

The Caring Community



“Helping the community where we can and bringing people together to do good things... Imagine the community you want to live in, and then spend a little time every day taking small steps to create it!”

The Caring Community Spring 2022 Newsletter

www.thecaringcommunity.love

Volunteer Appreciation Day!



Many of our amazing volunteers with their Raffle prizes... 😊

Our Volunteer Appreciation Day event in Robbins Park on Saturday, January 22 was a phenomenal success! While we were still setting up, Cynthia lovingly presented us leadership members with totebags of Caring Community mugs, mousepads, and teabags (Yogi Breathe Deep, Calming, and Stress Relief - aaahhh).

We had four tables set up, with beautiful presentations, under two pop-up tents:

~ Information: newsletters, sign-up sheets, Gleaning for Good door hangers, and flyers

~ Thank You Gifts: salves, produce bags, teas, soaps, totebags, turmeric, yuca/cassava stalks, medicine balls

~ Refreshments: mint tea, butterfly pea flower lemonade, chocolate chip cookies, banana cake, Swedish snowball cookies (all food items were vegan), fresh fruit (apples, oranges, starfruit, watermelon)~

Raffle Prizes: beautyberry plant, wines (starfruit and elderberry), totebags, tomato plants, gardening hat, freeze-dried cookies (mango and chocolate-banana-orange), gardening gloves

About 35 people visited us throughout the day (1-4 p.m.), ranging from regular volunteers... to those who have come once or twice... to those who were enjoying the park and just curious to see what we were about. Lots of talking, laughing, and sharing of information... everyone eager to converse about their experiences with, and enthusiasm for, gardening.

Even the weather cooperated, overcast but no rain! Joy, love, and connection on so many levels. We rock(ed), and very much look forward to welcoming new hands and hearts into our garden space... ❤️



We invited Davie's Mayor Judy Paul and Vice Mayor Michelle Whitman, and Cynthia and Alex (Robbins garden leader) gave them a tour.

Nature is never static. It is always changing. Everything is in a constant state of flux. Nothing endures. Everything is in the process of either coming into being or expiring. ~ Kilroy J. Oldster

Big Thanks to Veronica Poses for her donation of a bench to the HOPE Outreach Food Bank Garden! Stay tuned for Before and After photos in our Summer 2022 newsletter issue, coming in July... 😊

See You in the Garden!



There is a lot going on in the world. There are things happening that we can't directly affect. When times get hard, it's easy to get depressed, to focus on what's wrong and feel helpless. We do the opposite. When things get tough, we know that we can't fix everything, but that we can do **something**.

Sometimes, we're really astonished at how our choosing to do **something** turned into so much. How our small, consistent actions created all this good is something we can't explain. We didn't set out with goals to change the world, just the idea that we wanted to do some good, somewhere. It turned into The Caring Community.

At The Caring Community, you'll find a lot of selfless people. You'll find them in the garden, bending over in the hot sun to plant and harvest for other people. You'll see them in backyards, climbing ladders and stretching to harvest fruit that was donated by homeowners for food banks.

Much of the work you won't see being done, because someone like our Spotlight Volunteer, Kiana Raphael, is spending nights and weekends wrestling with numbers to produce our reports and accounting, or figuring out how to keep our website up-to-date and functioning.

You won't see the time and effort that the garden managers spend in planning and organizing, or the phone calls that get made, or the time spent creating social media buzz so that even more volunteers come out to the garden. Usually you'll just see us grinning in the garden or while we're picking fruit or recruiting volunteers at the PopUp Market.

Are we really that selfless? Hmmmmm. Is it just the satisfaction of knowing that we're doing our small part to make the world a better place? Is that why the pictures you see show us all grinning from ear-to-ear? Don't tell anyone, but we have a lot of FUN in what we do. Sure,

it's sweaty and we get a little messy. We get a LOT out of what we do. Fresh air, friendship, and fun. We're also making a significant impact in our community. Who knew?

Cynthia Schaefer is an herbalist, homesteader, founder of *Flurban Paradise* and *GrowSocial*, and community organizer for various organizations such as *The Caring Community* and *South Florida Edible Gardening and Sustainable Living*. Find her at Flurbanparadise.com

Kiana Raphael, COO and website manager of **The Caring Community**, raphael.kiana@gmail.com

Once the New Year begins, so does all the planning for a prosperous year! Like most of us during this time, we're getting our finances in order to make sure we had a better year than before; that includes securing funding for our ongoing programs, such as our self-care stations.

As we continue into the new year, TCC continues to grow in achievements. Since our conception, we've had the pleasure of having our self-care stations funded by United Way in the past, and more recently from direct grants via Broward County Schools EAP (Employee Assistance Program) and, this year, we yet again were able to secure funding for 40 more self-care stations through them! We are so grateful every year for their support in that we truly are here to help our teachers in their time of stress.



