



**2020 ANNUAL
IMPACT REPORT**



DEAR FRIENDS,

For this annual impact report, we're reflecting on how 2020 has shaped Backyard Growers in both small and profound ways as we worked together to meet the needs of our community. We're filled to the brim with gratitude for your support of our mission. Along with our funding partners, foundations, local corporate sponsors, and committed volunteers, we joined forces to create a more resilient food system in our community by connecting people to the resources they need to grow their own food.

As more and more families in Gloucester faced economic hardship and food insecurity, Backyard Growers responded with gusto, ingenuity, and innovation to serve our neighbors. Your support allowed us to provide more raised beds and new accessible growing solutions like GrowBags for container gardens, host virtual trainings and workshops, and grow healthy food in re-purposed school gardens.

Over this past year, our growers shared with us that, while gardening, they felt happier and more hopeful at a time when happiness and hope weren't easy to come by. This was also the case in our school programs, when

kids returned to their gardens to work safely outside to harvest fall crops with smiles hidden under their masks. Thank you for making the Backyard Growers' community healthier, happier, and more hopeful. And while we are proud of the accomplishments detailed in this report, we recognize that our work to recover from this past year is far from over. We are continuing to learn from the pandemic, listening to our community of growers, and finding new ways to respond to increased need. We are thankful to you for being part of our Backyard Growers' community.

Stay well,



Lara Lepionka, Founder & Executive Director



Dr. Brian Orr, Board President

June 2021



BACKYARD GROWERS' MISSION

is to cultivate healthy, connected, environmentally sustainable communities and to fight for food justice by teaching people how to grow their own food. We provide resources, training and support to connect children, families and seniors with access to and education about healthy food through vegetable gardens at homes, housing developments, organizations, and schools.

2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Brian Orr, President
Pediatrician, Brian Orr Pediatrics

Larry Oaks, Vice President
CEO & President, Mainstay, Supportive Housing & Home Care

Elizabeth Redmond, Treasurer
CFO, Pathways for Children

Suzanne R. Gosselin, Clerk
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Betsy Brown
Retired non-profit professional, Wellspring House and North Shore United Way

Heidi McGrath
Retired teacher, O'Maley Innovation Middle School

Allison Mueller
Member of Wellspring Board of Directors and Trustee of Awesome Gloucester

Jennifer Perry
Director of Operations, The Open Door

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Former CEO, Lemuel Shattuck Hospital, Burnham's Field gardener, Community Volunteer

Karen Taggart
Community Volunteer, Member of Associates of the Boston Public Library Board of Directors and Mountain Top Arboretum Board of Directors

Jen Zola
Volunteer Outreach Specialist

2020 STAFF

Lara Lepionka
Executive Director

Corinne Lippie
Program Director

Melanie Murray-Brown
Development Director

Courtney Allen
Communications & Outreach Manager

Emily Brown
FoodCorps Service Member





SPREADING HAPPINESS WHILE CONNECTING PEOPLE TO THE POWER OF GROWING FOOD

I have always enjoyed gardening in years past, but this year it has made such a huge impact on my mental and physical health. It's been such a weird, unprecedented time for many many reasons. I really needed a garden this year. Thank you for helping me get back into it just in time."

- Tanya G.



With the effects of COVID contributing to increased economic hardship and food insecurity, Backyard Growers doubled down to provide even more community members with new resources to grow food in their backyards and community gardens. Thanks to your generosity, and support from our program partner Black Earth Compost with their clients across the region, 20 new households received raised bed gardens through our Backyard Garden Program. We also piloted a new accessible growing solution through custom GrowBags for container gardening to support those who would otherwise face barriers to growing food. Being able to garden and spend time safely out of doors contributed to the mental and physical health of so many.





MOBILIZING WITH NEW WAYS TO DELIVER PROGRAMS TO STUDENTS SAFELY WHILE HELPING THEM CONTINUE BUILDING HEALTHY HABITS



Every year in Gloucester, Backyard Growers' programs provide 100% of students from pre-school through 7th grade with direct, hands-on experiences in school gardens that have woven their way into the lives of thousands of kids. Working under COVID restrictions, we figured out a way to continue serving our local students and piloted our GrowBag initiative, a new affordable and portable way to grow food, distributing Salad Days™ Kits to Gloucester's 2nd Graders so they could still experience growing their own salad greens while schooling at home. We also repurposed our school gardens by using them to grow kale and salad greens to distribute to Gloucester families in partnership with Gloucester Schools Food Service. Our FoodCorps Service Member Emily worked with the district's Remote Academy to share lessons in healthy eating and cooking with Gloucester's 250 remote learners. With fingers crossed, we planted school gardens in the summer with the hope that our 2020 Fall Harvest Days could happen—and they did! Hundreds of Gloucester's elementary school kids harvested veggies and brought them home to enjoy.

