

ANNUAL HARVEST REPORT



2018



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

Another growing season has come to a close, and it gives us a moment to reflect on a successful year at The Big Garden. In 2018, our educators helped more than 1500 low-income children and youth learn how to grow their own produce and lead healthier lives through our garden programming. These kids tell us stories about how the garden is the best part of their day, and we share in their excitement. They also tell us stories about taking produce home from the garden on Friday, because they aren't sure they will have enough to eat through the weekend. Regardless of whether the stories bring happiness or tears, we are grateful every day to be able to do this work.

The year began in our greenhouses where we grew nearly 30,000 organic vegetable, herb, and flower seedlings. We also began our Garden to Table middle school program while there was still snow on the ground. In March, we launched our new Giving Grove community orchard program by planting fruit trees in low-income neighborhoods and teaching residents how to maintain them. By April, we were teaching elementary school kids how to start early season crops in their school gardens through our new Farm to School program. In May we hired seven outstanding New Roots summer education interns to teach our Grow-Your-Own summer program to low-income kids. In our biggest week of the summer we taught 973 kids!

As summer moved into fall, we ramped up our elementary and middle school programming again. And we were glad to see that our program evaluation shows that the kids who participate in our programming report they are much more likely to eat fresh produce. While our major focus is children and youth, we understand that adults often need a little help getting access to and learning how to cook fresh produce. Through partnerships with CHI Health and Cooking Matters, we led farmers market tours for adults on WIC and SNAP nutrition assistance programs. In 2019 we are excited to partner with CHI Health to roll out our new mobile kitchen that will bring our programming to even more people!

It has been another bountiful year at The Big Garden. We are grateful to everyone who partners with us in this work. From individuals and churches, to local foundations, garden partners, and schools: we couldn't do any of this without you. Together, we are growing healthy food, healthy kids and healthy communities.

With gratitude,



Nathan Morgan
Executive Director
nmorgan@BigGarden.org



*Photo courtesy of
Omaha Community Foundation*

HIGHLIGHTS

New Garden Builds

Gateway Elementary School | Omaha, NE
Magdalene House | Omaha, NE
Conestoga Elementary School | Omaha, NE
Morton Middle School | Omaha, NE
Nathan Hale Middle School | Omaha, NE
Lewis & Clark Middle School | Omaha, NE
United Methodist Church | Colby, KS
United Methodist Church | Dakota City, NE
Christ United Methodist Church | Schuyler, NE
Norris Middle School | Omaha, NE (rebuild)

*Roughly 16 other gardens were improved or expanded.

Farmers Market Tours

In partnership with Cooking Matters, we offered **17 free tours** of Omaha-area Farmers Markets, teaching **214 participants**, mostly women & children, how to select, purchase, and prepare fresh garden produce. Participants also received **\$930** worth of market bucks to spend!



Volunteers

Throughout the year, hundreds of volunteers tended gardens, stuffed envelopes, staffed booths, painted faces, washed pots, planted seeds, swept floors, planted trees, & more. Volunteers in Mission (VIM) teams: **7**
Individual volunteers: **175+**

HIGHLIGHTS

Giving Grove Partnership

In March, we launched a community orchard program in partnership with Giving Grove in Kansas City. This program has enabled us to plant 61 trees and 45 brambles at 8 sites around the Omaha-metro this year. These trees & brambles will produce more than 270,000 pounds of food over their lifetime!

Grow-Your-Own Program & New Roots Internship

This summer we had 7 interns (including two certified teachers) who logged 2,940 hours gardening & teaching children, youth, and adults at 33 sites across Omaha! Our educators taught a combined average of 76 classes each week, even reaching 974 participants one week!

Our curriculum covers soil health, planting techniques, pollinators, permaculture, food systems, local foods, harvesting, and cooking. We are teaching participants all the skills they need to grow, cook, preserve, and eat fresh garden produce!



Farm to School

Our Farm to School program reaches low-income elementary-age children, teaching them gardening, cooking, nutrition, and preserving skills.

This year, we expanded our Farm to School program to include spring and fall sessions. In the spring, we taught **7 classes each week** at 6 different schools, reaching **131 participants** weekly. In the fall, we taught **13 classes each week** at 9 different schools, reaching an average of **354 participants** weekly.

Topics included: spring seeds, garden bed preparation, food origins, microgreens & salads, composting, vegetable identification, local foods, seed saving, drying herbs, food preservation, cover crops, and harvesting & eating root vegetables.

This fall, classes also made pumpkin pancakes, which was a big hit!

HIGHLIGHTS

Greenhouse Cultivation

Using organic practices, our staff & volunteers grew nearly **30,000** open-pollinated heirloom herbs, vegetables, and perennials. Seedlings were gifted free-of-charge to our education gardens. The remaining plants were sold to the public at our 2nd annual plant sale. The sale was wildly successful, raising **over \$14,000** to support our programs!



Refugee Assistance

In September, immigrants & refugees living at the Yale Park Apartments in Omaha were displaced due to unsafe living conditions. Our educators had been gardening on-site with the residents, including some children who participate in our school programs. Big Garden staff pooled personal time & resources to move & refurbish homes for a couple of the families.



