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An Outreach Project for People Experiencing Homelessness

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OUTREACH PROJECT FOR HOMELESS POPULATION

Abstract

The Homeless Garden Project is a non-profit organization, which has been active for 28 years in Santa Cruz. The community served are those experiencing unstable housing. This varies from couch surfing, staying in shelters, sleeping outside, and staying in tents. Seeking employment is a difficult process especially if you are homeless. The project purpose was to increase the number of participants at the agency through an outreach event. This project was conducted at Watsonville Homeless Connect. The goal was to sign at least 15 people for the orientation. Transportation was defined as a major barrier for participation. Based on findings from this study, HGP should buy single bus ride passes. A potential next step the Homeless Garden Project might take is to conduct outreach at community meetings. Watsonville is a community that is not similar with the organization.

Keywords: *Homeless, outreach, employment*

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Agency and communities served

The Homeless Garden Project is a non-profit organization active for 28 years in Santa Cruz, CA their mission is “in the soil of our urban farm and garden, people find the tools they need to build a home in the world” (Homeless Garden Project, 2017, p.1). The founders believed there was a direct relationship between homelessness and joblessness. Lack of job skills, recent work history, social support network, and low self-esteem all make the transition out of unstable housing more difficult (Homeless Garden Project, 2017). The Homeless Garden Project addressed these issues to help trainees raise themselves from homelessness. In 2017, there were 2,249 people experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County (Santa Cruz County Homeless Census & Survey Comprehensive Report [SCCHC & SCR], 2017). Out of the 2,249 people experiencing homelessness only 31% were employed which indicates a 69% were unemployed (SCCHC & SCR, 2017).

The Homeless Garden Project has several job training workshops and programs. These programs and workshops can be moved around due to the weather. During the cold and raining weather, trainees spend their workday downtown Santa Cruz at the workshop. At the workshop, trainees make products, which are sold at the Homeless Garden Project Store. Each one of their products sold at the store has at least one dried flower/ herb from the farm. The Homeless Garden Project provides many services for the trainees being served. They provide job training, support services, and employment for those who are experiencing unstable housing. This can vary from couch surfing, staying in shelters, sleeping outside, and staying in tents. Couch serving is considered when a person is staying at a different place for the majority of the time. It is a temporary home, which is usually two or three days.

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Some of the job training are value-added production, cooking, horticulture, and retail. Every three months trainees are given different tasks so they get the most experience from their time there. The trainees also meet with a social worker once a week up to an hour. There are currently six social workers and each has a caseload of four trainees. Social workers are in charge of announcing three job listings and three possible housing availability in the Santa Cruz area. They can connect their clients with different resources available to them in the community. Currently, there are 24 members participating at the Homeless Garden Project. However, in 2017 the agency served 51 individuals. The age ranged between 20-64 (Ansley, 2017). Another population being served is the Santa Cruz community. Anyone can go down to the farm or workshop and volunteer there. They have the opportunity to know what this non-profit is about and interact with the trainees. Those who volunteer there also get free lunch provided by the agency and it is made by the food grown in their garden.

Project Description

Seeking employment is a difficult process especially if you are homeless. Employment is one factor to why a person is homeless. This problem has an impact on the agency because they are always hiring. Those experiencing homelessness can have a hard time finding employment because they may have a criminal record. This agency does not disqualify them because they understand the difficulty they can have getting back into the real world. "Having a criminal record can make it difficult, or even impossible, for an individual to work in a given field, especially one that requires an occupational license" (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2018, p.1). This has a great impact on the Santa Cruz community because the agency will be able to help minimize the number of homeless who are not employed and have a criminal record.

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Causes of Unemployment

Many of those experiencing homeless have a criminal background. 47 percent of local employment regulations restrict people convicted of any felony from being hired (National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction, 2017, p.3). This contributes to the problem because it is hard to seek employment if a person is recently released from prison (see appendix B). The lack of motivation is also a cause of employment. There is a lack of motivation to work, or a sense of entitlement, reflecting a cycle of dependency and expectation of Transience (Family Homelessness Service study, 2015, p. 19). The agency is looking for someone who is motivated in achieving a job and a stable home. Motivation is important when you are moving towards the next step. Lack of skills and resume are also a primary cause of the problem. Sometimes there is a big gap between employments or they have done jobs under the table. "Homeless workers' limited skills and education levels usually consign them to, at best, temporary employment at very low wages" (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2016). This is a big problem because it is going to take them longer to save enough money.

