



Greetings from Jacky Rivera



Theory of Change

We believe that by developing collective leadership among La Mesa Verde members, through producing our own food and organizing for policy change, we can improve access to good food in San José and create a strong, sustainable community committed to food justice.

SURPRISINGLY, AS SOMEONE THAT GREW UP surrounded by California's agriculture, from the fields of Southern California to the Central Valley, it wasn't until I joined La Mesa Verde (LMV) in 2013 as an Americorp member that I planted my first seeds. And I am not alone, to many LMV families, gardening has opened an opportunity to reconnect with the land, food and their community.

LMV is a network of urban gardeners that addresses food access, and challenges injustices in the food system by producing our own food and organizing around systemic change. To achieve this goal, we utilize **Agroecology** to ground our work, focusing on three main areas within our programming: organic gardening techniques, cultural diversity and values, and active life in the community. Agroecology is the study of agricultural systems through the guidance of ecological principles. It carries the themes of diversity, resilience, and sustainability that influence how we grow food and how we build strong communities.

For LMV implementing this framework is part of our work to **transform the food system**. We recognize that the conventional food system is designed for profit, at the expense of our community and our health. In order to challenge and transform these structures of power, we need to empower our communities to be active in creating a future to **achieve food justice**.

Food justice exists when a community exercises their right to grow, sell, and eat culturally appropriate, fresh, and nutritious food; cultivated sustainably while caring for the well-being of the earth, workers, and animals.

We do all this to **enjoy social wellbeing**, where all our communities live a high quality life in solidarity with one another and nature.

Inside you will find stories from members on how LMV: Builds Community, strengthens Collective Knowledge and reinforces Environmental Stewardship through gardening.

Thank you for supporting our gardeners. If you want to learn more or join us for a tour, send me an email at jacqueline@sacredheartcs.org



STORIES FROM LA MESA VERDE LEADERS



Collective Knowledge

Jeanne

VOLUNTEER SINCE 2017

As a garden mentor with La Mesa Verde's Mentorship Committee, Jeanne has worked with many new members. She believes deeply that she and her mentees are working and learning together, as equals. In her time as a mentor, she has learned so much from new members. Many of them come from different countries and integrate the cultivation practices, they learned from their family, into their current gardening work. She has seen so many different ways to grow a successful garden in this area.

What she has loved most about this work is being able to build relationships with her mentees. One of the members Jeanne works closely with often shares stories about his experiences with cultivating food. When he reflects on

these moments, she can clearly hear his enthusiasm and passion for gardening. These kinds of conversations have helped her develop trust and mutual respect with her mentees.

This experience has taught her that there is no right or wrong way to grow; there are just many different approaches one can draw from.

This exchange of knowledge and gardening practices is a key part of La Mesa Verde. It happens in the garden between mentors and mentees and in larger events like the monthly member workshops. The more people share about

the different successes and failures they have had in their garden, the more our membership's collective bank of educational—oral and written—resources expands.

Building Community Veronica & Rodrigo

MEMBERS SINCE 2014

"Even though we are a diverse community, we have agreed on a common vision and are actively working towards [creating greater access to healthy food]. We may cultivate different vegetables, but it is with the same goal

in mind. So, building a community is about unity, creating friendships, and working together towards [a common goal]."

For Veronica, La Mesa Verde is more than a program, it is a community. She first noticed this community when she saw members of different ethnicities and gardening experiences coming together to learn and share a meal at the monthly workshops. She says, sharing a meal with others is a truly profound experience, helping build trust and friendships in the network.

To her, being in community also means standing in solidarity with fellow gardeners. One shows solidarity by helping others to learn and grow. She believes deeply that La Mesa Verde cultivates this type of environment by providing a safe space for people to connect with one another. Sometimes, members even bring extra seeds, seedlings and harvest to share out. Other members show solidarity by volunteering



and leading different components of the program. Veronica loves that leadership development is core to La Mesa Verde's community.



