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Genesee Valley Organic Community Supported Agriculture

<http://www.gvocea.org>

GVOCSA News

On the way to your stomach something happens to your soul.

March 2004

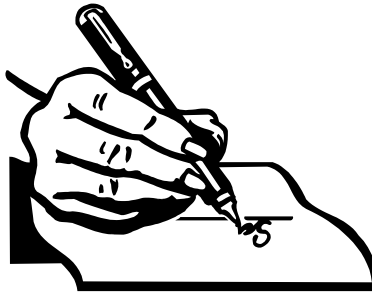


Notes from the Farm

By Elizabeth Henderson

Daily snowfalls may be annoying for us humans, but the land enjoys the deep hibernation a constant cover allows. Well insulated from pounding rains or raking winds, the life in the soil continues at its leisurely winter pace. Garlic and tree roots grow. Cradled in unfrozen earth under their blanket of hay mulch, carrots turn ever sweeter. The leeks, outer leaves reduced to brown mush by the cold, prepare for rebirth when the snows recede. Your farmers keep physically fit by digging out the greenhouse and our driveways, while appreciating the 3-month break from our rigorous farming schedule. We pity farmers condemned to 12 month activity by residence in warmer climes.

So what do we do all winter at Peacework? In December, Greg, Ammie and I finish up our records for the year. Ammie organizes our mess of invoices, Greg totals up expenses and I total up receipts so that we have a firm basis for our budget for the coming year. By the January core meeting, we have a proposal ready for the core to consider. You can view our proposed budget in this issue of the newsletter, along with our actual expenses for 2003 and the GVOCSA financial report.



Mark your calendar for the general sign-up meeting

Saturday, March 27th, 2-4 PM, OR Wednesday, April 14th, 7-9 PM.

The location is Friends Meeting House, 84 Scio Street (between East Avenue and Main St.). The entrance is off Charlotte Street, and childcare is

Crops, Seeds and Interns

In January, we do a detailed review of the previous season's crops. We try to understand what varieties did well and why, as well as why some things did poorly. Our intern from last season, Katie Lavin, sat in on this session as a way of preparing herself for her job planning GRUB's crops for 2004. Based on this review, we plan our rotations. We chart out the specific beds for each crop, taking into consideration the previous 2 or 3 years' crops on those beds and the quantities we estimate we will need for the current year.

Then we take out the seed catalogues and do our orders. Altogether, we spend close to \$3,000 on seed for food crop and cover crop, so ordering takes a few days. The National Organic Program standards require that certified organic farms use only certified organic seed. Had this requirement taken the form of a 5-year phase-in, it would have made a lot more sense. The organic seed industry is in its infancy. Most varieties of most of the crops we grow are not yet available as organic seed. Only recently has the supply of untreated conventionally-grown seed reached an adequate level of production. Each year our favorite companies, Fedco and Johnny's Selected Seed, add more organically grown varieties, many from northeastern (NE) farms. We also

Member Action Items!

- ❑ *General Sign-up Meetings:* Saturday, March 27th, 2-4 PM, OR Wednesday, April 14th, 7-9 PM. Friends Meeting House, 84 Scio Street (between East Avenue and Main St.)
- ❑ *The May Day Celebration* will be held Sunday, May 2nd from 2-6 PM.
- ❑ *The GVOCSA Picnic* will be held June 18th from 5pm. The location is to be announced.

order from High Mowing Seeds, a young company specializing in NE organically grown seed, and from Turtle Tree Seeds, a biodynamic seed company. A few of the conventional

