

Care for the land, Feel the love

“We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.

~Aldo Leopold

On a cool evening, down in the South Valley of Albuquerque, I whack a shovel, chopping down tumbleweed. With fifteen of us working, we take out a whole patch of weeds in a couple minutes. The New Mexico sky blazes, as cotton ball clouds turn bright pink. We work into the night, raking and cutting down weeds for a new community garden. Somebody brings pizza and others bring instruments. We run around playing tag with new friends. Adults talk and laugh as the music starts. Wouldn't this be wonderful if this was happening in every neighborhood? This reminds me of the “fountain of energy” that Leapold writes about with plants and animals in harmony. We were not only planting the seeds of a garden, we were planting the seeds for a community.

I first learned about soil health on a hot, August day in Massachusetts, when my Grandpa taught me how to compost. You make a layer of green plant materials, then compact them down. Then, Grandpa's special ingredient is to pour bean broth, called soy lecithin on the pile. This adds nutrients, creating a damp environment that breaks down to create healthy soil. Grandpa asks my brother and I to cut down an immense, leafy comfrey bush. We worked in the blazing sun chopping it down and bringing it to the compost, wheelbarrow by wheelbarrow. By the end of the day, we have a heaping mound of compost that will be used in his gardens next year. Aldo Leapold's vision for tending the land is that all parts of the ecosystem, soil, plants, and animals are given care and attention.

When we return to Albuquerque, we call Isabelle Jenniches with the New Mexico Healthy Soil Group. Isabelle teaches us about the five principles of soil health. She teaches farmers, ranchers, and gardeners about carbon sequestration, cover crops, animal integration, no tilling, plant diversity, and having continual root systems. These

principles help everyone create a balance of animals, plants, and soil so that the ecosystem is healthy and thriving.

After talking with Isabelle, my siblings and I start making a video about how soil can combat climate change and call it “Soil Care is Climate Repair.” What’s exciting about videos is that you can share your voice with many people, inspiring change and action. Our video is part of CAVU’s program for teaching young people about climate change mitigation and adaptation and it will be shown in the Colorado Film Festival this February.

In the spring, the seeds that we planted in Haven garden will be poking out of the ground. Grandpa's garden will be filled with healthy compost. Our video about soil health will be shown to the public. The Haven garden will be a space for people to plant, meet, and educate each other. Education is like water because plants are fed by water and people are fed by education. Just like plants, we need water to live, and it takes all of us, to educate all of us, for all of us to be healthy.