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Darrie Ganzhorn



Director of Programs and Operations, Homeless Garden Project

Darrie Ganzhorn is Director of Programs and Operations for the Homeless Garden Project in Santa Cruz, California. Born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1958, Ganzhorn studied marine biology at UC Berkeley. She worked at the Hopkins Marine Station after graduation, but when her son was born, she had an epiphany. “I didn’t want to do research anymore. I wanted to do something based on human needs. I wanted to do something that wasn’t esoteric, that was more basic and vital,” Ganzhorn said in her interview. She found meaningful work at the Homeless Garden Project, where she interned in 1991, not long after the Project was started by UCSC philosophy professor and social visionary Paul Lee. Influenced by the ideas of the radical educator Myles Horton, Ganzhorn began to edit “Voices from the Garden,” a series of newsletter profiles of homeless people who worked in the Garden. This interviewing experience infused her with an appreciation for oral history that she brought to the interview conducted by Irene Reti on February 12 and 19th, 2009, in the modest offices of the Homeless Garden Project, located in a former liquor store not far from the Pacific Ocean in Santa Cruz. Outside of Ganzhorn’s office, a team of women designed gorgeous flower wreaths for sale in the gift shop.

Ganzhorn has held various positions as the Homeless Garden Project evolved. She provides a multi-year perspective on the development of this internationally known organization and a detailed description of the various programs they offer.

Additional Resources

Homeless Garden Project: <http://www.homelessgardenproject.org/>

Paul Lee, *The Quality Of Mercy, Homelessness in Santa Cruz*, (Platonic Academy Press, 1992).

“Homeless Garden Project,” videorecording produced by Arcane Light Productions, 1993.

“Growing Hope: the Homeless Garden Project Story” videorecording produced by Ric Howard, Len Borruso, Jered Lawson; director, Ric Howard; written by Jered Lawson. Santa Cruz, California. (Distributed by the Video Project], 1995.

Michael Vining, “Growing Alternatives and opportunity: Homelessness and Garden-Based Social Change in Santa Cruz,” (1993 Senior Thesis, UC Santa Cruz) Available at UCSC Library Special Collections.

Jered Lawson, “Community-supported Agriculture: Farming that Works,” (Senior Thesis, Community Studies, UC Santa Cruz, 1992). Available at the UCSC Library.

The Homeless Garden Project Reader: a Compilation of Media and Project-generated Resources (1991). Available at the UCSC Library.

Beginnings

Reti: Today is February 12th, 2009, and this is Irene Reti. I’m with Darrie Ganzhorn at the Homeless Garden Project’s offices on West Cliff Drive [in Santa Cruz, California], in front of a beautiful Valentine’s Day wreath sale. Darrie, can you start by telling me where you were born and where you grew up?

Ganzhorn: I was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1958, and I grew up in Baltimore until I was ten. And when I was ten, my dad got transferred from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco, and my family moved out to Marin County. I lived there until I was eighteen.

Reti: What kind of work was your dad doing when he got transferred?

Ganzhorn: My dad worked for Social Security. He eventually was an administrative law judge. I think he had a different role at the time he was transferred, but that's eventually what he became.

Reti: And were you at all interested in gardening or horticulture at that time in your life, when you were growing up?

Ganzhorn: I wasn't. The first time I ever had a garden was when I had my first child, which was in 1982. We planted a garden, and we were incredibly surprised and delighted when it worked.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Ganzhorn: And it was a really fun thing to do. We rented a small house in Aptos. There was a piece of property between the house and the railroad tracks that was not officially the property of our landlord but available to us. We planted the whole thing with vegetables.

Reti: Ah, perfect!

Ganzhorn: It was wonderful.

Reti: And what brought you to Santa Cruz County?

Ganzhorn: That's a really good question. I had a friend in college, and we sort of followed each other around. We were never in the same places, but we went to all the same places at different times. And she had always been here. After I

finished school, I went down to Pacific Grove to take a marine biology class with Don Abbott, who was retiring that year. I worked in that area for a while, and then I met a man who became my husband. He was more centered in Watsonville, but then, when we got married, we lived in Aptos.

Reti: And where did you go to school?

Ganzhorn: [UC] Berkeley, and my major was biology. I had thought that I would do physiology, because when I was in high school I did a really neat Regional Occupation Program class that was called Childcare Occupations, and part of that class was doing assignments in real-world situations. So I worked at a regular daycare center, and then I also worked at a center for people with developmental disabilities. To be at this center, you had to have multiple disabilities. My idea was to major in physiology and then get a teaching credential and then get a master's in special ed, or maybe it was even longer than a master's. I was setting myself up to go to school forever.

Reti: [Chuckles.]

Ganzhorn: In my sophomore year, I took a class on doing research on marine biology. It was up at the Bodega Marine Laboratory, and all the UC campus students had the option to take it. It was a wonderfully exciting quarter-long class, with really amazing teachers, very independent and self-directed and creative, and living at the ocean, of course. I totally fell in love with it. I was supposed to go back to Berkeley for anatomy, so it was the exact opposite of what I had been doing the previous quarter. I had fallen in love in Bodega Bay, so I didn't go back to school. I considered dropping out of school, but I jumped

over the humps, and I realized that it was research that was really what was interesting me. So I found a way to switch my major to biology with an organismal emphasis, and continued to do research at Berkeley. I found a professor who sponsored me to work with him, and we did a research paper together that we eventually published. The year after I graduated, he hired me to finish the work, and then eventually I went down to the Hopkins Marine Station [run by Stanford University in Pacific Grove, Monterey County].

Reti: Briefly, what was the nature of the research?

Ganzhorn: My professor was really interested in the place where the environment and physiology meet. So he had always had this project in mind to do with turtle reproductive cycles. Was it photoperiod or temperature that got them to start making sperm or eggs? And so it was about manipulating photoperiod, or temperature, or both, and then seeing how different test populations responded. It was a totally idyllic time of my life, very hard work and very intellectually stimulating. The professor I had was so supportive of me. I think everyone should have somebody like that in their life. He later told my mom that he really thought I could do anything I wanted. And that was how he behaved towards me. That's just so enormously supportive. I would go in, in between classes, and he would say, "I have something to show you." His office was in the basement of the Life Science Building in Berkeley. He had made this room up on the fifth floor that was going to help us refine our experimental design. It was all set up for the turtles, and he took me up there to see it. He was so excited!

Reti: [Laughs.]

Ganzhorn: You know, simple pleasures.

Reti: So you moved from doing marine biological research—

Ganzhorn: To doing whatever kind of research I could. I met somebody who was a post-doc in Paul's office, and he had gotten an assistant professor job in Texas. He was going to have a lab there, and he told me when he opened it, I could be his research assistant. By the time that happened—because he was getting all set up, and some time definitely lapsed there—it wasn't interesting to me anymore. I didn't want to do it. I had hoped when I went to Hopkins that I would be able to find work doing marine biology. I did, but it was very part time, so I was supplementing it with a pretty full-time, demanding job, working at a Montessori school in Monterey. That was kind of a demanding lifestyle, and it didn't last very long.

Soon after that, I started taking classes at Moss Landing and looking for more work at Moss Landing Marine Laboratories, which is between Hopkins and Santa Cruz. That was where I met the person who was my husband for a while. I taught outdoor ed for a while. I was sort of finding myself.

When I had my son, who was my first child, I had a very vivid insight. It really was something that came in a moment: I didn't want to do research anymore. I wanted to do something based on human needs. I wanted to do something that wasn't esoteric, that was more basic and vital. I held onto that, and when I found

the Homeless Garden Project it felt like, this is it, this is what I've been thinking of for so long.

Discovering the Homeless Garden Project

Reti: How did you find the Homeless Garden Project?

Ganzhorn: Well, both my kids were getting to the point where they didn't need me at home with them all the time, and my marriage had ended. So I was looking for work to support all three of us. My husband was in Hollister at that time, and I wanted to be in Santa Cruz. I had always wanted to do an internship with the Resource Center for Nonviolence. I was thinking, well, I'll do an internship there, and I'll work doing farming, because I thought that was really interesting in terms of basic needs. All my life, I had had a lot of positive feedback about my intellectual abilities. I had gotten awards and scholarships. But my sister was always the really physical one. We sort of divvied that up, like "You be good at thinking, and I'll be good at"—

Reti: [Laughs.] Mind-body split, right?

Ganzhorn: Yes. Giving birth was a big turning point for me. I wanted to continue to use that body knowledge, and to be a more whole person. I had thought farming would be a really interesting way. I had experimented a lot with diet around that time, and with cooking. I was eating macrobiotic. So it fit that I would want to farm.

I was working on figuring out how the internship would work. The Resource Center for Nonviolence—everyone there was really amazing and supportive, but

I think they had never quite had anybody who was a woman [my age]. I guess by then I was probably in my late twenties, and maybe even thirty. Probably most of their interns had been lots younger. They were letting me figure out exactly what I wanted. Then I heard “Homeless Garden Project,” and I thought, wow, it’s both things in one.

Reti: And this was about when?

Ganzhorn: Late 1990. The Project started in May of 1990. I’m probably going to be a little blurry on some of these details. I think of myself as starting May 1991, and I don’t know if that’s when I first [started] to think about the internship, or if it was when I first got hired to work for the Project.

I heard about the Project, and I remember I kept trying to find it, and I couldn’t find it. It took a couple of weeks. And this was doing my parenting and taking care of the house and taking my kids to where they were doing their schooling. I didn’t have a whole lot of free time by myself, but I spent some time looking for this. I guess they [the kids] were probably with me.

We finally found it, and I remember the first person I saw was Bill, who is on the cover of our video and DVD, and a really amazing writer, a Vietnam vet, an imposing figure. One of the things he did was he dug the initial irrigation trench, the main pipe that went all the way down parallel to Lighthouse Avenue, perpendicular to Pelton. He was almost done digging it when I walked up onto the farm. He’s quite a good chatter. He didn’t have smooth social skills, but he was a schmoozer. He had his own way of doing it, and he was doing that.

Starting the Newsletter: *Voices from the Garden*

So I spent some time there, and I remember thinking, wow, there's this amazing little micro-community that's very self-sufficient and very idealistic. It's living out this ideal that a lot of us have. It's actually here, happening. Yet, it was so hard to find. Not that many people knew about it. I thought, well, maybe one thing I could do is do a newsletter.

Reti: Ah!

Ganzhorn: I had been influenced by reading a book about Myles Horton called *Unearthing Seeds of Fire*.¹ Are you familiar with it?

Reti: I know who Myles Horton is. I haven't read that book.