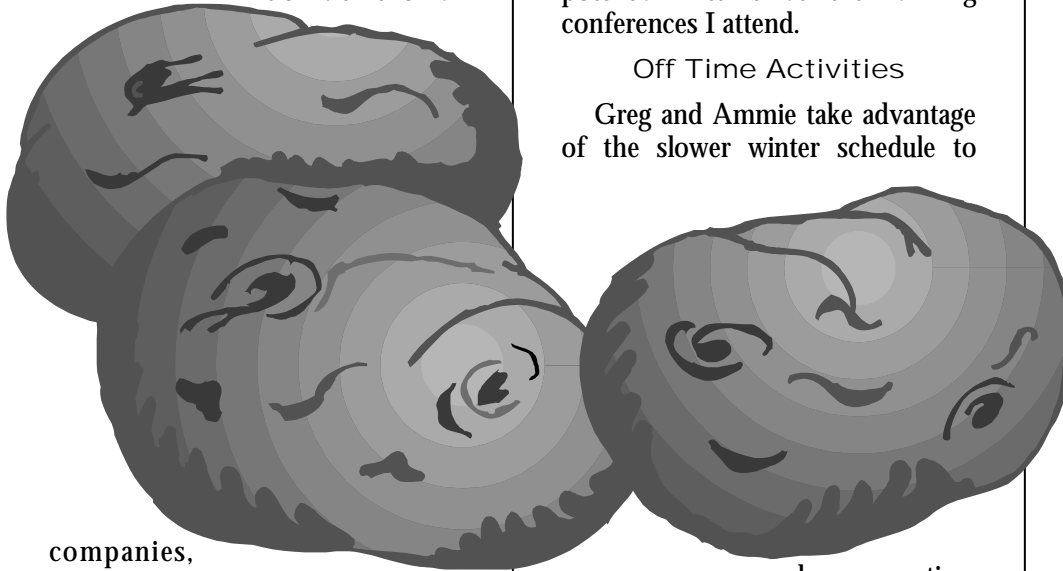
Bangladesh. While tempting, we just cannot take the chance of hiring someone without a lengthy interview. Word of mouth attracts some good candidates and I meet potential interns at the farming conferences I attend.

Off Time Activities

Greg and Ammie take advantage of the slower winter schedule to

themes of the conference. Marianne Simmons, Dennis Lehmann, and I gave a workshop on community and CSA, and Dennis gave a workshop on running a good meeting. The Politics of Food staff brought a car load of children from the school garden project who did a great job of staffing a table where they sold their Petal Power salves.

I have also given keynote speeches for the Virginia Association of Biological Farmers and the Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference (UMOFC). In Virginia, they asked me to reflect on my 23 years of farming and to look into the future. At UMOFC, I wove my talk around the conference



companies, such as Harris and Seedway, now have catalogues for organic growers featuring organic and untreated seed. Bakers Creek and Harvest Moon Farm are small companies offering unusual heirloom varieties. We buy as many organic varieties as we can, trialing a few new ones each year. So far, no one is doing organic production of broccoli or carrot varieties with the qualities we need to grow these crops on a large enough scale for the CSA. Price continues to be an issue. The price of organic potato seed is \$69 to \$79 for 50 pounds plus shipping from Maine or Colorado. We can buy conventional potato seed for \$18 a hundred weight from a New York farm. When I placed our order this year, I had a long conversation with the farmer about considering some organic production.

Our most challenging winter job is finding good interns. We list Peacework on several websites that cover farm internships – ATTRA, N E W O O F , a n d OrganicVolunteers.org. As a result, we get inquiries from around the world. Unfortunately, we must turn down requests from such places as Morocco, Spain, Ghana, and

spend more time with their daughter Helen. Greg's parents took the families of all 3 of their sons to Disney World for Christmas. I bet if you ask her, Helen will share with you her album of photos of her with Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Cinderella, and other such celebrities. For many years, Greg has served on the board of Citizen's Action for Self Help (CASH), a non-profit devoted to low income housing in Wayne County. His work with CASH goes on year-round, with a heavier commitment in the winter.

I continue to spend a lot of my time doing organizational work for the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA), both the state chapter and the interstate federation. Both have been going through strategic planning to better focus our work and increase our activity on behalf of local organic agriculture, farming, and gardening. There is so much to do, and our resources are so modest.