"I was surprised how fast my lettuce grew. It was fun to grow and I think we'll eat more lettuce now!"

- Crofton P.



CONNECTING GROWERS TO CULTIVATE NEW SKILLS, COMMUNITY, & STRENGTH



Before the shutdown, we hosted fun in-person events, including a Winter Warmer mixology event, Kombucha Making Workshop, and Natural Skin Care Workshop. With programs going 100% virtual, we provided online gardening trainings to our new and emerging gardeners, covering skills like how to plan your vegetable garden and tomato care. We launched an online shop selling growing resources and hosted curbside pickup to safely distribute thousands of spring seeds and seedlings for program participants and supporters. During the

summer, we nurtured our community of growers by having gardeners host Facebook Live tours of their own gardens, connecting neighbors through their growing spaces online. We had a sold-out virtual fall fundraising event, the 5th Annual Great Gloucester GrowDown, with supporters tuning in to a live movie premiere from home to support us while enjoying a delicious picnic-style meal prepared by local favorite, Short & Main.

CONTINUING TO GROW STRONGER WITH SOLID PLANNING

From Roots to Wings: Highlights from Year 2

2020 was the second year of Backyard Growers' 3 year Strategic Plan, "From Roots to Wings." We are proud of the many accomplishments achieved throughout the year. Here are a few highlights.



Expand and deepen Backyard Growers' involvement in Gloucester

Key Accomplishment: Year 2 of our strategic plan was shaped in large part by our response to COVID. First and foremost, in the spring of 2020, our staff rapidly pivoted to get thousands of growing resources directly into the hands, homes, and backyards of Gloucester residents. We built and repaired over 100 raised beds, supporting the food-growing infrastructure we have spent the past ten years building across the City of Gloucester.

We also engaged a Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity Intern to support our ongoing work in this area in part by leading feedback sessions with gardeners in our community garden settings.



Develop a practice consulting to groups working to establish gardening programs in geographic areas beyond Gloucester

Key Accomplishments: We launched a new strategic partnership with Black Earth Compost to create a "Full Circle School" model in communities all across Eastern Massachusetts. Through our consultation services, the partnership provides schools with expanded opportunities to turn cafeteria food waste into compost to put back into school gardens that produce food with and for kids. We also expanded our school community throughout Massachusetts, consulting with new schools in Brookline, Haverhill, West Springfield, and Beverly to help them adopt our Salad Days™ school garden programming into their curriculum.



FUELED BY VOLUNTEERS & FORGING NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Volunteers are the Backbone of Backyard Growers

When the pandemic halted all group volunteer work, Backyard Growers developed new safety protocols to safely allow volunteers to work in gardens. Last year, volunteers safely helped maintain community garden spaces, and manage The Open Door food pantry garden to provide fresh food for their clients. Volunteers provided essential help weeding the community gardens for overwhelmed members of our population, allowing the gardens to remain positive, calming spaces for all.

We are grateful for the ongoing dedication of our corps of volunteers who help with new gardener mentoring, garden maintenance, and administrative and special event projects. In 2020, we had the help of 250 volunteers contributing 960 hours of service.



"I was furloughed from my job due to the pandemic and eventually lost my job entirely. When that happened, I thought, 'I need to do something.' I reached out to Backyard Growers and became a volunteer. Having your hands in the dirt is so healing. And I totally recommend it to anyone who wants to make a difference. Being in nature is therapeutic and uplifting. You see the magic of how things grow. It was a real blessing." - Molly O.

2020 PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

- Action, Inc.
- Cape Ann YMCA
- Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce
- City of Gloucester
- Endicott College
- FoodCorps Massachusetts
- The Food Project, Inc.
- Gloucester Housing Authority
- Gloucester Public Schools
- The Grace Center
- Massachusetts Farm to School
- Mass in Motion Cape Ann
- Northeast ARC
- Pathways for Children
- Rose Baker Senior Center
- Sawyer Free Library
- The Caleb Group
- The Open Door
- Wellspring House



"It makes us happy to know that being able to donate to Backyard Growers will help provide a family with fresh vegetables. We are farmers at heart, so having a garden and making sure that another family has a garden is something that comes naturally to us."
- Errol & Yvonne S.

