

Groundwork Lawrence

Green Team

FY08-09 Newsletter IV

Summer 2008

Groundwork Lawrence is a non-profit organization working to create sustainable environmental change through community-based partnerships. Groundwork Lawrence is an affiliate of Groundwork USA. The Groundwork Lawrence **Green Team** is a year-round program that offers part-time, paid positions for 10 Lawrence high school students each year to help learn about and lead local environmental and healthy community initiatives, conduct research, raise awareness, challenge their peers to do community service, and participate in hands-on improvement projects throughout the City of Lawrence. The program is intended to promote the protection and restoration of Lawrence's critical ecological systems, natural resources, and public health by engaging teens in advocacy and service-learning efforts focused on the community's parks, gardens, waterways, and vacant open spaces. The Green Team program has dual goals - to prepare Lawrence's youth for a lifetime of environmental and healthy community leadership, and to invest in our community's future and capacity to improve its physical environment. Welcome to the fourth newsletter, we hope you enjoy reading about our service projects, trips and education. Welcome to the fourth Groundwork Green Team newsletter.



Johnson Farm

As a result of a fruitful partnership with Johnson Farm who donated a ¼ acre of land for this cause, our Green Team harvested 2,056 pounds of vegetables that were donated to Neighbors in Need, a local hunger relief organization in Lawrence. Neighbors in Need operate 7 food pantries that are strategically located in Lawrence neighborhoods so that they may be in walking distance to those most in need of food assistance.



Throughout our time on the farm, we learned the basics of farming. We first began with hoeing the weeds alongside the growing vegetables and soon harvested them. This turned into a consistent routine during our days at Johnson's Farm. While weeding and harvesting wasn't easy to begin with, working under the sun made it even harder. However, we were always reminded that all our hard work was giving fresh, healthy produce to families in need.

"It was hard work, but for a great cause, this definitely helped improve the lives of others." - Wilnelly Rivera, a Green Team member

The Green Team helped harvest 2,056 pounds of food!



Farmer's Market



Every Wednesday this summer, the Green Team worked at the Lawrence Farmer's Market. We had the opportunity to experience how the market works and to learn a lot from local farmers.

We helped several farmers who participated. Sacha, a Green Team member was a huge helper for Dirk as the "cashier" for his farm.



Sometimes we even received free fruits or vegetables as an award for our help. We cleaned up trash around Appleton Way, flying paper bags being one of our major trash issues. We helped with counting, and handing out flyers for various causes and events. We also interacted and socialized with people from the city. Green Team always looked forward to Wednesdays. We were honored and grateful to be a part of helping inform our community of the different events, resources and introducing them to fresh fruits and vegetables.

"I enjoyed working with Dirk. What I liked about working at the Farmer's Market was people with WIC could get fresh food. The Farmer's Market is the place in Lawrence where citizens can get healthy food."
-Sacha Cruz, a Green Team member

Community Gardening

Beginning in April, the Green Team maintained two raised garden beds at the Brook St. community garden.

We watched our plants grow from seedlings into delicious vegetables, herbs and beautiful flowers. We visited the gardens every week to water, weed, thin, transplant, and most importantly harvest. Though at times the Green Team necessarily didn't see "eye to eye", we managed to settle our differences and learned that it was best to work as a team.



“Working in the community gardens was frustrating in the beginning, because we had shared beds. Everyone had ideas about how they wanted to do things and it seemed like we couldn’t agree. But then we created a system that helped guide planting and it also helped organize our group into working together.” - Wanny Munoz, a Green Team member

By mid-summer it seemed like every week we had vegetables to take home to eat and share with our families. We were even able to use some of our produce for cooking which we will talk about later on in this newsletter.

Leonard School Garden

The Green Team adopted the Leonard School garden in July. This garden was started by Groundwork Lawrence’s ‘Eat Right Move More’ Program with middle school students. The purpose of this program

was to teach students healthy habits: the importance of eating more nutritiously, and increased physical activity. The garden was maintained during the summer by Green Team.



The Green Team willingly took care of it as our own. We watered, weeded, and harvested the garden all through the summer. We harvested yellow pear tomatoes, regular tomatoes, green and purple beans, eggplants, zucchini, cucumber, parsley, basil, mustard greens, bok choy, flowers-zinnia’s etc.

Later in the summer, once the mustard greens and bok choy were harvested we planted carrots, beets and onions. Unfortunately, our zucchini bed rotted late in the summer from all the rain. The zucchinis that did survive got enormously huge. We planted some late season lettuce in place of the rotted zucchinis. This summer we learned that growing your own food is hard work but it can also be very rewarding.

