

## 2010 Another Year to Remember

### 2010 Highlights

- 72+ families were given new gardens
- 48 families received continued support in their second year of the program
- Established three community gardens, three school gardens, one hospital garden, and one group home garden
- Introduced 19 new families to our Adult Education and Nutrition Workshops and 22 children to our After-School Nutrition Education Workshops
- Introduced Canning & Preserving Workshops in partnership with Central MA Agway
- Received our first Federal Grant, the Compassion Capital Fund, in partnership with the Institute for Nonprofit Development at Mount Wachusett Community College
- Rebranded our organization and introduced a new communication platform. Visit our website for samples: [www.growingplaces.org](http://www.growingplaces.org)
- Received the 2010 Massachusetts Nonprofit Network Excellence Award in Nonprofit Collaboration and the 2010 Wachusett Chamber of Commerce Environmental Award



Dear Friends,

In our mission to improve the food security and nutrition education of people in need, 2010 was a year of success and growth for Growing Places Garden Project.

We recognized early on in the year that the complex issues facing communities we serve cannot be solved alone and we secured federal funding to develop a Community Partnership Program. The program is designed to help us enhance our visibility within the community, build a united coalition of like-minded organizations, and access a greater number of clients in need of our services. By taking a leadership role in combating important hunger, health, and nutrition education issues we will provide:

- access to fresh, healthy produce and the support our clients need to become successful gardeners
- nutritional education and school and community gardens to our service area
- outreach and support that inspires others to replicate our programs and services so that our impact extends beyond our service area

We have witnessed a great spirit of collaboration and enthusiasm among all of our supporters who share our passion to help families to be more self sufficient, more economically sound, and healthier.

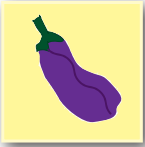
Thank you for your support and best wishes to you and your family this holiday season!

*Jodi Breidel*

Jodi Breidel  
 Executive Director

*Bindy Buhner*

Cindy Buhner  
 Co-Founder & Chair



# 2010 Treasurer's Report

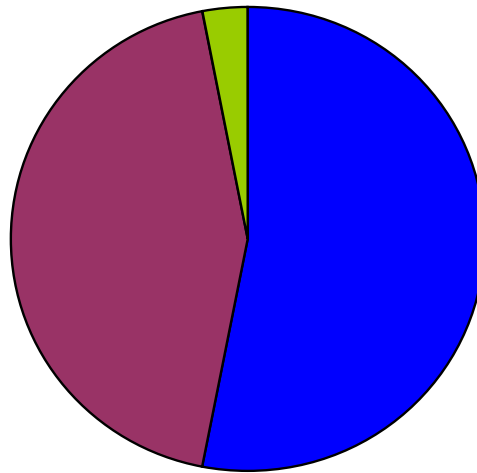
Growing Place's has grown exponentially serving over 290 households over 9 years. We plan to add over 75 in FY 2011 and continue this growth pattern. We have expanded our mission to providing nutrition education to our clients and the community.

In FY 2010, total revenues were \$151,216, of which 53% came from corporate grants and partnerships, 43% from public gifts and vendors, and 3% from federal grants. The organization realized a net surplus of \$6,819 for the year.

In FY 2011, Growing Places intends to reach out to even more families in our community. In order to accomplish this goal, we have budgeted \$184,400 to support 150 raised beds and to expand our nutrition education program to more clients. Additionally, as of this report, Growing Places has received \$71,300 in committed grants and donations leaving a current fundraising gap of \$113,100.

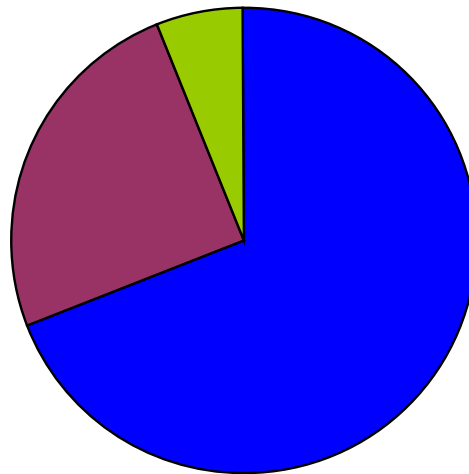
## Always Growing Our Supporters!

