



BACKYARD
Growers

Annual Report
2018





**GARDENS.
FOOD.
PEOPLE.
POWER.**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Letter from our Founder.....1
- Board of Directors.....2
- Backyard Growers’ Timeline.....3
- School Garden Program.....5
- Community Garden Program.....7
- Cooking Workshops.....9
- Backyard Garden Program.....11
- Strategic Plan.....13
- Financials.....15
- Partners and Volunteers.....17
- 2018 Supporters.....19



Our Mission

Backyard Growers cultivates healthy, connected, environmentally sustainable communities and fights for food justice by teaching people to grow their own food.

DEAR FRIENDS,

Well, I guess we're all grown up! This spring marks Backyard Growers' 10th growing season. Backyard Growers has matured into a vital community resource, serving folks here in Gloucester and beyond. Thank YOU for being a part of making Backyard Growers thrive.

Our work is about cultivating community through growing food together. Our programs are filled with people from all walks of life: low to moderate income families putting fresh veggies on their tables from our community gardens, volunteer mentors

helping seniors grow food in their backyards, and people learning new skills and teaching others. In our gardens people are learning English, reconnecting with their neighbors, spending more time with their kids, and growing culturally significant food they can't find in the grocery store.

Our work is about a generation of kids growing up planting, harvesting, and eating their own school-grown food. I love watching 7th graders at O'Maley Innovation Middle School harvesting wheat to make bread, and remembering those same

children as kindergarteners planting their first pumpkin seeds. Eating salad is no big deal for these kids, because they grow and eat it every year in our School Garden Program. 100% of Gloucester's school children have done just this and we see the lasting impact every time we work with kids in our School Programs, with ripple effects across the community.

We are nothing without our people. Over the years, we've been fortunate to have incredible staff, service members, participants, volunteers, donors, and board members who have devoted their passions, talents and finances to Backyard Growers. As the founder, I'm always touched when people join Backyard Growers — it feels personal!

Food brings people together.

Thank you for joining us in greening our little corner of the world, and for being part of a wider movement to reconnect with where our food comes from so that everyone can have access to fresh, affordable food.

Keep growing, keep eating fresh delicious food, keep working together, and we'll see you in the garden!

With Gratitude,



Lara Lepionka
Executive Director



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jennifer Perry, President

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Community Volunteer, Former Wellspring Staff & Board Member

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Larry Oaks

President, Mainstay, Inc.

Dr. Brian Orr

Brian Orr Pediatrics

Jen Zola

Volunteer Outreach Specialist





BACKYARD GROWERS TIMELINE

2008

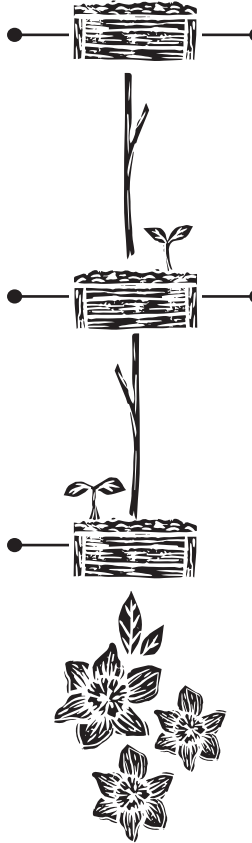
Prompted by the economic downturn and the need to feed their family of four healthy food on a budget, Lara and her husband Steve rip out their yard and plant an urban microfarm, laying the groundwork of what will become Backyard Growers.

2012

Backyard Growers' Backyard Garden Program continues to flourish, empowering 38 new families to grow their own food.

2014

Programming expands to O'Maley Innovation Middle School, where a hands-on Popcorn Program teaches students about cells and seeds. In October, all five elementary schools start monthly taste tests, trying samples of seasonal produce to learn about new vegetables.



2010

Backyard Growers is officially founded as part of the Cape Ann Farmer's Market. In its first year, the program helps seven families build their own gardens and helps establish a youth garden at the Riverdale Park housing development

2013

Backyard Growers launches district-wide Salad Days and Fall Harvest Days in Gloucester Public Schools, helping 1,300 kids to plant, harvest and eat fall and spring crops of school garden-grown veggies.



2015 Backyard Growers gets its own repotting and moves to a new headquarters on Main Street! 150 gardens are planted throughout Gloucester, and a new summer food and farming program is launched at Gloucester High School.

