vate water company directly over the convergence of underground waterways. Twenty years later, San Francisco bought it and named their acquisition after the marble tribute to the watershed.

Kraus convinced the agency in 2006 to lease the land – unused at the time – to her nonprofit for a year-long trial period. She paid $9,000 for water rights to supply drip irrigation to tenants and started to recruit people interested in growing their own food 40 miles southeast of San Francisco, 10 miles south of Pleasanton and about the same distance southwest of Livermore.

After a bountiful first year, Kraus negotiated a nine-year lease agreement and $65,000 from the public utilities commission to pay for basic infrastructure to water the crops. In turn, she found folks eager to get their hands dirty, rent local land, grow organic food and teach the public about sustainable agriculture.

Farmer Fred Hempel rents the most acreage on the site. He joined the co-op when it started three seasons ago. He's taken it on himself to teach others about farming by setting up an internship. Volunteers help him plant, weed and harvest in exchange for some farming know-how.

Summers and falls at the farm are a completely different picture than the lull that descends in the wintertime. When the mid-year sun shines overhead, the field bustles with industry. Now, with the plot resting and the farmers taking a break from a busy summer-fall season, nonprofit coordinators are busy planning to make the educational aspect an institutional effort instead of leaving it up to the farmers.

King studied the science of agriculture in college. In running the co-op, she draws from her background working for an environmental nonprofit and farming on her own time in the Sierra foothills. Managing on-the-ground operations for the sustainable farming group combines King's nonprofit and farming experience and offers her a chance to teach newcomers about the joys of growing and eating locally grown crops.

Part of the plan for the year ahead, though, is to bring in more experts and host more events for the public. Side stepping muddy ruts and puddles around the fenced-off farm on a damp January morning, King pointed to a makeshift gazebo feebly sheltering a circle of soggy hay bales and talked about her nonprofit's vision to host public educational events under its roof.

Already, farmers bring in plenty of volunteers to help with the grunt work. It's King's job to bring in the experts for some lectures and workshops in the year ahead. "This year, we'll really start to see the three goals of this organization come together," said King, passing three picnic tables a Pleasanton Eagle Scout built and donated to the farming experiment-turned-social-movement.

"We're just becoming established as (a) farm. We're starting with the responsible stewardship of natural resources. This year, we're especially focusing on the educational aspect, on educating the public about what we're doing here."

From 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on both Jan. 31 and Feb. 7, farmers will team up with the nonprofit and volunteers to spread mulch and plant native shrubs around the farm to lessen stormwater runoff from the farm into the nearby Arroyo de Laguna creek. The weekend volunteer days mark the beginning of a more public year for the co-op. More volunteers could mean more farmers find their calling, organizers predict hopefully.

King has planting plans of her own. She wants to grow buckwheat and legumes on a small patch on the creekside of the field. She said she hopes others will find a calling to work with the land, too. "What it does, is it reminds people how the earth works," she said. "And how it supports them." www.sagecenter.org.

Zach Sheppard of Baia Nicchia holds some of the produce raised in Sunol.

Library Activities 'In Defense of Food'

The Livermore Public Library's third annual "Livermore Reads Together" community-wide reading program will feature Michael Pollan's book In Defense of Food: The Myth of Nutrition and the Pleasures of Eating.

Livermore Reads Together activities to be held at the Livermore Civic Center Library, 1188 So. Livermore Avenue:

Chef Joey Altman and The Back Burner Blues Band, All-chef band featuring Joey Altman, star of TV's Bay Cafe, Appetite Adventure and Tasting Napa. Tuesday, February 3, 7pm

Family Movie Night: Ratatouille, This movie will be shown in the Storytime/ Craft Room. Thursday, February 5, 7pm

Teen Chef Cook-Off, Part II, The Teen Chef Cook-off lets you, teen boys and girls, learn what it takes to be a professional chef or improve culinary skills. Saturday, February 7, 3-5pm

Cookin' the Market---Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association, emphasizes fresh and seasonal ingredients, healthy recipes, and easy preparations to demonstrate that anyone, regardless of time or talent, can cook fresh and nutritious foods. Sun., Feb. 8, 2 p.m.

Author Wona Miniati--Cooking with All Things Trader Joe's, create the stuff of chefs, in minutes, using ingredients all from Trader Joe's. Tuesday, February 10, 7pm

Author Jesse Ziff Cool --Simply Organic: A Cookbook for Sustainable, Seasonal and Local Ingredients, Dedicated to sustainable agriculture and cuisine for 33 years, Jesse is an advocate for local, sustainable, organic food production and these farmers, to whom she warmly refers as her heroes, she considers to be the first real environmental pioneers. Thursday, February 12, 7pm

For more information call 925-373-5505 or e-mail Joyce Nevins to receive e-mail notices about upcoming programs.

Livermore Reads Together: In Defense of Food is sponsored by The Friends of the Livermore Library. For additional events check the library's website at www.livermore.lib.ca.us For more information contact Rosemary Dukelow at 925-373-5514.