As usual, our farm team attended the NOFA-NY Winter Conference, but this year nine CSA members came as well. CSA was one of the

GVOCSA Vision Statement

We envision the creation of a land-based community of people of diverse ages, backgrounds and incomes, farmers and non-farmers, who are committed to love, justice, equality, democracy and cooperation, and honor the intrinsic value of nature and food, and the dignity of labor.

The members of this community will work gently together to learn and teach others to live sustainably, in the broadest sense, for the health of all living creatures and the planet. We will practice an agriculture that supports a whole, healthy, sustainable and loving community.

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theme, "Growing Our Roots." I traced the varied roots of our agriculture and challenged the audience to decide if we are to grow into an industry or a movement. You can read the texts on the GVOCSA website. At UMOFC and at the Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), I gave workshops on social justice in organic agriculture. Chelsea Green has invited me to update *Sharing the Harvest*, since the first edition has sold out. As I travel around to conferences, I also gather CSA materials wherever I go. I will end my winter break with a visit to my son in California where I enjoy acting as his classroom assistant.

Buying the Farm

Our biggest news is that Rebecca Kraai has offered to sell us the Humbert Farm, the 130-acre farm of which we have been renting 12 acres and the barns, plus the 6½ acre Fairville Field. The core has formed a special committee to work with us farmers on figuring out how to do this. So far, we have done a lot of research on farmland prices, the Genesee Land Trust, community land trusts, and conservation easements. We will be filling you in on the details of this exciting project as soon as we have reached a little more clarity on the path to take.

Hibernation time will end soon with the warming rays of the spring sun. We at the farm look forward to another good season of growing food for you. We hope you are "over wintering" well and will join us again for our shared adventure in farmer-consumer cooperation!



May Day Party at Peacework Organic Farm!

Please join us in dancing around the May Pole on Sunday, May 2nd, 2004 (rain date, May 9th) at the farm from 2 - 6 pm. No previous

experience necessary! After dancing, Mona Rynearson, teacher of gardening with native plants and Bergen Swamp Preservation Society Management Committee Chair for the Zurich Bog, will lead us in a nature walk. Potluck supper at 4:30 pm. Please bring place settings and a dish to pass. Drinks provided. All GVOCSA members, Peacework farm members, and their friends and relatives are invited!



Results of the 2003 Veggie Questionnaire

By Greg Palmer

First, let me send out many thanks to all the members who filled out the veggie questionnaire for the 2003 season. We received 53 responses, which is a full 21% of our membership, another fantastic rate of return for a survey! As in the past the questionnaire respondents expressed a high level of satisfaction with most of what you received from the farm, and we were very glad to hear that - thanks again!

We finally had a less challenging year with the weather: snow covered the fields into March. Yes there was the ice storm in early April but fortunately the havoc it wreaked on the farm was minimal. Over the summer it *rained*, quite a difference from the preceding two summers. More rain and colder temperatures in October, earlier than expected,

caused trouble with some crops, but all of the GVOCSA farmers considered the past season to have been the best yet.

As in previous years several of you asked to receive **spinach** more frequently. Most of you may know spinach is a cool-season crop that will only grow well in spring and fall. We now grow two varieties in the spring, Springer and Tyee. Springer germinates quite well in cooler, wetter conditions. It helps ensure a good early stand. Tyee is heat-tolerant so we can stretch our spring spinach production into early summer. It's a variety we've been growing for several years and it has always been a reliable producer. We thought the spring '03 plantings did pretty well even though they were curtailed a bit by the hot dry period at the end of June. We planted many beds of spinach for fall cropping but the early onset of cold, wet weather in October stunted the spinach (as well as the lettuce). The plants grew very slowly. Also, for the first time we noticed significant deer nibbling. What we were able to harvest was delicious baby spinach but it required a lot of hours under miserable conditions to cut it. We have planned again to plant ample beds of spinach this coming spring and fall: we'll see what the weather will let us bring you!

