

## February 2012 E-Newsletter

### Sherry Boschert: Self-Starter

By Arlene Silverman

Inner Sunset resident Sherry Boschert has used an online fund-raising tool called Kickstarter. As a result of this effort, she has raised \$5,500 for a design element to be included in the Hidden Garden Steps. (Please see note.)

Actually, Sherry should take the name of “Self-starter.” A twenty-year resident of the area with her partner, Meg Newman, she saw the Hidden Garden Steps material at a street fair. Wasting no time becoming involved, she has put up posters, placed videos on fundraising and volunteering on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/user/HiddenGardenSteps>), and come to a planning meeting to talk with project artists Aileen Barr and Colette Crutcher.



Sherry Boschert, in the first Hidden Garden Steps Kickstarter video

Through Kickstarter, she linked to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) groups to ask for contributions toward an element called the Diablo Fairy Lantern, which will recognize the LGBT residents of the Sunset District who live near the steps.

The choice of the element—particularly its name—was a natural, she says. Sherry was concerned, when she moved to the Sunset, that gay and lesbian neighbors were virtually invisible. Everyone knows about the Castro, she notes, but “we’re here” in the Sunset, too. In order to meet other gay people in the area, she has been affiliated with a group called Out in the Fog.

But why this project? First of all, Sherry has long been interested in environmental issues. For years, she was a prominent member of a group advocating for the production of a plug-in hybrid automobile that would lessen our dependence on oil. (She published a book entitled *Plug-In Hybrids*.) She had seen the Moraga steps and “they knocked my socks off...When I heard that the Hidden

Garden Steps mosaic would be designed by the same artists, I knew I wanted to support the project. I [also] realized it was a way for...Out in the Fog to engage in a community project.

“I’ve always believed in the benefits of community involvement. You work together to make life better for everyone. The possibilities of what we can do as a community are infinite.”

*NOTE: Sherry reports she would “be happy to help anyone create their own Kickstarter (Kickstarter.com) project to benefit the Hidden Garden Steps, if they don’t have enough money to order a tile by themselves. Perhaps a student wants to raise the funds to get a tile naming his/her school in the mosaic. Or maybe a family that has lived in the Sunset for generations would like to sponsor an element in the design and have a way for all the extended relatives to contribute. It’s easy and fun, and I’d be happy to walk people through how to do this.”*

### Hidden Garden Steps Featured at DPW Street Parks Workshop

The Hidden Garden Steps community continues to grow. Our project, one of two San Francisco Department of Public Works (DPW) Street Parks projects featured during a workshop sponsored by DPW and San Francisco Parks Alliance staff on Saturday, January 27, 2012, is part of a growing coalition throughout the city.

Since our efforts to create a second set of ceramic-tiled steps, a new set of community gardens, and colorful murals in the Inner Sunset District is, at its heart, an exercise in building community and establishing long-lasting collaborations, our participation was *continued on page 2*

### Calendar:

- **February 21, 7—8:30 pm**  
*Private fundraising event*
- **March 3, 10-11:30 am**  
*Monthly organizing committee meeting; follow live on Twitter @gardensteps*
- **March 10, 1-3 p.m.**  
*Garden Clean-Up on the Steps*

## DPW Workshop *continued from page 1*

another major step forward for us and for our Street Parks colleagues.

Steps organizing committee co-chair Paul Signorelli, discussing “Community, Collaboration, and Raising \$10K in Two Hours,” helped other Street Parks project colleagues—there are 140 spread throughout San Francisco at this point—understand how low-cost, grass-roots efforts are moving our project toward its \$300,000 goal.

The 25 participants in that workshop, which included site visits to three projects in progress, decided at the end of the day that we did not want this gathering to be a one-time event, so a DPW Street Parks LinkedIn discussion group has been formed to continue the conversations. A Facebook page will provide another venue for sharing of resources, best practices, and solutions to challenges faced by Street Parks project stewards—suggesting, once again, that continuing efforts at fostering

community are producing positive results face to face as well as online.

*NOTE: To see our DPW Street Parks project workshop presentation online, please visit SlideShare at <http://tinyurl.com/84lu4af>. Speaker notes are visible if you click on the “Notes” button at the bottom of the screens on SlideShare.*

## The Artists on the Steps

By Paul Signorelli

Hidden Garden Steps artists Aileen Barr and Colette Crutcher are certainly not lacking for vision.

“My dream is for steps to be tiled all over the city, by a variety of artists. We have staircases in every neighborhood. If we see them as blank canvases, maybe someday we’ll become known as the city of tiled steps,” Colette said during one of the project’s initial fundraising and community outreach efforts last year.

Our artists have been at the heart of our campaign to create a second set of ceramic-tiled steps, a new set of community gardens, and colorful murals in the Inner Sunset District ever since it was first discussed in January 2010. They met with organizing committee members to propose and then refine the design which is currently under consideration by members of the San Francisco Arts Commission. They have joined us at events designed to create a community of support around the project. And they are now enthusiastically anticipating the moment when we reach a fundraising goal that will allow us to begin production of the tile elements that will eventually be installed on the 148 cement steps connecting Kirkham and Lawton streets on a very steep hill at 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Their work on the first set of steps, connecting 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> avenues on Moraga Street, were the original inspiration for the Hidden Garden Steps project and remain a community gem not only for those of us in the Inner Sunset, but also for travelers from around the world. Completion of the Hidden Garden Steps will move us one small set of steps closer to the vision that Aileen and Colette are so effectively helping to foster.



Aileen Barr and Colette Crutcher at the first Inner Sunset Steps site (Moraga Street) before installation began.

### Thank you

for helping to transform our community one step at a time.


**To donate and/or volunteer,**  
please visit <http://hiddengardensteps.com>.

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