Ganzhorn: He talked a lot about the role of somebody who's outside a problem in facilitating social change. His idea was that you bring people together, and you help them find their own solutions rather than solving it for them. So I thought, well, if I'm going to do a newsletter, it would be really important to have people's voices in it, not just mine, and have people tell it in their own voices, kind of like we're doing here, right?

Reti: Yes, exactly. (laughs)

Ganzhorn: A lot of time had passed [by then], and I was starting to do the newsletter. Even back then, the Project had Circle Meetings. I remember going to a Circle Meeting and thinking, all these people are going to want to help me do

this newsletter, and there's going to be an outpouring of enthusiasm for this newsletter.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Ganzhorn: One person wanted to help.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Ganzhorn: And that was Bill. He was amazingly patient and enthusiastic about writing something, and the piece he wrote was ultimately really wonderful. He called it "A Day in the Life of the Homeless Garden Project," and he wrote beautifully and honestly about the realities of who was there at the Project. He named one of his coworkers and said something like, "He has a voice about as smooth as a gravel truck."

Reti: That's great.

Ganzhorn: You know, those kinds of things, and that there's a "carnie" atmosphere. That sort of talking. I've always hoped someone would do it quite as beautifully as he did then. So he was the only one that said he would write something, and he went on to do that. Then we decided that I would interview other people to get the rest of the voices in there. Transcribing, I found to be a very tedious process, and also very wonderful in terms of listening. You hear so much more than you can hear with your ears when you listen over and over.

Reti: Yes, absolutely. It's very intimate.

Ganzhorn: And also you see how much people love to talk and to tell their story. You really see that. It's healing, to be heard. At that time, there wasn't anyone doing that with the crew. My marriage was really, clearly over at that point. I was needing to get a job, and the Project offered me a job. It started out at nine hours a week for five dollars an hour. That was precious little money. We were living off the grid, and we were paying really, really low rents for Santa Cruz. Somehow I patched it together. Looking back, I'm really not sure how I did that.

Reti: Yes! [Laughs.]

Worker Services Facilitator

Ganzhorn: I don't think it lasted a huge amount of time, maybe five months, six months, [something] like that. Then the project got a grant from the [David and Lucile] Packard [Foundation], and they gave me a larger number of hours.

Reti: And how was your job defined at that point?

Ganzhorn: We had really funny names for it, and I remember Bill making fun of them: worker services facilitator was what it was called. We now call the people who are our clients or our participants—we call them trainees. At that time they were called workers. The idea was to sit with people like I had, to talk about what was going on, and what might help them move forward, and to help them hook up to what already existed.

Reti: You mean in terms of resources in the community that existed for them?

Ganzhorn: Mm-hm. And there's a huge learning curve in that. There's a book out now called *The Soloist*.² It's being made into a movie that chronicles how we who see someone on the street think—it could be so easy for that person to just turn their life around. What I finally learned was to not move faster than the person was willing to move, and [to listen to] what Myles Horton had been telling me when I was reading: it's their problem and it's their solutions that are meaningful, not mine. Let people come to their own solutions, support them and coach them to find their own solutions, and then to enact them, and hopefully stay true to them, and find enough support to continue with what they want to do. And, you know, we all change. We all find different things that we thought, like I thought it was going to be physiology, and that wasn't it.

Reti: Right.

Ganzhorn: So sometimes you *don't* support someone to keep doing what they're doing. But that was my original job.

Reti: So the people that you were working with—what kinds of paths did you see them take in terms of jobs that they ended up being able to get that they really wanted, or other kinds of goals that they met?

Ganzhorn: Well, Bill was able to start his own landscaping business. Joe has died in recent years, and I don't think that he really overcame a lot of what was keeping him on the streets. Another man—one of his issues was his weight, and he's lost a lot of weight, and he used to wear these fake ears, and there're probably tons of things you could say about that, but he doesn't do that

anymore. He works with developmentally disabled folks, and he's a very, very nurturing man, so I think he would be really good at that.

Another man moved to Hawaii and was working construction. Another man was a writer. He had written a Psychedelics Encyclopedia. He had a major drinking problem that I don't think he ever resolved. First he worked for the Senior Employment Services for a while, with the public library system. When that ended, he ended up working for the Grey Bears for a while. He died in the last couple of years. He died, Bill died, Joe died. There've been a lot of deaths.

There was a woman early on who had two kids, when we were putting together the wreath-making enterprise. We had a little garden down here for a while, and she was very instrumental in making that garden work and in helping us to solidify the idea of having a Women's Organic Flower Enterprise. She actually came up with our original name, which was Status Quo? with a question mark.

Reti: Oh, what a great name!

Ganzhorn: A play on the word "stattice."

Reti: I love it!

Ganzhorn: She ended up moving up to Humboldt County. She was going to have her own herb farm. She did that for a while, but then she switched to retail. I think that that kind of kept evolving. I'm not sure where it is now, but I know that her daughter is down here going to Cabrillo [College], and she's doing well. She's stayed independent and stayed sober. There is another woman (this was

not the completely early days) who now works down at River Street Shelter, cooking.

Some things that people were working on was getting benefits for trainees who had been in the Vietnam War, but they had never trusted the bureaucracy and the bureaucracy hadn't honestly trusted them, either. We were trying to hook people up with services. We worked a lot with the Homeless Persons Health Project at the beginning, getting people medical services. Katherine Beiers was on our board. She was a city council member, and she lived on Lighthouse and Gharkey Street, and there was something about how the property where we were had actually been owned by someone named Gharkey, and he had wanted for it to be used by the poor people of Santa Cruz County.

Reti: I never knew that.

Ganzhorn: I don't think I have the full story, but there's a reason why it was an intention that wasn't able to be carried out. Katherine also was the daughter of a dentist. Bill was doing his landscaping business, and he did her yard. One day she offered him an apple. He had no teeth, so he said, "Well, I can't eat apples anymore." So she decided to help him get his teeth back. And she did. Then we did that with a few other people, trying to raise funds so that they could work with a dentist, who would also discount their rates so that they could get false teeth. There were all kinds of stories around that, too.

Reti: That's wonderful. So let's back up just a little bit.

Ganzhorn: Sure.

The Beginnings of the Homeless Garden Project

Reti: Tell me about how this project, the Homeless Garden Project got started, who started it, and what their initial idea was of what the project would be.

Ganzhorn: Okay. So this is my patched-together version [from things] that I've heard. Every now and then, I hear somebody tell it, and I realize, well, this is just my perspective.

Paul Lee was active on the Citizens Committee for the Homeless board. I imagine he spearheaded and was a major motivating force for the Homeless Garden Project.

Somebody was doing a hunger strike until the City of Santa Cruz did something to provide shelter for people who were homeless. There was *no* shelter. And so the Citizens Committee started a shelter in what (near Kuumbwa Jazz Center in downtown Santa Cruz) used to be the Family Sauna Shop. Do you remember that place?

Reti: I do.

Ganzhorn: It was now vacant, and they used that as a site for a shelter. And it was Paul Pfotenhauer at that time and Darrell Darling, and I'm sure there were some other really wonderful, amazing men. Paul Lee is truly visionary. He doesn't have a lot of patience for process and details, but he is truly, truly a visionary, and gets really excited about doing something good, or doing the right thing. They would go spend the night there. He had been involved up at the university somehow with starting the Farm and Garden and other projects up at

the university connected with farming, and he had an amazing garden, himself, and loves gardens and loves connecting people.³

One other thing that was in his head was the Conservation Corps concept, where people worked together [to do] community work, building teamwork and leadership skills among people, taking what's laying around, wasted, and putting it to use, bringing it up to its potential.

One of his friends owned an herb nursery. I think it's down near the San Luis Obispo area. Paul's friend called him to say it was going out of business, and he asked Paul, "Do you want these herb plants? Do you want me to donate them to you?" Paul said, "Yes! Absolutely!" And he thought, well, that's too many for my backyard, so— Oh, I left out one more piece. So when they spent the night at the shelter, he talked about when they woke up in the morning, it was kind of like being on the streets of New York—really rough and tumble, very high energy, not at all a place to dream or to feel safe. He thought, how can anybody ever move out of homelessness when they're surrounded by concrete and asphalt, they don't feel safe, and they don't have a place to land, or a center, or whatever you think of as what home provides for you, a place to dream about something better and what they might want? And he thought, well, that would be a good reason to have a garden. So when this guy offered him the plants, he thought, well, this is finally my Homeless Garden Project. So he went to Jim Lang, who was then the director of Parks and Recreation for the city, and said, "Do you have some land for me?" Jim said, "Well, we could put you in the existing community garden spots." Paul said, "Great."

Kurt Christiansen, he has his own landscaping business, and he was an apprentice up at UCSC's Farm and Garden, at CASFS [Center for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems]. He talks about working in his community garden spot and Paul Lee driving up with all these men in suits. I picture them coming out of a black limo when Kurt says this.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Ganzhorn: You can see Kurt, really tall Kurt, with his work clothes on and Paul Lee saying, "That's going to be the director of the Homeless Garden Project." But Kurt didn't take him up on it. But then Lynne Basehore, who's now Lynne Cooper—she was organizing an Arbor Day event. And she also talks about having just been to—I think it was Indonesia, to work on a composting project, and learning a lot about compost and really being excited about compost and how it worked in our community. She also talked about walking down Pacific Avenue. The place where I imagine, or where I remember her talking about, was kind of near where Rhythm Fusion is [now]. A homeless man was there. It was nighttime and he was obviously hurting and suffering and didn't have anyplace to go. She said a prayer that there would be a place for that man.

She was working on this Arbor Day thing, and she called Paul Lee and said, "Would you give a talk at this Arbor Day celebration that I'm putting together?" He said, "No, I'm not going to do that, but would you like to see this Homeless Garden Project that I'm putting together?" So she agreed to go with him, and then she volunteered for nine months after that as the director. The way I have heard the story is that they would go down to the shelter and ask who wanted to

volunteer to help plant plants and make this herb garden start. Lynne had been a manager at India Joze Restaurant. So they would get coffee from India Joze, and sandwiches. That would be what people would get in exchange for their volunteer work, as well as the process and the satisfaction.

Reti: And the site at that point was?

Ganzhorn: It was on Pelton. Well, it's a little inaccurate to say Pelton. Pelton was a big vacant field in what is now a cul-de-sac with thirteen luxury homes. But at that time, there was a little alley perpendicular to Pelton, between Lighthouse and Laguna. [The Homeless Garden Project] was [located] on the part very close to the alley. And I'm not really sure exactly what part they had, because by the time I got there, they had already filled that up and needed more space, and somebody thought, well, let's just use this empty space right here. Then somebody from Parks and Recreation staff came by in their regular routine of checking on what was happening at the community gardens, and they noticed that the Homeless Garden Project was using more land than had originally been agreed on. They said, "Well, you're going to have get permission for this."

