

## **Teen Leaders from Lowell Community Health Center visit Garden**

**Wednesday, July 24, 2013**

On July 24, 2013, Board Member Judit Vajda and former board member Mari Adams gave a tour for the lovely youth and staff from the Lowell Community Health Center. Thirty or so teenagers from Lowell High School, most of them about 17 years old, participated in a summer program through the Health Center. Many of them are part of "Lowell Dance 4 Peace," a group of teenagers working for peace that has been in operation for 18 years.

Before touring the Garden, Jude gave them an extensive orientation of the Garden's history. She noted, "I always find it so interesting to see how the group evolves during a tour. Uneasy and talkative at first...unsure what to expect....and very quickly turns sad and somber...no one wanted to share their stories....or share why they were crying...it is still very much taboo....not to mention so difficult and painful to discuss. They didn't want to show their emotion (especially not a teenager)....but by the end...a few of them could no longer hold in their hurt. I was – to say the least – very touched by this group of youth who are committed to working for peace."

The Youth and Staff were very attentive and a few were emotional towards the end.

A few staff members have attended the Honor Program in the past and arranged for this visit. Several of the participants knew one 17-year-old youth who had a stone in the Garden and took pictures of his stone in remembrance of him.

Masada Jones, the Youth Leadership Coordinator, captured what it was like to visit the Garden, especially for those who have been affected by violence themselves. She said, "Although, it was somber and sad I could feel the supportive energy of those around me."