10TH ANNIVERSARY

GrowFood NORTHAMPTON

2010-2020

Reflections 2020

Strong Roots

FOUNDING DIRECTOR, LILLY LOMBARD

At Grow Food Northampton, our roots run deep and strong. With so many seeds, literal and metaphorical, thoughtfully planted and tended to in the last ten years, we have developed a root system that, as we celebrate our tenth anniversary year, has produced an abundance of nourishment – literal and metaphorical – for our community. As seeds need soil, oxygen, water, and the right temperature to germinate and produce roots, over the last ten years, Grow Food Northampton has flourished in the soils of Northampton, our board of directors has served as the water to our seeds, and our staff as the oxygen necessary to set roots, grow strong, and blossom. The love, support, and participation of this beautiful community -- our volunteers, donors, the children we teach, community gardeners, Tuesday Market customers, local farmers, and the people we meet through the Community Food Distribution Project, have provided the perfect temperature to nurture our seeds from germination to growth.

Because our roots run deep, we were able to meet the challenges of 2020 by providing our community with food, educational opportunities, land, and meaningful human connection:

- **Our Community Food Distribution Project delivered over 100,000 pounds of fresh produce from local farms to members of our community experiencing food insecurity;**
- **Our Community Farm provided land to farmers and community gardeners to grow food;**
- **Our Grow Food Kids program pivoted to safe in-person gardening activities and to cooking lessons in virtual classrooms;**
- **Our beloved Tuesday Market adapted to restrictive Health Department regulations to provide direct farm-to-customer access to healthy farm products for community members of all income levels by offering a SNAP match;**
- **Our Giving Garden served as not only a living laboratory for regenerative farming practices, but as a source of 8,900 pounds of organic vegetables for community partners that make meals for people who need them; and**
- **Our Farm to School program worked hand in hand with the Northampton Public School system to provide locally-grown produce for student meals, and internships for high schoolers working through the pandemic to address climate change and local food system improvements.**

In a year during which the national food system crumbled around us, the need for resilient agriculture and a just local food system became ever more clear. Industrial agribusiness, responsible for 24 percent of greenhouse gas emissions and 70 percent of water extraction globally, has never been sustainable. "Big ag" harms farmworkers and their families and is destroying the very foundation upon which it is dependent -- the precious farmland that we have left in this country. **With 75 percent of the farmland in Massachusetts lost to development since the 1940s, Grow Food Northampton's Community Farm is particularly meaningful** – a place where farmers grow food and medicinal herbs, members of our community grow their own food, and children can touch, smell, learn about, and work in the fertile soil. What is more, as we plant and reap harvests on our farm using regenerative, non-chemical practices, we maximize biosequestration, remediate climate change, and build climate resilience.

2020 has been a year of deep reckoning as this country has roiled with the living legacies of colonialism, racism, and avarice. **At Grow Food Northampton, we know that this country's entire food system functions on land stolen from indigenous peoples and later, from Black farmers.** From the African people who were kidnapped and enslaved in the 17th and 18th centuries, to the Black men who

were subjected to convict leasing after the Civil War, to migrant laborers from the Global South over the last century, our agricultural and food systems in North America have thrived only through the exploitation of these human beings deemed ultimately dispensable. As we launch our second decade of work, Grow Food Northampton is committed to self-education, reflection, and action around remediating the ways in which agricultural and food systems are inequitable and harmful to Black, indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC). We are committed to holding ourselves accountable for the ways in which we participate in this harm, and to ending it.

We know well that the land that Grow Food Northampton now stewards was brutally expropriated by white colonizers from the indigenous Nonotuck tribes that had farmed it sustainably for millennia. It is only because of a history of expulsion and genocide of the indigenous peoples of this region that Grow Food Northampton has the privilege of stewarding this land today. It is with deep respect for the Nonotuck peoples that we care for this land; we are currently exploring the ways in which we can learn from them and share the land's resources and beauty with their ancestors who still inhabit this area.

