

Welcome to BioInspire, a monthly publication addressing the interface of human design, nature and technology.

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As an attendee at my second Bioneers conference, my world was rocked with incredible joy, emotion, and most of all, inspiration. This 3-day conference just north of San Francisco has had the ability to not only to revolutionize my world view time after time, but provides me with the hope and courage to step up and face today's challenges with all my brothers and sisters whose will and determination lead my way.

It was absolutely amazing to learn about the wide variety of projects currently being undertaken by today's youth. Together, we will make this a better world for all of us. Sharing your stories both inspire others to follow similar paths of pro-active restoration of our social and ecological fabric, as well as provide encouragement and hope for projects currently underway.

Whether initiating community gardens or spurring social activism, your stories are an important and valuable tool to help connect all of us and provide an astonishing amount of inspiration. It can be done. It will be done. **Today's youth are doing it!!**

Your stories will guide us all.
Much peace and hope,

John Mlade

Bioneers Conference 2003

October 17-19 ~ San Rafael, CA

Bioneers Youth Initiative Overview

In the third year of the Bioneers Youth Initiative, we were delighted to have been joined at Bioneers this year by more incredible youth leaders than ever before. Over 100 scholarships were awarded to a diverse group of youth and educators from the US, Canada and Brazil. The Bioneers community, including adults, is invited and welcome to participate in the youth program.

The Bioneers Youth project aims to support and catalyze youth leaders and educators engaged in environmental and social justice work, and connect them to a network of peers and accomplished mentors. Bioneers youth honor the transformative power of alliance across race, age, gender, class and culture, and importance of diversity in

addressing the challenges facing the Earth.

“It means so much to me that youth were taken so seriously at the conference, that we were armed with so much knowledge to take home with us to spread the word... The conference got me thinking about my goals and how I might want to shape my future.” - Catherine Wing (2002 youth scholarship recipient)

Visit www.bioneers.org/youth.html for more information on the Bioneers Youth Initiative and a full listing of the Bioneers 2003 youth schedule. A partial schedule follows:

Youth in Action

Young activists are uniting movements using fresh perspectives, creativity and imagination. Hear from inspiring youth leaders vocalizing change! Severn Cullis-Suzuki founded a children's environmental group at age nine, and addressed the Rio Summit at twelve and hasn't stopped since; supermodel, actress, mother and environmental activist Angela Lindvall founded the Collage Foundation for youth change agents; the youngest delegate to the UN Summit in Johannesburg and a co-founder of Georgia Kids Against Pollution, Illai Kenney is also one of this year's Brower Youth Award winners. Moderated by devoted activist and visionary, Julia Butterfly Hill.

Youth Dialogue Groups

Change the world through dialogue! Brainstorm, share your ideas, network and participate in small group discussions around issues including finding a mentor; campus organizing; undoing racism and oppression; youth voting; food & farming; education; green entrepreneurship; and much more. Bring your own ideas for discussions you want to facilitate.

Theater for Liberation

Theatre can be a powerful tool for exploring social, political and environmental education and liberation. Experience theatre as a means to kinesthetically explore the intersection between social and environmental issues, and human community. Rebecca Schultz and Meadow Barr will introduce techniques from Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) and provide an experiential outlet for exploring the depth of issues at Bioneers with our minds, bodies and voices.

Youth Speaks

Join Jason Mateo and other Youth Speaks poets for an interactive creative writing/spoken word workshop. Discover new avenues for self-expression, learn tools to vocalize positive social change, and explore leadership and teamwork through the written and spoken word. Come motivated to write and speak, and leave with at least three pieces of writing to share (at the youth open mic if you choose!).

Bringing IT Back: Tloque Nauaque Teocalli

Driven by rich ancestral heritage, essentially hidden for the last 500 years, young people are awakening to the revitalization of sacred indigenous culture, and working in partnership to cultivate civic responsibility and sustainable community models. David Guizar and youth from Tloque Nauaque Teocalli (United Together: A House of Creation) will discuss the reemergence of Mexica-Indigenous culture in Los Angeles and beyond, and its role in countering gang violence in the barrios.