Consequences of Unemployment

The major consequence if this problem is not addressed is the number of those experiencing homelessness will increase in the Santa Cruz community. This will increase the number of those who are unemployed. The Bureau of Labor Statistics added over three-quarters of a million workers to the unemployed list (Economic Policy Institute, 2009). Another consequence is the income the community receives from taxes. Instead of collecting money from those paying taxes, the community will need to open more shelters for them to live. In Santa Cruz, they are going to be closing the unsanctioned tent encampment by Highway 1 by March 15. Laurel Street shelter will open after funding was approved by supervisors (Ibarra, 2019).

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Project Description & Purpose

The capstone project was an outreach event, which consisted of two parts. The first part was an event called Watsonville Homeless Connect. This was a tabling event to sign-up anyone experiencing homelessness for an opportunity to have transitional employment. The second part was an orientation given to those who signed up. The orientation was given the next day of the event, which decreased the number of people not showing up. For both of these events, there was paperwork need. Talking points and flyers were created (see appendix C&D). A social work intern was trained in order to attend the event. On the day of the orientation, everyone was called about the orientation. Packets were also created with all the information needed for the orientation.

The primary purpose of creating this project was to employ those who are experiencing unstable housing in Santa Cruz. The agency is consistently hiring because there are people graduating from the program. The second purpose was to give participants the skills and materials needed to get a permanent job. Many people do not have the necessary skills to start in an entry job. This agency provides them with a variety of lectures and skills. The last purpose was to help the participants find a job and housing. According to Roberts (2017), 95% of those who graduate have at least a part-time job.

Participants & Resources

Those who will be participating in the project are those who are experiencing homelessness. This event was primarily for those who are experiencing homelessness. Another person who participated was a social work intern. She volunteered to attend the event because she wanted to connect with other organizations to better help her clients. She was recruited by talking about this event in the social work group supervision and explaining what the event was

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going to be about.

The main resource needed was having access to the agency office. Packets were made for the event and trial hire process. The mentor is the staff member who was needed as a resource. She had all the materials needed for the event and orientation. The social work intern was another person needed for the project because she attended the event as well. No funding was needed for this project because the agency already had everything.

Challenges

A challenge that occurred at the tabling was not many people would approach our table. This issue was addressed by standing up instead of sitting down the major of time. “Standing in front of the table where you approach people as they walk by instead of waiting for people to come to you” (The American Association of University Women, 2015). This was a great way to attract people to the table. Another way this issue was addressed is by handing out something free. It was not anything expensive or fancy. This catch people's eye so they would come to our table. The second challenge was not everyone who signed up attended the orientation. This has been a challenge the agency has seen before in trial hires. The issue was addressed by reminding everyone of the orientation. They were called on the day of the orientation as a reminder.

Expected Outcome & Assessment Plan

The agency accomplished two outcomes from the project. The first outcome of the agency expected to accomplish was to sign-up at least 15 people at the event. This was a hard number to accomplish because this event was at Watsonville. The agency is in Santa Cruz, which is a thirty-minute drive. The second outcome was to hire those completed the trial hire. An assessment method to evaluate the success of the program is very important.

The project assessment method used was counting the number of participants. This was

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done by creating a sign-up sheet. This demonstrated to the agency how many people were expected for the orientation. At the orientation, the assessment method was used again. By doing the orientation, the agency had an idea of how many people were going to be hired. The agency needed to have certain funding to employ them.

Assessment Measure & Method

The assessment measure used was keeping a count of how many applications were given. This was done by writing down a number on the top left side of the application. A different assessment measure used was keeping track of how many people actually signed up for the orientation. This gave us an idea of how many people to expect at the orientation. The assessment method used was an interview with the mentor. She was able to determine the success of the project and reflect on new ideas that could be included in future tabling. She has now realized the importance of bus passes for those coming from Watsonville.

