



FRESNO METRO MINISTRY • www.fresnometroministry.org
1055 North Van Ness Avenue • Suite H • Fresno, California 93728
PHONE: 559/485.1416 • FAX: 559/485.9109 • EMAIL: edie@fresnometmin.org

Excerpts and Summary of the 45th Community Hunger and Nutrition Forum Wednesday, July 14, 2004 12:00PM –1:30PM

Trinity Lutheran Church, Fresno

Sponsored by Fresno Metro Ministry

Supported by

USDA, Community Food Project

California Dept. of Health Services Cancer Prevention
and Nutrition Section, by USDA

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

California Food Policy Advocates

The following is a summary of the reports made at the forum compiled by Jeremy Hofer and Carey Berend.

FOCUS: Planting a Seed Starting and Sustaining Community Gardens

Jeremy Hofer: Thank you so much for everybody taking the time out of your busy schedules to come today.

We're going to be joined in about 30 minutes by Bill Maynard. He will speak on his experience up in Sacramento putting together gardens and sustaining them and working with the city on gardens, but first I wanted to give a little background on the situation in Fresno as I understand it. There are some blanks that I hope people in this room can fill in for us for the record. I put together a quick Power Point that should take about five minutes and it basically is distilling some of the information that Sharon Stanley put together after the last grant ended. **The California Endowment was a three-year grant that came in 1999 and it funded 15 gardens across Fresno**, so this is some of the information from that grant. The grant was called **Beyond Hunger, New American Community Garden Project**. **Fifteen community gardens were established by a partnership of nine sponsoring agencies including Adventis, Refugee Ministries and Services, Hmong Mission, Church of Christ, Catholic Charities, Khmer Society of Fresno, Grace Lutheran Church, California Rural Legal Assistance, Hmong Baptist Temple, Harmony Free Will Baptist Church, and Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries.** I put up there in addition to those groups **Stone Soup**, which was not part of the grant but they independently did their own garden at the **Saint Paul Newman Center**. I put it as discontinued on the map but maybe it's to be continued. This is a color version of the map that's in front of you. Again, if there are any corrections please see me. Funding is very important for gardens because they don't just happen for free. A lot of times there are costs involved. That's what we found out with this project.

The California Endowment provided a three-year grant and funded a coordinator that was located at FIRM and the coordinator was in charge of getting these gardens started. I believe it was five a year. The most important part of any kind of grant is the in-kind support, and that's basically the local support. That's what people are throwing in at the local level and saying they're behind it and that really lends itself to sustainability. **There was a whopping \$66,940 per year so that's quite a bit of in-kind support that this community put forward. That support came in the form of garden equipment, installing the equipment, land clearing, leveling, workshop teaching, troubleshooting, consultations, and**

provision of sponsoring agency staff to serve as a communication link with gardeners. Though they did receive a small stipend, every single sponsoring agency went over and above what that stipend was really worth in time and energy. **Land site donations, leadership team meetings, time commitments, irrigation equipment, and compost donations. Gallo Winery started giving us compost for free.** We would just drive five trucks up and they would give us their compost. There were a lot of partners and a lot of support coming from the community. I put the James Irvine Foundation because at CRLA I was involved in writing a small \$5000 grant to keep that garden going after this three-year grant happened, so they're definitely supportive and that could be something in the future for us to consider. **Gardens were located on city-owned, privately owned, and church-owned properties, so these were donations of land from these entities. There were 18 to 24 families at each garden with a total of about 300 families, and figuring an average of six members per family that makes 1800 participating gardeners.** It really was the whole family that would go out there and garden this land and it included cousins, grandparents, so it was the extended family as well. **It was estimated that 4200 additional family members benefited** in the sense that they would bring the food home and the extended families benefited. It doesn't mention there that **church members benefited, Plant a Row benefited, other people that just went by the garden to visit benefited,** so this is a real important influx of culturally appropriate, healthy food that is available because of these gardens.

The impacts of gardens are enhanced food security, culturally appropriate foods, improved understanding of gardening techniques, increased civic participation, income generation, economic development, increased networking for garden resources, meaning it actually put gardening on the map and brought together the UC Davis Extension and farm advisors and churches for resources, **family support services.** Very important. We have an influx of refugees coming and this is a great model in a sense to connect sponsoring agencies and a network of agencies to these gardeners and serve them and give them a direct service through this relationship. **The most important impact in a way is the health improvement for both our community and the improvement in physical and mental health of the gardeners.** Then the herbal medications that they grew in the gardens connected them to their past, to their homeland, so there were really important health improvements.

Some of the workshops that were given on a monthly basis throughout the three years were drip irrigation systems, pesticide use, safety, organic gardening methods, weed identification and control, composting, fertilization, and pest identification. Community partners included Fresno City Irrigation and Parks and Recreation Departments, County Extension, Master Gardeners, small farmers, programs of the Fresno County Cooperative Extension, Gallo Winery, as I mentioned, and then I put others. Some people in this room were partners and so there was a real wide web of partners.