The other spring crop you asked for more of was **rhubarb**. This is one of the few perennial crops we grow on the farm. To assure good regrowth for the following year, a portion of the stems must be left on each plant. We harvest as much as can be cut from each plant and all of it goes to the CSA. We are dividing our existing plants to propagate more so we will be able to supply a more generous amount in future years.

Arugula is another popular spring and fall crop we are trying to offer more frequently. In 2001, 56% of the survey respondents asked to have arugula more frequently. In

Rochester's
Progressives
Celebrate!

**Remembering &
Renewing
Rochester's Progressive
Social Movements**

Past, Present, & Future

Potluck Dinner & Concert
featuring

Charlie King &
Karen Brandow

Friday, March 19

Stardust Room

Edgerton
Community Center

41 Backus Street

6:30 – 7:30 pm Potluck &
Conversation
(please list your ingredients)

7:30 – 11:30 pm Stories, Concert

Information Tables of
Sponsoring Groups

Information: Rome Celli 732-1767 or

CelliR@RochesterAlliance.org

*Information: Politics of Food
232-1463*

2002, that percentage dropped to 25%. This past year that number stayed about the same (26%) while another 20% of respondents either wanted less of it or none at all, so it seems we're reaching a point of balance on Arugula.

Previously, the crop that you were the least satisfied with and that the most of you asked for more of was **sweet corn**. In the five years we have been growing veggies at Peacework, we finally grew a decent crop of corn. However, we should not give ourselves much credit for this. Yes, we spread a lot of ROM (rotted organic matter) the previous fall, and yes, I did side-dress half the planting with liquid kelp, but mainly in 2003 it *rained*. How wonderful!! Tuxedo, one variety we planted, germinated beautifully while the

other, Argent, did not (bad seed). Fortunately we had enough Tuxedo seed left to replant and with such healthy looking plantings I think we all (including CSAers) did better taking care of it (hoeing, weeding etc.) in hopes of getting a higher yield of decent-sized ears. It all worked! We'll see if we can replicate the results this year. Pray (or dance) for rain!

All of the curcurbit crops (**squash, cukes, and melons**) did better in 2003. We're still battling striped cucumber beetles and squash bugs and probably always will be. Not only do these pests suck on the leaves and stems, weakening and diminishing the life span and productivity of the plant, but they also suck on the fruits themselves. They also spread fungal diseases that make some of the fruits abort. We cover the young plants with cloth row covers to protect them but the covers have to be removed at blossoming so bees can pollinate the flowers to make the fruits.

The summer rains increased the productivity of these crops, particularly the winter squash, though the net gain diminished somewhat because of attack by powdery mildew. Yellow sticky traps were used against the pests (the drawback to this being they also trap a number of beneficial insects) as well as better use of "Surround", a colloidal clay spray that makes plants less attractive to insects while not interfering with photosynthesis. This combo seemed to improve our pest control.

Last year half of the survey respondents asked to receive **snow peas** and **shelling peas** more often. That percentage dropped to 30% this year. We grow two or three varieties of each of these peas with differing maturity dates hoping to stretch out the season. We actually had good germination in '03. We used T-22 (a beneficial fungus approved for organic use) on the

pea seeds to help with germination (which we think worked). Things were looking really good but in mid-to late June it turned hot and dry for two weeks, which caused all of the varieties to ripen at the same time. As for the ripening of the crop and the length of the pea season, we really are at the mercy of the weather.

Normally, we do a good job supplying you with several weeks of fall **broccoli**. Last year 40% of you would have liked more. 2002 was not a good year for broccoli due to drought and the worst outbreak of gray aphids in many years. 2003 was better and the survey reflected this: that 40% dropped to 24%, though it's a bit surprising it didn't go lower since we thought we delivered a lot of broccoli. It was also one of the best years for quality – hardly any worms and very little aphid infestation for some unknown reasons. Broccoli, like all brassicas, is a cool season crop that actually improves in flavor after the frosts set in. As with peas in the spring, we plant many varieties of broccoli and stagger our transplanting dates to extend the harvest as long as possible. All of the transplanting has to occur in July to have enough time to mature the crop. The winter of 2000-2001 was exceptionally mild. Last winter with its more severe weather may have had a positive impact on pest populations for the growing season. Let's hope this winter does too!

