Small print often contains important ideas. If any of these garden ideas seem worth some of your time? Join the Steering Committee and make it happen.

STONE SOUP NEWS

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"Stone Soup" is the title of a well known Grimm’s fairy tale which illustrates how small contributions by many people can create a satisfying outcome for everyone. It was used by garden member Chandra Travis to reference the way the revival of the garden at 143-145 St. Nicholas Ave. was progressing. To keep this spirit in mind during the months when the garden looks abandoned again; we have decided to call this communication newsletter, “Stone Soup News”. After this initial issue, largely the result of a collaboration by Marilyn and Steve; future issues will depend on the willingness of the gardeners to share in its development.

As our garden turns into less and less of an inviting green space my deepest regret is that the start of this fading year’s efforts was too late for most of you to really participate in actual growing and therefore could not experience the joy that I was able to feel at my first Harvest Celebration; held on September 23rd. Sorry no pics!!! I was too busy and there wasn’t much light. But, it is still timely; in that the next few months begin the true test of our collective to effectively revive the Carrie McCracken- (TRUCE) Community Garden.

I hope you will all get a chance to host family, friends, and fellow garden mates at a lively fest; such as we had. In attendance were three octogenarian Harlem elders of my upbringing; my mother, Mrs. Birdie Jenkins, her lifelong chosen sister (my godmother) Mrs. Jean Nooks, my uncle, Mr. Joseph Daly.

Our featured guests Jeff and Laura Johnson came all the way from Virginia and displayed their fantastic herb and pepper sauces and dispensed some good farming tips for the garden’s future. I’m sorry I couldn’t arrange it in a more timely fashion, for more of you to come.

I want to thank those of you who helped get the garden cleaned up enough for me to have had that event. I have been gratified by all of your expressions of interest; and more so, by your demonstrations of time, labor, and personal expense; which has brought the garden up to the threshold of a new and diversified future of success. The “Stone Soup” strategy really works!!!

I realize, it is not easy to add a new commitment to one’s already established and challenging life routine. But, I hope you have each found reasons enough to return, take hold, and continue the improvement of a potentially great community gem. Now that my crops are in; and some of my health issues are in abeyance; I will start trying to reach each of you to complete your orientation and input into the community gardening process. I ask for your support and encourage your assumption of a greater leadership role in this effort. I would ask that you all also to revisit the desires that brought you to the garden and commit to taking some direct action to satisfy those goals. “Pamoja Tutashinda” means in Swahili "Together we shall win!!!"

I encourage each of you to converse with two other people who would be good for the garden by the end of this month. Even if you can’t get them to become active members; try to secure their advice to clarify the vision of the projects you would like to see actualized in the next year. Then send me back a brief outline on what you expect the garden to achieve in 2009. Goals and timetables are good aids to affirmative action.

I would like to make more progress before the year closes out. Give me a call; mornings (212)662-9557, especially if you can give even two hours to move any item forward.

Happy Holiday wishes to all and Thank you for your consideration.
JOIN THE STEERING COMMITTEE!

In order for our garden to be licensed by Green Thumb a community group has to present the will and the capacity to take proper care of the garden.

This is why there is a requirement that at least ten steady members are involved with each garden group. The purpose of a Steering Committee is to give leadership in improving our neighborhood garden.

Any one who wants to join the garden can be on the Steering Committee.

A non-compliant garden can be closed; lost to the community, for ever. This is what happened to a piece of this garden last year. To keep this kind of loss from happening, a strong and balanced community coalition has to be developed to replace single group, single person or elite group control.

This has been Steven Kidd’s mission as Neighborhood Garden Initiator: to get enough good people together to preserve and improve this community treasure. We now have great partners and more coming forward.

In order to document and formalize this development; A preamble Statement of Purpose and an agreement letter have been prepared. If you are ready to help load the revival of community participation within this garden, please read it, sign it, and return it in the pre addressed envelope.

Please address your comments and future contributions to Marilyn Massow at CMAC@yahoo.com.

Thanks to her for this issue.

On December 12th a small group of garden members met with key staff of the three components of TRUE. Our purpose was to build unity and clear up any misunderstandings that might hinder future cooperation. Representing the gardeners were Steve Kidd, Ivy Walker, Pee Wee Murray, and Gregg Strayhorn. It was stressed that the other nearby agencies to be organizational co-sponsors of the garden. We also wanted to acknowledge the role that TRUE played in maintaining the garden after the passing of Mrs. McCracken. At the expected follow up luncheon (with soup from Soupmaker); we will be listening for TRUE’s response on how they can help revive this needed green space. We left believing a real truce with TRUE is in the making.

