

From homeless to home and garden

N.E. Flower Show part of the journey

By Carol Stocker
GLOBE STAFF

Flower shows are different from home, boat, and car shows. Sure, they sell things, but more than that, they're about people — people like Timna Robinson, who six years ago was living in a shelter for homeless women called Re-Vision House in Dorchester. Now, the 27-year-old has her own place and an exhibit in the New England Spring Flower Show.

Her display featuring raised beds of vegetable seedlings and a miniature greenhouse was created with other former and current Re-Vision House residents. Students in the carpentry program at Madison Park High School in Roxbury donated a miniature replica of Re-Vision House with its rainbow-colored door, a portal for 22 resident families.

"I always had a green thumb. I used to garden with my mom years ago, and I love it," said Robinson. "I went to the flower show for the first time when I was 21 and I got all excited. 'Look here! How do they do that?' And then one day, I said, 'We're going to do The Flower Show!' So I called them and asked them how to do it. They were amazed. . . . But they liked the idea and Louis Raymond, the floor designer, gave us more space and a lot of advice."

Robinson helps run the agri-

cultural training program at Re-Vision House, which includes aquaculture and hydroponics, in an 80-foot greenhouse on two formerly vacant lots that have been transformed into a market garden. Surveying the rows of greens headed for the flower show, she reflected, "People come in here with issues, sad and blue. This gives them a nice frame of thought."

Among 50 other exhibitors at the nine-day show, which opens Saturday, is Winston Flowers, which is consulting with the John F. Kennedy Library & Museum to recreate Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy's bridal bouquet in honor of her gold wedding anniversary to John F. Kennedy. Also exhibiting are Howard Garden Design of Newton, Mahoney's Garden Centers, and Mosaiculture Internationales Montreal 2003. The City of Boston Parks and Recreation Department will dedicate its exhibit, "A Tour of Boston's Neighborhood Parks," to the memory of its late commissioner, Justine Liff. "It will be good for people to see that Boston's parks are not just Boston Common and the Public Garden," said department spokeswoman Mary Hines.

It's the spirit of the volunteers and exhibitors that make the show work. Award-winning designer Peter Sadeck of Freetown has been participating in the low-er Show since it was at Suffolk Downs and he was 10, working for Allen Haskell in New Bedford. Sadeck likes the camaraderie.



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO/JANET KNOTT

The greenhouse is a highlight of this formerly vacant lot in Roxbury where women from Re-Vision House tend to a garden. They are (left-right) Shahonda Levon, Margaret Brulport, Rosetta Haynesworth, Timna (Pie) Robinson, and Judy Lieberman.

"It's a reunion thing," he said. "You see plant people you don't see all year long. Plus, it kind of gives you a start to spring. Thursday night is the big transformation night because the judging is Friday morning. Anyone that's fallen way behind in setting up, everybody chips in to help them catch up."

His flower show partner, Paul Miskovsky of Miskovsky Landscaping Inc. in Falmouth, agrees. "It's a lot of work, but it's a labor of love," he said.

The two men spend up to

\$15,000 on their exhibits. Sadeck said the modest subsidy from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, which produces the show, "gets blown away on lunch. And we spend it on tickets that we give away to our friends and families. Last year we spent \$3,000 on flower show tickets!"

Subaru of New England joins returning event sponsors Shaw's Supermarkets/Star Market, Bartlett Tree Experts, and Borders to support the 132nd annual event.

This year's show, "The Garden Journey," runs March 15-23 at

Bayside Exposition Center in Dorchester. Advance tickets are available at Shaw's, Star Markets, Borders bookstores, and participating garden centers and nurseries, and online at www.massshort.org and www.ticketweb.com.

Admission is \$15 weekdays in advance, \$16 weekdays at the door, and \$18 weekends. For those over 65, it's \$14 weekdays, \$18 weekends. Children 4-12 are \$7; younger children are free.

Tickets to the Gala Preview tomorrow can be purchased at the door. The Benefactor Preview,

5:30-9:30 p.m., costs \$250. The Supporter Preview, 7-9:30 p.m., costs \$150.

Bayside Expo Center is off the Southeast Expressway/I-93 at exit 15. Parking is \$12 per car. For public transportation, take the MBTA Red Line to the JFK/UMass stop. Bayside is a short walk away. A shuttle bus will run from the JFK/UMass stop every 15 minutes from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, for \$1. On weekdays, a shuttle will run 8:30 a.m.-7 p.m. and until 9:30 p.m. on March 18.