

20



19

Annual
Report

About Urban Growers Collective

Rooted in growing food, Urban Growers Collective (UGC) cultivates nourishing environments that support health, economic development, healing and creativity through urban agriculture.

Urban Growers Collective aims to address the inequities and structural racism that exist in the food system and in communities of color, using urban agriculture as our tool and method for our work. Research suggests that urban agriculture can produce a range of social, health and economic outcomes for communities. We believe engaging in this work will ultimately lead to healing trauma on many levels and improving the economic vitality and overall health of the communities in Chicago.





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Message from the Directors

As we close the chapter on 2019, we look back on a year that marked several achievements, setting a solid foundation for Urban Growers Collective's work. In March, UGC was approved as a 501(c)(3). Over the summer, we further developed our Theory of Change to help guide our organization in the future. Key stakeholders and research were combined to evaluate and communicate our work more effectively, so that we and our partners can refine and improve our efforts addressing food access, job training and equity building.

We are grateful for your dedication to our mission and belief in our past, present, and future work as Urban Growers Collective. Moving into the next year — and the next decade — we are poised to dig deeper and have a greater impact. We hope that our annual report will inform and inspire you to stay engaged with the Collective.

Sincerely,



Erika Allen
Co-Founder, CEO Operations
Urban Growers Collective



Laurell Sims
Co-Founder, CEO Finance
Urban Growers Collective

Job Training & Education

Program Area

One of Urban Growers Collective's goals is to build knowledge and an awareness of healthy produce, urban agriculture, and the food system. We provide education and employment skills to youth and adults from the community to create a strong foundation for school, work, and life.

Our programming in Job Training & Education focuses on 3 different pathways:

- **Farmers for Chicago** - Our farmer incubator provides long term land-use, community learning with peers, tool and equipment share, mentoring and training for beginning farmers.
- **Youth Corps** - Our teen education program employs and engages teens at our urban farms in hands-on learning.
- **READI Crews** - In partnership with Heartland Alliance, we provide exposure to urban agriculture and landscaping to men who are at the highest risk of gun violence involvement.



Farmers for Chicago

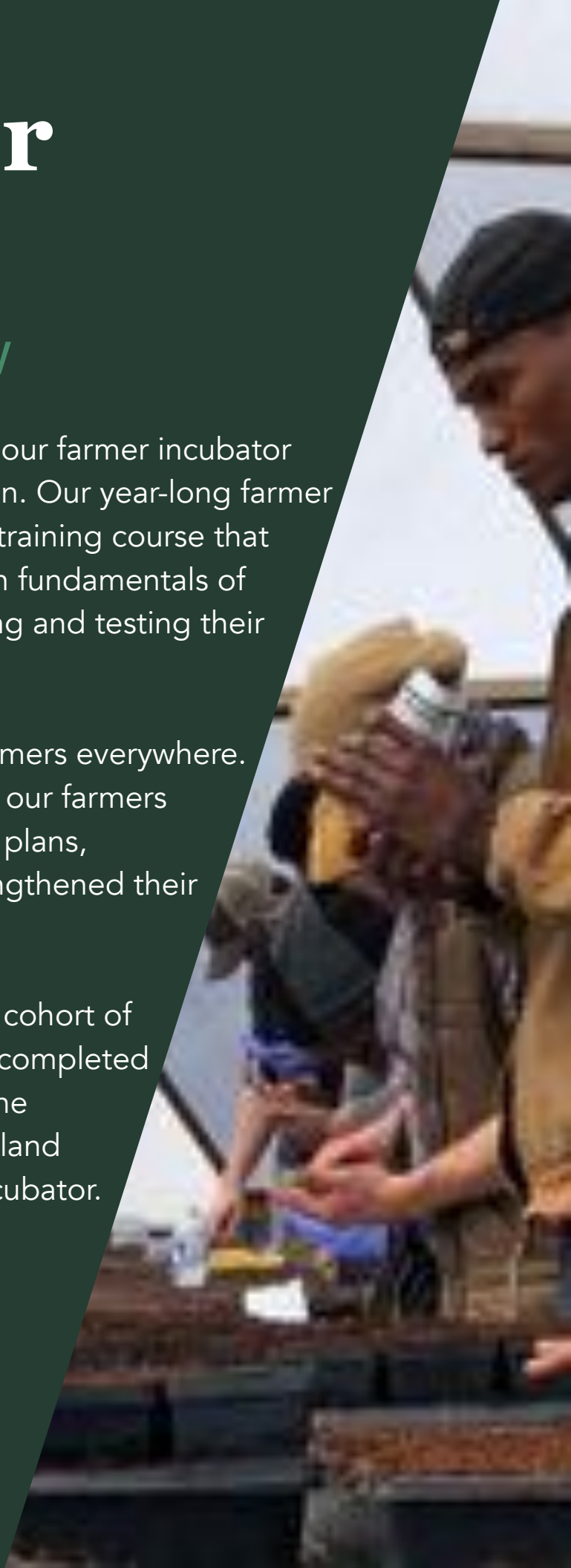
Program Overview

As we close out the year, the farmers in our farmer incubator are already preparing for the next season. Our year-long farmer incubator program is a hybrid business-training course that allows participants to learn the hands on fundamentals of farming, while simultaneously developing and testing their business plan.

