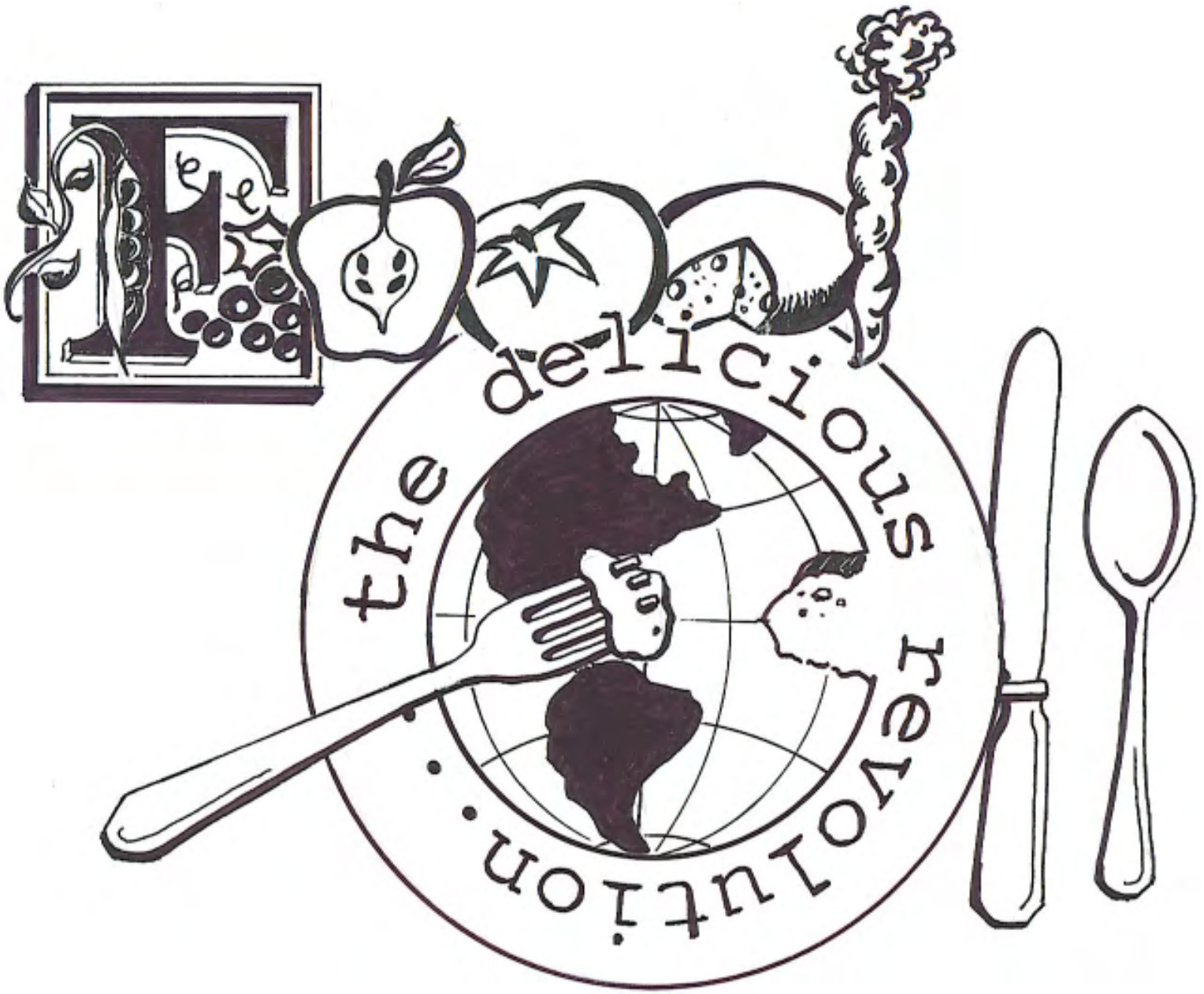
THE Round Table

Summer 2008

"...a path from where we are to where we should be." --Peter Maurin



Why This Issue?

As I think about this issue and why we are taking the time to write about it, I am even more aware of the growing personal revolution inside of me. I am learning how, in America, the issue of food is one of those topics that is best not talked about. Food is here, everywhere in abundance. Clean and ready to eat in minutes, if not even seconds. However, the rest of the world sees food differently. Either it is interwoven beautifully and seamlessly into their culture and identity or it is painfully absent from the lives of millions of people. Now, at last, as food is starting to become a topic of conversation forced by rapidly rising food and oil cost, we are confronted with not why this issue *now* but rather why not *sooner*. Food is truly one of those things that crosses all lines and all peoples. It is culture; it is identity; it is fundamentally life or death.

In this issue, we look at food and the growing and reviving culture around it. We begin with a look at where we were and where we need to go concerning food. New Roots shares with us their perspective as urban farmers, and we hear the story and views of a graduate of a local culinary job training program. Through a variety of book reviews, we offer a vision from growing to cooking food, and how food can affect us all. Lastly, we take a moment to look at the recovering culture of shared meals to build "common-union."

The Roundtable wouldn't be complete without hearing from different voices about what is going on in the extended community. The From Abroad piece is from James Meinert, who shares his experiences of Nicaragua. Elizabeth Driscoll talks about what is happening at Karen House. We get a check-in on the action down the street at Little House, courtesy of Mike Baldwin and Teka Childress. Becky Hassler opens up the world of midwifery to all of our benefit in Round Table Talk.

Food is a part of us and our culture, whether we like it or not. To be quite clichéd, we are what we eat, but we are also *how* we eat and *with whom* we eat. I agree with Virginia Druhe who, when we discussed this issue of the Round Table, said, "Food: there truly is nothing like it!" So, welcome to the delicious revolution- creating a new world never tasted so good.

- Timmy Cosentino

Front cover Artwork by Jeff Finnegan

"The Delicious Revolution" is a term coined by Alice Waters, founder of Chez Panisse restaurant, author of eight books, and strong advocate for sustainable agriculture. "What could be a more delicious revolution than to start committing our best resources to teaching children; by feeding them, by showing them how to grow food responsibly, and by teaching them how to cook it and eat it, together, around the table?" -www.chezpanisse.com/pgdrevolution.html

Centerfold by Teka Childress and Joe Angert

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The Global Food Democracy Crisis: It's Paradigm Shift Time!

by Stephen Bartlett

”Neither he that planteth, nor she that watereth, but God who provided the increase.” 1 Cor 3:7

To unlearn much of what we have assumed to be good and trueis difficult, especially when what we have assumed to be good and true has managed to feed, house and clothe (many of) us here in the U.S. up to the present. Thus, for the middle-sized or large-sized farmers in the U.S. who grow corn and soybeans, the recent dramatic rise in the price of corn and other grains can only be viewed as a godsend. “Finally,” we can hear corn producers say, “a way has been found to sell the corn surpluses whose overproduction has depressed prices for decades. Finally we are getting our just dues for all our hard work.”

For years farmers were encouraged to “get big or get out” and told that the U.S. farmer was the person responsible for “feeding the world.” Even as they were being squeezed by the fewer and fewer corporations that purchased their food, as well as the purveyors of increasingly expensive inputs, the U.S. farmer, astride a giant combine on a 20 year debt payment plan, did indeed begin to feed the world. Rarely did people ask: Who says we have to feed the world? Did the world ask us to feed them? Why can’t they feed themselves? So-called “free trade” agreements pushed by grain exporter and now retailers like Wal-Mart, got the U.S. Trade Representative to batter down the doors of markets around the world, from the GATT to NAFTA to the World Trade Organization negotiations.

But the system is vulnerable, economically exclusionary and ecologically destructive, and that vulnerability is now being exposed by the food price crisis of 2008. The current system relies on the use of cheap oil for mechanized production and natural gas-derived fertilizer. The distance that food began to move from producer to consumer increased, and increased some more. The U.S., Canada and the European Union literally became the breadbaskets of the entire world, providing wheat, corn, rice, soybeans, meat, milk and cooking oil at prices calculated to win market share from local producers all over the planet. They were highly subsidized and producing at such a large scale, a feat that is possible only with cheap oil, as to defy the ordinary capacities of small-scale family farmers.

So, while speaking on a panel this June on Kentucky Educational television to discuss the impacts of ethanol production on society, I was not surprised that the man representing the National Corn Growers Association was aglow with a smile and an organized file of data from favorable studies. He had the look of those whose “forebearance” has finally delivered the gold. Corn was up from $2 per bushel in 2006 to an incredible $7.65 per bushel at the end of trading that day.

My question to those “pragmatists” dealing with the current system is: Do we need to turn more and more of our food into fuel for vehicles in order to get a decent price for our production? Or can government intervene to make sure that farmers don’t go under due to a kind of savage competition and race to the bottom? This could be accomplished, for example, by instituting a grain reserve and making sure excess production is sequestered from the market in times of glut, or freed onto the market in times of need, so that people do not starve to death, a practice that has saved countless millions from death over millenia.

Now I grow corn too, planted and weeded by hand together with pole beans and squash as the Native Americans did for thousands of years, and we save the seed each year. We make the corn into meal in a hand grinder, or turn it into tamales the way our Mesoamerican immigrant neighbors still know how to do by adding lime mineral to the corn soaked in water, a process a lot like making hominy. The bottom line for me is this: the price of corn is almost meaningless, because I don’t buy or sell it, except when I go to the supermarket. Truly, the beauty of subsistence farming! Food outside the commodity economy.

According to a fellow representing the National Corn Growers Association on the television debate on ethanol, the price

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of corn should be meaningless to the average U.S. consumer too, since there is only, say, 9 to 15 cents of corn in a box of Corn Flakes that costs $2.50. No wonder you need to add milk to make it into a meal. But if you are a mother of five in Kenya, and you spend 80% of your income on food, a rise in the cost of corn (along with wheat and rice) is highly significant and can bring hunger to your table. The staple food of Kenya, ugali, is made from corn meal.