In 2021, Grow Food Northampton will be

launching a strategic planning process using a lens focused sharply on racial and economic justice. As the board and staff determine our lodestars, we know that to truly transform our local food system into an equitable, vibrant, just and sustainable one, we need all of you in this, together, with us. We welcome you: farmers, participants in our programs, thought partners, volunteers, gardeners, teachers, students, parents, families, and donors. We are only as strong as the community that supports us. There are many ways to be involved. Be in touch and help us continue to deepen our roots to achieve a just local food system.

Deeply yours,

Alisa

Alisa, *Executive Director*

Community Farm

CRIMSON & CLOVER FARM

By Michael, Associate Director

The Community Farm is the backbone of Grow Food Northampton, and where it all began. Thanks to a collaborative preservation effort of the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the City of Northampton, two farms previously known as the Bean and Allard farms were restricted from development. In 2010, TPL purchased both farms, a total of 180 acres for $2.5 million, then sold 60 of these acres to the City of Northampton to establish a recreational complex and a river greenway. On the remaining 121 acres of land, the City and the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources purchased an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) to ensure forever-protected farmland.

From enormous community organizing efforts, citizens of Northampton came together to purchase this farmland and form what is now the non-profit organization, Grow Food Northampton (GFN). In only six months, GFN raised over $670,000 to buy all 121 acres of land. And on February 25th, 2011, GFN purchased the APR farmland from TPL and the Northampton Community Farm was born.

As a community farm, we strive to meet both the interests of the community and support the farmers and gardeners who grow on the land. The Northampton Community Farm has become a permanent asset to our community by:

- **Protecting and enhancing our prime soils, water, and food quality by employing sustainable, organic practices -- and building climate resilience in the process;**
- **Improving the public health in our community by growing an abundant supply of healthy food for local markets and donation;**
- **Providing small-scale farmers with access to land by offering a flexible and innovative approach to leases and infrastructure, with a focus on economically and environmentally compatible and sustainable farm operations;**
- **Leasing community garden plots to hundreds of residents including many subsidized plots to community members struggling with economic challenges;**
- **Offering agricultural learning opportunities at our Community Farm and Community Garden through workshops and educational programs for all ages; and**
- **Inviting public celebration, events, workshops, and strolls on our farmland.**

The Community Farm is currently home to four farm operations: Crimson & Clover Farm, Song Sparrow Farm, Sawmill Herb Farm, and Joe Czajkowski and Lakeside Organics. Together with our farmers, we provide mutual support, shared learning, and shared infrastructure. Our

SAWMILL HERB FARM

anchor tenant with a 99-year lease, Crimson and Clover, receives support from us to offer subsidized CSA shares to those with SNAP benefits in order to ensure that our neighbors with lower incomes have access to fresh, healthy food options throughout the growing season. We strive to address common challenges to land access and sustainable production in unique ways for each farmer operation on the Community Farm.

The farm is also home to 300-plus community gardeners and our Giving Garden program. The garden plots and Giving Garden on the South Parcel have created opportunities for Grow Food Northampton to intentionally create a space that prioritizes regenerative agriculture. We have been able to use these spaces to experiment with farming practices that give back to the land and enhance climate resilience.

Over the ten years that we have stewarded the Community Farm, we have taken seriously our responsibility to remember and honor the original stewards of this land. Before European colonization and the genocide of indigenous peoples throughout this area and all of North America, this land was stewarded for thousands of years by the Nonotuck people, specifically the Nipmuck tribe with some of their descendants still living in the area today. We also recognize the crucial role of land and farming in mitigating the climate crisis. With both of these realities firmly in mind, we are making tangible our commitment to equity and environmental stewardship. Having just completed a 10-year Farm Plan to chart the course for our second decade, we are opening our farm to diverse and historically excluded farmers, improving the farm's infrastructure to achieve this same goal, and dedicating more staff capacity to stewardship and climate mitigation.

Together with our farmers, we provide mutual support, shared learning, and shared infrastructure.

