

Growing & Sharing the Harvest



Photo Credit: Dandelion Duff

Community Food Initiatives
Annual Report 2015



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Photo Credit: Keith Wilde



Dear Friends,

Throughout life, there are some years of calm when little changes and then there are some years of incredible development and energy. 2015 will be remembered as a year Community Food Initiatives underwent strategic and monumental growth in order to manifest our vision.

Highlights of 2015 include the creation of a regional seed company, designed as a social enterprise to both support participating local seed savers and to strengthen the organization financially. We are now working to develop Donation Station programs across the state and region. Community gardeners began using season extension techniques in order to increase their yields. Partnerships with the Athens County Public Libraries, Hocking-Athens-Perry Community Action and Job & Family Services led to an increase in Discovery Kitchen and Workshop events for the public. Our fantastic Board of Directors and staff dedicated countless hours developing a comprehensive strategic plan for the next three years, leading up to our 25th anniversary!

There are many moments when chatting with a food pantry coordinator during Donation Station distribution, a community member during a canning workshop in the Chauncey Public Library, or receiving a call from a teacher to let me know how much she appreciates our support, that I am filled with humble gratitude. I am grateful to live amongst people that care about one another, commit to working for the greater good, and are creating the future they want to see for Southeast Ohio.

Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Nally".

Mary Nally, Executive Director

A background image of a woman with glasses and a white shirt, smiling and holding a plant in a field. The image is faded and serves as a background for the text.

Our Vision

Our vision is a resilient region in which everyone in our community has access to an equitable, inclusive, and thriving local food system.

Our Mission

Our mission is to support a local food system that assures and expands access to fresh, healthy foods for all people in our region.

Our Values

Culture & Community— We value naming our assets--soil, seeds, and an Appalachian heritage of food production and preservation--so that everyone can see their place in strengthening our assets and our community.

Education & Empowerment— We believe that by sharing the knowledge to grow and prepare wholesome foods, people become empowered to feed their families, improve their health, and their community.

Justice— We are rooted in the belief that equitable access to fresh and nutritious local food leads to a safe and clean environment, meaningful work with living wages, and fulfills the needs & rights of all people.

Collaboration— We believe in the strength of collaboration and doing better together.

Photo Credit: Dani Bartley

Community Garden Programs

The Gardens

With a total of **20,000 square feet of garden space**, the Eastside, Southside, Chauncey, Glouster and Nelsonville Gardens were busy with gardeners working, learning and harvesting alongside one another. Teams of volunteers came out each month to help maintain the pathways and provide extra hands in weeding the plots.

Thanks to a Grow Appalachia Grant, we had 18 individuals at 9 different sites learn about intensive organic gardening and install low tunnels to extend their growing season. Although the low tunnels weren't installed until the Fall, these gardeners tracked their harvests and produced over 3,136 pounds!

The Workshops

The basics of organic gardening, small-scale season extension, seed saving, fruit trees 101, food preservation and preparation were among the myriad of topics taught at over **34 workshops to nearly 365 individuals**. Using peer-to-peer teaching and hands-on learning whenever possible, these workshops are an approachable and easy way to build confidence in growing, preserving and preparing food for yourself and your family.



Photo Credit: Dani Bartley

Kerrign Boyd, CFI Community Garden Program Coordinator (L) and Stephen Board, CFI Intern (R) weeding at the Nelsonville Community Garden



Rachel Riling enjoying her low tunnel in the Nelsonville Community Garden

Community Orchards

Fruit and nut trees and berry bushes offer long-term and low maintenance food security, as well as aesthetic beauty to communities. We coordinate a volunteer Community Orchard Advisory Committee to maintain a map of fruit trees on public land within the City of Athens. The long-term goal is to promote public harvests as well as gleaning opportunities for the Donation Station. Look for news in 2016 and visit the map on our website!

Seed Sovereignty

Over the past century, seed diversity has dwindled at an alarming rate--93% of seed varieties have been lost over the last eight decades. Making our local food systems reliant on outsourced, limited varieties of seeds, we increase the risk of system collapse.

