

2019  
IMPACT REPORT

PROJECT  
GROWS!



# A YEAR IN REVIEW

When visiting The Farm at Project GROWS, one thing you'll hear is the need for healthy soil. As part of our sustainable farming practices, we test samples of our soil at the end of each year to monitor its health and quality and help us plan for the next growing season. Similarly, our 2019 Impact Report is a way for us to look back on the past year while also looking ahead. This report maps the creativity and leadership of our personnel and partners over the last year as well as the generosity and impact of our donors. Together, these pages reflect a vibrant organization, akin to healthy soil, that through our work together is nurturing a resilient and just food system.

2019 was indeed an outstanding year! In our service with you, we delivered 6,138 hours of "hands-on kid instruction" in gardening, nutrition, and cooking with youth in Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County. We also launched the *Harvest of the Month* program in Waynesboro elementary schools and continued HOM programming in all Staunton City schools. Our farmer's markets and the food access programs supported by these markets experienced an astounding year of growth, and we celebrated another summer of our Youth-Run Farm Stand!

We also marked transitions with Jenna Clarke Piersol, former Executive Director and Courtney Cranor, former Interim Director and Immediate Past Board Chair. We are forever grateful for their years of service and tremendous impact on our community! Their leadership, with the passion and talents of Nichole, Laura, Clara, and Megan as well as our Fellows, Interns, and Summer Youth Staff has built a foundation for flourishing. This ethic of leadership in our personnel along with our partners, donors, and board creates a healthy organization, maintains fiscal well-being, and emboldens partnerships now and for the coming years.

As we compose this reflection in June of 2020, we are living in an extraordinary moment and the challenges to our world are many. Indeed our mission and work in public health, food access and sustainable community food systems has greater need and urgency now, and we need you! Together, we are resilient and will continue to build healthy soil through growing, educating, and advocating for the best of health and the brightest futures for our youth and families!

Tom Brenneman  
DIRECTOR

James Goalder  
CHAIRPERSON,  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS



PROJECT  
**GROWS!**



"I like this farm because it's OUR farm."  
BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB CAMPER

# IMPACT OVERVIEW

"Having access to a farmer's market where I can use my SNAP-EBT card and get it matched has had a major impact on my health."

FARMER'S MARKET CUSTOMER

"My daughter now knows more than I do regarding how to grow & pick fruits and vegetables."

PARENT OF LITTLE GROWERS CAMPER

## FOOD EDUCATION

HOSTED **1,134** student visits  
on **41** on-farm field trips

LED **45** farm to school tastings reaching  
**4,362** unique students with **18,117** interactions at **11** schools across **3** districts

CREATED **2** new cooking series with youth:  
**Let's Eat!**, a 6-week family cooking program at Dixon Educational Center and **Young Chefs**, a 4-week youth cooking program in collaboration with the Boys & Girls Club of Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County

TAUGHT our **2**nd year of garden lessons at Dixon Educational Center where students:  
• Participated in **10** garden lessons and experienced **2** garden tastings  
• Engaged in planting, harvesting, and tasting potatoes from their own school garden and served on their lunch line!  
• Supported student-directed harvests of patty pan squash, kale, radishes, and helped students to successfully grow flowers in their classrooms

CELEBRATED the **3**rd year of our Youth-Run Farm Stand with the Boys and Girls Club in Waynesboro

PROVIDED **1,119** pounds of food to Staunton City Schools and Waynesboro Public Schools through regular produce sales and donations

ENABLED **118** families to spend **\$5,362** in SNAP (*Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*) benefits on locally grown food at our farmer's markets

CATALYZED nearly **\$105,000** in the local food economy through Project GROWS farmer's markets - **\$57,822** at North Augusta Farmer's Market (27% increase from 2018) and **\$46,918** at Waynesboro Farmer's Market (138% increase from 2018)



Photo by Norm Shafer

## ON THE FARM

The Farm at Project GROWS is located on the historic Berry Farm in Augusta County, VA. What began in 2012 as a small, half-acre plot supporting seasonal vegetables has blossomed into a four-acre production farm oriented to year-round food access through greenhouses, high tunnels, and a quilt patch of garden plots with buffering pollinator habitats. **2019 brought an unprecedented year of growth to the farm!** We increased our total food servings of farm-grown produce resulting in a 61% increase in total pounds of produce donated across our communities and a 43% increase in pounds of produce sold directly to Staunton City Schools and Waynesboro Public Schools.

