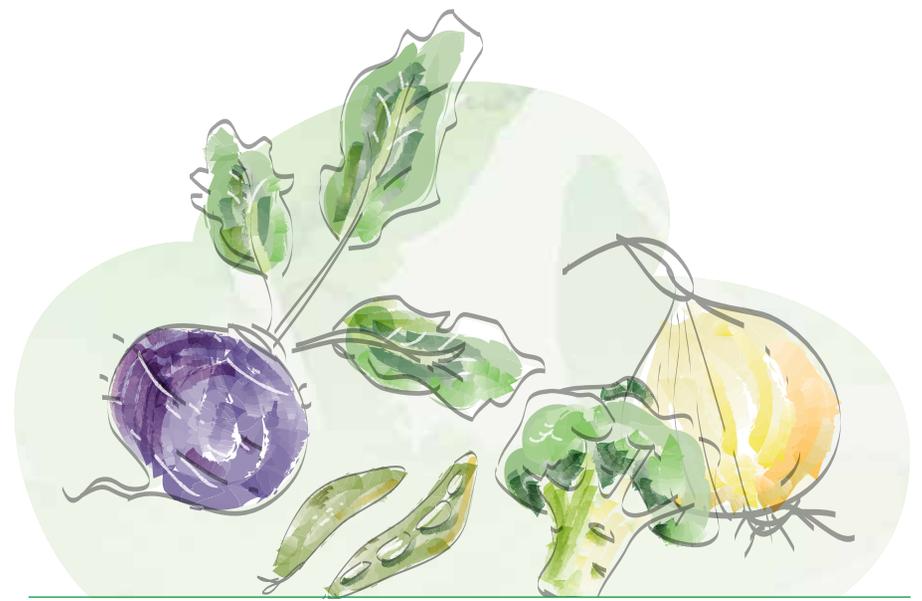




# 2021 Annual Report



**Project GROWS is an educational, nonprofit organization with a mission to improve the health of children and youth in Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County, Virginia through garden-based education and access to healthy food.**



Dear friends,

It is with great enthusiasm that I write to you as Project GROWS' new Executive Director. Since its inception in 2010, Project GROWS has been an inspiration to me! In my prior role as part of the Boys & Girls Club team, I was able to witness first-hand the incredible impact a great partnership can have on a community. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to put my passion into action in support of the Project GROWS mission, and especially fortunate to follow in the footsteps of those who have come before me—visionaries and transformational leaders with shovels in hand—who positioned Project GROWS as an innovative force for change.

As I begin my tenure, I want to extend heartfelt gratitude to all of the incredible GROWS staff, members of our Board of Directors, and multitude of passionate volunteers—past and present. There are so many supportive people in the community who deserve our thanks. Their involvement speaks volumes about the incredible energy that has surrounded Project GROWS since the beginning. The list includes local schools and afterschool programs, civic organizations, businesses, foundations, and community members who, with open arms, offer their strengths to help us carry out our mission.

As we reflect on 2021, we have many successes to celebrate, which we are pleased to share with you in the pages of this report. After years of visioning and planning, we are delighted to announce the completion of the Geiman Barn at our farm at 608 Berry Farm Road.

We would also like to take this opportunity to introduce our new Director of Farming, Brynn Grumstrup. We are so pleased to welcome Brynn, who brings a wealth of farming experience, in-depth knowledge of soil health, and dedication to making healthy food accessible to all. Brynn joined our team in November, and just like magic, the farm is abloom this spring with a greenhouse and high tunnels so bountiful they might burst. We are indeed busy bees gearing up for our highest food production season to date.

Well done, Project GROWS and friends. All of your efforts and contributions have such a tremendous impact on the lives of youth and families in our community. I am truly honored to join you in service. Thank you all!

Sincerely,

Executive Director



## Board of Directors

Ann Lefevé Snyder  
David Geiman  
James Goalder  
Deborah Bundy-Carpenter, RN  
Sophie Cantell Lambert  
Susan M. Pereles  
Chris Aycock

For their board service in 2021, we thank Shana Meganck, Kendrick Kier, and Patty Sechi!

## Staff

Annie Sachs  
Executive Director  
Nichole Barrows  
Director of Education  
Megan Marshall  
Director of Food Access  
Clara Metzler  
Director of Community Engagement  
Brynn Grumstrup  
Director of Farming  
Robert Clemmer  
Farm Educator  
Georgia Meyer  
Farmers Market Manager  
Kelsey Klotz  
Administrative Assistant

Distinguished Service  
Our sincere thanks to Laura Faircloth for 5 years of service to Project GROWS!

## Accessible Food Systems

As market managers, we strive to keep access at the core of our market programs because we believe everyone deserves access to healthy, affordable food. That's why in 2021, we were proud to become a regional lead for Virginia Fresh Match, a network of more than 90 farmers markets and community retail outlets that doubles the value of SNAP-EBT (food stamps) benefits spent at participating markets. Through this regional coalition, we are honored to be a part of essential advocacy to provide folks in our community with more purchasing power while supporting local farmers within our regional food system.