I know that Peter Katzlberger was somehow involved, and I know that Jim Lang was somehow involved [with what came next]. What I heard was that there were a lot of questions raised. You can imagine what they would be: "Oh, we don't want homeless people in our backyard," and, "Is that safe?" and—

Reti: This is a fairly affluent neighborhood.

Ganzhorn: Mm-hm. It's a couple of blocks from the ocean. It was city-owned land, and the city was not trying to sell it at that time, because the real estate market was depressed. They wanted to sell it eventually, because it wasn't really land that they could afford to give to a private nonprofit. Apparently at this meeting, somehow the concerns were allayed by the idea of the possible benefits that this could provide to our community. If you watch our video about the Project,⁴ there're people from the community who speak about—"You know, when I first heard about this, I was concerned, is this safe for me? Are my kids going to be safe, and am I going to be safe?" who later became really big supporters of the project. When it came time for the city to sell that land, they wanted to reevaluate and say, maybe we should keep this project here, and even asked us, as a Project, to fight to stay there, which we didn't do, because we had made an agreement with the city that we wouldn't do that.

Reti: Oh, I didn't realize that.

Ganzhorn: There was one thing that I [left out], which was that Lynne talked to people on the crew [about] different scenarios being presented. Is this about a safe place to be, a refuge and sanctuary? Or is this a place where you can grow your own food? She really felt like what people wanted most was a job, so she geared what was happening there towards jobs.

By the time I got there, there was already a farmers' market happening, and there were some initial grants beginning to happen. Adam Silverstein was the farm director, and Lynne was the project director, and Robin Davidson was working with compost and working with getting commercial accounts to sell the produce.

And Geraldine Drager was trying to get things donated for the participants, for the workers, as they were called at that time. I guess Adam was also doing all the greenhouse work. The project had this really funky old truck. It was beautifully funky.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Ganzhorn: There was a really, really diverse community of people that were there at the farm.

Women's Organic Flower Enterprise [WOFE]

Reti: Okay, so why don't we talk about some of the different projects? Let's talk about the Women's Organic Flower Enterprise. Was that your idea?

Ganzhorn: Not totally. It was one that was surfacing all the time. Lynne was always busy. I made her sit down and plan it and ask for funding for it, because we had gone through a couple of years of laying people off in the wintertime, which seemed really crazy and at cross purposes with what we were trying to accomplish. I always have thought the rainy time is one of the hardest times to be homeless. Joe had been making wreaths and selling them. By that time, I think we had gotten an office. Lynne's house was the office for a while. That was where all the staff meetings were, and everything else happened at the Pelton site. Then Jane Weed had her garage open, and I think she rented it to us. I don't think she donated it to us, but maybe. And we used that as an office. It was freezing cold sometimes. It was really close to the farm (although we called it the garden at that time).

It must have been around September or October when we started really trying to plan it. What we were doing was figuring how many people could we employ, how many hours a day would they work, and how many days per week, and what would we try to do, and how would we sell it, and how many dried flowers did we have and so forth.

Reti: That's a lot to figure out.

Ganzhorn: Yes. By that time, I think the CSA was also maybe coming together. (It's funny how badly I remember.) I think Tomlyn was involved at the very beginning of this becoming a real enterprise. She had come through Bill Watt, who was executive director of Families in Transition, and had somehow been involved with the Job Training Partnership Act. Olivia Boyce-Abel had been involved with the Farm and Garden, and somehow Lynne knew [her] as an amazing wreath maker. She came and trained people to make wreaths. I don't remember when the candles started. I think it probably was that first year. We used to originally put olive oil cans with beeswax in them in electric skillets with water in them, and hand dip the beeswax candles, two at a time.

Reti: Whoa! [Laughs.]

Ganzhorn: Then we decorated them with paper and put the flowers on them. Anybody could do that. We would stack the wreaths up in boxes in the garage, and there would be five or six stacks as tall as me, maybe. Then someone would come on Sunday morning and take that stack and go to a church and try and sell them, and then come back. And we would be working in the office, waiting to

see how they did with selling them and hoping they would come back empty-handed.

Reti: Did they sell a lot?

Ganzhorn: They did. They sold enough that we felt like it was worth keeping on going. I don't remember why we were working on Sundays, but we were, I guess. And I don't remember where my kids were when I was working on a Sunday. But we did that.

I think around that time we had had the first year of CSA, and we had to move out of the garage because Jane wanted to use it. Lynne had found that the Union Pacific building was all boarded up. I have amazing pictures of that. When we finally got in, you could see that people had been camping in there, and all the glass was broken, and there were tons of alcohol bottles. It had been a dress store, and I think it was probably that the dress store went out of business and it was an abandoned building. I think they just probably boarded it up to keep it safe, although the restaurant next door *had* been damaged in the [Loma Prieta] earthquake, and that was boarded up.

At that time we also had Mary Tsalis doing some consulting on grant writing. She said, "This is a great project. You just need to solidify some things, have some clear training objectives and a way to measure it. Do more of what you're already doing. Do it on a little bit larger scale." So we found that building, and we were looking for new ways to farm new sites. We had started the CSA, and we thought, well, if we have the Pelton site just for CSA and we have a little garden just for the Women's Enterprise, then we'll know how much land and

flowers do we need for CSA and how much land and flowers we need for the WOFE. It'll keep it more clear.

A woman had come to work at the project, who just left, just kind of disappeared. When she came back, she said that it was not always feeling that safe for her to be around the men who were having their anger issues. That had been one of the number one goals of the place: sanctuary and refuge and safety, so we thought that it would be really neat to have a space just for women.

Reti: So that's how it became the Women's [Organic] Flower Enterprise.

Ganzhorn: Right. So it was a lot of different things. It was layers of reasons, which I think is fitting. I've read about permaculture, about doing things for multiple reasons. I like that kind of solution to things.

We rented the Union Pacific building. They finally answered our call and said that we could rent it for five hundred dollars a month. So we moved in and started cleaning up. There was never water in the Union Pacific building. The person who had used it before us had not paid the bills, so whoever wanted to get the water line reconnected would have had to pay this huge fee. We just were, like, okay, we just won't have water. We had a Port-a-Potty over in the garden.

Don Williams owned Santa Cruz Feed and Seed. There was a little patch of land behind it, directly across the street from the Union Pacific building, And Don said, "Sure, you can use that land. If I had known you wanted it, I would have given it to you a long time ago." That first spring, we pulled up huge blocks of

asphalt from that garden site. I remember Tomlyn had just gotten into housing through Families in Transition, and it was beautiful, beautiful housing, kind of near where the old Farm Restaurant used to be on Soquel Avenue. I think that low-income housing is still there. Like, really beautiful skylights and— Tomlyn would work her butt off, work in the garden really hard and lead the women. She was a very inspiring role model. She said she would go home and take a shower, put a dress on and cook dinner for her kids. She remembered one day her neighbor coming by and saying, “Where are *you* going?” And she said, “I’m not going anywhere. I’m just cooking dinner for my kids.”

Reti: [Laughs.]

Ganzhorn: So it was very hard, very dirty work. We initially hung up the flowers to dry in what became our offices later, the administrative offices. It was a pretty darn huge building. So we had a little retail store back there. Things evolved. We started working with Cal-Works, and they at that time had a project that if somebody had been with them for a certain period of time, that they then would have to get a job in order to continue getting their stipend from Cal-Works. If somebody had tried to find a job and hadn’t found a job, they would do work experience, and they would get paid by Cal-Works for six months. Cal-Works is what used to be AFDC, Aid to Families with Dependent Children. I think it was introduced by President Clinton, so that maybe would tell us what year we’re in. The idea was that Aid to Families with Dependent Children was an entitlement, and our government didn’t want that anymore, and they wanted to encourage responsibility, and that people were freeloading on the system, and

it was the fault of the system because the system didn't encourage people to get into work.

Reti: This is part of the welfare-to-work program in Clinton's era.

Ganzhorn: Yes, Cal-Works is the California version of it. The title stands for something like responsibility to kids. So they would pay people to work with us for six months.

[We were running] a three-year job training program; this isn't: you stay here forever. We want to be able to have new people come in, so we needed to have people leave so that new people can come in. [We were] clarifying the difference between how many jobs we were going to be able to create and how much of it was a training program.

So when Cal-Works' participants started working with us, and they could stay for six months, it seemed to us like a very short period of time for someone who had been struggling with something for a while to suddenly get to, "Okay, now, everything's fine." We had three really wonderful women who came and worked with us through that program. I'm not sure why I'm mentioning that right now, but two of them are actually involved with us in one way or another right now, and the third one, I'm not sure what's going on with her.

So let's see, the Women's Organic Flower Enterprise. [Pause.] We had enough space to have a little store in the back, and people would come there. We stopped going to the churches as much and using the store a little bit more. I remember having a big open house one year and inviting all our mailing list, with little

postcards. It was really, really successful. Each year we would build on our small successes, and found that there was a really receptive audience for our wreaths and candles, and started trying to become more efficient at production and do better outreach and solidify our retail process and so forth.

One year, Peter Katzlberger, who used to be the director of planning for the city, and Mary Edmund, who was one of our board members, were co-directors of the project, and Peter suggested, “Well, why not just find a vacant spot downtown on Pacific Avenue and have a store down there so we’re more visible?” We did that, and we really found that we just couldn’t produce enough to sell. It seemed like anything we brought in there would sell.

Reti: Where was that space?

Ganzhorn: The first one? I think it was in what’s now the Velvet Underground. I think we called that the old PG&E building. And then another year, we had what’s now Palace Arts, and another year we were right next door to Palomar. Is that where the Pacific Trading Company is now?

Reti: I think that’s right, yes. So you were able to pay rent on Pacific Avenue?

Ganzhorn: They gave it to us for free. Amazing, isn’t it? The landlords agreed each year.

Reti: That’s phenomenal.

Ganzhorn: It really is. We had a really nice one in what is now Sockshop Santa Cruz. And that was one of the most fun places to have. There was a big craft-fair-

almost feeling, in the front. We were in the back, and then there was a basement where we could keep our storage.

Reti: That's the one I remember, yes.

Ganzhorn: There was enough space to really exhibit what we had and have storage.

Reti: It was beautiful.

Ganzhorn: And we had a lot of nice production going. It was just spacious, in every way, not just in terms of the space, [but] in terms of having enough staff, having the feeling of community support, being able to park when we dropped things off, and having the production and the customers—everything matching up in a really nice flow.

And then a couple of years we tried to be downtown and really didn't find optimal store spaces. We had been working with the Roberts Foundation and they had said, "Let's do a serious look at your marketing." They said they didn't think that it was realistic for us to have a year-round store, that it seemed like having the holiday market was realistic, but not having a year-round store. It didn't seem like there was a market for that.