**589**  
unique  
volunteers  
donated over  
2,100 hours  
of time

Children and youth numbering in the thousands experienced Project GROWS fresh produce on the farm, regularly in their school cafeterias, at special farm to school tastings and *Summer Feeding* events, at food demonstrations in community markets such as our **Youth-Run Farm Stand** at the Boys & Girls Club and the Project GROWS Staunton-Augusta Health Department Farmer's Market, and in meals prepared at home with their families. Project GROWS' Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program provided food for over 20 local families, including three shares donated in this 2019 season to partnering faith communities.

Volunteers generously donated over 2,100 hrs in 2019 across the many programs of Project GROWS! 2019 was indeed an incredible year in strengthening (y)our programs and furthering (y)our impact on the health of children, youth, and their families across our communities.

## CAMP SPOTLIGHT

2019 marked the launch of **Little GROWers Camp**, our first-ever summer day camp on The Farm at Project GROWS, produced in partnership with The Blue Ridge Children's Museum.

The inaugural Little GROWers Camp consisted of 23 campers, ages 5-8 who spent five consecutive mornings on the farm exploring the journey of a vegetable from farm to table. Little GROWers campers worked together to make snacks and simple salads from vegetables they harvested, taste-tested a variety of produce, and tended the garden. With this great partnership, we are excited about expanded camp offerings in the coming years!

Grew 52 different kinds of fresh fruits and vegetables!

**12,698**  
total pounds of produce grown  
(Increase of 24% from 2018)



## IN OUR SCHOOLS HARVEST OF THE MONTH

Partnering with Staunton City Schools, Waynesboro Public Schools, and the *Get Fresh Program*, Project GROWS launched a new food tasting program in 2019 called **Harvest of the Month**.

Students from **10 different elementary, middle, and high schools** were provided opportunities to sample and explore seasonal locally-sourced produce in their cafeterias throughout the school year! **Harvest of the Month** is designed to both connect students to where their food comes from and to empower students to influence food choice in school meals. In this first year, **Harvest of the Month** contributed to a 43% increase in Project GROWS produce sales to schools!

Through **Harvest of the Month**, school children encountered **7 different vegetables**—including radishes, sweet peppers, cabbage, and more—sourced from The Farm at Project GROWS and other local farms. A total **45 Harvest of the Month** tastings sparked over **18,000 interactions** with students, encouraging youth and their families to explore new vegetables at home as they tested out our simple *Harvest of the Month* recipes. On the horizon for 2020 are even more opportunities to deepen these farm to school connections.

- ★ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps
- ★ Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
- ★ Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

### IN OUR COMMUNITIES FOOD ACCESS AT FARMER'S MARKETS

**Food Access** is a cornerstone of our mission, and today we remain as committed as ever to addressing the persistent food access gap experienced by many households across our communities. With support from Virginia Fresh Match, we offer a SNAP Matching Program to more than double the value of SNAP\* benefits for purchases of fresh local food at our farmer's markets. This program provides families the opportunity to stretch their budgets while empowering consumer choice and strengthening our local economy. In part through robust marketing and outreach, SNAP sales at Project GROWS markets tripled in 2019 from the previous year, resulting in over \$5,000 SNAP dollars invested in local food purchases.

Additionally, food access through WIC\* and Senior FMNP\* vouchers increased by over \$2,000 at the Project GROWS - The Farmer's Market @ the Health Department! In fact, **88% of all FMNP vouchers distributed in Augusta County in 2019 were redeemed at this market**, proving just how integrally important this market is in building healthy food access in our community. Indeed, expansion of nutrition incentive initiatives at our markets this year contributed to an overall 60% increase in vendor sales at our markets, which in turn brought