Growing Places relies on our Corporate, Private, and Community Partnerships to fund these programs. If you would like to help support this worthwhile community outreach, please contact us at: 978.598.3723 or [staff@growingplaces.org](mailto:staff@growingplaces.org)



## Revenues

- corporate grants & partnerships
- public gifts
- federal grants



## Expenses

- program
- administrative
- fundraising





# Thanks to all of you!

## Individual Donors & Foundations

Anonymous  
James and Karen Ashworth  
Bill Ayad  
Davida Bagatelle  
John Balco  
Jackie and Jim Baldassare  
Anna and John Barker  
Sharon Barrett  
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Dr. John & Jane Yunginger

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Cleghorn Neighborhood Ctr.  
Crocker Elementary School  
Fitchburg Housing Authority  
Fitchburg Public Schools  
After-School Programs  
Hannaford Supermarkets  
HealthAlliance Hospital  
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District - Luther Burbank  
New England Seed Company  
Pampered Chef  
The Print Shop @ Dunn & Co.  
R.A. Hall & Co., CPA  
Shaw's Supermarkets  
Share our Strength's  
Cooking Matters MA  
Strand Theatre  
Twin City CDC  
WIC North Central MA

## Businesses

Bare Hill Studios  
The Barn School  
Bay Leaf Studio  
Berlin Orchard  
The Black Sheep  
Bolton Orchard  
Carlson Orchards, Inc.  
Central Avenue Auto Repair  
CitySprouts  
Clinton Savings Bank  
Cristina Vitiello, LLC  
Deborah Kotlarz  
Dharma Harvest, Inc.  
Fiber Loft  
Forgione Lawn Care  
Gibbet Hill  
The Healing Garden  
Hillside Garage Inc.  
Leominster Credit Union  
The MathWorks, Inc.  
Moore's Lumber  
Nypro Inc.  
The Polus Center  
Redinger & Associates, Inc.  
Tailgaters Grille  
Venier Design Inc.  
Westward Orchards  
The Wine Merchant

## Volunteers

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Jordan Albert  
Brendan Aylward  
Sammy & Katie Barrett  
Beaudette Family  
Heidi Beaulac  
Mandy Beebe  
Emilia & Camila Bernasconi  
Robert Berry  
Greg Billings  
Joe Bongiardina  
Alexander Boyd  
Art Boyd  
Stacy Brassard



# Thanks to all of you!



## Volunteers *con't*

Daniel Breidel  
 Cindy Buhner  
 Maria Burgos  
 Gwendolyn Burke  
 Liz Burns  
 Liz Buros  
 Lily Byam  
 Joe Cabral  
 Jeanine Calabria  
 Jacqueline & Stephanie Cannon  
 Caradimitrapoula Family  
 Kathleen Cardinale  
 Champine Family  
 Cisneros Family  
 Darryl Clark  
 Crocker Elementary  
 School Students  
 Lori & Will Colby  
 Colon Family  
 Brenda Crawshaw  
 Marcia Croyle  
 Adrienne Cummings  
 Diane Dalton  
 Wanda Davis  
 George Davis  
 Steve Dennison  
 Deyst Families  
 Sherri Dinsmore  
 Dischler Family  
 Duchnowski Family  
 Kathy Dugan  
 Pete Dumont  
 Patty Dundee  
 Tim Ebner  
 Ciara Figueroa  
 Joan Finger  
 Janet Fraser  
 Pamela Frederick  
 Andrew Gauthier  
 Bob Gayros  
 Cayley Geffen  
 Mary Giannetti

