



Growing for Good

SOUTHSIDE COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

Fresh news from Southside Community Land Trust

FALL 2019

She nurtures gardens, youth, and communities



Raffini brings a rich background in the arts and education, as well as decades of gardening experience, to her role as SCLT Director of Youth Programs.

Gree-tings!

That is the melodic salutation that will welcome you next time you visit SCLT’s office by our newest employee, Raffini.

Raffini came on board last July to assist with the summer youth program, and joined SCLT’s full-time staff in early September as our Director of Youth Programs. Her responsibilities include all aspects of youth programming, including recruiting, hiring and managing Youth Staff in both Providence and Pawtucket.

She brings a long association with SCLT as a community gardener, as well as a strong passion for education. At 16, she founded a school for toddlers called “Start Ahead, Stay Ahead.” It was designed for young children prior to entering Head Start, and helped mothers to invest in their children’s education by volunteering in the classroom.

Raffini also discovered her affinity for the arts early on, particularly theater. It was through drama that she met George Houston Bass, a protege of Langston Hughes and the founder of the Rites and Reason Theatre. Impressed with her style of writing and performance, Houston Bass requested that Raffini write a full-length play to be performed at the theater. She wrote Madam’s Backyard Bash, a live jazz performance that is now an annual event.

Raffini worked at the UCAP School (the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program) for 25 years as an arts educator and managed a program called “Sister to Sister,” which brought young girls of color together to learn their history and discuss how to improve their lives. Raffini says she’s still in contact with most of the graduates of the program.

She continues to work as an oral historian who writes scripts, short stories and poetry. A long-time member of the RI Black Storytellers (RIBS), she offers workshops as well as public and private performances. Raffini’s favorite RIBS event is the annual Funda Fest. “Funda” means to learn and to teach, which is how Raffini lives her life.

—Agnieszka Rosner,
SCLT Development & Administrative Coordinator

Just add fresh produce

Youth Staff pilot a farm-to-lunch program that may become a model for others in Providence

One of the things SCLT’s programs do is to help youth find their voice by advocating for healthier food in their neighborhoods. Now, their voices may benefit thousands of children and youth who are served in Providence’s free summer meals program.

Youth Staff have been participating in the federal program administered by Providence’s Parks Department during their six-week summer program. They have also made it known that the meals didn’t match their tastes, including a desire for vegetarian options. Most importantly, they felt the food didn’t reflect their work growing and selling fresh produce from the Somerset Hayward Youth Farm.

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Sergio, Innocense and Jiah making kimchi as part of the summer lunch pilot



Your support keeps our programs strong

If you've been following us on social media, checking our website, or reading our e-newsletters, you'd be right in thinking that these past six months have been very busy.

Every growing season involves planting and harvesting, recruiting and training, marketing and strategizing. We've also been running a capital campaign, preparing more land for production, and operating our largest summer youth program yet. In addition, this fall we won a second, competitive, three-year farmer training grant from the USDA. Sen. Jack Reed, an advocate for Rhode Island farmers, announced the grant at Urban Edge Farm in early November.

As we expand our programs, we hope you'll consider making a gift (or increasing your gift) to SCLT's Annual Fund. Your support will enable us to continue teaching children, youth, and adults about gardening and nutrition, food equity and safe growing practices.

On behalf of our loyal members and hard-working farmers, staff and Board of Directors, thank you for believing in the goal of a just and sustainable Rhode Island. Our work moves us, together, toward a robust, resilient future.

Please make a gift today!

Warmest wishes,

Margaret DeVos
Executive Director

Rochelle Lee
Board President

PS: Our annual appeal runs from now through Dec. 31.
Donate using the enclosed envelope or via our secure website:
www.southsideclt.org

Fresh Produce *Cont'd from front page*

Christy Clausen, program supervisor for the Parks Department, was listening. She'd been looking at ways to make summer lunches, which serve 6,000 children and youth per day, more appealing and healthier. She also sought to include more local produce. She and Maggie Nowak, then our farm, food and youth coordinator, arranged a meeting with six Youth Staff.

"I gave them a training about all that has to go into planning the meals, including following USDA nutrition guidelines," she said.

They took the information and brainstormed with Jazandra Barros, SCLT's community outreach coordinator. A Johnson & Wales graduate, Jazandra brought experience as a cook in commercial kitchens and community nutrition educator with URI to the conversation. Youth Staff wanted to prepare lunches themselves with produce from their farm, such as carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes, garlic, cooking and salad greens.

