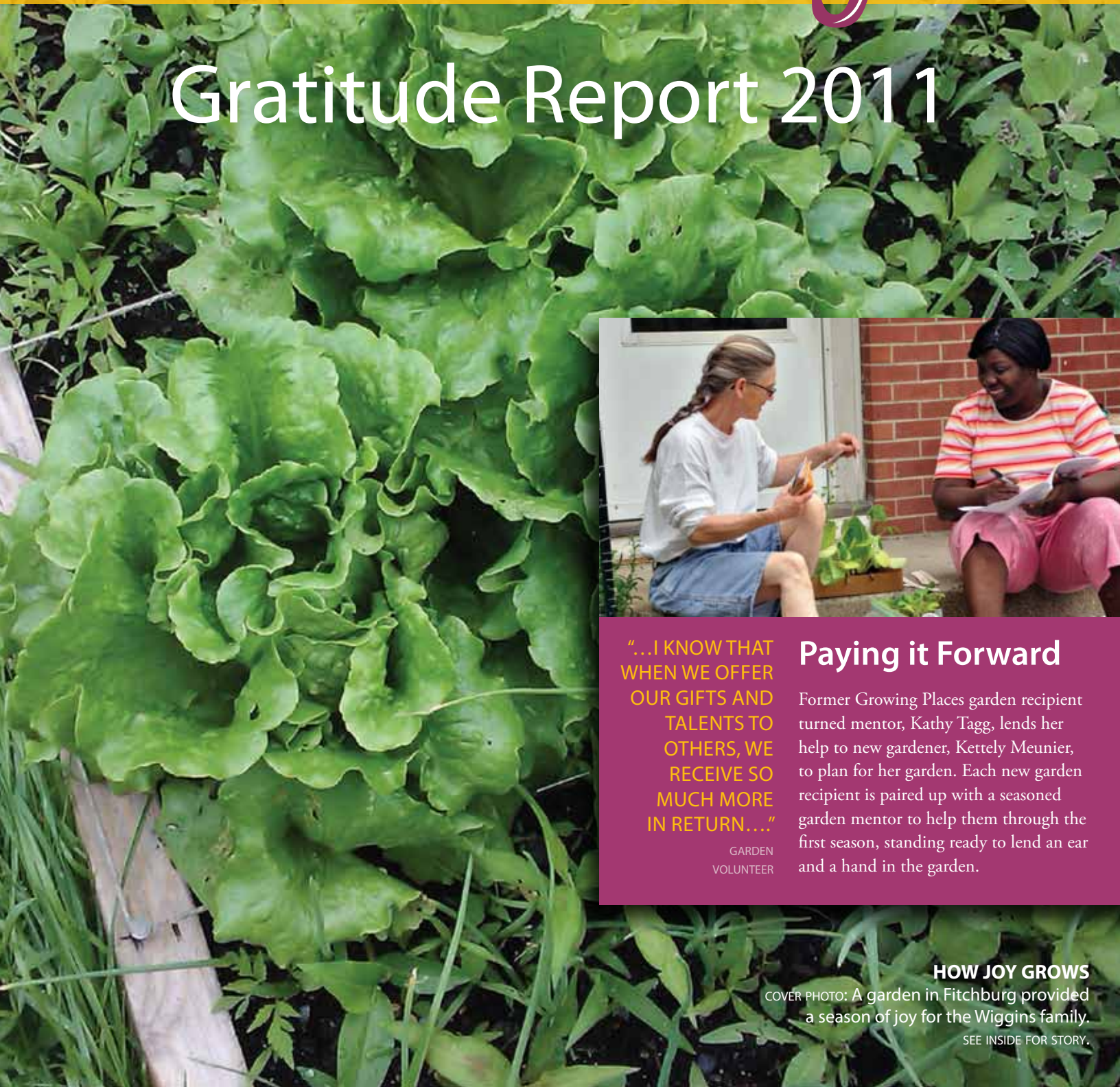


GROWING PLACES GARDEN PROJECT

Feeding Families Together



Gratitude Report 2011



**"...I KNOW THAT
WHEN WE OFFER
OUR GIFTS AND
TALENTS TO
OTHERS, WE
RECEIVE SO
MUCH MORE
IN RETURN..."**

GARDEN
VOLUNTEER

Paying it Forward

Former Growing Places garden recipient turned mentor, Kathy Tagg, lends her help to new gardener, Kettely Meunier, to plan for her garden. Each new garden recipient is paired up with a seasoned garden mentor to help them through the first season, standing ready to lend an ear and a hand in the garden.

