

**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 7

Fall 2008 A seasonal publication of Roots and Wisdom

PHOTO/TIM TEAR

*"There is a wonderful aura here in the garden. The teenagers seem like one big family."*

—P. GETTYS, ESL INSTRUCTOR, LINCOLN SCHOOL, AUGUST 6, 2008, FEHR AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD GARDEN OPEN HOUSE

## Summer in the City

Roots and Wisdom's four urban gardens were teeming with youthful energy, bustle and visitors of all ages during this year's Summer Growing Program. Thirty-one county youth, three college crew leaders and staff devoted their time and efforts toward garden cultivation, performing community service, participating in workshops and farmers' markets and raising awareness about local food.



PHOTO/MATIE NETHAWAY

Summer Growing Program Youth and Edible Playground program participants

Through their hard work and activism this summer, the youth experienced first-hand our vision "Creating Community through Agriculture." Many mentioned how much they enjoyed growing food together, building friendships and helping their neighbors in need.

At the Fehr Avenue Neighborhood Garden, where more than 140 varieties of vegetables, herbs and flowers are grown, several community events brought committed supporters and new visitors to the garden. Roots and Wisdom Advisory Board members and staff invited friends and associates to Brown Bag Luncheons "under the tent" to learn about the program and meet our youth. A garden luncheon was held with two area groups, and the City Mission Youth Adventure Group spent a morning discovering the joys of growing vegetables with our youth participants.

Once again, **Be Vocal Eat Local** week (Roots and Wisdom's effort to encourage local eating and support for local farmers) was a rousing success with events held at various venues throughout the city. An Open House, organized and hosted by the youth and crew leaders, took place at the Fehr Avenue Garden with garden tours, workshops on composting, healthy eating, backyard gardening, food demonstrations, scavenger hunts and more—a full and exhilarating day for guests of all ages. Veggie Theatre performances—skits conceived by youth—were held at the St. Luke and City Hall Farmers' Markets. A Roots and Wisdom documentary, "A View from the Ground Up," made by Schenectady High School students, premiered at

Proctors Theater as part of the John Sayles School of Fine Arts Summer Film Festival and culminated our exciting week of activities.

### Roots, Shoots, Flowers and Fruits

The downy woodpecker's morning visit to the sunflowers at the Edible Playground at Orchard Street Park in Schenectady's Mont Pleasant neighborhood was just one of the many highlights of the new summer program. Young children, youth participants and Roots and Wisdom staff came together for a terrific four-week educational program filled with learning, fun and exploration.

The urban garden program—Roots, Shoots, Flowers and Fruits—provided a wonderful backdrop for neighborhood children to learn about how things grow, the benefits of physical activity, and eating healthy veggies. Youth participants served as program mentors during the weekly sessions, and reported that working with the young children brought a new and welcomed dimension to their summer experiences at Roots and Wisdom.

The program was co-created by Roots and Wisdom and Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County's Eat Well Play Hard Program.

### Happenings

Keep up to date with Roots and Wisdom events and local food happenings in the Capital Region: sign up for our occasional e-newsletter, Scoop, at [www.rootswisdom.org](http://www.rootswisdom.org).

### Celebrating Our Bounty

Schenectady County has a long and rich agricultural tradition. In partnership with Schenectady County Special Events, Roots and Wisdom hosted a series of events over a month-long period to celebrate the farming tradition. The opening event was a discussion and book signing with Alisa Smith and James MacKinnon, authors of *Plenty: Eating Locally on the 100-Mile Diet*. Alisa and James provided entertaining insights and anecdotes about their experiment in local eating and challenged the audience to creatively explore the wealth of available local food.

Hundreds of people dined in nine Schenectady restaurants during the 2008 Farm to Chef Event. These restaurants featured tasty dishes made with local products including vegetables, fruits, meats, poultry, cheese, honey and mushrooms from nineteen upstate New York farms.



Mark Graham of Mezza Notte Ristorante demonstrated his local cooking skills at the Schenectady City Hall Farmers' Market. Mark prepared ravioli and risotto using freshly harvested vegetables and herbs from the Roots and Wisdom garden.

Community members participated in a Local Food Forum with prominent growers, conservationists, educators and activists.

The month-long celebration concluded with the annual Schenectady County Farm and Foliage Day on Saturday, October 18, 2008. The event provided a number of opportunities for people to visit farms and farmers' markets and learn more about our agricultural heritage while enjoying the changing of the seasons in the county.



PHOTO/TIM TEAR

## A Time to Talk

*When a friend calls to me from the road  
And slows his horse to a meaning walk,  
I don't stand still and look around  
On all the hills I haven't hoed,  
And shout from where I am, 'What is it?'  
No, not as there is a time to talk.  
I thrust my hoe in the mellow ground,  
Blade-end up and five feet tall,  
And plod: I go up to the stone wall  
For a friendly visit.*

BY ROBERT FROST

Time to Talk, written more than 90 years ago, wonderfully conveys, how we, at Roots and Wisdom, feel about our visitors—you are always welcome in our gardens.