Giovinazzo Family  
 Jake Goldstein  
 Green Acres Youth Residents  
 Connie Grabowy  
 Samarth Gupta  
 Lisa Hamaker  
 Alex Handler  
 Barry Hanson  
 Kao Her  
 Clay Hobart & Parker School  
 Students  
 Talia Horvath  
 Katie Hunting  
 Virginia Ibane  
 Jensen Family  
 Barbara Jordan  
 Renee & Megan Joyce  
 Nicole Juul-Hindsgaul  
 Tina Kammerer  
 Eileen Kassower  
 Shamaila Khan  
 Mary Ellen Kilbreth  
 Lee Klein  
 Karen Knowles  
 Gina Kovach  
 Kristina Kronauer  
 Liz Lagadinos  
 Leah Family  
 Michael Leah  
 Marianne Leahy  
 Lezlie Lee  
 Peter Legere  
 Cheryl Lonardo  
 Longsjo Middle School  
 Students  
 Gisela Lopez  
 Patricia Loverro  
 Shelia Lumi  
 Donna Mackie  
 Richard Maglione  
 Susan Martin  
 Rich Maynard  
 Leslie McBrayor  
 Grace McNamara  
 Ashley Mendos  
 Wendy Metz  
 Mills Family  
 Jane Moosbruker  
 Heidi Morley  
 Zachary Murphy  
 Mary & Paul Murtland  
 Natasha Nassar  
 Mike Nester  
 Chined Okerafor  
 Gloria Ortiz  
 Oskowitz Family  
 Barbara Pelkey  
 Marimar Perez  
 Jennifer Peters-Ayers  
 Bria Pichette  
 Julie & Mark Pratt

Prichard Street Residents  
 Jack Reynolds  
 Kim Ricciutti  
 Rivera Family  
 Rivie Family  
 Vicky Robinson  
 Jose Rodriguez  
 Linda Russelll  
 Renne Senes  
 Michael Seward  
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 Mary Louise Shaw  
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 Mary Jo White  
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 Ayn Yeagle  
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 BIGWORDS  
 Danielle Winkler

**GROWING PLACES**  
**GARDEN PROJECT**  
 Feeding Families Together



# Feeding Families Together



GROWING PLACES  
GARDEN PROJECT





### **why we do it**

Food security is a growing problem today and can result from many situations, including change in job status, change in location, natural disaster and emergency; not just long-term poverty.

### **how we do it**

By donating complete vegetable gardens and teaching our clients how to care for them and enjoy a healthier way of eating.

### **who we are**

Volunteers, donors, clients, families, partners, and trustees—all coming together to nourish community.

### **eligibility determined by**

- ✓ Economic need
- ✓ Availability of appropriate gardening space
- ✓ Commitment of 5-7 hours per week to tending a garden



Safe, affordable, and nourishing food is a growing issue for all Americans, and it's about much more than just having enough — it's also about knowing the right foods to eat and how to prepare them. A local garden is a wonderful way to provide nourishment for the body and soul.

### **our mission**

**Growing Places Garden Project's** mission is to improve the food security and nutrition education of people with limited economic means. We do this by providing vegetable gardens and nutrition education so that people can grow food on their own and become more conscientious about their nutrition.

### **our goal**

Our goal is to grow proficient gardeners who maintain their gardens on their own and, through our encouragement and support, continue to grow fresh, healthy food for themselves and their loved ones year after year.

### **our guiding philosophy**

At Growing Places Garden Project, we believe that gardening can be transformative. We have witnessed the positive impact of teaching families to garden and the change that occurs when individuals are empowered and encouraged along the way. Something truly amazing occurs when a group of people come together to move soil, plant seeds, and watch them grow. The entire community is nourished and reminded that the potential to create abundance in our own lives is always within reach.



*“Growing Place’s passion for the cause is inspiring. The issues of food, health, and the economy are on everyone’s mind these days, and Growing Places offers an important solution.”*

*Sarah Webb, Community Service Coordinator, Groton School*

## programs & services

### *garden program*

Growing Places ensures access to fresh, healthy food for a wide range of clients by offering residential, container, and community gardens. We make a commitment of at least two years to our clients establishing gardens the first year at the client's residence or community gardens, and returning the second year with seeds and seedlings. All gardens, seeds and plants are supplied at no cost to our clients.

### *our gardens are*

- Established at each client's residence or community plot
- Personalized to the client's dietary needs and aspirations
- Designed to conserve water and be maintained without synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides

### *a garden takes shape*



Many volunteers come together to take on the individual tasks that eventually becomes a garden.