2017 Backyard Growers receives a \$100,000 grant from the Cummings Foundation's 100k for 100 Program. Burnham's Field Community Garden is doubled in size to include 36 raised beds for neighborhood residents, and a wheat growing program for 7th graders is piloted at O'Maley Innovation Middle School. A new 16-bed community garden is built at Willowood Gardens housing development with support from Whole Cities Foundation.



2016 A record 988 pounds of produce is harvested from school gardens, and Backyard Growers expands its reach into Manchester and Rockport schools. Nine cooking workshops teach delicious farm-to-table recipes, and 16 new raised beds are built for low-income families at Riverdale Park housing development.



2018 Backyard Growers' fearless leader Lara receives the 2018 Kale Blazer Award from the Massachusetts Farm to School Association for program leadership. Backyard Growers undergoes a strategic planning process and builds a three-year roadmap, *Roots and Wings* (see page 13).



SCHOOL GARDEN PROGRAM



WHEAT TIME

This year, O'Maley Innovation Middle School seventh graders were the first participants in Backyard Growers's new wheat garden program. Students planted, harvested, threshed and winnowed the wheat and their hard work paid off with a delicious reward: baking homemade bread with grains they had grown themselves. Wheat also went beyond the garden and

was integrated throughout the seventh grade curriculum. In science class, wheat provided an example of selective breeding for desired characteristics. History classes discussed wheat in the Fertile Crescent. And, over 200 seventh graders connected growing, eating, and hands-on learning in ways they'll remember for years to come.

SALAD DAYS, FALL HARVEST DAYS & TASTE TESTS *"Mom, instead of pizza"*

Our annual Spring Salad Days and Fall Harvest Days school garden events mean that every child in Gloucester Public Schools learns to plant and harvest a range of veggies as they progress through the school system. Growing food is the first step, but for a true seed-to-fork experience, kids need a curiosity for eating new foods. In

2018, we visited schools monthly to host "Harvest of the Month" taste tests, giving students a chance to try in-season produce while building excitement around new types of foods.

With a menu ranging from green monster smoothies to rainbow carrots, taste tests emphasize the natural deliciousness of each vegetable, never

"I loved the entire experience. From threshing the wheat in the fall to milling and baking it now, the whole time I fully enjoyed myself. I think that Backyard Growers is a great program that teaches kids about gardening. It was also great because earlier in the year we learned how crucial wheat was."

- 7th grader, O'Maley Innovation Middle School

"Pizza tonight, can we have lettuce?" - Alessandro, 1st grader

disguising what is on the plate. After tasting, kids vote if they liked it, loved it, or tried it, keeping a positive mindset while building a communal sense of adventure around new tastes.

Students carried these new tastes home: parents reported kids who previously wouldn't touch

vegetables came home excited to eat them. By spreading an openness towards new foods, taste tests are cultivating a life-long love of fruits and vegetables, instilling healthy habits from a young age.



LOOKING AHEAD: Backyard Growers is committed to spreading our school garden concepts beyond the city borders. We've already expanded our school program to six additional school districts in Massachusetts, and in the coming year, our elementary and middle school program models will be made widely available to other districts in the region. We'll provide training and consulting services to help schools make Salad Days and Fall Harvest Days part of their school culture, just like it is in Gloucester.

2018 School Garden Program Impact



1,000 lbs. of veggies into school cafeterias.

Over **2,000** Gloucester Public School students planted, harvested, and ate garden crops in their school cafeteria.



**COMMUNITY
GARDEN PROGRAM**



In 2018, Backyard Growers' ten community gardens helped over 300 people grow their own food. Community gardens provide families without a yard with space for their own plot, and enable partner organizations like the **The Open Door, North Shore Health Project, The Grace Center, and Action Emergency Shelter** to grow fresh food for their clients. Participants at **Rose Baker Senior Center** worked with Backyard Growers staff to cultivate salad greens and radishes that went straight to their three-times-a-week free salad bar, while kids working in the garden beds at **Riverdale Park** and **Willowood Gardens** community housing developments started a market stand to give away extra produce for free to neighbors. Local families and seniors gardened at **Burnham's Field, McPherson Park senior housing** and **Pond View Village** to stretch their food budget and add fresh, healthy veggies to their dinner tables.