“It looked like someone injected steroids in these zucchinis.” - - Jesenia Lopez, a Green Team member

Power Pod Visit

The Green Team received a private tour of a single unit Power Pod model with the founder of PowerHouse Enterprises, Quincy Vale, in Lawrence MA.



We were led into a dark warehouse where a beautiful energy efficient home stood. Inside the power pod there was a cozy room with modern furniture, lots of large windows, a small kitchen, a bedroom and bathroom. Quincy Vale said that he started the Power Pod company because he wanted to make eco-friendly, 'green housing' options affordable to the middle class and he wanted to prove that you did not need to be wealthy to have solar panels. So his power pod units were based on this principal- Quincy said he wanted to make energy efficient green homes

more affordable for middle class Americans. Some of the 'green' things that we thought were really cool: the roof had solar panels, and the kitchen countertop was made out of recycled newspapers.



Quincy showed us what the solar panels looked like and how they worked with the heating and cooling and could provide enough energy for the house. This visit was very inspiring to the Green Team. If you'd like to learn more about the power pod you can visit the website at <http://www.powerhouse-enterprises.com/powerpod/index.shtml>.

Financial Literacy

To take a break from the mid-day summer heat, we took part in financial literacy classes. During the course of these sessions, we learned about how to better budget money, take a critical look at our current spending habits, and identify habits that we could change to be more financially savvy. We came to the conclusion that in order to better handle our money we needed to verify how much money we spent every week. One Green Team member realized that he was spending \$60 on Dunkin' Donuts ice coffee a month. Another Green Team member realized that her clothing shopping



habits exceeded her income and that this was something she would have to work on. We then set a future, realistic financial goal we wanted to accomplish either by the end of the summer or the end of the year.

Regional Groundwork Green Team Kick-Off

The Green Team Summer Kick-off was hosted by Groundwork Lawrence this year at the Lawrence Boat House. This was a chance for all of the regional Groundwork Green Teams to come together, meet one another and find out what projects each group and organization was working on in their local community. We were joined by Groundwork Somerville, MA, Groundwork Providence, RI, and Groundwork Concord NH, green teams.

Trail Maintenance at Den Rock Park

Instead of our usual Green Team schedule, we ventured to Den Rock Park to meet with Don Hoffses from AMC. Don came to Lawrence to teach us about trail maintenance, and to help guide us through fixing Den Rock's water bars which prevent trail erosion, and guided us on clearing overgrown trails. A group of Green Team members worked on the water bars, while another group walked along the trails and lopped off overgrown branches so that there was a 4X8 ft space left for walking on trail. The Green Team had done trail maintenance work in previous years, but we still gained new knowledge of general wear and tear of trails and the regular maintenance that is needed to keep the trails in good shape. For our safety we wore stylish yellow work helmets and practiced the safety tips Don taught us how to use the tools. Another useful tip Don taught us was one of his famous phrases, "Woo Woo," which means great, or that's the way to do it! Although many of us got tired of trail work quickly, we kept a good pace and finished earlier than anticipated. We even got free AMC t-shirts.



Cape Cod National Seashore Trip



The Green Team went on an exciting service trip to Cape Cod for three days. We camped out at Shawnee-Crowell Campground in Sandwich, MA where we joined GW Somerville, GW Providence, and the NPS's Boston Trail Blazers- Frank Middleton of the National Park Service helped organize the event. We did trail maintenance in Provincetown, MA along the beach bike trail. The second day, on our way back after our service, we swam at the Knickerson Campground which had a beautiful lake. We swam in the ocean at Province Town- but because of the hurricane down South at the

time, the waves and current were really strong. A few of us even saw a pod of whales in the distance spouting up water.

Walking Audits

We conducted a few walking audits during the summer with Kathryn Pryblyski of Groundwork Lawrence. Our first site was near Hayden Schofield Park. Our second walking audit was near Lawrence Community Works (LCW) community center at the intersection of Newbury and E. Haverhill. Some of the questions we answered on the survey were: Are cars parked on the street?, What is the walking surface? How



wide is the sidewalk (if there is one)?, Is there room for 2 people to walk side by side? Is there trash on the ground? Is there a crosswalk where you crossed the street? What is the condition of the crosswalk? (lines faint, bright) Did cars yield to pedestrians in crosswalks? When we reunited from our walking audits, every green team pair had something to say about the street and intersection they covered, lack of signage, crosswalks, cars going over the speed limit etc. We hope to do more of these in the future and report our findings to the city to advocate for improvements.