### *nutrition education for adults & children*

To help adults and children eat nutritiously and improve their physical health, Growing Places is partnering with Operation Frontline (of Share Our Strength) to provide nutrition-based cooking classes to current and prospective gardeners in the communities we serve.

For Adults, we offer a six-week class designed to promote healthy food choices, teach lifelong cooking skills and provide practical nutrition information as well as food budgeting strategies.

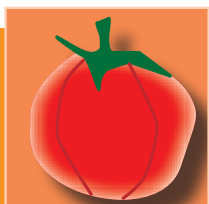


We've introduced nutrition education and cooking to a wide range of children through the schools in our service area to help reduce the growing number of at-risk youth. The program introduces children to the ease and benefits of more nutritious eating and shows them how to make easy, healthful snacks and meals.

Participants in both programs receive donated groceries, recipes and a gift bag of kitchen accessories to help them stay on top of their new skills.

### *ongoing support throughout the process*

To ensure that our gardeners are successful, seasoned garden mentors are available by phone and email for consultations during the first year. In addition, Growing Places also supports our clients with regular newsletters that include helpful tips on gardening, recipes, articles and more.



*“The experience of gardening taught me that patience and hard work bring great rewards and that I can be the creator of abundance in my own life.”*

*Malaena Nahimas, Stow, MA*

# providing food security

## benefits of gardening

Our clients constantly tell us that they reap much more from their gardens than they sow and enjoy the many benefits gardening provides including:

- ✓ Increased diet of fresh, home-grown produce
- ✓ More creative, home-cooked meals
- ✓ Increased physical activity and more fresh air
- ✓ Reduced stress
- ✓ Creates a beautiful focal point to admire
- ✓ Fosters an appreciation for the miracles in nature
- ✓ Helps children understand where food comes from
- ✓ Provides bounty to share with neighbors and loved one
- ✓ Brings people and communities together
- ✓ Inspires the mind

## our history

Kate Deyst and Cindy Buhner founded the organization in 2001 after reading an article in Smithsonian Magazine about a similar project started by Dan Barker in Portland, Oregon. In their first season, Kate and Cindy managed to find five worthy clients and became impassioned about making a difference one garden at a time.

Since 2001, we have helped nearly 1,000 people grow vegetables, gain self-confidence, and learn how to take more control over their nutrition.



For more information about **Growing Places Garden Project**, please visit us at [www.growingplaces.org](http://www.growingplaces.org) or call us at **978.598.3723**



“What a tremendous experience it was for all of us! The girls from Troop 30744 rose to the tasks and really achieved a sense of purpose and accomplishment for this rewarding work.”

*Pamela Erdos, Assistant Leader, Girl Scout Troop 30744*

## the gift of a garden

Our gardens are generously donated by individuals and partners within our community. Together, we are helping families become more self-sufficient, healthier, and more economically sound.

- 🌻 Complete Garden \$500
- 🌻 Soil and Amendments \$100
- 🌻 Lumber and Hardware \$75
- 🌻 Seeds and Plants \$50
- 🌻 Client Starter Kit \$25





# collaboration is key



## partnering for success

We recognize that we alone cannot solve the complex issues facing the communities we serve, and we look forward to collaborating with others to develop and implement joint strategies that go beyond the scope of our organization. With funding received from the 2010 Compassion Capital Federal Grant through the Center for Democracy & Humanity @ Mount Wachusett Community College, we have established a Community Partnership Program.

### *this will enable us to*

- ✓ Increase collaboration and community engagement
- ✓ Establish connection with key individuals and organizations
- ✓ Access a greater number of potential clients in our service area

At the same time, Growing Places will enhance visibility and awareness of food security issues throughout the community and take a leadership role in combating important hunger, health and nutrition education issues.

## Our Sphere of Influence\*

Growing Places' mission encourages widespread community action focused on improving food security. We rely not only on our partners but also our supporters who generously donate funds and goods and the volunteers who provide crucial time and labor. Together, we form a strong coalition of like-minded individuals or a "sphere of influencers" that produce powerful connections benefiting everyone involved.



\* Adapted from the SPICE Model in the book "Firms of Endearment" by R. Sisodia, J. Sheth & D.B. Wolfe



“Your nutrition and cooking classes provide a hands on, age-appropriate approach to helping our students develop healthier eating habits.”