Some problems were encountered. We learn from our mistakes and as we move into this next phase of these gardens we need to take into account what the problems were. **Water was a big issue and the high cost of water and I particularly want to highlight.** These gardens are located on city property or located within the city boundaries. Whether it's the city water district or the Bakman Water District we had to pay the regular business cost of water so just like any other business these community gardens were having to foot \$300, \$400 bills in the month and that was taking out a lot of resources just to pay for the water. So water is a big issue. Pest problems and how to deal with that.

Disturbances by neighbors. There was occasional vandalism by children. I'm going to ask either Randy Vang or Sharon Stanley to speak about what they did in that instance when there was vandalism at one site. Sustainability is a big issue. **We were at 15 or 16 gardens. We're now at 7, at least by my counting, so we need to look at how can we make gardens more sustainable.**

These are just some quick quotes that I put up there. **"On a cool morning when I'm in the garden I'm reminded of my home in Laos, my village, my valley, my family back home. It makes me happy."** **"The garden gives me the opportunity to do something useful for my family and it gives me a break from the demands of my active children."** These are some photos that I took as I went around the gardens. Here are some drip irrigation examples up at the Methodist Church. Notice that they're using old drip line with holes in it, so they're reusing this drip line to then grown plants on.

With that I'd like to open it up. I don't really have a set structure for how I want to do this other than starting with Sharon because she has put in a lot of time and a lot of her energy and her heart into this project, so Sharon, if you could just fill in the blanks, strengths and weaknesses and where you see this in the future going.

Sharon Stanley: The first question I have Jeremy, if it's your birthday, I know you're trying to have a healthy menu here but where's the cake? We're missing that. The second thing I would say is Jeremy already gave the speech that I would have given about the project. I'm glad I sent you that report so we could see it in a Power Point presentation. There are many people who are here today who were integral to the growing of that garden project and I want to ask everybody who's here today who participated in helping your organization get involved or worked with gardeners or taught to please stand up so that the rest of you will know each of those who participated, and thank you. So this will be a team effort of comments and I'll apologize also ahead of time. I need to leave a little bit before 1 o'clock for another meeting. Again, Jeremy already covered most of the information. **One thing that I would highlight again and again and again was the importance of community building in the project.** Sometimes that was very intentional, and Mayla can tell you about it and Diane can tell you about it and others from Khmer Society could talk about truly wonderful garden dedication ceremonies that were well planned, that involved the gardeners in them, that sometimes had other spiritual components offered as blessings to the garden that were multi-generational that were very fun activities. There were other community-building experiences that were definitely less intentional, and Randy, if you've got the posters that show some of the events from our two gardens. I would just highlight something in relationship to the garden that happened at El Encino. We had some similar kinds of challenges at Diane's church with the community that surrounded it. **At El Encino what happened, though, was there was physical vandalism against the gardeners themselves. Rocks were thrown. They hit an elderly Hmong woman. They hit an elderly Hmong man. These were kids from the neighborhood just across the wall from the site that the church had given for the garden.** For these gardeners it had been a very admirable challenge that they had taken hold of to ever start to use drip irrigation system because it's so very much different from the flood irrigation system that they were accustomed to and it was a really hard sell. Theron can tell you and confirm that because he worked in multiple trainings with the gardeners. **In that first season, especially before we had the evidence of tall corn to point to that could actually come if you just drip irrigated your garden, it was tough to get people to buy into it, but the gardeners had.** This was several years ago and at the end of September just about **two or three weeks after they had installed a state-of-the-art drip irrigation system down all couple of dozen rows of the garden and were starting to feel**

comfortable with it the kids from the neighborhood came probably with a 99-cent pair of scissors and walked down and cut every single line of drip irrigation that they had put in that garden. So Jeremy mentioned the civic participation aspects of the garden, and again, some of that was intentional and some of that was not intentional. In this case there developed a lot of ways of linkage between the gardeners and the Police Department, but it was in response to that kind of vandalism that had occurred. It happened that it came very close to the time of Fresno Fair and the gardeners' initial response was to say, "Were just going to stop farming. We'll just move if our neighbors don't like us." And we said, "But wait. You live in a new country now. You have protection. You've been given that land to use by the church that is beside where the garden is located." So they agreed that they would go down to the Police Department. We called the Police Department and they said, "I'm really sorry but we are just booked up with Fresno Fair coming," and we said, "You know, we're really sorry, but it is 102° and every line of the drip irrigation has been cut and this garden has been a tremendous endeavor by all of these Hmong families who are participating. So we said to the police, "We'll see you on Monday morning." **We went to the Southeast Fresno station and they were able to free up some police time to meet with the gardeners. There were more than 20 of them who went.** It took great courage on their part. As they met the police became engaged in coming down with the gardeners and were started to work at making door-to-door contacts with families that bordered where the garden was located, but then the gardeners did, I think, one of the most clever, wisest moves in the whole garden process. There are so many stories that Mayla and Diane and Jeremy can tell you about the other gardens, too, but the gardeners also decided this. We asked, "**What else would you do if you were in Laos and you knew your neighbors didn't love you and didn't understand you?**" They said almost instantly, "**We'd kill a pig, we'd kill five ducks and we'd throw a party and we'd invite those neighbors to come to it.**" **So that's exactly what they did and they had over 325 different neighbors come on that day and not only did they just feed them the wonderful pig that they cooked and all of the ducks that they cooked but there were city leaders who participated.** We were very grateful for that. The gardeners also took many of those who came on tour of the garden and gave them vegetables and really shared in a way that helped to abate the vandalism for several years.