This was a tough growing season for farmers everywhere. Despite the late spring and heavy rains, our farmers pushed through. They honed their farm plans, experimented with new crops, and strengthened their business and marketing channels.

2019 marked the graduation of our first cohort of incubated farmers. Now that they have completed training in the program, they will have the opportunity to continue farming on the land while mentoring other farmers in the incubator.

We are excited for next season, and all of the bounties it will bring.



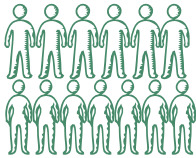
Farmers For Chicago 2019

in numbers



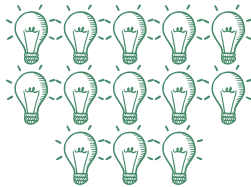
2 sites

were cultivated and farmed on this season



13 farmers

participated in the incubator



13 workshops

were held covering topics from composting to bee keeping



Youth Corps

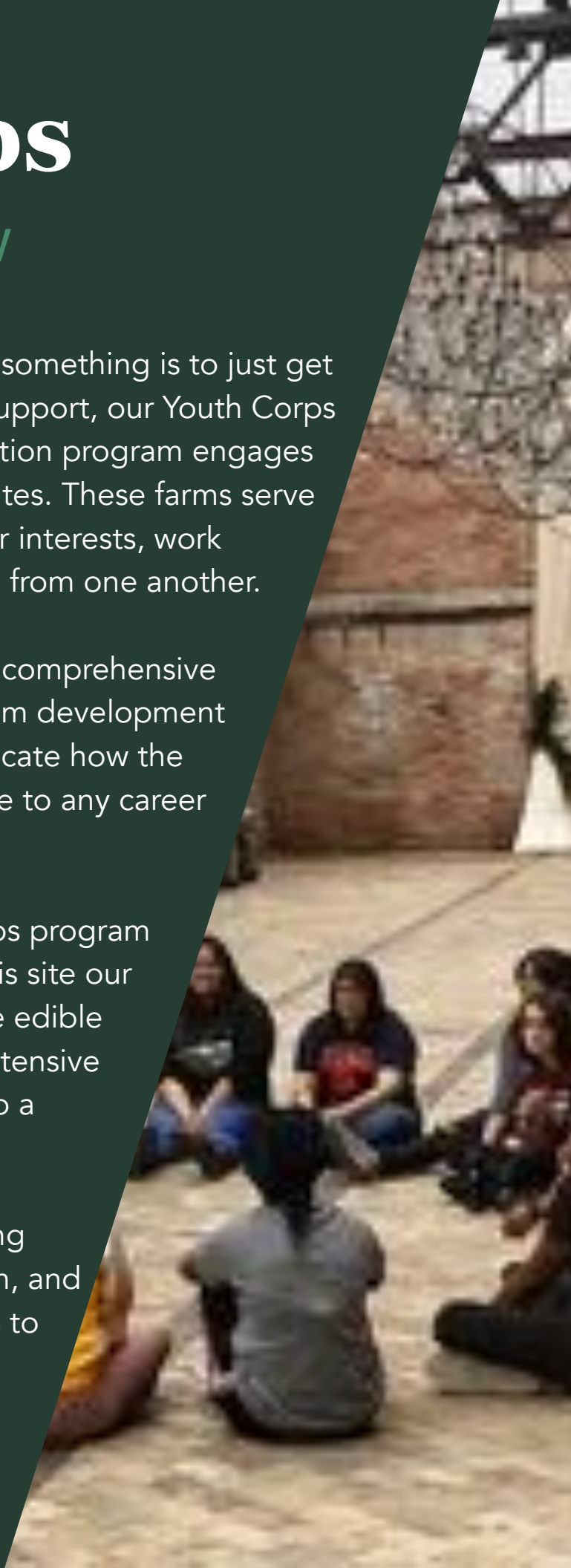
Program Overview

Sometimes the best way to learn about something is to just get down and dirty with it. Thanks to your support, our Youth Corps are able to do just that. Our teen education program engages and employs youth on our urban farm sites. These farms serve as a safe space for teens to explore their interests, work collectively, share their talents and learn from one another.

It is our goal that teens graduate with a comprehensive understanding of sustainable food system development and the ability to connect and communicate how the skills they've gained at the farm translate to any career path they may follow.