Jennifer Jones, Fitchburg Public Schools

# GROWING PLACES GARDEN PROJECT

Feeding Families Together



75 Green Street • PO Box 17  
Clinton, MA 01510  
t/f: 978.598.3723



Growing Places is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.





## Enhancing the health, self-sufficiency, and well-being of people in need



### Massachusetts Service Area

|           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| Acton     | Lancaster  |
| Ayer      | Leominster |
| Berlin    | Littleton  |
| Bolton    | Lunenburg  |
| Boxboro   | Maynard    |
| Clinton   | Pepperell  |
| Devens    | Shirley    |
| Fitchburg | Sterling   |
| Groton    | Stow       |
| Harvard   | Townsend   |
| Hudson    | Westford   |

### WE ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE OUR AWARDS & RECOGNITION

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD  
Wachusett Chamber of Commerce, 2010

EXCELLENCE IN NONPROFIT COLLABORATION  
Massachusetts Nonprofit Network, 2010

### Our Mission

Growing Places Garden Project's mission is to improve the food security and nutrition education of people with limited economic means. We do this by providing vegetable gardens and nutrition education so that people can grow food on their own and become more conscientious about their nutrition.

Our gardens are:

- Customized based on dietary needs and preferences
- Environmentally friendly and designed to conserve water and be maintained without synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides
- Intended to grow enough produce for a 1-4 person household
- Designed so that they can be maintained independently by the third season

### Our Goal

At Growing Places, we believe gardening can be transformative. Through the process of learning to grow, care for, and harvest food, people become engaged in the gardening process and gradually become more aware about their nutrition and health. By encouraging our clients and providing regular support, our goal is to grow proficient gardeners who maintain their gardens on their own and continue to grow fresh healthy food for themselves and their loved ones year after year.



### Service Area and eligibility

We service 22 communities in North Central Massachusetts and recruit gardeners through a variety of methods that include partnerships with like-minded organizations.

#### Eligibility for a garden is determined by

- Economic need (household income is less than or equal to 200% of the poverty level)
- Availability of appropriate gardening space
- Commitment of 5-7 hours per week to tending a garden

## Our Services

### Garden program

We ensure access to a wide range of clients by offering residential, container, and community gardens. We make a commitment of at least two years to our clients: establishing gardens at the client's residences or community gardens the first year, and returning with seeds and seedlings the second year. All gardens, seeds and plants are supplied at no cost to our clients.

### Nutrition education for adults

To help people eat nutritiously and improve their physical health, we have partnered with **Operation Frontline** (of Share Our Strength) to provide nutrition-based cooking classes to current and prospective gardeners in the communities we serve. Each six-week class is led by a knowledgeable teacher and is designed to promote healthy food choices, teach lifelong cooking skills, provide practical nutrition information and food budgeting strategies.

### After School program for children

Due to the growing number of at-risk youth, we've introduced nutrition education and cooking to a wide range of children through the schools in our service area. The program introduces children to the ease and benefits of more nutritious eating and shows them how to make easy, healthful snacks and meals.

### Ongoing support throughout the process

We offer lifelong advice and support through workshops, our website, and regular newsletters. In the first year, each family receives personalized guidance from a Garden Mentor who helps establish goals and priorities, and monitors progress throughout the growing season. In the second year, each family receives seeds, seedling, and continues to receive ongoing technical support.

### Call for Collaboration

We recognize that the complex issues facing the communities we serve cannot be solved alone, and we look forward to collaborating with others to develop and implement joint strategies that strengthen our communities and help families become more self-sufficient, healthier, and more economically sound.