We had different kinds of issues with the neighbor on the other side of the wall at Sierra Vista Church who had become convinced that when he sat down in his chair on his side of the fence that the community garden sign that's about this tall on the other side of the fence which is facing this way somehow completely blocked his view of the sky. He also was convinced that he was getting sick from the smell of onions that were being grown. It was a very serious issue to him. He called the police several times on the onion growers. The police were a little bit at a loss as to what to do. What the gardeners did, again, was incredibly wise because after having a community-building event there at the garden on site at the Memorial United Methodist Church one afternoon the gardeners then made door-to-door deliveries to every family making sure that they especially dropped a lot of the vegetables on the doorstep of the gentleman who had complained and that helped to settle that down. **So those community-building aspects and civic participation aspects have been very critical.** I am excited with Jeremy and with everybody else who has been involved in this project in the past to continue to look for how we can keep going with it. I have been impressed that half of the gardens at least still remain years later after any official funding from that particular project exists any more, and we couldn't have done it without linkages with the community, with Theron through the Master Gardeners program and the extension program, City Parks and Recreation, and every participating organization and

certainly those who gave the land at the churches and elsewhere. Maybe Myla, Diane, or Theron, if you have other comments you might like to make.

Jeremy Hofer: If they're brief comments please make them. We've got about seven minutes left of this and then we're going to go to Bill Maynard and then we can come back and continue this discussion.

Mayla Lee: Our garden was the first one started. That was the one on the West Side. We actually started out over there with 22 families. It was on one acre and we were using ditch water. **Ditch water was a blessing and yet it was a challenge because they turn it on certain months and shut it off certain months of the year and so we would have the rest of the year going without water for our gardeners.** That was a challenge for us and we ended up using city water for the other months, but then, like we were saying earlier, it was costing us so much that we decided to stop the city water and just use whatever ditch water we could for those months. So that's like April to September and the water is shut off and you just let the crops sit and they can harvest whatever was ready by then. That's what we're still doing and that's a challenge for us. **We're constantly trying to get support from the city to see if they can help us with that area.** Habitat for Humanity has so many acres of land. We worked with them. They gave us five acres of land to do a large community garden on the West side. Somehow we were given that five acres and we have a lot of families working on it and we were using city water. They were even helping us to install the water system, all that stuff, so that we could use city water, but like I was saying, **the cost was just unbelievable and so because we couldn't keep up with the costs and we couldn't get enough funding to even keep the garden going we decided to let it go. That was a loss for us because we lost about 50 families from just that one garden.** We also have other gardens that we continue to garden. Right now we have four gardens. One is a much smaller one, but we still have four gardens. We have a lot of support from the **USDA NRCS** and they came and toured our gardens. Even individuals from Washington D.C. came and toured our gardens. We have had individuals from Philippines University come with some of their crew and they toured all of our garden sites. They really wanted to come and see and duplicate what we're doing here in the Philippines as well, so it was quite interesting. **We also have a Lao group from Riverside who heard about our project through the NRCS presentation that I went to and they wanted to duplicate that so they came and toured our gardens. What was amazing to me is that the city mayor bought into it so they funded the whole thing and the Lao community there was able to have a five-acre piece of garden that the city is funding,** so I hope that some day we will have that in Fresno because we have great need here and we have so many families that are on my waiting list and are still waiting like the other community gardens as well.

Theron Plevca: The importance of the water issue just can't be overemphasized. **These gardens that have closed down that were once productive for hundreds and hundreds of refugees are closed because they can't afford to pay for the water.** I'm really pleased to see Mr. Perea here today because I have approached the city powers several times to no avail about getting a subsidy for the water or a cutaway prorate for water or some help with this. It's desperately needed and these gardens are so important for the city, so anything you can do, Henry, would be appreciated.

Terri Soares: I primarily work with schools, K-12, and many of the issues you're facing are issues they're facing. I was wondering if there has ever been exploration of community and school gardens coming together.

Diane Zastovnik: I don't actually know what became of it, but Sierra Vista School in Clovis, which is one of Memorial Methodists Neighbors, was talking to us about putting in a Hmong garden on their campus. Like I say, I don't know what happened to it.

Phoua Moua: I don't know actually what happened to Sierra Vista, but **currently there is a school garden at Burroughs Elementary School** and it's supported by Western Growers and Sarah Reyes is also in support of that. I think it's named after her. It's actually the Sarah Reyes **Kinder Garden**.