In 2021, we saw an increase in total vendor sales across our Waynesboro and Verona (formerly North Augusta) Farmers Markets along with an increase in sales that included benefits programs like SNAP-EBT, WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers, and Virginia Fresh Match. Following community input, we also piloted a mobile market in 2021 bringing much-needed nutrition access for seniors at Gypsy Hill House. We look forward to building on these successes in 2022 as we look forward to expanding our mobile market program.



### Program Highlights

**220 market customers used their SNAP-EBT benefits to purchase local food at our markets**

**70% increase in vendor sales at our markets, keeping more food dollars in our local economy**

**ONBOARDED 4 new Virginia Fresh Match retailers to the Shenandoah region**

**68% of seniors reported they ate more fresh fruits and vegetables as a direct result of the mobile market**

## The Project GROWS Farm

In our fields nestled between Berry Farm Road and the small creek that feeds Falling Spring Run, we grew dozens of varieties of vegetables, fruits, and herbs in the last year. Starting in the spring, we began harvesting crops like salad mix and radishes. Our crew worked through the height of summer, bringing in loads of hot weather favorites like tomatoes, peppers, and squash. We continued to harvest all the way into December, finishing the season with carrots and collards. It was gratifying to provide so much delicious food to folks via our different outlets—from students of all ages at local schools to the supportive members of our CSA program.



For the 2022 season, we are excited to renew our focus on soil health. In acknowledgement of the essential relationship between plants and microorganisms, we are implementing and expanding key practices that support soil biology and lead to healthier plants. This means that the leaves, roots, and fruits that we harvest will be packed with nutrients that equate to good food for all our bodies.

*"This is wonderful. I can't get out, so this is closer, and I come with my daughter. The tomatoes are wonderful... I love this day! Thank you for going through the effort of being here."*

—Gypsy Hill House mobile market customer

### Program Highlights

**HARVESTED 178,000 servings of produce (nearly 15,000 lbs)**

**DELIVERED 31,000+ servings of fresh produce to school cafeterias — a 114% increase from 2020!**

**DONATED nearly 1,000 pounds of produce to schools, afterschool programs, and other community food access initiatives**

**CELEBRATED our second year providing fresh produce snack packs regularly to students at the Boys & Girls Club of Waynesboro, Staunton, and Augusta County**

**FACILITATED the onboarding of 4 new farmers into Staunton City Schools and Waynesboro Public Schools' purchasing systems using our Local Procurement Manual**



## Food & Environmental Education

As a nonprofit partner to both schools and afterschool programs, Project GROWS is privileged to engage students at multiple points along their preschool through 12th grade journey. The challenges and uncertainties during the pandemic led us to work with our partners to find creative ways to connect deeply with smaller groups of students.

In 2021, these programs happened not just in cafeterias, but also in classrooms, the school garden, and on the farm—during school hours, after school, and during the summer! In partnership with the Counseling Department at Staunton High School, we launched Youth Leaders in Agriculture, a career exploration and mentoring initiative to teach local high school juniors and seniors skills in farming. We also functioned as a Staunton City Schools (SCS) satellite campus alongside Family and Consumer Science teacher Samantha Sterrett, co-teaching a summer class, “Farming and Leadership”, intended to help students gain academic credits lost during COVID-19 school closures. To celebrate Farm to School Month in the fall, we partnered with Shelburne Middle School for a tasting event serving up bulk produce from Project GROWS and delicious samples of fresh gazpacho and couscous salad.

We were also pleased to continue our cooking education classes with the Boys and Girls Club and summer camp program with the Blue Ridge Children’s Museum. From preschool to high school, we look forward to finding ways to enrich students’ public school experience in the year ahead.

### Program Highlights

**REACHED 1,664** students through our programs

**FACILITATED** over **25** K-12 field trips to our farm

**HOSTED 8** local guest speakers who presented to our Youth Leaders and our summer campers about farming and environmental education topics including beekeeping, backyard birding, entomology, and soil and water conservation

**PROVIDED** a host site for **12** days of the SCS Summer Feeding Program at our Little GROWers Day Camps and the Verona Farmers Market (formerly North Augusta)

**SERVED 8** high school students in the inaugural year of our Youth Leaders in Agriculture program



2021 marked our 4th year of partnership with Dixon Education Center on the Outdoor Classroom and School Garden. Local Boy Scout Caleb Jones of Troop 81 took on the Dixon garden as his Eagle Scout project, helping us transform the outdoor classroom and school garden into a welcoming space for preschoolers that is easier for teachers to use with their students.



## Volunteers & Community Impact

One of the mantras we live by at Project GROWS is that our work is done with and through people and partnerships. Since our founding in 2010, hundreds of community volunteers have generously donated gifts of time and talent to our organization. From helping us maintain several acres of vegetable production to leading cooking classes in schools, assisting with farmers market operations and more, volunteers have supported our work every step of the way.