**For more information about Growing Places Garden Project, please visit us at [www.growingplaces.org](http://www.growingplaces.org) or call us at 978-598-3723.**



## The McNeal Family Garden A Story of Success



### Case Study Highlights

Client: The McNeal Family

Town: Shirley, MA

### Opportunity:

Strong desire to eat healthy, be part of the growing process, and connect with nature

### Process

- Site visit
- Needs assessment
- Square foot gardening
- Plot Plan
- Garden mentors
- Ongoing support
- Feedback loop

### Results

- A bountiful garden that nourished the family
- A beautiful space for friends and family to admire
- Renewed faith in the power of nature

*“Installing the garden was easy—I worked with a crew of volunteers to move soil, assemble the three raised beds, and plant all the vegetables I had requested – winter squash, peppers, radishes, beets, kale, cauliflower, broccoli, potatoes, peas, beans, carrots, red and green lettuce, cucumbers, summer squash, and zucchini.”* Nancy McNeal

### Opportunity

With the effects of the economic downturn and unemployment continuing to ripple through our communities, many are struggling to make ends meet. Nancy McNeal of Shirley, MA, learned about Growing Places from a friend and applied for a garden in the spring of 2009. Having experienced two unsuccessful gardening attempts, Nancy welcomed the opportunity to have experienced mentors help her become a successful gardener.

Nancy was used to being resourceful about food. She had organized and run a co-op where several families bought produce in bulk, but she wanted to take a more hands-on approach toward producing food. Managing a household of eight, including her husband, five children, and her mother-in-law, Nancy had many mouths to feed and was excited about the opportunity to provide her family with lots of fresh, healthy produce.

### Growing Places' Process

Our process starts with a site visit to determine the best location for the garden—ideally a south facing spot that has access to water and at least 6-8 hours of sunlight a day. After siting Nancy's garden and using an intensive square-foot gardening system to organize the beds into manageable plots, a garden mentor provided Nancy with a plot plan and markers to help identify where everything would be in her garden after it was planted.

Once everything was in the ground, Nancy just needed to make sure to weed, water, and harvest the produce. “It was pretty simple, Growing Places took care of the hard part which was getting started and knowing which location was best.”



**“I found my mentor’s advice about early and late season planting useful and I appreciated being able to call her anytime with questions.”**

Growing Places provides clients with regular newsletters to help them get comfortable with what they are experiencing—what insects to be on the lookout for, tips for pruning, and lots of delicious recipes for the harvested produce. They also provide a Growing Guide that provides step-by-step instructions on how to care for the garden.

### **Results**

After the garden was installed, a mentor visited with Nancy to talk about how her garden was working. “I found my mentor’s advice about early and late season planting useful and I appreciated being able to call her anytime with questions.”

Nancy is extremely grateful for her garden and for all it has brought to her extended family. The experience of gardening has planted “seeds” that have spilled over to other sources of food—she is making her own butter and yogurt and her daughter makes her own baby food and is anxious to start her own one-acre farm that would include bees, chickens, goats and even a Jersey cow or two. “Everyone in the family has benefited from the garden—my children and grandchildren have been active in the entire process and as we gain confidence, we are inspired to go even further in the quest to become more self-sufficient.”

Growing Places believes wholeheartedly in the power of gardening and sees the benefits gardens bring to families—from spending more time with loved ones, to creating new recipes, new experiences—and more. We see people become more hopeful and more resourceful when they become an active participant in the magic of helping a garden grow. Having a garden is a wonderful way to provide nourishment to the body and soul.

**For more information about Growing Places Garden Project, please visit us at [www.growingplaces.org](http://www.growingplaces.org) or call us at 978-598-3723.**



## Partnering to build community A Story of Success



### Case Study Highlights

Partner: Massachusetts Opportunity Council (MOC)

#### Opportunity:

Enhance community and bring healthy food to neighborhoods in need

#### Process

- Mission fit
- Complimentary programs and services
- Partnership agreement
- Shared funding
- Shared resources
- Captive audience

#### Results

- Residential, community, and container gardens for at-risk children, families, and elderly across Fitchburg
- Inter-generational exposure to cultural traditions and educational opportunities
- Renewed sense of pride in targeted neighborhoods
- Beginning of healthier communities

*“The gardens have bestowed benefits beyond just encouraging the families to eat better and save money – the gardens have impacted the neighborhood as a whole and created a point of pride within the public housing community.”*

**Bob Hill**

### Opportunity

It's amazing what can grow when two like-minded organizations with similar missions work together in pursuit of a worthy goal. The Montachusett Opportunity Council (MOC), a Fitchburg, MA-based non-profit community action agency, wanted to construct several community gardens for low-income residents and families but lacked the gardening knowledge to make it all happen. It turned to Growing Places to provide that expertise and a collaborative plan to implement several community gardens was put in motion. Leveraging the strengths of their respective organizations, Growing Places and MOC worked side-by-side to identify families in need, enlist volunteer support, and install the gardens. With a high population of at-risk youth, elderly, and families in transition in Fitchburg, the gardens were a welcome addition that not only promoted healthy eating but also enriched the community by providing healthy outdoor activity and a sense of purpose and hope.