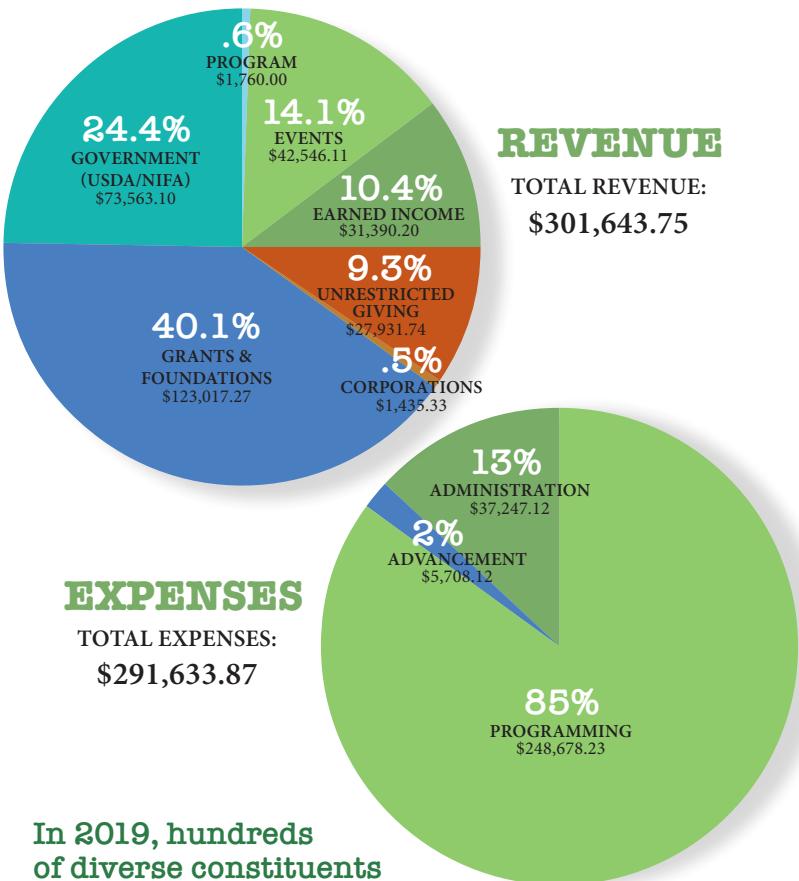
more local food into our community while strengthening our local food economy.

Parents are asking for the recipes because their previous veggie-haters are loving these items now!

NUTRITION SERVICES STAFF

# FINANCIALS, PARTNERS, & YOU!

# LEADERSHIP & PERSONNEL



## In 2019, hundreds of diverse constituents

came together with a spirit of incredible generosity in support of Project GROWS. Through the Taste of Spring Plant Sale to the Annual Gala—donors, friends, and partners gave generously across the year in support of the long-term health and wellbeing of thousands of youth and families in our communities. We wish to extend a special recognition to major donors and foundations in 2019.

### \$1,000 - \$2,499

- Lance Barton
- Community Action Partnership of Staunton, Augusta and Waynesboro
- 3XF Fishersville (formerly known as Crossfit 3xF)
- Cary Dahl
- Nell Desmond
- James Goalder
- KK Homes, Kathleen Kellett Ward
- LB McCray
- Grace Schultz
- Kristen Shuyler
- Stonewall Jackson Hotel & Conference Center
- SubRosa Supper Club
- Tiny Fields Farm, Laura Beth Dawson

### \$2,500 - \$4,999

- Consumers Auto Warehouse, Andrew Wiley
- Judith Spencer Merrill
- Cecile C. Wheeler and Kenneth M. Wheeler, Jr.

### \$5,000 - \$9,999

- Anonymous
- Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge

### \$10,000 - \$24,999

- Allegheny Mountain Institute
- Augusta Health Foundation
- Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation
- David and Jeanne Geiman
- United Way of Staunton, Augusta County and Waynesboro
- Community Supported Agriculture Subscribers and Farmers Market Vendors

### \$25,000 - \$49,999

- Anonymous
- Sponsors & Attendees of 2019 Gala
- Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth

### \$50,000+

- USDA - National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)



## Board

James Goalder • PRESIDENT  
 Courtney Cranor • IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT  
 Grace Schultz • TREASURER  
 Nell Desmond  
 Tony Davenport  
 David Geiman  
 Damon Strickland  
 Deborah Bundy-Carpenter  
 Shana Meganck  
 Sophie Lambert

## Staff

Courtney Cranor • INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
 Jenna Clarke Piersol • EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
 Laura Faircloth • DIRECTOR OF FARM OPERATIONS  
 Clara Metzler, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF FARM OPERATIONS  
 Nichole Barrows • DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION  
 Megan Marshall • DIRECTOR OF FOOD ACCESS  
 John McCray • DEVELOPMENT MANAGER  
 Audrey Carter • COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECTS COORDINATOR, PHASE II FELLOW,  
 ALLEGHENY MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE  
 Freddy Carruth • EDUCATION ASSISTANT, PHASE II FELLOW, ALLEGHENY MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE

## Interns & Partner Organizations

Lauren Buckhout • BRIDGEWATER COLLEGE  
 Ryan Davenport • JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY  
 Lexi Deak • JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY  
 Caroline Fleury • JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY  
 Emily Getty • BRIDGEWATER COLLEGE  
 Kyleigh Jenkins • JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

## Youth Staff

Samantha Baker  
 Erika Dabney  
 Rheannon Fultz  
 Noussaiba Garti



# GROWing Forward

FINISH STRONG!