Findings & Assessment

There were multiple results from this capstone project. This first result was transportation. Transportation was a big issue because the participants did not have reliable transportation. This was a big challenge for those who are from Watsonville. Another assessment was done to evaluate how many people came to the orientation. We were able to assess how many people signed up and came to the orientation.

This project did not achieve the expected outcomes. The number of people expected to attend the orientation was not the same number of people who showed up. There was expected to be ten people at the orientation but only five showed up. This was a big issue because they did not have money to get on a bus to Santa Cruz. There was one thing the agency did learn from this project. If they are conducting outreach in Watsonville, they should purchase at least 15

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single bus rides for them to get there. This was the initial plan but it was something the agency did not take into consideration.

Strengths and Successes

This outreach event had multiple strengths and successes. One of the strengths was the different handouts and information there was at the event. There was an outreach flyer that was created and it had all the information about where to apply and what the agency provides. This flyer also had a map of how to get to the office and farm for an application. Another strength was the agency already had some talking points to be used at the event. After the trial hire week, the agency was able to hire four new trainees to the program. This was a great success because almost all the persons who attended the orientation were hired.

Limitations and Challenges

The capstone project did have some challenges throughout the way. At first, the intern wanted to do a lecture and a pre and post-test on coping skills. The lecture was going to be based on the participant's perspective rather than a book. There was a change of plans because it was not going to be presented within a certain timeline. This issue became a limitation and new plans had to be created. There were three challenges this project had. The first challenge the project had was no attraction at the booth. It was difficult to attract those who participated because other booths were giving out free equipment that could be more useful for them. Another challenge was that those who signed up did not have a cell phone to be reached at. It was hard to reach out to them to remind them about the orientation. Having a disposable phone or no cell phone at all makes it difficult for people living on the streets to maintain relationships with the caseworkers, health care providers, and employers (California Health Report, 2019). It is challenging because they are not reachable in an emergency. Others did have a cell phone but they did not have

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service. The last challenge the project had was it did not provide transportation for them to go to Santa Cruz from Watsonville. This issue was a challenge for some because they did not have transportation or money to get on the bus.

Recommendations

This outreach project has provided a benefit for the agency. The agency has hired four new participants. They were able to provide employment for those who are experiencing homelessness. Every year the agency attends this event in Watsonville but there was still new knowledge gained. The agency has now accepted that transportation is a challenge for those coming out to Santa Cruz. Watsonville is not their main priority but now the agency is focusing on doing presentations at Watsonville. They have also purchased 15 bus passes for those who are interested in applying at Santa Cruz. Something that can be done differently is the way this project was approached. For future reference, I would add a big poster saying "We're Hiring" standing tall behind the booth. This can bring more people over to the booth. Giveaways would also attract people to the booth. The agency only provided some stickers, which were not enough. There are two pieces of advice I would give to anyone doing an outreach project. They should do research on the different ways to make your booth more attractive. In addition, there are different ideas to create an interaction with those passing by. This can be a quick thirty-second on what your booth is about. The last advice is to bring candy to give out. Everyone likes free stuff especially food. After buying candy, it did bring more people to the booth.

Broader Social Significance

Employment is one factor to why a person can become homeless. The average cost of living in Santa Cruz is 122, which is above the 100 national average (Sperling's Best Places, n.d). The monthly rent is considered more than average on the national level. This is more difficult for

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those who lose a job unexpectedly. The results of the project contributed to the number of employees who were hired during the trial hire. There are still things that need to be done to address this problem. In Santa Cruz County there needs to be more transitional employment, to help transition into a full-time job.

Insights

From this yearlong program, I have learned it is better to start at an early stage rather than leaving everything towards the last minute. An insight I gained from the capstone writing was looking more in depth into the problem and finding the factors that affect it. These writings helped me create a plan for how I was going to complete this capstone project (see appendix A). It also gave me an idea of the different challenges I would have if my project had some obstacles. It can be hard to plan and implement a project. Everyone who collaborated with me had to agree with a plan before we could move on. The implementation was a little difficult because it was my first time doing a tabling event.