[But then we got a new executive director] and she wanted to try the retail store [year round, despite the report from the Roberts Foundation]. The city wanted us to move out of our building because they were putting in Depot Park. So they bought that from Union Pacific. Then they offered us this building, which we also don't pay rent on. It's another temporary use. They bought this from

Lighthouse Liquors, so it was really interesting moving in here, cleaning it up, and getting rid of the coolers. Some really amazing people from Barry Swenson Builder helped us redo the store, pro bono. Originally the whole front half was our store. Our idea was to have a year-round store here, but it wasn't very successful. We weren't getting the same kind of business as we do during the holidays. So we would still move downtown. But we had a couple of years where we moved downtown and it was hard to find us, and we didn't do very well. So the last three years, we've been here and doing pretty well, doing better than we had when we were in bad locations downtown, and almost as well as when we were downtown in really prime locations.

Reti: Great.

Ganzhorn: I think when we first moved downtown, we made a certain amount of money, and the second year we thought, well, if we could make more, we would sell more, so we doubled our sales goal the next year. The next year after that, we also increased our sales. It kept increasing until it finally leveled off, so that this year we made somewhere around—I've seen different numbers, probably depending on how you do the accounting, thirty to thirty-two thousand dollars, just between November and December—and that's just a gross number.

Reti: You've got costs for materials and other things.

Ganzhorn: Yes.

Reti: What a success story! And they're [the flower wreaths] so beautiful, too. I was admiring them before we started the interview, and each one of them is gorgeous. When you walk in, the whole wall is covered with wreaths and it's really special.

Ganzhorn: Yes, I haven't bought one, but I have bought one to give to somebody else. I have been so involved in the store and watched people for so many years look at them. I really try to step back and let people go through their process and have been tempted sometimes to say, "You know, we actually have a few more back here."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Ganzhorn: But then thinking, oh, that's going to make it harder.

Reti: Yes, I know. I was obsessing about which one to get, too.

Ganzhorn: But then when you try to look, you see, it's really hard to choose.

Reti: It is. Any one of them is beautiful.

Ganzhorn: Mm-hm.

Barry Swenson and the Shaffer Road Site

Reti: So let's talk a little bit about Barry Swenson.

Ganzhorn: Barry Swenson also lets us use the land.

Reti: Tell me about that.

Ganzhorn: Around that time when we were working with Mary Tsalis, who was writing grants at that time (she went on to do a lot of other things unrelated to the Homeless Garden Project), she was saying, “Maybe you could try to do more. Do what you’re doing, but do more of it.” So one of the ideas that Lynne came up with at that time, as project director, was that we would have a site where people who had done three years could graduate to, and they could sort of run their own market garden out there. We would do CSA on Pelton; we would do the Women’s Enterprise flowers down here on Washington Street, and then we would do farmers’-market crops out on Shaffer Road. The greenhouse for all the sites would be on Pelton.

Lynne had all the staff worked out for that as well. I think we must have had a board member who was suggesting various spots, although I don’t remember who that would have been. I’m not really sure how we got involved with that land. At the time, Mark Hansen was the property manager, and that land is owned by a silent partner along with Barry and Ron Swenson’s dad. They were very open to letting us use it. I think that they were probably really aware of the politics of wanting to do something nice for the community, but then the community becoming really attached to you continuing to do that nice thing. Like, “you let them use it, so now it’s theirs” kind of thinking. But they did let us use it, in spite of that. We had to get approval from the Coastal Commission for a temporary farm use, and then we had to get certified by CCOF [California Certified Organic Farmers].

Reti: Was that difficult?

Ganzhorn: I don't remember it being difficult, but that doesn't mean it wasn't. I was still working more with trainees and grants and newsletters and administrative stuff. Lynne Basehore would have gotten those approvals.

Reti: That's not as much your area, the farm.

Ganzhorn: Although they did let me work at the farm then. I used to actually get to work in the greenhouse, which was my total favorite, and with making bouquets, which was my other favorite.

So we tried to do that program where people could graduate into working independently at Natural Bridges Farm and run a farmers' market. We were trying to do it without hiring an extra staff person, and it turned out that at least that year, it wasn't a good plan. I remember having a retreat the following year and everyone unanimously agreeing that we needed to rethink how we were doing Natural Bridges Farm. We ended up just having it be an extension of the Pelton farm and doing CSA out there. That seemed like a good plan.

Connecting with Community

Reti: Today is February 19, 2009, and this is Irene Reti. I'm with Darrie Ganzhorn at the Homeless Garden Project for our second interview. So Darrie, let's continue our interview today by talking about the Community Connections program.

Ganzhorn: Okay. I like to call it Connecting with Community, because there's another nonprofit in town called Community Connections, which is under the umbrella of the Volunteer Center. They work specifically with people with

mental illness. We actually work with their program called Career Services quite a bit. That's a program that tries to find jobs and training for people who have mental illness.

Connecting with Community was really kind of the job I started out with here at the project, and it was based on the interviews that I had mentioned last time, that I had done with people one-on-one. It's evolved into a structure where we set goals with people and then ask them to work towards meeting those goals.

It really took me a long time to feel like I knew how to do this job, and I always feel like there's room for improvement with it. I've sometimes wished that I had a background in counseling. It would have been really positive for the program and also for the participants if we had had a counselor. I'll get to that in a bit, but (kind of following on the Myles Horton idea of things), I used to let people come to me with their problems. So if someone didn't want to talk to me so much, I figured they had it covered. It worked into the system of the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

So a couple of years ago, our executive director, Dawn [Coppin], had this idea. She wanted to put into the budget that people would meet with me. She asked me how often should it be, and we decided on every two weeks. That drastically shifted the structure. People had to come to me.

Reti: When you say "people," do you mean the trainees?

Ganzhorn: Yes. And it was paid. So that's a really interesting shift of dynamic. But it really worked. I was surprised how well it worked. Some people came in

and they immediately knew how to use the time with me. They knew what they wanted to work on, and they would just get right to work. They would have lists and so forth, and check stuff off. Other people would come in and they would talk—a lot of times it would just be griping about what was going on with other co-workers, or with things going on at the farm. It wasn't goal setting. But then, right at the very end of the hour, people would start talking about what was really on their mind, what they needed to work on. Of course, with five minutes left, we wouldn't be able to really get very far with it. The next time they came it would take a while to get to that point again. But I do think we made some real progress.

I also was doing these sheets that we called the matrix. That was developed down at California State University, Monterey Bay.⁵ It's called the family development matrix, and it talks about basic needs that we all have here in California, like education and employment, social and emotional health, transportation, food and clothing, health and safety, housing or shelter. Then it puts individuals some place on the continuum between at-risk and thriving. We were using that as a way of evaluating our programs, to see if indeed people did become more stable in their lifestyle as a part of working at the Homeless Garden Project. It had been especially developed for families that were dealing with immigration, so we had to adapt it a little bit. And then we continued to adapt it because we, as staff, knew that somebody had gotten more stable, but it wasn't showing up in the matrix. So we changed it to try to catch the nuances, as opposed to the difference between renting and owning your house—to between like, well, now I'm camping; now I'm in the shelter for thirty days, you know,

that sort of difference. But then every time we changed it, that meant that we couldn't compare from year to year. Honestly, I'm still not that happy with it.

I noticed one of the questions on your outline was about things that are challenging. This is definitely one of the things that is challenging. First of all, I think our staff in particular, and the way our program operates, with its really high value on organics and on people-centered services and so forth—we don't value evaluation as much as we need to. We always feel like, oh, my gosh, we have to do all this *and* we have to evaluate it? And we *do* have to evaluate it.

I'm working on a grant right now. A man saw the article about us in the *Good Times* [weekly newspaper] when we were in the *Good Times* community fund this year. His wife actually pointed it out to him. He works for a high tech company over the hill that gives out grants, and he encouraged me to apply for a five-thousand-dollar grant. So I applied. He just called me and he said that he happened to be gone when the committee reviewed the grant. They told him that they thought it was a little bit vague, and that they needed some clarity about our successes. He needs to hear some data about our successes.

Reti: For funding, measurability is really important.

Ganzhorn: Yes. He was really good. I said, "The measure that most people think of is somebody getting into a job and getting housing. And that isn't already appropriate for the people that are here. Sometimes it might be more appropriate for someone to get Social Security, so we might ask somebody to apply for Social Security. We count that as a success." He said, "Well, if you could give me that sort of information, that's valid to us too. And the kinds of challenges you've had

with shifting evaluation styles and so forth are also valid to us.” So that’s just a story that we need to tell.

But anyways, I was working on doing that with people. Invariably, when we would be filling out those sheets, it would become really obvious—this is an area where we could really do something. And the person who I was working on the sheet with would say, “Yes, this is something that I would like to do.” I always tell people the evaluations aren’t about them, that it feels very personal and it’s very much about their life, but what we’re evaluating is the [Homeless Garden] Project. So there’s a really nice neutrality there.

So this part of my story is from a different part of my brain than I normally am in right now. This is the part of my brain that thinks about the project in terms of individuals. More lately, I’ve been in the part of my brain that thinks about the project in [terms of] programs and well-being and stability and funding. It’s actually a big contradiction that I’m trying to figure out, because in October of 2007 our executive director left, and after many, many years of saying, “I don’t want to be the executive director,” I agreed to do it. The idea was I would be called director of programs, and I would continue in my old role as director of Connecting with Community, and I would also do the new program direction. And as time goes on, it becomes really clear that the Project needs someone to help keep moving our vision forward, help clarify it for our staff and trainees, and also for the community. The vision of the Project is dynamic. And it’s hard to switch back and forth between doing that and working with the individuals.

Reti: Yes, I can imagine.

Ganzhorn: I've been toying with the idea of well, maybe we should just, until we get another person doing this, not work one-on-one with people in the way that Connecting with Community does. But I think it's so crucial.

Reti: You're trying to be two totally different kinds of people. As a director, you need to back up and look at the whole picture. Then you're also trying to help individuals.

Ganzhorn: It feels like it's two arrows going in different directions. (laughs) [But] even being in that position that tries to look at the whole, big picture, I see the need for working one-on-one with people. And in thinking about reporting our successes to funders, we need that information. And they really, in terms of how they sit inside me, feel like they are at cross-purposes.