Jeremy Hofer: That's a great question. **One of the things that I had looked at for a while was how to link local schools that were in the proximity of the gardens with these gardens and how to bring classrooms into the gardens for this experiential learning.**

Terri Soares: Your contact would be Terry Davis at Fresno Unified, and I can give you other names too. She's extremely interested in school gardens and was looking for funding. They did receive funding through the Department of Education a few years ago, but I don't know where she's at with that right now.

Jeremy Hofer: **The other model that would be interesting to explore is linking these gardens up with food pantries that are real close to them that are serving people within the neighborhood through Plant a Row.** That would be a great asset to these pantries.

Randy Vang: I work for FIRM. I used to be a garden coordinator for the last several years and I just want to share with you today that while, Sharon, you were in Texas for your education one of the garden leaders from El Encino Baptist Church told me that they planted the corn and all the corn has been cut down by somebody approximately a week ago, so I just wanted to share this information about vandalism. The gardener told me that they stepped on the rows and they stepped on every vegetable and all the corn, they broke every one. So the garden leaders are not very happy with people that do that. Also, **after the impact of the welfare reform there are so many Hmong families that call to our office that want the gardens but because of the funding that we didn't have we can't come to you and other sites for gardens.** I just want to say if it's possible we all have to work together to find some sort of funding. At El Encino Baptist Church I think we have about 2.5 or 3 acres there. The water cost last year was about \$800 and the church didn't have any money to help the garden. Even though the garden now receives a little money from the Welfare Department they still had to pay for the water costs. I don't know what we're going to do this year to be able to keep a garden there for the families that need it for vegetables for daily food. I also invited Pastor Tom from El Encino Baptist Church to come here, but he was not able to come.

Jeremy Hofer: Thanks everybody for your comments. This conversation will definitely continue. This is just a start. We're kicking it off. We're planing a seed here. Originally I wanted to call this "Community Gardens in Crisis", but then I didn't like the sound of that because they're not really in crisis. It's just that they come and they go and what we're doing here is we're going to start them again and support the ones that are in existence. With that I want to introduce **Bill Maynard. He is the founder of the Sacramento Area Community Gardens Coalition. He's also on the National Board of the American Community Gardens Association.** He has come all the way from Sacramento this morning and he's going back in about an hour, so please give him a round of applause for coming in.

Bill Maynard: Thanks for inviting me, Jeremy, and thank you all for attending the seminar today, especially the council person. I'm glad to see that the council is taking an active interest in the community gardens. We need their support largely in many ways, as we'll see.

Let me give you just a little bit of my background. I started many years ago growing vegetables in my own backyard. Then I got onto the Sacramento Parks and Recreation Commission as a representative from my neighborhood. The city was talking about community gardens due to the fact that we had a 30-year old community garden that was actually on state property and it was going to be developed into high-rise apartments, etc. So the gardeners wanted the city to buy the property and of course they didn't want to do that, but that sort of peaked their interest or forced their hand to look into community gardens and they actually came up with a preliminary policy for community gardens. Since then that garden, the Mandela Community Garden in Sacramento, has closed down after 33 years, I think it was. But it was more or less the sacrificial lamb to start the city thinking about community gardens more.

The founding of the Community Garden Coalition was about two years ago because the city really got tired of talking to these gardeners and the lawsuits that the gardeners put in to stop the project and they really were glad to see a fresh, new approach by a group to move forward from that point on to start more community gardens. That's really been a great earpiece for the community gardens. I just got elected to the American Community Garden Association Board. That's a worldwide group. Our conference is in Toronto this year and in two years I hope to bring the conference to Sacramento, so hopefully we'll see many of you in Sacramento for that. My interest grew and you can see that I'm on **Sacramento Hunger Commission** because they heard about my work and they said I should be on the Hunger Commission, so we really pushed that. Then I developed an interest for Master Gardeners. I've become a master gardener and I'm a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission. It all ties together.

Let me give you a little background on the community gardens. **Our community gardens are the national average size of community gardens, 20 x 20 feet or 400 square feet. We charge the national average, which is about \$50 per year, and that covers the water costs so the gardeners are paying.** There are some gardens that are free because they have a grant, but as you have heard, when those grants run out then they're looking for funding. **We find that if we have 50 plots at \$50 each we have \$2500 to use for water and other things,** garden improvement, fencing, compost, put on a party, or whatever you want to do if we have extra money. In fact, **the city with our first community garden has agreed to pay for the water for all community gardens in their park system and they had talked about giving the park rate instead of the residential or commercial rate** so that helps out in lowering the cost if you do have to pay for the water.

Sharon Stanley: Who did you work with in your city to make that possible?