Recently I suggested that people join together in a 3 day fast in solidarity with the 1 billion people on the planet living in chronic hunger or on the knife's edge of hunger, and the 3 billion living on under $2 per day. About 30 people in several states and three or four countries joined the fast. We were fasting as a spiritual form of meditation and protest. Hunger cannot be tolerated by people aware of its tortuous and preventable presence. Our fast reminded us of this in an inescapable way: going without food is a form of suffering; doing it voluntarily for a day or two or three helps humble us and clarify our minds and hearts, even as we suffer. Doing it involuntarily is truly a form of torture, the proxy torturers being those who support and benefit from the economic structures that create the hunger.

The facts are there to contemplate, along with the solutions: 1) There is no shortage of food in the world; in fact, 2007 was a record year for food production in the world, and if devoted directly to human consumption, the food in the world could provide more than 3,500 calories per person, enough to make us all plump. 2) The food crisis is about *unequal access* to food, about *economic impoverishment*. 3) Most hungry people in the world are rural people, landless or land-poor farmers. 4) Despite all this, most food consumed by people worldwide is still produced by small-scale family farmers (though on average this is no longer the case in the U.S. or Europe): and 5) Supporting family farmers is probably, therefore, the best, perhaps the ONLY, strategy with a hope of succeeding in eliminating absolute impoverishment and hunger; it empowers those suffering most from hunger while stimulating the local economy and providing food security in those countries who have been made too dependent on imports.

There is no free lunch, as they say. Every human choice and action has consequences: economic, political, or ecological. A farmer friend of mine does most of his work with a minimum use of fossil fuels, except to drive his food to market. He works really hard and is skinny as a rail. He wants to live in harmony with nature. He feeds at least 25 families with really healthy organic produce, pastured chicken, and grass fed and finished beef. He makes very little money, just enough to scrape by. If it weren't for his family's land and their support, he probably couldn't do what he does because of the way the agricultural economy is structured, with the farmer always squeezed in the middle.

Once your land is larger than 80 or 100 acres, even if you wanted to, you could not plow and work that land with draft horses. With a lot of land you have to have a tractor and probably a combine that takes 20 years to pay off, if you can pay for it. Size really matters when thinking about making the paradigm shift into sustainability.

The corn and soybean growers of the U.S. are in a pickle. Those who have survived have done so by expanding their operations and through clever finance, or by subsidizing their operations through jobs off the farm. But now corn growers finally making a profit are being blamed for starvation in Africa and Haiti and elsewhere, which these growers know is absurd. Farmers are not the exporters, the free traders, or the ethanol moguls. They just produce the bounty. The corporations export, process, hedge, hold, and release on markets, their virtual world trade monopoly. This price rise could just as quickly vanish if speculative capital flees commodities to the next bubble futures market. After all, there is no stability in pricing; we have no national grain reserve to buffer volatile grain prices, or provide food in times of drought or other scarcity, such as that caused by the flooding in Iowa, let alone to save a surplus off the market.

It is a few corporations with slick lobbyists and political connections that are the biggest beneficiaries of this whole policy and food system. The profit-motive and government complicity in the exclusively corporate agenda is the true culprit. Cargill, Archer Daniels and Midland (ADM), Dupont, Monsanto, Dow, Bunge, Conagra: First they convinced the U.S. government of the need to promote so-called "free trade," which allowed the dumping of the surplus corn and soybean production overseas, not to mention wheat and rice whose prices rise and fall with corn, the largest food commodity in international trade. Doing this with our cheap glut of grains so undercuts the markets of those countries that most of the grain producers in the global south went bankrupt. Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) were forcing indebted countries to stop maintaining grain reserves ("they don't make a profit") and to stop providing credit and agricultural extension and technical support to farmers producing for domestic markets, as part of "structural adjustment programs." And then the coup de grace: now that those countries have come to depend so highly on the imports of corn, wheat and rice to feed themselves, they suddenly get massive price shock, increases of 40 to 82% in basic grain prices. Fuel prices go through the roof, fertilizer prices go through the roof, food prices sget o high they leave gaping pain in the stomach of the hungry.

The bottom line: food is too important to be left up to so-called "market forces" or to misplaced corporate welfare. The

ethanol diversion of grain is not even driven by the "free" market, but by government subsidies and gas-percentage requirements, by credits and loans for new ethanol refineries, etc. It is estimated that to meet the increasing ethanol percentage goals in fuel mandated by the U.S. government, more than half of all acreage currently producing corn for livestock feed would have to be diverted to ethanol production! This is creating internal contradictions: the industries that relied on feeding cheap corn to livestock are facing dramatic increases in the cost of production. Once feed contracts have to be renewed, the price of confinement chicken, pork and beef is likely to double in the next few months. Truly the chickens will be coming home to roost.

The need for "energy independence" in terms of reducing our dependence on foreign oil cannot be achieved without a strong energy conservation program, increased gas mileage in vehicles, etc. to reduce our consumption. As a panacea, the idea of maintaining current consumption by turning food and oil crops into fuel is a dangerous idea, one that is fatal not only for people who eat, but for the global climate and therefore for all of humanity. Monocultures grown in forest clear-cuts to produce fuels cause far more CO2 to be released into the atmosphere than the oil itself does, because it means deforestation and depletion of carbon from soils. Even turning pasture to the production of so-called cellulosic ethanol (biofuel produced from wood, grasses, or non-edible parts of plants) would go from a very efficient transformation of cellulose in grass to the meat in cattle, toward a dubious fermentation and conversion of oily or sugary grasses or fiber into ethanol, further exposing and depleting soils of their carbon content.

One estimate has it that improving pasture management worldwide, allowing just a 1% increase in the carbon content in soils, could absorb all of the excess CO2 currently in the atmosphere! How we farm and forest matters! In fact, it might be the MOST important factor of all in addressing global climate change.

The root solution is this: restore local food economies, restore the fertility (and carbon content) in our soils, reforest the Amazon being destroyed to grow soybeans for feed, eat less meat worldwide, and produce cattle and milk primarily from grass and not from grain. Put in place sensible policies that buffer and support the prices of our basic grains, such as a national grain reserve, as proposed by the National Family Farm Coalition. Put in place price floors above the cost of production for our non-perishable grains. Eliminate subsidies by avoiding overproduction and maintaining rational pricing of grains. Food sovereignty needs to be restored. Small-scale family farmers cool the planet and feed humanity, in their stance of reverence towards the land. God provides the increase; let us show some gratitude and respect and stop treating our soil like dirt! No justice, no peace. No fertility, no future.

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RoundTable Fact…

A young friend of Karen House recently brought home from school: 1)A worksheet promoting a healthy diet of fruits and vegetables, 2) a 24 ounce soda and two bags of Doritos she had won during her after-school program, and 3) a bag of candy purchased from her 5th grade teacher's stash for $1.

New Roots Urban Farm: A Model of Sustainability

by Mary Hargadon

In urban life, food usually comes from far away. Mostly all the food bought by people who live in cities has been transported from rural areas. Although there are many reasons for the existence of the current food system, time and space are an issue when it comes to the availability of local food. The busy working life of most urbanites makes it difficult to find time for keeping vegetable gardens or livestock, and cities don't really leave room for growing your own food. Given these conditions, many are finding they are dissatisfied with the food system and feel that it is disconnected, unsustainable, and/or unethical.

The food system is disconnected because people miss the process of watching a seed transform to a vegetable and many even miss out on the process of cooking such vegetables at home and eating communally with others. Produce is instead bought at stores, with stickers that say names of different states or even different countries on them. In another example of this disconnectedness, many city kids grow up without much experience seeing food grow from the ground.

The system seems unsustainable in light of current gas prices that affect the cost of food trucked across the country. Food production seems unethical because of the working conditions and pay for those who grow, pick, and ship much of the produce in stores, and also the living conditions of the animals that provide meat and dairy. Many people want a new way of attaining produce and animal products but have few alterative options with the time and space available in urban life.

In cities across the world, many are creating urban farms to remedy this problem. The goal of farms built in the city is usually to provide food security in the surrounding community. A big benefit of urban farms is that they make food immediately available to city dwellers instead of importing it from other states or countries. Ideally, this not only saves resources but helps urbanites (especially people that are already struggling) to survive in case of a disaster or pending food crisis. Depending on the codes of each city, these farms can also raise animals such as chickens, goats, and bees. Urban farms can provide food directly to neighbors, restaurants, stores, and food banks close by. They give people who live in cities a chance to be independent and sustain urban living, no matter the status or income level of the area. Urban farms can utilize sustainable resources such as rainwater and yard waste compost. Gardening in the city also improves the quality of the soil, even if is has been contaminated with building rubble. These farms can also serve as an excellent learning experience for children who don't get the chance to visit rural farms. While sustainable organic rural farms can also help their communities, urban farms are especially revolutionary because of how difficult it is to grow and raise food in the city.

An urban farm called New Roots has been growing next to Karen House in St. Louis for over three years. What was once four empty building lots is now a flourishing vegetable farm. Rows of vegetables like carrots, collards, garlic, and tomatoes can be seen through the chain link fence on Hogan Street. Behind the rows is a small green house made of recycled windows that holds trays of baby seedlings. An aquaponics[1] system in progress is currently improving this greenhouse. Further back are multiple compost bins, one housing worms to make vermicompost[2]. Two herb beds hosting plants like sage, chives, sorrel, and dill are framed next to the greenhouse and hoop house. The large hoop house covered in clear plastic serves as a shelter for the outdoor kitchen equipped with picnic tables, a stove, a fridge, and a sink. Beyond that is a newly renovated chicken coup housing nine chickens. The plot also contains an earthen oven made out of clay and other natural materials. This time of the year, the farm comes to life with farmers and volunteers working, playing, and cooking together on most days.

