

GETTING BACK TO THE GARDEN

Bilingual summer camp sprouts from grassroots

There is perhaps no better teacher than Mother Nature. Her curriculum is seasonal and her pedagogy is patience. And though we may at times ignore her lessons, her classroom remains willing to receive us. It is this truth that inspired Lydia Scott and Leela Greensberg to create the Grateful Growers Summer Camp for kids age 5-10.

"Kids need to be outside more, engaging the natural world and learning about where food comes from," Greensberg says.

Based out of the community garden at The Village School, Grateful Growers Summer Camp will run Aug. 6-10 and Aug. 20-24, with a bilingual program focused on permaculture, Spanish and Waldorf curriculum.

"It's going to be a lot of planting and harvesting and preparing food," Greensberg says. "Kids will be learning about soil and insects and the communal aspects of growing food."

During the academic year, Greensberg teaches part-time at The Village School, where Scott functions as the garden coordinator; between these two is a combined 20 years of childcare, teaching and gardening. Although Grateful Growers is its own operation and independent of The Village School, Greensberg and Scott received the go-ahead to base their work out of the school's garden – a well-established plot of earth that will serve as a classroom to the campers.

"The outdoor classroom is an important one," Scott says. "We wanted to offer kids a camp where



Kids can play with growing food at Grateful Growers Summer Camp

COURTESY GRATEFUL GROWERS SUMMER CAMP

they are connected to their food and the earth."

Food is the best way to connect people to the natural world, Scott says, and as far as she and Greensberg are concerned, the earlier this connection is established in someone, the better.

But it won't be all seedlings and spades for these campers. The traditional staples of any solid summer camp, such as games, field trips, storytelling and art projects, will be thrown into the mix as well – but with a bilingual twist.

"It's really important for kids to be exposed to more than one language," Greensberg says. "Having the bilingual part of the camp puts them around Spanish in a way that is functional and can help them learn it better."

Greensberg says the campers will be spoken to in Spanish from time to time, as well as being told stories in Spanish as well. She says that while the camp is not intended to be a full-immersion program, the campers will be engaged in Spanish every day.

Although this is Grateful Growers Summer Camp's first year, Scott and Greensberg foresee the program being a long-term project that will nurture the community and hopefully reach kids who would otherwise not be able to attend a summer program.

"We are looking into getting grants for next year's program," Greensberg says. "That way we can reach families who don't have the money to put a kid in summer camp. It didn't happen this year because we are so busy getting started up, but soon." – Dante Zuñiga-West

For more information on Grateful Grower's Summer Camp, send an email to gratefulgrowerssummercamp@gmail.com or call 343-1583.

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