Although she has always viewed herself as a leader, La Mesa Verde has allowed her to freely be a leader. She loves working with others to solve problems, connect to resources and most importantly build each others' skills and confidence.

Veronica knows that this is a space she and her husband are not going to leave any time soon. There is so much more she wants to do to keep growing the network.

Connecting with the Environment

Martha

MEMBER SINCE 2009

"When we learn to cultivate our own food, we learn to value the environment even more."

As part of La Mesa Verde's first gardener cohort in 2009, Martha recalls a truly powerful conversation during one of the workshops, on

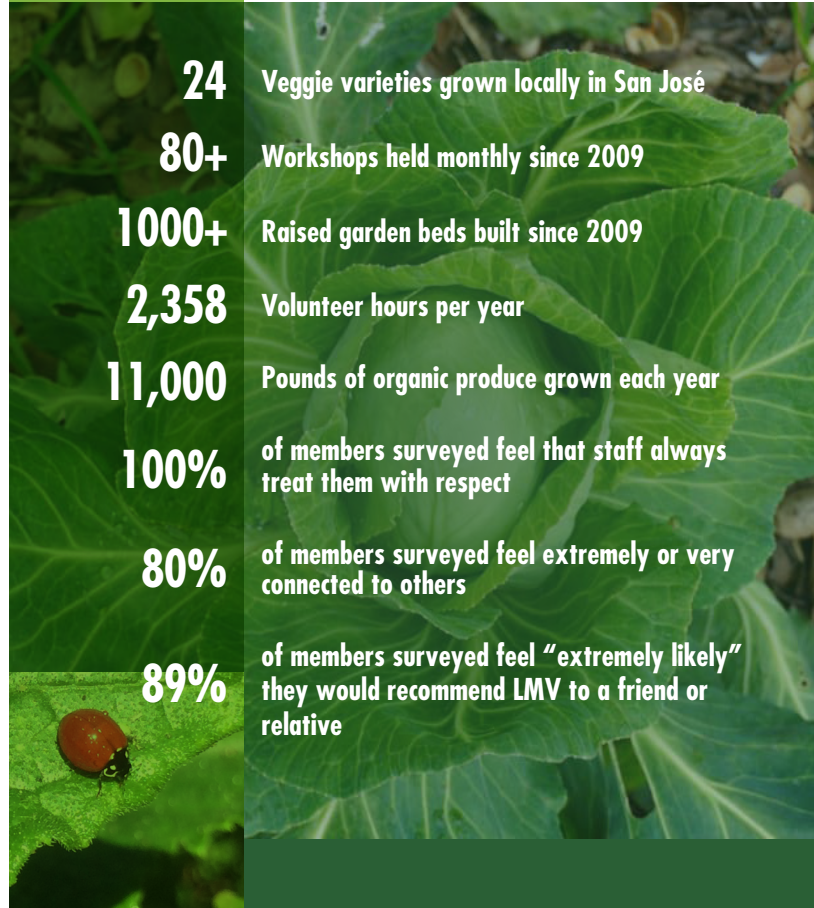
the importance of recreating balance in the ecosystem. She learned how all organisms are interconnected: from the plants and birds, to the microorganisms in the soil. Once in the garden, she started noticing these connections and her role in supporting that ecosystem. She saw how she could not force the ladybugs to stay and protect her vegetables against aphids. Instead, she needed to provide them with an environment where they could thrive; so, she began growing plants that they loved and they began to stay. Growing her own vegetables has deepened her love and respect for Mother Earth.

This love and respect goes beyond her garden too. From 2015 – 2017, she joined La Mesa Verde's campaign for Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones and advocated for local policy changes that would bring a greater balance of nature in our city. She believes deeply that we need healthy environments where people can walk, play, and be active. If our cities lack green space, this can affect people emotionally, spiritually, and physically.