This farm was created with a mission to educate, provide food security, and be a model of sustainability. New Roots educates by providing workshops, volunteer opportunities, field trips and tours, internships, and a summer kids program. It is important for the farm to be a resource for those who want to be in touch with gardening, agriculture, or just nature, but have

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Mary Hargadon has been an intern and collective member of New Roots in the past, and now grows a flower garden for the farm - check out her work in the park near Karen House on Madison street!

Mary Hargadon

trouble doing so due to city living. Food security is established simply by having a plot of land in the middle of a city neighborhood that has healthy food available. The food isn't donated or transported to New Roots; it's grown at the farm, and can be grown year after year. The farm practices sustainable agriculture by growing organically and not using artificial chemicals. It also accomplishes this with techniques like creating compost from waste from the farm and building with some recycled materials. Having the produce readily available in the city and at farmers markets is also more sustainable than having food be shipped from far away.

One of New Roots' big programs is its CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). A CSA is a program where members buy a share of the farm every season, and therefore pick up a certain amount of vegetables every week during the growing season. A typical weekly share includes a bundle of around eight different vegetables, including root vegetables, greens, garlic, onions, and seasonal crops. New Roots usually has around twenty CSA members that all live in the St. Louis city area. This gives city dwellers a chance to get local organic produce and a chance to get to know their farmers. The CSA is the revenue generator for the farm. The shareholders also sometimes have other ways of contributing to the farm, like printing the brochures or screen printing T-shirts for the kids program. Shareholders and farmers gather yearly for events like potlucks and the harvest party in the Fall.

New Roots' main motive, though, is to serve the immediate community in the surrounding neighborhood. Its placement in North St. Louis city wasn't random, but rather intentional. Inner city communities tend to be the most disconnected from their food and have less organic produce available. The farm serves its neighbors with the summer kids program (YAP) and the North City Farmers Market. YAP (the Youth Apprenticeship Program) meets twice a week when school is out with kids ages eight and up, some being guests of Karen House. The kids harvest the vegetables for the shareholders and then make a lunch together including food grown on the farm. They get to learn how different vegetables grow by picking crops like beets or eggplant and work together to get the food washed and stored. While getting kids to eat vegetables can be challenging, many are more interested after picking the crops themselves and preparing them in dishes like pizza.

The North City Farmers Market is a collaboration with New Roots and the Old North Restoration Group. New Roots sells produce there every Saturday morning from 9:00am to 12:00pm at the 14th Street Mall on St. Louis Ave, just blocks away from the farm site. There are different vendors and activities each week. There are also other vendors selling produce besides New Roots, like the farm Burning Kumquat from Washington University and City Seeds. Low prices make the food available to a variety of people, plus five dollar vouchers for the market are supplied to food banks in the area so that more people have a chance to get fresh local produce in the city. Bikes are provided and fixed through the market to make transportation easier for community members.

New Roots has always been run by a collective, which currently has seven members. Some of the members work full time for the farm, and some part time. In ages running from early twenties to early thirties, Sara, Chris, Stephen, Joe, Molly, Amy, Trish, and new intern Jenny, run the farm. The collective members don't make a wage for their hard work, but they make sure that enough money is made to support each other. Each member gets something like an allowance each month, providing just enough to scrape by. The collective has faced challenges in both the past and present with urban agriculture. There has been the ongoing struggle due to the fact that it takes full time work to run a farm, but New Roots can't provide full time pay or benefits like health insurance. This leaves many of the members balancing jobs with their work on the farm, which at times is exhausting. Yet, this way of life works because many farmers share meals and living spaces in the neighborhood and live cheaply. Because they integrate work, play, and food together, farming is much more than a job; it is a lifestyle for the collective.

While each of these revolutionary farmers comes from a different background, for the most part they had to learn farming skills later in life. Being part of an urban farm attracted them for overlapping reasons. Every member has different skills to offer to the project and takes on different responsibilities. There is obviously much physical labor to be done with crop management and building the structures on the farm, but there is also a lot of behind the scenes work. Volunteer contact, market organization, sprout management, curriculum writing, and accounting are some of the many ways each person contributes. Even though the farm looks like a peacefully growing garden at first glance, much work and organization goes into it. The collective is responsible for the management and the labor that is neces-

sary to run the project, and every year they have managed to grow with the farm, despite challenges and setbacks.

Though New Roots isn't a perfect system that completely feeds its community all year long (yet), it is a model, proof that food doesn't have to use tons of oil to travel to people, and that it can be grown locally. The model teaches adults and children how to grow their own food, or at least gives people the chance to support local farmers. Its presence provides a green space in the neighborhood, where there is normally little plant life. The farm demonstrates fair treatment to animals and how to raise them. It demonstrates what variety of vegetables can grow in the area and don't need to be transported from other states. Along with physical expansion, the collective is always seeking out new methods of growing and strengthening the sustainability of the farm, like with the new aquaponics system. They are also continually sharpening skills such as food preservation and seed saving.

New Roots Urban Farm, photo by Beth Buchek

Though the collective finds urban farming very rewarding, the act can be draining because of the constant battle against pollution and soil contamination. Despite these challenges, they continue to improve the quality of the earth on the farm site and provide a green space for the neighborhood. There is also the conflict of desire for a bigger stretch of quiet land in the country, where one could be more in touch with nature while farming and see all the stars at night. Yet, the color, diversity, and picturesque grit of the city remain satisfying for the moment. Urban farming gives farmers the chance to connect with so many different kinds of people daily and the immediate resources of recycled materials to be creative with. Being present in an urban setting can be very influential and inspiring for fellow urbanites, not to mention a wonderful resource. For now, the collective is committing their time to farming in St. Louis, and many are truly grateful.

For info on New Roots visit www.newrootsurbanfarm.org, or email collective@newrootsurbanfarm.org. You can visit during the warm weather months on weekdays at 1830 Hogan, St. Louis, Missouri 63106.

Mary Hargadon

1. New Roots is turning their greenhouse into an aquaponics system by raising fish and recirculating their fertilized water to feed seedlings. the water is recirculated by a solar powered pump.

2. Vermicompost is compost that has been broken down with the help of earth worms.

Campus Kitchen: Cooking Up A Solution To Hunger

by Ellen Rehg

Gabrielle Jones sat on her front porch smiling impishly. Her eyes danced as she regarded Tim Cosentino, the Coordinator of the Campus Kitchens Project at St. Louis University, sitting across from her. She was telling on him.

"He got me with spices. Cayenne pepper! He put it in his hand and actually licked it! So I tried it, and my mouth was burning! He tricked me and burnt my mouth!"

She was relating her experiences in the Culinary Jobs Training Program at Campus Kitchens. Gabrielle, a 25-year-old June graduate of the program, had only good things to say about it, the trickery notwithstanding. Gabrielle's flair showed in her clothes – simple but hip. Her stylishly baggy shorts ended in looped fringes. She had a Sponge Bob theme going on, from the small stuffed Sponge Bob keychain which had a rainbow Obama button pinned to it, to a Sponge bob watch and even a Sponge Bob sock she wore on her broken foot that rested in a blue boot brace.

I'm just a big kid at heart," she grinned.

Also sitting with us on the porch was her friend and landlord, Charlene. Charlene interjected occasional asides to Gabriella's comments, which at times reminded me of a Burns and Allen routine.

"I like cooking. I like construction. I like cooking because I like to eat," Gabriella explained.

["Everything!"] – This from Charlene.

"Everything," Gabrielle confirmed. "Meeting Tim, I've learned to eat a lot of things: Organic peanut butter, spicy food, but no colored pasta. I don't like the red and green noodles. But Tim gets us to eat [different things]. How, I don't know.

"The main thing that we cooked that I liked the most was the Indian curry. Chickpeas and curried rice. It's a sweet curry."

["Uhh-uhh. No way."]

Gabrielle laughed. "She won't eat chickpeas," she said, indicating Charlene. "I tried but she won't eat them."

Gabrielle was referred to Campus Kitchens through an agency called Employment Connections. The Campus Kitchens Project brings together student volunteers to prepare and deliver meals, low income people who need meals, and grocery stores and school cafeterias that have food they can't sell anymore, even though it is still safe and healthy to eat. Funded by a grant from the Sodexho Foundation, a subsidiary of the multinational food service corporation, the Sodexho Alliance, Campus Kitchens was piloted at St. Louis University in 2001. The inspiration for it came from a community kitchen called DC Central Kitchens in Washington D. C., and from a student-led meals program based in Wake Forest University. There are now Campus Kitchens located in twelve cities, some in universities and others in high schools.

The idea behind Campus Kitchens, from the start, included more than meal preparation and delivery. It was also meant to be a vehicle to provide service-learning opportunities to students and job training for low-income people seeking jobs in the food service industry. The jobs training program reflects an effort to address the problem of hunger at its roots. Most of the people who enter the jobs program are referred through a social worker or a social service agency. Karen House has also referred people to the program.

"My counselor knew I liked the cooking field, so he asked me if I'd like to be a part of the program and I said yes. I was excited when I found out I made it in," Gabrielle told me. She started in April and graduated in June.

Since St. Louis University initiated the jobs training program in 2004, there have been about ten courses that run for nine weeks each. Tim has overseen one course since he took the Coordinator job in January of 2008. Four out of the six initial trainees completed that course, have jobs, and are doing well, he reported to me.

Trainees learn culinary skills. Not being a graduate of the program, I had to ask for an example of these. They include things like how to use knives, from paring knives on up to the big ones. They learn how to butcher meat, like how to cut a chicken into eight pieces.

There are also classes in safety and sanitation. This topic is covered by the certification test that each student takes at the end of the course.

"The test is really hard to pass," Tim told me. "It asks you

Ellen Rehg is working on her book about Ann Manganaro, her philosophy classes, and is thinking about becoming a nurse.

things about bacteria, and how fast it grows. You have to study for it."

Charlene remembers how Gabriella approached the test.

["She pulled her books out, but she didn't open them. Then she went to sleep!"]

