Josh: "I accomplished my goal of doing something over the summer instead of sitting down and playing video games. I learned to eat healthier than I did. My eating habits are better, to say the least. I eat more fruits and vegetables instead of junk food and fast food. I feel better when I eat healthy and when I eat unhealthy food it makes my stomach nauseous and irritated."

2011 "FOOD, WHAT?!" ACTIVITY REPORT

Kayla: "I have successfully worked a regular hour workday. I wasn't absent one day. I've learned how to speak to people professionally and really gained confidence in what I am capable of doing. I have learned how to be a hard worker and how what I put into my body affects it more than I think. I have grown in ways that are hard to describe. For a while I was really unsure of everything I did or said. Now I'm more comfortable with myself."

Strawberry Blast:

On May 12th, 300 middle and high school students from throughout Santa Cruz County descended on the farm for our 4th annual youth-organized Strawberry Blast!

Using fun activities and the delicious red ripe organic strawberry, we tackled some serious health and justice issues for teens. This Blast was created by two FoodWhat youth, Josh and Diego. They defined the goals as "opening teen awareness to where food comes from and to have a positive farm experience, and to learn about food justice and their personal health."

It was a hands-on day of harvesting berries in the field tasting the joy of eating fresh fruit; of combining milk, yogurt, and strawberries in the bike blender to pedal your own healthy smoothie; and of engaging in youth-led workshops such as Fast Food Jeopardy or Youth Dollar Power. The day was powerful and delicious!

(Excerpt from The Santa Cruz Weekly about the Youth Dollar Power Workshop)
"Every time you spend a dollar, you vote. Every time you buy a Coke or a Rockstar or a Monster, you're showing the world you believe in that product," says C.C. Parsons, a Food, What?! (youth) staff member. His demonstration asked kids to guess how many teaspoons of sugar were in a Vitamin Water (12.5 teaspoons) and a Rockstar (15.5 teaspoons), but it was the visual representation of sugar in a cup that really seemed to stick. "When they hear these things and actually see the volume of sugar, they flip," says Parsons.

Spring Internship:

The Spring Internship at FoodWhat served 52 students who came once a week for 12 weeks. (In 2007 we had 5 students in the Spring, 18 students in 2008, 28 in 2009, 45 in 2010 and 52 this past year!) Each year we get many more applications- and calls from schools- to participate than the 52 spots can serve. There is a clear need and demand for this type of programming in our community.

- Each week we began with an opening icebreaker, **one hour of farm work, one hour youth empowerment and leadership development workshop, one hour of cooking and eating together,** and ended with quiet journaling time
- Successfully completing the Spring Internship, **students earned a $175 stipend, 2 school credits,** and the opportunity to apply for the Summer Job Training Program
- The primary feedback from the youth about the Spring Internship was that being on the farm, cooking, and eating were their favorite parts of the program. We saw **positive changes in their eating habits** with each and every youth opening up to, and being excited about, eating healthy, farm fresh food!

Erik: "I am now more of an outside person. Usually I would be in my house every day not caring about whether I eat healthy or not. Now after the Spring Internship with FoodWhat I became more aware of what I eat and I've learned to hang out more outside."

Summer:

This summer FoodWhat **employed 22 youth in a paid job-training program for 8 weeks** from June through August. Four graduates from last year's programming worked as Junior Staff co-designing the summer program, doing peer-to-peer education, and leading the new youth crews in farm activities. The **focus of the summer job was on professionalism.** They learned transferable skills that support them in succeeding in a job, with a strong emphasis on timeliness and communication. The crew worked four days a week—three days on our farm and nearby Freewheelin' Farm, and one day doing community service at the Homeless Garden Project. Each part of our day included the "Four R's"—elements of responsibility, relationships, relevance, and rigor. We used food, farming, and justice as the vehicle to learn and practice these skills while serving the real food justice needs of our low-income community. In final surveys, 100% of the youth reported profound personal and professional growth.

Mason: "This summer working at FoodWhat has been my most productive summer yet and it kept me out of trouble… I'm more confident in public speaking. I also feel like if there was a situation where a leader was needed I would feel confident enough to do so."

