

ANNUAL HARVEST REPORT



2017



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

This Harvest Report reflects some major accomplishments for The Big Garden, all of which would have been hard to imagine just a few years ago. We are growing healthy food, healthy kids, and healthy communities on a larger scale than we ever have before, and all of it is because of your support. We have a lot to be grateful for!

A year and a half ago we took a leap of faith and purchased our Big Garden campus. This space has become a home base for all of our work. We've hosted hundreds of people for workshops, garden classes, tours, and events here. We've grown 15,000 organic vegetable seedlings and thousands of pounds of fresh produce in order to provide access to fresh, nutritious food for all people, no matter where they live or how much money they have. And we've added chickens and bees to what has truly become an urban farm. In July of this year we paid off our campus in full and are now debt free! To everyone who donated, who volunteered, who spread the word about our work: all of you helped make this happen, and we are deeply grateful.

Our programming continues to grow as well. This summer we taught 10 weeks of garden-based education classes to some 900 low-income children and youth. These kids learned where their food comes from by growing, cooking, and eating it themselves. And if you think kids won't eat fresh vegetables, just get them involved in growing them. We have kids who clamor for kale and kohlrabi! All the kids we work with say they are more likely to eat vegetables if they grow them themselves. If we want to address diet-based illnesses such as childhood obesity and poor nutrition, we need more kids gardening.

Our middle school program, Garden to Table, is now at six middle schools, and we are offering Farm to School program at six schools as well. In addition, our Volunteers in Mission program has provided life-changing service opportunities to hundreds of youth.

All of this is because of the generous support of individuals, local foundations, congregations, and the Great Plains United Methodist Conference. To all of you who've supported our work: thank you. We are looking forward to a bountiful 2018 as we grow healthy food, healthy kids, and healthy communities.

Sincerely,



Nathan Morgan
Executive Director
nmorgan@BigGarden.org



*Photo courtesy of
Omaha Community Foundation*

HIGHLIGHTS

New Garden Builds

Field Club Elementary School | Omaha

Westside Early Learning Center | Omaha

Butler Gast YMCA | Omaha

Ponca Elementary School | Omaha

Ashland Park-Robbins Elementary School | Omaha

Park East Park | Omaha

Gomez Elementary School | Omaha

ENCAP | Omaha

Madonna School | Omaha

New Covenant United Methodist Church | Wichita, KS

LaCygne United Methodist Church | LaCygne, KS

First United Methodist Church | Ottawa, KS

Broken Bow United Methodist Church | Broken Bow, NE

Faith Westwood United Methodist Church/Millard Central

Middle School | Omaha

*Many other gardens were rebuilt or expanded.

Farmers Market Tours

In partnership with the Visiting Nurse Association Cooking Matters program, we offered 13 free tours of Omaha-area Farmers Markets, teaching nearly 100 participants, mostly women & children, how to select, purchase, and prepare fresh garden produce. 2017 was our first year offering this program.



Volunteers

Throughout the year, hundreds of volunteers tended gardens, stuffed envelopes, staffed booths, painted faces, washed pots, planted seeds, swept floors, scrubbed walls, and more. Volunteers in Mission (VIM) teams: 13
Individual volunteers: 225+

HIGHLIGHTS



Cultivation

Using organic growing practices, our staff & volunteers grew more than 15,000 non-GMO herbs, vegetables, and perennials. Many of these were also heirloom varieties. Seedlings were distributed to our education gardens and sold to the public to support our programs.



Nature Camp

Weekly summer drop-in classes for children ages 3-8, held at our campus. Themes included pollinators, soil & composting, pickle-making, jams & smoothies, plant art, and farm to table.

Participants: 120



Gifford Park Neighborhood Market

Through a partnership with South Omaha & Butler-Gast YMCAs, Big Garden staff + YMCA Youth Volunteer Corps had a booth at 10 weekly markets, selling produce from their garden. Sales supported youth programs.

HIGHLIGHTS

Growing Gardeners Workshop Series

In partnership with City Sprouts, we offer four seasons of engaging, hands-on workshops that feature skills and techniques for every gardener and urban farmer.

All workshops are free or low-cost.

Total workshops in 2017: 58

Participants (thru Nov.): 407



Grow-Your-Own Program & New Roots Internship

This summer, our 11 garden educators logged more than 4,620 hours planning & teaching at 35 unique sites in the metro-

Omaha area. More than 900 children, youth, and adults participated weekly over 10 weeks. Our curriculum covers soil health, planting techniques, pollinators, permaculture, food systems, local foods, harvesting, and cooking. We are teaching participants the skills necessary to grow, cook, and preserve garden produce.

Farm to School

Farm to School is a national program that has three components: school garden installation, garden education, and local foods procurement. We install edible school gardens and bring our educators into the classroom to share gardening, cooking, nutrition, and preservation skills.

Participating Schools:

Ashland Park Robbins Elementary School: 8 weeks

South Omaha Learning Center: 8 weeks

Fontenelle Elementary School: 18 weeks

Ponca Elementary School: 8 weeks

Lothrop Magnet Elementary School: 8 weeks

Educare at Kellom Elementary School: 8 weeks

Total classes: 58

Participants reached: 159



HIGHLIGHTS



Seed to Market/ Garden to Table Program

Through the Collective for Youth program, we teach after-school gardening classes in 6 Omaha middle schools. Participants learn to grow vegetables and herbs in their school garden as well as how to properly harvest, cook, and preserve these crops through various methods. This program specifically highlights STEAM education through plant science and organic gardening techniques, nutrition, and healthy lifestyles.