Bill Maynard: Our councilman, Jimmy Yee, was the councilman for the Mandela Garden issue. The Mandela gardeners a number of times could not pay their water bill so they would go to Jimmy and say, "Jimmy, pay our water bill, please." These water bills were \$1500 because they were back three or four months, so he said, "Tell you what. I'll do it this time but no more." So they did fundraising and pushed for that to make sure they didn't have to go back to Jimmy. Since the coalition has taken over a lot of the backbone of the community gardens in Sacramento he's been really supportive. He donated a shipping container for our tools, he donated 40 yards of compost, and he's been a great supporter. **The Parks and Recreation Department feels that if it's on park property it's a park and it should be**

watered. They're getting free maintenance because, I don't know if you know about it, but being on the park board each one of those parks out there costs \$50,000 on average to maintain, to water, to rake, to pick the trash up, if they have lighting and whatever. Some go up to \$100,000 a year, so they're getting free labor, they're claiming community gardens as an asset in their reports and community building, so getting the water for free is a small token, I think. It builds community, like Jeremy mentioned in his presentation. It creates partnerships and friendships, educates others on organic practices, promotes interaction between neighbors, age groups, and cultures, provides exercise, promotes healthy eating habits, and creates urban green spaces and fresh vegetables.

The Sacramento Hunger Commission did a report on "**Hunger Hits Home.**" That's a hunger report in the Sacramento area. This was sort of a survey report. One of the questions was "Would you garden in a community garden if one was provided to you?" and 47% of the people polled said that they would use a community garden to supplement their family's food bill. Most of those people were on assistance programs. They would gladly grow their own food and work for it. Most of the community gardens in Sacramento have waiting lists of up to two years just to move ahead one extra plot, so you might be on the waiting list for three years before you get a plot until a new community garden comes into your area.

What you really need to get these community gardens going is an active Community Garden Board established at each garden and the Community Garden Board does a number of things. It coordinates with the land owners or official. It looks for new land. **End of side A...**each one sort of acts on their own. It enforces the rules and it establishes a garden work day. It's just sort of the everyday handling of the garden and then they have a representative from one of the gardens, for each garden maybe two representatives, and they'll go to a special meeting of all the gardeners and they'll talk about problems and grants coming up and they'll either apply for a grant all together or maybe individually. It depends on how big the grant is. So it's very important to have that garden board in place.

When you're looking for a site you want longevity. The best thing, **the ultimate goal is to own the land. Next best is church, school, and park land.** Worst case would be a three- to five-year lease minimum for a site on private land, and those are really hard. They're relatively easy to get but they're hard to give up because you put so much sweat equity into those sites. You'd really hate to give it up after your first or second harvest. Park land is one of the best ones to go with that we've been seeing, anyway.

We have income versus costs. As far as income we charge plot fee. Fundraising, donations and grants also bring income. For operating costs there are water costs. **Some gardens require insurance and that runs about \$1000 or \$1500 a year. Our Parks Department is providing insurance for us through their park program.** Other costs come from site improvements such as compost, fencing, irrigation, repair of irrigation and fencing when something happens to it, and board office supplies like forms, stationery, and fliers. Then we have project funding. Grants are not the easiest but are one way to find money, finding them and writing them and following through with the grant. Donations from garden centers, businesses, tree trimmers. **You can get the free wood chips from tree trimmers.** We use wood chips in our pathways. A lot of gardens have small pathways, **but we're making ours at least four feet wide and in some cases ten feet wide for truck access.** You'll see some pictures of that a little bit later. Also, volunteers. There are a lot of people that just want to volunteer in the gardens. They don't want to have a plot. They just want to get their

hands dirty and do their community service. Schools are a great place as well as different fraternal organizations like the Elks or Moose, church groups, service groups, retired persons like AARP, and the public. Usually if you just put out an ad or notice in the paper you'll get somebody there. **Public awareness. Be proactive.** It's really what you have to do. You want to write newspaper articles, you want to push the envelope and actually say, "We've got a community garden. Why don't you come out and take a picture of us." Just have different events at the garden to get the media out there or council people. Keep media in the loop. Always send them an e-mail even if it's not any event but just tell them you're having a meeting and sometimes they'll publish it. **Meet with your officials and area representatives. We met with every council person on the city council and we also went to the county board of supervisors to let them know what we were doing.** The more they hear about you they'll remember your name, they'll remember what you're doing.

Networking and forming partnerships is about the best thing that you can do. To start that you really need to break down the elements of community garden into issues of **food security, hunger, green space, community building, exercise, healthy eating, organic produce, multi-generational family activities**, and you just try to find organizations have similar goals like the Sacramento Hunger Commission, the Elk Grove Food Bank, the Green Party, or Peace Action. They're all doing similar projects or they want to. We just had a roundtable put on by Peace Action and we had over 90 people attend that were on the same book and page and we sort of broke it up into tables. Some were talking about transportation issues, some were talking about gardening issues, some talked about organic produce, air quality, bike trails and pedestrian access, and it just sort of all came together. We meet quarterly just to brainstorm and we've made a lot of good connections that way. Hold quarterly roundtable meetings and create a joint effort like a community garden that could be one of the projects out of that.