Moving into the rest of this year, we are hoping to secure even more funding gardens through grants and fundraising.

Alejandra Jeldrez, HOPE Outreach Food Bank Garden Leader, hopeoutreachfoodbankgarden@gmail.com

2022 just began and we have already achieved so much at Hope Outreach Food Bank Garden. We started off the year with a lovely tea party on the first maintenance and harvest day of January at the Marando Farms Cafe. Our

volunteers brought an assortment of teas and their favorite baked goodies, and we munched on the delectable treats while discussing our plans for the new year ahead of us. What an encouraging event that was! So encouraging that we will be keeping it as our garden tradition every first week of the year. Hopefully you will be there next year.



Further in January, we hosted a stepping stone painting party. We got a donation of flat stones and bricks, which were painted with outdoor paint. We had the primary colors, white and some pre-mixed colors, so everyone had fun mixing paint to create their desired shades. It was a great turnout, with lots of creative painters, even little ones. Volunteers adorned the bricks and stones and turned them into colorful reminders that will brighten our days as we work there every week. They are in our garden beds to aid us in harvesting the hard-to-reach places of our garden beds. Some were also placed in our perennial garden to form a pathway.

Speaking of the Perennial Garden, we now have one. Ha! In February, our skilled Claire and Susan led the installation of a fence around the area between the Banana Circle and the Pollinator Garden. They did a fantastic job building a sturdy fence with our volunteers. It even has a gate so we can easily walk in, and it is large enough to fit the wheelbarrow. Donkeys, goats, and chickens were eating the leaves of fruit trees in that area, so when we thought about turning it into a perennial garden, we knew it needed to be secured. Then, in March, we got our hands in the dirt and added lots of perennials to it. We planted papaya, pigeon peas, garlic chives, butterfly pea, Cuban oregano, and other perennials. We also added some annuals that would benefit from the perennials there.

In the coming months we will be planting for the Spring, doing more work on the Perennial Garden and Banana Circle, and planting cover crops. We are very excited to announce that we plan on adding a bench for our volunteers to rest after a fun morning of joyful work. We are also working on another new section: The Tea Garden.

If you are interested in volunteering at Hope Outreach Food Bank Garden, please contact our Garden Leader Alejandra: hopeoutreachfoodbankgarden@gmail.com

Alex Rakita, The Caring Community Davie Educational Garden at Robbins Park,
Asr1025@yahoo.com

We have been harvesting bananas and pigeon peas and watching our garden grow. We had a great class on hügelkultur, and now we have a new raised bed to grow more food.

This garden has great potential, but we need people. We need to create a team that comes every week or every other week to do maintenance. Are you one of those people? 😊 Reach out to Cynthia at 954-661-3396 if you are!

This location also has great potential as a teaching location. Our goal for this Fall is a schedule of classes for all ages. If you are a teacher looking for a field trip, reach out to us. We want to maximize this location and we are open to ideas! As food continues to get more expensive, we at this garden are committed to helping be part of the solution. Join us?



Also, The Broward County Government NatureScape presented us with a Special Achievement 2022 Emerald Award, "for creating and maintaining Florida-friendly landscapes or completed exceptional projects that demonstrate visible ecological practices."

Scott Holtzman, South Creek Sanctuary Food Bank Donation Garden, scottholtzman@mac.com

Things have been mellow at the sanctuary. We have been harvesting all winter season, about every other week, with energy being expended in many directions at the sanctuary. The main thing we experienced this season is switching the distribution site from The Legacy Closet to the Broward Partnership. Our hope is to build a more intimate relationship with Broward Partnership

over the longer term, given the nature of how it works. More to come on that in the next quarter.



Otherwise we will look to complete the winter harvest, collect any seeds we can, and turn the garden for spring crops like okra, black eyed peas, and such.

Katy Cain, Gleaning for Good/Society of St. Andrew (soSA) SE Florida Area Coordinator, sflgleaning@endhunger.org 954-643-4502

We are nearing the end of our Palm Beach gleaning season, with just a few more weeks of leaf crops. We may have a few tomato or cucumber gleans in late-April and May. Then it will be mango season! If you would like to volunteer, please see our calendar and sign up here: <https://endhunger.volunteerlocal.com/volunteer/?id=60160>



Also, thank you to Elson's Exotics for inviting us to glean the starfruit grove. We were able to recover almost 2,000 lbs. for local food pantries. Thanks to our volunteers who make it possible!

