

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 Fall 2021 Newsletter

www.thecaringcommunity.love

Welcome!

Is there anything more heartwarming and rewarding than good people coming together to do good things?

If you aren't familiar with The Caring Community, let me introduce you. We are a group of volunteers, doing good where we can. Our web page can tell you about our programs and how we do good things for our community. I want to tell you about our hearts, and why we do good things for our community.

Most of us in this world want to do good. We want to help, to share, to care about the wider world. The rewards of volunteering are myriad; people who volunteer regularly report greater satisfaction with life, happier relationships, and even live longer! Those are all great benefits but, still, not why we do it.

We do it because we know that if we want to live in a better world, we have to build that better world. We believe that what Margaret Mead is credited with saying is true: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

We believe that people should be able to eat fresh organically-grown food, so we grow food for food banks and have teaching gardens so more people can grow food for themselves and others.

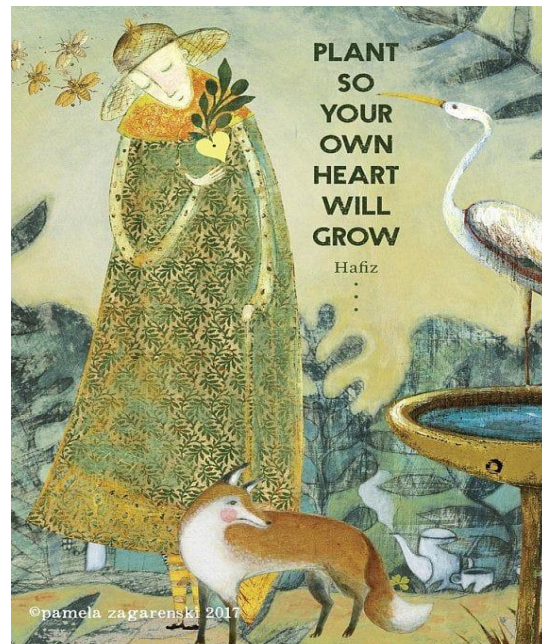
We believe in zero food waste when there are hungry people to be fed, so we harvest fruit from backyard fruit trees and take it to food banks. We believe there are members of our society that are in service to the greater good of us all, and that we should recognize and support them. We provide Self-Care stations for teachers so that they can take a moment in their day, drink some supportive or relaxing herbal tea, and know that someone they will never meet cared enough to offer them a brief moment of respite.

We KNOW that when we work together to do things that matter, we are creating ripples of good that will spread through our community. We KNOW that we have fun, feel good, and spend time with great people when we

volunteer with The Caring Community. We KNOW that all the money in the world can't buy the feeling you get when you do something that makes someone else's day just a little bit better.

We are SUPER proud that in every level of our organization, it is all done by volunteers. We have no salaries, no offices, just good people doing good work. Our model is working, and we're happy to mentor anyone who wants to replicate it.

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



To know someone here or there with whom you can feel there is understanding in spite of distances or thoughts expressed; that can make life a garden.” ~ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

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

As the year is winding down, TCC has had another successful year! We are so happy to announce that we got funded for another 60 Self-Care Stations and stress-relief resources for our teachers and first responders through Broward County Public Schools' Employee Assistance Program (EAP), with the help of Marie English; without her we would not have gotten this far and we are so grateful for everything she has contributed. We also partnered with Carlita at the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) and were able to receive funding for our cover crops and sweet potato gardens!



We must give THANKS to one of our AWESOME volunteers, Stacey Smith. Stacey created a birthday fundraiser on Facebook that raised almost \$1000. Our volunteers mean the world to us and a lot of this work could not be done without their help! Another big shout-out to Scott Holtzman for submitting his volunteer hours to his company and raising funds for our garden. TCC is slowly growing and it's thanks to all the hands that helped us on this journey. Our Seed Money campaign has finally been submitted so keep a look out on Facebook over the next few weeks for your opportunity to contribute!