TOGETHER WE'RE FIGHTING FOR FOOD JUSTICE & FOOD SECURITY

The Impact of Giving: Errol & Yvonne Smikle's Story

Errol & Yvonne Smikle came to the U.S. from Jamaica and have found their happy home in Gloucester. The Smikles are 'foodies' and love to support local farmers, while growing their own staples of Jamaican cuisine, like callaloo, scotch bonnet peppers, and thyme at home. They've continued the wonderful Jamaican tradition of sharing garden bounty with neighbors. Here

in Gloucester, they share not only what they've grown in their own home garden, but they also share their love of growing their own food by supporting our Get-a-Garden Give-a-Garden program. With their gift, they made it possible for a local family in need to have their own raised bed veggie garden, too.

TAKE ACTION!

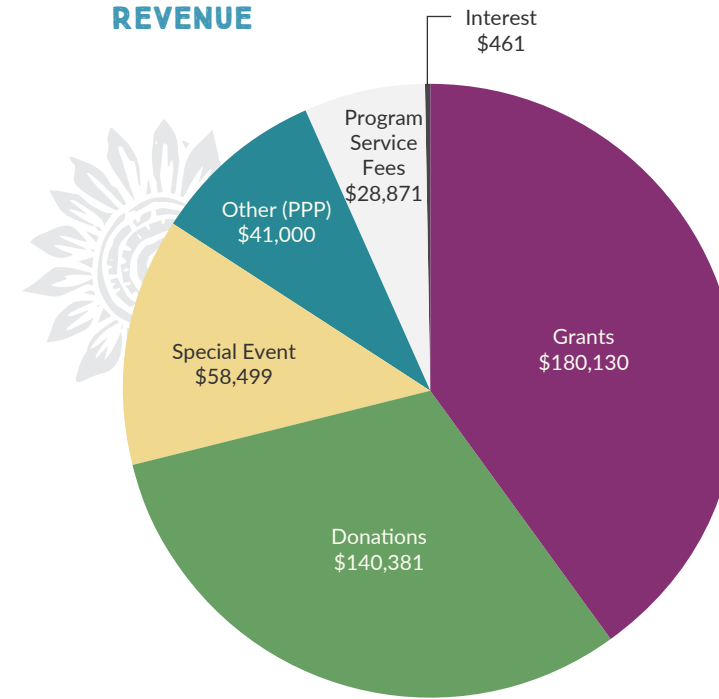
Want to help sustain and support Backyard Growers in the community? Some of the ways to take action are...

- DONATE.** Visit backyardgrowers.org/donate to give online or mail in.
- VOLUNTEER.** We've streamlined the volunteer application. Visit backyardgrower.org/volunteer-with-us to learn more and apply.
- JOIN.** Subscribe to our newsletter by online form at backyardgrowers.org or drop us a line info@backyardgrowers.org.
- ENGAGE.** Keep up on the latest by following us on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

2020 REVENUE & EXPENSES

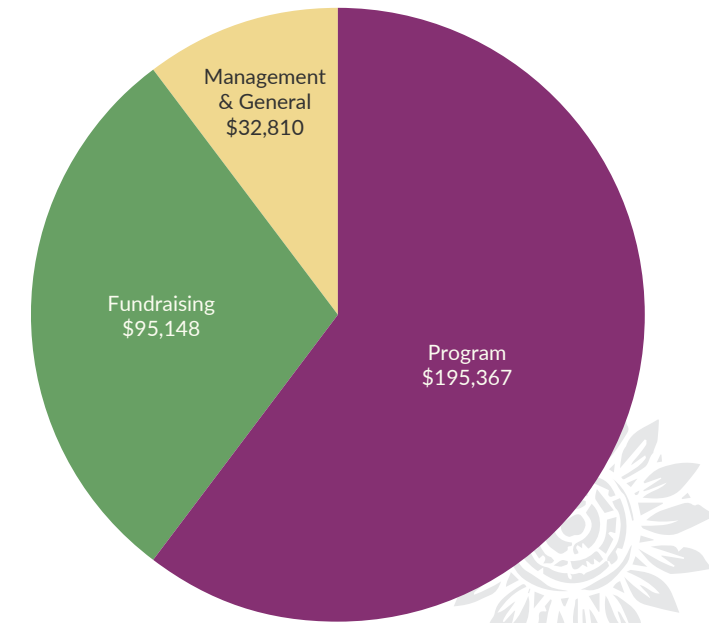
Fiscal Year: 1/1-12/31/2020

REVENUE



Total: \$449,342

EXPENSES



Total: \$323,325

NEW ADDRESS!

Backyard Growers
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Gloucester, MA 01930



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