She was taking medicine for her foot, which she had broken during a street football game. When she sat down to study, she fell asleep instead.

photo by Beth Buchek

["She started not to come!"] Charlene said, meaning that she almost didn't go to the test. However, she did go.

"I was calm when I took the test," Gabrielle related. She was thrilled that she passed it and earned her certification.

The students also learn life skills. These include resume writing, interviewing skills, and how to present yourself for a job interview. The course is designed to train underemployed and possibly undereducated people for a management level position in a kitchen.

"It's a higher level skill than just kitchen work," Tim explained. The impact of learning management skills was evident in Gabrielle's aspirations.

"I want to work in the Renaissance Hotel kitchen, not a fast food kitchen," she told us. "I want to work somewhere where people will actually appreciate eating. Any place that has promotion within, [so I can move up the ranks] not just your everyday fast food restaurant. I'm not 18 no more!"

Gabrielle worked at a Popeye's Fried Chicken before attending the Culinary Jobs program. While she was working there, she suffered a seizure and a stroke. She attributes these medical episodes to working in the hot, stressful environment of Popeye's.

Eventually, she wants to own her own business. "I want to start my own catering service," she said.

[I will not be working with you! I've done my jobs!] – Charlene.

"I was trying to get this building right here." She indicated a building facing Hodiamont across from where she lived. "I was approved for a $10,000 loan. This neighborhood, you've got every nationality up here." She thought she could sell either soul food, or a variety of ethnic foods. She and another program graduate have a pact to go into business together,when either one of them is ready.

"What was something you learned in the program that you weren't expecting to learn?" I asked her. I got an answer I wasn't expecting.

"Patience!" Gabrielle replied immediately. "I wasn't patient enough to try new things. Meeting Tim opened up my mind. I found myself eating two spicy sausages last night, without actually dying."

Tim explained that part of the program is expanding people's palates. Since people generally cook what they know, what they know can limit them. A professional cook has to be familiar with a range of foods, and has to be open to trying new things.

"The program cured a lot of the fears I had," Gabrielle continued. "Fear of failure was my biggest fear. Once I met Tim, and the other people in the program, and we interacted like a family, [it helped me.]" The friendliness and family atmosphere fostered the kind of trust that allowed her to grow and blossom.

"I learned not to be silent, but to ask questions," she went on. "If it wasn't so hands on, and so like a family, I don't think I would have completed the program. Because it was hands on, it helped us to understand what we were doing. The last two weeks we could do things without having to be asked.

"[The program] gave me a lot of patience! I learned how to keep my concentration, [and to work] moving at a certain speed. You can't snap back if someone says something that bothers you. You have to be able to work with criticism."

"I know I can cook," Gabrielle said with confidence. "I have the skills to run a kitchen. I'd like to put that to the test."

["Now she wants to be on Hell's Kitchen!"] – Charlene. (Hell's Kitchen is a cooking 'reality' show.)

Gabrielle confirmed this. She is eager to pit her newly earned skills against the mean and demanding chefs on that show. She feels she is more than equal to the task.

She is accustomed to using whatever food is available in the most creative and healthy manner possible. Campus Kitchens is a "food recovery" program, Tim told a group of volunteers. He has spent only $50.00 on food since he started his position in January. The bulk of the food comes from grocery stores and school cafeterias that can't sell or reuse their day old or leftover food.

I couldn't help but think about Millet's painting, The Gleaners, showing three women picking up stalks of wheat that have fallen off of a wagon carrying the bales of grain. The painting, in turn, echoes the story of Ruth and Naomi seeking the small amounts of grain left by the harvesters. Like them, Campus Kitchens is making use of the small amounts of leftover food, in this case, from corporations.

These small amounts make a big difference to those who don't have enough to eat. Each week as a trainee, Gabrielle helped to cook 100 of the 500 meals that Campus Kitchens prepares and delivers to people needing food. Many of the people served are seniors living in apartments near St. Louis University. Gabrielle enjoyed getting to know some of the people who received the meals she helped to prepare. She liked that she was able to prepare meals that they enjoyed eating.

With the new employment program, Campus Kitchens is gleaning not only the scraps left over by big food corporations, but also the talents and skills of individuals left behind by our big educational systems. And in so doing, it is helping those people whose needs have been left out of our social system. All that's left for us to do is to ponder why all these things are being left behind in the first place.

At the Table

by Carolyn Griffeth

There is a lot of talk these days about the benefits of dining regularly as a family. It is amazing that something so basic as parents eating dinner with their children has become rare enough to warrant a windfall of research, articles, and even campaigns to reintroduce the practice. Perhaps all this hoopla has paid off. On April 8, 2004 the *New York Times* reported that that a national survey by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA) found that 58 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds said they ate dinner with their families at least five times weekly, up from 47 percent in 1998.[1] It is my personal projection that if the cost of gas continues to sky-rocket, these numbers could improve all the more drastically, as families that generally zip their kids from activity to activity might instead simply stay home, plant a garden, and begin cooking from scratch to combat rising food prices. Why get excited about this? Studies show that kids who eat with their families at least five times a week were 42% less likely to drink alcohol, 59% less likely to smoke, and 66% less likely to try marijuana. They also had better grades and a lower incidence of eating disorders.[2] These changes of behavior suggest that during family meals something more than the child's body is being nurtured. The child's sense of belonging, of being loved and understood is also nurtured. This happens as the child watches, or helps, a parent prepare the food and as the family takes time to be present to one another around the dinner table.

Time to be present to one another—this strikes me as the ingredient most lacking in the American family, and in our society at large. When there are so many things out there to entertain us or entice us, it becomes hard to be present to the person before us, even our own child at home. It is clear that children need our presence and we theirs. Presence makes us feel connected, loved, and secure. Presence awakens, enlivens, and even enlightens. Eating together is, therefore, potentially a profound spiritual practice, a ritual way of meeting not only the needs of our bodies, but also our souls.

My family (myself, my husband Tery, Ghana,14 years old, and Finn, 3 years old) spent last summer eating most every dinner and breakfast as a nuclear family for ten weeks while volunteering in Chiapas, Mexico. This was for us, who normally live and eat with others in our community, a radical departure. I hate to report that Tery and I found cooking every night tedious, and eating as a nuclear family rather dull, having already spent the entire day together. In contrast, our lunches in the highlands where we were working were delightful, although routine. Each morning, we would pack our bags full of avocados, tomatoes, plums, and peppers, sold by Mayan women who carry produce down from the hills to sell in San Cristobal's sprawling market. Then, before boarding the micro-bus or combi, we would buy a big pack of fresh tortillas from the ubiquitous tortillarillas and some fresh cheese from a street vendor.[3] At the farm, I would cook quesadillas and make salad (after forging through the garden I was working on) for everyone around. The quality of the ingredients was the same as what we ate in our apartment in town, but the feeling was different—lively, relaxed, festive. We ate not only with our kids but also with friends, fellow workers, and neighbor's kids…just as we do at home.

Here in Saint Louis, we live within an intentional community known as Kabat House, which includes a house of hospitality serving primarily Spanish-speaking homeless folks, the house my family lives in ("The Farm House"), and an extended community of others who consider our bathrooms their own. At last count, community and guests were about 15 all together. Kabat House has a cooking schedule and most of us, most the time, eat dinner together, and other meals spontaneously, daily. We also share our dinners with many others: the collective members of New Roots Urban Farm, neighbors who have become our friends, neighborhood children, anarchist-squatter friends, and others who have just dropped in.

Each dinner consists of one part routine and two parts chaos or creativity. The routine part consists of the following: a cooking schedule that includes the regulars who cook one night a week, target dinner time (6pm), consistent location (our yard, weather permitting, or Kabat house), and a nearly unanimous use of beans and donated bread. The chaotic-creative part

Carolyn Griffeth welcomes all to participate in cooking and dining at Kabat House almost any night or to dance salsa, study Spanish, or play soccer on Sundays. She is also seeking to connect with others interested in urban art and permaculture.

We Can All D


Tony Hilkin and Julie Jakimczyk's home and garden

"At Greenbee Center for Sustainable Living and Education, our garden plays an important role in our efforts to live more sustainably in an urban setting. Through intensive soil remediation and permaculture-inspired techniques, we have transformed our previously vacant side-lot into a local, organic, just, and safe food source for ourselves and for our neighbors".

– Julie Jakimczyk

Pastor James E. Word of the Everlasting LifeApostolic Church has been cultivating this garden in our neighborhood for years and has shared his produce with a local center for senior citizens.

A Dozen Simple Steps To Take (You can start with one or two.)

1. Read some of the books cited in the book review
2. Bring healthy lunches to work and avoid buying
3. Plant a garden (you can start small if you've neve
4. Buy food that's locally grown.
5. Join a food co-op or food-buying group.
6. Become a subscriber to New Roots Urban Farm c grown food.
7. Join the Slow Food Movement (international mov promotes "good, clean and fair" food. Its Ark of T
8. Spend time over dinner with family and friends.
9. Involve children in gardening and in preparing me
10. Cook batches of food and freeze them so that you
11. Eat fruits and vegetables in their season and store
12. Make your own cheese. It's easier than you think

Resources

Places to buy locally grown produce in St.

