

Las Milpitas de Cottonwood Community Farm Inauguration Celebration, January 21, 2012

Remarks by Carrie Brennan

Executive Director of City High School and Tucson Small School Project

To be here with all of you today – honoring the history of this land, celebrating the recent progress here, and envisioning its future together – is a dream come true: A dream for me personally and a dream for City High School.

City High School adopted this plot, with the blessings of the County, in 2006 so that our little urban school located right in the heart of downtown could have a school garden. We picked up where the Farmacy Garden project left off, tending and cultivating a small portion of the land.

Like all good ideas, the benefits of school gardens have been touted for forever. Over the last decade school gardens have had a wonderful resurgence; thanks, in part, to high profile projects such as Alice Waters and the Edible Schoolyard. And the efforts of our own local high profile restaurateurs like Janos – and many local schools. Just drive by Miles School on Broadway or Borton Elementary on 22nd for an inspiring view of school gardens. Or visit the new garden area at the Tucson Children's Museum, designed for children.

We all know that connecting young people to the land and the growing of food is a good thing on so many levels. Gardening – especially as part of a community farm like this – can teach just about every life lesson:

- how to collaborate with others
- how to eat and live healthy
- how to nurture, how to work hard, how to survive
- where food comes from
- the intricacies of where we live, our environment, climate
- the value of water, worms, and waste
- and so much more ...

How City High School got involved and stayed connected to this land over the last 7 years is very much a Tucson kind of story: The right people showing up at the right time. Seeing the potential. Sharing the vision. Shouldering the work.

Some of those “right people” include: Elliott Lax from City High School; “Farmer” from Ha:San School; Lise-Anne Tijerino from the neighborhood and a former City High School parent; TJ Bordenave, a longtime volunteer on the land; and many City High School students, such as Vinnie Anaya, Austin Dail, and Carrie SooHoo, to name just a few.

And the latest generation of leaders, connectors, and shoulderers of the work:

- the dynamic duo of Trish Gallegos, a City High alum and Youth Farm Project Intern, and Shanti Sellz of the Community Food Bank; and,
- Megan Valanidas and all of this year’s City High Urban Farmers.

I am pleased, grateful, and proud that City High School was able to play a key role in keeping the vision of the place alive. We were able to take the baton from the Farmacy Garden folks and run some distance with it.

But our little school is just that: a little school. We have been waiting and hoping over the years for a partner like the Food Bank to join hands with us. Our school and school garden is now a part of something much bigger and more sustainable: a true community farm. What a dream come true! Thank you for being a part of this farm and for celebrating the inauguration of Las Milpitas with us today.

And let me close with a shameless plug for the City High farm interns and their produce-selling venture today. Please stop by their table to purchase super fresh produce, grown here on the farm: lettuce, turnips, cilantro, mustard greens, and fennel. All for record low prices!