### Helping us Grow

Roots and Wisdom extends its warmest thanks to: Marilyn and Dave Coutant, our Fehr Avenue Garden neighbors, for their invaluable support, friendship and generous use of their garage.

Paula and Joe Pliss for welcoming friends and community members to their Union Street home in May for a Garden Party—a splendid kick-off for the 2008 growing season. Special thanks to Advisory Board Member Pat Rodriguez for providing hors d'oeuvres and spirits for the occasion.

Maureen Kim for hosting an elegant luncheon this summer for the Alliance with the Medical Society of Schenectady and Caduceus Garden Club members. We are grateful to Maureen for her generosity, time and culinary expertise and for organizing such a successful event at the Fehr Avenue Garden.

The City of Schenectady for their strong and continued support and services.

Schenectady County Job Training Agency and

Schenectady County Special Events, especially Wendy Voelker, for partnering with us on key community programs.

The staff of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schenectady County for all they do.



### Schenectady Greenmarket

It's happening! On Sunday, November 2, 2008 Schenectady Greenmarket will open its "doors" at Proctors Arcade. The market will feature local producers of fruit, vegetables, eggs, meats and more. Hours are from 10:00am to 2:00pm on Sundays; parking is available in the lot behind Proctors. For more information visit [www.schenectadygreenmarket.org](http://www.schenectadygreenmarket.org). Roots and Wisdom will be selling value-added garden products. Come visit us.

### Reading List

Winter is an ideal time for planning your spring garden. Why not curl up in front of the fire with these books?

*How to Grow More Vegetables* by John Jeavons

*Four Season Harvest* by Eliot Coleman, Barbara Damrosch and Kathy Bray

*The New Organic Grower* by Eliot Coleman, Sheri Amsel and Molly Cook Field

*The Organic Lawn Care Manual* by Paul Tukey

*The New Victory Garden* by Bob Thomson



PHOTO/TIM TEAR



PHOTO/DEBBIE FORESTER

**What do NBA aspirations, Irish clogging and royalty have in common?** They have all converged at Roots and Wisdom: Amin, Amata and Eliah have participated in the Summer Growing Program since its inception in 2006.

**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 2007 through September 2008.

#### Business Donors

Roxbury Farm  
Soluna Yoga Studio  
Two Spruce Pottery

#### Matching Gifts

Dell Foundation  
Fennimore Asset Management, Inc.  
GE Foundation

#### Corporate and Community Foundations

Stewart's Foundation  
Ben and Jerry's Foundation

#### Community Groups

Alliance with the Medical Society of Schenectady County  
Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Rotary Club  
Concerned for the Hungry

First Reformed Church of Schenectady, Covenant Fund Award

First Unitarian Society of Schenectady, Special Sunday Collection

First Unitarian Society of Schenectady, Daytime Women's Alliance

First Unitarian Society of Schenectady, Clear the Closet Sale

Ozone House, Union College

Soroptimist International of Schenectady

Union Presbyterian Church, Women's Association  
We c...green

#### County, State and Federal Funding

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

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

### Roots and Wisdom Staff

Amata Castillo, *intern*  
Carlin Churchill  
Debbie Forester

Christine Horigan  
Kristin Petersen, *webmaster*  
Leslie Wiedmann-Herd

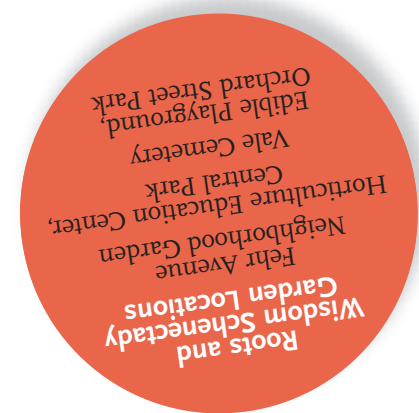
### Roots and Wisdom Advisory Board Members

Mary Anderson, <i>chair</i>	Kevin Karpowicz	Kristin Petersen
Barbara Blanchard	Ed Kosior	Jay Quaintance
Amata Castillo	Al Lansing	Pat Rodriguez
Matt Cutler	Maria LaTorre	Amanda Walczak
Julia Holcomb	Chris Logue	Thomas West
	Megan "Dash" Matiz	

NEWSLETTER DESIGN/AURORA DESIGN

### Roots and Wisdom

107 Nott Terrace, Suite 301  
Schenectady, NY 12308  
518-372-1622 x286  
[info@rootswisdom.org](mailto:info@rootswisdom.org)  
[www.rootswisdom.org](http://www.rootswisdom.org)



107 Nott Terrace, Suite 301  
Schenectady, NY 12308

Roots & Wisdom