However, we have a long history of subsistence agriculture including seed saving. The Southeast Ohio Seed Savers are a network developed by Community Food Initiatives to cultivate and support regional seed saving efforts. This network in 2015 hosted two Seed Exchanges, multiple Seed Saving Workshops, including one at the Paw Paw Festival, and certain seed savers from this network are collaborating with CFI staff in the development of our new regional seed company.

Read more about the seed company on page 13!

School Garden Programs

School Gardening activities enable students to learn about gardening, the environment, food, and nutrition. While gardening, students develop practical life skills, and engage in physical activity. As outdoor learning labs, school gardens offer a unique, multi-sensory, inquiry-based education. Most important, the creative and often playful approach of school gardening, instills confidence and enthusiasm for life long learning.

Professional Development & Technical Support through consultations by the School Garden Coordinator helped teachers seeking advice on best practices for garden planning including season extension and planting strategies.

Material Support was provided to school gardens in the form of seeds and plant starts, and shared tools for specific project needs. Thanks to numerous in-kind donations, we were able to provide mulch and lumber for building raised beds!

Direct Service Teaching in the gardens is a big part of what the School Garden Coordinator does, working directly with students. Supplementing the indoor classroom learning, this gives students the opportunity to get hands-on experiences and connect the curriculum to real world benefits.

In 2015, we had **39** school garden teaching events reaching **635** students!



Vinton Middle School students building their new school garden

We Grow. We Learn. We Sell. We Earn. YEAH Kids!

The YEAH Kids program had its 7th year and continues to demonstrate success in its mission to provide positive mentorship, professional development and opportunities for the youth living at Hope Drive. For youth 11-18, they can apply and be interviewed to participate in YEAH Kids. This program is effectively an entrepreneurial summer job that includes organic gardening, culinary arts and business basics to prepare and inspire participants to engage in the job opportunities within the local food economy. Each participant tracks their hours of work and is paid based on the total monthly profits according to their total hours.

2015 Highlights—

- New Participants and Increased Dedication from Experienced Participants
- Cultivated and Harvested Garden Produce
- Increased Variety of Value-Added Products made at ACENet
- Attended **11** of Athens Farmers Markets
- Tour of Casa Nueva Restaurant to Learn about Future Job Opportunities
- Attended Workshops on Canning, Dehydrating and Fermenting Foods
- Total Profits of **\$1,077** shared among participants



YEAH Kids at the Athens Farmers Market



Hope Garden Party



Sampling Jam at the Athens Farmers Market



Jam Production at ACENet Kitchens



Just Having Fun in the Garden!



Showing Off the Garden Harvest

The Donation Station



Photo Credit: Emily Matthews

Andrea Reany and Javi Devia working the Athens Farmers Market



Photo Credit: Emily Matthews

Javi Devia using financial donations to purchase local food

This local food solution that fights hunger and supports the food economy at the same time is something we can all celebrate.

In partnership with the Athens Farmers Market, Chesterhill Produce Auction and area farms and food producers, tons of healthy food gets to area food pantries and soup kitchens to help feed those in need.

The Donation Station program is different than traditional emergency food programs. It is one thing to give away food, but it is another to connect and empower people. The Donation Station contributes to the local food economy that provides many jobs in the region. It connects food pantry patrons with healthy choices and cooking education as well as providing access to our other programs. Thus, a person living with food insecurity can be empowered to grow some food themselves and prepare healthy meals for their families, truly putting an end to hunger.

In 2015—

86,991 pounds of local food was distributed to 41 pantries and agencies in Athens, Morgan and Vinton Counties.

Donations fueled our investment of **\$14,599** in the local food economy.