This year, we added a fourth Youth Corps program site: Schultz & Burch Biscuit Co. With this site our Bridgeport Youth Corps supplement the edible gardens at our ComEd site with more intensive vegetable cultivation and have access to a beautiful outdoor classroom space.

In 2020, we are looking forward to having many of our teens return to our program, and to introduce new Youth Corps members to the farms.



Youth Corps 2019

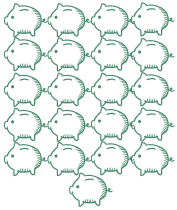
in numbers



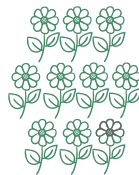
242 Teens
participated in the Youth Corps



5 farms
were cultivated by Youth Corps



\$102,215
in stipends were paid to teens
employed through our program



972 ounces
of honey processed and bottled
by our Youth Corps



86% of teens
completed our Youth Corps
programming



2 teas
Designed, blended, and
marketed by our teens

Youth Corps hard at work in the
spring to develop the farm plan for
our Roosevelt Square Farm



Educare

Project Overview

Educare Chicago is a high-quality Early Head Start and Head Start program in Chicago's Grand Boulevard community. Urban Growers Collective manages the gardens at Educare, in partnership with the Ounce of Prevention Fund.

At Educare, we know that nature is the best classroom. Being outside and observing the natural environment awakens our senses and reminds us to look around and explore. The sooner we can help children see the tangible elements of education in the real world, the better they understand that the lessons they learn in a traditional classroom have real meaning.

Having the vegetable garden for the last seven years has opened an entire world to the children we serve by giving them a space to explore nature. This year we added a natural play space where children can climb, build with stones, create natural instruments, feel soil and sand, and touch and smell plants to engage their senses is a tremendous learning asset at our facility.

We are excited to see how the natural play space is utilized next year, and are looking forward to continuing to enrich Educare in our outdoor spaces.



Educare 2019

in numbers



145 pre-schoolers
participated in our program



14 classrooms
Were engaged in gardening
activities



1 natural play space
was built this year including
music, building and story nooks



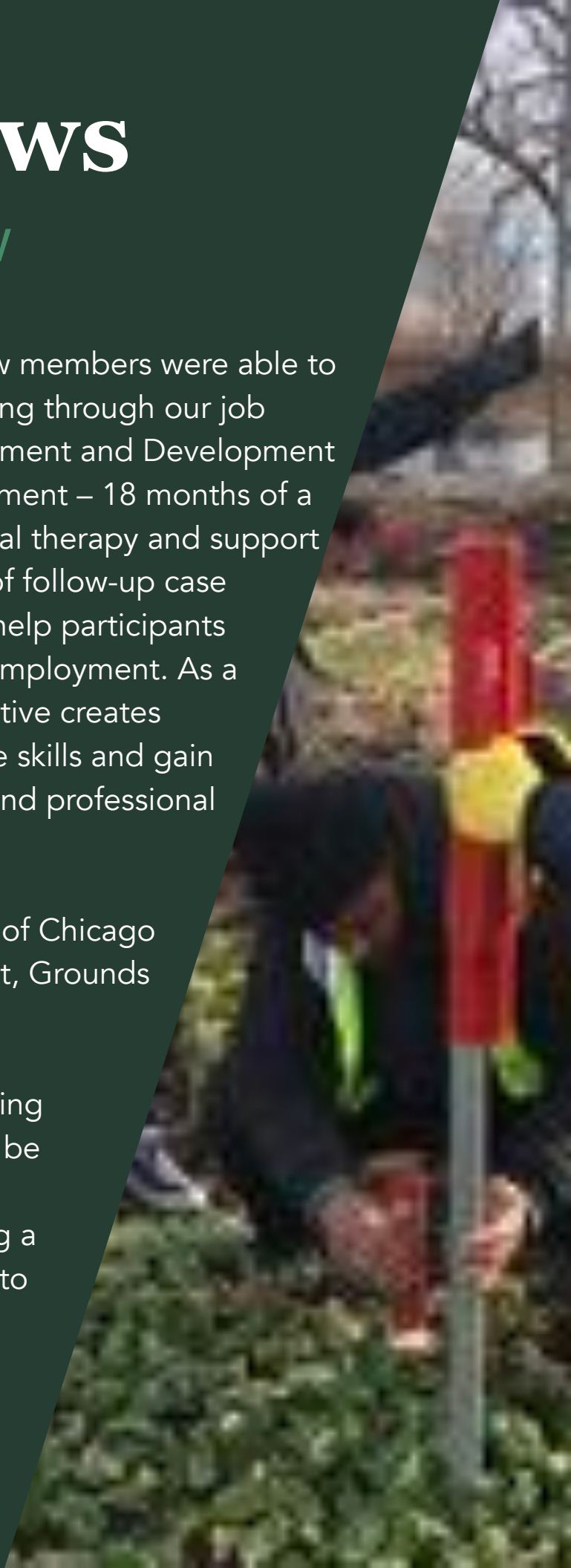
READI Crews

Program Overview

Thanks to your support, our READI Crew members were able to explore urban agriculture and landscaping through our job training program. READI (Rapid Employment and Development Initiative) Chicago is a two-year engagement – 18 months of a paid transitional job, cognitive behavioral therapy and support services, plus an additional six months of follow-up case management and coaching support to help participants successfully transition to unsubsidized employment. As a work site partner, Urban Growers Collective creates opportunities for participants to practice skills and gain knowledge that informs their personal and professional development goals.

