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Final Report
June 23, 2022

Grant Received:
2021-2022 Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Competitive Grants Program

Proposal name:
Hibiscus for Farmworkers ~ Jamaica para Campesinx

Principal Investigator:
Heidi Herrmann
Farm Owner- Strong Arm Farm
Faculty Instructor- Santa Rosa Junior College and Sonoma State University
strongarmfarm@gmail.com
(707) 548-6061

Co-investigators & Cooperators
Jocelyn Boreta
Non-Profit entity: The Botanical Bus: Bilingual Mobile Herb Clinic
info@thebotanicalbus.org
(707) 338-4132

Addition of bonus collaborator midway through project:
Non-Profit entity: Celebrating Women's Leadership in Food (CWLF),
<https://foundationsandthefuture.wordpress.com>
Caiti Hachmyer
caitihach@gmail.com

Location:
Sonoma County, California
Specifically: Seedlings were raised at SRJC Shone Farm,
7450 Steve Olson Lane, Forestville, CA 95436
Plants were grown and harvested at Strong Arm Farm
2927 Llano Rd. Santa Rosa, CA 95405

Proposal Category:
Education and Outreach Grant (Experiential engagement)

Priority area:
Supporting Urban and Rural Communities

Commodity addressed:

Hibiscus (aka Roselle, Jamaica) *Hibiscus sabdariffa*

Grown for traditional health and healing for Sonoma County vineyard workers

Grant amount: \$7,000.

Part II. Objectives

Objectives from initial proposal: My goal for growing hibiscus plants is to extend a free source of plant-based medicinal support to my fellow Farmworkers in Sonoma County.

- Grow a Certified Organic crop of hibiscus in soil with no synthetic inputs
- Grow enough pounds to effect change and keep a steady supply for 100s of gallons of tea
- Connect with an agency to reach the Farmworkers, since I do not have that network, rapport or language skill
- Educate recipients with a laminated information sheet about the health benefits of hibiscus
(This objective did not get met. The recipients taught me the health benefits and came with their own knowledge and wisdom, and it was unnecessary/inappropriate for me to school them.)
- Engage with a population that has been marginalized, exploited, undocumented, underpaid and rarely seen or appreciated by the greater community.

With each sip of the zingy red tea I hope they drink in the love, hugs and inclusion of a fellow farmer, and the medicine of the plant quenches the human right to health and access to healthcare appropriate to one's culture. Second goal is to employ an aspiring agriculture student from Santa Rosa Jr. College, where I teach Sustainable Agriculture courses.

- Select and hire a student that values the goals of this crop and wants practical career building skills
- Additional goal is to learn how to write and receive a grant, administer and summarize results.
- Receive experience in grant execution

Part III. Summary

Heidi Herrmann grew certified Organic hibiscus plants for The Botanical Bus, a bilingual mobile herb clinic that empowers holistic health in Latinx and Indigenous populations through culturally relevant, community driven programs. Seeds were propagated at Santa Rosa Jr. College's CCOF Organic certified Shone Farm, where the Principal Investigator is faculty and completed the school's farm property's Organic certification simultaneously to this grant. The greenhouse had a severe fungus gnat infestation in 2021 that stunted and killed many seedlings; only a third survived. The weakened seedlings were transferred in their jumbo six-packs to Strong Arm Farm. With the help of a student assistant. About 60 plants were transplanted in May 2021 and grew well in the Organic soil conditions. Harvest began in mid September through the 3rd week in October. It was a shorter season, due to time lost in the spring due to slow plant recovery from pest pressure and with the rains beginning early that year. About 10lbs of fresh hibiscus were donated and made into tea for about 5 weeks. With Heidi's 2022 crop, 108 plants were donated, a year later, but still applicable to grant project. With much better growing conditions, Heidi has more than doubled the amount of plants grown in the ground for the pending 2022 fall harvest. Although the grant will be closed-up by then, I still plan on donating to this cause, now that I've formed relationships with them.

A student was hired to help with weekly harvest in the fall of 2021. This student identified as non-binary, African-American and was enrolled in Sustainable Agriculture classes at SRJC. They were paid,

with grant funds and even used the hibiscus for individual crafts like dying fabric. Ambitions of the student to start a dye-plant farm was a frequent topic of discussion while working together.

An event was held on October 3, 2021 at Strong Arm Farm that celebrated the Hibiscus and exceeded the expectations of the grant proposal! More than just visiting the farm for a harvest, an entire event, festive celebration and skill-share was created with the help of funds and organizing talent from Celebrating Women's Leadership in Food (CWLF.) Caiti Hachmyer billed this event as "This space will be one of reconnecting to the land and this important plant, a space for sharing knowledge and skills across communities, and a celebration of one another's work." About 25 Promotoras from the Botanical bus joined and 10 women leaders of color joined (invites of the CWLF group) from SF, East Bay and Salinas to share in the collaboration and co-learning. Individuals shared their memories, recipes, processing tips, and importance of hibiscus as a traditional healing food. A translator was enlisted to assist English speakers, since much of the sharing was in Spanish. This was the first of a newly hashed skill share event series (of the Botanical Bus) that is aimed to focus on plants, healing modalities and traditional/cultural health methods.