Well, let me give a little bit more history. Somebody came to us who was going to school for a Ph.D. in psychology, and she said that she needed to do an internship, and she was very interested in doing it here but she would need to get supervision in order to get credit for it. There was a psychologist who had been volunteering with us for a long time, and he said that he thought it was actually a really big deal to do something like this. So I called one of my friends who is a therapist and she said, "I can see why he would say that, and you know, maybe if you were really interested in doing counseling at the Project, you would get together a lot of professionals from the community to talk about what that might look like." So for almost nine months, maybe eight months, we had a bunch of people getting together and talking every two weeks for a couple of hours, really wonderful therapists, and it was a really wonderful discussion

about what it would look like to have a counselor here. There were really different agendas going on. We took turns facilitating it, and I learned so much about counseling and about how we operate, things that I took for granted about how we did things, like what people-centered and what strength-based counseling was about. And we didn't really do counseling, because none of us of course are counselors. But what we came up with was that we wanted to offer services to people, because the services that exist have so many gatekeepers, and people have such a stigma about having someone get inside their head. It just doesn't happen. People don't do counseling—people on the street, a lot of people, don't do counseling.

I just ran into somebody who works at County Mental Health, who used to be involved with us years ago. He is one of the gatekeepers. They talk about access, and he was talking about the number of people that came to them trying to get into services. It was in the thousands, more than a thousand; I think it was even maybe more than two thousand. And he said that out of those people, two hundred people were let through the gate into having services. It was because the cost of providing those services is so expensive to the county. If you can imagine paying a county psychiatrist and all the union employees that are working at the county—it's so expensive and the county budget for that service is so small, that they want to make sure that the people who most need that service are the ones that are getting it, as opposed to somebody who hasn't been to the hospital (behavioral health unit), hasn't been to jail.

Reti: I see.

Ganzhorn: So we wanted to provide that service because it's so hard to get [access] to, and because there's such a stigma [against counseling in the community of people who are homeless]. I really wanted to do something that I realize is a bit ambitious for us to do from the Homeless Garden Project but that would really address the stigma of mental illness. Because I have seen it over the years, I have seen it as such a barrier to getting care. You don't get that with diabetes. You don't get that with cancer. People get care and there's no stigma. I see it as such a barrier to a lot of people we work with moving forward in their life. I think that in people who are dealing with poverty and low income, [mental illness is] more significant of a barrier. I do think that there are some people who are more educated and who have more resources, who do deal with mental health issues, and have a very productive, positive life. I mean, it's not easy, but—

This group articulated a way of working that acknowledges that people have their own solutions, and that if you can build trust with somebody that you're not going to hand them a solution, that you're waiting for them to come up with their own solution, they will come up with it. In the process of these meetings, we talked with a lot of people at the county about getting more assistance for our trainees and for our staff. There is a new program coming at the county called Workforce Employment Training, and that would be training for our staff to work with people who deal with mental health issues.

A man surfaced who was an intern at Family Services, and almost done with his hours, so he didn't necessarily need intern hours in order to get his license. He wanted to volunteer for a year, and was a really perfect fit for our organization.

He wasn't somebody who comes at things with the [attitude of]—"you're sick; you're a patient and I'm a healer," but more of like, "Let's work side by side and talk about what's going on. And if you don't want to talk about it that's okay too." He comes twice a week right now. He started coming during our workshop time. I'm really looking forward to seeing how that will evolve when he's up at the farm with people.

Around October or so, most of the crew moves from the farm down into the workshop, and makes wreaths and candles. They are still here right now, on February nineteenth. But we decided yesterday at our staff meeting that most of the crew is going to move back up to the farm on March third and start doing greenhouse work and training in the greenhouse. There's a really different dynamic when you're down here in the workshop, especially if it's raining. There's not as much privacy and it's just a lot more of a bureaucratic feel. It's not organic. The whole element of the farm doesn't come in and sweep you away. It's a lot more social. It's a lot more of little, fine motor movements, rather than big motor and fresh air and that sort of thing.

So where are we now?

The Health of People and the Health of the Soil: Organic Farming

Reti: Well, you just said the word *organic*. That triggered a question for me. This oral history [series] is about organic farming and sustainable agriculture. People might wonder what the connection is between the Homeless Garden Project being an organic farm, and the horticultural therapy and other kinds of healing

work that's going on there at the more social level that we've been talking about this morning. Why is it important that the farm is organic?

Ganzhorn: I think it is important that it's organic. Organics is about investing in the health of people and the community and the soil and the future. When you look at it really holistically—which an organic system is a lot more prone to than an industrial system—you realize that it doesn't make sense to have people who have tremendous potential to offer their community be on the fringes and not able to participate. I think that a lot of people understand the connection in an incredibly intuitive way. And yet, when you try to put it into words, it's just so big, that it's hard to do. I think that's why we've been so popular, is because people understand intuitively that working with basic needs and working with the health of the environment is so fundamental, and that when you look at things that are wrong with our food production systems, or things that are wrong with our economy, or things that are wrong with our hearts as individuals, that really getting back to fundamentals of—okay, well, what matters? It matters that we eat. It matters that we're fed. It matters that we take care of each other. It matters that we have meaning in our life, that we are contributing and productive. They all go together, and it's hard to understand how it *doesn't* make sense.

I remember Bill, who I think I maybe talked about last time.

Reti: Yes.

Ganzhorn: He did an interview with Homer the Homeless Hoe Man that was humorous and sarcastic. He was talking about how Homer, who is that little

scriggly guy that's our logo, that he doesn't understand why it takes a homeless man to teach our children about the value of sustainable agriculture, and yet he's very proud to do that. I think that for all of the ways that people on our crew might not understand exactly what sustainable agriculture is about, they understand what it *isn't*, and they understand that they're safer and they appreciate that, and they are very, very, very proud of it. When I've done interviews with people, they have talked about when they first started working here they didn't understand how important [organic growing] is. That's something that they proudly put forward, that they understand how important it is.

I'm really proud that we've been organic all the time since we've started. I've been trying to write a little bit more about it in the articles that I write in the newsletter. So I've been reading some of the more recent writing by Michael Pollan, and there was a book called *Manifestos on the Future of Food and Seed*.⁶ The book featured writing from the Slow Food movement. The values put forward are hard for me to articulate, but it's definitely something that I think I live, for the most part, and aspire to live even more, and be able to articulate. Paul [Glowaski]⁷ and Karalee, our farm directors, speak to it much better than I do. I think that sometimes, as an organization, there's this dialogue between the training program and the sustainable agriculture part of what we're doing. There's maybe like a pendulum swinging back and forth about what we're emphasizing. I think, in a way, to think of them as different is really a mistake. They really are the same thing.

A couple of years ago, when we were working with CCOF to get certified, they noticed that we were selling mixes in the store that we called organic. We put together organic flour and sugar and lavender that we grow, and make lavender shortbread cookie mix.

Reti: Oh, it's delicious! I just got some for a Christmas present from my boss this year.

Ganzhorn: Did you try it?

Reti: Oh, it was so good.

Ganzhorn: Isn't it great?

Reti: Yes, I baked it and brought it to eat while I was at the Eco-Farm conference in Asilomar.

Ganzhorn: Oh, wow. It's yummy.

Reti: So you make these mixes.

Ganzhorn: And we make one for biscuits too.

Reti: That's also good.

Ganzhorn: We go down to the Saint Francis soup kitchen. They let us use their kitchen for free in the afternoons. It's a certified (by the health department) kitchen. And we put the mixes together. And it turns out that we can't call it organic because our processing hasn't been certified. At first that was just so counterintuitive to me. Now I understand, okay, we can't call it that. We have

lost two major staff people in the Women's Organic Flower Enterprise, so we're really down to a very minimum staffing there. And we've re-arranged the program so that people come into the farm, and there's less of a division between the farm program and the Women's Enterprise. But we don't have time to oversee this whole processing and do the certification of it. So we had to change all our labeling. That was so devastating to me. It's definitely something I have as a goal, that we will be able to get a staff person that could oversee that certification, and would make sure that it is certifiably organic. It has to do with where do you store product, and what you clean with. It might be out of the question, since we borrow the facility, but we'll see.

Reti: And just to clarify, when you said you were working with CCOF on getting organic certification, you were renewing your certification. You've been certified organic—

Ganzhorn: Every year since the beginning.

Reti: I wanted to make sure that that was clear.

Ganzhorn: I really think that a lot of people in the community do support us because we're organic. There's an interview in the current newsletter that we're working on that talks about one of our donors and why he donates to us. It actually touches on both things that we just talked about. He's a psychiatrist for the county, and he said that he supports us because of the outreach that we've done with people with mental illness, and [also] because that he loves all things organic that care for the earth.

Horticultural Therapy

When I first started working here, Lynne, who was the director, told me that that the way horticultural therapy is practiced here at the project is you just do it. You just put your hands in the soil and it's healing.

Reti: (laughs)

Ganzhorn: You just do it and there's no real science to it. I have seen plans that have been written by horticultural therapists about: what is the patient's issue, and what are they working on, and what's the plan, and how do you reinforce that? It seemed like it was about consistency. And it seemed like one of those processes where becoming intentional about something helps to clarify and helps to strengthen an approach. I think that sometimes we come around to the same discussions when we talk about a struggle that a staff person is having with somebody and how we want to be consistent among the staff about it.

There was a horticultural therapy class at Cabrillo [College] for a while that used to come out and visit with us. They saw us as a place where horticultural therapy was happening. That class isn't happening anymore. I understand that they don't have enough enrollment for it. But there is another one in Colorado and up in San Francisco as well, and I've been talking with someone who wants to somehow work with us. He's thinking about maybe hiring trainees as they graduate from here to work with him, and maybe have an application process with a resume. I'm looking forward to him in the next few weeks coming and talking to our trainees about what it is that he's providing, and seeing how he

explains the horticultural therapy aspect of it, and what the response is from our trainees.

Partnerships with Other Organizations and Farmers

Reti: So the Homeless Garden Project has a partnership with the Agriculture & Land-Based Training Association [ALBA].

Ganzhorn: Yes.

Reti: Can you talk about that?

Ganzhorn: Yes. Over the years our CSA has expanded and shrunk, like a lot of things at the project. I think I told you last time that we had 120 shareholders at one time, when we had both the Pelton [Street] site and the Natural Bridges Farm site. When we lost Pelton, and we just were at Natural Bridges, I think we did forty shareholders. For one or two years we did just a flower CSA and no veggies. That was partially because there were some pest problems at Natural Bridges Farm and we wanted to stop growing vegetables for a period, to eliminate any food source for those pests. Natural Bridges Farm is pretty windy and cool, and has that beach microclimate. So we can do cool-weather crops. You ask three different farm directors and you'll get three different answers about what you can do out there.

