

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO GROW AND EAT HEALTHY, ORGANIC, LOCAL FOOD

From the Director



Wasatch Community Gardens (WCG) has been sowing the seeds for a year like 2023 for decades - 34 years to be exact. With the healthy soil of community support; the helping hands of thousands of volunteers, donors, and program participants; and the seeds of new staff and community programming; WCG blossomed and stretched toward sunny skies over the past year in ways that have me so inspired by today and so hopeful for tomorrow.

In 2023, we took on increased programming, new departments and leadership, and increased staff wages. This growth in staffing and programming means that our teams are better equipped to specialize in their areas of expertise, which, in turn, deepens WCG's work with community members in even more authentic, comprehensive, and responsive ways. Ultimately, this translates into deeper, more intentional community programming to achieve healthy food access for all.

We also kicked off an ambitious 5-Year Growth Plan in 2023 to ensure that WCG continues to sustainably, equitably, and intentionally support local food systems

for years to come. In Year 1 of this plan, we successfully raised \$3 million (!) to expand community programming and increase our staff's capacity to deliver programming. In Year 1, we also secured a permanent home for our "Green Phoenix" Urban Farm - over 2 acres in an existing Glendale "agri-hood" under a conservation easement to ensure the land will be available only for agricultural purposes, in perpetuity. THIS is our 5-Year Growth Plan in action.

Hear from our new department directors themselves about how WCG is digging deep to meet the needs of our community.



James Loomis Director of Agricultural Operations

2023 saw the creation of the new Agricultural Operations Department at WCG. The "Ag Ops" team is the dedicated steward of various WCG sites, and we serve to facilitate and enhance programming, ecology, and community. As a gardening organization, our sites are at the core

of our work, and the Ag Ops team is the heart of those sites - from our Campus to community gardens to working farms. This new department creates the opportunity for greater specialization and increased capacity of WCG staff in the design, building, permitting, and maintenance of our gardens and farms. It also expands WCG's support of our local urban farm and homesteading community.



Maddie Judge Director of Programs

In 2023, we strategically restructured elements of the Program Department to create more meaningful capacity for program staff. This looks like creating reimagined Education Program positions to

support internal and external garden education, and two new permanent education positions for our Youth & School Garden Program. We furthered our commitment to addressing food justice issues by planning a dedicated Advocacy & Justice Program, which launched in early 2024.

We hope you're inspired by the growth and community support reflected in this 2023 Annual Report. This growth is possible because of YOU, and we hope you'll continue with us on the front lines of engaging community members in their local food system. As we build the programs and resources needed to ensure healthy food access for all in Year 2 of our 5-Year Growth Plan, come grow and soar with us in 2024!

Warmly,

Georgina Griffith-Yates Executive Director



About Us

WCG's mission is to empower people to grow and eat healthy, organic, local food. Since 1989, we have provided children, adults, and families in Salt Lake County with access to land and education for growing and eating fresh produce, while building and nurturing community connections through gardening and healthy food.

Our hands-on, garden-based programming takes place in our Campus teaching and demonstration gardens, community gardens, school gardens, and urban farm. WCG serves the Salt Lake community through four core programs: Community Garden Program, Education Program, Youth & School Garden Program, Job Training Program; and our newly established Agricultural Operations Department.

WCG hosts community events throughout the year aimed at educating Salt Lake County residents about gardening, healthy eating, and building community. Annual events include the Spring Plant Sale, Tomato Sandwich Party in September, and the Love Local Holiday Market in December.

WCG staff also engage with academic researchers, students, and science professionals by hosting, and participating in, informal and formal research projects related to food production, plant diseases, beneficial insects, invasive species monitoring, water-wise gardening, and other aspects of improving and sustaining urban food production.



2023 IMPACT

11,000+

Community members were served by WCG's programs, events, and produce donations

65% OF OUR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Were from low- and moderate-income households

2,968

Volunteers contributed 8,926 hours of service to WCG

7,000

People attended our annual events aimed at engaging community members in gardening, healthy eating, and building community. These events included our Spring Plant Sale, Tomato Sandwich Party, Día de Muertos event, and Love Local Holiday Market

45,000+

Seedlings were sold at our Spring Plant Sale and distributed to community gardeners and partners

6+ ACRES

Of beautiful, productive green space were maintained across Salt Lake County to provide community access to healthy, organic, local food

How fortunate we are in Utah that your dedicated staff and volunteers continue to offer an urban space where the community can learn the benefits of healthy, local food, and get their hands dirty, learning to cultivate their own produce. Our directors are pleased to be able to assist you in providing youth programs and adult training to keep these important agricultural skills alive.

