



»»» NEWSLETTER «««

THE BIG GARDEN THYMES

HARVEST REPORT FOR 2023

Teaching People. Building Communities. Growing Food Sovereignty.



A LETTER FROM TOM



Greetings, family and friends of The Big Garden!

2023...Wow! How did it go by so quickly?!? I remember early January watching it snow, a few days later we were into the hot days of summer, and a few days after that, we were winterizing! As I sit in my office today, I am very excited for what 2024 has in store for us at The Big Garden! Before I get too far into looking ahead though, let's take a look back at some of the highlights of 2023.

Teach - We set a goal to teach more children in 2023, than we had in 2022. A tall order, but our educational series for children really sets the stage for a lifetime of growing healthy food, healthy children and healthy communities. In 2022, we had 4,497 students of various ages attend our classes...for 2023, we increased that number by 6% to 4,752, most coming from elementary students when we restarted the Farm to Table program! We actually taught more classes in 2023, 646 compared to 444 in 2022, but found that with a smaller teacher to student ratio, we could spend more time with each student, getting a much more fulfilling experience for each child. For 2024, we will continue to grow these educational programs, with a goal to top the 5,000 mark!

Build - After 17 years of adding new community gardens and fruit tree groves, we saw that there was a need to repair several beds at various locations to keep them viable as growing sites. We still added 4 new locations, but overall, we impacted 26 locations, compared to 14 in 2022! We also adopted that for groves, adding 40 more trees, mostly to existing fruit tree sites.

Grow - With the addition of a growing site within 10 minutes of our campus, we grew over 6,000 pounds of fresh produce that was then given to food banks, pantries and shelters to help those with an immediate need for food. Compared to 3,407 pounds of produce in 2022...a whopping 78% increase!

We also held 15 farmstands this year, working in partnership with Whispering Roots, giving out coupons nearing \$25,000 to be used with local growers for fresh produce. We taught adult education classes at Mulhall's, covering such subjects as seed saving, small space gardening and planning your garden space. We did all these great things with the help of over 500 volunteers! We also had our 9th annual seed share, giving 264 people the opportunity to get new seeds for their home gardens!

As I say goodbye to 2023 and look forward to 2024, I will continue to focus on growth. Growth of food, growth of our programs and growth in supporting those who need us the most. I want to extend a heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped support us through donations, grants, volunteerism, social media messaging, and gifts in-kind. Thanks for buying your plants at our annual plant sale, and thanks for keeping us in your thoughts and prayers - we couldn't do all these things without people like you!

All my best,

Tom Neal

TOM NEAL

Executive Director

WE TEACH

2022

2023

71

Pre-School Classes

76

13

Elementary School Classes

222

360

Middle School Classes

348

4497

Students Reached

4752



WE BUILD

2022

2023

7	New Community Gardens	4
6	Comm. Gardens Repaired	8
1	Comm. Gardens Expanded	14
24	Giving Grove trees planted	40
1	New Community Orchards	2



WE GROW

2022

2023

3407 Pounds of fresh produce

6059

20k Seedlings

20k

500+ Volunteer hours served

600+

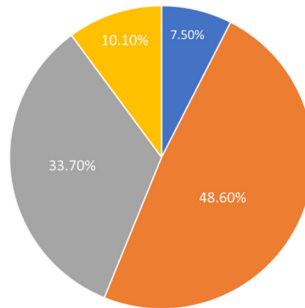


FINANCES

MAJOR GRANT FUNDING

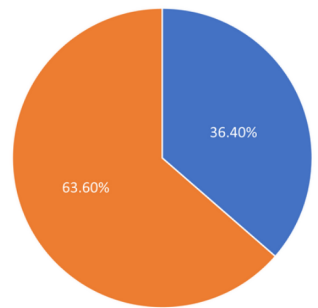
- BCBS of Topeka
- Collective for Youth
- Creche Foundation
- Farm Credit Services
- KS Healthy Congregations
- Mammel Foundation
- Mutual of Omaha Foundation
- One Tree Planted
- Rotary Foundation
- Semerad Foundation
- Sherwood Foundation
- Weitz Foundation
- William and Ruth Scott Foundation

2023 Income



■ Individual Donations ■ Major Grants ■ Conference Support ■ Other Income

2023 Expenses



■ Operating ■ Programs

Special thanks to all who donated individually, whether financially, through volunteerism, or through in-kind gifts to The Big Garden.

Thank you to the countless United Women In Faith volunteers who made plant stakes, to the hundreds of volunteers who came out to our campus or build sites to help with our mission, and to the people who supported us through our annual Plant Sale.

We could not do this without all of you!



STAFF AND BOARD

BIG GARDEN STAFF

Thomas Neal, Executive Director
Kay Carlson, Director of Campus and Volunteer Activities
Kaya Baker, Director of Education
Sara Atkins-Rauwald, Marketing and Communications Manager
Brittany Beyer, Gardens and Giving Grove Manager-NE
Molly Baurain, Gardens and Giving Grove Manager-KS
Amy Gee, Campus Coordinator
DioseLina Estevez, Education and Farmstand Manager
Emily Hefeli, Education Assistant
Mara Bullock, Education Assistant
Alaiya Cave, Education Assistant-PT
Terry Salem, Education Assistant-PT

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Burke Harr Esq. - Houghton - Bradford Whitted, PC LLC
Ian Finn - StoneX Commodity Solutions

INTERNS

A'Lece Moore
Alex Moss Glover
Flora Griffith
Malique Horvaldt
Rayn Tot



THE BIG GARDEN

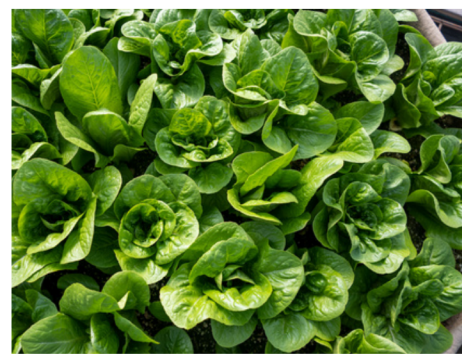
TEACH. BUILD. GROW. TEACHING PEOPLE. BUILDING COMMUNITIES. GROWING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY.



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