Regarding policy you really want to work with your city officials and once you get your network of like-minded people you can establish rules for the community gardens in your area. I'm not sure if your gardens have rules, **but each garden should be on the same book and page with the rules in case a gardener moves from one garden to another.** No invasive plants, don't plant anything illegal, keep your plot clean and your plants within your plot, and different things like that. Actually, the city Parks Department came up with a guideline for creating community gardens and it's a pretty thick pamphlet. It has to go back for city review yet after a number of years that it's been out and sort of report back, but that's going to happen soon, as we're updating our Parks and Recreation master plan. Help the city create a boilerplate set of rules. You can have more rules for your garden but the city wants a boilerplate, a small, minimal set of rules such as no dogs in the park, no loud music, different things, and you can add your own rules for your garden. **Create a process for renting plots, fees, and a fee structure. It's important to have the garden board in place.** Every garden should have a garden board, a president, treasurer, secretary, event coordinator, etc., and a method for reporting back as a group to keep everybody intact and on the same book and page.

In some of the parts of North Sacramento and South Sacramento, especially in the older parts where the lower income neighborhoods are, the main food providers such as the Safeways have all moved out so they don't have a main grocery store there, so we get the small mom and pop stores on the corner that are more or less an AM/PM with some vegetables that have been there about three weeks and so it's not really an ideal situation. Sometimes there is an IGA in there that's relatively good. So access to fruits and vegetables is important. The community garden supplies a big, big help to increasing the food in those neighborhoods. It's better to eat from your local food shed or just grow food in your own neighborhood. Especially back east the produce is trucked out there from out here so they're eating their vegetables after 2000 miles. They're flown or trained or whatever, but they're usually picked

before they're ripe and they lose flavor, so it's better to eat from your local food shed whenever possible. You can supplement your family's monthly food bill. **As you can see, the average community garden will produce about \$500 worth of vegetables, and that's on a 20 x 20 plot so that's a pretty good payback if you're paying \$50 per year for your water.**

Sacramento has just completed writing a food charter for the city. It's modeled after Toronto's food charter and as far as we know Sacramento is the first city in the United States to write a food charter, and since I helped write it or oversee it to get it through the city I wanted to make sure community gardens were a part of that and so we made sure that there is support for more community gardens in the Sacramento area.

Participant question: What is a food charter?

Bill Maynard: Food charter just says that the city supports access to fresh vegetables for everyone. It also touches upon the city providing alternatives in their cafeteria, not just fast food. You know, put in a salad bar and things like that. It really addresses nutrition, access to fresh fruits and vegetables, and promoting it in a number of ways. I think it's probably on **targethunger.com, the Sacramento Hunger Commission's website**. For resources the master gardeners are always a great resource as well as the Sacramento Community Garden Coalition at saccommunitygardens.org, and the American Community Garden Association website is communitygarden.org.

Funny enough, you also have a Stone Soup Community Garden project down this way. This is actually one of the questions about having a community garden on school grounds. This is actually on the Martin Luther King Junior High Campus, the Grant Union High School District in North Sacramento, and this was taken about two years ago. It's a little scrap of land that fronts a residential property on one side and backs the school on the other and they just used it as nothing. It was fenced in on three sides and it was just a big piece of green that they had to cut and nobody ever used it. That gazebo there fell down shortly after we got there and it wasn't really used for anything. So we cleared it and started getting it ready. The Hmong gardeners came out. This is a project funded by the WIC program and for all the garden plots the families have to have kids 0 to 5 in them so when they come to the garden they have to bring their kids to build partnerships and friendships and family. We didn't have to teach them anything for the most part. They just went to town. I mean, they knew what to do. It's probably a little bit over a half acre, I believe. So now instead of grass it's a flourishing garden. The school district pays for the water and everything so there's really no cost to the gardeners. It's covered by a three-year grant from WIC so we'll have to figure out something when that grant runs out.

Participant question: For the garden there how do you irrigate it?

Bill Maynard: The school district actually installed the water for us. I work for a civil engineer during the day so I drew the plans for the site, the plots and where we wanted the taps, so they installed it. We paid for the equipment but it was a slow time of the year for the school district so they put it in and they were happy to do that.

Terry Soares: I can see the benefits. They're numerous for schools and community. What are the challenges for the two in light of the fact that some schools want to use this as a way to integrate topics and hopefully nutrition?

Bill Maynard: This garden really doesn't have school participation in it but we are working on it, and someone mentioned Western Growers. I did bring some applications back there. Western Growers is doing their next round of grants. I think the grant applications are due in a month and in fact not too far from here we had the first Western Growers grant and it's actually the demonstration school garden for Northern California. We put that in about a year-and-a-half ago. But they give \$1500 for their grant usually for anywhere in California and Arizona. In fact, at that site we do have parents gardening with the kids at the school garden and the Garden in Every School program through the board of Education is supportive of that. I don't think they're giving away grants anymore through that process because of the budget but they're very supportive.

Participant question: What was the reason why the school is not actively participating in this program?