HOW JOY GROWS

COVER PHOTO: A garden in Fitchburg provided a season of joy for the Wiggins family.

SEE INSIDE FOR STORY.

YOUR Gift Matters!

Dear Friend,

As you read through this review of our work over the past year – remember – YOU had a hand in this!

See yourself in the pictures and numbers and hear yourself in the stories and the quotes.

- YOU had a direct impact on 300 low-income youth, families and seniors in North Central MA.
- YOU helped to increase access to fresh, local foods for over 300 people in the past year alone.
- YOU transformed neighborhoods, restored pride in self and place and helped to build self-reliance.

Whether you lent your time, talent or treasures – we are immensely grateful.

Once again, we celebrate YOU and reach out to you to continue your support. Help make this year another great success. Help reach more low-income families with the tools and skills to feed their families healthy, nutritious foods. Help rebuild neighborhoods and a sense of pride.

Please make a donation to Growing Places today, so that together we can continue to impact our communities and make North Central MA a place where everyone has access to fresh, affordable, nutritious foods!

Thank YOU!



Linda Russell
CHAIR



Joanne Foster
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



WIGGINS GARDEN

Diona Wiggins, one of the Wiggins' four children, enjoys harvesting.

Growing Joy

Garden brings sense of purpose and joy to mother and children

Timing is everything. Nine-year-old DeAundre Wiggins heard about the opportunity to receive a free garden at school just about the same time his dad lost his job and was about to be deployed to Afghanistan, and his beloved grandmother passed away from cancer. DeAundre's mom, Diane Wiggins-White, told us her son talked nonstop about getting his own garden.

She applied to Growing Places because she wanted a garden not only to feed herself and her four children, but also to give DeAundre something to do to help take his mind off his troubles and accomplish something to make his dad proud.

According to Diane, the first-year garden was a huge success. "We began to eat more vegetables and I was cooking a lot more," she said. They really loved the garden, Diane said, and it really helped DeAundre through his difficult time. "I saw a change in his attitude and his grades at school," she said. And to her surprise, Diane said, "it helped me through my hard time. It was therapeutic."

Diane and her son enjoyed being able to walk outside and pick fresh vegetables, including lettuce and tomatoes, two of the key ingredients to DeAundre's favorite, BLT sandwiches. And finally, she added, "The garden saved us money and gave DeAundre and me something to focus on rather than the absence of his father."

Diane and DeAundre have a lot to look forward to this year. In addition to another season of fresh vegetables, DeAundre's dad is due to return from Afghanistan at the end of March. DeAundre can't wait to show his dad his gardening skills!



VOLUNTEERS IN SERVICE

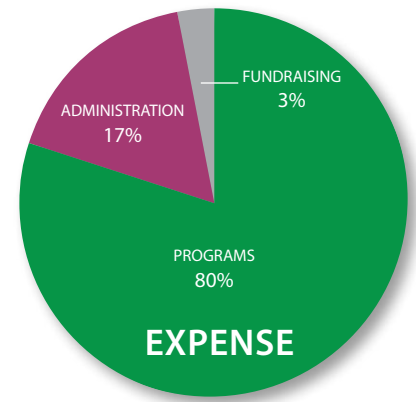
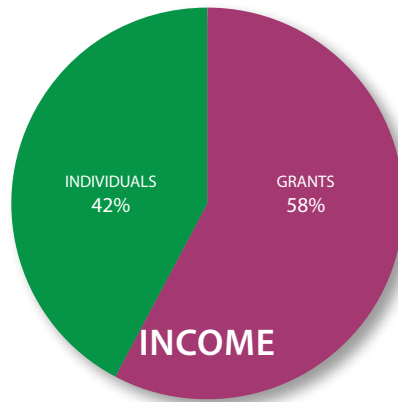
A volunteer works with members of a local Boy Scout troop to help install a garden.

How YOU Made an Impact

IMPACT IN DOLLARS

Small in size, big in reach.

With two staff and an annual operating budget of less than \$132,000, we really know how to stretch YOUR dollar. During this past fiscal year we generated \$121,607 in income and incurred \$131,169 in expenses to serve over 300 people. A reserve fund carefully built up over ten years has provided the foundation to allow us to carry out our mission during challenging economic times. Thanks to donors like YOU!



