Supporters,

This year, I was privileged to meet a 2015 client who returned to us as a volunteer. She shared her story of domestic violence leading to homelessness and single parenthood. Through her courage and the work of community organizations like ours, she was given a fresh start. She and her family spent a morning with our clients, and it was astounding to see her children engage in the gardening experience with such poise and confidence. We hope for stories like these. We see them every year. Our board and staff are humbled by these courageous stories, and we set our goals to see outcomes like this.

We had an incredible year as an organization. We exceeded our five-year strategic goal, building 101 garden beds for families facing food insecurity. We provided a garden to 354 individuals, 178 being children. We supported 4 new community gardens that dedicated their work to the greater community, donating thousands of pounds of produce to local food pantries. We relied on the partnership of 46 different organizations within the region, and benefited from 16 corporate sponsors and foundations. While we continue to grow, we continue to be a volunteer-led organization, utilizing over 200 volunteers this year.

We are proud of our successes, in part due to the support of those that believe in the good work we do, but mostly because of our families that hope for better. We are grateful for the critical part you play in the process, and together, we aim for a more food secure, well-nourished region.

Sincerely,

Jeannie Iseman
Executive Director

How to get involved with The GardenWorks Project

VOLUNTEER
Please visit our website at www.gardenworksproject.org for current volunteer opportunities and ways to get involved.

DONATE
We look to you to give us reasons to grow further. Please join us in the fight against food insecurity and donate today.

ENGAGE
Visit our website to learn about upcoming educational events and opportunities to get further involved in the food growing movement!
MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD
Emily Kehoe, Board President

Dear Beloved Community Members,

As 2019 comes to the end, The GardenWorks Project is set to finish another year strong. Because of the support of our donors, sponsors, and community partners, 354 members of our community have access to fresh vegetables and fruits in the form of 101 garden beds. By investing in the idea that all people deserve nourishing food, you made this statistic possible. I had the privilege of being a Garden Lead for The GardenWorks Project’s 2019 growing season. On a rainy day in May, my fellow volunteers and I built a garden bed frame, filled it with nutritious soil, and planted an abundance of seasonal and organic seedlings for two families in our community. During the build, Stacey, one of our clients and recipient of the garden, said “There are times where I feel like I am failing as a mother. I cannot afford to go to the store to get fresh fruits and vegetables...I just want my kids to be healthy and happy. This garden is a God sent. We can eat healthy and maintain it as a family.” Like any mother or guardian of a child, Stacey just wants to provide the best for her family and have the peace of mind her children are getting the nutrients they need to grow and thrive.

As we look into the future, The GardenWorks Project’s staff and board are incredibly excited for 2020. The Board of Directors will be reviewing its Strategic Plan to ensure that we as an organization continue to thrive and grow. In the excitement of our accomplishments, there is always the undercurrent of ongoing needs of the families we serve. As we continue to empower, educate, and support DuPage County and beyond, we will need your help to continue to support our clients like Stacey. Whether this is donating your time or money, you are making a huge impact. Thank you so much for being a part of The GardenWorks Project’s network in 2019. We look forward to our continued growth in the year to come.

Sincerely,
Emily Kehoe
Board President

Contact information
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Resource Center: 103 W. Washington St., West Chicago
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www.gardenworksproject.org
WHO WE ARE

Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

The mission of The GardenWorks Project is to promote organic suburban agriculture to improve the well-being of our community, the environment, and those facing food insecurity. We empower, educate, and support all food growers in their efforts to nourish their families and neighbors in need.

Vision

Our community nourished by gardeners empowered to grow and share food.

History of the organization

In 2012, our founder, as a service opportunity for her family and children, built four vegetable gardens for food insecure families through referrals from Glen Ellyn Food Pantry. Today, The GardenWorks Project utilizes the help of over 200 volunteers and 46 food pantries and social service agencies to promote health and wellness and fight hunger within our communities. Since 2012, we have provided gardens to over 1540 individuals in western Chicagoland. We continue to be the only organization doing this type of unique work in the arena of food security.