Community Garden Program Impact:

92%

of participants
eat more fresh
vegetables

83%

of participants
spend less money
on food

95%

of participants who
are parents say their
kids learned the
benefits of eating
fresh food

"My family loves fresh veggies. They are expensive so we don't eat them as much as we like. But with the garden we had plenty. I even froze some for the winter for soups."

- 2018 Backyard Growers gardener



"The cooking workshops were very helpful. You got to meet others and see what was being cooked. The roasting of root veggies was awesome!"

- 2018 Cooking Workshop Participant



COOKING WORKSHOPS

Now that your garden is thriving and your kitchen is overflowing with fresh produce, what comes next? **Eating!** In 2018, Backyard Growers hosted 5 cooking classes (including, for the first time, baking workshops) with 68 attendees to help gardeners transform their in-season produce into meals for the whole family. Free for Backyard Growers program participants and open to the whole community, kids cook alongside adults, learning new ways to prepare healthy, delicious food.

2018 Cooking Workshops

JUNE

Spring Cooking



AUGUST

Syrian-Inspired
Summer Cooking

Salsa-Making
Demo

Recipes

- Hummus
- Baba ganoush
- Tabbouleh
- Yalanji (*seasonal vegetables and rice rolled into grape leaves*)
- Tomato Salsa with Peppers

SEPTEMBER

Carrot Hummus
Demo & Tasting



OCTOBER

Fall and Winter
Garden Cooking

NOVEMBER

Baking with
Storage
Vegetables

Recipes

- Golden beet and apple pie
- Kabocha squash drop biscuits
- Pumpkin seed energy bites

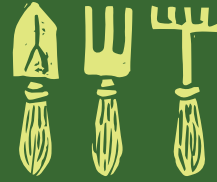
DECEMBER

Holiday Baking: Incorporating
Storage Vegetables into
Holiday-Themed Treats

Tea Making



Throughout the spring and summer, Backyard Growers offers workshops to our gardeners and the community that are designed to make gardening easy and accessible to all, no matter your experience. Topics range from indoor seed starting, to training in the square foot garden method, to trellis-building, to backyard composting.



BACKYARD GARDEN PROGRAM

Pat Jackson had a 1-acre garden when she lived in Jackson, Mississippi, but after moving up to Gloucester, she wasn't familiar with the seasons or types of vegetables that flourished in Massachusetts. Somehow 30 years passed without any gardening – but then Pat heard about Backyard Growers and put in an application for her own garden. Today, each summer brings a thriving crop of spinach, chard, cherry tomatoes, and other delicious veggies.

“I’m 77 and in better health now because of the garden,” Pat said. “It’s invigorating watching it grow. I feel better, I’m happier, and I know from moving in the garden that I’m stronger!”

In 2018, Backyard Growers focused its Backyard Garden Program on low to moderate income older adults, providing each participant with a 4’x8’ raised garden bed, training, seeds and seedlings, and two years of mentorship to help their new gardens thrive. Thanks to

this program, which has served over 150 households throughout Gloucester, community residents of all ages are growing their own healthy, delicious food!



"Thank you so much for building a growing bin for my dad after my mom passed away. He has enjoyed many, many moments out there and we even had his 91st birthday around his Backyard Growers garden!"

- Margi Green



Backyard Garden Program Impact:

163
FAMILIES
served
since 2010

86%
of gardeners spend
less money on food
since starting their
garden



STRATEGIC PLAN

Roots and Wings: Building Backyard Growers' Strategic Vision





photo credit:
ellensargentkorsh.com



In the summer of 2018, Backyard Growers hunkered down to explore a key question: **What does the future of Backyard Growers look like?** To answer that question, over the course of three months, we held focus groups, conducted surveys, and interviewed more than 90 stakeholders including staff, board members, community partners and participants.

