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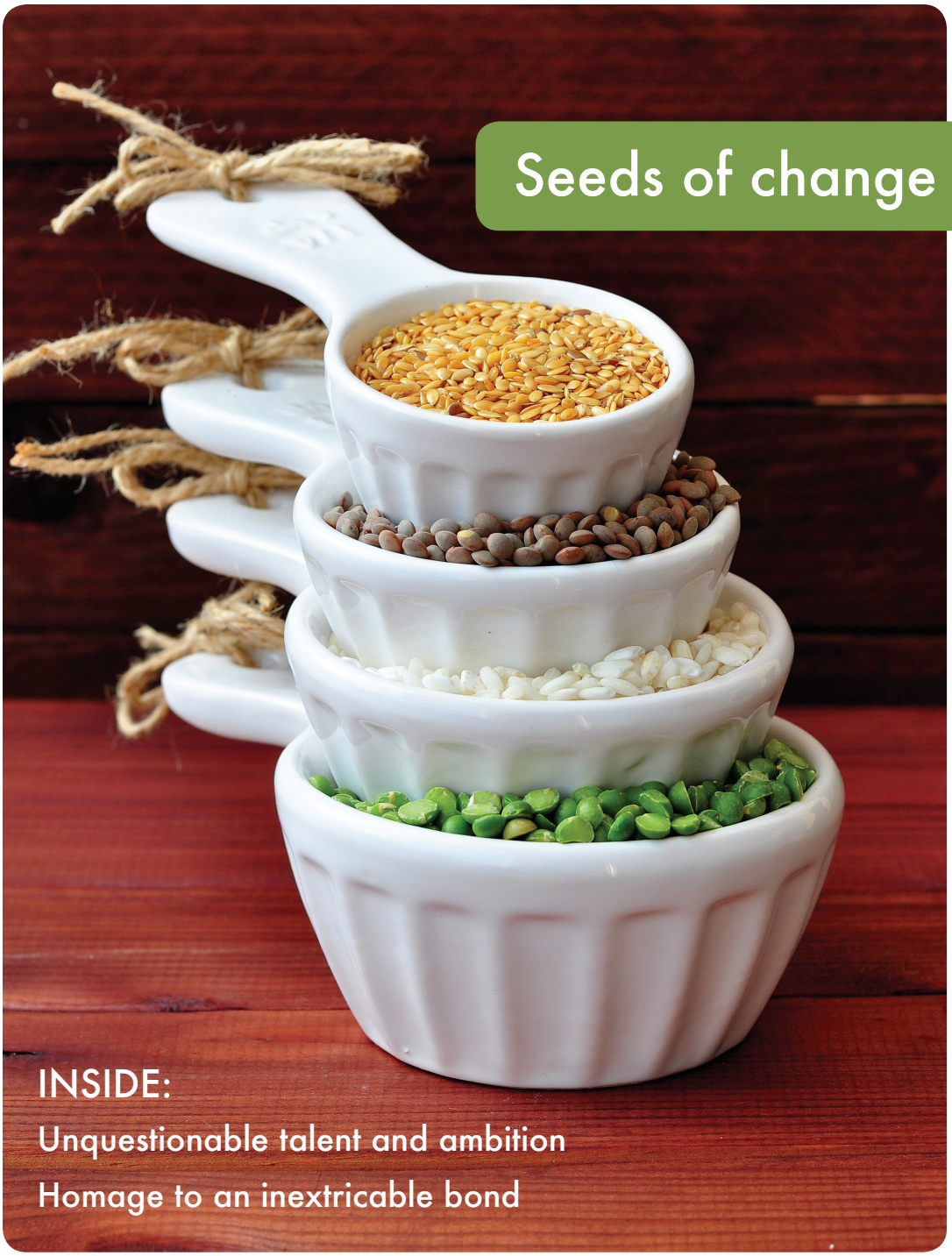

Seeds of change

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Unity is published in February (African-American Heritage Issue), March (Women's History Issue), May (Asian-Pacific American Heritage Issue), June (Sustainability Issue), September (Hispanic Heritage Issue) and November (Native American Heritage Issue).

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Incubator fuels green movement

Volunteers used mostly reclaimed materials during the renovation of the Green Garage.