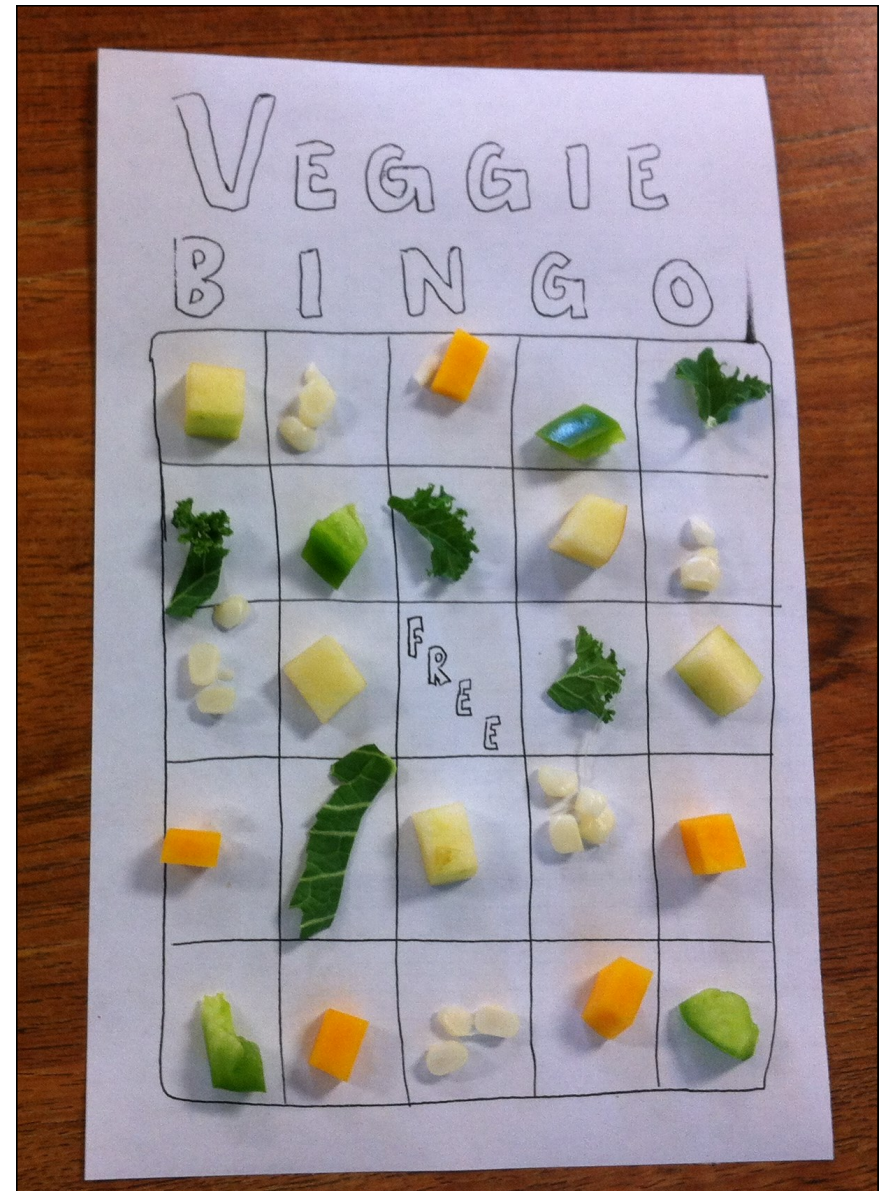
Discovery Kitchen

Discovery Kitchen plays a key role in the success of the Donation Station program. We offer healthy cooking coaching to food pantry patrons and agency clients using local seasonal ingredients. Adaptive to the site, sometimes Discovery Kitchen is a hands-on cooking class while other times it involves samples and recipes and often games, such as Veggie Bingo (see photo).

"I feel like Discovery Kitchen is the perfect model to get people interested in trying new, healthier food options." -Athens Librarian

Collaborations with Athens County Job & Family Services, Hocking Athens Perry Community Action and the Athens County Public Library helped significantly grow this program to connect people from all corners of the county.

In 2015, **44** Discovery Kitchen events took place reaching **711** people!