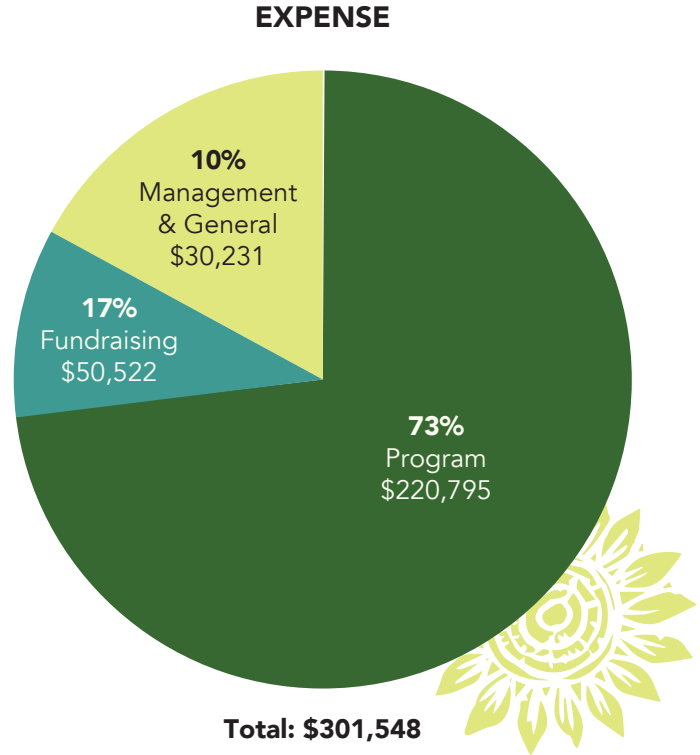
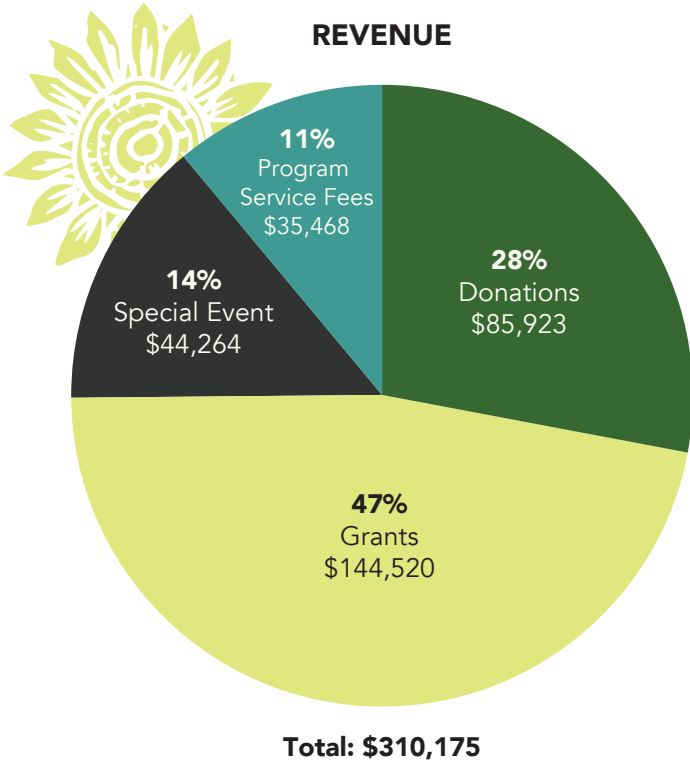
This work revealed Backyard Growers' many strengths: strong leadership, a dedicated and talented staff, financial stability, strong community support, solid partnerships with local schools and other nonprofits, and, overall, successful community-building around growing food. But challenges surfaced as well: shifting funding sources, greater demand than capacity, and constraints

around physical space and staff compensation.

All of the information gathered informed the vision and goals of a three-year strategic plan, **Roots and Wings**. The plan outlines a strategy for bolstering our infrastructure to ensure long-term success, and for spreading our reach and impact beyond Gloucester, while deepening the impact of our existing programs.