Alejandra Jeldrez, HOPE Outreach Food Bank Garden Leader, ajeldrez777@gmail.com

It is the end of the Summer Season in Hope Outreach Food Bank Garden. Summer in sub-tropical South Florida is different from the northern states: we take a break from growing the temperate-climate vegetables and focus on tropical-climate greens, root crops, and fruit. However, the food pantries do not have much use for the subtropical summer greens; they are rare plants that America's residents are not used to and end up tossing them if they receive them. Therefore we only take our papayas, bananas, and a few herbs.

As we had less to harvest and care for, we centered our attention on improving the soil, maintaining the tall weeds at bay, and building and fixing structures. We were able to achieve a great amount of progress this summer. The harvests were plentiful, and we were able to donate 131 pounds to The Cupboard Food Pantry

from June to September. It was mostly fruit and they were so grateful for it. They say that our bananas are amazing and our volunteers can attest to that. We love rewarding them with a tasty treat after a day of work in the garden.

Work was never-ending in the garden these past months. We are constantly pulling grass and unwanted plants that wander into the garden beds and steal the space of what little herbs we have inside. You could say pulling weeds and mulching were a big part of our maintenance this summer. We also manicured our pollinator garden area and added more native flowers. I cannot wait to see them in bloom in the fall. It will be filled with bees, ladybugs, wasps, and butterflies. We will all be looking forward to seeing them each Friday morning. That will be another reward to our hard-working volunteers; we would not be able to do any of this work without them. We planted cover crops in August in hopes to give back to the precious soil. In this event, we planted sunn hemp, cowpeas, and lentils. We have also added a number of tithonia plants throughout the garden to supply us with a source of chop-and-drop to add biomass over the soil whenever possible. Hopefully next season we will have a positive update of the results.

Many changes in the structures of the garden happened and will continue to happen this year. We took down the A-frame trellis; the bamboo was decomposing and not holding up well, so we had to say goodbye. On the bright side, we made some additions, such as four sweet potato towers in May. They are doing well and we hope to have a sweet potato harvest very soon.



We also built some new structures to prevent iguanas from getting into the garden beds and eating the crops. The previous loose netting on PVC pipe frames was not working well for us so we had to come up with another solution. We are testing out two structures: one is a hoop house with removable netting, which will also provide an organic method to prevent cabbage worms from eating the kale and collard greens, the second is an intentionally wobbly PVC frame but with chicken wire instead of the previous loose netting. Our goal is to prevent wildlife from getting tangled in the netting, and to make weeding an easier task. When the iguanas try climbing the chicken wire they will find it difficult to climb over an outward curve of wire. We are testing out our

two structures to see which method is more efficient. Once we have worked with them for a month we will decide which one to build for our Fall/Winter garden. We had this last method recommended to us by an experienced local CSA farmer, Ricky, and our MVP volunteer Claire came up with the building method. It is so great to have experienced garden friends that help our project improve each year. The garden has had many challenges this year, but each time we brainstorm solutions together and come up with improvements that are making the garden more productive each year.

I am looking forward to whatever challenges and provisions the HOPE Outreach Food Bank Garden will have in the next season, with each one bringing our volunteers closer together and letting the garden shine brighter and becoming more fruitful.

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

The Caring Community Educational Garden at Robbins Park is happy to announce that Alexander Rakita has volunteered to take over leadership! Alexander has been a steadfast volunteer in this garden and brings his lovely family to help.

The food forest, banana circle, and butterfly garden at the Davie Community Garden was installed right before COVID brought the world to a halt. Our plans for events and classes had to be put on hold while we waited for access to the park and for it to be safe for gatherings.

November 2020 brought floods that covered the garden for several days. But our Little Garden That Could kept on going. We harvested pumpkin, turmeric, bananas, and lots and lots of pigeon peas for the local food banks last fall.



Since installation of this garden, we've focused mainly on maintenance. As circumstances change, we have some exciting plans for the future of this garden! We would love your suggestions on classes you'd like to attend or teach at the garden. The Town of Davie is a stellar partner in this endeavor and they will be helping us take the garden to the next level with borders for our gardens and irrigation.

