

# ANNUAL HARVEST REPORT



2019



# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

2019 brought a new season of growth for us here at The Big Garden. We reached thousands of children, youth, and adults with our hands-on gardening and cooking classes at dozens of locations across Omaha. We will continue to build on this work in 2020.

We know that our work is having an impact when kids tell us they are eating more fresh produce and that they are cooking more often at home. We also realize there is so much more to do. Currently, we reach about 8% of the kids who are enrolled in the schools where we have gardens. We want to raise that number in 2020. We have a responsibility to do more because the need is so great.

This past November we brought on a new staff person to manage our Kansas operations. We are excited to grow our garden network in Kansas with the goal of increasing food security and improving nutrition across the state.

2020 will be a year of planning for The Big Garden. Our board and staff will spend time reflecting on where we can do the most good, how we can continue to scale up what we do best, and what resources we will need to increase our impact. We look forward to sharing more about our plans for growth as they unfold.

It is an exciting time overflowing with possibilities. Let's dig in and get our hands dirty! We know how lucky we are to get to do this work, and we are grateful to all our supporters who make it happen.

With gratitude,



Nathan Morgan  
Executive Director



*Photo courtesy of  
Omaha Community Foundation*

***The Big Garden's mission is to cultivate food security by developing community gardens, creating opportunities to serve, and providing education on issues related to hunger.***

# HIGHLIGHTS

## New Garden Builds

Children's Respite Care Center SW | Omaha, NE  
Children's Respite Care Center NW | Omaha, NE  
Montessori Co-op School | Omaha, NE  
Tri-Faith Initiative | Omaha, NE  
Wilson Middle School | Council Bluffs, IA  
Holy Family Catholic Church | Omaha, NE  
Bancroft Elementary School | Omaha, NE

\*Three other gardens received expansion or other improvements.

## Farmers Market Tours

In partnership with CHI, we led **17 free tours** of Omaha-area Farmers Markets, teaching **92 participants** how to select, purchase, and prepare fresh garden produce. Participants also received **\$450** worth of market bucks to spend! Five CHI chefs did cooking demonstrations in our Gather Mobile Kitchen Classroom.



## Volunteers

Throughout the year, hundreds of volunteers tended gardens, stuffed envelopes, staffed booths, painted faces, washed pots, planted seeds, swept floors, planted trees, & more. Volunteers in Mission (VIM)

participants: **48**

Individual volunteers: **145+**

# HIGHLIGHTS

## Giving Grove Partnership

Through our community orchard program in partnership with The Giving Grove, we installed **8 mini-orchards** in the Omaha-metro this year. We planted **79 trees** and **9 brambles** which will produce around **374,638 pounds of food** over their lifetime!



## Grow-Your-Own Program & New Roots Internship

This summer we hired **6 interns** who logged more than **2,500 hours** gardening & teaching children, youth, and adults at **37 sites** across Omaha. Our educators reached **900+** participants each week.

After completing GYO, our participants report:  
**90%** now know how to plant a seed or seedling  
**92%** now know how to harvest 1 type of fruit or vegetable



## Farm to School

Our Farm to School program reaches low-income elementary-age children, teaching them gardening, cooking, nutrition, and preserving skills. Our Farm to School program covers spring & fall terms.

Big Garden educators taught **15 classes each week** at **13 different schools**, reaching a total of **597 participants**.

Topics included: spring seeds, garden bed preparation, food origins, microgreens & salads, composting, vegetable identification, local foods, seed saving, drying herbs, food preservation, cover crops, and harvesting & eating root vegetables. This fall, one favorite class session made butter from local cream, added local garlic, and then made cheesy garlic bread with local sourdough!



# HIGHLIGHTS



## Greenhouse Cultivation

Using organic practices, our staff & volunteers grew **25,000** open-pollinated heirloom herbs, vegetables, and perennials. Seedlings were gifted free-of-charge to around **50** Big Garden partnering sites. The remaining plants were sold to the public at our 2nd annual plant sale. The sale was wildly successful, raising **over \$18,000** to support our programs!

## Garden to Table Program

In partnership with Collective for Youth, our educators teach **8** after-school gardening classes in **6** lower-income Omaha middle schools. We teach **42** weeks of the year, for a total of **336** after-school classes, reaching an average of **85** students each week.

Participants learn to grow vegetables and herbs in their school garden as well as how to properly harvest, cook, preserve, and eat these crops through various methods.

This program specifically highlights STEAM education through plant science and organic gardening techniques, nutrition, and healthy lifestyles.