### Educational gardens for children and families

The first site MOC targeted for community gardens was Health Alliance Hospital's Burbank Campus in Fitchburg. Lezli Lee, Program Coordinator of MOC's Community Partnership for Children, knew the gardens would be easily accessible to many young families with children in the neighborhood already receiving MOC's services and would serve as a hands-on example of how to enhance health and nutrition. The garden would also provide a powerful educational resource for the community, engaging children in all aspects of growing food.

Sheila Lumi, Community Coordinator of North Central MA for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), was instrumental in recruiting local families with children to participate. "One of the best ways to get children to relate to fruits and vegetables and make healthy choices is to expose them to nutritious foods as early as possible and teach them where the food comes from". Six families currently participate in the MOC Community Partnership Gardens and there are plans to expand the gardens next year.

### A new prescription for seniors

Food insecurity—the inability to obtain available food—and malnutrition among our seniors is concerning because of age-related factors such as decreased mobility, health issues, and isolation. MOC approached three



**“One of the best ways to get children to relate to fruits and vegetables and make healthy choices is to expose them to nutritious foods as early as possible and teach them where the food comes from.”**

senior housing locations owned by the Fitchburg Housing Authority—Daniel Heights, Wallace Towers, and Fitchburg Green—all of which were searching for ways to increase healthy eating and socialization among residents. “We wanted to find a way to provide seniors with access to fresh produce since they typically experience barriers to these healthy options due to cost and mobility issues,” stated Ayn Yeagle, Director of Elder Nutrition. Together, these gardens serve a growing number of elderly residents who have become enthusiastic gardeners, many for the first time. One resident, a self-proclaimed “sun child,” enjoyed the increased activity and the excuse to get outside more often. Another resident who is originally from Puerto Rico explained with pride that she liked her garden because “siempre hay cosecha! [There’s always a harvest!]” She is eagerly awaiting the ripening of her “veinte ocho [twenty eight] tomatoes.”

### **Building community within housing authorities**

Next, MOC approached Bob Hill of the Fitchburg Housing Authority who fully supported establishing gardens for residents and contributed some funds to build the gardens. Bob believes “the gardens have bestowed benefits beyond just encouraging the families here to eat better and save money—the gardens have impacted the neighborhood as a whole and created a point of pride within the public housing community.”

Single mom Heidi always puts out extra vegetables in a box for the neighbors and encourages the local kids to get involved as well. “The fun part is when I get all the neighborhood kids in here—they’re interested in what’s going on and have lots of questions—I like to teach them something positive.” Heidi feels fortunate to have fully experienced the gardening process and feels a sense of responsibility to keep her garden going. She sees her garden as a powerful tool as well as a positive symbol of collaboration and community spirit.

### **Results**

With little to no means to purchase or obtain fresh fruits and vegetables, many low-income families are struggling to afford healthy foods and provide nutritional meals for their families. Growing Places and MOC see this first-hand through their work with families every day and teamed up to make twice the impact to the community. While each organization has its own strengths, together they were able to share networks, expand their services, and accomplish more than either could have accomplished individually.