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

It's the end of summer as I write this note. And the end of summer represents the end of one full revolution around the sun for the South Creek Sanctuary Food Bank Donation Garden, so it's a good time to reflect, on many levels. The garden is more or less taking a break at the moment, and I am too.



The year itself has been full of learning, hard work, joy, laughter, and accomplishment. I think the most amazing thing that happened during this year's experience is that the amount of food, in weight, that was produced in the garden was more than matched by those who knew about the garden donating their own fruits and veggies to be passed on to the Legacy Closet, the distribution site where all the food is sent out. That means one idea, one seed, one effort, rippled out to produce twice the vibration. Powerful.

This year, of course, I see ways to expand production, to grow more food, but as I have slowed down and allowed myself to take a break, what I realize is that the goal I want to achieve is not to produce more, but to learn to produce with greater love, awareness, and peace, so that - if such a thing is even possible - the food that is sent out can be imbibed with expanded consciousness. And perhaps, some beings who receive the food can be touched a little more deeply, even if they cannot feel it. The world is always producing more, wanting more, desiring more. This year, I will grow with more presence, and share that message with the community as well. After all, the greatest gift you can give, to anyone or anything, is your complete presence.

Katy Cain, Gleaning for Good SE Florida Area Coordinator, sflgleaning@endhunger.org 954-643-4502

Mango season has closed and we are firmly in avocado and starfruit season. We have been focusing our efforts on backyards and farms in Broward County. We'd like to encourage homeowners to consider donating some of their backyard fruit directly to their local food bank, but

Gleaning for Good and Society of St. Andrew (SoSA) are here to help facilitate donations by harvesting and transporting fruit. We would welcome new volunteers, as

the bigger our network, the more food we can save from waste and distribute to the needy in our community. Glens on farms in western Palm Beach County will start in November. We look forward to increasing our harvests and will need many hands to make that possible. These glens are a great opportunity for groups, those needing service hours, and for folks curious to see where much of our winter produce is grown.



Total Gleaned Produce for 2021 through August:

Broward County: 7,288 lbs. (represents many small loads from backyard glens and some farmed fruit)

Palm Beach County: 74,212 lbs. (harvested in conjunction with our partner gleaners at Christians Reaching Out to Society (CROS) Ministries. Those glens are generally at large farms in Belle Glade, the reason the numbers are much larger)



And our **Compost Circle** at HOPE Outreach Food Bank Garden is ready for your contributions! What can you add to the compost pile? Food scraps (fruit and veggies), used coffee grounds and filters, eggshells, dry leaves, grass cuttings, shredded paper, and leaves among other things. Please **DO NOT** put meat or meat scraps in the compost! Comment or message us if you're not sure what's allowed. Please beware of red ants and other insects around the banana circle and compost pile. Wear closed toed shoes and/or long sleeves and pants to protect yourself from ants. Don't forget to bring compostable material during our gardening events. Don't throw out those veggie/fruit peels, feed them to our worms. Thanks for your support!

Our compost pile is located at the end of our garden. See the map to see how to get from the parking lot to the compost pile. Please bring your compost when Marando Farms & Ranch is open (closed on Wednesdays) and respect the property.

Calendar of Events

Oct 2 (Saturday)

***Fall Planting Day – South Creek Sanctuary Food Bank Donation Garden

October 16 (Saturday), 8-10 a.m.

***Mulching/Weeding/Pollinator Garden – HOPE Outreach Food Bank Garden, Marando Farms, Davie FL

Adding beautiful flowers to your garden can help create an ecosystem that will let your garden maintain itself without pesticides. Plus, who doesn't want to see beautiful flowers all around? We will be mulching the garden, pruning our massive lippia bush, and adding more native Florida flowers. We will have lots of Lippia, Milkweed and Giant Milkweed cuttings for our volunteers to take home and make their own pollinator garden.

October 17 (Sunday), 1-5 p.m.

