William Gundry Broughton Charitable Foundation

County, State and Federal Funding

Agriculture Workforce Certification Program
Schenectady County Job Training Agency

Warmest thanks to our individual donors (please see insert) who help support Roots and Wisdom’s mission. All gifts are important and deeply appreciated.

Funding for the Fall 2007 Dig Ideas was generously provided by Price Chopper.

Roots and Wisdom Staff

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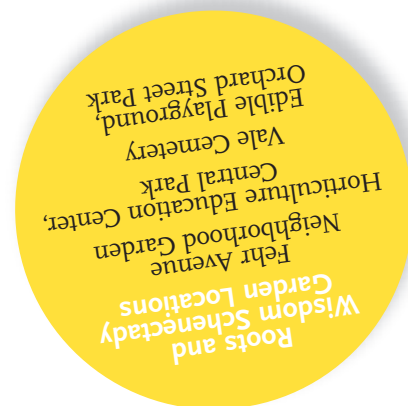
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NEWSLETTER DESIGN/AURORA DESIGN

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