Learning goals

The experience that contributed the most to my learning goals was when I started to conduct outreach presentations for the Santa Cruz community. I connected with other agencies and gained knowledge of their services. A social worker should also be aware of the resources that are around them (National Association of Social Workers, n.d). The “lessons learned” from the challenges was to go with the flow. If a challenge or an inconvenience happened, it would have changed my plans. A lesson that pushed me out of my comfort zone was when my mentor asked me to do a presentation by myself for the first time. At that moment, I was nervous because presenting was a weakness. This pushed me out of my comfort zone because I was speaking to professionals and not my classmates. Conducting these presentations did help me

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grow professionally. I have contact information with several organizations that help those who are experiencing homelessness. Something I will remember the most from the project is the connections I created while I attended the event. Many people need help to get one-step further to become successful. I will remember those people who were there because they need support and not just for the free stuff.

Advice

The CHHS internship has been very beneficial for me. This is definitely something I would recommend to other majors. Although it went well for me, I want to give some advice to future CHHS students. Something you would expect is that it is going to be hard to be part of that organization. It is going to take some time to develop connections and get comfortable with yourself. Another thing to expect is to create your own agenda. Sometimes the mentor will not have time to meet with you and talk about the tasks for the day. You need to be able to come up with something productive while they are absent. The best way to approach your senior field placement is to try new things. “When you fail small, and fail often, you rapidly increase the rate at which you learn new insights and skills” (Robinson, 2014). These new experiences will benefit you in the future. The capstone project should be something that is thought at the start of the semester. You should create a list of the different problems that should be addressed by the agency. If one project does not work out, at least you have a list of other problems that could be addressed. The sooner it's done the less stress you will be at the end of the semester.

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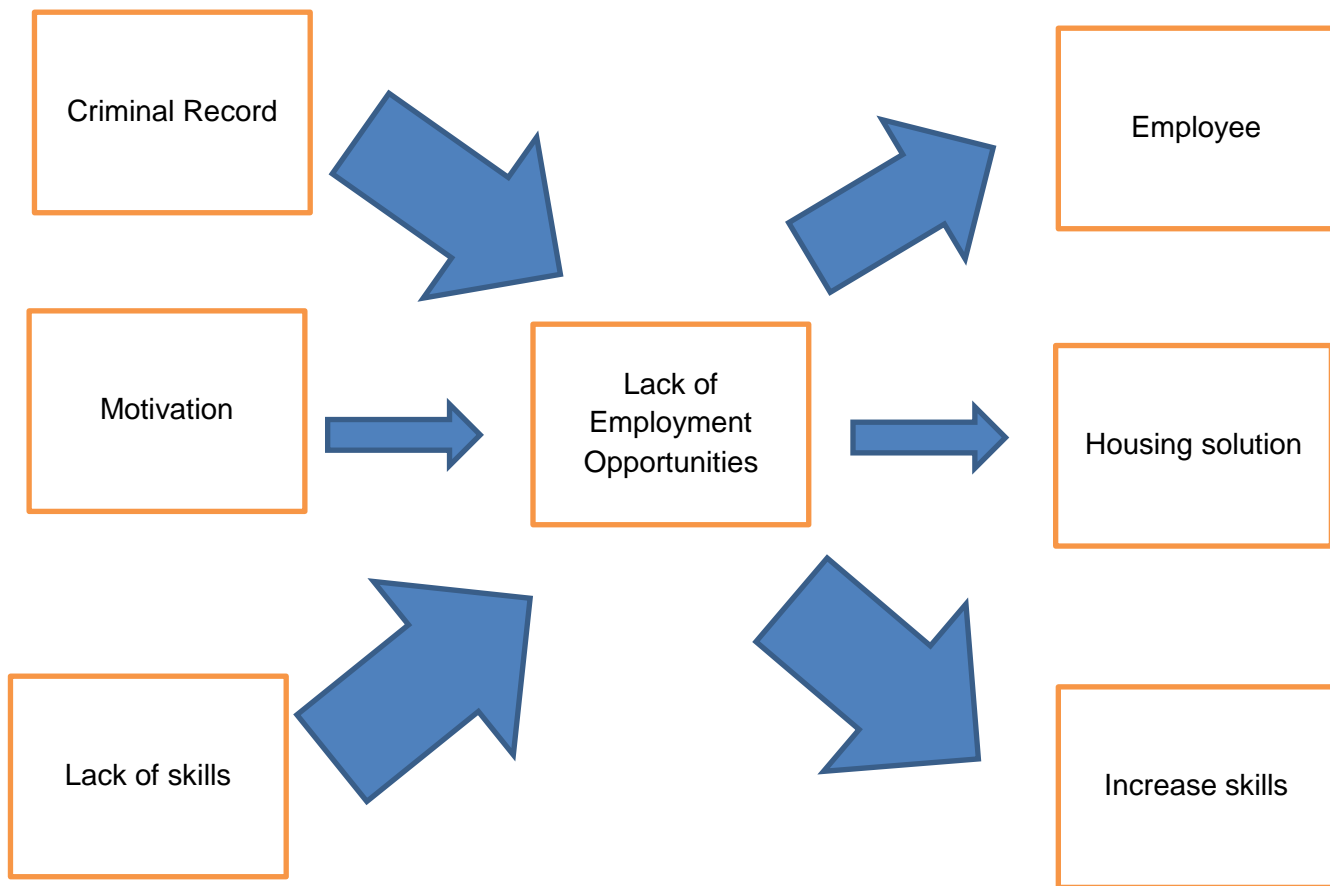
Appendix A
The scope of Work and Timeline

