



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



# A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As we reflect on another transformative year at Growing Places, we are reminded of the incredible community that makes our mission possible. Our dedicated team, comprised of 13 staff, 7 passionate youth leaders, 9 committed Board members, and more than 100 volunteers, stands together to support our local farmers and nourish our community—especially our most vulnerable households.

At the heart of our work lies a simple yet powerful belief: local food systems can thrive when we foster connections between farmers and the communities they serve through a values-based food system.

In action, our initiatives are impactful and far-reaching. Every week, we aggregate \$7,000+ worth of local produce from more than 30 farmers within the North Central Massachusetts Agricultural (NCMA) network. Once this fresh bounty arrives—either brought to our warehouse in Leominster or picked up from the farms—our dedicated staff, youth leaders, and volunteers work tirelessly to sort and pack the produce. Together, we deliver fresh bags to more than 200 households across 20+ NCMA communities, ensuring that nutritious food reaches those who need it most.

Our mobile market further expands access, bringing produce to locations where transportation is a barrier, such as subsidized housing and community organizations. We proudly accept SNAP and the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP), aiming to educate and empower the 80% of eligible households not currently utilizing these benefits—potentially bringing an additional \$1.9 million to our local farms each month.

This year, we took a significant step in enhancing our community impact by partnering with local institutions to lay the foundation for wholesale purchasing. We also collaborate with nonprofits, schools, and healthcare institutions through programs like Food As Medicine to connect food-insecure families with resources to access SNAP benefits and improve their food security.

Thanks to your support, we increased our local produce purchases sourcing 146,217 units of produce from 38 Massachusetts farms to households across NCMA; more than 80% of the 16,000+ transactions were made via nutrition benefits.

As we enter our 23rd year of operation, we are excited to announce the upcoming launch of our regional food processing center. This innovative facility will enable us to lightly process local produce—slicing, dicing, and preparing it for our community while fostering a closed-loop system to minimize waste and maximize nutrition.

As we celebrate these achievements, I invite each of you to join us in strengthening our local food system. Whether in your personal or professional life, I encourage you to take one meaningful action to support local agriculture. Together, we can continue to redefine our food landscape and build a healthier, more connected community. Thank you for being a vital part of our journey. Let's continue to grow!

With gratitude,

  
Executive Director

# SUPPORTING FARMERS



In 2023, we purchased **\$365,519**  
from **38** local farms, including **33** NCMA farms.



**101**

varieties of produce

leveraged **\$299,866**

in food security funding



to support **16**  
North Central MA farmers  
to build capacity



# SUPPORTING COMMUNITY

**14%**

increase, reflects Mobile Market  
and Home Delivery in **22**  
North Central MA communities

**11,130**

units of  
service

**80%**

(2%  
increase)