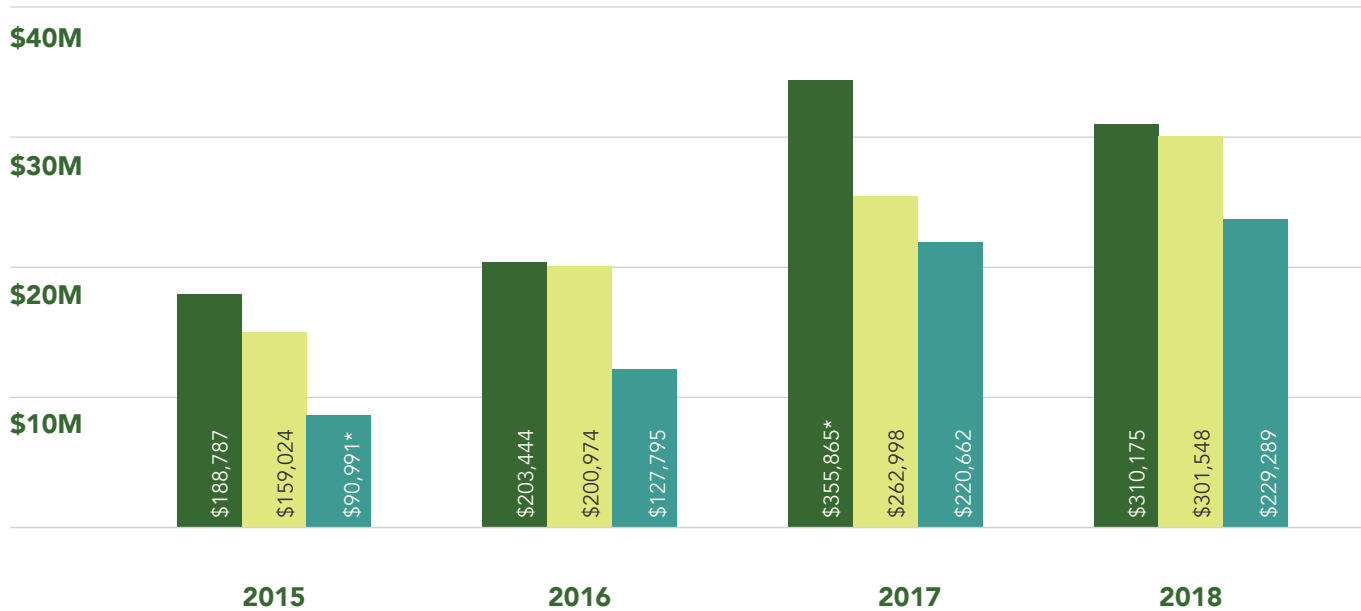
Roots and Wings is available online at backyardgrowers.org. We invite you to take a look and join us on this exciting next leg of our journey in Gloucester and beyond.

2018 REVENUE & EXPENSES



FOUR-YEAR FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

 Revenue
  Expense
  Net Assets



*Includes beginning year fund balance of 61,228

*In this year we recognized receipt of the entire \$100,000 Cummings Foundation grant, which is disbursed over a 4-year period

VOLUNTEERS & PARTNERS



photo credit: ellensagentkorsh.com

Backyard Growers runs on volunteer power. We are so grateful for the hard work and dedication of the hundreds of folks who selflessly shoveled soil, built gardens, taught kids, stuffed envelopes, and so much more in 2018. THANK YOU!

Garden Mentors

Our incredible team of volunteer garden mentors make a year-long commitment to help our new gardeners be successful by assisting them every step of the way. Mentors attend garden trainings, help build raised beds, distribute seeds, and provide advice and guidance. In 2018, garden mentors continued to provide support to our backyard gardeners and expanded their reach to support participants in some of our

community gardens, coming at a set time each week to provide a consistent friendly face and gardening know-how. Several mentors spoke other languages, such as Swahili, which helped us welcome recent refugee families into our programs.

2018's gardens flourished thanks to the care, commitment, and dedication of this year's garden mentors. Their love of gardening and willingness to share their time and skills with the community helped create a new crop of lifelong gardeners.

Interns and FoodCorps Service Members

Each year, FoodCorps Service Members spend eleven months full-time with Backyard Growers, bringing

photo credit: ellensargentkorsh.com



“The reason why I support Backyard Growers is the people behind it. They’re just warm, loving, caring, giving individuals that want to make life better for everyone around them. I want to give to people that want to give back. And who are they helping - they’re helping out kids, they’re helping out families in need.”

- Jesse DeBenedictis, Owner, Works by JD



energy to our school programs to help create a new generation of veggie-loving gardeners! In June, they’re joined by a fabulous crop of summer interns. Service members and interns share their knowledge with hundreds of students and community members while gaining experience to be the food leaders of tomorrow.

Community Volunteers

This year, community volunteers, whether individuals, school groups, sport teams, or local companies, contributed 1,200 hours of their time! Their work building new gardens, leading weekly harvests, hosting taste tests in schools, and watering and weeding school and community gardens keeps Backyard Growers, and the gardens, flourishing.