Local Harvest Grocery (localharvestgrocery.com or 314
Saturday mornings in Tower Grove Park (towergrovefa
North City Farmer's Market (St. Louis Avenue and 14th
City Food Co-op Buying Group (cityfoodcoop.com)

Gardening Resources

Seeds of Change (seedsofchange.com, 1-888-762-7333
Fedco Seeds (fedcoseeds.com, 207-873-7333)
St. Louis Gateway Greening (gatewaygreening.org, 314

Websites

localharvest.org
slowfoodstl.org
newrootsurbanfarm.org
sparkpeople.com
missourifamilies.org/MOhungeratlas.org
pickyourown.org
wikihow.com/Eat-well for less

Books

Organic Housekeeping, Ellen Sandbeck
Home Cheesemaking, Ricki Carroll
The Big Book of Preserving the Harvest, Carol Costenbader
Fix, Freeze, Feast, Kati Neville

Do Something

s and consider the issues raised.
fast food.
er planted before.)

or another subscription farm that promotes organic and locally

vement founded in 1986 to combat the "fast food culture".) It
Taste program has saved hundreds of local produce growers.

eals.
can provide healthier meals for your families when time is limited.
e them by freezing, canning and drying for later use.
and doesn't involve expensive equipment.


garden at TC House

"We planted a garden to help the kids at TC House learn where their food comes from. We want to eat as locally as possible and this (growing our own food) is as local as you can get."
-- Annjie Schiefelbein and Jenny Truax

. Louis

-864-5260)
armersmaket.org)
th Street)

3)

-588-9600)


Mary Ann Kramer
& Larry Chapman's garden

"If you're going to grow grass, you might as well grow something you can eat. Some of the other gardeners and, of course, the price of food caused us to think about growing our own food."
-- Larry Chapman


Marie Andrew's garden

"I don't like crappy food.
I prefer organic food.
You can eat a much wider variety of things.
Who can afford enough basil to make pesto?
Working with the earth gives me peace of mind.
I love being in nature because God speaks to me there."
-- Marie Andrews

New Roots Urban Farm, photo by Beth Buchek

includes: the cook's ability to create a big, scrumptious meal with what often appears to be a spattering of mismatched ingredients; the time dinner actually gets done; and most essentially, who actually shows up, which is the crux of the whole thing.

You see, the emphasis of our dinners is not on *what we will eat*, which most of us have previously thought-out ad nauseaum, and which is largely predetermined (whatever someone has dumpstered, plus whatever we grew or foraged, whatever Whole Foods donated, plus whatever we could afford), but rather *with whom* we will eat. In a culture that is loopy about food choices, and preachy about family-meals, I feel I must defend this emphasis on with whom I eat my meals, which has profoundly shaped the last decade of my life. Unfortunately, there haven't been too many studies on the value of cooking and eating regularly with friends, and welcoming the homeless, undocumented, mentally ill, and all other misfits to join you. This idea (not unlike Ghandi's view of Christianity itself) is one that presumably has never been tried, much less widely promoted! But it has been recommended, and convincingly demonstrated (in my opinion), by the popular radical Jesus.

While the historicity of much of Jesus' life has been questioned, New Testament Scholars agree that Jesus' table fellowship with "sinners" is one of the most historically reliable actions recorded in the Gospels.[4] In Luke 15:1-2, Jesus is spotted surrounded by tax collectors and sinners, a sight which makes the Pharisees mutter, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Apparently Jesus is known for following his own advice as stated in the previous chapter: "When you hold a lunch or dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind . . .(Luke14:12-13)." The parable of the great feast likewise states: "Go out quickly to the streets and alleys of the town and bring in here the poor the crippled, the blind and the lame (Luke14:21)." These verses set the stage for one of Jesus' even more controversial declarations that immediately follows: "If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he can not be my disciple (Luke 14:26)." Taken together, these passages make Jesus' point powerfully clear: One must set aside traditional, exclusionary alliances, even that of family, and instead, at risk of loosing one's own life or status, make room at the table for the poor and disadvantaged.

But why so much emphasis on who one invites to the table? In The Aims and Means of Jesus, Ben F. Meyer sheds light on the place of dining in Jesus' historical context:

"It was through table fellowship that the ritual distinction of the clean and unclean and the moral distinction of the righteous and sinners found concrete social expression. Since Gentiles were unclean (Deut. 14.21) and uncleanness was contagious, Jews were not to eat with them (Jub. 22.16). But the rule applied by Jews to Gentiles was also applied by the religious to the irreligious within Judaism. . . To subvert these distinctions was not a breach of religious etiquette but a challenge to the social order. Jesus, as we have seen, sharply relativized a central aspect of the first distinction ('Nothing that goes into a man from outside can defile him'); and by admitting the unconverted, public, professional sinner to his table fellowship (Luke 19.5) he shattered the social form of the second."[5]

Much of Meyer's remarks resonate with what we see in society today: Individuals seek to remain safe (saved?) by eating the right foods with the right people, which hardly ever includes people of different class, culture, or ideology, or the really hungry. The lunch-counter sit-ins of the civil rights movement are one example of how provocative it can be to cross racial lines in America. The ongoing segregation of the black and white community, evident in most school cafeterias and backyard barbeques, suggests that deep divides remain. One also sees these divides when volunteers at a soup kitchen gladly serve the homeless, but refuse to join their guests at the table or, when they do, sit all huddled together for protection!

By dining with sinners (anyone from prostitutes and tax-collectors, to common workers who don't adhere to the purity codes of the religious establishment), Jesus pronounced them as forgiven or socially-acceptable once again, and united himself with their stigmatization. But the goal of Jesus' open table fellowship wasn't simply the inclusion of the disadvantaged into Jewish society, rather the fellowship itself laid the ground for a new society, one in which all people are welcomed and empowered to participate fully again, and to be present to one another again, in the spirit of Jesus. Needless to say, this new

Here I sit present to Being
Present to friends and family
Present to earth and eating.
-Source Unknown

society posed a great threat to the established social order. Through a careful literary study of the book of Luke, New Testament scholar, Robert J. Karris, OFM concludes that: "Jesus got crucified because of the way he ate. The religious leaders could not tolerate this prophet of good news to the poor who, not only in word but especially at meals, criticized their way of life." Highlighting an estimated nineteen meals within Luke, Karris emphasizes that the climactic last meal of Jesus and his disciples is best understood as the "last" supper in a sequence of suppers.[6]

Considering how much emphasis the book of Luke alone places on Jesus' radically inclusive dining habits, it seems logical that those whose lives are inspired by Jesus should imitate his practice of open table fellowship, at least now and then, and that doing so might provide a key to the mystery of Eucharistic communion, or as Carl Kabat likes to say, Common-union. This Common-union, or experience of soul-felt togetherness, is largely what attracts me to eating together as a community. (It is also what I believe makes the experience a positive one for my children.) What makes this practice really powerful for me is that we are a community of inclusion, in which even communitymembers who couldn't reach consensus on many theological and ideological things (including what I've written) can eat and live together. We're a community in which our lives are shared with those forced to the margins of society (by mental illness, addictions, disabilities, and false documents). Our dinners, though, are an expression of a common vision: a table where all are welcome, where our presence to, and acceptance of, one another is personally transformative and lays the groundwork for something even more grand: a new society, or at least a little village, of individuals reaching beyond themselves and their differences and living cooperatively.

photo by Teka Childress
Composting is one step you can take to reduce your contribution to the local landfill, increase the health of your soil, and recycle your kitchen and yard waste. Check out www.howtocompost.org, and in St. Louis, Home Eco (314-351-2000) for advice and materials to get you started.

But don't let me mislead you to believe that our motivations for eating as a community are completely Christ-inspired or altruistic. We are equally motivated by the desire to reduce the burden of creatively preparing (and growing) nutritious food for ourselves and the kids. When I think back to how my mother managed to work full time, keep a garden, and cook for all of us each night, I am filled with wonder and appreciation, as well as a bit of dread. Of course I want the benefits of home-cooked meals and table-fellowship for my children, but although I love to cook, I also realize that cooking real food for my family can practically take over my life. This is where community comes in. In a very real sense, our "community" is simply a large, extended family (like people in so many cultures around the world live in) where the work of daily life is distributed in a way that lightens the load of all, particularly the mothers![7] Our cooking rotation not only alleviates the demands of cooking, but also enables us to eat much healthier, delicious foods than we would come up with on our own, and empowers us to extend the benefit of "family" cooking and dining to include many folks who don't have a family (at least not at hand) but still hunger for festive meals, for fellowship, and to serve.

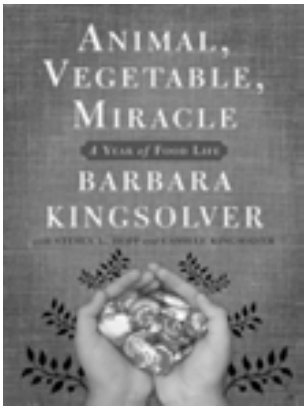
While I recognize that our communal lifestyle makes such dining practices uniquely possible, I offer up our experiment as an invitation for others to embark on their own. Having just returned from a gathering celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Catholic Worker, I am heartened to know that open-table fellowship remains a central practice within the Movement, and I feel inspired by the multiplicity of ways it is being practiced. It is, like family dinners, something we do for ourselves as well as others—a practice of presence and solidarity, which feeds both body and soul. It is just as Dorothy Day put it in the closing lines of the Long Loneliness:

"We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love eachother we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of the bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone any more. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship. We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community."

1. Foderaro, Lisa W, "Families With Full Plates, Sitting Down to Dinner," The New York Times, April 5, 2006
2. "Family Dinner Linked to Better Grades for Teens," ABC News. Sept. 13, 2005, can be found at http://abcnews.go.com
3. Although everyone in rural Chiapas grows corn, thanks to free trade rules, all the tortilla shops use corn grown by corporate farms in the U.S.A. Local farmers can't compete with million dollar machinery fueled by cheap gas.
4. It passes the criterion of (1) multiple attestation, (2) double similarity and double dissimilarity (3) and overall cohesiveness.
5. Meyer, Ben F, The Aims of Jesus (London, SCM Press, 1979), 158-159.
6. Karris, Robert, Luke: Artist and Theologian (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 47.