The shared-table area provides workspace for Green Garage businesses.

Once a Model-T showroom built in 1920, a historic brick warehouse is now a vehicle for a new era of growth in Detroit – thanks to owners Tom and Peggy Brennan. Their symbol of urban reinvention, the Green Garage (www.greengaragedetroit.com), opened in 2011.

"The Green Garage was created out of an interest in making both a demonstration center for sustainability principles (including sustainable building renovation) and a community in which small businesses could grow and thrive, thereby contributing to the local economy," Matthew Piper, director of communications, operations and community growth, tells *Unity*.

The New York Times reported that more than 200 community volunteers helped design and renovate the Green Garage, located on Second Avenue. "In accordance with its eco-friendly mission, they used mostly reclaimed materials, generated just one-and-a-half Dumpsters' worth of waste, and used passive means – a white roof, triple-glazed windows and extra-thick insulation – to cut the building's energy demand by 90 percent," says Piper.

The number of business utilizing the incubator varies. "Usually only a small handful (two to three), but many more participate in our Thursday sustainable small business leadership lunches, which is another part of our incubation work."

The incubator is home to 50 small businesses and nonprofits including:

- B**VG Associates.** Consultant focusing on wind and marine electricity-generation systems
- **Center for Community Progress.** Nonprofit that advises local governments on addressing vacant properties.
- **De-Tread.** Recycler of tires.
- **LivingLAB.** Landscape architectural firm with an emphasis on sustainable planning and design

Of the businesses on site in early 2016, 12 were renting seats in the shared-table area, 14 were renting desks, 12 were renting offices and seven were renting workshop space.

The Green Garage does much more than nurture businesses. A prime example of the entity's emphasis on community involvement is the El Moore, its sister project. In existence since 1898 as a collection of spacious, upscale flats, the El Moore had deteriorated by the late 20th century and eventually became vacant. Now, says Piper, the development encompasses a "multi-phase project including residential apartments, an overnight 'urban lodge, and … a neighborhood green space and new retail building. The apartments have been leased since July '15, the lodge opened in January '16, and construction on the green space and new building" were set to begin in spring 2016.

"Everything we've done at the Green Garage and the El Moore is in service of a larger goal of creating supportive communities in which people can thrive and connect to each other in meaningful ways" says Piper. "This community orientation, which we think is missing from so much of contemporary life … is fundamental to our work and guides our decision-making."

A man of unquestionable talent and ambition

Much-lauded violinist Damien Escobar has some unlikely competition – in the form of One Direction and Justin Bieber.

No, the former child prodigy (who seamlessly merges hip-hop and classical) isn't battling two of today's biggest pop acts for critical acclaim. Rather, Escobar is trying to divert his adolescent daughter's attention from the activities of her current musical crushes to furthering her mastery of the violin.

"I see a lot of me in my daughter," Escobar says. "She just has the natural ability on the instrument. (Unfortunately) One Direction and Justin Bieber have taken over her life right now," he laments good-naturedly.

Still Escobar, a native of Jamaica Queens, New York, resists the urge to micromanage the musical aspirations of his daughter and preschool-age son. The latter is already playing piano, which was the first instrument Escobar played when he was 2 years old. When it comes to his children's lessons, "I hire someone else to teach them," says Escobar, who jokingly adds: "I don't want to be (Jackson family patriarch) Joe Jackson."

While Escobar's children are learning the intricacies of music, people around the country are learning more about the depths of their famous father's talents. He's touring extensively throughout 2016; in fact, he's booked for a June 11 performance at NYC's Highline Ballroom. But others will also have an opportunity to see Escobar this year. "I'm going to get to your city," he vows to his fans across the country.

And touring isn't all that's on his musical agenda. When Escobar spoke to *Unity* the day after the 2016 Grammy Awards show, he was in the last stages of work on his first album of original music. He was hoping that "Boundless" would be on sale in April.

"This album is really special. The energy between the producers and everybody I have in the studio is so pure. It's an honest kind of energy (translated into a recording) that I feel is going to be timeless."

In order to retain artistic control of his nascent recording, Escobar nixed signing a contract with a record label. Instead, he used his own money

"I want to have my music on the radio," says violinist Damien Escobar.

and thousands of dollars raised via a crowdfunding website to fund "Boundless," the album and tour.