Donation Station Development

Because the Donation Station is so unique, other communities are interested in having their own in order to increase support to their local food economy and provide healthy solutions to those living with food insecurity. CFI was fortunate enough to hire former AmeriCorps member Bekky Hobson as the Donation Station Regional Developer to provide assessment and consultation with communities wanting their own Donation Station. In 2015, Bekky presented at the Ohio Ecological Farm and Food Association conference and the Ohio Society for Public Health Education Conference and is in conversation with several communities across Ohio.

Special thanks to the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation for supporting this effort!



Bekky Hobson, Donation Station Regional Developer

Why have a Donation Station?



Addresses Food Insecurity
and Health Disparities



Increases Local Food
Access & Creates
New Customers



Reduces Farm Waste



Secures Income for Market
Vendors & Farmers



Invigorates Triple
Bottom Line of
Economy, Community
and Environment



Increases Collaborative
Partnerships

The Give-Aways

Growing food all begins with seeds and plant starts.

These events are coordinated by the Donation Station and Community Garden AmeriCorps members, bringing the Donation Station's expertise on distribution strategies and the Community Garden program's connections to gardeners and growers of all kinds. In 2015, the School Garden program also got involved by teaming up with the Athens City High School Green House to grow plant starts distributed to school gardens in Athens and Vinton County.

Special Thanks to Jackson Area Ministries for providing the seed potatoes and many of the seed packets, Athens Master Gardeners for plant starts, and to J. Scott Hill Farm in Meigs County for growing so many tomato starts!

Seed Potato Give-Away

33,100 Pounds Distributed to **603** Families across **11** SE Ohio Counties

Seed Give-Away

4,862 Seed Packets of **309** Varieties Distributed to **227** people across **5** SE Ohio Counties

Plant Start Give-Away

4,620 Plant Starts of **32** Varieties Distributed across **4** SE Ohio Counties



A Sugar Snap Pea growing up to be given away



A happy customer at the seed potato give-away

The Seed Company



In Southeast Ohio, we are blessed with a vibrant local food system with farms, restaurants and community members that celebrate the advantages of local food. However, until recently, there has been something missing: local seeds in our garden supply stores. With a network of incredibly dedicated seed savers, we're filling in the gap!

CFI has developed a regional seed company to provide income for seed savers, increase food security and invigorate part of our Appalachian heritage and local food economies, making locally-sourced seeds available for all.

\$2,205 in profits from retail sales in the first year pilot

Over **\$5,000** in donations from our fundraising campaign

Our company offers an alternative to large agribusiness by only purchasing seed from local seed savers, farmers, and plant breeders. All germination testing, labeling and packing is done in-house keeping our overhead cost low meaning maximum dollars are staying within our community.

Participating growers receive seed saving training, on-site farm consultation, ongoing technical support, and payment for all seed orders. This venture operates as a social enterprise—a business that supports participating growers while also supporting the organization.

Join us— We're seeking seed savers to participate in the company!

Financial Report

In 2015

- Three new staff positions plus an AmeriCorps VISTA were added to help grow programs and increase organizational capacity
- Full-time staff receive health insurance options
- Income nearly doubled from \$102,615 to \$197,581

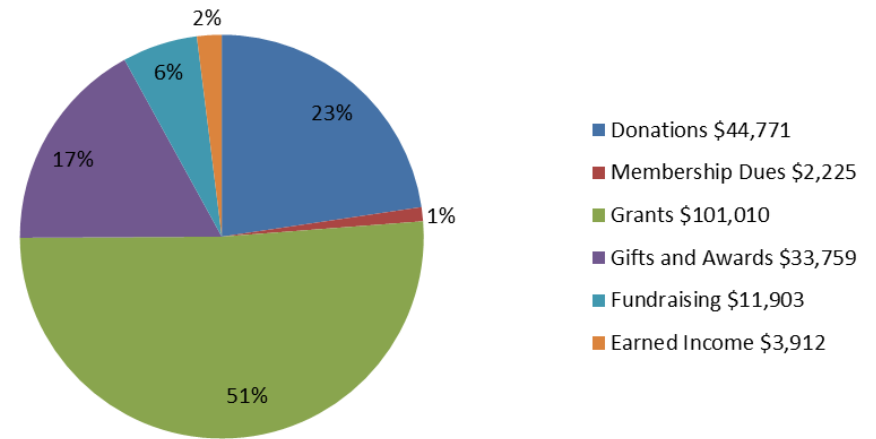
It is because of individuals and regional foundations that all of our work is possible particularly as we expand regionally. Thank you!

