

January 2012 E-Newsletter

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Calendar:

- **January 14, 1-3 p.m.**
Garden Clean-Up on the Steps
- **February 7, 11:30-2:30 p.m.**
Visit our table at the Millbury Union at UCSF to purchase a tile for that special someone
- **February 12, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.**
Visit our table at the Inner Sunset Farmer's Market, located at the parking lot near 9th Avenue and Irving

Ongoing:

- **Garden Clean-Up** occurs the second Saturday of every month.



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Let the Garden Bloom!

People who walked the Hidden Garden Steps at this time last year could not have been pleased. The garden was not only hidden; it was nonexistent. The land on either side of the stairs was barren. The steps themselves were covered with graffiti. HGS project coordinator Licia Wells remembers the sight as "dreary. Simply dreary."

Fast forward to today. Since April of last year, dozens of neighbors have contributed cuttings from their gardens and volunteered to make the garden bloom.

The transformation started simply enough. Licia remembers sitting at a table at a neighborhood farmers' market when people who knew little about the HGS project approached her about contributing cuttings from their own garden. Among those interested in the

project was Barbara Meli, a neighbor who has become a dedicated volunteer. Her interest was not surprising, since she knows the area well: As she walked the stairs three times a week to do her shopping, she noticed the neglect. "The area had been dormant for a long time."

Barbara and her fellow volunteers come to the steps each month to weed, to sweep, and to remove the graffiti. They tend to the cuttings that have been



Tri Beta students from the University of San Francisco help with the garden clean-up.

contributed: succulents, buckwheat, monkey flowers, coastal strawberry, seaside daisy, and native grasses. Tree Shapers, LLC donated their services to cut back the overhanging tree branches. Licia says, "I can't tell you how many people thank us" for beautifying the area.

Of course, there is ongoing work to be done. Nature in the City, which is spearheading the Green Hairstreak Corridor project, contributed 100 native plants for the HGS garden that will help the Green Hairstreak Butterfly to thrive once again on our hillsides. Native plants like the buckwheat and monkey flower are taking hold and need tending. The project is also looking for additional native plants, including seaside daisy, coast strawberry, purple needlegrass, and various succulents.

Garden volunteers meet at the bottom of the steps on the second Saturday of each month from 1 – 3 p.m. All tools are provided along with good company.

To learn how to help, contact Volunteer Coordinator Alice Chung at: hiddengardenvolunteer@gmail.org

Majed Fakhouri: Food for the Soul

"The planet is God's gift to us." That's one of the reasons why Majed Fakhouri says he has been such a strong supporter of Hidden Garden Steps. An avid gardener, Majed is a staunch believer in keeping the earth green and

healthy. "I want to landscape the planet," he says.

The owner of Crepevine on Irving Street, Majed has translated his beliefs to action. Taken with the hard



Majed Fakhouri, owner of Crepevine, and active community supporter.

Majed Fakhouri: Food for the Soul *continued from Page 1*

work and community involvement that HGS reflects, Majed hosts generous buffets for project meetings and gives members the run of the restaurant. "Having Majed involved in the project has given us a tremendous boost," says Paul Signorelli, the HGS organizing committee co-chair. "The receptions he hosts give us a physical presence in the heart of our neighborhood's business community, and his enthusiasm is contagious."

The Crepevine owner is not new to community involvement. He helped to launch a drug rehab facility in the south of Market area. But the HGS project is particularly close to his heart. He says he believes in "rehabilitation of the soul...If you forget to care for the land, you forget your soul."

Majed, who came to the U.S. from Jordan when he was 12, started the Bay Area Crepevine restaurants with his brothers 17 years ago. After he had a heart attack a few years ago, he decided to cut back by concentrating only on the Inner Sunset location. (The father of three, he says that he wants to be around for a long time.) Besides, he adds, "I love this neighborhood." The feeling is definitely mutual. [Crepevine is located at 624 Irving between 7th and 8th Avenues. Open Monday-Thursday 7:30 a.m.-11 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays 7:30 a.m. to midnight. Phone: (415) 681.5858; Website: www.crepevine.com]



Artists Aileen Barr and Colette Crutcher describe their design for the 144-step 16th Avenue and Kirkham staircase to community members at Crepevine.

Successful Fundraising at a Table Near You

The Hidden Garden Steps project is succeeding in great part because planners have worked hard to get the word out to the community. We speak at neighborhood meetings. We send out flyers. We distribute brochures wherever there's an opportunity. We spread the word to other organizations.

No one, however, was quite prepared for the success that HGS Organizing Committee Members Judy Goddess and Paul Signorelli experienced on a clear, crisp day in early December, 2011, when they showed up at the bottom of the stairs with a table, project information, cookies and a supply of apple juice. Lots of neighbors stopped by, but not only for the cookies.



Organizing Committee Member
Judy Goddess.

"I was somewhat shocked by the response that day," says Judy Goddess. "People who had heard that they could sponsor tiles came with checks in hand." During the course of just two hours, donors had purchased \$10,000 worth of tiles. One tile was bought by a young woman who had spent hours going up and down the stairs as she

studied for the California Bar exam. (She passed, of course.) Another bought a tile for her granddaughters. And there was Rufus Browning, Judy's partner, who surprised her with a generous check for the Shooting Star element in honor of family members. (For a description of elements available, see "Donate" at hiddengardensteps.org.)

Paul has been one of the project planners from the very beginning and says he knows why neighbors contribute to HGS. It's simple, he says. "People give from the heart."

NOTE: The next tabling event will be on February 7, 11:30-2:30 p.m. at the Millbury Union at UCSF, weather permitting. If you're able to join us, please contact Alice Chung at hiddengardenvolunteer@gmail.com.



The Shooting Star element was recently sponsored by Rufus Browning, bringing HGS fundraising efforts up to \$90,000.

Thank you

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

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