Table 1. Draft Scope of Work			
Title: An Outreach Project for People Experiencing Homelessness			
Project description: This project consisted of a public event in Watsonville for those experiencing unstable housing. They had an opportunity to sign up for an orientation given a day after the event. The orientation consisted of an overview of the program.			
Goal: Increase the number of employees			
Primary objective of the project: Sign-up at least 15 people to participate in the program			
Activities		Deliverables	Timeline/deadlines
1	Discussed capstone project ideas with mentor	Final capstone project idea approved	Oct 9, 2018
2	Took Survey Monkey	Reserved our spot for the event	Oct 10, 2018
3	Met with mentor	Discussed materials needed	Oct 17, 2018
4	Developed a flyer	Description of what the agency offers	Oct 31, 2018
5	Print all paperwork	Paperwork and flyers	Nov 13, 2018
6	Conducted Watsonville Homeless Connect	Got people to sign-up for the program	Nov 14, 2018
7	Printed all paperwork	Paperwork needed to conduct orientation	Nov 15, 2018
8	Conducted orientation	Gave the incoming participants of the agency	Nov 15, 2018
9	Completed reporting requirements	Final agency and capstone reports	May 3, 2019
10	Prepared capstone presentation	Present at Dress Rehearsal	May 8-10, 2019
11	Final preparation for Capstone Festival	Final presentation at Capstone Festival!!	May 15 or 16, 2019 (TBD)

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Appendix B

Problem Model



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Appendix C

Outreach Flyer

WE'RE HIRING!



WORK ON OUR ORGANIC FARM AND RELATED ENTERPRISE LOCATIONS!

WHAT DO WE DO?

The Homeless Garden Project provides job training, transitional employment and support services to people who are experiencing homelessness or unstable housing. The programs take place on our 3-acre organic farm, and at related enterprise locations.

OUR GOAL IS TO SUPPORT YOUR TRANSITION INTO A JOB IN THE COMMUNITY.

WHAT DO WE OFFER?

- A safe, supportive community
- A positive, educational work environment
- A fresh, nutritious lunch
- Access to our weekly lecture series (classes include personal finance, resume writing, and more)
- Access to social work support
- Experience to build your resume
- Job and housing search support
- Job skills in horticulture, retail, cooking, value-added production, and much more