In Malcolm X’s terms we were able to “Take it behind closed doors” and to “Make it plain”. TRUE Director, Yvette Russell, and Garden Initiator, Steve Kidd, will meet soon to further this process. Ms. Russell has previously expressed a desire for us all to move beyond any past contentions and to pull together for the benefit of the community. By enabling TRUE staff and gardeners to have direct, frank, and open discussion of various issues; she helped to move the healing process past the limbo of guarded co-existence towards a mutually beneficial coalition.

Broadening community participation was the primary objective of the 2008 effort called “Diversity Grows”.

CARRIE McCracken/Truce Garden

CAROL McCracken Truce Community Garden
432-106 St Nicholas Avenue @ 117th Street

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WE’RE WORKING ON A WEBSITE!

Stone Soup

COMMUNITY

It doesn’t work until you get in the middle of things

Cityunity

More people should get involved in organizations that uplift the community, that care about the community such as HCCZ’s Community...”

Through these organizations community members can design alternative development plans that don’t involved pushing out native Harlem residents...”

Shawana Bell—reprinted from Harlem OVERHEARD vol 13 number 25

Curtis Mayfield “Choice of Colors”
CHILDREN IN A GARDEN

The Carrie McCracken / TRUCE Garden is open to children, because they need a place to socialize without iron playground paraphernalia. A garden exposes them to agriculture outside of the classroom to experience the community coming together for a common cause.

They will learn about commerce, responsibility and team work cooperation. We have to have cats and kids it is a community garden and they can have a place of peace and quiet in the heart of their neighborhood.

Children are an important part of the community and they will be an important part of the garden. They will be urged to express themselves as garden members.

Here’s hoping that all families will use the garden for celebrations in the years to come.

CATS AND THE GARDEN

Urban Feral Cat Remediation Project (Humane care for abandoned animals)

Feline lovers are encouraged to join this committee to provide humane care of abandoned cats in the garden; while protecting other garden users from potential cat-borne contaminations. The excess cat population is recognized as a function of human neglect; people having supported a cat population during the times of rodent infestation. With proper fencing off and planting of attracting materials a balance can be struck for cat lovers and gardeners alike.

In “Stone Soup Garden” there are a number of cats that have been taken care of by a cat lover extraordinaire Rafaela Garcia. This woman feeds the feral cats in the neighborhood and the cats in the garden are dear to her. They have had a number of litters and now Rafaela is getting tired of being alone in this fight to keep them alive. We have formed a committee and reached out to other gardens and found the Wilson garden on 122 Street, who were very helpful and thanks to them we now have a cat shelter. Step by step we plan to replace the cat shanty with cleaner and neater shelters that will be raised off the ground; and shielded with trees and bushes.

Members who want to help should talk with Rafaela or Marilyn.

How about an aquaculture demonstration project to grow fish for cat food?

GARDENING NEWS

Needs and deeds

Matt (her friend who donated some trees to the garden), also planted a fig tree. It will take two years for fruit to grow, so they promised. Matt is also willing to donate more trees.

Stone Soup IV

Ms. Ivy Walker really showed commitment to the community garden by attending and completing the Green Thumb Course on Pruning.

She showed us the tools she earned and will show others how to use them next Spring. Ms. Walker is an experienced and successful gardener. She joined the Carrie McCracken / TRUCE garden to help improve her community; to make the walk along St. Nicholas Ave. something to be proud of.

Let her know how proud we are of her effort. Also whether you’ll help with the care of the garden’s trees and shrubs.

Thoughts Ideas and Info

A lot was done in a short amount of time, but we’ve got more work to do to realize the potential of this garden. The interest was indeed tremendous, but it is the commitment that will tell whether we will be successful or not. No one can do this alone.

The garden needs many things to put it back on line. Most importantly it needs people. We have a number of things to get done before January, as well as a number of items for the garden itself. Key holders need to schedule times. The garden should be a safe haven in a concrete jungle and as neighbors and residents we must take responsibility for our community.

Registration for Green Thumb begins next month. As a registered garden we have access to workshops and assistance. Their calendar is available on-line.

If anyone has any ideas regarding fund raising don’t be afraid to express them. Join committees, attend workshops. Everybody contributes something to truly make this a community project. We can all benefit from the success of the garden.
In 2008 our theme was “Diversity Grows”. We chose that name because it represented the neighbors and volunteers, who had meetings, discussions, planned and shared in an effort to make a brighter green space for all.

In 2009 our theme will be “Building the Garden to give Harlem H.U.G.S.”

Honoring the neighborhood’s rich and diverse human history

Uniting residents and workers for a greener community

Growing food and floral produce; and hosts community events

Serving the community’s nutritional, educational and recreational needs

Volunteer students from the New School, came to the garden in mid-August to work with Truce staff members and the gardeners on a clean-up day.