Members loved our **leeks** this year; almost 40% of you asked to get them more often. Leeks are a very slow-growing crop: we plant them in early spring at the same time as the onions and it takes them all season to grow. We like to save them for the last few weeks of distribution so they will reach their full size but we are planning to plant more of them this year and maybe we can start distribution of them a week or so earlier. We have an excellent snow cover on our over-

wintering leeks this year so I hope we will be able to provide you with great leeks at the beginning of this year.

We will be planting more **Brussels sprouts** this year and experimenting with a second variety so we can distribute them to you more than once. I know these are right up there with turnips and mustard greens for the crops that got the most “won’t eat” responses on our survey, but the people who like them really do want more. In 2002 we had a complete crop failure on **parsnips** for the second year in a row. Last year we invested in pelleted seed and we can say we had qualified success: the seed came up. Much of the crop did not reach full size, however, so this year we will seek continued improvement.

I was surprised to see that over a third of respondents asked to receive more **celery**. In the past, we have gotten so much negative feedback on the eating quality of our celery that Ammie tried to talk Liz into not growing it at all! I don’t know what they do in California to get the mild, pale eating celery we’re all used to from the store, but ours doesn’t grow like that. It tends to be quite tough with a strong, salty flavor. It’s great in soups but it is not raw table celery. That’s why we only grew a little of it and offered it as a choice. We will grow a little again this year and maybe more of you will try some in cooking.

Of the new crops we are trying, most of you really liked the

edamame or green soybeans and 30% of you would like to get it more often. We save our own seed of this crop and last year we doubled our production and saved even more seed.

However, it is one of the hardest crops to pick that we grow, as those of you who have been at the farm on a soybean-picking day will testify. The pods are small (a good pod as only 4 beans in it) and stick tenaciously to the plant, making them even more tedious to pick than string beans or snow peas. They also have to be picked before they turn brown to be really tasty. Last season we cut and bunched several plants together (like they do in Japan) and gave bunches in shares.

We’re evaluating whether this method worked better. Perhaps we can do two staggered plantings this year and work on faster picking techniques to get more of them to you.

Over the summer, we heard from a lot of you who liked the **sorrel**. It was not so popular with the folks who completed the veggie questionnaire, ranking up there with mustard greens in the “won’t eat” or “want less often” columns. It is easy to grow (in fact, we may not be able to get rid of it!) so we will continue to offer it this year but only as a choice with something else. **Shungiku** (edible chrysanthemum) made it onto the questionnaire this year but 60% of respondents put a question mark next to it. They either could not

remember getting it or did not remember what it was. I guess we need to do more education! We grew a little in ‘02 and the adventurous souls who tried it seemed to like it. Liz saw lots of different “gikus” growing in Japan on her trip and we’ve found it also does well in the early spring. We’re always looking for something new and different in texture and taste that we can offer you early in the season to liven up the salads and stir fries. Look for more of it this spring with more recipes on the web site.

A couple of members receiving partial shares mentioned wanting more choices in the items they receive. Our goal is to grow enough of most items for all shares and offer choices on items where people’s tastes really differ (as determined by feedback from you in person or from the veggie questionnaire). We like offering you choices when we can to keep the shares varied and interesting but we have to balance this with the request from our distribution captains to limit the number of choices we offer each week to minimize confusion at pick-up.

