

Maria Barraza
Professor Kurt
ESPM 50
December 5, 2021

Final ProjectF-Community Project Organization

Summary and Description of CPO

For my project, I decided to work with one of the Community Project Organizations. After looking through the various organizations to possibly work with, I came across the Vallejo Project, which instantly caught my attention. The Vallejo Project is a community service center that works to improve the outcomes of youth by connecting students to a variety of opportunities to aid in their success. I had the privilege of working at their garden which is called the Unity Garden, this beautiful garden sits right next to the Reynissance Family Center which houses families in need of housing assistance. The residents have the privilege of enjoying the beauty as well as the food from the garden. The garden recently took in chickens which provide the residents with eggs which they really enjoy and are currently growing a variety of leafy vegetables as well as an array of herbs for the residents to soon enjoy in their meals.

At the Unity Garden, I helped with a variety of tasks to help with their weekly goals. The tasks I contributed included clearing hundreds of pounds of trash that was illegally dumped there by local residents. We carried and hauled the garbage into a huge truck. The garbage dump that we cleared had broken blocks of concrete that weighed a ton, huge pieces of building material such as wood sheets and metal parts. One of the hardest things to carry out was the massive tree branches which we had to cut using an electrical saw. While we were clearing up the area we had to be extremely cautious not to step on any nails that could potentially pierce our feet and look out for spiders that could climb up our legs. Regardless of the not so pleasant parts of hauling away the hundreds of pounds of garbage into the truck, I am glad I was able to assist in this and clear out the area as soon as possible because the room was made for new garden beds to be able to plant new vegetables for the Reynissance Family Center's residents. I also assisted with

weeding around the garden beds as well as repotting plants and later planting them into freshly turned soil. In addition to that, I was able to take part in a two-person effort of clearing a 24ft by 6ft area that was covered in weeds and completely transforming it to be able to have a variety of herbs planted there. I also took part in the effort of shoveling up mulch into carts to transport to the garden and help spread it around the garden. In addition to that, I also fed the chickens which were my favorite experience since I love animals and believe they can be almost therapeutic for many people.

Aside from getting lots of work in the garden, Natalie and I were able to create a curriculum-inspired presentation on the basics of composting in order to help teach local residents about it and hopefully inspire them to create compost at home if they have the possibility and even involve the younger kids into the process and help them learn about growing food.

Link to Presentation on Composting

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1NoGI0-Z9fBXA1rzeqGfONF45yRpEbAyg3leE_JstFR0/edit

Hours Dedicated to each Task

I dedicated over twenty-five hours volunteering at the garden itself to help with weekly tasks. I was present at the garden each Sunday for four hours each day that I went. I also spent nearly ten hours commuting from my home to Vallejo and back. In addition to that, we also had mandatory weekly meetings each Tuesday with Adjoa and other Vallejo Project volunteers where we checked in about our progress each week. I dedicated approximately ten hours to these weekly meetings. My last task for the Vallejo Project was the presentation on composting which I and

Natalie worked collaboratively on. I spent about seven hours on this portion which included our planning, research, and creation of slides for the presentation.

Reflection on my Engagement Experience

I had an overall wonderful experience volunteering with the Vallejo Project as I was able to work in a stress-free zone and assist in a variety of work done at the garden from weeding and potting new plants to helping clear out a trash dump. In high school, I contributed over one hundred hours of community service during my junior and senior year and one of my favorite experiences was being able to work at the local gardens so when I saw that there was an opportunity to work at a garden for our project in this ESPM 50 class, I was immediately intrigued. I love getting my hands dirty in garden projects and overall being in an open environment where I am able to enjoy the crisp breeze and warmth of the sun while contributing to a meaningful and selfless experience in my free time. My work at the garden was extremely therapeutic as I have realized that I spend the majority of my days every week at home and had not had an opportunity spring up to do some community service in a local city. I feel extremely fulfilled with happiness and accomplishment for all the work I was able to contribute to the Unity Garden and feel honored to have had the opportunity to have been able to connect with the Vallejo Project through the ESPM 50 class this semester. During my experience working with the Unity Garden, I have learned more about gardening and the importance of teamwork especially when it comes to a community garden that relies a lot on volunteer contribution to help push out projects and allow for the garden to continue to push forward. I hope I can come back sometime in the future or possibly summer of 2022 to be able to see the progress that the garden has made since our involvement at the garden. I worked really hard alongside all the UC Berkeley students this past month or two to hopefully make even a small difference in the garden and allow for it to continue serving the local residents and serving as a community garden where locals are free to come and learn about what they do. I hope I can come back soon to the garden

and bring along my siblings or friends to continue to volunteer with the Vallejo Project and experience its growth.

Pictures



Area which we weeded, turned the soil, and planted herbs



Me turning the soil and getting it ready to plant our herbs!



After planting the herbs and spreading mulch around the garden!

The garden beds which we removed all the weeds from.



These are the plants we repotted!







These are the garden's compost bins!