Participating Schools:

Monroe Middle School: 42 weeks

McMillan Middle School: 42 weeks

Marrs Middle School: 42 weeks

Nathan Hale Middle School: 18 weeks

Norris Middle School: 18 weeks

Morton Middle School: 18 weeks

Total classes: 274

Participants reached: 1276

Our Campus

- Got chickens
- Installed beehives
- Erected an insect hotel
- Installed a rain garden
- Established mushrooms
- Planted fruiting trees & shrubs:
elderberry & raspberry
- Planted native pollinators & medicinals:
yarrow, echinachae, black-eyed susan,
grey coneflower, and more!
- Planted many vegetables & herbs including:
bush beans, tomatoes, okra, kohlrabi, garlic,
sweet potatoes, greens, a squash patch,
an herb spiral, and more!



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Note: *If your name was omitted from this list, please accept our sincerest apologies and contact us so we may properly recognize your gift. Furthermore, we are not given names of groups or individuals who donate through the United Methodist Women New York office, so we are unable to recognize you.*

GROUP/ORGANIZATION DONORS

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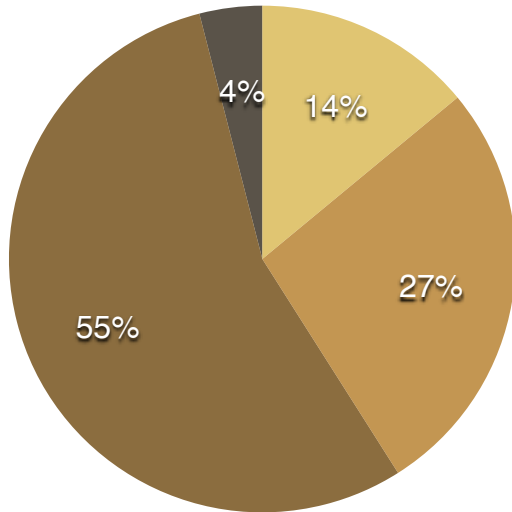
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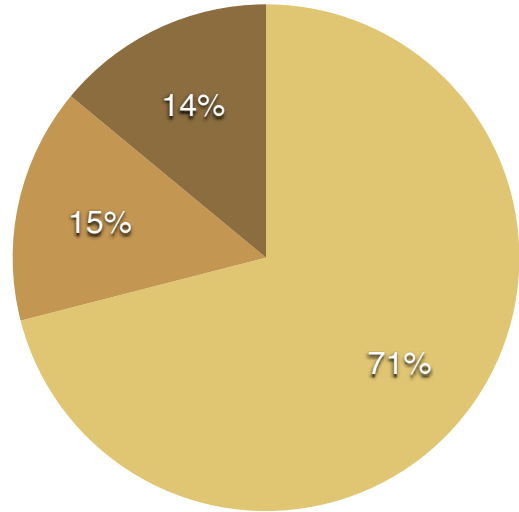
FINANCIALS

Income through 9/30/17
\$496,939



● Donations ● United Methodist Church
● Grants ● Earned Income

Expenses through 9/30/17
\$398,780



● Personnel ● Programming
● Operating

IN-KIND DONORS

The following farms provided food, discounts, tours, or served as visiting farmers for our classes:

Big Muddy Urban Farm - Brent, Kia, Emily, Taylor, & Cadence
 Deer Ridge Greenhouse
 Doe's & Diva's Dairy
 Heartland Organics - Gene & Dorrie Gage
 Little Mountain Farm - Ali Clark
 Loess Roots - Rod Angeroth
 Miller Dohrmann Farm
 New Earth Farm & Goods - Jonathan and Catherine Dodd
 Old Tree Farm
 One Farm - Danelle Myer
 Rhizosphere Farm
 Rolling Acres Farm - Denise O'Brien and Larry Harris
 Wild Rose Farm
 Willow Lane Greenhouse



The following individuals made significant donations to our campus and/or classes:

Clinton Hall & Brian Hiser - chickens
 Matt Noble - mushrooms
 Bruce Phillips - music
 Fred Richart - honey + demonstrations
 Hayden Stessman - painted greenhouses, built tables
 Andy Szatko - rain garden
 Kent Templien - bees
 Scott Yahnke - moving compost

Additional thanks to the countless volunteers who donated their time and energy to support our work.

LEADERSHIP

Staff

Nathan Morgan, Executive Director
Cait Caughey, Director of Education
Matt Freeman, Director of Operations & Development
Jaimee Trobough, Director of Marketing & Communications
Stephanie Finklea, Education Coordinator
Kay Wilwerding, Education Assistant & Volunteer Coordinator
Matthew Cronin, Program Coordinator
Terry Salem, part-time Education Assistant
Erin Higgins, part-time Education Assistant

Summer Interns

Kate Humphreys
Bradley Christian-Sallis
Taylor Dollison
Terry Salem
Erin Higgins
Andrew Weeks
Clare Maakestad
Olivia Gahan

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Aida Amoura, Teacher at Conestoga Elementary
Marcia Ghali Bergren, LIMHP | MSW
Dwayne Brown, Principal Architect Slate Architecture

Mission

The Big Garden's mission is to cultivate food security by developing community gardens, creating opportunities to serve, and providing education on issues related to hunger.





The Big Garden
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Omaha, NE 68152
info@BigGarden.org

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