In response to the “please also grow” question on the survey, several people asked for berries or other fruit. Perhaps when a junior partner joins the farm this may become a viable option. We will do what we can to improve the quality of the fruit we do grow – melons and cantaloupes. Half of all respondents in the survey want more of these and more often. Peacework is still a new operation. Just 6 years ago, all of our fields were hay fields. This year, we’re continuing work in the Fairville field by realigning the beds and planting cover crops to help restore soil structure in the wet half of the field. Our soil fertility levels and degree of pest and weed control are improving but we need to continue to work on them. All the kinks aren’t worked out of our irrigation



system. The erratic weather patterns of the past three years have stymied our efforts to establish permanent asparagus beds. This past season we decided asparagus from seed was not going to pan out for us so we bought and planted 2,000 asparagus crowns in the Barn field that should yield a crop in two more years. We are hoping that another farm in the area will take the opportunity to offer a separate fruit share to members of our CSA much like Rick Austin offers eggs and chicken to you now. It is possible that Andy Fellenz, a new farmer in Phelps will want to do so. Time will tell! Meantime, we thank you for your input and continued support and look forward to growing (hopefully ever better) vegetables for you this year.

Thanks to the 2003 Core Team Members!

At the heart of the GVOCSA are the Core Team volunteers. Schedulers make sure that the right number of folks sign up for each shift, and keep the schedules up to date. Distribution Coordinators ensure that the "veggie pickups" run smoothly. Working on the newsletter involves creating content, design, production and mailing.

We are grateful to all our Core Team members for sharing their time and talents, and helping to make the GVOCSA an organization to be proud of. We'd like to send a special thank you to the 2003 outgoing Core Team members:

Heidi Dankosh
Clerk

Marianne Tracy
Newsletter Editor

Pat Mannix
Newsletter Production

Carol and Jim Harrison
Sunday Distribution Coordinators

Dennis Lehmann
Co-Treasurer

Maureen Oberman
Sunday Distribution Coordinators

Dave Carlson and Mary Gleason
Winter Shares



GVOCSA Picnic
this June

Share fabulous food and get to know new members. This picnic is always a really fun, relaxing way to spend a Friday night!

Friday, June 18th

5:00 – 9:00 p.m., with potluck supper starting at 6:00

Location To Be Announced

Potluck supper, with ingredients on 3x5 card (for food sensitivities)

Bring your own place setting

Hot and cold beverages provided

More information and directions will be available at the June distributions and in the next newsletter.



Politics of Food and GVOCSA: What's the relationship?

By Jan McDonald, Politics of Food Program Coordinator

Politics of Food (POF) is a 29 year old organization that started as a task force of the Rochester Peace and Justice Education Center, a chapter of Clergy and Laity Concerned (CALC), to address the root causes of war at the end of the Vietnam War. It included four task forces: Disarmament; Safe and Renewable Energy; Human Rights (which became ROCLA); and Politics of Food, the food and

hunger task force.

The founder of Politics of Food, Alison Clarke, defines "politics" as people and participation.... "for democracy is really a verb, not a noun," in her mind. "If you're not doing it you lose it," she says. With this action in mind she set out to activate, advocate, educate, and empower people to participate in creating a sustainable food system.

Over the years, Politics of Food followed its mission to create a sustainable food system that:

- Is environmentally sound, using renewable resources;
- Is economically viable, providing wages that are just for all farmers and farm workers;
- Provides safe, nutritious food; and
- Promotes social justice and the humane treatment of animals.

The Politics of Food Program has always had as a major goal connecting farmers, citizens, restaurants, and other food producers in the region.

GVOCSA began as a project of Politics of Food with 26 member shareholders in 1989. GVOCSA became the first CSA in western New York state. Farmer Elizabeth Henderson, then at Rose Valley Farm, Alison Clarke and others began the CSA which has now grown to over 260 members. When a strong core group developed to help administer GVOCSA, Politics of Food's role was to provide outreach to low-income members interested in receiving good, quality, affordable food.

POF continues to be the urban sponsor of GVOCSA. As a not-for-profit, POF provides the bulk-permit for the GVOCSA mailings, answers phone calls about GVOCSA and provides information to interested citizens, promotes GVOCSA as a sustainable alternative to the current agricultural

industry, and participates with the CSA and Peacework Organic Farm at local events, fundraisers, and educational fairs. Together we are creating a just and sustainable food system. A model that is steadily growing.