Bill Maynard: Well, with the grant you had to have children ages 0 to 5 in your family and those families may have kids at that school, but for the kids to be part of it they have to be 0 to 5. They can come in. They're welcome to come in, and some do up to age 12 and we sort of lose them after 12 or 13 for the garden. We are working as a trade-off, let's say, with the school. They have a native plant area inside the school and we've been helping them with design and gardening questions through that, so they have their plot on the inside. When we asked the teachers no one really replied at that time, but after we got it built of course they wanted to be part of it then, so it may morph into something else after the grant is gone and when the restrictions can be lessened a little bit.

This is the second site of the Stone Soup Garden Project. There are four sites. Two of them are at the high school campus and junior high school and one is at the next to a church under power lines where there is a little weird piece of property there. That's a small one, only about 12 plots. The other one was next to a grocery store where they didn't develop the second building so we're using their commercial pad to grow vegetables now and it was fenced by the funding from the grant and irrigation was put in. We don't know how long that one will be for, but at least for three years because that's what we signed the agreement for. We invested a lot of money in it but there's great need. The people were gardening in drainage ditches right across the street from the out-fall of two 42-inch pipes draining the street drainage with a heavy metals, your gasolines that run, they're gardening in that because they want to garden so bad. All they have is apartments on each side of this drainage canal and they're gardening in this. We probably got about 60 families out of that drainage canal and into the other garden across the street.

This is the entrance to the other garden. We try to make them nice looking with some flowers and keep it down low so there's not a lot of tall corn right out by the street. It is fenced. They had a few problems with vandalism but it's nothing really bad. We try to have a celebration every year where they will bring in food and use the vegetables from the garden just to have more or less our Stone Soup potlucks, which are really great things. We get families and different age groups. They also do classes in the classroom on campus so that parents are getting into the classrooms where they might not normally feel comfortable, so they're being taught nutrition and gardening maybe about twice a month. It depends on what they want to learn. We have the translators going. Language is big problem sometimes when we have one of the gardens at the commercial site. We have Spanish gardeners and Hmong gardeners so I'm working with two translators going and then a lot of times there are problems that the gardeners can't talk to each other so maybe twice a month they get to sort

of communicate in some way other than sign language to get their points across, so it has been interesting.

This is the first community garden in the Parks and Recreation Department in the Southside Community Gardens at 5th and W Street in downtown Sacramento and this was the tradeoff that I talked about for the Mandela Garden. This garden is about an acre in size and it's about three-quarters of a mile from the old site. The other gardeners didn't really like this site. It's right at the junction of I-5, 80, and 50 so it's sort of loud but it's been a really, really great place to be. This is our kids garden. We have a kids garden there. As you can see, we use wood chips. I don't know if you guys use wood chips in your garden plots, but these **wood chips are all free by the city tree services department, so otherwise what would they do with them? Well, they would take them to a landfill and get charged \$60 to drop them off. So we're actually saving the city \$60 a truckload** and we have probably ten truckloads in here and we have a spot that they just keep dumping wood chips and we're almost to the point of saying, "Stop, we have enough." But it's really handy for that because we put cardboard down to keep the weeds down and then we put about four inches of wood chips over the whole site. We have four-foot paths and we have ten-foot paths for access to pickup trucks. You really need that to take wood chips to the other end or if you have an event and you need to bring things in. We had a big grand opening and we brought a forklift in with tables and chairs and it was really nice.

This is one of the pumpkin patches here. That's my plot in the top corner, cabbage and beans, zucchini, and my tomatoes, loads of tomatoes. I have so many tomatoes right now.

So let's get growing! One of my favorite quotes is, "**We must be the change that we wish to see in the world,**" by Gandhi. So you really have to be community activists. You have to push the agenda. If you don't do it no one else will, as we all know, so I'm glad that we're moving ahead.

As for new projects we have some exciting new projects that the Hunger Commission and I are working on. We're doing edible landscaping in low-income housing projects so instead of paying for shrubs and trees that don't produce fruit why don't we inject fruit-bearing trees? So we put in 80 fruit trees and citrus trees, we gave them each a little herb garden outside their front door, and we also made an orchard on site because this is a unique project with the Mercy Housing people. It already had a community garden built into it and its own baseball field and it's all fenced so we took some of that extra land around the baseball field and put in a community orchard as well. The makeup of the people there are Hmong and Spanish for the most part with a mixture of everything else. We went door to door with translators and held meetings on site and asked them what they like to eat and we tried to plant the trees by where they were living. We felt that they would take more interest if that's that pear tree that they always wanted out there instead of, "I don't really like that apricot." It was sort of what they wanted, so we tried to do that as best we could and we gave them choices of seeds. We went to the Asian food market with them and they showed us what they wanted and we tried to find out what they were. It's been a great project and we're planning to do another one shortly. I've also been involved with a senior project, a new development with over 1000 homes going in. As a selling point because no one else has one we've interested them in a community garden in their new subdivision for seniors, so they actually put in an herb garden on the corner of this weird shaped pie lot so they have fresh herbs. They can walk down and pick herbs. They also left room with these ag buffers that

surround the back of the property to put in a community orchard and community garden if the desire is there by the residents.