LAKESIDE ORGANICS

NATE FRIGARD
FARMER OF CRIMSON AND CLOVER

SUSAN PINCUS
FARMER OF SAWMILL HERB FARM

JOE CZAJKOWSKI
FARMER OF LAKESIDE ORGANICS

DIEGO IRIZARRY-GEROULD
FARMER OF SONG SPARROW FARM

SONG SPARROW FARM

"This land was perfect for me to start leasing on for a number of reasons. It offered established infrastructure that I could share and wouldn't have to buy or build myself, a community of farmers and gardeners, and leasing from an organization that is dedicated to agriculture and food justice. It's been wonderful to be on this land. I love having the farm in the midst of such a vibrant community, running into people all the time as I work. It's been invaluable to be field neighbors with Ellena and the Giving Garden, as well as Susan from Sawmill Herb Farm, and grow from our interactions as farmers and friends. Leasing from Grow Food Northampton has been less like dealing with a landlord and more like a partnership. I'm grateful to be here."

Diego, Farmer of Song Sparrow Farm

Community Garden

By Pat, Community Garden Manager

Planning of the Community Garden began in 2011 with the design by the Regenerative Design Group in Greenfield, MA. The heart of the South Parcel of the Community Farm is the 7-acre Community Garden. The Garden opened during the summer of 2012 to its first group of "Pioneer Gardeners." With support from the City of Northampton, basic infrastructure was made possible such as water lines, a tool shed, a composting outhouse, picnic tables, and an edible hedgerow along Meadow Street. In 2014, the originally named Florence Organic Community Garden, or FOG, was changed to more accurately identify the Garden as a program of Grow Food Northampton -- the Grow Food Northampton Community Garden.

Since then, we have grown immensely and are currently closing our eighth season at the community garden. In this unique season, we have a lot to be grateful for. We welcomed over 80 new gardeners this year and added 25 more plots to accommodate them, giving our neighbors an opportunity to grow an abundance of food and give back to the land. Many gardeners found the Community Garden to be a good respite from the stresses of the year and a great place to be socially distanced while in community.

We welcomed over 80 new gardeners this year and added 25 more plots to accommodate them, giving our neighbors an opportunity to grow an abundance of food and give back to the land.

This year, the garden was more important than ever for those whose income changed or evaporated because of the pandemic. The ability to grow their own food was especially important. And while many of the new gardeners had little or no experience growing food, they received a lot of help from other gardeners. Carla Shafer offered many free plot consultations to help gardeners design and grow their gardens. We were even able to offer two new programs this year. Gardener Hollie Marron, an occupational therapist, obtained a small grant to support educational programming and equipment for gardeners dealing with disabilities. GFN Board member (and Master Gardener) Donna Wiley also led a tour of our Pollinator Gardens, which are grown solely to support and maintain our crucial pollinators.

The community we build in the garden is

“I come to the garden for peace, and I find it.”

Community Gardener

strong and unique every year. With the obligation of community service hours from our gardeners, we were able to sustain and bring that same community spirit to our changing programs. Many gardeners volunteered with the Community Food Distribution Project, the Tuesday Market, and the Giving Garden.

We continue to be grateful for the Informal Garden Leaders who seamlessly continue their care of communal spaces in the garden including the Medicine Garden, Edible Hedgerow, the Gooseberries, and the Bramble Patch, as well as our beloved composting outhouse. A new crew formed this year -- Wonderful Weather Women -- who founded an engaging way to keep gardeners informed of frost, lightning, heatwaves, and rainfall.

As we welcome new gardeners, we have updated our language to reflect our deepening understanding of our relationship to the land and its history. Instead of talking about “ownership” we talk about “stewardship,” and invite folks to reflect on care of the land by the Nipmuck people, from pre-colonial times. It is important to learn about the role this land played in the abolition movement with the Northampton Association for Industry and Education, as well as learning about the massive grassroots effort that put this land in the stewardship of GFN. This adds to our overall understanding that the land, the soil, the critters, as well as the people, form our garden community, and how each plays a critical role in keeping it healthy and welcoming.