RoundTable Reviews: Books on the Delicious Revolution

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life by Barbara Kingsolver, Camille Kingsolver, Steven L. Hopp
Reviewed by Gerry Rauch

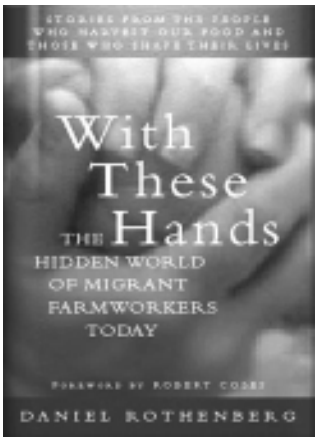


If anyone wants to promote Barbara Kingsolver to saint-hood, I volunteer to be her first 'miracle.' I have never been accused of being a great cook or of having any sustained interest in gardening, beyond the telling my husband what I'd like him to plant. This engaging book has me making my own pie crusts for our homegrown gooseberries, canning twenty pints of jam, and paying more for locally grown foods at our neighborhood organic store.

We learn that Kingsolver, her husband, college-age daughter, & pre-teen daughter decided to move from Tucson to Western Virginia in an attempt to live a sustainable life. They agreed to only eat food grown or raised within 50 miles of their home or what they can grow or raise themselves. They also wanted to expand on the pleasures they had begun to find in both cooking together and in exploring the topic of food.

The book's structure is that of a calendar year, from one March to the following March. Each chapter presents the needs of their garden that month, what it yields, and how to cook it. Sketches of the month's garden bounty, scrumptious recipes, facts about corporate farming and food production, along with the author's award-winning writing gives this book broad-based appeal. Whether you are an environmentalist, a believer in organic foods, an avid cook, or one who simply enjoys the well-turned phrase, Animal, Vegetable, Miracle will challenge your way of eating and make you believe that you can eat sustainably and enjoy it.

With These Hands: The Hidden World of Migrant Farmworkers Today by Daniel Rothenberg
Reviewed by Virginia Druhe

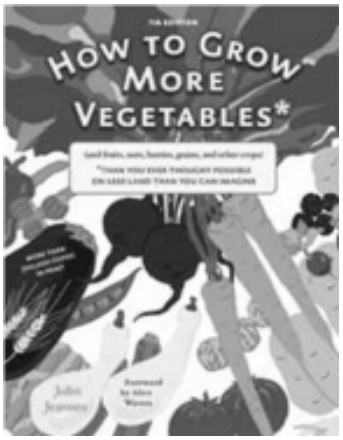


I remember an old orange juice commercial that showed one hand reaching for the juice from the grocery store shelf as another hand, from the orchard, put the juice on the shelf. Every time we reach for fruits or vegetables in the store, our hand mirrors the action of the farm worker harvesting the product in the field. We are that close to each other and at the same time, so invisible to each other. Increasingly, our milk, beef and chicken also come home to us from industrial systems built on the labor of farm workers. Environmental activists, family farm defenders and health activists encourage us to reexamine our relationship to the food system. When we do, it is vital that we include farm workers in the equation. We will not have built a sustainable food system, or a humane one, until it sustains the humanity of the laborer in the field. With These Hands documents the current farm labor system through the voices of work-

ers who labor in the fields, growers who manage the multi-billion dollar agricultural industry, contractors who link workers with growers, union organizers, physicians, workers' families in Mexico, farm worker children and others. Taken together, they present the complex, hidden, and vital world of migrant farm workers.

Though the book is now eight years old, it is still the standard and, sadly, none of the fundamentals of the situation have changed. If the book were written today, it would simply need one more chapter – on the chilling effect of vigorous immigration enforcement in these communities. It is well recognized that nationwide more than half of farm workers are undocumented immigrants. "New York Times Book Review" called this book "oral history at its best." I recommend it as an excellent and very readable way to hear the voice of the people who offer us the intimate service of providing our food.

How to Grow More Vegetables (And Fruits, Nuts, Berries, Grains, and Other Crops) Than You Ever Thought Possible on Less Land Than You Can Imagine by John Jeavons
Reviewed by Jenny Truax

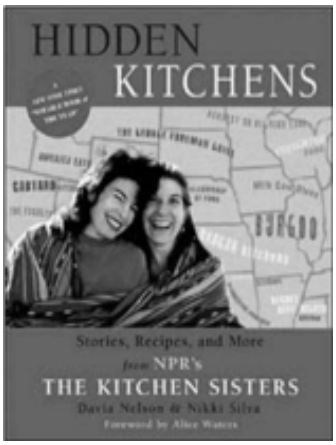


Beginning an experiment in truth last year, we began laying out plans for a backyard garden at Teka Childress CW House. The folks at New Roots suggested the book How To Grow More Vegetables, which I quickly devoured. Published by the group Ecology Action, the book seeks no less than to solve the problems of war and world hunger. The book is not a primer on how to garden. As a beginner, I needed to supplement it with The New Seed-Starters Handbook, The Organic Gardener's Handbook of Natural Insect and Disease Control, The Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening, and the Missouri Botanical Garden website (http://mobot.org/gardeninghelp/plantinfo.shtml).

The Biointensive method of gardening combines elements from French intensive techniques used in the 1700s (close spacing of plants, planting into a FOOT AND A HALF of horse manure) with Biodynamic methods utilized in the 1920s (planting in raised beds, using natural, rather than chemical, pest controls). Biointensive gardening decreases the amount of watering and energy needed to produce food, while increasing vegetable yields. It's based on some very common sense ideas: To get something from soil (vegetables, fruit, etc.), you need to give back to it (with naturally occurring organic matter like compost and manure). Nature grows great wild food that doesn't usually pop up in neatly spaced long rows (the Biointensive technique involves staggered, close spacing). Growing the same vegetable on the same plot of land for many years is not good for anyone (the book has sample layouts for crop rotation), and many vegetables have definite preferences for who their vegetable neighbors are (the book lists both companions and antagonists for planting). When you spray chemicals onto plants, more than those little aphids get killed (Jeavons encourages us to plant 10% extra in anticipation, and describes methods of environmental and organic controls for bugs, disease, and others pests).

The book points out that our homegrown tomato "requires no fuel for transportation, no packaging to be sent to the landfill, no political decision about who will be allowed to work the fields or what level of pollutants is acceptable in our groundwater." It stridently emphasizes the need to build up our soil in our small "mini-farms" so that we as a species survive beyond the projected 42 to 84 years worth of topsoil that remains on the planet. Get out your shovels!

Hidden Kitchens: Stories, Recipes and More
Audio Book by Davia Nelson & Nikki Silva.
Audio and print book available at http://shop.npr.org/product/show/28777
Streaming and downloading available at http://www.kitchensisters.org
Reviewed by Virginia Druhe



A couple of years ago I heard a piece on public radio that grabbed my heart. It presents homeless people and people living in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels talking about how they find ways to prepare food and how useful the George Forman grill has become for them. One man talks about using the grill to cook for others by plugging into a power pole under the overpass on Chicago's Wacker Drive. These voices, fascinating in themselves, are interwoven with George Forman telling his story of growing up desperately hungry, of the ruses he used as a child to convince others he was not hungry in order to hide his shame, and of how hunger made him angry, got him involved in numerous fights and prevented him from learning. He tells how it changed his life in the Job Corps when he finally had enough to eat, how it took him two months to believe that the meals would continue to arrive 3 times every day, how he began to be at peace, to read and to learn.

I love actually hearing the delight in his voice when he says he did not know his grill is so useful to people who are so hungry, but he is very glad of it. I also love his humility when he talks about realizing he had no real friends when he stopped fighting and how he created his new life by sharing food with others.

This is just one of more than 30 episodes in the "Hidden Kitchens" series on NPR. The series is produced by Jay Allison

RoundTable Quote:

"Access to good, affordable food makes more difference to what people eat than health education. No amount of telling people to eat more fruits and vegetables will change their diet if they cannot easily buy such things."

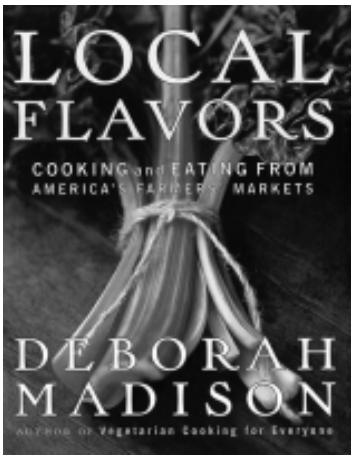
-The World Health Organization

along with Davia Nelson and Nikki Silva, who call themselves the Kitchen Sisters. For me, a couple of the most fascinating episodes are compilations of listener calls offering amazing stories of food and people coming together — a kitchen set up every night and taken down every morning at a cab yard in San Francisco to offer Brazilian home cooking to the large number of Brazilian cab drivers in the city, a secret "toolbox kitchen" selling hidden brats and buns on an auto assembly line in Michigan, and cooking in the pit at NASCAR races.

I love how each story celebrates the joy we find in food, the endless creativity it calls out of people, and the deep bond it creates between us. These stories remind me that even when eating alone I am in communion with the whole of humanity. Eating and sharing food is one of the most profoundly human things we do. These delightful stories clothe that big truth in wonderful and revealing particulars.

The stories are available on the Hidden Kitchens website for listening, downloading, as a three CD set, and also published as a print book. I strongly recommend that you enjoy these stories in audio form. You will hear voices and music that are at times central to the food experience being shared.

Local Flavors: Cooking and Eating from America's Farmers' Markets
by Deborah Madison
Reviewed by Timmy Cosentino



Deborah Madison's book Local Flavors isn't your ordinary cookbook. In many ways it is a survival guide for your local farmers market. It is also a gateway to exploring new and exciting fruits and vegetables that before now you may have only wondered about. The premise of the book is simple: local food tastes better and is better for farmers and consumers. However, since the majority of us do not live on farms, accessing local food is the challenge. The answer for Madison is in your local farmer's market.

All over the country, farmers markets have sprung up. I can think of six different markets in St. Louis alone. The challenge of eating locally and through a farmer's market is learning how to eat seasonally. That doesn't just mean eating more tomatoes in the summer, it means expanding our diets to include, literally, the whole rainbow of produce: greens in the early spring and fall, asparagus only in the early spring, tomatoes, eggplant, and zucchini in July and August, and dozens of varieties of little used winter squash and tubers. Did you know that potatoes range in color from pale white to vibrant purple? What about the sheer variety of winter squash that if given a chance will become dinner rather than Halloween and Thanksgiving decorations? Check out Madison's Local Flavors and take a moment to really discover your local farmer's market and just how delicious and varied going local can be. I recommend taking a look at apple-oat pancakes with cheddar cheese, pasta with golden fennel, and winter squash braised in pear or apple cider in particular. Happy cooking!