Total Gleaned Produce for 2021 (2022 numbers not yet tallied):

Broward: 12,928

Palm Beach: 74,212

Calendar of Events – April/May/June 2022

*****HOPE Outreach Food Bank Garden, Marando Farms, 5151 SW 64th Ave., Davie FL** (behind the barn)
~Saturday, April 23: Spring Garden Planting, 8-10 a.m.
~Saturday, May 14: Banana Circle and Perennial Garden Maintenance, 8-10 a.m.
~Saturday, June 18: Cover Crop Planting, 8-10 a.m.

We also meet every Friday from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. (Spring/Summer Hours) to plant, weed, harvest, mulch (whatever needs doing!)

*****Robbins Preserve Park Lodge, 4005 S. Hiatus Rd., Davie FL** (across from the playground)
~April 23: Trellises, Malabar Spinach, and Fun, 8-10 a.m.
~May: Planting Papaya and papaya recipes (date TBA)

*****South Creek Sanctuary Food Bank Donation Garden, 551 Palmetto Dr, Coconut Creek FL**
Every Sunday in April/May/June: harvesting greens, herbs, vegetables, fruit (if interested, contact Scott)

*****Gleaning for Good (various locations)**, Thursdays and Saturdays, 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. (contact Katy)

*****Bring your water and gardening gloves.** Optional items to bring: trowel, pruners, if you have them.

La Zoola Pop-Up Market

~Sunday, May 1, 1-4 p.m., 6120 SW 173 Way, Southwest Ranches FL 3333

June location to be determined

Come buy, barter or trade local! Fresh grown fruits and veggies, plants, prepared foods, tinctures, tonics, arts and crafts and much more! FREE to vend and attend!!!

To volunteer, please go to the link below to fill out and submit the form. After your response is received, someone from our organization (another volunteer) will contact you to discuss upcoming events/volunteer opportunities:

<https://love.us1.list-manage.com/subscribe/post>

Join our Meetup group and check our Facebook pages to get announcements on upcoming garden events!

“Knowing that you love the earth changes you, activates you to defend and protect and celebrate. But when you feel that the earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way street into a sacred bond.” ~ Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass

Spotlight on Kiana Raphael, co-founder, COO and Website Manager of The Caring Community



Susan: *When do you feel like your affinity for gardening began?*

Kiana: Between having family members give us homemade remedies to make us feel better and my dad always making teas from herbs in our backyard, it's very hard to say where it all started. If anything, it's always been in the background of my life until I became much older to really make it a focus in my life.

My dad was the main one that propelled my interest because he was just always so knowledgeable and always had gardens he was working on. When we lived in Haiti, I remember taking trips to some of the gardens that he owned, and we would just walk for miles and eat fruit that was on the land.

When we moved to Coral Springs in 2004, he grew various fruits in our backyard like mangoes, papayas, and coconuts and he'd always have them for us to eat in the house. Even today, after we've all left the nest and are tending to our own fruits, he's still managed to have gardens over in Haiti where he's growing peanuts, rice, beans, etc to provide for his community. Gardening has always been a staple in my life and I truly have to thank my father for instilling that love for the earth in me.

SM: *When did you become involved with The Caring Community? How has your role expanded?*

KR: Oh man, my role has expanded so much over the past 3 years! I went from doing little things here and there like monitoring our finances and creating our

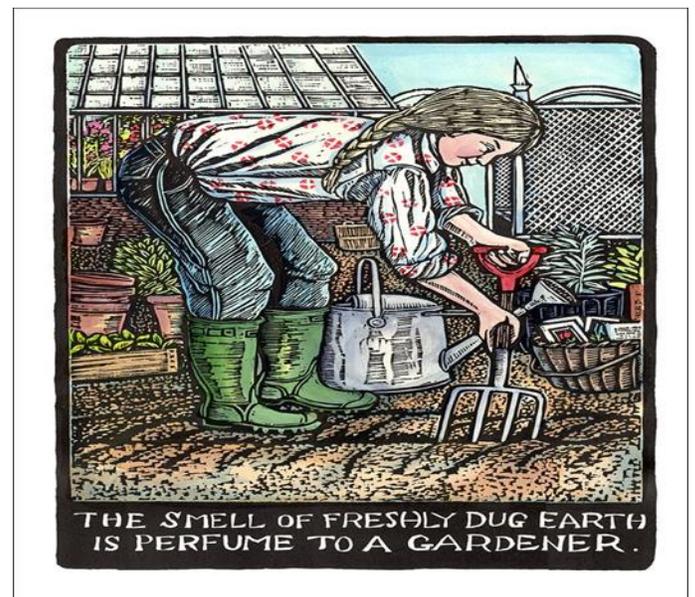
websites to now writing grants for us, filing our taxes, and even better, helping put together an amazing team to make The Caring Community!