percent of local  
produce purchases via  
nutrition benefit programs

## FOOD + NUTRITION SUPPORT

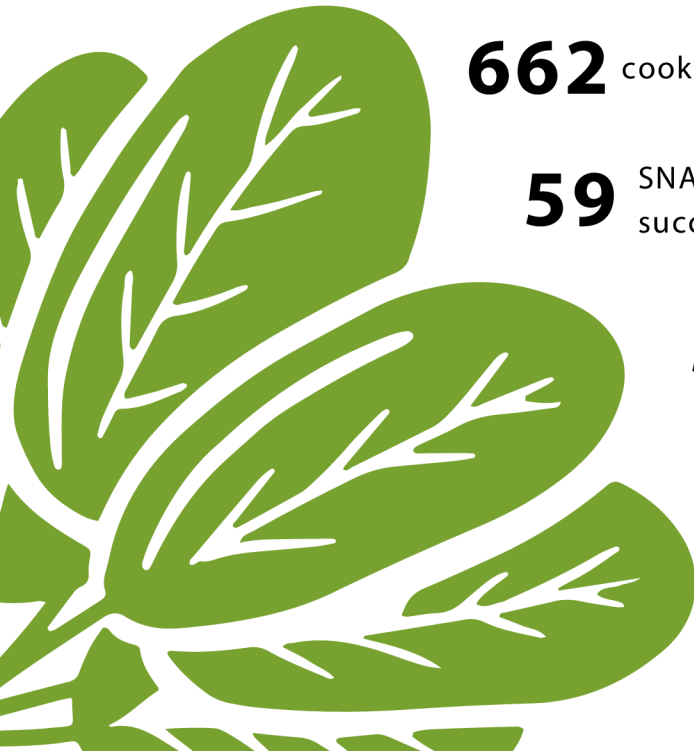


**662** cooking class participants

**59** SNAP applications completed with a **59%**  
successful enrollment rate (35 applications)!

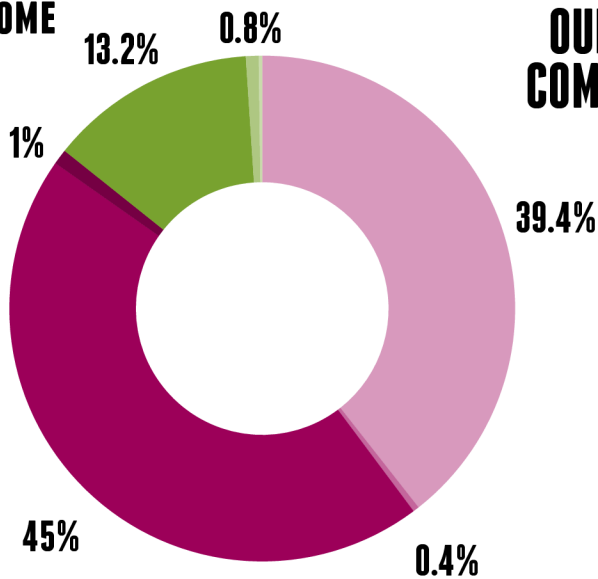
**52** professionals from food pantries, social service  
agencies, and schools trained in food justice,  
SNAP and HIP!

**\$940** worth of produce purchased through  
our Food FARMacy partnership with  
HealthAlliance Hospital



# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

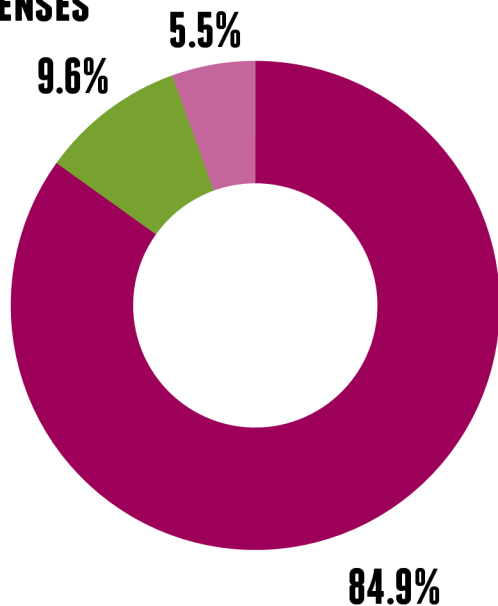
## OPERATING INCOME



## WHERE OUR MONEY COMES FROM

| OPERATING INCOME | FY2023             |       |
|------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Foundations      | 889,328            | 39.4% |
| Individuals      | 8,809              | 0.4%  |
| Government       | 1,014,880          | 45%   |
| Corporations     | 21,957             | 1%    |
| Events           | -                  | 0%    |
| Earned Income    | 298,733            | 13.2% |
| In-Kind          | 18,349             | 0.8%  |
| Interest         | 5,094              | 0%    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>     | <b>\$2,257,151</b> |       |

## OPERATING EXPENSES



## HOW WE SPEND OUR MONEY

| OPERATING EXPENSES          | FY2023             |       |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Programs                    | 1,270,866          | 84.9% |
| Administration & Management | 143,612            | 9.6%  |
| Fundraising                 | 82,482             | 5.5%  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                | <b>\$1,496,961</b> |       |



# OUR TEAM

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rocco Mammone, Chair  
Rev. Dr. Susan Suchocki Brown, Vice Chair  
Sheri Bean, Treasurer  
Miranda Jennings, Clerk  
Dr. Shelley Errington Nicholson, Member  
Kelly Johnson, Member  
Amanda Curtis, Member  
Polly Sioux, Member  
Evie Gleckel, Member  
Meghan Maceiko, Member

## STAFF TEAM

Ayn Yeagle, Exec. Director  
Cory Chauvin  
Derek Alford  
Donna Wysokenski  
Janet Edwards  
Jess Hansen  
Kayla Kress  
Mackenzie Wirtz  
Marielle Vega  
Minna Scholten  
Molly Velasco  
Rhea Bujold  
Richelle Brown

# THANK YOU TO OUR GRANTORS AND SPONSORS

Amelia Peabody Foundation  
Bemis Company Outdoor & Community Funds  
Bjurling Charitable Foundation  
City of Fitchburg  
City of Leominster  
Clif Bar Family Foundation  
Community Foundation North Central MA  
Eos Foundation  
Fallon Health  
Greater Worcester Community Foundation  
Health Equity Partnership of NCMA (CHNA9)  
Heywood Hospital  
ICU Federal Credit Union

Mass Service Alliance  
Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources  
Point32Health  
ReFED, Inc.  
Reliant Foundation  
Robinson Broadhurst Foundation  
Schwartz Foundation  
UMass Memorial Hospital  
United States Dept. of Agriculture  
United States Environmental Protection Agency  
United Way of North Central MA  
Workers Credit Union



**Growing Places' mission is to inspire and connect the North Central MA community to create equitable access to healthy food and environmental sustainability through education, collaboration, and advocacy.**

325 LINDELL AVENUE LEOMINSTER, MA 01453  
TEL: 978.598.3723 GROWINGPLACES.ORG