Tuesday Market

By Niki, Tuesday Market Manager, and Rowyn, Market Assistant

Tuesday Market was started by Ben James and Oona Coy of Northampton in 2008 and became a program of Grow Food Northampton in 2016. Voted Best Farmers Market in the Valley year after year, Tuesday Market is a beloved space for purchasing local food and connecting with the community, and serves as a valued space for farmers to sell their produce and farm products. The market has always been committed to food access and has had incentives for SNAP customers since its inception. GFN continued this with the SNAP Match Program -- a $10 match of SNAP dollars each week, funded by community business sponsorships.

This year brought many changes and distilled the market down to its most basic function as a place for people to access food -- fresh, beautiful food, directly from local farmers. We navigated strict new safety regulations to open the market on May 12, 2020. Pandemic-related changes enforced by the Northampton Health Department included: a new market set-up, management of a 30-customer capacity, sanitizing, mask enforcement, and physical distancing cues. Managing these changes required the help of an average of two volunteers each market day to make them happen. Working with the Health Department, we were able to slowly alter the safety plan as needed over the months, eventually making more products available and welcoming live musicians.

Tuesday Market provides a community-building experience and space. But this year in the pandemic, that meant providing a safe place to shop for food, while also getting some of that sense of community connection.

An average of seven market vendors accepted HIP (Healthy Incentives Program) each week providing customers with the benefit of tremendous choice in their shopping experience. Our SNAP Match program continued to be very popular, providing

60-plus families with benefits, doubling their SNAP dollars, with the option of using their HIP benefit at market each week.

We were happy to welcome a new vendor this year, an immigrant worker-owned co-op, Riquezas Del Campo. They joined the mix of a smaller than usual, but robust lineup of vendors. An average of 10 vendors attended the market each week selling a huge variety of produce, eggs, maple products, honey, flowers, meat, cheese, plants and popsicles.

Typically, Tuesday Market provides a community-building experience and space. But this year in the pandemic, that meant providing a safe place to shop for food, while also getting some of that sense of community connection. Members of our community who struggle economically rely on our consistent support for SNAP customers. We educate new customers every week on how to make best use of their benefit and because of this, our SNAP customers grow each week. In the local agricultural scene, Tuesday Market is a sought-after market for vendors.

60+ families each week use the Tuesday Market SNAP Match program. The program allows families to double their SNAP dollars up to $10 each month.

Tuesday Market is now a Northampton institution. We will continue to deepen our roots and be part of the downtown Northampton community and greater Valley agricultural community. As some markets struggle, Tuesday Market has thrived. We hope to leverage our consistency and reputation to make positive changes for greater equity and sustainability in the future.

2020 Vendors

- Apex Farms of Shelburne Falls
- Bare Roots of Barre, VT
- Crabapple Farm of Chesterfield
- Cricket Creek Farm of Williamstown
- Crooked Stick Pops of Easthampton
- Many Graces of Easthampton
- New England Wild Edibles LLC of Amherst
- Park Hill Orchard of Easthampton
- Pie in the Sky of Northampton
- Red Barn Honey of Northampton
- Red Fire Farm of Granby
- Riquezas Del Campo of Florence
- Sage Meadow Farm of Easthampton
- Sunrise Maple Farms of Colrain
- Wingate Farm of Hinsdale, NH

Grow Food KIDS

Grow Food Kids, as we know it, officially launched during the 2016/17 school year, with generous funding from the state to pursue a pilot education program focused on healthy eating and local food in all of the elementary classrooms of the Northampton Public Schools (NPS).