SM: *What is your best lesson/takeaway from your involvement with the community?*

KR: My biggest takeaway from being involved with the community is that people really have no idea what being involved with the community entails. It's amazing being able to help people around you but it's the work that comes with it that scares people away it seems. I feel like we live in a world where we are so disconnected from each other that the desire to help others outside ourselves is so far removed. Being involved with the community has really shown me the importance of being selfless and building relationships with the people around you and trying to find a solution within your reach instead.

SM: *What is your greatest wish/hope for the sustainable gardening movement in South Florida?*

KR: My greatest wish is just to get more knowledge and connection throughout a lot of communities. There are so many food deserts and being able to build teams of people everywhere that can provide and maintain healthy options can do wonders for not only communities today but for future generations. South Florida is such a melting pot filled with people who have vast knowledge from so many different countries. Imagine what can be created if we just come together more often and start thinking about thy neighbor a little more.



Artist: Mary Azarian

If you use Amazon, you can help The Caring Community at NO cost you. Instead of going to Amazon.com, go to <https://smile.amazon.com>, and when prompted, enter The Caring Community Inc Pembroke Pines as your designated charity. For every \$100 you spend on Amazon Smile, we get 50 cents. Every little bit counts, and adds up!

Pineapple Salsa by Claire Measel

- ~ 2 cups sweet pineapple, diced (can also use papaya)
- ~ 1/2 bunch cilantro, chopped fine
- ~ juice of two limes
- ~ 1 small red onion, minced
- ~ 2 tablespoons fresh hot pepper of your choice, minced (as small as the onion)
- ~ 1 tsp pink salt



Mix all the ingredients together and let sit for an hour for the flavors to meld. This goes great with avocado in a green salad, or with protein of choice.

Movie and Book Recommendations

Back to Eden (Amazon Prime) is a documentary film that shares the incredible story of American gardener and arborist Paul Gautschi and his lifelong journey learning how to get back to the garden of Eden. Back to Eden Gardening is a regenerative organic gardening method that practices no-till and organic growing principles. The permaculture technique is simple -- cover the soil. Growing food and plants with industrial techniques has devastated our climate and planet. These practices reduce greenhouse gas emissions and could help trap more carbon than conventional gardening and agriculture.

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle – Tenth Anniversary Edition: A Year of Food Life by Barbara Kingsolver Since its publication in 2007, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* has captivated readers with its blend of memoir and journalistic investigation. Newly updated with original pieces from the entire Kingsolver clan, this commemorative volume explores how the family's original project has been carried forward through the years. When Barbara Kingsolver and her family moved from suburban Arizona to rural Appalachia, they took on a new challenge: to spend a year on a locally-produced diet, paying close attention to the provenance of all they consume. Concerned about the environmental, social, and physical costs of American food culture, they hoped to recover what Barbara considers our nation's lost appreciation for farms and the natural processes of food production... With Americans' ever-growing concern over an agricultural establishment that negatively affects our health and environment, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* is a modern classic that will endure for years to come.

Be the Promise by Clare Dubois

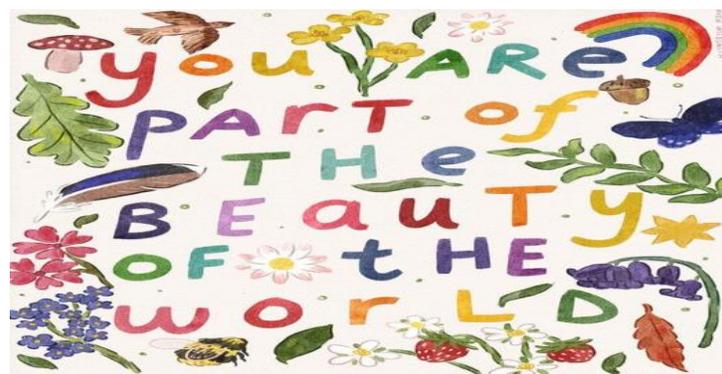
Into your arms falls the possibility of a new you.
Within your heart the sky nudges,
Begging permission to expand you beyond all known
frontiers of love.

Your mind stops speaking for a moment,
Stunned into silence by the beauty of fresh green grass,
Sunlight on blossom,
The honey sap scent, buzzed from within the warm hive,
The promise of new life as yet untouched by the ravages
of an unconscious world.

Take this moment, whole and hallowed.
Take this glimpse of a miracle world interwoven with
threads of generosity so complete,
That it overfills with succulence,
Spreads its buds and says yes to everything and
everyone.

Take not one moment more for granted,
As your heart feasts on blessings freely given to your
eyes, fingers and feet,
And as your body remembers the sacrament of your life
as part of this Earth
Give thanks.

Give thanks in a myriad of tiny ways
With every gratitude-filled glance,
Every moment of awe,
Every touch so tender and every sacred act of giving
back
Be the promise of rebirth in this world.
Be the you that you were born to be.



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