

Farm



Notes

March 2009

www.worldhungerrelief.org

info@worldhungerrelief.org

(254) 799-5611

Planting Change in the City

"So what veggies are we going to send home with the boys this week?"

Every week WHRI Urban Gardening Intern, Bethel Erickson, and I face this important decision as we wait for the Brazos and Tennyson Middle School students to arrive at the Elm Avenue garden.

"How about broccoli?" I say
Bethel shrugs. "They do like broccoli, and we have plenty for them to take home and cook."

"Good, last week while we were giving out carrots they were sneaking broccoli into their hoody pockets!"

Contrary to common wisdom, some inner-city Waco middle school boys really *do* enjoy working in gardens and eating vegetables. Anecdotes like that above are backed up by studies showing that children who grow and prepare vegetables are much more likely to eat them. Students across Waco and throughout the U.S. are disproving the myth that kids don't like vegetables.

In 2003, WHRI received a grant from the Cooper Foundation to assess the needs and interest for urban gardening in Waco. Our interns conducted surveys in South and East Waco. We also helped develop the Heart of Texas Urban Gardening Coalition, a group of organizations and individuals with a passion to see gardening outreach happen in McLennan County. We originally thought that we

would be helping back yard gardeners grow fresh, healthy food. However, it turned out we found an even greater enthusiasm for school gardening programs.

Last year, we helped start gardens at two schools as well as supporting an entrepreneurial high school student growing vegetables for sale at the Carver Park Baptist Church. Support from Cooper Foundation, Alcoa Foundation, and the Baptist General Convention of Texas' Christian Life Commission as well as a long-term relationship with Communities in Schools has enabled us to expand to seven schools this year, though we still can't respond to all the requests we receive. The gardens serve as "outdoor classrooms" providing an environment where students can enjoy outdoor

physical activities while learning about science, nutrition, and environmental stewardship.

While the gardens produce tomatoes, peppers and watermelons, the most valuable seeds germinate in the lives of the students tending the gardens. One Doris Miller Elementary School 4th grader, Isaiah, obviously has some behavior problems. But he gained a new sense of pride in himself and his school by being a part of developing the garden. He even got his picture in the *Waco Tribune Herald*! Isaiah's teachers came to thank us for giving him purpose at school. An A.J. Moore Academy



Middle school students prepare vegetable beds at Elm Ave. garden

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... Planting Change

student's mother called his teacher to find out about the gardening program her son wouldn't stop talking about. He had decided that he wanted to become a chef, and was excited about learning to grow vegetables.

Through these efforts WHRI has brought together diverse members of the Waco community. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a diverse group of 1,100 community members volunteered to help us work in 12 gardens around town. The event was featured in a *Washington Post* article on President Obama's call to service.

The gardens also provide valuable cross-cultural experiences for our interns. As they work with young learners and volunteers, they are challenged to put into practice the teaching skills, gardening,

and nutrition concepts that we teach as part of our internship program.



Amy Cox waters onions at Elm Ave. garden

previously believed.

Funny, our broccoli-snitching Middle School kids had that figured out long ago!

Matt

Come Join us for

Spring Farm Day

Saturday, April 4th from 9:00am - 4:00pm

Special Presentation @ 12:30pm by

Brad & Jenny Stufflebeam,

“Eating Locally”

LIVE MUSIC & FARM FRESH FOOD

Plants, Seeds, & Grass-Fed Meat Sales

ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN!!!

Pony Rides, Hayrides, Animal Petting Area

"Sowing Kingdom Seeds"

My story starts in the mono-cropped farmlands of the Midwest. Momma grew gardens with low-income folk, and Papa preached about God's Good Word. And something made sense – about how we should love our neighbors – and see to it that all folks should have somewhere to lay their heads and something to fill their bellies. God has put me in a position of privilege to comfort the afflicted – and afflict the comfortable.

In the sheltered Scandinavian sweet corn slopes of Northeast Iowa, I complete degrees in Social Work and Sociology (with unlikely emphases in community food security nonviolent direct action). There I dreamed big dreams about revolutionizing the world – part of an eager generation enthused to serve Christ in the abandoned parts of the Kingdom by growing gardens, living communally, biking bravely and drinking lots of coffee.