Achievements since 2012

- **415** gardens built
- **372** volunteers
- **1540** received gardens
- **46** partners
- **15** community gardens
- **960** clients are children
The GardenWorks Project has historically maintained a working board as an example of the volunteer-driven model we continue to maintain in our 9th year. While the board provides vision, direction, and insight for the organization’s trajectory, we are proud to have a board that is eager to participate in other ways, such as getting down in the dirt to fight hunger for our clients. The board met as a team on a cold and frosty November morning to turn down gardens at a site in Glen Ellyn—what an incredible team!
PROGRAMS

Home Gardening Program

Our flagship program provides home gardening opportunities for families facing food insecurity. Referred from our 46 area partners, households receive a 4’x8’ cedar raised garden bed (or balcony containers) constructed by our volunteers, and provided with organic materials to ensure a successful first harvest. This year, we provided 101 families with new gardens, and 71 total garden refreshes in the spring and fall for our past clients. Last year, we provided 93 gardens and as we continue to grow, we plan on providing more service offerings to our families, as well as a total of three years of eligibility in our programs and resources to all families enrolled in the program.

“It feeds my children. It feeds my soul as well as my belly. To connect with the earth is holy in my life, it’s really important to reconnect with the soil and the reality of our own basic needs. I’m privileged to be able to have the time and resources to do that.”

2015 Home Gardening Program client turned volunteer

Volunteer Service Day with DuPage Foundation’s Next Generation Initiative

The Home Gardening Program received a generous grant from DuPage Foundation’s Next Generation Initiative this year, and The GardenWorks Project hosted several NGI members for a morning of garden builds and garden refreshes.
PROGRAMS

Community Gardening Support Program

The Community Gardening Support Program, established in 2017, supports the establishment or expansion of community gardens within the region. These gardens commit to growing food for the purposes of supplying emergency food assistance agencies while educating community members and children about the importance of increasing the local food system. This program has seen significant successes not only in increasing the quality of fresh produce being distributed to food insecure households, but also providing an educational opportunity for community members, school districts, and other partners to see value in cooperative gardening and organic agriculture. In the last three years, we are proud to have supported 15 community gardens since 2017.

For more information and how to get a community garden started in your neighborhood, please contact The GardenWorks Project today.

Community Gardens supported since 2017

- College of DuPage (Glen Ellyn)
- Madison Learning Garden (Lombard)
- Elmhurst College 1892 Heritage Garden (Elmhurst)
- Lisle Township Food Pantry Garden (Lisle)
- Gary/Winfield UMC Community Garden (Winfield)
- DuPage Habitat for Humanity (Hanover Park)
- Mercy Housing (Wheaton)
- DuPage Habitat for Humanity (Wheaton)
- Western DuPage Special Recreation Assn (Carol Stream)
- Parkview Elementary School, District 44 (Lombard)
- Horizon Elementary School, District U-46 (Hanover Park)
- Whittier Elementary School, District B8 (Downers Grove)
- Compass Community Garden (Bolingbrook)
- Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry Garden (Naperville)
- Midwest Shelter for Homeless Veterans (Wheaton)
- West Chicago Demonstration Garden (West Chicago)

"The GardenWorks Project Community Garden Grant allowed Horizon Elementary School to create their first school garden this past season. We wouldn’t have been able to pull off the feat without their assistance. Not only can we share how food is grown with our students but we can also help them recognize they are stewards of our planet and that they can have a positive impact on our environment."

Michele, Garden Manager, U-46 employee
In its third year, The Food Growers Network offers education and resources through its membership-based programming. In an effort to promote suburban organic agriculture, the network offers starter seeds, educational events, and a community of individuals growing food together. By supporting all gardeners in DuPage, regardless of income level, with the resources needed to start home vegetable gardens and encouraging the donation of excess produce to area food pantries, we can ensure that all families have access to fresh, locally grown foods.