IV. Specific Results: 1.) Promotoras from the Botanical Bus shared their experience with this plant, recipes for use, and health value. This was done in the field as we all got to touch, taste the plant and see its full size. Personal stories were shared from individuals' childhood of harvesting the plants in Mexico with their elders. I was surprised to learn that hibiscus was cooked with meat in an asada style savory dish.

2.) Everyone in attendance got to harvest their own hibiscus to take home.

3.) 2 non-profit groups with aligned values joined for the first time.

4.) A student was hired to further their agricultural education, build skills, and industry experience.

5.) An invite was extended from one style of farm worker to another. We each operate in different realms and socio-economic strata, cultural backgrounds but found a delightful commonality over this healing plant.

6.) A permanent, respectful relationship has been formed. I know where and when to drop off future hibiscus pounds since this is a crop I will continue growing.

Here is an excerpt from CWLF's year-end summary reviewing the event:

The Botanical Bus Hibiscus Harvest, Skill Share and Celebration

In early October, building on a multi-year relationship, CWLF co-organized a gathering at Heidi Herrmann's Strong Arm Farm in Sebastopol with The Botanical Bus team, including director Jocelyn Boreta, farmworker health clinic coordinator Yatziry Galvan, and the BB network of Promotoras (community health advocates who are rising up to lead, advocate, educate, mentor, and translate health programming in their own community) including María "LuLu" deLourdes Pérez Centurión, Juliana Jimenez, and Angeles Quiñones. Approximately thirty people from across communities in the North Bay, SF Bay Area, Salinas Valley and Los Angeles gathered to learn about the cultivating, processing and use of Hibiscus. We celebrated the wisdom of and learned from grower Heidi and the network of Promotoras who use Hibiscus as medicine.

This was the first intentionally bilingual space that we have co-created. It provided the opportunity for the Promotora community to connect with the land and the entire growing plant that provides the hibiscus flower that they use regularly, and for the community of farmers and community advocates to connect with the Promotoras themselves. We enjoyed a farm tour, art activities, harvest, and a feast together. We are honored to collaborate with Botanical Bus and are working together to build stronger farmer relationships with their network to support connecting their Promotora community, and by extension our North Bay farmworker community, to locally grown plant medicine.

V. Dissemination of Findings:

The 2 non-profits I partnered with both made several Instagram postings following the October 3 event. Botanical Bus has a Spanish following and their posts were offered in dual languages. The culminating event also received acclaim in CWLF's '2021 Yearend review' p7 with descriptive article and p8 with pictures. (see attached)

VI. Benefits/Impacts on Agriculture and/or Food Systems:

Recognizing food as medicine can be a simple and empowering learning tool. It was important to provide actual Hibiscus plants as well as harvested material to the Promotoras of the Botanical Bus. Enabling autonomy of resources, and nurturing of one's own medicine supply adds another layer of thoughtful complexity and sovereignty to the experience. Offering other crops with cultural/traditional healing modalities can be offered by growers to Latinx populations through service oriented non-profits and health centers.

Although I cannot cite individual improved health, I hope that my donated hibiscus aided in a reduced stress load for the overworked, underpaid, exploited, underserved Latinx vineyard workers in my community. I grew the plants with this sole purpose and am thankful to be able to give without cost to the recipient. I believe that just the act of receiving thoughtful gifts of plants and freshly grown food-medicine from one's community is healing and supportive.

VII. Impact on Target Audience:

The Oct 3 event at Strong Arm Farm was the first of its kind for the Botanical Bus. A real farm-visit, where children joined, food was served, respect and reverence were in abundance and all were welcomed. For some this was the first time they were invited for social/non-work reasons to a local farm. I personally enjoyed being translated to, and allowing those sharing their stories to speak in Spanish, with that being welcomed and integral to the experience. The Promotoras, who make the hibiscus juice to share with vineyard workers, got to see the care that went into growing this plant ingredient, and meet the person that wanted to donate to them. Hopefully this was a small step in realizing there are community members that what inclusion, health and respect to be extended to the Latinx farmworker population. I will continue donating to this group since it is a value and population that I support, that doesn't just stop when the funding shifts. Thanks to UCSAREP funds for enabling me to make bold steps to grow a unique crop.

I find this requested chart odd, invasive, assumptive, and totally unrelated to my project. I did not know I would be asked to provide this information, so I did not survey/note/tally/categorized the humans related to this funding.

From my recollection about 35 people attended the farm event. (30 women, 2 men, 3 children)
1 African-America identifying non-binary student was hired as harvester.

Most women were possibly of Latinx decent, although I have no idea.

I do not know how many vineyard workers were served, maybe 60.

I heard Spanish being spoken by most in attendance.



CELEBRATING WOMXN'S LEADERSHIP IN FOOD

2021 YEAR IN REVIEW



FEMME FARMER FIELD DAYS: COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION

INITIATIVES

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