Since then, the Grow Food Kids program has evolved to offer experiential learning opportunities for all students in grades K-3 in NPS and the first grade in Easthampton Public Schools, including one farm field trip in the fall or the spring to Crimson and Clover farm, and/or Grow Food Northampton's Giving Garden, and up to five classroom cooking workshops throughout the winter months. Students average four or more hands-on learning opportunities per year. This past winter, we reached over 500 students with our classroom cooking workshops before school closed due to the pandemic. **Our cooking workshops encourage adventurous eating, explore how vegetables grow, discuss the origins of different foods, and empower students to try new things and prepare their own food.** The field trips to Crimson & Clover and the Giving Garden allow students to learn about our local food system through firsthand experience.

Classroom cooking workshops reached over 500 students this winter before temporary school shutdown.

This spring, in light of the ongoing pandemic, we have kept these goals in mind as we have pivoted towards remote education. During the growing season, staff members led weekly virtual tours of the Giving Garden, educating viewers on the rich heritage of the land and cultivation of many plants on the farm and surrounding area. On our YouTube channel, we have continued to build a collection of recipe videos that students and families alike can follow along with from home.

More recently, we have piloted remote cook-

Since remote school in September, we created take-home recipe kits in order to make the program accessible for all, paired with virtual cooking classes, which we've now brought to all of the NPS second grade and third grade – reaching over 370 students!

ing workshops for all of the 1st and 2nd grade NPS classes accompanied by "take-home recipe kits," individually packaged for each of the 377 students. The kits contain all the ingredients, materials, and instructions necessary to prepare a simple recipe from home, as our goal is to offer all students equitable access to our culinary curriculum. We hosted three socially-distanced "Fall Fun Days." Located at the Hampshire Heights community garden, the Florence Heights community garden, and Meadowbrook Apartments, we provided crafts and gardening activities for youth who live in these neighborhoods. We hope to continue this effort in the spring, and bring some of our hands-on programming that we typically would offer on our farm field trips to smaller gatherings at neighborhood garden sites.

Our primary focus over the winter months will be on our remote cooking workshops and digital educational materials, and planning on-farm socially distant programs for the spring. We are evolving our programs to support students, families, and teachers, even in light of the pandemic, by providing spaces for students to form enthusiastic connections with each other, the place we live, and the food we eat.

Farm to School

By Megan, Community Engagement Coordinator, and Michael, Associate Director

The Farm to School program in Northampton was born out of our hopes to expand our Grow Food Kids programming to reach middle and high schoolers, as well as bring more community voices to our programming. A committee of Northampton Public Schools (NPS) teachers, students, and administrators, along with various community members, were brought together to lead the Farm to School efforts in the schools. In our first year, we introduced more local fruits and vegetables to the school lunch program through engagement of students in the decision-making process about which products to include, worked with students towards the implementation of district-wide composting, and provided gardening opportunities for middle and high school students. Central to all of these projects has been a commitment to equity, honoring and creating space for diverse cultural heritage, and lifting up student "choice and voice." We see this as a critical opportunity for us to empower youth leaders in the field as we work to create a just local food system.

Through our connection to the Northampton Public Schools internship program, our involvement in Northampton High School has expanded rapidly. We have worked side-by-side with three interns who have helped us create new opportunities for students and community members to engage with local sustainable agriculture in and outside of school. Projects have included the creation of recipe videos, cafeteria taste-testing, developing farmer spotlights, research on sustainable

Central to all of these projects has been a commitment to equity, honoring and creating space for diverse cultural heritage, and lifting up student "choice and voice." We see this as a critical opportunity for us to empower youth leaders in the field as we work to create a just local food system.

FARM TO SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

agriculture, and several other innovative pursuits related to the building of a just local food system.

As we have been compelled to pivot programming due to the pandemic, our approach for Farm to School engagement has shifted. Luckily, we have been able to stay connected to our student and parent audiences through our social media pages, @freshhampton. Grow Food Northampton has also donated local produce to the NPS Food Services' school lunch program, providing at least two local fruit or vegetable options per week. With these fresh additions to school-provided meals, we have been able to engage our community with local farms and new, exciting recipes.

We are constantly inspired by students' ability, with fire and creativity, to approach challenges at both the local and global levels. With their energy, we are creating approaches to sustainability, climate resilience, and an equitable food system for all.