FOR A COMPLETE REVIEW OF OUR FINANCIALS, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE WWW.GROWINGPLACES.ORG

IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

- 61 new low-income families received a garden and educational support
- 46 gardeners returned for a second year
- 72 children participated in our gardening and cooking classes in conjunction with Cooking Matters®
- 201 individuals volunteered to build frames, install gardens or mentor new gardeners
- 91% of our gardeners ate more meals at home after receiving a garden
- 94% of our gardeners shared their produce with friends, family and neighbors
- 93% of our gardeners got more exercise after receiving a garden
- 97% of our gardeners spent more time outside after receiving a garden
- 67% of gardeners reported eating vegetables on a daily basis after receiving a garden, as opposed to 22% prior to having a GP garden

PERCENTAGES BASED ON SURVEY RESPONSES FROM FIRST-YEAR GARDENERS

IMPACT IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“This has been a fantastic experience for me. I have learned much from mentors, the newsletter... My grandson shared in the marvel of seeing seeds turn into living plants.” FIRST-YEAR GARDENER

“I THINK THE COOLEST PART WAS SEEING EVERYTHING GROW DAY BY DAY.”

FIRST-YEAR GARDENER

“We all truly enjoyed adding our home grown vegetables to our meals. It got the kids more excited in healthy eating.”

FIRST-YEAR GARDENER

to harvest within weeks. This has saved my family money and given something for myself and my children to enjoy doing together...”

SECOND-YEAR GARDENER

“I really enjoyed planting, tending and harvesting the garden. It gave me a sense of pride to feed my family veggies I grew myself. Because our nutrition was improved, we all felt better too!”

FIRST-YEAR GARDENER



WHO KNEW THAT THE TASTE OF VEGETABLES WOULD START A REVOLUTION?” – MARION NESTLE

More than 100 people enjoyed two viewings of the award-winning documentary *Food Fight* sponsored by Growing Places this past spring. The documentary presents a fascinating look at how American agricultural policy and food culture developed in the 20th century and how the California food movement has created a counter-revolution against big agribusiness.

Getting Fresh

Community gardens rebuild communities and create access to fresh foods

Each year Growing Places helps to establish new community gardens or expand existing ones. This past year, we provided garden materials for four new community gardeners: one in Clinton and three in Fitchburg.

“THE GARDENS DISPLAY TO PASSERSBY AND NEIGHBORS A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY...”

DAVID THIBAUT-MUÑOZ,
TWIN CITIES CDC DIRECTOR
OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

One of Growing Places’ partners is Twin Cities CDC, where we have helped to install gardens at the Prichard Street Community Garden. “Not only did neighborhood renters clean up two trash-filled lots where people traditionally dropped off their furniture and odd car parts by creating the Prichard Street community garden,” said David Thibault-Muñoz, the CDC’s director of community organizing, “but their presence at

the site while gardening displays to passersby and neighbors a commitment to community and deters criminal and anti-social behaviors from occurring in the open air surrounding the space.”

Community gardens also provide access to fresh foods where there may be limited or no access. According to Thibault-Muñoz, “They [Prichard Street gardeners] have more access to healthy, organic foods. The closest supermarket is about a mile away from this hilly neighborhood and neither of the two neighborhood convenience stores sell vegetables.”



FRESH VEGGIES!

A garden in bloom at the Prichard St Community Garden in Fitchburg.

It Takes a Village



The work of Growing Places would not be possible without the support of 200+ volunteers, 150+ donors, and numerous other supporters. Please take a moment to go to our website at www.growingplaces.org and click on SUPPORTERS LIKE YOU, to see the complete list of all of those wonderful individuals, businesses, foundations, and partners who lent their time, talent and treasures to Growing Places this past year. Thank YOU!

PICTURED ABOVE CLOCKWISE: Happy new gardeners in Leominster; Berlin Boy Scout working on a garden installation in Clinton; Parker Hannifin Co. employees volunteer as part of United Way Day of Caring to build 30 wooden garden frames; First-year gardener, Berlin; Students enjoying the Cooking Matters® class at the Reingold Elementary School, Fitchburg; First-year gardener, Fitchburg.

GROWING PLACES GARDEN PROJECT

Feeding Families Together



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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