HOW TO GET STARTED

Transitional Job Training Program

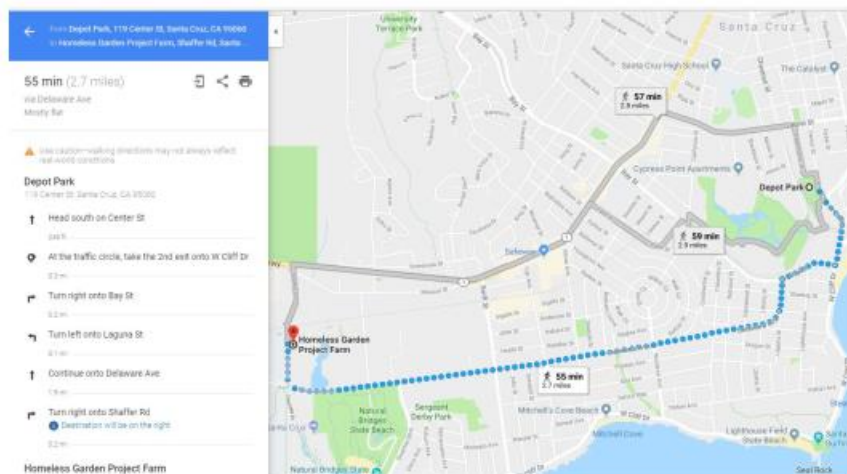
This paid position lasts up to a year long. As an employee of Homeless Garden Project, you work 20 hours/week, \$12 an hour, Tuesday-Friday 9-2. You will receive personal support in your transition out of homelessness and unemployment while gaining valuable job skills.

TO APPLY: Come to the farm and fill out an application Tues - Fri 10-2

**(See back for directions) Contact Ansley Roberts: AnsleyR@homelessgardenproject.org
(831) 818-1029**

“We’re not just growing plants, we’re growing people.” --Georgie Linderholm, HGP graduate now employed full time in the community and current volunteer.

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Take the 3 bus to Delaware and Shaffer

Or the 20 to Mission and Shaffer

3 Mission / Beach						
Departs Santa Cruz Metro Lane 2	Departs Bay & Mission	Departs Grandview & Arroyo Seco	Departs Long Melina Lab	Departs Beach & Pacific (Wharf)	Departs Santa Cruz Metro Center	Arrives
A	B	C	D	E	A	
MONDAY - FRIDAY						
7:22 AM	7:30	7:34	7:45	7:58	8:13	
8:22	8:30	8:34	8:45	8:58	9:13	
10:22	10:30	10:34	10:45	10:58	11:13	
12:22 PM	12:30	12:34	12:45	12:58	1:13	
2:22	2:30	2:34	2:45	2:58	3:13	
4:22	4:30	4:34	4:45	4:58	5:13	
5:22	5:30	5:34	5:45	5:58	6:13	
SATURDAY - SUNDAY						
9:50 AM	9:58	10:02	10:13	10:35	10:35	
11:50	11:58	12:02 PM	12:13	12:35	12:35	
1:50	1:58	2:02	2:13	2:35	2:35	
3:50	3:58	4:02	4:13	4:35	4:35	
5:50	5:58	6:02	6:13	6:35	6:35	

During the summer (mid-June through mid-September) this weekend trip will not serve the Beach-Boardwalk area. For exact dates call SCMTD Customer Service (831) 425-8600. **NOTA:** Durante el verano (mediados de junio hasta mediados de septiembre) este viaje de fin de semana no servirá a la zona de Beach-Boardwalk. Para fechas exactas llame al Servicio al Cliente de SCMTD (831) 425-8600.