RoundTable Facts:

- **The average number of fruits and vegetables available at a supermarket is 48; the average for a small neighborhood store is 11.**

- **There are 30% fewer supermarkets in low-income versus higher-income areas.**

- **Lack of access to supermarkets forces lower-income people to pay as much as 76% more for some food items.**

-The Prevention Institute

From Abroad

by James Meinert

Recently, a friend of the Catholic Worker was here in Nicaragua and in a gush of emotion exclaimed, "My heart beats with Nicaragua!" This phrase caused a few of us longer term volunteers here to pause and wonder if our own hearts beat with Nicaragua. After rolling it around in my head for a few days, I realized my own personal truth: My stomach growls with Nicaragua. I love the food here. I love the rice, I love the beans and I love them both even more when mixed together. Some volunteers get all nervous thinking about where they will work or live when they return to the United States. But not me. I get nervous thinking about where I will find a steady supply of red beans. Still, that is in the future, and my present is chock full of red beans and a variety of other edibles that make up the local food culture into which I am fully immersed.

I came to Nicaragua in late 2006 with visions of community, simplicity, faith sharing and a whole lot of working for the common good. I didn't, however, think much at the time about the food that would sustain me throughout my time here. That all changed as I began going to the local markets to buy our food supply for the week, and began noticing that some of the food I ate for lunch, served to me at work, came from a nearby farm. Simultaneously, I was struggling with strong feelings of being an imperialist. English, the class I teach and the commonly accepted language of today's Empire, is the only foreign language offered and it is not optional. I was also struggling with feelings of being a consumerist, eating three meals a day but not really contributing to the production of anything concrete. Although some have argued that I'm producing educated people, in the dichotomy between scholars and workers I'm pretty sure teaching falls into the former. So, upon learning that there is a small farm attached to my school from where much of the fresh produce comes, I asked the farmer responsible for the caring of the farm if I could help out. He seemed confused at my desire to get onto the farm when the many Nicaraguan youth raised on farms are today trying to get off, but not opposed, and thus fully welcomed my added assistance. There began my small adventure in alleviating my consumerist guilt. Still, I wasn't producing much. As my community would tell you, I was pretty excited about the several hundred cucumbers I planted, and then pretty sad when all of them died because of a "hot rain," whatever the heck that means. Setbacks aside, I've committed myself to a further fixation with the so-called green revolution, recognizing that the current food crisis might again make growing food locally a necessity.

James on a recent trip in Nicaragua

As far as the crisis is concerned, Nicaragua isn't in as bad shape as some countries. Markets fill up every day with fresh produce brought in from the countryside. Foods come in and out of season so prices fluctuate throughout the year, but in line with the international food crisis, prices have gone up continually and drastically over the last year. Tomatoes used to fluctuate between 60 and 90 cents a dozen, but are now closer to $1.80 to $2.00 a dozen. The prices of rice, beans, and oil have risen to stay. For many families the obvious result is less food on the table but there are countless other hidden sacrifices in their lives already weighed down with the jagged cross of poverty. I'm often left watching helplessly and feeling useless, asking what I can do?

We can all start by growing a single tomato plant and then eating those tomatoes and giving thanks to God for God's goodness and flavorfulness. We may even realize how difficult it is to grow stuff without neighbors to support us and people with experience to teach us. I am realizing that as I've lost not only cucumbers, but now our basil and green peppers aren't looking so hot. So, start building communities around sharing food and food knowledge and start cutting off support for the destructive food giants—Monsanto and DuPont come to mind, among others. These small acts are where we encounter hope and how we build our own food cultures. I look forward to joining in the struggle. I should be back in St. Louis in January, and I hope someone has some red beans stashed away, saved up for a winter's day. ✚

James Meinert, in Nicaragua with Jesuit Volunteers International, recently had a head-shaving accident and is feeling in solidarity with his over-pruned plants.

From Little House

by Teka Childress and Mike Baldwin

As many of you probably already know, Mary Ann McGivern passed the Little House on to us when she left for the Big Apple a few years ago. “Little House” is a deceptive term for this 1870’s four-family flat at the corner of 17th and Mullanphy (three blocks from Karen House).

We were a bit hesitant at first to accept this “gift” from Mary Ann because we certainly had enough going on already without taking on something new. Yet, it made perfect sense for us to do it because of my years of offering hospitality and Mike’s years of involvement in every aspect of affordable housing. We knew that the low rents at the Little House did not cover all the expenses, but we decided to give it a go and have managed so far, except that the big back porch is still in dilapidated condition due to lack of enough funds to build a new one.

Downtown Teens, photo by Mike Baldwin

Much to my surprise, not liking change, and not to Mike’s surprise, who likes challenges, we have come to love our new home. We have a nice apartment, a beautiful backyard, and great neighbors.

Our backyard at North 18th Street, as anyone knows who had seen it, was worthy of envy because of Virginia Druhe’s years of care. I have been impressed to see how lovely Mike has made our new backyard. We also have the greatest advantage of all that Mary Ann left behind by her planting. I reached up and took an apricot off the tree in the back and literally reaped what I did not sow. But my favorite thing about the backyard is our new (to us) hammock. We had to take it down during the mulberry season, however, or risk coming in the house only a few shades off the demanding little girl who became a blueberry in "Willy Wonka."

Our neighbors include those who live in the other three apartments of our building, those on our block, and the residents who live in the new houses that have sprung up. Ms. Yvonne, who lives in our building, next door and downstairs, has five grandchildren who come to visit, especially on the weekends and summers. They add a great deal to the fun on our little block. Theresa, who lives below us, has been in the building for several years now and works for a home health care company. We saw her coming in the other night, the night before July 4th, and she was preparing for her work day on the following day, the holiday. She had to leave at 5 a. m. and expressed her doubt that the time and a half made it worth it. Above Ms. Yvonne, Jessica lives with her four girls who are a delight. They come to us from Karen House.

The block we live on has been the domain of the Bailey family for the past forty plus years. Mr. and Mrs. Bailey, who live in the house on the other end of our three-house block, invariably have one or more of their grandchildren living with them. Often in the summer, their grandson, Jeremy, lives with them and has worked with the Downtown Teens, the program that Mike runs to teach local teens job skills. In between the Baileys and us is our neighbor Payne. He is Mrs. Bailey’s brother. He is the original scavenger. Anyone who has seen his house next to ours knows this. Nothing goes to waste under Payne’s watchful eye.

Lastly, down the street on the next block, are our new neighbors. I am afraid I had some reverse snobbery going on and didn’t expect to have much in common with these neighbors in these new suburban-style homes, but in walking down the street have come to like them a great deal. They have been friendly and open and interested in the neighborhood, wanting to become involved in building a good place to raise their children.

So, the moral of this story is, if someone offers you a house, you needn’t necessarily be afraid to take it. Change doesn’t always kill you and can bring some lovely new and unexpected aspects to your life. ✚

Mike Baldwin and the Downtown Teens recently built a beautiful fence for Karen House, and **Teka Childress** has been busy fitting the Green Revolution into her bustling life and enjoying her homegrown lettuce and basil.

From Karen House

by Elizabeth Driscoll

As some readers might know, Karen House invites volunteers to come to the house to prepare and serve meals. Last week, a woman named Sherrye came while I was "taking house." At first, she seemed quite bossy and I was taken aback by her attitude. We looked at the food that was available to cook, as I was quite unprepared for her visit. "Rice," I offered. "No one will want rice," she replied in an annoyed tone. Then she asked, "No box macaroni and cheese, what do you expect me to do in this mess?" "We have lots of cheese and noodles," I offered. "Well honey," Sherrye said while she looked at the clock, "You better start shreddin." "By the way, where's the chicken that they said would be thawed out?" she hollered. "It's thawing in the sink with water," I sheepishly replied. Then she looked at me sternly inquiring, "Exactly how long has that chicken been out?" and then continued with, "I told them to put it out last night." The doorbell rang, and I was happy to have an excuse to escape.

When I returned to ascertain the progress of dinner, we began to talk about the people that she and I both knew from the Karen House community. Sherrye explained that she used to be a guest at Karen House. With a little time and conversation I began to see her rough exterior was just her assertive and maternal nature, and I guess with time, she began to think that I might not be just a naïve white girl. So, with all sincerity, I asked, "How was your experience at Karen House?" "Honey, it was good. I love Karen House!" "Really, why?" I asked, surprised by such a bold answer.

She replied in a warm tone, "Because they were always there. We were a family and this was our house. We all looked out for one another. Every holiday, we all celebrated together like a family. Christen and Courtney and all the women, we would hang out and paint our nails together on Friday nights. I would always look out for Dan, because Courtney and Dan were dating and she couldn't cook, but he loved my cooking. My son even liked it here at Karen House; he just adored hanging out with Tim and Jo-Jo. But most of all, they were always there. When I had to go to the hospital, they brought me there and they could have gone home, but they stayed with me the entire time. You know I cooked this same dish, my homemade macaroni and cheese, for Teka's wedding and now I'm teaching you to cook it. You see, now I have my own place, but we still see people from Karen House. When my young daughter died just last year, my son and I stopped making friends in the neighborhood; we couldn't risk the danger anymore. But Karen House has been a place where there is trust. They have always been there."

