**Southside Community Land Trust’s Community Growers Council**

**Bio-Sketches**

**Ploua Khang**

Ploua been the garden leader at the Potters Avenue Community Garden for about 10 years and a gardener with the Land trust for 30 years! She was there with SCLT when they cleaned up a lot at Potters Ave and helped transform it into the thriving garden it is today. When she isn’t working as a nursing assistant at a nearby health center, Ploua (and sometimes with her daughter and niece) lovingly tends to her squash, pumpkin, beans, eggplant, cilantro, scallions, tomatoes and hot peppers. She occasionally sells her produce at the Broad Street Farmers Market on Saturdays.

**Jerome Charleus**

Jerome is known for having several plots in Providence, includes ones in Sycamore St., Algonquin House on Broad Street, Glenham and two in Cranston Street. Jerome started farming in Haiti, where he grew rice, okra, corn and bananas. Some of his favorite crops to grow are collards, tomatoes, eggplant, scallions, potatoes, okra and most of all beans. He moved to Rhode Island from Haiti in 1980 and established his farming roots here. Jerome is fondly proud of his gardens, selling or giving his produce to family and friends. He is thinking about next steps to start raising chickens. Jerome teaches workshops to beginning food growers at SCLT’s community gardens.

**Chao Yang**

Chao has been farming since she was 10 years old! Back in Laos she and her family would grow crops like rice, corn and greens. Farming came naturally to her after settling down in Rhode Island in 1980. Her story of becoming a community gardener here had some ups and downs before becoming the thriving business today that her son bemusedly named “Crispy Green Vegetables.”

When she first got to Rhode Island she would farm daily with her grandmother who had given her a small plot of land in the southside. Chao was devastated when the landowners decided to take the land back, which she had so lovingly cared for and planted many things in. Fortunately, somebody from Southside Community Land Trust had heard about her plight and brought her to Burnett Community Gardens, where she has been happily gardening ever since.

You can find [Crispy Green Vegetables](http://www.farmfresh.org/food/farm.php?farm=3178) at the [Broad Street Farmers Market](http://www.farmfresh.org/food/farmersmarkets_details.php?market=3), where they have lemongrass, longbeans, sweet potato leaves, bittermelon, 4 kinds of basil, cherry tomatoes, cucumber and more!

**Chia Xiong**

Chia is known in the community for her incredible gardening skills and language abilities. She's the leader of the marketing collaborative formed in 2009, which includes 8 urban growers across 6 different gardens. The marketing collaborative works together to plan the market stand, responsibilities and earnings at the Broad Street Farmers’ Market. She is also the Burnett Community Garden leader, where she first started gardening 16 years ago. Back then, the space was in unkempt condition, littered with trash and rats with no reliable source of water or compost. At the urging of Community Land Trust staff, she took on garden leader position in 1998. Since then, with the help of other community growers (most of them fellow Hmong) through workdays and garden meetings, the garden has been transformed to the beautiful, lush space it is today.

Although far from her parents’ farm in Laos, Chia is right at home in Providence. “I feel good. I feel happy,” she says. You can definitely sense her joy and pride as you see her interacting with customers at the market, selling them the freshest vegetables and herbs she's lovingly grown herself.

**Garmai Mawolo** has been the Glenham Community Garden Leader for 2 years. She came to Rhode Island 7 years ago from Liberia, where she had grown a plethora of crops like rice, potato, arrow root, sweet potato leaves, hot peppers, tomato and eggplant (many of these she also grows right here in Rhode Island!). Garmai was first connected with Southside Community Land Trust through the International Institute, which often refers refugees to community gardens as a place to establish strong relationships with people in the community, other refugees and the land to which they now live. Her garden yields an abundance of tomatoes and her favorite black beauty and white eggplants. It’s a lot of work but she’s proud and happy to be doing it. “It’s so good for my health,” she says, “gardening keeps me healthy and strong.”