Reti: (laughter)

Ganzhorn: The bottom line is we decided to work with other organizations to supplement our CSA so that we could offer warm-weather crops. ALBA basically

sells to us every week at a wholesale price, food for our CSA that is hot-weather crops. And, for the most part, that's as far as our collaboration has gone. But this winter I called them and asked them to come and speak at a panel about employment. I was looking at people in the community who would be a logical next step for somebody who had been with the project and wanted to go on, in a variety of different fields. I asked Charlie, who is the owner of The Garden Company on Mission Street, an incredibly nice man. Foster, who works up at Swanton Berry Farm, came. Someone came from Trader Joe's [market]. And Kurt Christiansen, who has a landscaping business and has come and spoken to our trainees before about going into landscaping as a natural thing to do after graduating. He and Ken Foster have come, and they both were apprentices at UCSC, so the trainees get to hear this wonderful history. But anyways, I asked ALBA to come, and spoke with their outreach person and we decided it made more sense for them to come this spring. They're going to talk for a whole hour, rather than as part of a panel, about the kinds of programs that they offer to people, and how it might fit for people on the crew.

The other [connection] is historically, Ann Baier, who works for ATTRA [Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas]. She has been an inspector for California Certified Organic Farmers [CCOF] in the past. She now has two young children. She was the director of ALBA when it was called the Rural Development Center. Then she went on to be a fellow at the Kellogg Foundation and helped the Homeless Garden get a grant for two years. And that's pretty much the other connection. It would be neat if we could find more ways to collaborate. You know, originally, farming seemed like one way that people

could graduate from the project into working. The longer we've been in operation, the more we've thought about other ways. There have been some people who went into farming, but definitely not the majority.

Reti: And what about your collaboration with Freewheelin' Farm?

Ganzhorn: Freewheelin' Farm—Amy Courtney⁸, whose farm that is, and she works with some other people. She was in Americorps. We had an Americorps program here at the Project; I don't know if it was one or two years. They were doing a lot of gardening projects, and we were just one of their sites. There was a really neat corps of people who were doing Americorps, who will always be part of the Homeless Garden Project's history, I'm sure. But I'm pretty sure we just trade certain things back and forth [with Freewheelin' Farm] for the CSA, and maybe some equipment every now and then.

Reti: She grows berries up there, right?

Ganzhorn: Right. She's got the ollalieberries. So we went up there and harvested some for our CSA members, I think just a couple of weeks last year. And then I think we traded some of our fruit.

We do something kind of like that with Randy Clayton and Draft Horses for Hire. We don't trade food, but he has definitely offered his services. He's brought his horses over and ploughed the fields for us. Sometimes we get to pay him, and we never give him enough. He's been really generous in helping out. When we had our old building where the soccer field is now, he had the feed

store right across from there. We were very good neighbors, and we'd have tea together on those rainy days.

The Community Supported Agriculture Scholarship Program

Reti: And what about the CSA scholarship program. Tell me about that.

Ganzhorn: I'm pretty sure that started almost right at the beginning of the CSA. Jered Lawson⁹, who was a really awesome intern, he—I think of it as something that he started, but Lynne might tell me that, no, it was actually her. (laughs) He called it Feed Two Birds with One Worm.

Reti: (laughs)

Ganzhorn: (laughs) Isn't that great? And then you get people who say, "Oh, I don't think we should talk about the worm dying. It should be feed two birds with one seed." And then you get somebody saying (laughs), "Well, a seed is not very much for two birds." All this editorializing on the name. But originally there was an awareness that CSA, in an attempt to eliminate the middleman and really help the farmer get a fair price for the food, as well as stabilize their funding and have a more predictable funding source from what they're growing—there was an awareness that it would be expensive, and that a lot of people who are on limited incomes can't come up with a big chunk of money like that for a one-time payment, or even for a three-time payment. We do have that option for people, that they do a deposit and then two payments during the season. But we wanted to try to make it available to a lot of people, not just to people who had that kind of income. And the other part was that some people

might really like the idea of CSA, but they like the convenience of shopping when they feel like it, or they go away during the summer—for some reason they can't do CSA themselves. So they could donate and help somebody else get a share, and still support the training program. We used to just give the food to families who were low income. We had a process where people would kind of apply. It was hard to choose, "You can have a share, and you can't."

Reti: You're talking about people eating.

Ganzhorn: Yes. And then I remember specifically one person who had AIDS, who was talking about how she really felt like AIDS made it necessary for her to eat organic, and that was part of her wellness. It's funny, because you could think of it as part of everyone's wellness. But we decided to start donating shares to the [Santa Cruz] AIDS Project. They had a program where they distributed food boxes to people that lived in their [care facilities]. So we donated to them for a couple of years and then I think they lost funding for that program. So we started thinking, well, let's just donate to different agencies for two years, and then we'll move on to new agencies.

Most of the agencies we work with are kind of like us—they're still trying to do the same programs even though they've lost one or two or three staff people. And the idea of coming on a Friday afternoon to pick up food is a little bit challenging.

Reti: For the programs that you are working together with on distributing these CSA shares.

Ganzhorn: Yes. [But] the Live Oak Family Resource Center has really been outspoken about, this is something that we really want to provide for our clients and our participants, and this is something they really appreciate, and Walnut Avenue Women's Center as well. So right now we're working with Live Oak Family Resource Center and also with the Santa Cruz Community Counseling Center [which] has a few programs. One of them is the River Street Shelter, which is where a lot of people who have worked for us have stayed at one time or another. They also have a program called Transition House, that is a program that is helping people to stay out of the behavioral health unit at Dominican [Hospital]. They really believe that community-based activities such as preparing a meal together, and also having organic veggies, are a real value for their participants. So we're working with them.

Last year we did, I think, eighteen shares. Each share would normally have a bouquet with it. It didn't make sense to give six bouquets to these agencies. So we decided to give the bouquets to Hospice. And that's one of my favorite parts of doing this. They've told me amazing stories. What they do is they put the bouquets near the door. And then their volunteers or their staff who are going to visit patients take a bouquet, as long as they last, to the families.

Reti: Oh, that's great.

Ganzhorn: They sent us a beautiful thank you letter about how it lifts up their patients' spirits. It just seems like such a great win-win.

Reti: Yes, that's beautiful.

Ganzhorn: And I'm sure there are stories like that about the food that would be worth [documenting]. I just don't know how to get them right now. I think a lot of it has to do with—you know, here we all are in the middle of our programs, and our programs are all tied up with the stories of individuals that are private. We've been really, since the beginning, practicing telling the community about what we're doing. But a lot of programs that are more funded by grants, they're not doing that. It's not their way. It's not built into their operation. It's maybe actually something that they try *not* to do, because they want to protect the privacy of their clients. So we don't always get those stories.

Partners in Dining Program

Reti: I see. That makes sense. And how about the Partners in Dining program? What is that?

Ganzhorn: Partners in Dining was started by Vivian Rogers, who was an awesome development director, who left in April 2007. I still keep in touch with her and she helps me keep that thread going. The way it started was that the Shadowbrook Restaurant said that they were doing this program where they would donate a portion of their sales to us. If we invited our donors and our community of people to eat there, they would donate twenty percent of that person's ticket to us. It was right around the holidays a few years ago. So we set up a table. It's an expensive restaurant. If you have wine with dinner, it can be quite an expensive meal. It went fairly well. So we thought, well, let's ask other restaurants to do it. So for a while every newsletter (which would be four

newsletters a year), we would try to have two restaurants that would donate a percentage of a night's meal.

Reti: So it would be one particular night that they would make this partnership dining experience, not every night of the year.

Ganzhorn: Yes. And we kind of let them define what percentage and how they wanted to work it. Some of them would just say, "We'll give a percentage." And some of them would say, "You have to bring in a flyer or make a reservation in the name of the Homeless Garden Project."

I'm really toning that program down right now because restaurants are having a hard time because of the current recession. Restaurants are closing. There have been a couple of restaurants who agreed to do it, and then they didn't actually get back to us with the money. So I just thought, hmm, this isn't working that well and it doesn't feel that good, so let's put this on hold for a little while.

Partners in Change

We do have another program though, that's called Partners in Change. That is companies that regularly donate services to us, or discount their services. Complete Mailing Service gives us forty to fifty percent off their service every time.

Reti: Awesome.

Ganzhorn: I'm just amazed by that. We used to work with Paychecks, which is a payroll company. They gave us, I think, forty or fifty percent off. We just

switched payroll companies because we found this other payroll company that, even though Paychecks was giving us fifty percent off, could offer the service for even less. I'm hoping Johnny's Seeds will be able to give us a little bit of a regular discount on seeds. And Mission Printers donates the printing of our newsletter every time we do a newsletter. We pay for paper and they donate the printing. Bob Carlton Graphics really, since the beginning of the Project, has donated his services. He was the guy who came up with that logo. They do layout. They do almost all our flyers and promotion. They're like family to us. For years and years they've done graphic art for us. *Good Times* donates ad space to us every week. We were just selected by them to be involved in the *Good Times* community fund. They publish an article, a full-length article, about various non-profits in the community. I think there were four this year. They ask the community every week during the holiday season to donate to these four non-profits. The community makes the donations to the Community Foundation, which then has a grant from Packard to match those donations to a certain point. So they got us involved in that last year and we'll be getting money from them in the next couple of weeks, which is going to be really, really helpful right now. And in the process of meeting with Ron, who is the publisher at the *Good Times*, he said, "You know, if you have an important event coming up, or you could really use some extra publicity, have Bob do your ad in the regular size that we run, but also have him do a full-size page." Then I asked him to start doing them in color as well. So on Christmas Eve, Ron ran a full-page, color ad about our holiday store. He just does it if he has space, but it's just so, incredibly generous!

Reti: Wow.

Ganzhorn: And one time Food Bin was donating food to us that we were using for lunches. It's really amazing what the community has done for us.

Reti: It seems like such an important thing to document. I think the general impression is that people in Santa Cruz hate people who are homeless. Downtown, there is all this tension going on between people who are homeless and the people who are there to shop, and it's this ongoing story that I've been hearing about ever since I moved here thirty years ago, this hatred that's there.

Ganzhorn: It's definitely palpable.

Reti: So, yes, that's real. But then, at the same time, you've got a community that in so many ways is supporting this organization. And that's a story that also needs to be told.

Ganzhorn: Absolutely. I felt that way when we did the panel that I was talking about this winter. One of the things that comes up when I'm working with people on making their resumes is: you know people have been working with us for three years and maybe it's the only thing on their resume. Do they put down Homeless Garden Project, or do they put Natural Bridges Farm? If they're putting us down as a reference and their reference calls us, the machine says Homeless Garden Project. So it doesn't really work well to hide the fact that it's the Homeless Garden Project. For years when employers come and speak to our trainees I've asked them, "Would you hire someone who had Homeless Garden Project on their resume?" This year it really stood out. All of the employers that came said, "Absolutely, I would. If it said Homeless Garden Project I would think, this is somebody who is trying to better themselves. This is somebody who

is making a real effort to move forward, and I really respect that and I respect the Homeless Garden Project.” I think that says it all for these businesses that are trying to help.