Ready to save the world, I jumped head-first into the fire by teaching financial literacy and "the ways of the white man" to convicts fresh out of prison on the South Side of Chicago. I ended up learning more from them about the injustice of our "justice" system and racial relations in America today. Paired with a disillusioning congressional aid stint in New Hampshire, I became cynical of saving the world via politics, as I recognized the all-pervasive role of power and money therein.

I began to put my hope in Christ as Messiah – rather than myself or politics. I moved to the North Side of Chicago to try out communal living with a group called Jesus People USA (JPUSA). Through my work at a homeless shelter – as well as nightly bouts of dumpster diving and bike brigading, I started seeing

Christ's Kingdom taking seed in the hearts of broken folks and sprouting in the cracks of the trash-strewn sidewalks and dirty-needed alleyways.

The Lord led me next to the little-known lands of Delaware where I served as a homeless outreach counselor. Living in the city where gunshots are more prevalent than grocers, my house shared home-grown and

dumpster-salvaged goods with neighbors and clients – many of whom were losing toes or eyesight due to diabetes. Others were on the verge of myocardial infarction due to high blood pressure – resulting in part from our wonderful pharmaceutically-controlled health care system . . . I digress.

Now I'm in Waco, Texas. Living and working on a farm. The old traditional John Deere farmers in their Round Up Ready caps back home in Illinois are scratching their heads at the schizophrenic pilgrimage of their preacher's daughter . . .

If you need some seeds to keep in your pocket as you pass through the abandoned places of the Kingdom (whether it be a parking lot, vacant lot, suburban lawn), there's a gal with dirty braids and patched pants by the name of *la Gringa Loca* who wants to help replant the Kingdom.



Bethel Erickson

Bethel

WHRI Alumni & Intern Updates

◆ Allan DeLaurell

Serves at Talitha Koum, a "therapeutic nursery working with families mired in urban poverty." In December he led a group from Harvard University's School of Engineering in a successful well-drilling expedition in the Dominican Republic. He continues to contemplate and discern whether longer-term international service is within his calling.

◆ Jeremy and Amy Everett

Moved back to Waco after five years living and serving in San Antonio's West Side. Jeremy's community development work led to the development of the Guadalupe Street Coffee social enterprise. He now spearheads the Texas Hunger Initiative, a partnership of the Baylor School of Social Work and the Christian Life Commission. WHRI is excited about collaborating with him in combating hunger in Texas. Jeremy and Amy have two sons, Lucas and Samuel.

◆ Ruth (Mick) Mishler

Is conducting research on weed control in cassava and sweet potato in Mansa, Zambia. She has been studying at Penn State, and her research is supported through a Fulbright scholarship. She recruited John Mischler, a PhD student, to join her (they were married in October, 2008!) She reports, "We are doing well and are getting settled into life in Zambia, learning so much!"

◆ Patrick O'Conner

Lives in Oakland, California (Raider Nation) where he gardens & manages a plant nursery with City Slicker Farms, an urban farming organization. He plans to enroll in UC Davis's International Ag Development program after establishing residency.

◆ Micah Pasucci

Works at Washington Academy, the oldest high school in Maine. Among other responsibilities, he teaches bike repair & maintenance. In his spare time he translates for a Health Service serving Haitian migrant laborers and moonlights as a farmer, trimming goat hooves and butchering pigs. He's still a Yankee, but does miss Texas.

World Hunger Relief, Inc. is a tax-exempt, non-profit corporation registered with the State of Texas under the 501(c)(3) IRS status.

Mission Statement

World Hunger Relief, Inc. is a Christian organization committed to the alleviation of hunger around the world.

God calls us to:

- Train** individuals in holistic ministry that equips them to work with communities in developing sustainable farming techniques
- Educate** those with an economic abundance on methods of conserving and sharing resources
- Participate** in local and international sustainable development programs

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neil@worldhungerrelief.org
matt@worldhungerrelief.org
david@worldhungerrelief.org
dale@worldhungerrelief.org
joanna@worldhungerrelief.org

World Hunger Relief, Inc.
P.O. Box 639
Elm Mott, TX 76640-0639

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