Together they came up with a menu that included veggie omelettes with raspberry muffins, bean burritos with pico de gallo, and veggie stir fry with egg rolls.

Christy offered her enthusiastic support, got the menu approved and got Sodexo to supplement the youth-grown produce with grains, proteins and other staples. With Parks Department funding, Jazandra secured the Sankofa Community Kitchen near SCLT's office, which was key to the plan's success.

When summer came around, the pilot was implemented with Christy's ongoing involvement.



Reneiry and Dhyanne harvesting potatoes from Galego Community Farm in Pawtucket to use in their lunches.

“We knew that making our own lunches using our produce would bring challenges, and it did,” Jazandra said.

“On the very first day I made it clear that cooperation was key for our success. There was never any hesitation from anyone to step up to do a task, from washing dishes while someone else was cooking, or helping someone prep their recipe, especially when it involved a lot of chopping (and there was a lot of chopping!), to packing up and cleaning.”

Things went remarkably smoothly over the six-week pilot. Youth Staff and Jazandra are pleased with what they accomplished, and eager to continue next summer.

Christy also has high praise for the pilot, and was looking forward to telling her colleagues how it went. “Everyone wants to hear about it,” she said.

She hopes the Parks Department will source more fresh produce from other local farms going forward, and respond to other students’ dietary and cultural tastes.

“This was such a great partnership,” she recalled. “It was also the first program to be inspired, designed and executed by teenagers. It was amazing to watch it happen.”

—Jenny Boone, Grants & Communications Manager
with help from Jazandra Barros, Community Outreach Coordinator

You can read more about our youth programs on our website: www.southsideclt.org/children-youth



Dhamani preparing lunch at the Sankofa Community Kitchen in July.

Farm-to-lunch also added to the Pawtucket youth program

While the Providence lunch pilot was in the works, SCLT staff wanted to integrate healthy lunches and youth-grown produce into the Pawtucket summer program, too.

Last fall, we reached out to two community partners, Farm Fresh’s Harvest Kitchen and Groundwork RI, and developed a rich and comprehensive six-week plan.

Starting in July, 24 youth from Pawtucket and Central Falls divided their time evenly among the three organizations. Divided into groups of six, they spent one-third of their shifts learning about and advocating for community resiliency to global warming with Groundwork.

They spent another third at SCLT’s Galego Community Farm where they grew and harvested produce planted by

the spring Youth Staff. Their last third was spent at Harvest Kitchen, where they prepared lunches for the entire cohort and learned to make value-added food products.

All but one of the youth in Pawtucket completed the program (a strong measure of success). Besides learning about regenerative agriculture, food processing and kitchen skills, youth earned ServSafe certifications at the end of their six weeks.

All three partners are hoping to offer a similar program in 2020.



Capital campaign climbs toward goal

GROW! Campaign's success 'signals a firm belief in our mission'

As of this fall, we've raised \$2.5 million, more than two-thirds of our \$3.5 million goal. Funds will be used to renovate the 12,000 sq. ft. building at 404 Broad Street in Providence's Trinity Square neighborhood, and to create an endowment to maintain farms and community gardens in five cities across the state.

SCLT's Executive Director Margaret DeVos says, "Capital Campaign co-Chairs Michael Isenberg and Mary Worrell have done a tremendous job promoting the project and attracting donations from many new and current supporters."

The building will house a Farm-to-Market Center for processing fresh produce, a Youth Entrepreneurship Center, three street-level retail spaces for food businesses, as well as SCLT's administrative offices.

Altogether, the campaign will support SCLT's work to increase food access and improve the health of Rhode Islanders living in food desert neighborhoods. All

architectural specifications will be complete by February, 2020, and construction will begin next year.

"The new building will be meaningful and transformational for the organization, the staff and the communities that SCLT serves," said Michael. "It's inspiring to imagine the impact the capital campaign will have."

Mary added: "The pledges and gifts from individuals, from foundations, and from business and government agencies signal a firm belief in, and support of, our mission. We at SCLT are deeply grateful for this."

—Jenny Boone, Grants & Communications Manager

To learn more about the GROW! Campaign, visit our website: www.southsideclt.org. If you'd like a tour of 404 Broad Street, contact SCLT's Director of Development Shana Santow at 401.273.9419 ext. 103 or shana@southsideclt.org



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Southside Community Land Trust's mission is to provide access to land, education and other resources so people in Rhode Island can grow food in environmentally sustainable ways and create community food systems where locally produced, affordable and healthy food is available to all.

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