Partners

Action, Inc.
AmeriCorps
Cape Ann Farmer’s Market
Cape Ann YMCA
City of Gloucester
FoodCorps Massachusetts
The Food Project, Inc.
Gloucester Housing Authority
Gloucester Public Schools
The Grace Center
Massachusetts Farm to School
Mass in Motion Cape Ann
North Shore Health Project
Pathways for Children
Rose Baker Senior Center
TerraCorps
The Open Door

We wouldn't
exist without the
generous people,
businesses and
foundations that
support our work.
Thank you.

2018 Supporters

Up to \$99

Jerry Ackerman*
Farris Ajjal
Michele Ameno*
Jennifer Goulart Amero
Nicco Asselin
Charlee Bianchin*
Boston Fence and Vinyl*
Jane Bowers
Mary John Boylan
Cape Ann Law*
Jo-Ann Castano and Andy Innes*
Suzanne and Craig Cervo
Martha Peterson Chandler
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Cecile Christensen*
Kathy and Kevin Clancy
Traci and Steve Corbett*
Cheryl Curran
Gigs and Bob Cunningham*
Pamela and Salvatore Cuomo*
Tracy and Ed Davis*
Anthony Denigris

Louisa and Frank Deland*
Janet Dickinson*
Julia Dillard
Jeanine Elizabeth
Ronald Farren*
Lynn and Bill Fenollosa*
Charlotte Ferritto
Sarah Florenz
Kaethe Flynn
Germaine Fritz
Jason Gilroy
Samantha and Tony Goddess*
Nancy Goodman and Jim Gutstadt*
Heidi Goodwin and Powell Dixon*
Emily Gorman-Melo
Lorraine Gosselin
Pattie Goulart
Bob Granese
Megan Mai Graziano
Laura Hollowell
Caroline Haines*
Lindsay Hale
Oliver Herman
Mellissa Herron
Karen Heil
Janet and Jeffrey Hoffheins
Joanne Hurd and Chris Roe
Sharon Infante
Catherine Kenyon
Brian Kenna
Gitama Anne Kinigstein
Scout King
Chris Larson
Sharon Laporte
Allison Labelle
Larry Lepionka*

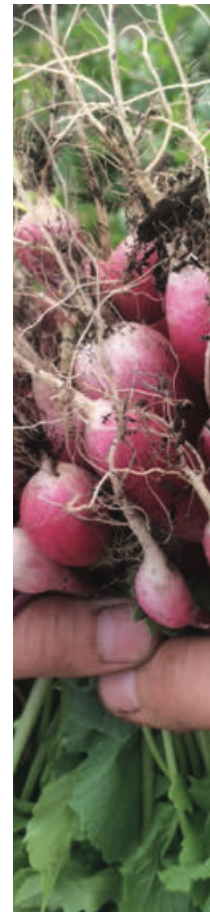
Liz Libson*
Corinne Lippie*
Lauren and Fredrick Mac Dougall Johnson*
Sarah and Earle MacGillivray*
Anne Maclean
Judi Mackenzie
Elizabeth Mahoney
Laney and Rick Makin
Anne Malcolm*
Dorothy and Walter Marshall
Anna McCoy
Aria and John McElhenny*
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Norie Mozzone
Emily and Daniel Murphy
Colleen Murdock
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Suzanne Newman*
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Okin Productions*
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Julie Palmason
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Deb Worth Teple
Janice Turner
United Way of Massachusetts Bay
and Merrimack Valley*
Laurie Ure
Shay Wainwright
Heidi Wakeman and Coley Bryan*
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Heather and Randy Widtfeldt*
Peter Williamson*
Lee A. Williamson*
Katharine Worth
Janet Wray
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\$100+

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Sophie and Noah Course-

Kellerman*
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Jane and Tad Cunningham*
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Kathy McLearn and Kevin Hutchinson
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Thomas Mikus





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 O'Maley Innovation Middle School PTO*
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 Christina and Richard Rhodes
 Andree Robert and Thomas Burger
 Paul Romary
 Claudia Schweitzer
 Ashley and Bob Scott*
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 Miffy Somers
 Monica and Peter Stratton*
 Nancy Swanson*
 Robin and James Towne*
 Kirsten and Myron Turfitt*
 Chris Waddell
 Michael Ward and Ellen Allard
 Nancy Warny
 Veterans Memorial PTO*
 West Parish PTO*
 Susan Williams*