The Food Project

The Food Project has been working with youth from the inner-city and suburbs to create sustainable local food systems locally and nationally. We have employed 600 teens, grown 1,000,000 pounds of organic food for shelters, low-income communities and Boston area residents, re-mediated 2.5 acres in the inner city and farm on 31 acres outside the city, engaged youth from different races, classes and ethnicities in food enterprise through our commercial kitchen, and through all this and more, provide a structured, intentional, experiential opportunity for teens to experience and begin to understand the natural world.

Kellogg funded us from 1998-2002 to begin to document and disseminate our work nationally. Part of that work was co-founding the national Rooted in Community Network. Last year we handed that network over and are working again for the next five years with Kellogg and a few other funders to go to the next level of local and national engagement for youth-14-24yrs old.

BLAST-"Building Local Food Systems Today" will provide the networking, training, advocacy, internship and job opportunities necessary for youth/young adults to stay engaged for years in their commitment to food security and local sustainable food systems. We will document and share best practices and support organizations to work with young people. At the end we will have a multi cultural group of leaders and practitioners from around the country for the future.

Our current web is www.thefoodproject.org and by March we will have a new site with information about this new stage in our development.

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Lead Coalition formed by the Urban Education and Outreach Team By Jeff Boucher, Age 17, Urban Education and Outreach Intern

Gardens are a prominent feature of the Dudley community. Within a 1/2 mile radius of The Food Project's urban office, there are over 168 gardeners growing food for their

families. However, the majority of the soil in these gardens has heavy concentrations of lead, which is transferred to the food they grow creating a dangerous health concern. Eating lead-contaminated food potentially causes both neurological and developmental disorders. Recognizing how beneficial the food is to the gardeners and their families, our goal is not to stop them from growing, but rather draw attention to this public health issue.

Our hard work spreading the word, reaching out to politicians, and meeting with health officials has led to the creation of our lead steering committee. This committee is made up of Board of Public Health and EPA officials, in addition to university scientists and professors. The lead steering committee assists us in our soil remediation efforts, GIS mapping, and planning for our annual Urban Agriculture Conference.

Find out more about The Food Project at www.thefoodproject.org

NOFA Massachusetts Youth Urban Gardening Project

For more info, click on: <http://www.nofamass.org/programs/justice/index.php>

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Rooted in Community (RIC)

Rooted in Community (RIC) is a national grassroots network that empowers young people to take leadership in their own communities. We are a diverse movement of youth and adult counterparts who are committed to building healthy communities through urban and rural agriculture, related environmental justice, community gardening, and food security work. Initiated in 1998, RIC helps strengthen the leadership skills of youth and adult community organizers through intensive national trainings, action days, and networking opportunities.

Nearly 100 organizations that work with young people on food justice, community gardening, sustainable agriculture, or related issues are part of this network. Each year, youth plan and help facilitate a national youth conference. The conference, along with other networking opportunities throughout the year, provides a powerful tool for young people to share strategies, lessons, and successes as well as gain inspiration from one another.

The 6th annual Rooted In Community conference will be held in July 2004 in Olympia,

Washington and will be hosted by Garden-Raised Bounty (GRuB) and the Cascadia Youth Gardening Coalition. For more information about the RIC network, see www.ricyouth.org

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USGBC Emerging Green Builders Subcommittee

Vision:

To integrate students and emerging professionals into the green building movement.

Mission:

To create a network of emerging green building leaders and develop opportunities for involvement through the U.S. Green Building Council.

2003-2004 Five-Point Charter:

1. Engage emerging green builders with the U.S. Green Building Council.
2. Establish a presence with green building leaders, educational institutions, and the green building industry.
3. Create and maintain webpages and a listserv through the U.S. Green Building Council for communication, education, and networking.
4. Increase attendance, involvement, and awareness of emerging green builders at U.S. Green Building Council events.
5. Work with the U.S. Green Building Council, Chapter Steering Committee and USGBC chapters to empower and encourage emerging green builders to become active in local networking, education, and advocacy.

