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Good Times at the Community Garden Harvest Festival

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Giulia Massari, of Lafayette, visits the Harvest Festival with daughter Deborah Ferber and granddaughter Francesca Ferber; also enjoying the celebration are Alison Hill, of Sustainable Lafayette, and "Papa John" Keifer. Photo Andy Scheck

natural riparian ecosystems, and the history of the area," said Thomas, "this garden is about growing food, and it is also about community and nature conservation."

"I was so proud of our garden today," says new garden member Kirk Dakis. "The garden was impeccable, the mulch, the flowers, the hay bales and fall display. Everybody in the garden did a great job and we had a lot of fun." Music resonated in the beautiful garden along Mt. Diablo Boulevard - mellow jazz by the Dominants, a group of Acalanes and Stanley students, and Gary Peare's ukulele players

A big display at the garden's entrance listed all that was grown this year - 46 varieties of vegetables and herbs, for a total harvest of 2,856 pounds.

Bonnie Stephens, who was in charge of edibles propagation and production this year, was extremely proud of the large harvest. "This year we looked for plants that were prolific; for example a year ago we grew broccoli that gives only one bunch and some off shoot. We realized that we could grow broccoli rabe and you can eat the leaves and the whole plant," she said. Stephens added that the group also stayed away from plants requiring a lot of water, like corn, and that they used a method that allows plants to be placed closer together. "They create a little CO2 environment under their touching leaves that makes them very productive," she explained.

"We also grew flowers to take care of our pollinators," added Stephens, referring to the garden's three bee hives. She recommended African blue basil as a great herb that also attracts bees to the garden.

The Lafayette Community Garden does more than feed its 50 working members and 20 associate members - it is also a community resource for information on gardening, chicken raising, conservation and Native American history. To learn more go to www.lafayettecommunitygarden.org.

Harvest is a time of joyful celebration as the fruits of the summer's hard work are gathered, shared and possibly stored before winter arrives. The celebration is even more meaningful when a whole community honors its work and achievements, along with lasting ties of friendship and respect. The Lafayette Community Garden celebrated its third, and most abundant, season Oct. 19 by sharing food, fun and activities. Like the earth, the community gardeners will rest this winter and be ready to plant again in the spring.

"More than 350 people came today," said community garden co-founder Janet Thomas as festivities started winding down under the oblique rays of autumn sun last Sunday. The five-hour party included food, presentations, games and activities for the kids. "It was a wonderful celebration," added Thomas.

Everyone was welcome at the festival. Special guests included wildlife biologist Doc Hale; representatives from the Herb Society; Penny Porter, who owns All in a Jar; and more. "We gave tours of the garden, had information about the

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