



**For more information, contact:**

Anne Bassett, GlynnDevins Advertising & Marketing  
(913) 317-2241, abassett@glynndevins.com

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 5, 2010

---

## **SENIORS, COMMUNITY GROUPS COME TOGETHER TO PLANT NEW COMMUNITY GARDEN AT GRAND LAKE GARDENS**

---

### ***Fresh Vegetables From One-Acre Patch To Benefit Alameda Food Bank***

---

**OAKLAND, Calif.:** An endeavor that started with a magazine article and an empty patch of land will soon yield a harvest of fresh, organic vegetables to help feed the hungry in Alameda County, thanks to the sweat of seniors at Grand Lake Gardens and volunteers from local community improvement groups.

During two Saturdays in April, the 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, nearly 100 volunteers will transform an undeveloped parcel of land sitting next to the Grand Lake Gardens retirement community, located at 401 Santa Clara Avenue in Oakland, into a new organic garden. When complete, the community garden will feature raised vegetable boxes, a wall of tomato vines and several in-ground plant beds. As vegetables are harvested from the garden, they will be donated to the Alameda Food Bank.

“We read an article about churches that used some spare land as garden space, and they were producing free vegetables to share with the community,” said Doris Pummill, a Grand Lake Gardens resident who serves on the community’s Greening Committee. “We shared the article with Adnan Hasan (the community’s executive director) and he was really excited about it. It just grew and evolved.”

Developing the garden became a community effort that blossomed into approximately \$25,000 worth of in-kind donations of time, labor and materials. Grand Lake Gardens took the initial idea to Rebuilding Together – Oakland, the local chapter of a national organization that partners volunteers and donors with worthy community projects. Rebuilding Together – Oakland connected Grand Lake Gardens with Piedmont Community Service Group, which is comprised of local students, Boy Scouts and adult volunteers. Piedmont Community Service Group agreed to donate materials, build planter boxes and provide labor to create the garden.

-more-

“We knew we had to get the community involved,” said Pummill. “We are seniors, so we can’t do all the work. We’ve gotten volunteer groups to come in. and get the garden established.”

With a lot of help, Grand Lake Gardens is going beyond simply tilling a patch of unused land to plant a few varieties of seeds, said Hasan and Pummill. An elaborate, full-fledged community garden will grow in a space where a few residents had tended to small plots of mostly ornamental plants,

A local Master Gardener group helped residents design an optimal garden layout for the site. Eight to 10 large planter boxes of varying heights, designed to make it easier for seniors get their hands in the soil, are being built and installed. A sprinkler system is being modified so that plants can be properly watered. And one entire side of the garden will be lined with tomato plants.

“Not everything is being developed in the first phase,” said Hasan. “About half is being developed now, and we will grow the capacity as we get more volunteers from the local community. When we approached the local food bank to see if they could use all the produce, they were very excited to have fresh vegetables. A lot of the stuff that they get donated is non-perishable items or produce that supermarkets were unable to sell. To have fresh vegetables to distribute to families will be great for them. The article we modeled the garden after talked about a church that has now distributed tons of produce over the years.”

Pummill added that designating the garden as organic was an aspect that was very important to the Grand Lake Gardens Greening Committee, which focuses on ways to reduce environmental impacts at the community.

“Having an organic garden was something that was in line with the green consciousness of the community,” said Pummill. “Our main effort is toward being aware of global warming and the environment, and what seniors can do here at the community. The community garden is one of the ways we can contribute. But, we saw that we needed help to make the best use of it.”

While nearly 100 volunteers will set up and plant the initial seeds in the garden, Hasan and Pummill are counting on both Grand Lake Gardens seniors and members of the surrounding neighborhoods to make the project an ongoing community effort.

“Our residents are very eager to do this,” said Hasan. “It’s not only the ones who are gardeners, but others who have a great interest in giving back to the community and volunteering. As people get older, they need to be of use to the community. It’s almost a primal force in many of us.”

“We contacted churches and schools to come in this summer, so we have help from building all the raised beds, helping with planting and care, all the way up through produce being delivered to community groups,” said Pummill.

Anyone interested in volunteering or contributing to the Grand Lake Gardens community garden can call Grand Lake Gardens at (510) 893-3329. Tours of the garden site and the community can also be arranged by calling the number. Additional information on the community and its lifestyle is available online at [www.grandlakegardens.com](http://www.grandlakegardens.com).

### **ABOUT GRAND LAKE GARDENS**

Since 1966, Grand Lake Gardens, located at 401 Santa Clara Avenue in Oakland, California, has offered quality senior living in a peaceful garden setting that is only steps away from the bustle of Bay Area urban life and beautiful Lake Merritt. The community delivers a well-rounded and rewarding lifestyle — one that helps residents attain personal growth through its wellness-focused Masterpiece Living initiative.

In addition to maintenance-free residential living, the community offers a continuum of on-site assisted living and skilled nursing care, one of the primary benefits of living at a continuing care retirement community.

Grand Lake Gardens in Oakland, California, is owned and managed by ABHOW, a California non-profit public benefit corporation. ABHOW is a nonsectarian corporation, serving seniors through quality retirement since 1949. License #011400246. Certificate of Authority #107.

###