Nourishing Self:

- Practiced farming skills and professionalism at Freewheelin' Farm harvesting for CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)
- Grew food on FoodWhat Farm to feed 18 youth crew members, 4 junior staff, and 2 full-time staff for weekly lunches
- Cooked daily lunches with youth-grown farm fresh produce
- Developed confidence and ability in cooking and preparing food
- Engaged in job training with a strong emphasis on professionalism
- Participated in leadership development workshops
- Explored the benefits of a personal "practice" through weekly yoga
- Exercised daily through the physical activity of farming
- Participated in bike safety training and biked produce into town
- Built a safe and supportive community of youth and adults working together
- Laughed, had fun, celebrated success, and each other

Sal: "I accomplished a lot such as growing up. Last summer I was all about me. Since I worked at FoodWhat I grew a lot. Now I don't give my mom a hard time. I pay rent and help around the house… I don't blame others for my mistakes."

Nourishing Family:

- Grew weekly veggie shares to feed their own families and connect the diet change embraced at FoodWhat with food prepared in the home
- Hosted parent cooking night with youth-grown produce in an effort to encourage healthy family diet change (which reinforces positive gains made by the youth in their eating habits). Included one nutrition workshop about "Eating a Rainbow"
- Celebrated the accomplishments of each youth in the job training program with an end-of-the-season dinner for over 100 of the youth's family members and friends—youth crew catered and created the entire evening

Natasha: "Mainly I learned about myself, that I can be a leader. The communication skills I have learned have helped me to express myself better at home with my mom and with friends and school. I learned life is short so make the most of it."

Thairie: "I've accomplished many aspects throughout the summer from making beds, weeding, transplanting, planting, flipping compost, improving my hard work and work ethic. I developed more skills working as a team player and communicating with others. I'm mainly proud of providing food for my family and getting a chance to help out my community."

Nourishing Community:

- Grew, harvested, and distributed 1800 pounds of fresh organic veggies from the FoodWhat Farm to low-income families in Beach Flats (including the Beach Flats Community Center for their brand-new healthy snack program)
- Provided 672 community service hours at the Homeless Garden Project
- Created flower enterprise selling youth grown and arranged bouquets to local businesses
- Operated weekly farmers market stand at Bayview Elementary (in partnership with UCSC Farm) during summer school providing affordable healthy produce to local families and providing job training for FoodWhat youth
- Completed 7 "BLASTS!" working in school sites county-wide on needed garden improvement projects and building a raised-bed garden at the Santa Cruz Teen Center

Nourishing Youth:

- Represented Santa Cruz County at the national Rooted in Community Conference on youth empowerment and food justice in Philadelphia—participated in creating a national Youth Food Bill of Rights
- Hosted 100 youth from the Bay Area on our farm for the Rooted in Community Regional Youth Summit to unite and educate fellow youth in the food justice movement—a day of farming and youth-led workshops, farm fresh pizza making, and networking

Joan: "I've become a better person both mentally and physically. I started taking more care of what I eat, how to become a better person, helping the environment stay healthier and showing other people the reason why we should all do the same."

Fall Leadership Program:

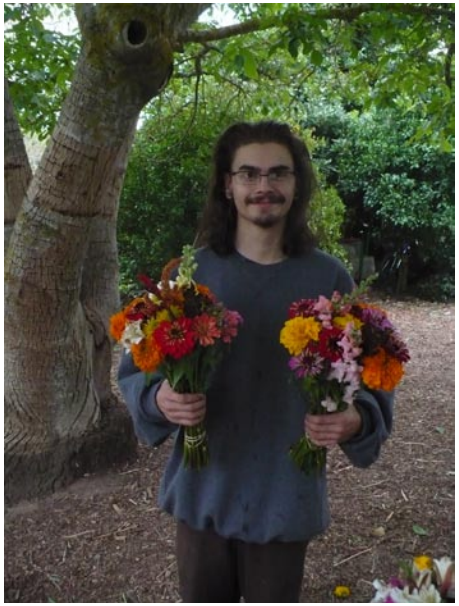
Each fall, participants who have successfully completed the FoodWhat Summer Job Program apply to **take leadership in managing one of the FoodWhat businesses.** They go through an initial training for their job and then become the youth manager or co-managers for that business. This past fall FoodWhat employed 12 youth for 8-10 weeks managing:

• **Catering Business**: The catering crew was contracted to create meals using farm fresh produce for Life Lab workshops for teachers and school food providers. The youth were responsible for harvest, cooking, and presentation. They also completed an annual project of canning and preserving the abundance of fall tomatoes and peppers. Lastly, they led a successful peer-to-peer cooking and nutrition workshop for local teens in a program called GirlZpace at the Walnut Ave Women's Center.

Sam: "I've learned more about farming and gardening. Also I have learned more about myself and how to make myself happier. I also learned how to step away if I am angry, take a deep breath, and go on with my work."