– Lisa Eccles, President & COO, George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation

5-Year \$5 Million Growth Plan

WCG values sustainable, equitable, and intentional growth to ensure our role as a community mainstay as well as the continued vigor of the organization, our supporter base, and the WCG team. In 2023, we developed and began to implement a 5-Year, \$5 Million Growth Plan. This plan builds upon three guiding pillars identified by staff, partners, and community members: preserving productive green space, creating shareable models, and strengthening organizational partnerships.

Funding raised so far is being put into action building organizational capacity as well as preparing for capital infrastructure investments as we move our urban farm. By the end of the five years (2028), WCG will have sustainably built sufficient capacity, with equitable pay and intentional structure, to ensure that we can meet the growing demands of our community.

OUR 5-YEAR PLAN HAS THREE MAIN PROJECTS:

- 1. Two new urban farm sites, including a permanent site for our job training farm
- 2. Immediate increased impact through the establishment of two new programs: an Advocacy & Justice Program focused on climate and food, and a Small Farm Incubator Program to provide education and resources to urban farmers
- Organizational sustainability, including an organizational restructure, equitable wages for our staff, and the addition of staff positions to support sustainable growth



A group of donors with the Alternative Visions Fund generously offered a \$2 million, 2:1 challenge grant to help us bring these projects to life. With the help of more than 400 unique donors, we met the 2:1 match in March 2024, resulting in a total of \$3 million raised for the capacity building portion of our 5-Year Growth Plan. This is a remarkable, community-driven achievement, and we are grateful to the Alternative Visions Fund and everyone who donated to this campaign so far. We are eager to continue sharing our vision as it grows into a future where everyone thrives through growing and eating healthy, organic, local food.



THE DONORS OF THE ALTERNATIVE VISIONS FUND ARE PROUD TO SUPPORT WASATCH COMMUNITY GARDENS AS PART OF ITS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION MISSION. WASATCH COMMUNITY GARDENS BRINGS THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER AROUND THE PRODUCTION OF ORGANIC AND TASTY FOOD IN AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT. THE MANY GARDENS THAT WCG HAS PLANTED IN UTAH HELP ADULTS AND CHILDREN UNDERSTAND HOW TO PREPARE SOIL PROPERLY WITHOUT CHEMICALS OR PESTICIDES IN ORDER TO GROW AND PREPARE DELICIOUS AND HEALTHY FOOD. WORKING IN A GARDEN CONNECTS PEOPLE TO NATURE, TEACHES THE DISCIPLINE AND PATIENCE NECESSARY TO GROW DELICIOUS ORGANIC FOOD AND BEAUTIFIES OUR URBAN ENVIRONMENT.

Community Garden Program

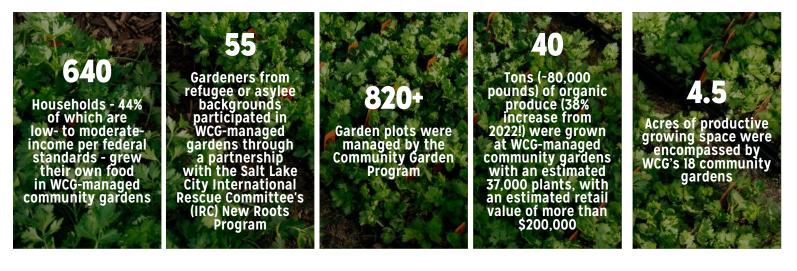
WCG helps community members grow their own organic produce by providing garden space, resources, and education. WCG-managed community gardens help to preserve productive green space, strengthen community bonds, promote healthier living, and provide access to fresh, healthy food for Salt Lake County residents.

Last year, WCG managed 18 community gardens through partnerships with Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, the City of South Salt Lake, and West Valley City. We also provide support to independent garden projects, including educational resources, seeds/seedlings, and open-source garden development materials.

WCG also worked closely with Rose Park Neighborhood Center through a partnership with the Good Samaritan Foundation and Salt Lake City on planning for a new community garden, slated to open in 2024. The garden will provide growing space primarily for clients of the Rose Park Neighborhood Center and surrounding communities, many of whom come from immigrant and/or refugee backgrounds.



2023 IMPACT



I ENJOYED WORKING ON PREPARING AND PLANTING THE YOU-PICK PLOTS. I REALLY LIKED TALKING TO ALL THE PEOPLE WALKING BY WHO HAD QUESTIONS ABOUT THE GARDEN.

- GATEWAY COMMUNITY GARDENER

Education Program

WCG empowers community members with the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to successfully grow and eat healthy, delicious food through hands-on workshops, virtual learning opportunities, community science activities, and educational tours of the Wasatch Community Gardens Campus. In 2023, our newly created Internal Education Manager role expanded capacity for our educators to offer nearly twice the number of educational events as were offered the prior year.