Of course we're working with the school gardens a lot. Somebody mentioned the food bank. Actually, **the food bank and Elk Grove Community Garden has sort of joined forces now and the food bank is going to be the fiscal sponsor for Elk Grove Community Garden and they're going to give the food bank about 25 plots for the people that usually receive food** to actually garden there on site at that community garden and also the community gardens will be helping the food bank at different fundraisers and different events. So it's a new partnership that's just getting off the ground two or three weeks ago and we'll keep you in the loop on how that's going. It's been done in other cities, especially in the Midwest. Kansas has a successful program with a food bank and possibly Oklahoma, but there are other cities, too, that have them. It just depends on if you have the land to do it. Any other questions?

Participant comment: We all know this because we know this. We eat fruits and vegetables, but now there is a study that proves why fruits and vegetables help us regulate our caloric intake, so **on your list of benefits you could list weight control because it controls calories** and for children we really need that because of the obesity epidemic, and for adults too.

Bill Maynard: Right. The best place to start is at the school gardens. Davis Unified School District is one of the better examples of that where their school has a garden for every grade level so as you progress from each grade level you go to a different garden. If you're studying Greek history those Greek herbs are there or if you're studying Mexico those plants you find in Mexico are there. It's a really good teaching tool, too, and you understand it more. Also, they have a very active composting program so they compost their waste from their lunches and they compost their things from the garden and things from home.

Theron Polivka: You mentioned the Community Garden Boards that you have. What is your hierarchy? Do you have one person who is the coordinator? Is that you and is this a paid position or employed by the city? Who does the structural part of it?

Bill Maynard: I wish it was paid. I'm doing it for the most part through my intense interest, sometimes obsession, of community and school gardens to get the word out about these things, so it's just something I'm into and I've helped a number of gardens by just trying to be the coordinator. The city is still trying to develop their interest. They're under all these budget cuts. They just can't go out and spend money. The coalition offered to do it on a contract basis and I think that would be fine to do, **like Master Gardeners in L.A., the Common Ground Project.** They have a big successful community garden project through there and maybe that could be a source for revenue for the community gardens, as we're under all these budget cuts. But there should be a coordinator and they should have an interest in it. The city actually put the word out about who might want to take over these community gardens. Is it the Maintenance Department, is it the Parks and Recreation Department, is it Social Services? No one seemed to want to take it and so who takes it then? So you have to have someone that really wants to do it or else it's not going to flourish. I don't see why they shouldn't sub it out to a consultant or a group like the coalition or the Hunger Commission or someone like your group here that can oversee that. Some cities do have paid positions as garden coordinators. **New York City had at one time over 700 community gardens. Now they're down to like 500,** but they're not all regulated by

one group. There are different groups in different cities. For example, the Bronx has BUG, Bronx Urban Gardeners. It's all different. It should be organized.

Jeremy Hofer: Well, our time is just about up, so, again, I want to thank you for coming all this way to Fresno. Before you leave I just wanted to bring your attention to some fliers that are in the middle of your table for the Crop Walk, which is coming up in October. Forty percent of the funds that are generated here locally are going to community gardens here in Fresno, so that's some money that's going direct.

Diane Zastovnik: I just want to point out that the Crop Walk will be starting at Memorial United Methodist Church this year, so if you see where our garden is on this map you'll see where you'll need to go to the Crop Walk.

Jeremy Hofer: You can contact us about that. Thank you all for attending. We'll be in touch about this important issue.

Participants/Attendees:

Bill Maynard, Sacramento Area Community Garden Coalition
Blong Lee, Fresno County EOC
Blong Xiong, Fresno Center for New Americans
Cheryl Wilson, Tower Garden Supply
Chris Velez, Intermountain Nursery, Prather
Deborah Thompson, consultant with Good Citizens in West Fresno
Diane Zastovnik, Memorial United Methodist Church
Dianne Hanzlicek, Plant a Row to Feed the Hungry
Ed Moreno, Fresno County Public Health Officer
Gary Dennis, Program Director for CHAANGE San Joaquin Valley
Henry T. Perea, Fresno City Councilman
Jay Yang, California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.
John Clark, Fresno Redevelopment Resource Center
Johnnie Belford, Fresno County Outreach Services for Health and Nutrition Programs
Larry Trelinger, Healthcare for All Central California
Mayla Lee, Agape Refugee Ministry and Services
Miaka Yang, Stone Soup Fresno
Nzong Xiong, Fresno Bee Home and Garden
Randy Vang from FIRM
Renaee Muniz, interested citizen
Rev. Sharon Stanley, Director of FIRM
Sovan Krub, Khmer Society of Fresno, nonprofit organization.
Terry Soares, California Nutrition Network
Theron Polivka, University of California Extension Master Gardeners

Packet Contents:

Agenda & Hunger Calendar
Map of current and discontinued community gardens in Fresno
Community Garden CRLA Article
City of Seattle's P-Patch Community Garden Program
Community Food Security News