A very special thanks to our cherished volunteers and community members who share our vision of helping to grow a new generation of engaged and healthy youth!



**156** volunteers, including **46** youth, gave **1,400** hours of service in support of our markets, school-based programs, and our farm in 2021.



Photo by Kate Simon Lifestyle Photography



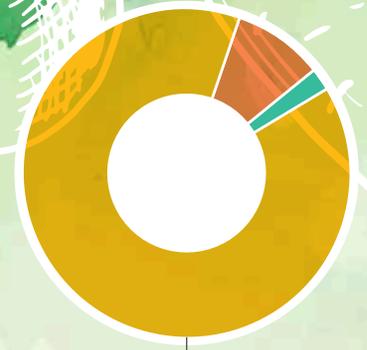
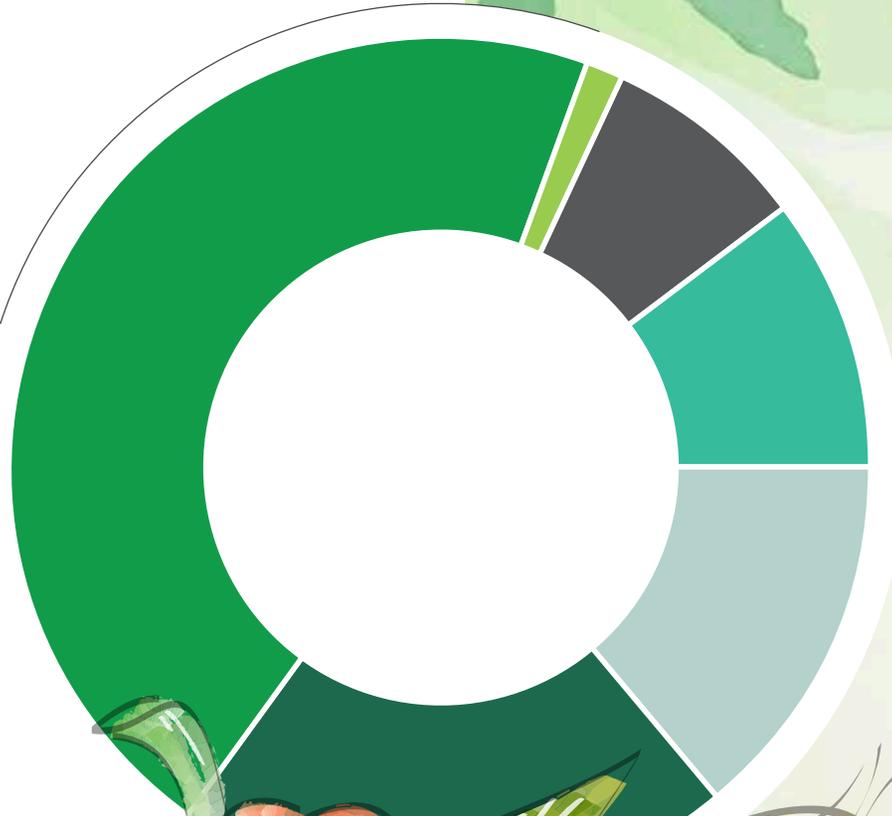
# 2021 Financials

Our resilience and our means to impact our communities in this unique year was made possible through the trust, generous support, and partnership of individuals, families, corporations, foundations and governmental agencies at the local, state and federal level.

## Revenue

|                     |           |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Restricted Giving*  | \$307,925 |
| Foundations         | \$142,638 |
| Grants              | \$94,875  |
| Unrestricted Giving | \$68,655  |
| Earned Income       | \$52,903  |
| Corporate Support   | \$8,744   |

\*restricted funds for Geiman Barn construction



## Expenses

|                         |           |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| Programming Expenses    | \$288,248 |
| Administration Expenses | \$29,275  |
| Advancement Expenses    | \$6,020   |



Project GROWS is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization registered with the Office of Charitable and Regulatory Programs, Virginia Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services. EIN 46-1070735.

## Project MOBILE

Debating May 2022 is Project MOBILE, a weekly farm-to-community event on wheels that will travel to different neighborhoods throughout Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County. Project MOBILE will feature a pop-up farmers market offering produce from the Project GROWS farm, along with a range of products from other local food producers. This mobile market will also feature free cooking demonstrations and fun activities for all ages! Project MOBILE offers a 50% discount to folks using SNAP-EBT (food stamps) and accepts other benefits like WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers.

The Project MOBILE launch was made possible thanks to funding and services provided by the Virginia Food Access Investment Fund, the Geiman Foundation, and Howdy Bailey's Yacht Services. Our thanks to LEAP and Shalom Farm for inspiration and guidance throughout this process, to the Veggie Van Training Center for support and training, and the many community members who are helping to shape this program!



# Consider Giving Your Gift Today!



Mailing Address: PO Box 781, Staunton, VA 24402

Farm Address: 608 Berry Farm Rd., Staunton, VA 24401

[projectgrows.org](http://projectgrows.org)