Through our partnership with Artes de México en Utah, we host a series of three bilingual workshops aimed at creating cultural connections around gardening and healthy food. Participants help plant and maintain a "milpa" garden (a traditional technique of growing beans, squash, corn, and other diet staples) in the Growing Traditions garden space at the Wasatch Community Gardens Campus.

In [my country] I practice ceremonies, we did a lot of ceremonies. And we feel deeply connected to Mother Nature. And when I came here (USA), I mean, for the ten years that I've been here, I couldn't find those practices, I felt like I didn't know where I was going, because I couldn't have a connection with Mother Nature, I had to live in an apartment. So I felt like I was locked in somewhere, I didn't feel I was part of it. Now I feel free, like those little birds that come out of the cage and feel happy when they fly. So I feel that connection.

- SABORES DE MI PATRIA PARTICIPANT



2023 IMPACT

769

Community members participated in 48 events (including 445 free or reduced-fee participants)

28

In-person and virtual workshops taught participants to grow and eat their own healthy, organic food

38

People participated in our three free "Wednesday Walk-Through" events, which brought gardening and food prep education directly to community garden venues in West Valley, Sandy, and South Salt Lake City

80

Community members attended at least one of our three bilingual Sabores de Mi Patria/ Flavors of My Homeland workshops hosted in partnership with Artes de México en Utah

2

Different varieties of tomatoes and peppers were grown and evaluated by 58 participants in our Trial Blazers community science project

I've been participating in plenty of on-line learning experiences since the pandemic and have to say this wins for the best. I have a lot of guilt now for torturing so many tomato plants over the years by doing things all wrong. Not anymore!

– WCG Webinar Student

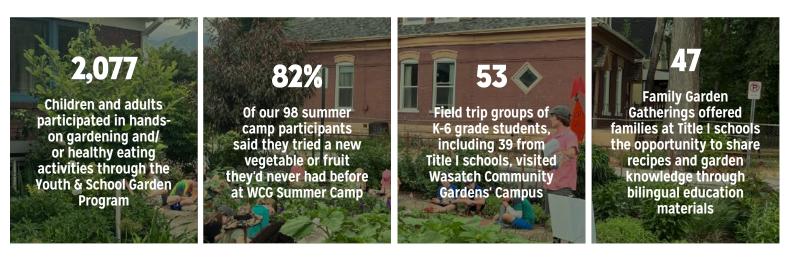
Youth & School Garden Program

WCG's Youth & School Garden Program connects children, teachers, and families to healthy, local food through handson, garden-based learning in our youth teaching gardens at our Campus, as well as in onsite school gardens. 2023 offerings included Youth Garden Club classes, field trips, summer camps and group visits, school garden support through the School Garden Leadership Network and a new Families as Teachers Program.

Gardens are a wonderful space for kids to explore their environment, taste healthy foods, release their creative energy, and experiment with nature. WCG's garden-based programming encourages kids to cultivate curiosity about food and nature and inspires them to make healthy choices for themselves, their community, and the environment.



2023 IMPACT



I LIKE THIS BETTER THAN MCDONALD'S. AT MCDONALD'S, THE FOOD COMES FROM ANYWHERE AND NOWHERE. HERE YOU KNOW WHERE IT'S COMING FROM.

- 3RD GRADE FIELD TRIP PARTICIPANT

Job Training Program

Our farm-based Job Training Program provides paid employment, work readiness training, job placement assistance, and mentoring to women experiencing or facing homelessness at our 1.4-acre certified organic Green Phoenix Farm.

By working part-time, undergoing job/life skills training, and engaging in one-on-one advocacy and support, our 15-16 week Green Team job training participants leverage the farm experience as a way to address barriers in their lives. The program serves as a crucial "stepping stone" for women who are working towards the goal of stable housing and employment.

Produce grown through our Job Training Program at the farm feeds participants and supports other WCG and community partner programs serving thousands of low-income community members each year.





2023 IMPACT

100%

Participants who received housing support - from stabilization, safety plans and housing voucher programs to moving support and continuum of care

2,546

Paid hours worked on the farm by the Il women who participated in the program for 30 days or more

45,000

Vegetable starts and ~1,000 edible perennial seedlings were grown by participants and sold to ~4,000 urban gardeners at our Spring Plant Sale

70%

Participants who achieved stable housing within 60 days of the program

50%

Participants who had reliable employment within 30 days of completing the program, and 50% continue to seek employment with assistance from our staff

100%

Participants who reported improved physical and mental health and increased knowledge of fresh food preparation

It'll change your life. It will change your life and it will change your thoughts on how life can be for you in the future. Like, my whole direction is totally turned around. I thought I was gonna have to be focused on hard stuff for a long time. Now I can sit back and you know, relax. I don't have to worry as much now.

