



The Garden Thymes

A Publication of the Camden Children's Garden

www.CamdenChildrensGarden.org

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Fall 2009

Mike's Message: We're Just Getting Started

This is an exciting year for the Camden Children's Garden and the Camden City Garden Club, Inc. Not only are we marking four major milestones in 2009, but we have gone back to our roots with a dramatic expansion of our community gardening efforts throughout Camden.

Thanks in large part to funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which launched a national faith-based initiative targeting childhood obesity, the Garden Club joined forces with the Woodland Community Development Corporation to teach urban families how to grow their own food in community gardens, and how to turn that produce into nutritious meals.

By late summer, 25 new faith-based community gardens had been established throughout Camden, as well as half a dozen other new food-producing gardens. Youth workers from the Children's Garden, as well as numerous AmeriCorps participants, helped to build these gardens under the supervision of Children's Garden staff.

All year long, we have been celebrating 25 Years of Community Gardening in Camden; 20 Years of Grow Labs in Camden Schools; 15 Years of Youth Job Training for Camden Youth; and 10 Years of the Camden Children's Garden.

Scores of people turned out on a beautiful June evening to "Celebrate Our Milestones" at the fourth annual Garden Party Fundraiser. As always, we presented *Champions of Children* awards to citizens who have contributed greatly to the community. This year's honorees included U.S. Senator Robert Menendez; George Ball, of Burpee Seed Co.; LaQuine Roberson, of the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps; and Thomas May, of May Funeral Homes.

In keeping with the evening's theme, we also saluted several staff who have helped make these anniversaries possible. Jeff Clarke, Lisa Roberts-Amegatcher and Anthony Camacho have all been with the Camden Children's Garden since it opened, and are involved with many of the programs we embrace – as Grow Lab educators, as supervisors and mentors for the Youth Program, and as cultivators with the Community Gardening Program.

It has been a busy year. But we're just getting started! The Garden Club began 25 years ago by helping people to help themselves through gardening, and we anticipate a lot more food gardening in our future, as we help people get through tough times.

With assistance from a longtime supporter, the Campbell Soup Company, we'll also focus on growing fruit and vegetables at the Philadelphia Flower Show next year. Our exhibit's theme? "Soup & Salad," of course.

– Mike Devlin, Executive Director

Solutions Flourish in Community Gardens

The Community Gardening Program of the Camden City Garden Club/Camden Children's Garden, is celebrating its 25th season of beautifying and nourishing the Camden community.

Through this program, Camden residents learn as they work hand-in-hand with the Garden Club

to create and maintain more than 50 food-producing community garden sites. Club members clean up trash-strewn lots and help renovate them into gardens, which rejuvenates communities by promoting healthy lifestyles and improving food access for these underprivileged urban populations. The Club also helps to transform neighborhoods through greening projects and tree plantings.

In 2009, the Club partnered with the Woodland Community Development Corporation to fight childhood obesity through community gardening and education about nutrition. This was funded by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as part of its national faith-based initiative. The first site of Camden's Faith-Based Community Gardens Project broke ground on Martin Luther King Weekend of 2009, at the Woodland Avenue Presbyterian Church. This year, the Club has created 31 new community gardens – 25 of them faith-based!

For a modest membership fee, the Club supplies gardeners with materials such as compost, fencing, seeds, plants, mulch and fertilizer.



Claraliz Santiago, Adrienne Edenburn-MacQueen and Rhea Krulikowski harvest produce at Bridge of Peace Church community garden.

The Camden City Garden Club is helped in its efforts by the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) in conjunction with Camden residents and Garden staff.

— Tracy Tomchik



Mike Devlin (left) next to Camden City Council President Angel Fuentes in Checo family plot at St. Anthony of Padua garden. Mr. Fuentes is also a church member.

New Exhibit at the Garden! **FOOD: From Farm to Family**

Young visitors to the Camden Children's Garden have long been able to see how food grows in a garden, but now they'll be able to follow its journey from the farm to the dinner table, thanks to a new exhibit that's both educational and fun.

"FOOD: From Farm to Family" is an interactive exhibit that invites children to play at being farmers who send their crops – realistic-looking plastic fruits and vegetables – to market; to shop for that produce at a Farmer's Market complete with pint-size supermarket trolleys and baskets; and finally to prepare it as dinner for the family in a miniature kitchen.

Scaled-down replicas of a stove, a sink, and a microwave oven should spur children's imaginations in the kitchen, as they whip up meals with plastic food and serve them at a child-size table and chairs. Several adult-size chairs are dotted unobtrusively around the room, for Moms and Dads who want to watch their children at play.

