

UPDATE: Youth and Economic Development

One Saturday in the Life of the Youth and Economic Development Department...

by Becca Prager

It's 8 a.m. on a Saturday. Most people are still sound asleep, but the SLUG office rocks with noise, people and action — *the Youth and Economic Development Department is in the house!* Crew leaders and youth supervisors are preparing for an eventful day outdoors. Trucks are loaded with tools and equipment, teenagers stop by on their way to the job site, photographers and volunteers call for information on the day's work plans, and everyone is packed up and on the road to their job site by 8:40 a.m.

The Youth Garden Internship

At 9 a.m., 25 teenagers are gathered around the trailer at the St. Mary's Urban Youth Farm site dressed and ready for work. Youth Garden Intern supervisor Terrell Smith brings teens and volunteers together in a circle to take roll and do stretches before starting the day's projects.

The Saturday crew at Alemany serves two different levels of interns. Eight YGI leadership teens work during the week and participate in a City College course (more below). These teens have proven themselves to be hard working and motivated, and are expected to assume more leadership and responsibility than the other interns. Twenty-five other teens work only on Saturdays and receive support while learning positive job habits and working their way up to the core crew. This structure and process builds leadership while allowing more teens to participate in the YGI program.

The Saturday children's program is going wonderfully. Every week children from the community come up to the Farm site to work in the garden and be with the teenagers. Experienced teens work closely with the children on

special projects, building an ongoing positive mentoring relationship with them. Children gain a positive work experience, teen role models, and the promise of a spring field trip upon completion of their workdays.

This past winter the teens maintained the 4-acre site beautifully under the expert direction of Farm Manager Daniel Greene. The food crop plateau is thriving with collard greens, mustards, potatoes and lettuce. An entire plot of garlic has been planted and mulched, eventually for use in our teen-made Urban Herbs vinegar product. Sweet peas, calendula and snap dragons are blooming in the flower garden. Lush harvests of collard greens, lettuces, broccoli, and peas are distributed door to door throughout the community when a crop is ready to eat.

The Golden Gate Park Nursery

With tremendous support from the Friends of Recreation and Park, SLUG is working with the Golden Gate Park Nursery to develop an exciting new program running a native plant propagation operation. Ten teens from the leadership YGI crew have been chosen to work with supervisors Tonya Tobie and Becca Prager at the Golden Gate Park Nursery every Saturday. Teens learn more in-depth horticulture and nursery skills while being exposed to the public job sector in the landscape maintenance and nursery.

"This program teaches them to take

care of things better," Tonya says. "They are in a smaller group so they can associate with each other and learn from each other."

Through this program the teens will gain the skills and knowledge to start up SLUG's own native plant propagation operation. There is a great demand for native plants throughout the City and in the landscaping field as people are becoming more interested in restoring



The Golden Gate Park Nursery crew chillin' in the greenhouse.

Rosemarie Lion

the land to its native ecological roots. The goal of this venture is to develop an economically viable operation that will teach teens business skills while building a model for self-sufficient community development.

Double Rock

SLUG's newest youth garden site is jumpin' off as community residents, 17 youth and supervisors devote their energy and enthusiasm to the project. Under the leadership of Double Rock residents Delvin Tobie (D.T.) and Terrance Sims, the teens have developed a strong work ethic and beautiful garden site. Every Saturday the crew is ready to tackle projects such as tree planting, clearing and preparing 60 raised garden beds, and laying out an irrigation and mulch system for the planned garden of potatoes, greens, and beans.

The Double Rock site has long carried the stigma of being one of the most dangerous and disenfranchised communities in San Francisco. This