And that being said, I also think that the business community could do a little more. I really would like to see the business community rally together and pay for some trainee positions, so that we could provide some more trainee positions.

Reti: Like, an endowed position where they would back that position.

Working with Veterans

Ganzhorn: Yes. And along those lines, somebody, I don’t know if it’s the Veterans Administration, or community members, but somebody making sure that there’s always a couple of positions available for veterans at the farm.

Reti: Have veterans coming back from the war in Iraq been working with you?

Ganzhorn: We haven’t yet. We haven’t. I’ve come across a couple of veterans that are on the street, and we have a couple of veterans in our program right now, but they’re not Iraq war veterans. There is that organization called Farms Not Arms.

Reti: I was just going to ask you about that.

Ganzhorn: Yes, and I talked to somebody in San Francisco who works with Swords into Plowshares about trying to get some funding for positions. Their model is really different than our model. It’s a very quick training program that they offer. But at least it would help us to pay for employing some veterans. We

haven't been able to make it come into something magical and actually happen. I'm not sure what that's about. It could have to do with the distance between San Francisco and Santa Cruz.

There's another organization called the Farmer-Veteran Coalition that we worked with quite a bit last year. One of our staff people went to their event up in Sebastopol, and went down to Mexico with one of the people who is organizing that event. We all went to the dinner that they had up at Swanton Berry Farm, and got to meet a lot of the people that are employed and working on farms. One of them [was] a really wonderful man who has a farm called Archi's Acres, and they are actually employing veterans, and he himself is a veteran, a very articulate man. It was a very exciting night, a wonderful dinner. It feels like the edge, the beginning of something really fruitful and really exciting. There was so much enthusiasm. It felt a little bit like that time when I first walked into the [Homeless Garden] Project and I thought, there's this amazing thing happening and people don't know about it. I hope that somehow we'll be able to work with them.

Reti: Yes!

Outreach Challenges

And how do you reach out to people whose first language is Spanish?

Ganzhorn: We have done that better sometimes than others. Patrick Williams, our farm director for twelve or fourteen years, spoke Spanish. He's no longer with us on a regular basis. He had been in the Peace Corps in the Dominican

Republic and he is a big traveler and speaks Spanish fairly well. Layla [Aguilar], who left last December, also spoke Spanish. Right now we don't have any real Spanish speakers on staff. We do have the crucial paperwork that any trainee comes into contact with translated into Spanish. And when we do outreach for trainees, we reach out to all the organizations that serve people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, or low income, including agencies that work specifically with monolingual Spanish speakers. Over the years we've had some people who speak mostly Spanish. We could definitely improve in that area. I honestly think it's very connected to this big paring down that we're having as a staff.

Reti: I understand that there's only so much you can do. Another question I have, if a person has physical disabilities— we've talked about mental health issues, but if a person has physical disabilities, how do you fold them into what you're doing here? If someone is in a wheelchair how are they going to work on the farm?

Ganzhorn: Yes, when and if we get into [our new site in the] Pogonip, there will be a facility that is built to accommodate people in wheelchairs. So far, it's always been adapting what we have so that somebody in a wheelchair could have access. We have had, over the course of the project, one person in a wheelchair who worked for us for his full three years, and he mostly worked in the office. We found ways to accommodate him. We found a bathroom across the street for him. We, of course, had a port-a-potty that we used that he didn't have access to, and we didn't pay the extra to have a port-a-potty that was handicapped accessible. He would go to the hotel nearby to use the restroom. He

and I used to go up to Circle Meeting together, and we would push his wheelchair through the mulch and the woodchips so that he could get to Circle Meeting. When we built this store, we had to put in a couple of accommodations for people with wheelchairs. And it's not ideal. We haven't had any deaf people, or people with vision problems, apply to work here. We've had people who were dealing with health issues that caused them to not be able to work the full hours. We've been able to accommodate people in that way, with flexible scheduling. And I do, in those cases, truly believe that it was helpful to them to have a transition between not working, and working in a place that worked for them better. One person in particular, the issues were around her back, but also around being outdoors all of the time, in the sun.

The county, many years ago, maybe fifteen years ago, had a whole training about the Americans with Disabilities Act. I'm excited about having a greenhouse that would be accessible to people in wheelchairs, and having some [raised] beds that would be accessible to people in wheelchairs. We've never actually built our own facility, and it's hard to imagine coming up with all that money, but we could build handicapped-accessible bathrooms, and it could be not only for a training program participants, but for CSA members and for volunteers and anybody who came. It could be pretty awesome.

Moving to the Site in the Pogonip

Reti: So where do things stand with the possible move to the land in the Pogonip?

Ganzhorn: Well, I don't know how many years ago, but the city adopted a master plan for Pogonip. It contained a site for the Homeless Garden Project. There's a condition that the Homeless Garden Project needs to create an operations and management plan that addresses certain issues laid out by the city and Parks and Recreation that relate to environmental impacts. We need to come up with an operations and management plan that the City Council approves. Our major stumbling block has been water. Originally, the city was going to bring city water up to Pogonip in order to restore the Clubhouse, because if they invested in restoring the Clubhouse they needed to have a plan for fire. And then the city decided not to restore the Clubhouse, and they actually even turned down money that could have been offered to them for restoring the Clubhouse. I'm not quite sure what all their issues were around that. But we can't afford to bring city water up to Pogonip. Also, our board felt like it didn't make sense for the Homeless Garden Project to plan a farm based on using city water, just in terms of water use.

Reti: Because it's really expensive?

Ganzhorn: Yes, and water that's really a precious resource that could be used for other uses rather than for agriculture. We don't need city water for agriculture, water that's been purified and gone through all the sanitation and so forth. So there was an idea of using a well. And the well that currently is there, we were told by the staff at Parks and Rec that it doesn't produce enough water for what our water needs are. One of our board members was very interested in using spring water. That was really discouraged at one point. But it seems like it was discouraged based on not knowing the actual facts. We found somebody who

had been keeping track of how much water is in the springs every year. And it turns out that the amount of water that we would need is negligible compared—I might have some of the details wrong, because I don't go to these Pogonip planning meetings. But I think we've gotten an initial okay from the staff and the city water department for putting into a plan that we would use these springs in a certain way. Then I guess the question becomes, how do we do it? We were following a system that exists someplace else in Santa Cruz, that is a very old system, for collecting the water, and then it would be fed into the garden through a gravity system, so a passive kind of thing.

In terms of the rest of the plan, I think there are things like what the buildings would look like— We've done this plan a few times now and it's fairly specific. Like, where exactly would the greenhouse be, and how big would it be, and what would it be made out of, and what slopes we could plant on, and what we could plant on those slopes, and where would the compost piles be, and what kind of road would cut across from the actual road to the perimeter of the gardens in case we needed to get materials to the other side during the rainy season? And would CSA members come pick up their shares at the farm, or would we have a drop off location in town? Those sorts of things have to get worked out, and it's all been getting worked out on a volunteer basis by members of our board.

Reti: Who are going and meeting with the city about this?

Ganzhorn: Yes. And every now and then I'm involved, or when Dawn was executive director she was involved, or Paul [Glowaski] is involved. It doesn't

seem like the best time to do fundraising for something like that (laughs) and yet, I think it's going to happen. The other thing that was a barrier to it happening was [that] people who really did support the Project, who were part of the environmental community, did not support it. It was a really interesting—

Reti: So you are saying that people who traditionally support the Homeless Garden Project and are in the environmental community, did not support the relocation of it to the Pogonip?

Ganzhorn: Yes. And my understanding was that was coming from a point of, let's just keep Pogonip exactly as it is. Let's not have anything there.

Collaborating with the Second Harvest Food Bank

Reti: Great, thank you. I hope it happens. So I don't think we've talked about Second Harvest Food Bank yet.

Ganzhorn: They started a really neat project that was about getting food to people who are working our training. The idea was that people would volunteer a certain number of hours a week or a month, and then in exchange they would get food from the Food Bank. The Food Bank comes on the last Thursday of the month. They come right before the end of a shift, and they bring two different bags of food: one of non-perishable food (and these are huge bags!) and one of veggies. They bring food to us, so our trainees and volunteers and people who use the project who aren't necessarily trainees can get food there. And I can't explain why it's so nice, maybe just because I really like the Food Bank. One of the things I've seen is that although having food once a month really helps, that's

not the way to feed yourself. You need food every day and every week. It is kind of nice to have it on the end of the month, for people who get food stamps and can't make it through the end of the month with the food stamps.

There are ways that we want to serve more people, and our budget limits the number of people that we can actually have in the training program. But a lot of people can get benefits from the Project without being in the training program. So this is one of them that they can get. Come and have the community at the farm and get free food in exchange. It means that it needs to be somebody who has a place to cook it, so it's probably not somebody who is homeless. It could be somebody down at Page Smith in transitional housing, or somebody who is couch surfing, something like that, but not somebody who is homeless, usually.¹⁰

Other Volunteer Opportunities

Reti: So related to that, there are many people working at the Homeless Garden Project as volunteers, besides the actual trainees? I think sometimes people think that whatever number of trainees you have working with you represents the total number of people served by the Homeless Garden Project. But it's really a lot more than that. We've talked about some of those kinds of volunteers already.

Ganzhorn: Yes. And there are a lot of interns from the university. There are a lot of those people who believe in what we're doing, that we were talking about earlier, who like working in gardens, or want to learn more about gardening, who come. A lot of people do community service. I think we are number one for a lot of people, in terms of, if I have to do community service I'm going to do it at the Homeless Garden Project. Some people have many, many hours to do, and

somehow have a work schedule that allows them to do it. People who have worked for us in the past who are getting social security and don't necessarily need the paycheck, can free up the position for somebody who really does need the paycheck, who still enjoy the benefits of working, and of working in community, and being in the beautiful place that Natural Bridges Farm is. There are groups that come out. I think last October there were 286 different volunteers that came out to the farm. And it could have been that a large group of them came [together], maybe thirty-five people or something, but still, that's a lot of different people. There are people who maybe volunteered once for a couple of hours, and then there are people who come two or three times a week, every week of the year. Or people who come twelve hours a week for a whole quarter. At one time we had seniors coming every time we made bouquets, and that was really, really fun. It's really fun when we have seniors at the Project, because it kind of balances out all the interns. (laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Ganzhorn: And it's also really nice to have kids out there, too.

Reti: You've worked with the Food What?! program.

Ganzhorn: We did work with Food What?! and we worked with Rooted in Community. I just did an annual report that had the names of all the groups that we worked with. Do you know the idea of alternative spring break, where the students go someplace and do a service project during that time? There's a place up in Oregon and they had an alternative spring break, and they came and worked with us two years in a row. I got to meet with them last year and they

talked about how their mayor had sponsored their trip because he's interested in doing a project like [the Homeless Garden Project] there, so he wanted them to come back and tell all about how it works and how it's put together. And that's such a great way to find out, is to actually come and see.