The sliding scale is an indication that GVOCSA is reaching out to those less able to afford the cost. However, getting the participation of low-income people has been the more difficult part of developing the CSA into a whole community model. Since almost 50% of low-income people that we currently work with in the low-income neighborhoods located in the City of Rochester have a lack of transportation, they are unable to get themselves to Peacework Organic Farm and to the weekly distribution site. Most are currently using the EBT card and have no cash to pay for their share, and most have had no exposure to the idea of a CSA. Overcoming these barriers has been difficult, but we continue to grow ways for low-income people to participate.

For the past seven years POF has maintained a focus on low-income families who live in one of the most impoverished neighborhoods in the City of Rochester. The Northeast/Upper Falls Blvd. area is surrounded by High Falls Brewery on the west, the Coca Cola plant on the north, Pepsi Cola on the east, and Amtrak and the Inner Loop on the south. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School #9 is centrally located to these landmarks. A model sustainable living and organic gardening program has been developing inside and outside of the walls of School #9.

The Rochester Roots School-Community Garden Program has been developing a model program that teaches seed to market to workforce skills that strives to educate students in grades K - 12 about sustainable agriculture. The techniques that I have learned from

the farmers at GVOCSA through my own membership and through Northeast Organic Farming Conferences have given me the necessary tools to teach students how to grow, market, prepare, and eat healthy, local, organic produce from their own urban gardens located at their school. One never leaves Peacework Organic Farm without learning something valuable that can be applied to one's own garden, and the lessons learned have allowed this rural-urban gardening connection to grow and thrive.

Growing low-income participation will become a reality this year thanks to a grant from Hunger Action Network of New York State (HANNYS). The Rochester Roots School-Community Garden Club has received the funds to purchase four shares in GVOCSA. You will see us working and participating right along side other members at the farm and at the distribution site. This will not only provide the students with continuing education to adapt into their own gardens, as well as provide a feeling of well-being in knowing that they are providing a significant amount of fresh, local, organic produce to their

own families; the fact that they are participating in a movement of citizens who share their concern for safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable food will add a new dimension to their life experience.

The connection between GVOCSA and POF will grow in other ways as well. Peacework Organic Farm will be growing the medicinal plants that the students use in the preparation of their calendula-based Petal Power and comfrey-based Green Power Skin Salves and Lip Balm products that are a part of their entrepreneurial and marketing training. While the students are at the farm contributing to their membership responsibilities they will harvest the leaves and petals.

The motto for the Rochester Roots program is "Education so real, you can see it grow!" I can't think of a better way to expose these students to a real education than through GVOCSA's members and the Peacework organic farmers. There is education everywhere we look, but the finest education is that received from conscious people who are working toward a sustainable and healthy future for all. See you at the farm!



Financial Report Page 1

Financial Report Page 2

Peacework Budget

Core List

Politics of Food Program, Inc.

GVOCSA

121 N. Fitzhugh Street
Rochester, NY 14614

Non-Profit Org.

US Postage

PAID

Rochester, NY

Permit No. 536

Return Service Requested

BY THE WAY

Please accept our apologies for the mess in the garage during our renovation. We are so sorry for the rough time the Winter CSA has had during distribution. But, watch for improvements in the space for next season... especially the new lighting. We are looking forward to our 4th season together!



FREE BIRTHDAY CAKE

Food Demos

DISCOUNTS GALORE

including Deborah Magone
The Darlings
Bill and Dje's Excellent Adventure
Kevin Fukugawa
Doug Waterman & Bobby Maville

LIVE MUSIC

Saturday, April 3...
Start your day with
Michael Warren Thomas
broadcasting live from Abundance
WYSL 1040 9-12 noon
Come Down & Join Us

You're All Invited to our

ABUNDANCE
COOPERATIVE MARKET

Third Birthday Party
April 2, 3, 4
at the store

Photo Show
featuring the work of
Marilyn Anderson
Julie Gelfand
Steve Piper
Ira Srole