



## **Marin's Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden Nationally Recognized**

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Marin's Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden has only been up and running less than a year and it's already winning national recognition. It's one of six projects chosen from 143 across the country to be awarded The Corps Network's 2009 Project of the Year. Conservation Corps North Bay will receive the award at an awards ceremony being held on Capitol Hill in February.

Projects of the Year represent some of the Corps' best work. The Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden was selected for its outstanding accomplishments in the category of Pathways to Achievement – Post-Secondary, Training and Credentialing Partnerships. This award honors Corps projects that have built effective partnerships with community colleges to create career ladders for corpsmembers in an inventive way that – one that can be replicated by other Corps.

Located on College of Marin's beautiful Indian Valley Campus in Novato, this 5.8-acre organic farm and garden is the first sustainable agriculture education and training center of its kind in the region. The Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden has afforded CCNB the opportunity to expand its programs to serve post high students who are interested in pursuing a college education and/or receiving a specialized certificate in Sustainable Horticulture. Through CCNB's partnership with College of Marin and the UC Cooperative Extension Marin, corpsmembers receive work study for their field work at the Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden while attending College of Marin. The Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden provides CCNB's corpsmembers with valuable hands-on field study, job training, and education to obtain jobs in Marin's fastest growing green jobs and sustainable agriculture sectors. During the program, corpsmembers are also eligible to earn approximately \$10,000 in AmeriCorps education scholarships towards the pursuit of their higher education. In August 2009, eight corpsmembers were chosen to participate in this inaugural program and in the spring semester, CCNB expects to enroll twelve corpsmembers.

Through this innovative program, College of Marin is committed to creating a Certificate in Sustainable Horticulture program and is aligning its curriculum with Agriculture & Environmental Sciences degree programs offered at the University of California Davis and Santa Cruz campuses so that students can seamlessly transfer to four year colleges to continue their studies in this field. In the spring semester of 2009, College of Marin offered its first Principles & Practices of Organic Farming & Gardening Class to 25 students. The class quickly became one of the College's most popular courses with 40 students enrolling in the fall semester class and its other sustainable agriculture classes filled to capacity as well.

The Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden project is a true community resource, serving residents from a variety of age groups, and socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. The Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden educates middle and high school students about the importance of eating locally, sustainably grown food, and related career opportunities. In spring 2009, 100 middle school youth participating in after school Cesar Chavez Clubs led by CCNB's AmeriCorps students came to the farm on field trips and in the summer of 2009, 170 middle and high school youth in CCNB's Project

ReGeneration summer youth program participated in service projects on the Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden throughout the eight weeks of the program.

Partnerships within the entire farming community have been critical to the success of this program. There has been an outpouring of support from the community to get the Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden up and running, resulting in inkind donations of materials such as hoop houses, compost, seeds, olive trees, oyster shells, and hundreds of tools as well as the donation of grading services.