"I'm so grateful for my fans (for their monetary donations). They believe in what I'm doing so much. It (the album) was just an idea for me and to see an idea" garner such financial support from fans was gratifying.

It's not difficult to understand why Escobar has such a strong connection with his fans. Aside from his undisputed talent, he's also an energetic champion of funding for arts education and other programs.

In 2015, he announced plans for a fall concert to help restore music programs in schools. Earlier this year, he was still working on making that happen. "It's taken longer than expected," says Escobar. "You'd be surprised how many corporations don't fund education. It's been a bit of a task, but we want to launch it in the fall of this year." The goal: 20 concerts performed in five cities over a two-week period.

Escobar was part of an October 2015 charity concert that raised money for the Jamaica Queens YMCA, on whose board he sits. He performed along with R&B artists Ginuwine and 112.

A consummate performer with true "street cred," Escobar and his brother, Tourie, once worked as street musicians in NYC. By the time the Juilliard grad and his sibling formed (and later disbanded) their music group Nuttin' But Stringz, they had taken third place on the "America's Got Talent" TV show, performed at President Obama's first inauguration and won one of two Emmys. After a short career in real estate, Escobar resumed his musical career. He still surfaces on the streets of NYC every summer for pop-up performances he promises will continue "no matter how quote-unquote famous I get."

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CULTURAL FINE ART

Homage to an inextricable bond

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The three artists featured in this edition of *Unity* highlight the connection between people and nature.

"Balanced Sand Globe and Wave" by Zach Pine

ZACH PINE

Zach Pine's journey as an artist began during his childhood in Northern California, where he made structures of sand, rocks and seaweed on the beach. His parents encouraged his early efforts, which were the foundation of his talent for creating in and with nature.

For the last 15 years, Pine has focused on the social and environmental dimensions of his art. His goal is to connect people with each other and with the natural world. "My work's intent is to foster a love of the Earth that triggers a protective instinct," says Pine. He hosts art events and workshops for groups that provide models and methods for collaborative creativity – the only way, he says, to promote successful efforts to save the environment.

Pine's "Balanced Sand Globe and Wave" was created at Muir Beach, California. He balanced the sand globe on a rock, knowing a wave would eventually come and return the sand globe to the sea.

"Balanced Sand Globes" by Zach Pine

Four sand globes atop four rocks make up "Balanced Sand Globes," which was created at Stinson Beach, California. Pine says the beach was formed, in part, by sand sediment eroded from surrounding rocks.

The globes in "Sand Globes at High Tide" were arranged in a line going uphill. This was one of the inspirations for Pine's online participatory sand globe project, Earth in Your Hands, focusing on the coastal areas he says are threatened by climate change.

Pine's intent is for sand-globe making to become as commonplace as sand-castle building, thus giving people one more reason to visit and love the coastal areas of the United States.

"Sand Globes at High Tide" by Zach Pine

GAIL McCOY

Gail McCoy was born in eastern South Dakota on a farm her great-grandfather homesteaded. She can recall tall grass and a one-room schoolhouse with no running water, and she credits this upbringing for shaping her rural point of view that's evident in her collages.

After retiring from 29 years of teaching, McCoy pursued her strong love for art. She focuses on cranes in her artwork because "they are a universal symbol for peace, hope and healing."

McCoy learned a technique for altering the ink on a high-quality international magazine by using a nontoxic, green solvent made from orange rinds.

"I paint the solvent on full-color pages, causing the ink to float around the page," says McCoy. "It distorts the photo image into an abstraction of pattern and color."

"Reverie at Dusk" by Gail McCoy

McCoy continues. "Sometimes the process of recycling paper can leave 'ghost images' and pieces of the original image," as in "Reverie at Dusk," which has visible text in the sky.

In "Copper Sky," McCoy constructed the background out of faded quilt images. "In a sense, my work is paper quilted into collages. I cut and paste paper instead of sewing material to make a legacy statement about cranes," McCoy says.

There is movement, drama and contrast in "Purple Moonlight." McCoy says this work represents a silent moment in nature that provides time for the viewer to understand the story the art evokes.