Visit www.usgbc.org/Chapters/emerginggreen.asp for more information.

Added Value

Added Value's mission is to promote the sustainable development of Red Hook by nurturing a new generation of young leaders. We work towards this goal by creating

opportunities for the youth of South Brooklyn to expand their knowledge base, develop new skills and positively engage with their community through the operation of a socially responsible urban farming enterprise.

Over the past three years, Added Value has trained more than 45 young people, founded the Red Hook Farmers' Market and begun to build a two-acre farm and urban agricultural educational center. Our work has been a catalyst for other community-based programs, helped revitalize Coffey Park, and strengthen the community's relationship with the food system. These early successes are due, in large part, to our ability to weave together a Community Advisory Council representing 30 local, regional and national institutions that support our work to improve the neighborhood by creating youth leaders.

In addition to our core urban agricultural projects Added Value has three programmatic initiatives: Herban Solutions (our market gardening business), Digital Horizons (our media literacy and multi-media initiative), and Project R.E.A.L (our environmental justice projects).

Youth participants work seventeen hours each week in our gardens, at market and on the computers. Among other things they are nurturing plants, selling produce and building our website www.added-value.org. For their efforts youth participants receive a generous stipend while gaining the skills that will help them build a more sustainable, more just economy. Upon completion of their year with Added Value participants possess the knowledge to make a difference in the quality of life in their community and the confidence to do just that.

www.added-value.org

Lots to Gardens and Hilltop Community Gardens

Located in Lewiston, Maine, Lots to Gardens and Hilltop Community Gardens support low-income populations in creating a sustainable and just community food system and cultivating a livable city for everyone. We create change in the community by growing food where it's needed, with the people that need it. We support people in finding their own voices and power through the participatory and community-driven processes we use to make decisions and to determine our goals, programs, and vision.

Through both organizations, over 35 families participate in growing their own food, and many adults and children attend weekly gardening nights. Weekly Harvest Suppers and Veggie Stands provide alternative means access to fresh food for the neighborhoods.

Through our Youth Development Program, we provide a meaningful and participatory work experience for youth based on the belief that youth are necessary partners in creating change. Youth design their working environment, expectations and consequences, and goals and action plans for their community. They maintain eight lots and parks in downtown Lewiston, primarily in the two poorest census tracts in the state.

Youth grow food, create green spaces, work with community members and children, and develop skills and knowledge. In addition to the crew positions, next year we will provide opportunities for taking on more leadership and responsibilities through two Internships – alumni youth will be paid staff, leading the youth crews and community programs alongside our staff.

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Gardening the Community

Gardening the Community is a project of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Massachusetts (NOFA/Mass). Currently the project strives to help youth understand the importance of healthy locally grown food, sustainable growing practices, environmental justice, and community empowerment, as well as gain first time job experience, and leadership training, in a safe, supporting, and fun atmosphere.

Gardening the Community has truly begun to reach out to the community and build roots. GC was recognized by the Maple High Six Corners Neighborhood Council with a Community Service Award for working to help improve the community. All 12 GC students were also individually recognized for their efforts in completing the program. GC students worked for 12 weeks this past summer, growing food in a garden at 488 Central St., Springfield, MA which was started in 2002 by GC youth. As part of the program GC students visited area farms, including the Food Bank Farm in Hadley, MA, Red Fire Farm in Ludlow, MA and The Many Hands Organic Farm in Barre, MA. Students visited other youth garden groups like Nuestras Raices in Holyoke, MA and UGROW, in Worcester, MA. In August the GC students participated in a community service activity at the Loaves and Fishes soup kitchen in downtown Springfield, MA.

GC is continuing to grow, adding another lot to the project, which has been given by the Maple High Six Corners Neighborhood Council. We will continue to engage more of the community by helping to promote urban agriculture development and community improvement, and making nutrition information and healthy food more accessible.