Membership benefits are provided annually, and begin at the start of the year. If you are interested in joining the Food Growers Network and participating in improving the output of the local food system in our region, please consider joining today!

West Chicago as Headquarters

The GardenWorks Project Suburban Agriculture Resource Center, located at 103 W. Washington St., West Chicago, serves as the hub for our operations and events. In addition, we continue to collaborate with the West Chicago Demonstration Garden, a donated space by St. Michael’s UCC. Going forward, we continue to set a vision that increases the opportunities for food growing within the region as well as improving the local food system to combat food insecurity, and we aim to utilize our Resource Center and Demonstration Garden as spaces to nurture education and research. We are grateful to People Made Visible, Healthy West Chicago, the city of West Chicago, West Chicago Park District, and St. Michael’s for providing space at no charge and for participation in the collaborative mission of improving food security.

People Made Visible, Inc.
The GardenWorks Project wants to see gardens flourish so clients have a plentiful harvest. In 2019, a new curriculum, Garden to Table Nutrition Handbook, was developed to teach families how to maintain a garden from seed to harvest. A garden map is provided to all clients for ease of understanding as well as succession planting and budget-friendly recipes contribute to a seasonally timed garden design. The handbook highlight the vegetables in each garden with nutrition facts, gardening tips, harvesting technique, and recipes to cook seasonally, healthfully, and within a modest budget.

We are fortunate to have received a grant to allow us to expand our curriculum to include a children’s handbook in our 2020 season. Stay tuned for updates on this curriculum to draw our children out to the garden and help make healthier choices this year!
PARTNERS

Emergency Food Assistance Agencies and Referral Sources

Addison Township Food Pantry, Addison
DuPage Health Department, WIC, Aurora
Two Rivers HeadStart Agency, Aurora
Village Baptist Church, Aurora
Aurora Interfaith Food Pantry, Aurora
Bensenville School District 2, Bensenville
Bensenville/Wood Dale Food Pantry, Bensenville
Metropolitan Family Services, Bensenville/Wheaton
Neighborhood Food Pantry at St. Andrew UMC, Bloomingdale
Volunteer Council of Bloomingdale Township, Bloomingdale
Compass Church Food Pantry, Bolingbrook
Neighborhood Food Pantry at Lutheran Church of the Master, Carol Stream
FISH Food Pantry, Downers Grove
St. Vincent DePaul Society Conference Food Pantry, Downers Grove
Downers Grove Township Senior Services, Downers Grove
Elmhurst-Yorkfield Food Pantry, Elmhurst
Elmhurst Walk-in Network, Elmhurst
Neighborhood Food Pantry at Family in Faith Christian Church, Glendale Heights
Bridge Communities, Glen Ellyn
College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn
Glen Ellyn Food Pantry, Glen Ellyn
Lisle Township Food Pantry, Lisle
Lombard/Villa Park Food Pantry, Lombard
St. Vincent DePaul Food Pantry at St. Pius X, Lombard
York Township, Lombard
Calvary Church Food Pantry, Naperville
Loaves and Fishes Community Services, Naperville
St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church, Naperville
Hosanna Lutheran Church Food Pantry, St. Charles
Disciples Food Pantry at Christian Church of Villa Park, Villa Park
Neighborhood Food Pantries at Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Warrenville
Neighborhood Food Pantry at Resurrection Catholic Community, Wayne
Neighborhood Food Pantry at WeGo Together (Leman Middle School), West Chicago
Healthy West Chicago, West Chicago
People Made Visible, West Chicago
St. Michael’s United Church of Christ, West Chicago
Wayne Township, West Chicago
West Chicago Elementary School District 33 (Birth to 3 Program), West Chicago
WEGO Together Pantry, West Chicago
People’s Resource Center, Westmont/Wheaton
Milton Township, Wheaton
World Relief DuPage/Aurora, Wheaton
DuPage Health Department, WIC, Wheaton
Midwest Shelter for Homeless Veterans, Wheaton
West Suburban Community Pantry, Woodridge