RAISE THE ROOF ON OUR BARN!

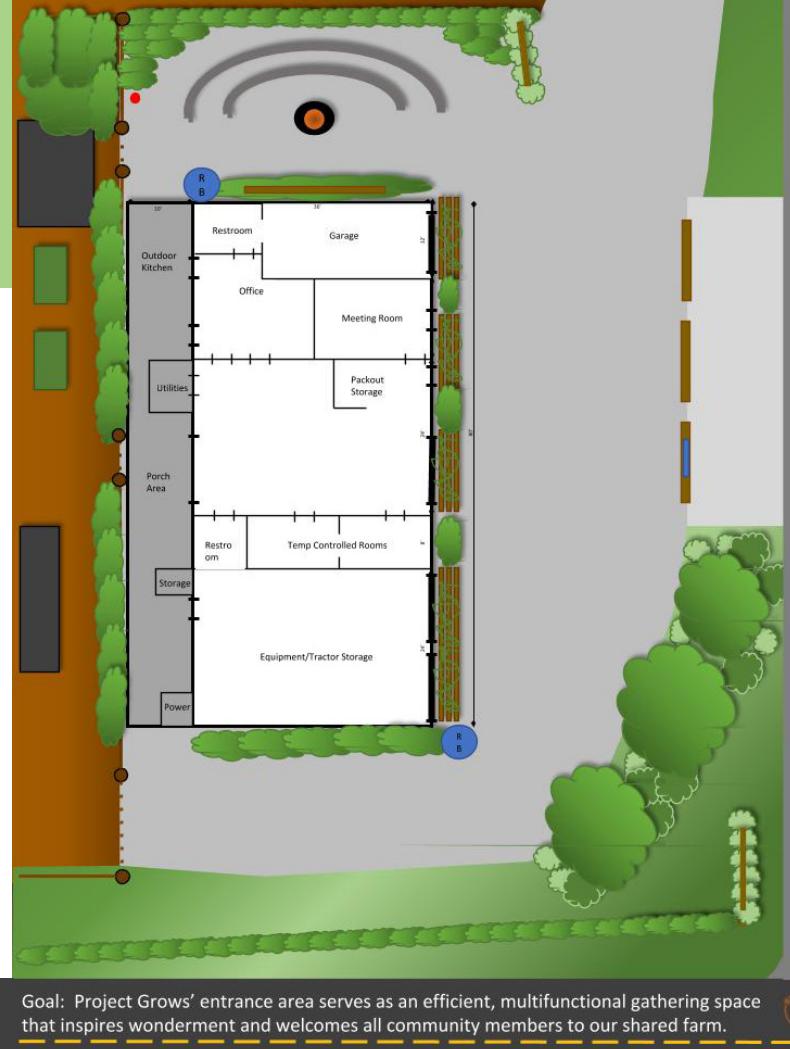
Our Last \$30K To Go!

## The Barn at Project GROWS:

- is a year-around, fully-accessible, multi-purpose facility
- will host our educational programs, serve as an office and meeting space, support food safety in the indoor packhouse for fruits and vegetables, and facilitate nutrition programs in an interactive outdoor kitchen!
- is a **\$150,000** capital project close at hand!

With your generous support,  
let's raise the final **\$30,000** for  
The Barn at Project GROWS!

Donate at: [www.projectgrows.org/give](http://www.projectgrows.org/give)  
OR contact: [director@projectgrows.org](mailto:director@projectgrows.org)



Goal: Project Grows' entrance area serves as an efficient, multifunctional gathering space that inspires wonderment and welcomes all community members to our shared farm.



Photo by Norm Shafer

Project GROWS  
608 Berry Farm Road  
Staunton, VA 24401  
[www.projectgrows.org](http://www.projectgrows.org)



Project GROWS' mission is to improve the health of children and youth in Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County. We are changing kids' health by connecting them to fresh local vegetables through hands-on food education and access to nutritious produce.