"Copper Sky" by Gail McCoy

"Purple Moonlight" by Gail McCoy

JANE INGRAM ALLEN

Born in Delta, Alabama, Jane Ingram Allen later attended the University of Montevallo, where she majored in art and English. After graduation, she taught art in secondary schools and received a master's degree in art education. During graduate school, Allen took a course in weaving and began weaving and making other fiber arts.

Allen says her artwork is connected to her Alabama roots by the materials and techniques she uses. Her use of quilting and joining handmade paper together with threads is a result of her time as a textile artist

"Polar Map" by Jane Ingram Allen

and growing up in a family of seamstresses, quilters, gardeners and farmers. The handmade paper she uses consists of natural and biodegradable materials from local plant waste, including seeds.

Her mixed-media, suspended artwork, "Polar Map," was created for an exhibition in Bangkok, Thailand that featured Allen's map-related artworks that she made around the world. The images are meant to increase awareness of the plight of polar bears facing melting ice.

"Salmon River Estuary Site Map" by Jane Ingram Allen

"Salmon River Estuary Site Map" was created in Otis, Oregon close to the Salmon River that empties into the Pacific Ocean. It is a two-sided, suspended construction map of the river and surrounding estuary on one side and a mixed-media collage on the other.

"Piping Plovers" is made from plant waste materials collected on Fire Island National Seashore, Long Island, New York. In this suspended piece, many shapes are joined together with natural thread. The intent is to bring attention to the endangered plover (a small shore bird).

"Growing up around quilters and farmers, I learned to love nature, and growing and making things," says Allen. "When I create art, my goal is to reconstruct those experiences from my life and environment and share those connections with my viewers."

"Piping Plovers" by Jane Ingram Allen

Seeds of change

Part of the human diet for centuries, dried seeds are finally getting worldwide recognition. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations declared 2016 the International Year of Pulses.

A subgroup of legumes (plants such as peas and bean plants), dried seeds are technically referred to as pulse – which derives from the Latin word for porridge or mush.

Pulses are part of the coveted dietary category of superfoods. They're gluten- and cholesterol-free; high in fiber, iron, protein and zinc; and low in fat.

The benefits of pulses aren't limited to their nutritional merits. They're also a boon for the environment. Pulses take less energy to grow than other crops, producing fewer greenhouse gases. Pulse crops are also one of the most environmentally friendly sources of protein, contributing to sustainable food production by protecting and improving soil and water resources. And since they can be stored for months without losing nutritional value, pulses are an ideal source of food between harvests.

Pulses are key ingredients included in a plethora of dishes – ranging from baked beans and chili (consumed worldwide) to signature dishes such as Medu Vada (consumed mostly in India).

2016 INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PULSES

Medu Vada (Lentil Doughnuts)

- 1/2 pound split urid dhal (beans), soaked for 2 hours
- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns
- 1 tablespoon cumin seeds
- 1 onion, chopped roughly
- 2 green chilies
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Rapeseed oil to deep fry

Drain the lentils in a sieve and start to grind the cumin and peppercorns in a pestle and mortar.

Heat the oil for frying in a kharai or wok.

Place the lentils, chilies, spices, salt and ground spices into a blender and grind to a thick paste-like batter, almost like putty. If it is too dry add a touch of water – but not too much as you do not want a watery batter.

Test by dropping in a little batter. If it bubbles and rises straight away, then it's ready.

Wet your hand and scoop up a small handful of the mixture.

Gently push a thumb into the center of the vada to create the doughnut shape.

Carefully place the vada into the hot oil and cook until golden brown on both sides.

Remove and serve.

Makes 4 servings

Recipe courtesy of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Seaweed's enjoying a growth spurt

The Specialty Food Association's 2016 Trend Forecast declares that seaweed is "set to explode thanks to its sustainability angle." And what does that mean?

Seaweed farms are good neighbors; they actually clean the water. The 3,500 kinds of seaweed need no fertilizing. Seaweed gets all it needs from the environment around it. And it grows (pun intended) like a weed.