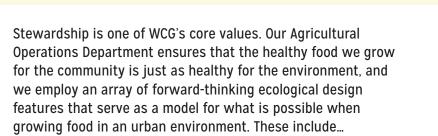
– Green Team Graduate

Agricultural Operations Department

In 2023, we created an Agricultural Operations Department to manage the 10+ acres that will be under WCG's stewardship in the next five years. Under the leadership of a newly created position - Director of Agricultural Operations - the new staffing structure has resulted in higher production in our growing spaces, increased efficiencies in water use, improved use of excess produce to ensure the food we grow is not wasted, and increased capacity for our program staff to more effectively serve the community.

THE AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT PROVIDES SITE SUPPORT FOR...

- Wasatch Community Gardens' Campus and headquarters
- 18 community gardens across Salt Lake County
- Planning and design for the new Rose Park Neighborhood Center community garden
- WCG's certified organic Green Phoenix Farm
- Planning for our new Glendale Farm Hub
- Applications and planning for future food-growing, community-serving sites



- Composting
- Hand scale, no-till agriculture
- Organic growing methods
- Beneficial insect habitat
- Waterwise irrigation
- Seed stewardship







The impacts are eye-popping. *I7 times more produce* was grown at our Green Phoenix Farm compared to the average yield per acre for vegetable farms in the United States. Meanwhile, the farm used *only 64% of the average water use* per acre for irrigating a vegetable farm in the West.

Our Agricultural Operations Department also serves the local urban farming community through material support, advocacy, education, and opportunities for networking. The team has developed new working relationships with Agricultural Agency Staff such as Salt Lake Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Soil Health Partnership, and Utah Department of Agriculture and Food - among others - to further WCG's impact as an active agricultural and community resource.

2023 Donors

\$1,000,000+ Alternative Visions Fund

\$100.000 - \$999.999

Anonymous (2) **Bur Oak Foundation** ESRR Impact Endowment Fund at The Chicago Community Foundation Palladium Foundation Salt Lake County Zoo, Arts, and Parks (ZAP) Program

\$50,000 - \$99,999

George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation Salt Lake City Public Lands Department Salt Lake County Parks & Recreation Stena Foundation The Dumke Family

\$25,000 - \$49,999

American Express National Bank Anonymous **Cultural Vision Fund** HCA Healthcare Katherine Brown and Ellen Bloedel Lawrence T. and Janet T. Dee Foundation Love Tito's Block to Block Program McCarthey Family Foundation Salt Lake City Community **Development Block Grant** (CDBG) Salt Lake County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Stephen G. & Susan E. Denkers **Family Foundation** Synchrony **Terence Kearns Stephens** The Sam and Diane Stewart Family Foundation Tim and Candace Dee U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service -Specialty Crop Block Grant Willard L. Eccles Foundation

\$10,000 - \$24,999

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\$5.000 - \$9.999

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\$1,500 - \$4,999

Rohrer

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Egbert

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\$1,000 - \$4,999

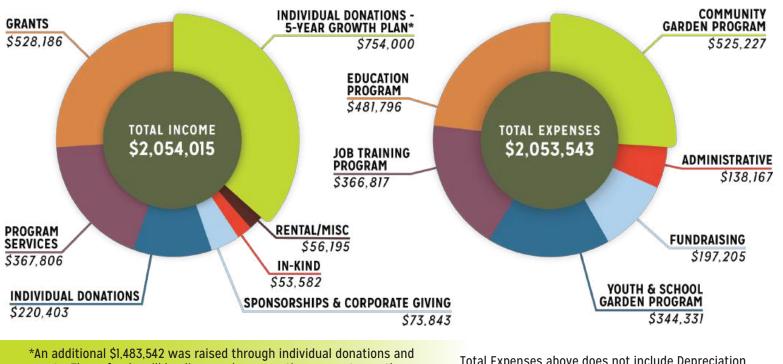
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Please contact Hannah Whitney at 801-810-7238 to learn more about supporting WCG or to report an error in your listing.

2023 Financials



grants. These funds will be dispersed as operating support over the following 4 years to realize our 5-Year Growth Plan Campaign.

Total Expenses above does not include Depreciation, which totaled \$259,113 as a non-cash expense.

2023 WCG People

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Mitch Dumke, Chair Kellie Flora Williams, Vice-Chair Jennifer Ewoniuk, Treasurer Ashley Peck, Past Chair Adrienne Cachelin Ian Davis Lance Heaton Laynee Jones Amy McMinn Chandler Rosenberg



629 E 800 S Salt Lake City, UT 84102 801.359.2658 WasatchGardens.org

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