For more information about the program, or to find out how you can get involved with us please contact:

GC Community/Youth Coordinator, Ruby Maddox, rrmaddox@hotmail.com
GC Garden Coordinator, Jonathan Bates, jonathan@thinkearth.com
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Or go to, <http://www.nofamass.org/programs/justice/index.php>

People's Grocery

People's Grocers is working to find creative solutions to the food needs of West Oakland residents. Our mission is to uphold the human right to healthy and affordable food and to build community self-reliance by increasing neighborhood access to locally-produced fruits and vegetables and by promoting social enterprise, youth entrepreneurship, sustainable agriculture and grassroots organizing. Our programs include:

Mobile market, a grocery store on wheels selling fresh healthy and affordable food from local farmers, Collards n' Commerce, a business and gardening program which employs 8 high school students and the Urban Agriculture program which works with 5 local gardens to grow food for residents.

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Excerpt from Keynote Address Given by Wilbur Bullock, Age 22, at the 2003 Community Food Security Coalition Conference

Now, I am not saying that youth are the solution to all of the issues in our food system, but I am saying that without us you will never find a long-term solution. There has to be a partnership between the both us. The best way I can describe this partnership is to compare it to a tribe. When I think of a tribe, the thing that sticks out to me is the relationship between the elders and the youth. Now the elders have the knowledge from past experience. And youth have energy, capacity, insight, and they are the leaders of the next generation. Now if the elders don't pass anything on to the youth then the knowledge they have will just die with them. And the youth will just make the same mistakes that the elders did. So you see if you want to change things you need to realize that you need us just as much as we need you.

I believe that it is possible to transform our current food system. But it is going to take people who dare to dream, people who have knowledge; it's going to take access to land, which will open up job opportunities that will help make the economics in your communities strong. You and can't sit around hoping waiting the next person to change things we have to do it.

As it says in a quote someone gave me, "We are the People that we are waiting for".

Find out more about The Food Project at: www.thefoodproject.org

B.L.A.S.T. Off!
Young People Building Sustainable Food Systems

At The Food Project, we know the importance of young people in the food system. They represent a key group of consumers. They are future leaders. And—increasingly—they are the ones making change in the communities across the country right now. BLAST, which stands for Building Local Agricultural Systems Today, is our national initiative to maximize young people's potential for transforming food systems.

BLAST will provide the networking, training, advocacy, internship and job opportunities necessary for a diverse group of youth/young adults to stay engaged for years to come in their commitment to food security and local sustainable food systems.

For our latest BLAST event, The Food Project hosted 50 youth and young adults from across the US and Canada at the Community Food Security Conference in Boston. In 2004, we will continue to integrate young people into major conferences, such as the Kellogg Foundation's annual Food and Society Conference in April. We will also be launching a website of resources and opportunities, and we will be selecting a cadre of young leaders for advanced training and action.

Stay tuned for more on BLAST as we update our website: www.thefoodproject.org

Excerpt from essay written by Kristin Brennan of The Food Project for *Toward A Liveable City*, a book of essays published by Milkweed Press, November 2003.

An army of purple tee-shirted teenagers start eagerly unloading themselves and their freight from a pair of cargo vans. Their knees are dirtied and their fingers smell like basil. The adrenaline still surges from the morning activity, when they pulled red peppers and eggplants gently from the plants, lifted skinny carrots from the soft soil bed, and snapped collard green leaves from the hearty stems. They set up their farmer's market tent and a crowd of people soon surrounds them with the buzz of Cape Verdean and Haitian Creole, Spanish, Portuguese, and English. Two months ago, these teenagers walked onto the farm land in this city neighborhood without any gardening experience but now they have pulled weeds, spread compost, set up drip irrigation systems, and harvested vegetables. The farmland once held 16 houses and, when those were burned to the ground, it became an acre and a half stretch of rubble and trash. Through the work of these young people, it now gives life to over 10,000 pounds of vegetables each season.