Not impressed by seaweed's environmentally friendly attribute? Consider that this abundant marine algae:

- Has been a dietary staple in China, Japan and Korea since prehistoric times. Seaweed harvesting and consumption have long been big in Ireland, too.
- Contains a wealth of nutrients such as fiber, iodine, iron, and vitamins B and C.
- Might aid in weight loss. A recent study from the University of Newcastle in Australia found that the alginates (a type of fiber) in brown seaweed appear to inhibit the uptake of fat. British Chef Jamie Oliver credits seaweed, in part, for his 30-pound weight loss.

In the U.S., Maine is the top seaweed producer. The state supports more than 20 companies that grow

Looking for a new breakfast dish? Try crepes with seaweed.

or collect seaweed, about double from 10 years ago. Maine harvesters collected 17.7 million pounds of seaweed in 2014, the most recorded for the state and more than four times its 2004 total.

Even though uncooked seaweed is described as bland and salty, it's still making its way into snacking strips, salads, soups and – yes – desserts. Curious cooks are turning to authoritative cookbooks that provide a wealth of information as well as recipes. In 2015 alone, "The New Seaweed Cookbook: Second Edition," "Cooking With Seaweed," "Seaweed in the Kitchen" and "Healthy Cookbook: Wide-Open Organic Ocean Seaweed Cookbook" were released.

Seaweed Salad

- 1 ounce dry mixed seaweed
- 1 tablespoon + 1 teaspoon rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon sugar (you can substitute a 1/2 tablespoon agave)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon ginger juice
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds
- 1 scallion, finely chopped

Put the seaweed in a large bowl and fill it with cold water. If you like crunchy seaweed, soak it for 5 minutes; if you like it more tender, soak it for 10 minutes.

To make the dressing, combine the rice vinegar, sesame oil, soy sauce, sugar, salt and ginger juice in a small bowl and whisk together.

Drain the seaweed and use your hands to squeeze out excess water. Wipe out any excess water in the bowl, and then return the seaweed along with the dressing and sesame seeds.

Toss thoroughly to combine. Plate the salad and garnish with scallions.

Makes 4 small servings
Recipe courtesy of Fresh Tastes

Continued from page 3

Unquestionable talent and ambition

So, you might wonder, what does a man of such myriad accomplishments strive for? Well, a Grammy, for one thing. Just after the 2016 Grammys show, Escobar tweeted that his single, "Awaken" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lIvW4IBGNsE&feature=youtu.be) would be nominated for a Grammy by year's end.

"I don't see myself as a violinist," says Escboar. "I see myself as a vocalist. I compare myself to the Stevie Wonders and the Drakes of the world. I'm not going to stop until I get (heavy) rotation. For me, I'm still not there yet. (But) I'm really ambitious and I dream extremely big. I want to have my music on the radio. That type of notoriety," he says, leads to a Grammy.

Damien Escobar is a champion of funding for arts education.

Student network lobbies for 'green food system'

When it comes to food, you might think all millenials favor anything that's fast and fattening. Not so, at least for thousands of students participating in the Real Food Challenge.

"Millenials are concerned about freshness and sustainability, nutrition and social responsibility," says David Schwartz, campaign director of the Real Food Challenge. "We want to see a food system that reflects our values, and adds value to our community – rather than further impoverishing farmers, ranchers, fishers and food-chain workers."

A national nonprofit, the Real Food Challenge (www.realfoodchallenge.org) established a network of student food activists for which it provides opportunities to network and participate in the sustainable food movement. In fact, the organization will host a national summit for student leaders in September 2016.

The organization also works with educational institutions dedicated to serving more "real food" on campus. Thirty-nine colleges and universities have made their involvement official by signing the Real Food Campus Commitment. The organization has also secured more than $70 million in pledges from institutions to buy more local and sustainable food.

The Real Food Challenge's primary goal is to shift $1 billion of existing university food budgets from industrial farms and junk food to local, ecologically sound and humane food sources by 2020. "We're confident," says Schwartz, "that we'll see that shift by the end of the decade."

On the cover: On the cover: Pulses (or dried seeds), a sustainable superfood. *Unity* is a celebration of food, art and culture. Published six times per year, *Unity* is exclusively distributed to clients of Thompson Hospitality and Compass Group, both world leaders in foodservice. To contact us, send an email to contentspectrum2016@gmail.com. ©2016 Thompson Hospitality and Compass Group. Produced by Content Spectrum.

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