**Students reported a 14% increase in their consumption of fresh produce after completing our program.**



# OUR TEAM

## STAFF

Nathan Morgan, Executive Director  
 Matt Freeman, Director of Operations  
 Cait Caughey, Director of Education  
 Jaimee Trobough, Director of Communications  
 Stephanie Finklea, Education Coordinator  
 Mioux Stabler, Education Coordinator  
 Erin Higgins, Education & Giving Grove Coordinator  
 Molly Baurain, Kansas Coordinator  
 Alajia McKizia, Education Coordinator  
 Kay Wilwerding, Education & Volunteer Coordinator

## SUMMER INTERNS

Laura Simpson  
 Presh Gaspard  
 Ashley Clark  
 Emily Mize  
 Kaya Baker  
 Carly Frazee

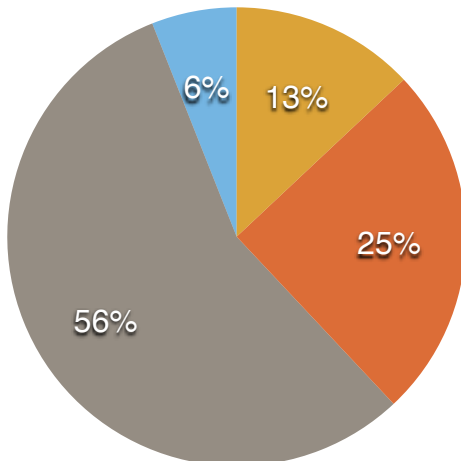


## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Dwayne Brown, Slate Architecture  
 Vice President: Brad Christian-Sallis, Civic Nebraska  
 Secretary: Melissa Taylor, Mutual of Omaha  
 Treasurer: Mike Ramsey, Mutual of Omaha  
 Pat McGill, Great Plains Conference United Methodist Women  
 Marcia Ghali Bergren, LIMHP | MSW  
 Amanda Bogner, President at Energy Studio  
 Jay Lund, Greenslate Development  
 Carly Wegner, University of Nebraska Foundation  
 Burke Harr, Houghton Bradford Whitted Law Firm  
 Alex Wolf, Koley Jessen  
 Rev. Kent Little, First United Methodist Church Omaha

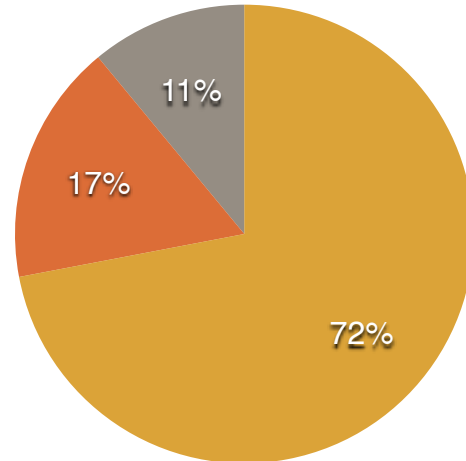
# FINANCIALS

**Income through November**  
**\$677,853**



- Donations
- United Methodist Church
- Grants
- Earned Income

**Expenses through November**  
**\$673,813**



- Personnel
- Programming
- Operating

# WHAT OUR STUDENTS HAD TO SAY:

Dear Big Garden and the  
 teacher Stephani and memo  
 thank you to pick vechor and  
 flex I love the food you  
 gys I shed the fees to my  
 mom and dad all the Paper  
 then my mom and dad can eat  
 them all me and my  
 sister Wendy we made base  
 Below all thank you from Jesus



Dear Big Garden,  
 Thank you for letting us harvest  
 vegetables. It was so much fun to harvest  
 My favorite part was digging for potatoes. I  
 like getting my hands dirty. Even if I  
 didnt I should get used to it! The  
 tomatoes were fantastic. As soon as I  
 got home I ate the tomatoes! The caval  
 looked leaves but you can eat them!  
 All the vegetables were fantastic! Thank you

From Bayleigh



Ariana

Dear Big Garden thank you for Picking my  
 class to participate in the big garden  
 I am very thankful. Thank you for letting  
 Our class harvest the vegetables and fruits.  
 I was excited on the first and nervous I  
 hope you guss come in the spring and I hope  
 you guys pick my class again in the  
 spring. Love, Ariana



Dear Big Garden  
 thank you for letting us come to the  
 garden every wednesday. and thank  
 you for letting us harvest the vegetables.  
 my mom used the tomatoes for  
 make sause for some food she  
 was making. My favorite part  
 at the garden was digging in the  
 dirt and pulling the tomatoes. I love  
 gardening even tho there are some  
 things I dont know about gardening.

from Christian  
 Room 505





***Growing healthy food, healthy kids, and healthy communities.***

**The Big Garden**

5602 Read Street  
Omaha, NE 68152

Website: [www.BigGarden.org](http://www.BigGarden.org)

Email: [info@BigGarden.org](mailto:info@BigGarden.org)

Facebook: The Big Garden

Instagram: [@bigardenomaha](https://www.instagram.com/bigardenomaha)