\$250+

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 Tamsin Aspinall and Barnaby Prendergast*
 Atlantic Vacation Homes
 Paula and Joel Axelrod*
 Sheila and Edward Becker*
 Carol Cataldo
 Cross Fit Cape Ann
 Lee and John Cunningham*

Dana Alarm & Electric
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 Joel and Charlie Emerson
 Faith and Christopher Emerson
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 Steven Lewis and Laura Wiessen*
 Serena Low*
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 Martha Morgan*
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 Bob Rosenfield and Marjorie Halperin
 Dawn and John Sarrouf*
 Mary Ann Shery and Mike Bresnan*
 Mern Sibley and Roger Garberg*
 Elizabeth Solomon and Chad Konecky
 Evelyn and Val Somers*
 Nathan Stanton and Esther Pearl*
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 Muffy and Tad White*

\$500+

Rich Alexander*
 Alprilla Farm*
 Annisquam Sewing Circle*
 The Annisquam Exchange*
 Araneo Landworks
 Associated Charities of Gloucester*

Beauport Financial Services*
 Black Earth Compost*
 Brace Cove Foundation*
 Brick Ends Farm*
 Building Center of Gloucester*
 Cape Ann Savings Bank*
 Sarah and J. Gibson Carey
 Robin and Kenneth Carlo
 Cheryl Coon and Jason Lundy*
 Michelle and Marty Del Vecchio*
 Jean and William Dugan*
 Ferrara Electric and Alarm
 Gloucester Meetinghouse Foundation
 Sarah Green*
 Renee and David Hamel
 Lauren Kenney
 Julie and Philip Lake*
 Alexandra Lepionka*
 Heidi and Joe McGrath*
 Carol McNeill
 Eileen and Joseph Mueller
 Allison and Joe Mueller*
 Janet and Mathew Natti
 Debbie Nelson and James Pratt*
 Neptune's Harvest
 Gretchen Parker*
 Prataap Patrose
 Wendy Perlman
 Quinn Group Insurance*
 Elizabeth Redmond
 Annie and Wayne Shreffler
 Hope and Adam Suttin*
 Susan and Eric Swanson*
 Victoria Wallins
 Sarah and R. Michael Wall

\$1,000+

BankGloucester
 Judy Bloomfield and Ed Howe
 Nonie Brady*
 Carla Bregman
 Betsy and Mike Brown*
 Cedar Rock Gardens*
 Clif Bar Family Foundation*
 Contarino Charitable Trust*
 Linzee Coolidge*
 Emily and Jesse DeBenedictis*
 Barbe Ennis*
 Enterprise Holdings Inc.*
 First Ipswich Bank
 Forest Foundation*
 Gloucester Female Charitable Trust*
 Joe Ann Hart and Gordon Baird*
 Hilarie Holdsworth Design
 Meg and Herbert Hollender
 Hilarie and Eric Holdsworth *
 Institution for Savings*
 Ellen Landrigan*
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 MassGeneral Hospital for Children Food Allergy Center
 MJ Mazur
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 New England Biolabs Corporate Giving*
 New England Biolabs Foundation*
 Brian Orr Pediatrics*
 Ruth Pino*
 Project Bread*
 Rockport Mortgage Corporation
 Maggie and Joe Rosa*
 Short & Main*
 The Single Step Foundation*

Karen and Dick Taggart
 USDA Farm to School*
 The Frederick E. Weber Charities Corporation*
 WORKS by Jesse DeBenedictis*
 Jennifer and William Zola*

\$5,000+

Bruce J. Anderson Foundation*
 Cell Signaling Technology*
 City of Gloucester*
 The Church Home Society
 Green Leaf Foundation
 Lowes Toolbox for Education
 McCarthy Family Foundation
 Charity Fund*
 Whole Cities Foundation

\$10,000+

Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation*
 Alfred E. Chase Charity Foundation
 North Shore Community Health Network*
 The Cummings Foundation*
 Western Philanthropies
 The Lenny Zakim Fund*

*Indicates donor of two or more years.



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 BackyardGrowersProgram
 @backyardgrowers

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