Looking ahead, we are excited to deepen our connections with Northampton High School and JFK Middle School by bringing cooking workshops and food justice education into the classrooms. Although uncertainty still lies ahead, there is momentum and excitement from students and teachers about the possibilities of connecting more students with local food and agriculture. We are constantly inspired by students' ability, with fire and creativity, to approach challenges at both the local and global level. With their energy, we are creating approaches to sustainability, climate resilience, and an equitable food system for all. We are looking forward to what's to come from the Farm to School program!

"I was an intern with Grow Food Northampton in the winter and spring of 2020. I focused mainly on the Farm to School program with the Northampton Public Schools System and planning the Farm to School summit event, which brought together the Farm to School Committee, interested students, and community members. Although my time interning at GFN was cut short due to transitions at the beginning of the pandemic, I enjoyed the time that I spent working with them. The Farm to School program is a great program that tries to get fresh, local food into school lunches and breakfasts. As a high school student myself at the time, it was amazing to see that Grow Food Northampton staff wanted to know what students thought and what suggestions they had. It made me feel great that I could help with the process of taking what the students suggested and turning it into reality. Overall, I really enjoyed my internship with Grow Food Northampton and I hope that their programs and influence in the school system continue to grow."

Zoe Bunk-Sizer, Farm to School Intern

Giving Garden

GrowFood SHARES *Focused on Food Justice*

By Ellena, Giving Garden Manager, and Jules, Terracorps Member

With the inception of the Grow Food Northampton organic Community Garden in 2012, several gardeners grew extra produce in their own plots for donation to local organizations helping to feed members of the community experiencing food insecurity. However, in 2015, the gardeners expanded these efforts to create the Giving Garden on its own parcel of land adjacent to the Community Garden. In 2016, the Giving Garden received a generous grant from Harvard Pilgrim Health Care to further expand programming and vegetable production.

Over the last several years, the Giving Garden has evolved from a pure focus on cost-efficient vegetable production for food donation into a more multifaceted effort to become an outdoor classroom for thousands of local youth, a living laboratory for regenerative farming, and a community space. In 2019, the Giving Garden received its second Harvard Pilgrim Health Care grant with a focus on volunteerism, and its first dedicated staff member to manage all components of the program year round.

8,900 pounds of fresh produce grown and donated to Star Light Center, Manna Community Kitchen, CSO Respite, and Easthampton Community Center.

The Giving Garden thrives on our close collaborations with local partners: Manna Community Kitchen, Easthampton Community Center (ECC), Star Light Center, and CSO Respite, all of which play vital roles in serving community members experiencing food insecurity. This year, as everyone shifted to adapt their programming during the COVID-19 crisis, we worked to support the increased needs. Manna Kitchen expanded to offer meals seven days a week, and we supplied produce for the head chef, Lee Anderson, to prepare delicious and creative meals day in and day out. With the Giving Garden's fresh organic produce, Star Light cooked and delivered meals to their members. Robin at ECC consistently praised our top-quality vegetables as she coordinated the record-high numbers of clients visiting the center. By the end of the 2020 season, we had delivered 8,900 pounds of fresh, organic, top-quality produce of 30 different crops, including fresh herbs, strawberries, and shiitake mushrooms. Our produce was harvested and delivered on the same day.

This season, the limitations imposed by COVID-19 compelled us all to get creative about how to make connections with each other. When the pandemic disrupted our daily routines, the garden became a place of solace for people who may have otherwise become more isolated. We hosted vibrant volunteer sessions three times a week in which gardeners and community members could connect with each other in a safe and welcoming atmosphere while they planted, tended, weeded, and harvested produce.