Composting Solutions

A teacher at Omaha's Fontenelle Elementary expressed interest in composting to our Education Director. Through informal conversations, we connected them with Hillside Solutions, and a partnership was born! By composting their lunch scraps, the school has reduced its landfill waste from 30 bags a day to 3, and other schools are following suit!

HIGHLIGHTS



Garden to Table Program

In partnership with the Collective for Youth, we teach 8 after-school gardening classes in six lower-income Omaha middle schools. We teach 42 weeks of the year, for a total of 336 after-school classes, reaching an average of 120 students each week.

Participants learn to grow vegetables and herbs in their school garden as well as how to properly harvest, cook, preserve, and eat these crops through various methods. This program specifically highlights STEAM education through plant science and organic gardening techniques, nutrition, and healthy lifestyles.

Topics have included: planting fall seedlings, making jalapeno jam, composting, saving tomato seeds, preparing the garden for winter, drying herbs, pollinators, pickling, and more!

State of Our Campus

- Built a formal produce wash station
- Planted 16 fruit trees outside our front gate
- Graded and reinforced the retaining wall on the east side of the barn and planted native winter cover crops to retain the soil
 - Installed signage on our buildings
- Renovated an upstairs office space in our Education Center
 - Installed a walk-in cooler in our barn
 - Built a small compost drop-off station
- Turned & improved the soil on a large patch to the west of our greenhouses
 - Planted several pollinator gardens



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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, unfortunately we are unable to recognize you.

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William & Ruth Scott Family Foundation

IN-KIND DONORS

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

Big Muddy Urban Farm
Bountiful Blossoms Bee Company: Carol Fassbinder-Orth
Doe's & Diva's Dairy
Grainolia
Heartland Organics: Gene & Dorrie Gage
Miller Dohrmann Farm
Old Tree Farm
One Farm: Danelle Myer
O'Tillie Pork & Pantry
Rhizosphere Farm
Rolling Acres Farm: Denise O'Brien and Larry Harris
Soular Power Plate



The following individuals made significant donations to our campus, classes, and events:

Don and Barb Bredthauer: freezer chest
Nick Bonham: extensive labor assistance
Matt Carlson: barn mural
Micole Harms-Brazell: Spanish translation
Matt Noble: mushrooms
Deb Keeney Wallace: event staffing
Scott Yahnke: mini-pumpkins for Harvest Festival

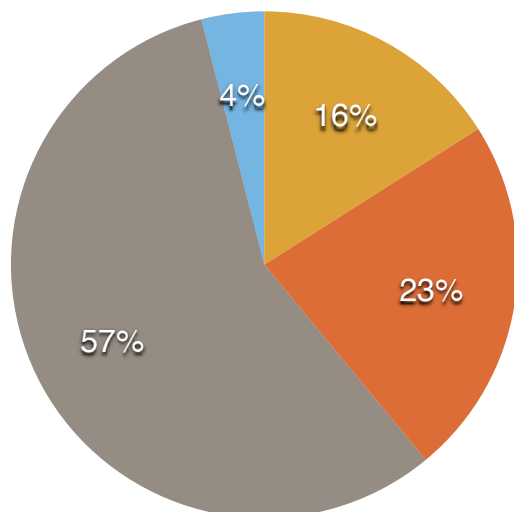
Additional thanks to the countless volunteers who donated their time and energy to support our work.

Special thanks to the volunteers who staffed our Harvest Festival haunted greenhouse.

And to the hundreds of United Methodist Women who wrote thousands of plant tags for us!

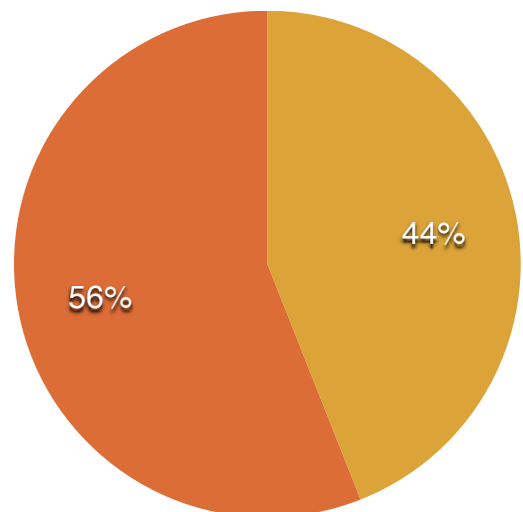
FINANCIALS

Income through 10/31/18
\$592,160



● Donations ● United Methodist Church
● Grants ● Earned Income

Expenses through 10/31/18
\$511,218



● Core Mission Support ● Programming

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
Alajia McKizia, Education Assistant
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Shayna Sterling
Cat Henning
Alajia McKizia
Mioux Stabler
Lauren Marolis
Kye Madsen
Maureen O'Brien

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.



2018 was our most successful Omaha Gives fundraiser ever, with nearly 300 individuals donating over \$25,000 to support our programs! We are incredibly thankful for that support! THANK YOU!



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

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