This is The Food Project, a non-profit that brings urban and suburban youth together to engage in care of the land and in food production. From these experiences, they deepen their understanding of themselves, their communities, and the relationship between the two. Here, young people put their fingers deep into the soil- the soil that has known neglect, pollution, and now, care and fertility - and pull out sweet carrots, forgetting

about pizza and chips if only for an hour or two as they crunch into the day's harvest. In this place, food is certainly the end goal – beautiful, delicious, and bountiful vegetables that fill the markets, the shelters, the resident's tables with color and flavor. Yet, it is in the process of planting, growing, and harvesting in this city spot that creates the occasion – the time, the place, the activity - in which people deeply engage in urban life through the most basic of human practices, the sharing of food. And because of this phenomenon, this city place is not just livable – it is alive.

Find out more about The Food Project at: www.thefoodproject.org

Green Teen Community Gardening Program

The overall goal of the Green Teen Community Gardening Program is to use the model of a community gardening to teach at-risk, underserved participants life and work-readiness skills through community gardening, agriculture, and business development, thereby decreasing juvenile delinquency and other negative behaviors among at-risk youth and young adults in the City of Poughkeepsie, New York. The objectives of the program include: (1) To increase knowledge of nutrition and gardening; (2) To improve the life skills of program participants; (3) To increase the positive self-esteem of program participants; (4) To instill a sense of respect and connectedness to community; and (5) To improve work-readiness skills.

The most recent accomplishment of the program includes the official debut of the Green Teen's Hot Shot Nectarine Salsa. Labeled as "Poughkeepsie's Own, Locally Grown," this event was the culmination of many months of work for youth and staff of this youth development and entrepreneurial program. The salsa is the original recipe of program youth, who also researched the current food climate, sourced the ingredients from local farmers, taste tested recipes with customers, and produced the salsa at a local commercial kitchen, Hudson Valley Foodworks. Sales from the 1,200 jars of 12-ounce salsa will support the program and youth participants.

To learn more about our program, please visit our website at www.cce.cornell.edu/dutchess

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Chickasaw Nation Community Garden

The Community Garden, in conjunction with the Chickasaw Nation Summer Youth Program, takes native American youth between the ages of 14 and 21 and employs them for the Summer, teaching them the secrets of urban agriculture. Believing that to succeed our youth will need a great deal more than agricultural knowledge, the Garden strives to offer a great deal more. Tutoring, life skills, career planning, and job development training play key roles in the Garden's program. Mixed with lessons on agriculture and life skills participants will have the unique opportunity to experience the Chickasaw culture as well as the wealth of natural resources available in the heart of "Native America."

You may find out more about our program and about the Chickasaw Nation at www.chickasaw.net. And if you have any questions regarding our program or the Chickasaw Nation please feel free to contact me at Ira.Adams@chickasaw.net

IraDean Adams
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Youth Horticulture Project

The Youth Horticulture Project, a new initiative of the University of Vermont Extension in the southern region, is a meaningful program that helps at-risk youth experience success and develop important job and life skills through the growing, harvesting and marketing of vegetable crops.

The goals of the project are to: 1. Develop critical life skills of communication, teamwork, leadership, decision-making and problem-solving through practical, hands-on agricultural and entrepreneurial experiences; 2. Build confidence and awareness of how to succeed in a job through real-life entrepreneurial activities associated with food production and; 3. Connect youth with the source of their food, the natural world and their communities through work on the land.

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Urban Oasis

Urban Oasis is an urban mini-farm located on the grounds of St. Elizabeth's hospital in the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, DC. Urban Oasis was initiated in 1998 as a project of Community Harvest and Garden Resources of Washington as a demonstration environmental farm to help address the lack of access to healthy food in underserved DC communities.

Urban Oasis has succeeded in bringing people from diverse backgrounds together on a regular basis to help grow affordable, healthy food for nearby communities lacking access to healthy food. Food from Urban Oasis is sold at farmers markets by youth and adult community partners.

Each year over 1000 volunteers from more than 35 organizations, school groups and businesses help to prepare garden beds, weed, mulch, compost, water and harvest. Students participating in the Youth Leadership Program are offered employment at Urban Oasis, where they tend and harvest crops for sale at the farmers markets and farm stands. For more information go to www.communityharvestdc.org

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