The new exhibit occupies the Potting Shed, adjacent to the Cityscapes garden where real herbs and vegetables grow. It was the brainchild of Valerie Frick, the garden's education director, who envisioned it as a natural extension of the expanded community gardens initiative that teaches adults how to grow vegetables and fruits and how to cook them.

— Denise Cowie

New Strategic Plan

The Camden City Garden Club is currently working on a new comprehensive Strategic Plan which will provide a blueprint for our continuation, development and enhancement over the next three years. It is most fitting that we are working on a document that reflects our hopes and dreams for the future as we celebrate 2009 as a milestone year commemorating 25 years of Community Gardening in Camden, 20 years of Grow Labs in Camden Schools, 15 years of Youth Employment and Training Program for Camden Youth, and 10 years of operating the Camden Children's Garden.

Our strategic planning process has brought together our board members, staff, and partners in the community to enable us to examine where we have been and where we are going. We have generated a vision which exudes energy and outlines a transformation with specific steps to make our ambitious dreams become a reality. We have built into our plans goals and milestones that will make us accountable for our progress, recognized for our successes, and aware of our challenges in the work we have set out for ourselves.

— Valerie Frick

Have Fun Gardening with Children: Create a Pizza Garden, Indoors or Out

You've heard all the alarming stories about rampant Childhood Obesity and Nature Deficit Disorder in children. A healthy dose of the outdoors can help cure both. But how can busy Moms interest their kids in Nature?

Simple. Introduce them to gardening while they're still very young. But you have to make it fun.

Moms who brought their children to a parent-and-child workshop at the Camden Children's Garden this summer learned that "Putting the Fun Back Into Gardening" – that's what the workshop was called – is not only easy, it can also provide some wonderful memories of shared moments.

Almost every child loves pizza, so take advantage of that to talk to your offspring about all the plants that help make that pizza taste so good – wheat (for the crust), tomatoes, oregano, basil, peppers, chives and onions, for example. Ask your children for other suggestions.

Now, work together to make a "pizza garden." If you have a backyard, you can simply dig a circular garden – the pizza – and divide it into slices, just as you would cut a pizza. Mark the slices with lines of sand, colored gravel, or white pebbles.

Let your children choose the plants they enjoy on pizza, and plant each "slice" with a different selection. Depending on the size of your pizza garden, you may need only one plant of each selection, or several.

Even if you don't have room in the backyard, you can still have a pizza garden. Simply grow it in a container. Just find a circular pot or hanging basket with a diameter of at least 12 inches, divide it into four "slices," and plant your pizza ingredients. For containers, make sure you choose a cherry or grape tomato intended for small spaces.

Show your children how to water and fertilize their pizza garden – but make sure they think of it as fun, not a chore! As the plants mature, harvest some of the tomatoes and herbs and create a home-made pizza together. It's an experience your kids will likely cherish forever.

— Denise Cowie



Lily Rivera works on a pizza garden at the workshop with her nephew, Antonio Mejia.



A hanging basket pizza garden features plants you might use to make a pizza. Decorate with colored gravel for extra pizzazz.

Girl Scout Events for Fall and Spring

With fall quickly approaching, the Garden is preparing for two Girl Scout events. These programs are designed for either Brownie or Junior Girl Scouts and will help them to complete Try-it or Journey Detour Badges.

Juniors: Outdoors in the City Badge - October 17, 2009 9:00am – 1:30pm

Join us in the Garden as we explore nature in the city. Girl Scouts will take a tour of the Garden looking for wild-life, play games, create urban art, and make sun tea. Upon completing the program, Scouts will have earned the Outdoors in the City Try-it badge.

Brownies: Follow the Trails Journey Detour – November 7, 2009 – 9:00am -1:30 pm

In this Detour from the Brownie Quest Journey, Brownie Girl Scout will learn some of the ways to lead a healthy lifestyle. Activities will include learning about nutrition and sampling a healthy snack, playing games, and learning tree identification techniques.

Look for these programs in the spring of 2010:

Brownies: Plants Try-it – May 15

Juniors: Agent of Change Journey Detour – May 29

Daisies: Flower Garden Journey Detour – June 5

Costs range from \$8 to \$9 per Girl Scout and include all activities and 2 tokens for our rides. More information: Cate Rigoulot at crigoulot@camdenchildrensgarden.org.

— Cate Rigoulot

Evening Rentals: The Garden is the Perfect Setting for a Special Event

Camden Children's Garden is the perfect setting for a company event, a bridal or baby shower, a birthday party, or even a family reunion!

The Garden is also available for evening rentals between 6 pm and 10 pm. Evening rental rates are based on the length of the event, the number of guests, additional options selected, and the number of Garden staff required. The rental fee includes use of the four-acre Garden, use of existing tents, admission to the Garden, and a Garden Supervisor to facilitate your event.