If you are an organization that works in the field of food security or emergency food assistance, please contact us to get your clients involved. The GardenWorks Project looks for interested partners to expand our client base, programs and services.
VOLUNTEERS

The value of our volunteers

What a year! In 2019, we utilized the skills of over 200 volunteers and interns to support and grow our programs and operations. These volunteers logged a total of 4979 hours of donated time, some hauling 50 pound bags of soil to households for garden construction, and others building our website for growth opportunities. In total, an estimated savings of $122,931 was realized by our donors putting in their hours to make our programs a reality. We are very thankful for the amount of work that goes into making this organization thrive.

How to dig deeper with GardenWorks

We continue to remain a volunteer driven organization not only as a way to keep costs dedicated to programs, but also as an opportunity to grow awareness about the realities of hunger and food security. Please visit our website at www.gardenworksproject.org for current volunteer opportunities and ways to get involved. No gardening experience required, we need all skills and interests to help further our mission!

How to donate

We look to you to give us reasons to grow further. Please join us in the fight against food insecurity and donate today!
FINANCES

Revenues Overview

Foundation grants continue to lead in revenue sources, at 53%. We had the fortunate success of receiving the JCS Healthy Lifestyles Grant, which added significant support for our program expenses. The DuPage Foundation continues to be a significant supporter of our work as well as many of our continued family foundation supporters and advocates.

Corporate sponsorships were our second largest source of revenues. We feel privileged to offer volunteer opportunities to our corporate sponsors during the growing season. Many leave with a feeling of empowerment and greater understanding of the hidden issues behind food security.

Our marketing committee continues to find new opportunities to diversify revenues. For example, our $500 donation garden beds, installed by volunteers, help us raise support, showcase the quality product we offer clients, and provide donors with a first-hand opportunity to garden through the growing season as our clients do each year.

Revenues (as % of total revenues)

- Grants (53%)
- Sponsors (17%)
- Ind. Contributions (17%)
- Earned Revenue (13%)
In 2019, we maintained conservative expenses in comparison to our budgeted expectations. As we continue to grow, we stand by a volunteer-led model of utilizing volunteer opportunities to accomplish much of our work. While we have continued to build a substantial number of gardens in the region, we continue to grow and expand our programs and services and anticipate continued increases in expenses to reflect this.

Program expenditures are also expected to increase to accommodate for additional resources and materials to ensure a successful first gardening year for our households. After careful surveying of clients and volunteers, increased services for clients are expected in the near term, and taskforces will continue to assist in this strategic direction. The organization continues to maintain programs and operations with only two staff members, and volunteer management is maintained through staffing hours. Thankfully, the organization is fortunate to receive hours upon hours of donated time from a talented crew of master gardeners and vocationally skilled volunteers.

Expenses (as % of total expenditures)

- Programs (60%)
- Operations (26%)
- Fundraising (14%)

Harvest against Hunger Fall Fundraiser, College of DuPage Urban Street Scene Building, Glen Ellyn.
Harvest against Hunger Fundraiser

We had a successful second annual Harvest Against Hunger event at the College of DuPage’s Street Scene Building (Glen Ellyn). The event was a celebration of the year’s harvest, and Nichols Farm (Marengo) provided the seasonal produce for the evening. We had brews provided from Skeleton Key Brewery (Woodridge), and we were grateful to have a full house of supporters and guests that evening! Several sponsors including WCEB (Chicago’s Public Jazz Radio) were some of our highlighted sponsors that contributed to a successful fundraiser event to position us well for our 2020 year. We hope to see you next year!
SUPPORTERS

Thank you for supporting our mission and the community!