2015 Foundation Gifts and Grants Provided by—

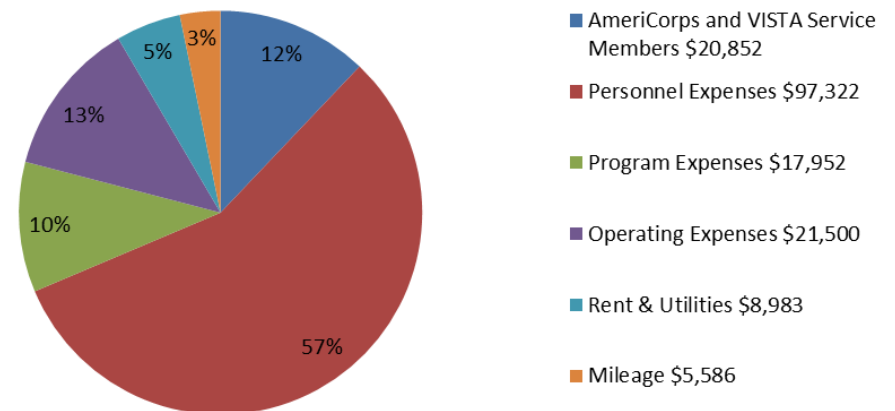
Athens Foundation, Edward Lamb Foundation, Grow Appalachia, KleinPenny Foundation, Kramer Family Foundation, Leona Cibrowski Trust, Osteopathic Heritage Foundation, OSU Research Foundation, Sister's Health Foundation and the USDA Rural Community Development Initiative

Thanks also to the Stinner Summit, City of Athens and the Athens Metropolitan Housing Authority!

Income in 2015



Expenses in 2015



Special Thanks to the 146 volunteers who put in 909 hours, equivalent of nearly 100 full work days!

Board of Directors

Ann Brown, Interim President ♦ Sarah Conley-Ballew, Vice President ♦ Nancy Pierce, Treasurer ♦ Lori Gromen, Secretary ♦ Ruth Dudding ♦ Steve Scanlan ♦ Kira Slepchenko ♦ Lee Gregg ♦ Barbara Fisher

Staff

Mary Nally, Executive Director

Andrea Reany (through November, 2015) & Ryan Leach, Donation Station Program Manager

Bekky Hobson (through June, 2105) & Javi Devia, Donation Station & Discovery Kitchen Coordinator

Jess Chadwell (through June, 2015) & Kerrigan Boyd, Community Garden Program Coordinator

Keith Wilde (through June, 2015) & Dandelion Duff, School Garden Coordinator

Kevin Fletcher, Regional Garden Specialist

Bekky Hobson, Donation Station Regional Developer

Jess Chadwell, CFI Seed Company Developer

Allison Hall, AmeriCorps VISTA

Ohio University Work Study, Summer Service Corps and Interns

Stephen Board—Merri Collins—Musa Conteh—David Doddridge —Kara Frisina —Adam Hanson—Jazzmine Hardges
Brady Heins—Rachel Komich—Tajha Laflоре—Steven Lapikas—Ehrin Lingeman—Bekah Mears —CJ Murfey
Patrick Mylett—Megan Osika — Melanie Rudolf—Beatriz Smidt—Ian Slifcak—Alisha Withem —Lauren Vargo