• **Farm and CSA Management**: These positions focused on building leadership capacity to successfully run and operate a small farming operation and direct market sales of produce. Youth were responsible for all aspects of the farm (weeding, transplanting, irrigation, etc) as well as harvesting for, and management of, our weekly low-income CSA (veggie shares) to the residents of Beach Flats. (Each bag was valued at $20 to $25 and was sold for $10 to help meet our goal of making healthy and fresh food accessible to all.)

• **Flower Business**: Youth were responsible for weekly flower harvest, field maintenance, bouquet making, delivery arrangements to local businesses, money handling and recording, and documentation. In addition, youth were tasked with running a U-Pick venture of over 250 sunflowers at the UCSC Harvest Festival including signage, pricing, money collection, change making, customer service, and documentation.



Angel reflected: "I'm proud that I've had this job this long…that I stuck with it. I learned how to hold down a job, do customer service, and accounting, and show up on time, and learned to schedule my (personal) appointments on days other than work. You guys have really taught me a lot…"

• **Gault Farm Stand**: FoodWhat youth managed a low-income farm stand at Gault Elementary with the goal of bringing fresh, local, organic produce to the parents and teachers at an affordable (subsidized) price. Youth organized setup and take down, engaged in customer service and produce sales, ran the EBT machine, and completed the market accounting and reporting.

• **BLASTS!**: Each week the BLAST Crew went to a school or community center to tackle a big work project to support their garden. This fall we "Blasted" at Green Acres Elementary, Westlake Elementary, Bonny Doon Elementary, Gault Elementary, and Mesa Verde Community Garden. We moved compost bins, planted fruit trees, pulled out invasive grasses, painted trellises, dug beds, and cleared large areas of land for new garden beds to be built and for gardens to expand.

• **Event Planning**: Youth planned and implemented the FoodWhat Fall Harvest Festival serving 300 Santa Cruz County students. Planning included organizing the activities/ stations, program creation, material collection, soliciting personnel, creating outreach flyer and distribution, writing a press release and media communications, facilitating the actual event, and conducting the follow-up evaluation.

Harvest Festival:

On October 27th, 300 high school and middle school students from Santa Cruz to Watsonville came to "Food, What?!" for a morning of fall farm activities, healthy eating, and food justice education. There was pumpkin carving, cider pressing, hay rides, mini apple pie making, farm fresh pizza baking, a food justice wall, "the hydration station", a fair trade and food miles workshop, a skit about healthy decision making and more...

(A Short Story...Excerpt from Edible Monterey Bay Magazine)
Throughout the festival, FoodWhat youth Sal Vasquez led discussions on the meaning of food justice. This past summer, Vasquez traveled with other FoodWhat members to the Rooted In Community conference in Philadelphia, and with other youth groups from around the nation developed a Food Bill of Rights. On the way back to Santa Cruz, he traveled to the Mexican border near San Diego and joined the Food and Freedom Riders, a group of young leaders working to expose the injustices of our food system. "I want to open up my own farm and give food to the underserved," Vasquez says of the career plans that his experiences with FoodWhat have inspired him to pursue. Already, he says, his Beach Flats neighbors come to him to ask for fresh organic fruits and vegetables. But until he's old enough to pursue his dream of starting a farm, he wants to continue working with FoodWhat and sharing the principles of food justice.

"You get to experience food you've grown and cooked yourself," says Jacques Jackson, a 17-year-old high school senior who wants to study culinary arts at Cabrillo College next year. "I've learned how to cook, what's in my food, what's healthier for my body, and what will fill me up more."

Max Tejeda, the Harbor High School student who was in charge of the Harvest Festival, says that since starting the FoodWhat program last spring he's been tending a small vegetable garden in his backyard and has enjoyed sharing his new passion for fresh, healthy food with his mom. She remembers having a small garden and eating local food while growing up in Mexico, but had been consuming mostly processed foods out of convenience before Max began the FoodWhat program.

CC: "I have accomplished beyond what I could ask for out of this program. I've gained a sense of what a community is. I have changed in ways that help me live healthier. I've grown personally. I have always taken things harshly and beaten myself up for silly things. In FoodWhat I've been able to focus more on the positive things in life. I've been able to do a really good job, work hard, complete it, and be proud of it. And that feels good, being proud of myself."

A sincere thank you to all the partners, allies, supporters, and believers in "Food, What?!" and the power of youth.

FOOD WHAT?!

A YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM