



CAMDEN CITY GARDEN CLUB, INC

Operator

Camden Children's Garden

3 Riverside Drive

Camden, NJ 08103

www.camdenchildrensgarden.org



From the office of: Mike Devlin

Contact: Tracy Tomchik

Tel: (856) 365-8733

Fax: (856) 365-9750

For: Immediate Release

Meet the Youth of the Camden Children's Garden

CAMDEN, N. J. (August 26, 2009) — On August 12, 2009, the Camden City Garden Club/Camden Children's Garden Youth Employment and Training Program invited their sponsors to share a healthy barbequed meal. To celebrate this program's 15th successful year, the Youth staff met with representatives from the various donating organizations, to discuss the fun and fulfilling work in which they have participated in throughout the summer at the Camden Children's Garden and in the Camden community. In preparation for the event, the youth staff wrote biographies highlighting their triumphs and aspirations. Photo above right: Junior and Senior staff enjoy a healthy snack with Americorps members and sponsors.

These youth employees know how fortunate they are to have a job in Camden and in today's economy, especially in light of the unemployment rate in the City of Camden, which hit 18% this summer according to June data released by the Labor Department (Courier Post, August 12, 2009). The Youth Employment and Job Training Program allows local teens to gain job experience and community service through the Garden Club's programs such as the Community Gardening/Community

Development Program (in its 25th year), Grow Lab in Camden Schools (in its 20th year), and the Camden Children's Garden for families (in its 10th year). To our knowledge, only one of these teens has ever dropped out of high school in a city with over a 50% dropout rate. These young people earn an income, learn basic job skills, and are taught horticulture, science, landscaping and interpersonal skills. The Youth Employment and Job Training Program is made possible through the generous contributions of organizations such as the Campbell Soup Foundation, Children Can Shape the Future Foundation, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, Hamilton Foundation, Holcim, Huston Foundation, William Penn Foundation, Ravitz Foundation, Caroline Sanders Trust #2, Schumann Fund, Susquehanna Bank, and TD Charitable Foundation. Photo above right: Sponsors, Garden staff and youth are pictured.



In addition to providing guidance, the Youth Program takes the junior staff to enjoy educational field trips to places like the Morris Arboretum, the Philadelphia Zoo and Longwood Gardens. (Photo Left: Youth Staff DeAndre Dixon at Longwood Gardens with Lisa Roberts, Supervisor and former participant of the Youth Program.) "These trips allow the young staff to learn about various gardening techniques and enable them to explore area attractions," stated, Valerie Frick, Educational Director and the program's co-founder.

Through the years, the Club has employed over 300 youngsters, many of whom have gone on to colleges, trades, and other careers. Now, we introduce you to just a few of the amazing youth working at the Garden :

- More -

Marchelle Roberts is nineteen years old and will be a sophomore at Temple University in the fall of 2009. She is a Broadcast Journalism major, and was born and raised in Camden. Before graduating from LEAP Academy University Charter High School in June 2008, and ranking third in her class, Marchelle had the opportunity to travel to South Africa, Cuba and Costa Rica. Upon graduating, she received scholarships for college including the Alfredo Santiago Endowment Scholarship and the Congressman Robert Andrews Scholarship. She is currently a second-year participant in the New Jersey Foster Care Scholarship Program. She is the fourth generation of Roberts' family to work with the Camden City Garden Club/ Camden Children's Garden. She is proud to have worked alongside her family to help the people of her hometown. In her spare time, Ms. Roberts enjoys reading, writing, dancing, and volunteering. Marchelle aspires to be a news anchor after completing graduate school, and earns some experience in Media Relations through her position at the Garden. As the oldest of nine children, Marchelle has learned that being and having responsible, positive role models are key factors to becoming a productive and successful adult. Marchelle is an inspiration, not only to her siblings, but also for her many co-workers in the Youth Program. In 2007, Marchelle was deemed one of the inaugural Youth Environmental Advocates, who educate the public about conservation, recycling, and building wildlife habitats.



Jasmin and Jessica Jimenez are nineteen-year-old Camden natives. These twins graduated from Camden County Technical School (CCTS)'s Sicklerville Campus in the summer of 2009. For three years, this dynamic duo has worked side-by-side with other CCTS peers at the Camden Children's Garden where they have been involved in projects such as the annual production of the Club's Philadelphia Flower Show exhibits, cultivation of Children's Garden displays, caring for the majestic inhabitants of the Philadelphia Eagles Butterfly House and entertaining visitors at the many Family Festivals offered at this waterfront attraction. While enrolled at CCTS, the twins were involved in the Future Farmers of America Organization - Jessica served as Vice President and Jasmin as Treasurer - and were awarded the NJ FFA Association Outstanding Student & Garden State FFA Degree. In the fall of 2009, the two will start at Camden County College, where they will major in Business. Jasmin was honored as a scholarship winner by the Camden County Freeholders in August 2009 and participated in the New Jersey Stars Program, which encourages New Jersey students to obtain a post-secondary education and will pay for the first two years of college tuition. After earning their degrees, this enthusiastic pair dream of opening a business together using some of the horticultural and life lessons learned while employed at the Camden Children's Garden.

Vidal Rivera is seventeen years old and lives in South Camden. He attends the Camden County Technical School (CCTS)'s Gloucester Township Campus where he studies Carpentry. Vidal enjoys his employment at the Garden because he is good at working with hands-on projects. In his spare time, Vidal loves boxing and aspires to be a professional boxer by 2012. Right, Vidal is pictured "play fighting" with another boxing fan, Mike Devlin, the Executive Director and Co-Founder of the Camden Children's Garden and the Youth Program. Vidal has been boxing for three years and trains six days a week at the Camden Boxing Academy. On August 16th, 2009, Vidal won his weight class in the Long Island Amateur Boxing Championships at the Five Towns Community Center in Lawrence, New York. Vidal knows that it is important to have a second plan, so he is studying carpentry for after his boxing career. He believes that his experience at the Garden, carpentry and training for boxing have helped him maintain a positive attitude towards hard work and dedication.





Chelsea Quezergue is a 17-year-old New Jersey native born in Atlantic City, but raised in Pennsauken, NJ. Chelsea began academically excelling at a very young age and joined NJ SEEDS in grade school. NJ SEEDS prepares academically talented and financially limited youth for success in competitive secondary schools. Chelsea was accepted at many private high schools but chose Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. During her summers, Chelsea traveled overseas and participated in an exchange program in Japan. She even fundraised to journey to South Africa through the SEEDS program, where she met with African peers to discuss common adolescent issues and visited an AIDS orphanage, for which she later raised money. She decided to take this summer to volunteer as she lives at home. Chelsea is an applicant of the Bayer and Speak Foundation Scholarship, which gives high school students up to \$1,000 to work at a non-profit organization, and this is how she came to

work at the Camden Children's Garden. She is excited to be working at the Garden because not only is she gaining useful knowledge, but she also really enjoys working with her co-workers - many of whom are other local teens. Chelsea is scheduled to graduate from Phillips Academy in 2010, after which she anticipates studying linguistics (concentrating on Japanese and Spanish) at Georgetown University, and aspires to be a translator for the United Nations.

Kevin Ruiz is a fifteen-year-old Camden resident on a mission to help his community! Kevin joined the Camden Children's Garden family about two months ago. He is about to go into his sophomore year at Brimm Medical Arts High School in Camden, where he is president of his class. Kevin hopes to major in the Culinary Arts in college and then go on to either medical school or law school -- either way he is interested in civic service. Kevin is also an Upward Bound Scholar, under which he is encouraged to attend college and keep up his grade point average. The Upward Bound Scholars Program will pay for participants' tuition for two years of community college in New Jersey and then two years in any other



New Jersey higher education institution, provided that the student maintains his/her grade point average. In his spare time, Kevin is founder and president of the Brimm Chow Hound House, a non-profit food bank organization focused on feeding needy animals -- a big problem in Camden! Kevin's parents and other family members are community gardeners of the Camden City Garden Club and Kevin maintains a personal garden where he enjoys growing his own healthy food and teaching other gardeners what he learns at his job at the Camden Children's Garden. In his spare time, he enjoys singing opera, running track, sitting on the Development Committee at Saint Anthony of Padua in the Cramer Hill section of Camden, New Jersey.

~ Family Festivals ~

September 26 & 27 - **Faeries and Wizards Festival**
October 10 & 11 - **Mum Madness and Pumpkin Parade**
October 24 & 25 - **Goblins in the Garden**
November 14 & 15 - **Train Festival**

~ Special Events ~

Safe Trick or Treat - October 31, 12:00pm -4:00pm
Holiday Festival of Lights- Friday & Saturday evenings November 28, 2009 - January 2, 2010

###