La Zoola Pop-Up Market, 14071 SW 36th Ct., Davie Come Buy, barter or trade local! Fresh grown fruits and veggies, plants, prepared foods, tinctures, tonics, arts and crafts and much more! Vending is always FREE and bartering and trading are strongly encouraged!!!

*All vendors and patrons are respectfully asked to wear masks and keep social distancing.

October 23 (Saturday), 9-11 a.m.

***Herbs, Herbs, Herbs! - Robbins Preserve Park Lodge, 4005 S Hiatus Rd., Davie FL

The first hour we're going to do mulching/weeding in the garden. The second hour we'll be planting herbs in the standing beds and discussing the growing conditions and uses of each herb, both medicinal and culinary. Herbs will be used for classes and for donations to food banks.

November 6 (Saturday), 9-11 a.m.

***Fall Garden Planting – HOPE Outreach Food Bank Garden, Marando Farms, Davie FL

***Bring your water and gardening gloves. Optional items to bring: trowel, pruners, loopers, pitchfork, shovels, and/or wheelbarrow if you have them.

Spotlight on Alejandra Jeldrez, HOPE Outreach Food Bank Garden Leader



SM: *When did your love for gardening begin?*

I have always had a love for flowers, trees and anything green green green! I have helped my mom in the garden since I was a toddler, however, I didn't learn much, just did what she told me and did not pay much attention to her lessons; I simply wanted to be among the pretty plants. Finally, a few years ago I decided to plant some ornamental plants in my own garden. While searching for the right plants I came across some herbs and thought, why not? Little did I know that a little garden with a few herbs would turn into a mini 10x10 food jungle. I had a lot of struggles at first, which took me to the South Florida Edible Gardening and Sustainable Living Facebook group for help. There I learned all about organic gardening and this aided me in getting my first successful harvests of juicy tomatoes. Once I took the first bite of that scrumptious homegrown tomato, I was hooked. It is heartwarming to grow a tomato plant from seed: nurturing it, hand-pollinating it, carefully pruning the dead leaves, walking around and touching it daily, then it gifts you its sweet fruit, and the experience is priceless. So I guess you can give credit to the tomatoes for my passion for gardening.

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

I first came upon The Caring Community through the Facebook group I mentioned. In 2018 Cynthia Schaefer had an event posted on the group for the installation of a garden to grow food for the homeless. I went that day and helped plant some beds, donated a few seedlings and two tiny lemongrass plants. That garden was later named HOPE Outreach Food Bank Garden. Fast-forward to July 2020 and the garden manager, Jessica Vella, made another post asking for volunteers to help in the garden. I showed up on a Wednesday and helped

her weed the garden with one of her friends; they had a lot of work to be done and very few people helping. A week after that, Cynthia asked for volunteers to help with various jobs with The Caring Community, including the food bank garden. I volunteered and after we talked she put me in as garden leader to work alongside Jessica at the HOPE garden. Garden Leader seemed like such a big responsibility and almost backed down, but Cynthia told me she had faith in me and convinced me to try it. I have volunteered at the garden ever since.

SM: *While working in the garden, I asked you a "political question", about choosing one store over another to buy gardening supplies, and you responded with the most respectful and beautiful answer. Again, please?*

Our garden has been nurtured by people of many faiths, philosophies, and political backgrounds. We all just focus on helping those in need, our desire to help others unites us. Any differences are put aside while we lovingly work in the garden and geek out on plants and insects. Our conversations revolve around problem-solving the gardening woes, gardening techniques, recipes, planning and, yes, we do get to know about each other and build friendships with tolerance. True tolerance means that in spite of our choices and differences, we treat each other with respect and kindness. There is a spirit of serving one another and the community that is one of the things I love about the volunteers of HOPE Outreach Food Bank Garden. We also think it is important to support local businesses and nurseries whenever we can.