20 UCSC via Westside										
Departs Santa Cruz Metro Lane 1	Departs Mission & Menzies	Departs Delaware St	Departs Pacific Shores	Departs Bay Dr & High	Departs Science Hill (UCSC)	Departs Pacific Shores	Departs Delaware St	Departs Mission & Menzies	Departs Santa Cruz Metro Center	Arrives
A	B	C	D	E	F	D	C	B	A	
MONDAY - FRIDAY										
7:20 AM	7:30	7:35	7:45	7:50	7:55	8:05	8:15	8:20	8:25	8:30
8:20	8:30	8:35	8:45	8:50	8:55	9:05	9:15	9:20	9:25	9:30
9:20	9:30	9:35	9:45	9:50	9:55	10:05	10:15	10:20	10:25	10:30
10:20	10:30	10:35	10:45	10:50	10:55	11:05	11:15	11:20	11:25	11:30
11:20	11:30	11:35	11:45	11:50	11:55	12:05 PM	12:15	12:20	12:25	12:30
12:30	12:30	12:40	12:50	12:55	1:00	1:05	1:15	1:20	1:25	1:30
1:30	1:30	1:35	1:45	1:50	1:55	2:05	2:15	2:20	2:25	2:30
2:30	2:30	2:40	2:50	2:55	3:00	3:05	3:15	3:20	3:25	3:30
3:30	3:30	3:40	3:50	3:55	4:00	4:05	4:15	4:20	4:25	4:30
4:30	4:30	4:40	4:50	4:55	5:00	5:05	5:15	5:20	5:25	5:30
5:30	5:30	5:40	5:50	5:55	6:00	6:05	6:15	6:20	6:25	6:30
6:30	6:30	6:40	6:50	6:55	7:00	7:05	7:15	7:20	7:25	7:30
7:30	7:30	7:40	7:50	7:55	8:00	8:05	8:15	8:20	8:25	8:30
8:30	8:30	8:40	8:50	8:55	9:00	9:05	9:15	9:20	9:25	9:30
10:20	10:30	10:35	10:45	10:50	10:55	11:05	11:15	11:20	11:25	11:30
SATURDAY - SUNDAY										
11:50 AM	11:50	11:55	11:55	12:00	12:05	12:10	12:15	12:20	12:25	12:30
12:30	12:30	12:40	12:50	12:55	1:00	1:05	1:15	1:20	1:25	1:30
1:30	1:30	1:40	1:50	1:55	2:00	2:05	2:15	2:20	2:25	2:30
2:30	2:30	2:40	2:50	2:55	3:00	3:05	3:15	3:20	3:25	3:30
3:30	3:30	3:40	3:50	3:55	4:00	4:05	4:15	4:20	4:25	4:30
4:30	4:30	4:40	4:50	4:55	5:00	5:05	5:15	5:20	5:25	5:30
5:30	5:30	5:40	5:50	5:55	6:00	6:05	6:15	6:20	6:25	6:30
6:30	6:30	6:40	6:50	6:55	7:00	7:05	7:15	7:20	7:25	7:30
7:30	7:30	7:40	7:50	7:55	8:00	8:05	8:15	8:20	8:25	8:30
8:30	8:30	8:40	8:50	8:55	9:00	9:05	9:15	9:20	9:25	9:30

Route 200 buses run with these trips during the school term to handle overloads. Trips begin and end at Bay & Laguna stop (O 2506) (see map). **NOTA:** Atribución de ruta de 200 con los viajes durante el término escolar para manejar los sobrecargos. Viajes comienzan y terminan en Bay y Laguna (O de parada 2506) (ver el mapa).

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Appendix D

Talking Points for Tabling at Santa Cruz Connect

The project provides job training, transitional employment, and support services to people experiencing homelessness. Our program lasts up to a year and acts as a springboard for people to get into jobs and housing.

Currently we offer 20 trainee positions. The training takes place on our 3.5 acre farm. We place a high value on timeliness, dedication, following directions, and setting and meeting goals.

We are hiring **up to 15 people** for a paid, week-long trial hire.

All people interested in the trial hire must attend an **Orientation Thursday, November 15 at 3:15 pm, at the Homeless Garden Project Office(at 30 West Cliff Dr.)**.

The **one-week** trial hire period will be **Tuesday, November 27th through Friday, November 30**.

They will be expected to be at the farm **Tuesday-Friday 9:00 am - 2:00 pm**.

They will get paid **\$11 an hour** for the time they work in the trial hire, and will **receive their checks on December 7**.

Interested candidates should fill out an application before the orientation (either at the event, or bring it to the orientation).

They **must have a driver's license and social security card** (or birth certificate) to get hired.

Interviews for full employment will be held on Friday..

25 people can sign up for the orientation, and the first 15 people who signed up on the list will be a part of the trial hire. If people do not show up to the orientation, we will fill those slots with the people who signed up (i.e. if 2 people don't show up, those slots will be filled by #16 and #17 on the list). Encourage people who sign up later to come to the orientation.