**For more information about Growing Places Garden Project, please visit us at [www.growingplaces.org](http://www.growingplaces.org) or call us at 978-598-3723.**





# Hunger in America is on the Rise

*A brief overview of important hunger and health issues currently facing our nation*

**Despite delivering 44 million pounds of food in Massachusetts, a 30% increase since 2006, our state food banks could still not cover everyone in need.<sup>2</sup>**

**Food insecurity:** USDA's measure of lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members

## Hunger Facts

- 1 in 6 Americans does not have access to enough food
- Most individuals struggling with hunger are not homeless or out of work
- 17 million US children (1 in 4) do not have enough food
- Hunger has long-lasting, devastating effects on the health and development of children
- Many adults struggling with hunger are college educated

The past few years have been the most challenging for many Americans and while we are emerging from the worst recession in decades, hunger continues to rise at an alarming rate. Today, nearly 49 million people in America – almost 15 percent of US households – struggle to put food on their tables<sup>1</sup>. The US Department of Agriculture, which began tracking food insecurity in 1995, reports that these numbers are the highest in the past fifteen years.

In Massachusetts, high unemployment and the subsequent loss of homes and savings has cut across all social classes. Hunger, once concentrated in low-income communities, is now spreading across the state, affecting the newly unemployed regardless of social status. With more than 600,000 Massachusetts residents struggling to feed their families, we are entering a new era of food insecurity. Massachusetts food banks and shelters have been stretched to capacity and are now serving about 9% of the state, a startling 23% increase over the past four years. Despite delivering 44 million pounds of food in Massachusetts, a 30% increase since 2006, our state food banks could still not cover everyone in need.<sup>2</sup>

## Children and Seniors most vulnerable

Children are especially vulnerable to hunger and poverty. According to the USDA, 17 million – or nearly one in four – children in the US are food insecure<sup>3</sup> and about one in five under the age of 18 live in poverty.<sup>4</sup> Hunger has long-lasting, devastating effects on the health and development of children. Failing to provide children with adequate nutrition in the first three to five years of life can impair mental and physical development and leave children susceptible to disease and other problems later in life.<sup>5</sup>

Food insecurity among low-income school children in Massachusetts has now become a public health emergency requiring immediate attention to help this growing population of at-risk youth.

Children are not the only ones vulnerable to hunger. Inadequate access to food and increasing malnutrition among our seniors is also a growing concern, complicated by age-related issues such as decreased mobility, limited outside assistance, and fixed incomes. Too often, seniors have to choose between spending their income on food or medicine.

1. Feeding America's Hunger in America Study, 2010  
2. Hunger in Massachusetts Study 2010  
3. US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Household Food Security in the United States, 2008, November 2009.  
4. US Census Bureau: [www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/poverty08/pov08hi](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/poverty08/pov08hi)  
5. Feeding American, John Cook K. Jeng, Child Food Insecurity: The Economic Impact on our Nation, May 2009. Project Bread Hunger Report



**Enhancing nutrition programs in Massachusetts is going to require strong partnerships and more efficient collaboration among nonprofits.**

## **Nutrition Education**

Complicating food security issues are concerns about poor nutrition and health and rising levels of diabetes, heart disease, and obesity-related ailments. American society has a new label – obesogenic – a term used to classify environments that promote excessive consumption of food, unhealthy foods, and physical inactivity. However, while the American diet leaves much to be desired in many cases, growing media attention has brought about new awareness of the problem and positive changes resulting in many of us eating more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and less processed food.

## **Reversing the trend**

Because education is the first line of defense against hunger and malnutrition, The Massachusetts Public Health commissioner is increasing support for better nutrition with more school nutrition and education programs, local farm support, and Eat Right programs that target both children and adults. At the same time, federal support for improved nutrition is increasing, as indicated by President Obama's initiatives to reverse the hunger trend with restored job growth, expanded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (SNAP) benefits, and other hunger programs.

## **What Can Be Done**

Food insecurity and hunger are serious and growing public health problems that have a direct impact on education, healthcare, and our quality of life. Enhancing nutrition programs in Massachusetts requires strong partnerships and more efficient collaboration among nonprofits.

While the Commonwealth has made great strides to maximize participation in federal nutrition programs and food banks and pantries have stepped up to give away more food than ever, more can be done to bring the programs to scale and improve access to and delivery of programs to those in need.

Growing Places Garden Project addresses the important issues of food security and nutrition education by teaching people in need how to grow their own food in 22 towns in Massachusetts. Since 2001, Growing Places Garden Project has helped almost one thousand people grow vegetables, gain self-confidence, and learn how to take more control over their nutrition.

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