Sadly, this year we were not able to host large groups and field trips in the Giving Garden, which meant that there were fewer volunteers than in previous years; a total of 41 volunteers contributed roughly 300 hours, as compared to 116 volunteers and over 500 hours last season. Nonetheless, the volunteer spirit in the Giving Garden was strong. One volunteer described a session by saying: "It was a joy to harvest basil this morning surrounded by the energy of all the other volunteers and the beauty of the garden." Four student interns from Mt. Holyoke and Smith College also joined us this season. They went above and beyond their volunteer responsibilities and formed a close-knit Giving Garden crew. We also continued our collaboration with Abundance Farm, that brought its teen program "Shefa on the Road," to the Giving Garden to help with projects.

This season, we tried out a new live weekly video series in the garden to highlight our regenerative growing practices and feature crops throughout the season. With our videos, we reached our local community, as well as friends and family spread all throughout the country.

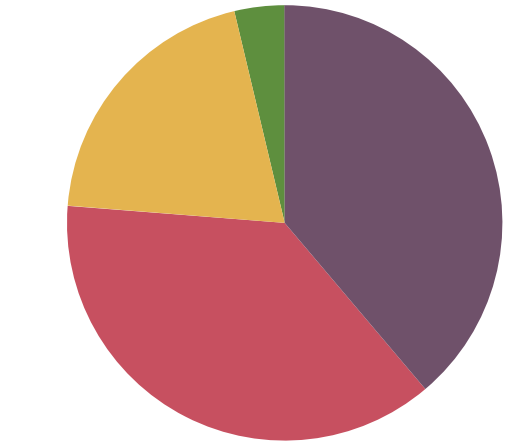
Check out our Giving Garden live videos on our Youtube Channel

For the second year in a row, Sawmill Herb Farm grew all of the plant seedlings for the Giving Garden onsite at our community farm. We continued to use compost, cover cropping, and straw and leaf mulches to retain moisture, protect the farm from erosion, and build soil and organic matter for years to come.

Produce Grown This Year

Basil
Beets
Bok Choi
Cabbage
Carrots
Chard
Cherry Tomatoes
Chives
Cilantro
Cucumbers
Delicata Squash
Dill
Eggplant
Garlic
Herbs
Kale
Lettuce
Mushrooms
Parsley
Pickling Cucumbers
Potatoes
Radish
Scallions
Scapes
Spinach
Strawberry
Summer Squash
Sweet Potatoes
Thyme
Tomatoes
Tulsi
Zucchini

2020 Giving Garden Donations by Partner Destination



Grow Food
KIDS

Community Food Distribution Project

GrowFood SHARES *Focused on Food Justice*

By Francie, Food Access Coordinator, and Michael, Associate Director

Over the last eight months, the CFDP has delivered food weekly to a total of 15 different sites throughout Northampton, both family and senior housing. That's about 800 households and approximately 1,900 individuals, including 50% of all residents at Northampton Housing Authority properties.

The Community Food Distribution Project (CFDP) was created in April 2020 when the Northampton Survival Center had to close its building because of COVID-19. Grow Food Northampton, the Survival Center, and Community Action Pioneer Valley came together in a matter of days to figure out a way to get food safely to members of the Northampton community who are experiencing food insecurity. Over the last eight months, the CFDP has delivered food weekly to a total of 15 different sites throughout Northampton, both family and senior housing. That's about 800 households and approximately 1,900 individuals, including 50 percent of all residents at Northampton Housing Authority properties.

Grow Food Northampton's role in pandemic food delivery has been unique in that the CFDP, besides providing delivery, has also used funding to purchase fresh, organic produce from local farms to support them through these uncertain times. The produce is then distributed to CFDP participants along with the Survival Center's pantry goods. In addition, the CFDP purchases thousands of dollars worth of produce for two local restaurants for the preparation of meals that are distributed twice a week to families, and provides fresh vegetables in the Northampton Public Schools free meals program.