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

We simply drop off the harvests at the food pantry and never see the recipients of our fresh herbs and fruits. We never see them taste the product of our labor. There are days when we work out a sweat under the Florida humidity and sun, we have been munched on by fire ants, we have seen snakes, have gotten cut with tools, scraped, fallen on our behind and laughed it off, had bugs fly into our hair, but none of this deters us from continuing to come week after week. We may not see the end result of our work, but it is all worth it. I must confess that I sometimes drift off while harvesting, to picture a family gathered around the table enjoying nutritious greens from our garden, or a grandparent baking a banana bread with bananas from our garden, or a single mom opening a bag from the food pantry and finding that there are fresh herbs which she cannot afford at the supermarket because she usually has to settle for processed ingredients.

This all gives me the fuel to go on working hard at the garden. This is a lesson I teach my kids all the time: never do something to expect gratuity, to be praised or to expect something in return; do it because you care, do it because you want to see the others happy. I personally do it to serve God also, because I am a Christian and this is what He has called me to do: to love my neighbor like He loves me.

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

I want this garden to continue to inspire others to serve their community and eventually I would like to give classes on how to grow food in South Florida in sustainable organic ways, for people with different financial abilities and growing spaces, without spending much money and without harming the environment. Imagine people realizing that there are many easy plants to grow other than the ones you see in the supermarket, plants that are easier to grow and require no pesticides because they are best suited to our climate. To prevent nutrient deficiency and obesity in children and to prevent the harm of our beautiful South Florida ecosystem. This is only the beginning and I cannot wait to see what is to come.



Movie and Book Recommendations

The Biggest Little Farm (documentary)
“chronicles the eight-year quest of John and Molly Chester as they trade city living for 200 acres of barren farmland and a dream to harvest in harmony with nature. Through dogged perseverance and embracing the opportunity provided by nature’s conflicts, the Chesters unlock and uncover a biodiverse design for living that exists far beyond their farm, its seasons, and our wildest imagination. Featuring breathtaking cinematography, captivating animals, and an urgent message to heed Mother Nature’s call, *The Biggest Little Farm* provides us all a vital blueprint for better living and a healthier planet.” (on Hulu)

The Overstory by Richard Powers “is a sweeping, impassioned work of activism and resistance that is also a stunning evocation of - and paean to - the natural world. From the roots to the crown and back to the seeds, this novel unfolds in concentric rings of interlocking fables that range from antebellum New York to the late twentieth-century Timber Wars of the Pacific Northwest and beyond. There is a world alongside ours—vast, slow, interconnected, resourceful, magnificently inventive, and almost invisible to us. This is the story of a handful of people who learn how to see that world and who are drawn up into its unfolding catastrophe.”

The Seven of Pentacles by Marge Piercy

Under a sky the color of pea soup
she is looking at her work growing away there
actively, thickly like grapevines or pole beans
as things grow in the real world, slowly enough.
If you tend them properly, if you mulch, if you water,
if you provide birds that eat insects a home and winter
food,
if the sun shines and you pick off caterpillars,
if the praying mantis comes and the ladybugs and the
bees,
then the plants flourish, but at their own internal clock.

Connections are made slowly, sometimes they grow
underground.

You cannot tell always by looking what is happening.
More than half the tree is spread out in the soil under
your feet.

Penetrate quietly as the earthworm that blows no
trumpet.

Fight persistently as the creeper that brings down the
tree.

Spread like the squash plant that overruns the garden.
Gnaw in the dark and use the sun to make sugar.

Weave real connections, create real nodes, build real
houses.

Live a life you can endure: Make love that is loving.
Keep tangling and interweaving and taking more in,
a thicket and bramble wilderness to the outside but to us
interconnected with rabbit runs and burrows and lairs.

Live as if you liked yourself, and it may happen:
reach out, keep reaching out, keep bringing in.
This is how we are going to live for a long time: not
always,
for every gardener knows that after the digging, after
the planting,
after the long season of tending and growth, the harvest
comes.

Check out our Facebook pages for upcoming gardening meet-ups, and/or e-mail Kerrie at kerriesullivan88@gmail.com to be added to our Volunteer List and we'll notify you of all our volunteer opportunities.

Susan Moss, Newsletter Editor,
ozwoman321@aol.com
Brenda Moiso, Social Media Director,
brendamoiso01@gmail.com