For additional fees, guests may request indoor options such as the Philadelphia Eagles Four Seasons Butterfly House, our tropical Aibonito exhibit, and Ben Franklin's Secret Workshop. Other options include the Garden's three rides: the Garden Carousel, the Arrow River Train and the Butterfly Spring Ride.

For more information about evening rentals, visit our website, www.CamdenChildrensGarden.org, download a brochure and call the Garden at 856.365.8733.

Funders Make It Happen for Children

Once again this summer an enthusiastic group of young people were able to learn and work at what many of them have called their "dream job" at the Camden Children's Garden. The youth tell us they love working in the Camden Children's Garden, learning about plants, meeting our AmeriCorps volunteers from all over the country, and making a difference in the lives of the families we are serving. Our 16 youth workers work five-day schedules and take classes in the summer, and many of them will continue to work with us on weekends when they return to school or college. This year they have been working in the community as part of our Faith-Based Partnership To Prevent Childhood Obesity and at our weekend family festivals conducting children's activities.

This wonderful experience would not be possible without the generosity of donors who designate their contribution for the Youth Program. These include:

- Campbell Soup Foundation
- Children Can Shape the Future Foundation
- Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation
- Hamilton Family Foundation
- Holcim
- Huston Foundation
- William Penn Foundation
- Ravitz Foundation
- Caroline Sanders Trust # 2
- Susquehanna Bank
- TD Charitable Foundation
- The Schumann Fund for New Jersey

Our special thanks to these funders and all others who make the Camden Children's Garden a special place to learn and grow.

— Barbara Klaczynska

Throw a Birthday Party at the Garden...



What could be a more fun setting for a children's birthday party than the Camden Children's Garden?

Party guests can play in the gardens, and if it rains, they can switch to crafts, story readings, or games.

Rental includes a party tent and a host for two hours – and for a little extra, you can add Arrow River Train, Garden Carousel or Butterfly Spring rides, or a visit from Mum Bear.

For more information, call 856-365-8733.

Children's Garden Events

Faeries and Wizards ~ *Saturday & Sunday, September 26 & 27, noon to 4 p.m. ~*

Celebrate these magical creatures with games, crafts and more. Make your own wizard hat or fairy wings. Listen to an enchanted storybook reading by a fabulous fairy.

Mum Madness and Pumpkin Parade ~ *Saturday & Sunday, October 10 & 11, noon to 4 p.m. ~*

A salute to Autumn, featuring Mum Bear, crafts and activities, all set amid the blazing colors of the Garden's beautiful chrysanthemums. Purchase and paint a pumpkin to take home (while supplies last).

Goblins in the Garden ~ *Saturday & Sunday, October 24 & 25, noon to 4 p.m. ~*

Kids in costumes receive half-price admission. Take a Haunted Train Ride; dodge costumed characters in our Haunted Maze; meet the bumbling burglars; have your fortune told. Celebrate the Mexican tradition of "Día de los Muertos."

Safe Trick or Treating at the Garden ~ *Saturday, October 31, noon to 4 p.m. ~*

Have a howling good time at the Camden Children's Garden by using the Garden to do your trick or treating. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Train Festival ~ *Saturday & Sunday, November 14 & 15, noon to 4 p.m. ~*

The Garden salutes a nostalgic favorite – Trains! The festival will feature our own permanent G-Scale display and Arrow River 1/3-scale Train Ride, plus train vendors and exhibitors. Join us for crafts, games, and a reading of The Polar Express.

Tree Decorating, Santa's Arrival, & Holiday Lights Begins! ~ *Saturday, November 28 ~*

Kick-off event for Holiday Festival of Lights. The day includes a sponsor tree-decorating contest, Santa's afternoon arrival, crafts, storybook reading. Tree Decorating noon to 4 p.m. At 5:30 p.m., lighting the Garden. Separate admission after 5 p.m.

Holiday Festival of Lights ~ *Fridays & Saturdays in December, and January 2, 5:30 to 8 p.m. ~*

Enjoy a magical holiday tradition on the Camden Waterfront, with 4.5 acres of gardens and over 100,000 beautiful holiday lights and animated light sculptures. Separate admission after 5 p.m.

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The Garden Thymes is a publication of the Camden City Garden Club, a 501 (c)(3) private, non-profit organization, registered in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The Camden City Garden Club is the operator of the Camden Children's Garden on the Camden Waterfront. The Club's mission is to provide recreational and educational gardening opportunities to people of all ages throughout the Delaware Valley so that people can discover that gardening is fun, easy and can be enjoyed by everyone.

Sponsored by the State of New Jersey.