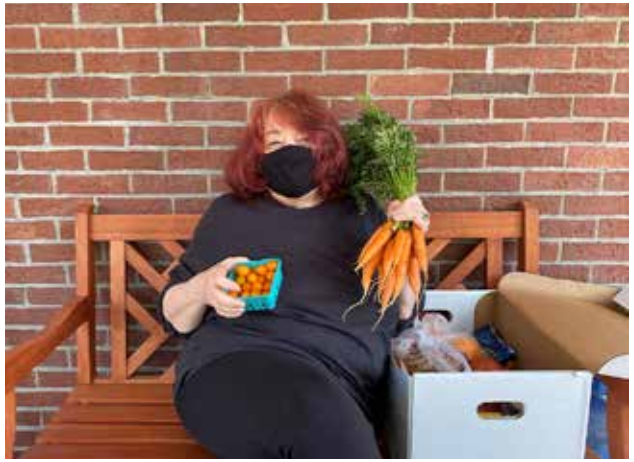
These are the important facts, the information vital for funding purposes and grant writing, and generally quantifying large scale community impact. But the thing that makes our work rewarding, and makes this program more than just a delivery service, is being able

to see and hear directly about the impact that the CFDP has on peoples' individual lives. A few weeks ago, we got a phone call from a participant who described how weekly delivery has allowed her to keep her anxiety about COVID down, and also to reliably balance her food budget, knowing that she has both pantry items and fresh produce coming each week. The vegetables have encouraged her daughter to cook, and she has been able to trade some of her food with others, and also give some away.

"It is incredible how much fresh produce is made available [through the CFDP] and is particularly special to me and my family. The thing about having enough fresh, nutritious food is that I can allow my children to explore with cooking, while usually I can't afford to do that. Usually, I have to plan out our meals a month in advance. The mental work that it takes to plan and organize our meals so that we don't run out of food or healthy ingredients takes up so much space. Having the ingredients, and enough, is such a relief that I can't even put into words how helpful it is for our family."

CFDP Participant

This last bit she really emphasized as important, because she said that being able to give something to others has felt really good—something that often gets overlooked regarding those with fewer means: the ability to not just survive, but also to be generous, and to have something to give as well.



The CFDP will continue to deliver food through the winter and beyond -- to 14 sites throughout the city -- to ensure that Northampton's most vulnerable residents can continue to be safe and nourished during a season when produce can be scarce and expensive. Along with bad weather, quarantine, and lack of transportation, it can be difficult or impossible for them to get what they need. One of the most gratifying things about the CFDP is that although it was conceived as an emergency program, it has fulfilled a need that existed before and will extend beyond the pandemic. People who previously could not make it to the Northampton Survival Center (NSC) due to physical challenges or lack of transportation are now getting what they need, and NSC has plans, ultimately, to continue the delivery program beyond the pandemic, due to the partnership between our two organizations and the success of the CFDP. When the pandemic and post-pandemic recovery period end, the CFDP will also end, but our community will be stronger for both the personal and organizational connections forged during this crisis.

It is incredible the ways in which a true community-based project with over 200 volunteers, including food recipients themselves, has continued with such spirit and strength. We have rallied many partners who have worked with us to distribute items such as books, bicycles, and art supplies for children; PPE such as masks and sanitizer; information about community resources; and personal care products.

A more recent development from our strong connections with residents and those who receive food deliveries has led us to create a participant advisory committee, who will help shape the future of this project and of food accessibility throughout Northampton. I hope that others will be inspired by the CFDP to see what can be accomplished through creativity, cooperation, and relationship building, so that when hard times inevitably hit, nobody is left out in the cold.

Farms Supported:

- Apex Orchards of Shelburne Falls
- Astarte Farm of Hadley
- Crimson & Clover Farm of Florence
- Good Alchemy Agriculture of Northampton
- Hart Farm of Conway
- Joe Czajkowski & Lakeside Organics
- Flora Farm of Haydenville
- Kitchen Garden Farm of Sunderland
- Nourse Farms of Whately
- Red Fire Farm of Montague
- Red Barn Honey of Northampton
- Riquezas del Campo of Hatfield
- Riverland Farm of Sunderland
- Song Sparrow Farm of Florence
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As of December 11th, 2020

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