A wonderful Karen House cook: Sherrye
Photo by Annjie Schiefelbein

In my short time at Karen House I am beginning to realize that there is a lot of love and a lot of goodwill shared in this space, but there is also a lot of pain and a lot of trauma. All too often, one will not see the guests, women or children, leave the cycle of homelessness, poverty, un-treated mental illness, or other disparities. More often than not, Karen House is a place for temporary, instead of long-term, relief from the horrendous social condition of poverty in the United States. Sometimes it makes me wonder, what's the point of trying to fight it? But such encounters with individuals, like the cook that came while I was taking house, give me hope and inspiration. Maybe it could have happened somewhere else, but this woman and her children found a community in Karen House, like I have. As a novice at the House, these encounters encourage me to not just give out sandwiches, mindlessly clean the house, or talk with people occasionally, but instead, to find the time to just be there with people, to let go of my ego, and to consistently and intentionally just be there for someone, in whatever capacity that need be.

Elizabeth Driscoll recently graduated from St. Louis University, coordinates a Language and Culture Exchange with the InterFaith Committee on Latin America, and puts us to shame with her love of jogging.

From the Mailbag

Dear Friends,

It is always a treat to get a new issue of the Round Table, and I always read it cover to cover, working on the clarification of my thought. I usually don't write in response, but had a couple of specific thoughts this time, all around the idea of "What Dorothy said." (I should mention that I was lucky enough to be among the last group of folks at the NYCW who were there while Dorothy Day could still get about, and, while many others there at the time certainly knew her better than I, I did have a few conversations with her in those years.)

First of all, I wonder if you could give me a citation for a line attributed to her on page 7, "Don't vote, it just encourages them." While I do remember seeing that (or something very similar) on a button someone was wearing in the Lower East Side back in the seventies, I've never heard it attributed to Dorothy before. I'd be very interested in learning that.

But the main reason I write now is to say something about the "filthy rotten system" line, mentioned four times in this issue (pp. 3,8, 15 & 19). Dorothy hated to hear that quoted back to her. When I was at Maryhouse, she knew that it had been made into a poster, but wouldn't allow it in the house. I don't expect folks to stop repeating it, but thought that, in Dorothy's defense, at least you should know that she was very unhappy about having that repeated.

"Our problems stem from our acceptance of this filthy, rotten system."
- Dorothy Day

I think it was almost like her reaction when a reporter (Newsweek, I think, but I'm not certain) asked her what she thought about people calling her a saint. I know you know what she said. "Don't say that. I want to be taken seriously." There are many other things she wrote and said that she felt better represented her. I hope we'll see a wider range of Dorothy Day's thoughts mentioned in the future.

Thank you for your work. I'm grateful to be on your mailing list.

Peace and all good,
Bill Barrett

Dear Bill,

Thanks for your letter. We hope other RT readers will be inspired to write thoughtful letters like yours!

We're really grateful for your insight into Dorothy Day's quote. We also spoke to Jane Sammon at Maryhouse in New York to find out more about it. Jane, who lived with Dorothy for nine years, had never heard Dorothy express frustration about the quote. We mused that perhaps Dorothy was upset that one negative-sounding phrase would gain such popularity in the midst of the volumes she wrote.

As you mentioned, "filthy rotten system" was a popular quote for our authors in the RoundTable issue,"Electing Justice? On Elections, Responsibility and Resistance". The authors used this quote as shorthand for describing electoral politics, our wealth-driven capitalist system, and U.S. structures that ignore the needs of the poor.

We agree that one quote couldn't possibly encompass all that Dorothy Day wrote, proposed, and promoted. This quote does, however, provide an accurate, if too brief, sample of the Catholic Worker critique of capitalism-driven "democracy." We find countless examples of this critique in Dorothy's writing. While perhaps overly-quoted, the words are certainly a pertinent example of Dorothy's opinions and actions towards electoral politics and responsibility.

This issue was an attempt to open dialogue about our responsibility as citizens, and we hope it represented a wide variety of Catholic Worker thought. From Annjie's dive into distributism and decentralization to Bill's analysis of power and oppression, we hope this RoundTable was successful in applying the philosophies of Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day in a contemporary setting.

Thanks again for writing, and we hope to see many more letters in our mailbox!

Jenny Truax
For the RoundTable Committee

Round Table Talk

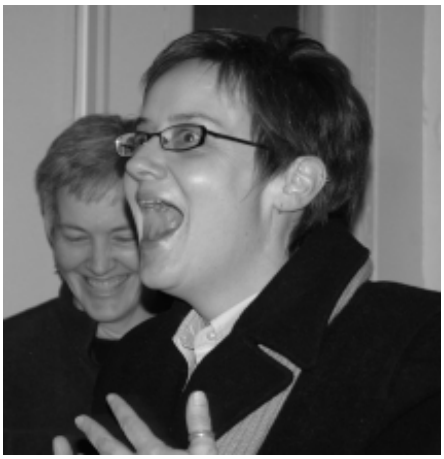
by Becky Hassler

I love falling in love, being in love, living in love! I love everything about it. Teka, who is just a few years older, but so much wiser, always tells me that that's really not the best part. I know it often fades, but I always want to believe it won't. I love the feelings, the intensity of not ever being able to get enough time with your beloved. I love being in love.

The Jesuit Perdo Arrupe writes: "Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evenings, how you spend your weekend, what you read, what you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything."

Every stage of falling in love, in fact, every stage of our life brings new questions, new opportunities for growth. The details are often out of our control, but the questions that we need to focus on and reflect upon are not what will I *do* now, but how will I *be* now. What will give my life continued passion? What am I *passionate* about? Living our passions fully is what will bring about change - will bring about the reign of God.

My stage in life right now is menopause, and this change of life makes me reflect on these very things. I was letting go of some of what was, and looking to see what was next. I decided to pay attention to my deep and long desire to be a nurse midwife. I am now nearly finished with my studies and am so delighted to embrace this deepened identity of who I am. The course work and clinical schedule have been challenging to say the least, but each time I am with a woman in labor I really find such peace and internal joy. To watch the process of labor and birth is awe-some. There is power and pain, labor and love, fear and fascination. There is certainly blood, sweat, and tears, but there is often also joy, and amazement, and beauty. Being with women in labor is a profound experience. Being there to see the miracle of birth truly is such a privilege. It's watching creation unfold. Midwife literally means "with women." A woman in labor is doing all the work. I am just there to just be with her and allow the process to happen, offering a comforting, compassionate presence.



Living in love: Becky at her surprise birthday party
Photo by Christen Parker

Someone described a woman's experience of birthing a child as not so much bringing something new into the world but, for her, the experience as letting something go; something that was a part of her womb is now apart. We all know what it is to let go. Birth cannot happen unless the woman is able to let go, and then to embrace anew. We can be midwives to each other to help the process of birth happen. The pain has to be there in order for new life to come; the letting go has to be there before birth can happen. Women say the pain of childbirth is most intense right before the baby is born. Women at that point often don't believe they can do it anymore. They want to give up from fear, exhaustion, or intense pain. That is where the midwife can be most helpful in reminding her that she does indeed have the power within herself to birth this child, to bring this new life into existence.

Whatever stage of life we are in, we can and must bring new life into existence. Hope to those who have none, peace to those who live in fear, bread to those who are hungry, homes to those who long for shelter, comfort to those in pain. It is all love.

"Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything."

Becky Hassler is still basking in the glow of her surprise 45th birthday party and looks forward to her graduation from the Frontier School of Midwifery and Family Nursing.

Statement from the 75th Anniversary Gathering of the Catholic Worker

…At this critical point in history, as we face unending war, including U.S. plans to attack Iran, ecological destruction and economic collapse, we call on our church and nation to join us in repenting our affronts to God.

The U.S. has become the wealthiest nation on earth at the price of the collective loss of our souls through our acceptance of the sins of war, torture, racism, discrimination, killing, nuclearism and environmental destruction -- all in the name of profit. We live a lifestyle that demands war and distracts from our true calling of loving and caring for one another… In the name of God, who calls us to love and not to kill, we appeal to the church and all people of good will to:

• Call for prayer, fasting, vigils and nonviolent civil resistance to end the U.S. military occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan and resist U.S. plans to attack Iran.
• Urge Congress and the military to offer appropriate care and support to returning soldiers, advise all soldiers to refuse to participate in these wars, and support all conscientious objectors.
• Call for an immediate end to the use of torture, and for the closing of Guantanamo and other secret U.S. military prisons.
• Call for the redirection of our resources from war making and exploitation to meeting human needs and preserving life on Earth.
• Call for an equitable redistribution of resources and simplification of our materialistic lifestyle.
• Call for disarmament and the abolition of all weapons of mass destruction.

New Windows at Karen House!

~ We are initiating an **Adopt-A-Window** Project this year to replace our 100 year-old windows. Are you or your group interested in adopting one or more of our 76 windows for replacement? Call us!

~ Mark your calendar for our **folk concert and silent auction** benefiting the Windows Project:
- Saturday, October 11th, time & location TBA
- Girlyman: three-part harmonies, catchy acoustic tunes, and soaring folk music with a sense of humor!

Do you have a donation for our silent auction? Call us!

Check www.KarenHouseCW.org for window packets, event updates, concert tickets, and sound clips from the band!

Karen House News

~ **RoundTable Discussions** begin this September with the DVD "**Fool for Christ,**" the one-woman play about Dorothy Day.

~ We want your **letters**! Please let us know what you think of our RoundTable issues.

Teka Childress House Needs: Help with our "Kid Fund" (this pays for outings, school uniforms, etc.)

Kabat House Needs: A gas stove

Intercambio: Contact the InterFaith Committee on Latin America for more info on this Spanish and English Language and Culture Exchange. 314-721-2977, or ifcla@ifcla.net

The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free. Please write to *The Round Table*, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO. 63106. Donations are gladly accepted to help us continue our work with the poor. People working on this issue include: Joe Angert, Megan Heeney, Virginia Druhe, Teka Childress, John Carroll, Beth Buchek, Elizabeth Drisoll, Timmy Cosentino, Christen Parker, Ellen Rehg, and Jenny Truax. Letters to the editor are encouraged; we'll print as many as space permits.

The Round Table

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