There are a lot of Quaker groups and other religious groups that have come out. The 3 Bells Café group has come out. Temple Beth El sends people. Farm to School comes, where we actually go and talk to the class about what happens at our farm, and get people ready to come, and then the students come and they do exercises.

Reti: Is that through Community Alliance with Family Farmers [CAFF]?

Ganzhorn: That's through CAFF, yes. We also did a collaboration with CAFF last year. They offered a program at Watsonville High where the students did a class and had a garden or farm at Watsonville High. And if they did that training, then it allowed them the opportunity to have a paid apprenticeship at ALBA during the summer. That's actually one of our goals, is to be able to have a couple of paid internships for low-income youth. One of our trainees told me about how he was eavesdropping on the youth group that had come out. And he was so impressed with it. The person from CAFF (it was Ildi Carlisle-Cummins) gave each student a bag. Some students' bag had one raisin in it, and some students' bag had a whole box of raisins. It was all random, what they ended up getting. Then they had a discussion about, well, what were they going to do with their raisin if they had just one, or if they had a whole box. He was so impressed with that. And I was so impressed with how hungrily he was listening in to the

education, and that he wasn't saying, "I'm fifty-six years old and I already know all this." (laughs) He was just like, "This is so neat!" I guess my point is that there really is some neat exchange when groups come to the farm. It isn't like these things are happening in isolation from each other. It's all connected.

A Model for Other Projects

Reti: We were talking about the people coming down from Oregon. What other kinds of programs have been inspired by the Homeless Garden Project? I know that you've been something of a national model.

Ganzhorn: Well, [in California] I know there was a project in Davis for a while. I'm pretty sure there is still one in Modesto. Long Beach is talking to us about one. I think there are a couple of projects similar to this in the Santa Barbara area. I think a lot of times people respond to the idea, but then they shape it with their own community. People from Australia and Japan have contacted us and actually come and visited us. There was a beautiful article with some of Kate Stafford's photographs, and it has the Japanese ideograms on it. The Project definitely has traveled pretty far. People on the East Coast have talked to me about what we do here. Florida—a whole group from Miami, Dade County came out. They actually had some land that had been given them for building shelters, and they, for one reason or another, hadn't been able to build on part of the land. I don't remember if it was stalled or if it was just never going to happen on that land. And they didn't want to give the land back. I guess what had happened was the federal government had said, "We're actually going to penalize you for

not having built these projects in time, and you either need to give the land back or you need to pay this huge amount of money.”

Reti: Oh, my god.

Ganzhorn: Which is just nuts! So the guy, who was a very persuasive and wonderful executive director, said, “Well, that’s not really going to serve anybody, and we want to do this garden thing.” And somehow he got funding for them all to come out here. It was tremendously fun. I’m not sure what happened with it. I always ask people, “Keep in touch with us and let us know what happens.” But I haven’t heard from them. I would love to hear from them about if they did actually get a garden going. It’s a huge responsibility to keep the funding going, if you want to pay people. And my own personal feeling is that it doesn’t make sense to ask people who are homeless to volunteer for an extended period of time. People need jobs. Our society is very much based on that you get paid, and that your worth is measured by getting paid. I think it’s just hugely important, and as much as it’s challenging to raise funds to pay people, and it costs so much, especially with workers’ comp and payroll taxes and so forth rolled in, I think it’s really crucial.

Last year these two very dynamic, charismatic women came down from Project Homeless Connect, which is in San Francisco. It was an organization that was getting all kinds of service providers together—health, and legal, and taxes—at the Moscone Convention Center. And then they would invite anyone who is homeless to be there and to get all their needs met as much as possible in that one single day. Public Works had some land available and these women wanted

to do a project like the Homeless Garden Project in San Francisco. I hope they did it.

Reti: Someone could do a great study following up on all of these projects that have started, a longitudinal study. It would make an excellent dissertation topic.

Ganzhorn: It would!

And it would be really interesting to have a funding source that was devoted towards funding projects like the Homeless Garden Project, in my opinion.

Reti: What do you mean?

Ganzhorn: A foundation that was trying to fund garden projects for any kind of at-risk population that was providing food to the community. Because one strategy is to increase the amount of funding that comes from earned income. That's a wonderful idea, and there have been budgets that we've done that tried to think of a stand-alone enterprise, with the idea that we are running exactly like a business. And then what that does, is it forces the project to focus more on production and less on training, and to hire people who are more capable of completing the production. So maybe people who really need the job and the training, who are not getting jobs anywhere and are not going to get a job anywhere until they have this transition— I think of the Homeless Garden Project as trying to provide something for people who have nowhere else to go. Those people stop being served by a project that focuses heavily on production.

Reti: Because then efficiency becomes the highest goal?

Ganzhorn: Right. I just really don't want us to be a low-paying job for people for three years. I want to provide a lot more than that.

Inspiring the Arts

Years ago Paul Fleischman, who is a Pacific Grove author who writes for young adults, called me because he and I had read poems on the air together. He wrote a really neat book of poems for two voices. And I'm not exactly sure how that all came to be, but he knew that I worked at the Homeless Garden Project. He called me and he said that he wanted to write a book about an urban garden, and he wanted to hear stories about what happens at the Homeless Garden Project so that his book was real. And he wrote this amazing book called *Seedfolks*.¹¹ That wasn't a project that was inspired by us, but it was a really nice way that the Project came into another realm.

Reti: Is that available still?

Ganzhorn: It is. I think it's about a community garden in someplace like Chicago. It tells the story through the eyes of young people who are involved in the garden.

Reti: Have you had artists or musicians or any other kinds of creative folk around?

Ganzhorn: We have. There was an artist who did a really beautiful pastel of the Pelton Farm. Oh, my goodness. It was so beautiful. Kitty Wallis, I think was who did it. And last year a dancer wanted to do a collaboration with us, but we

weren't able to actually follow through on that. Naomi and the Courteous Rudeboys—

Reti: (laughter)

Ganzhorn: (laughs) last year contacted us and said that they wanted to do a benefit for us. Pat Matheny, who—I think he's a musician but maybe he's a writer—he donates a portion of the proceeds of the sale of something that he did. And there's another local band, I think they actually have a photograph of a man who is kind of a familiar sight on the streets, on the cover of their CD and they donate a portion from the sale of their CDs to us.

Reti: I noticed you have quite a few CDs for sale out in the store.

Ganzhorn: And those are from Gourd Music, which is a local producer who produces a lot of musicians who do traditional American music or Celtic music. And there's another group of CDs out there from somebody who played at one of our benefits for free. And Hiroshi, who has worked for us off and on in the past through another program, and is an amazing painter and guitarist, he has his CD out there. I think that covers the CDs and musicians.

Some of My Joys

Reti: You've talked a lot about challenges that you've faced, but what gives you the most joy about this job?

Ganzhorn: That's a really hard choice.

Reti: (laughs) You can talk about more than one thing. It doesn't have to be a contest.

Ganzhorn: One of the things that I really love about my job is that we have this project where we ask knitters to bring in stuff that they've knitted, and we sell it in the holiday store. They just donate it.

Reti: I noticed the little cute caps for babies.

Ganzhorn: I knitted for a little while and my family always said that I was much more fun to be around when I knitted. (laughs) I never got to the point of people saying, "Could you please *not* give me a scarf for Christmas this year!" But I imagine it as being like the way they talk about a true gardener as somebody who hides zucchini in other peoples' gardens— (laughs) But these knitters walk in and it's like they're giving you a piece of themselves. And they're giving it with such pride and humility blended, and such excitement to be giving *of themselves*. That story plays out in so many different ways, but the knitters embody it so well, of people wanting to contribute, and we offer a way that people can contribute. I just love being here when knitters bring their things in. I had a grandson last December, not the December we just had but the one before. And Dawn, who is the Women's Organic Flower Enterprise supervisor, also had a grandson last April. So this Christmas we asked people to not just knit a scarf— It used to be called Knit a Scarf for the Homeless Garden Project. We said, "Knit whatever you want. Bring whatever you want in." And gosh, these people brought these beautiful baby things. I think we asked for baby things. I mean, I

kind of started crying a couple of times when these things would come in the mail, made with exquisite care and skill. So that's one of my joys.

I love it when people come back to the Project to tell of their successes. I love seeing somebody make a change who has been preparing for it for a while, and you can see it. And then they actually make that really brave step towards something better.

I love having doubts about the Project and then having them be restored by a person. The doubts come from things like fundraising, from something that comes from the world of business and the world of accountability, the world of—well, does this make sense in terms of the numbers? So [I love] having somebody come in with their own story that totally validates what we're trying to do here.

We have amazing staff here, and I really have seen how we all, including me, come here for a specific reason that we might not understand, but it gets fulfilled again and again and again. So those are some of my joys.

Reti: Thank you so much, Darrie.

Ganzhorn: Thank you. Thank you for listening to me.

Reti: It's my honor.

¹Frank Adams with Myles Horton, *Unearthing Seeds of Fire: The Idea of Highlander* (John F. Blair, 1975).

²Steve Lopez, *The Soloist: A Lost Dream, an Unlikely Friendship and the Redemptive Power of Music* (Putnam Adult, 2008).

³ See the oral history with Paul Lee in Maya Hegege and Randall Jarrell, *The Early History of UCSC's Farm and Garden Project* (Regional History Project, University Library, UCSC, 2003) <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/farmgarden.html>.

⁴ “Growing Hope: The Homeless Garden Project” (1993), produced by Ric Howard, Len Borruso, Jered Lawson; director, Ric Howard; written by Jered Lawson. Published [Santa Cruz, Calif.] : Homeless Garden Project; [Ben Lomond, Calif. : distributed by the Video Project].

⁵ See <http://hhspp.csumb.edu/community/matrix/familymatrix.htm>.

⁶ Carlo Petrini, Jamey Lionette, Vandana Shiva, editors. *Manifestos on the Future of Food and Seed* (South End Press, 2007).

⁷ See the oral history with Paul Glowaski in this series.

⁸ See the oral history with Amy Courtney in this series.

⁹ See the oral history with Jered Lawson in this series.

¹⁰ Ganzhorn is referring to the Page Smith Community House: “A transitional-housing program for 40 single male and female adults for up to 18 months. Eight co-housing units, individual and group counseling, referrals for social services, job placement and other resources help homeless individuals transition into self-sufficiency.” <http://www.scsshelter.org/>

¹¹ Paul Fleischman, *Seedfolks* (Joanna Colter Books, 1997).