Visit to UTEC Lowell

We took a trip to UTEC (United Teen Equality Center) in Lowell, MA to see what a youth run farm is like. The youth program, “Fresh Roots” gave us a tour of their farm, and had us partake in their daily routine. The youth program is divided up into three areas; farming, business and cooking. The UTEC Fresh Roots program sold their produce to the Lowell farmers market and restaurants. When

we got there, we played fun icebreakers, helped work on the farm, and played an intense volleyball game, which we ended up losing. We learned how to harvest garlic, how to grow potatoes in tires, and harvest spring mix lettuce. “It was fun learning what other youth groups were doing in farming,” shared Wilnely Rivera, a Green Team member. Seeing this youth run farm was amazing and we hope that someday we will be able to have one of our own in Lawrence!

Lowell National Park Clean-Up

We travelled to Lowell for the day to help the Lowell City Corps do a clean-up at one of Lowell’s National Parks. When we arrived, the Lowell youth had already pulled out a lot of garbage from the area, and surprisingly there was much more to be done. The Green Team went to work with City Corps to an area along the river. We were to clean up a site where previous squatters had been living. The area was totally charred and melted by a fire. It was a sad site. The Green Team pulled out all sorts of things, glass, parts of computers, bed frame, rusty bicycle etc. We worked hard all morning cleaning up the

area. However, we had to stop around lunch time because we had filled the dumpster. Even though there was more trash to be picked up, we felt it was a good start. Lowell is hoping to eventually have a river walkway along the area so that more people can enjoy the beautiful natural resources our region has to offer.





Trout Unlimited

In mid August, we set off for a three day trip to Lancaster, NH. When we first arrived, we helped conduct research on culverts and fish population deep in the woods off a long dirt road. We split up into smaller groups and researched fish in the river to count how many were getting upstream, though only a few of us caught fish in our nets and they were so small! Some of us helped measure the incline of the stream by standing in the river with big funny looking

waders and pulled up the measuring tape until the survey equipment beeped that we were level, and then we recorded the measurement.

The next day we visited a fish hatchery in Berlin, NH. Here we learned all about the fish hatcheries in NH, their history and what is involved. We got to help some of the workers fill a truck with some of the trout that were ready to be taken into the wild.

That evening some of us jumped into two vans to search for moose, which we had been told could be seen along the road at sunset. Unfortunately we didn't see any moose, but we had a great time camping at Camp Umbagog with Groundwork Somerville – we went canoeing, swimming, made s'mores and some of us even learned how to fly fish. Many of us had never been this far up north in New Hampshire.

A few months later after checking in with the Fish and Wildlife Dept, we found out that they had decided to remove the culvert because from their research (with our help) they determined it was too steep for the fish to swim upstream there to lay their eggs. So once again the Green Team had helped make a difference, this time for the trout.

Youth Summit

We attended a Youth Summit, at Lowell National Park on Saturday, August 16th. One of our fellow Green Team members, Wilnely Rivera won second place in the Youth Summit Essay contest (out of hundreds who submitted). Going to the Youth Summit was a great way to get to know other youth and feel appreciated for the work that we do.



Excerpts from Wilnely's essay:

Have you ever had a moment that changed...your way of life? As a member of the Lawrence Green Team, I have had the chance to experience many new and exciting things over this past year. Everything that I have done with the Green Team has made me more aware that I have to help improve my community and environment even if it is something small, because something small can make a big difference. Also I been told that the youth of today is the future of tomorrow, and we have to help make a difference now to help better future generations. Joining the Green Team has been one of the best decisions I have made.

Harvest Festival

On Saturday August 23rd, we had the chance to meet other community gardeners from the Brook Street Community Garden at Scarito Park. A few Green Team members did face painting for the kids that came. We all brought delicious dishes for lunch and desert to share. There was a contest for the best tomato dish and the winner received a large baking dish. It was a really nice chance for us to meet other gardeners.

Green Team Cooking

One of the things we enjoyed the most this summer was cooking! We had the opportunity to cook a few times this summer. We cooked flatbread pizza from scratch and added toppings fresh from the garden. And the Green Team added the toppings that they wanted. We used some vegetables and herbs from our garden such as tomatoes, peppers, basil, eggplant etc. All of the pizzas came out delicious! We made four in total so no one left hungry.



The next week we made tabbouleh with some ingredients from our garden like parsley and tomatoes. We also made hummus and blueberry crisp from our local CSA (community supported agriculture) Farmer Dave fruit share. The blueberries were sweeter than any blueberries you would find at a regular grocery store. This was because the berries were freshly picked nearby! It was great being able to make meals out of the vegetables and herbs that we grew this summer and to top it off with dessert made with fresh fruit from our CSA share!