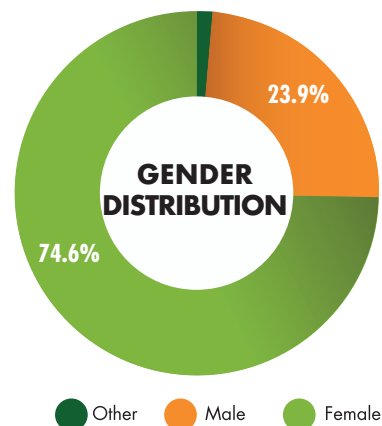
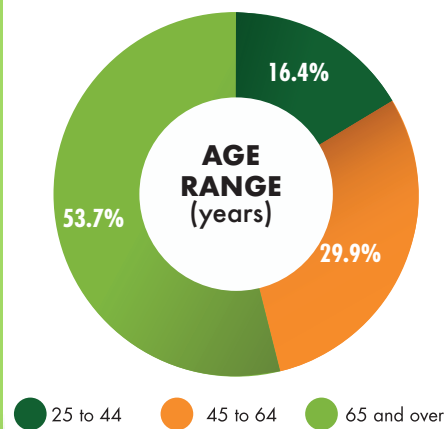
Martha dreams of a future where more individuals in San Jose can reconnect with the Earth. She reminds people that this is not something new; growing food is in our nature and the skills we are practicing come from our ancestors.



Fast facts



WHO ARE WE?



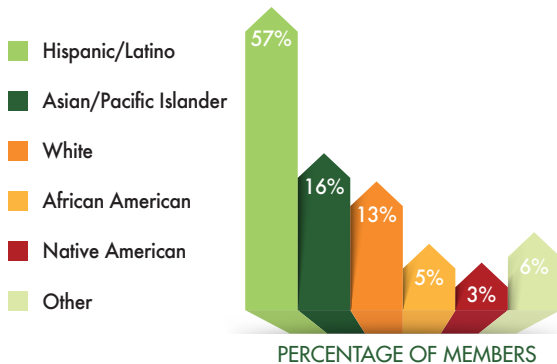
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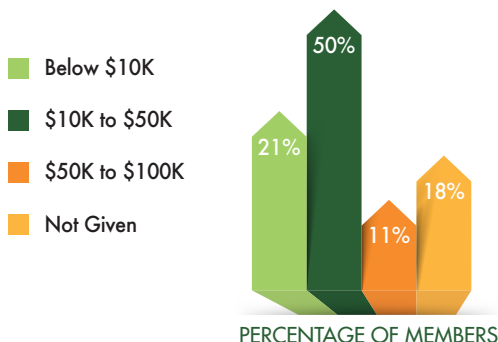
WHO ARE WE?



Ethnic Diversity



Yearly Household Income



WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT US

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

At **LaMesaVerdeSHCS.org** you can learn more about:.

- How to Become a Member
- Our Committee Structure
- Resources in Spanish and English
- Our Upcoming Events

VOLUNTEER WITH US!

We have many volunteer opportunities available:

- Super Build Day
- Garden Bed Installation
- Spring and Fall Plant Preparation

CONNECT WITH US!

If you want to connect with our team, you can email us at mesaverde@sacredheartcs.org or you can call (408) 916-5024.

You can also follow La Mesa Verde on social media:

- Facebook - @LaMesaVerdeSHCS
- Instagram - @_lamesaverde
- Youtube - La Mesa Verde SHCS

OR VISIT US AT 1381 SOUTH FIRST STREET, SAN JOSÉ, CA 95110

DONATE TO OUR PROGRAM

- **\$25** Helps purchase a drip irrigation system for one family
- **\$50** Covers Spring & Fall seedlings for one gardening family
- **\$100** Covers materials and nutritious food for one of LMV's monthly workshops
- **\$500** Enrolls a new family in the First Year Gardening Program

OR YOU CAN MAKE A MONTHLY DONATION!