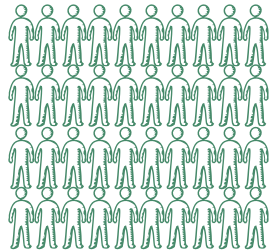
This year, we collaborated with the City of Chicago and Heartland Alliance on a pilot project, Grounds for Peace.

In 2020, we are looking forward to working with our READI Crew members. We will be focusing on hoop house construction, infrastructure management, and seeding a community garden plot for participants to grow.

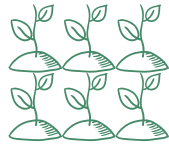


READI on the Farm 2019

In numbers



40+ crew members
explored landscaping and urban
agriculture



586 beds
were built this year



4,400+ hours
of work were completed on our farms



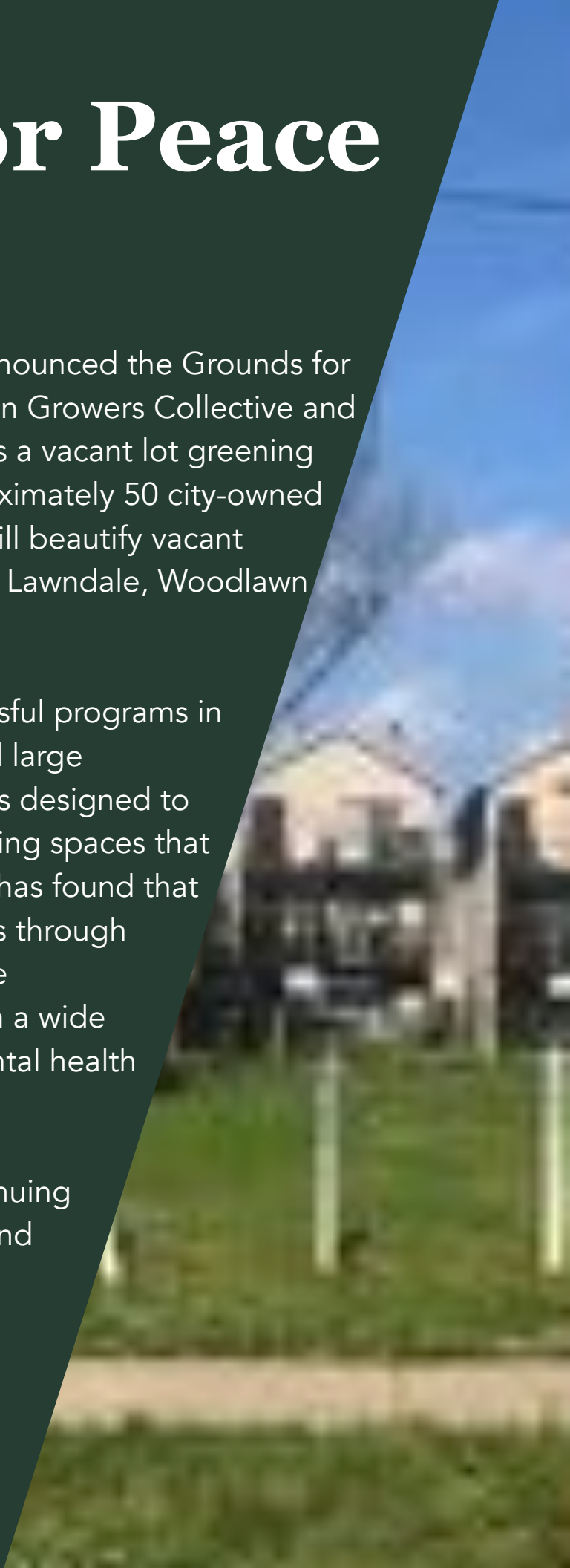
Grounds for Peace

Project Overview

On July 2, 2019, the City of Chicago announced the Grounds for Peace program in partnership with Urban Growers Collective and Heartland Alliance. Grounds for Peace is a vacant lot greening pilot program in 2019 to beautify approximately 50 city-owned residential vacant lots. The 2019 pilot will beautify vacant properties in three communities - North Lawndale, Woodlawn and Englewood.

Grounds for Peace is inspired by successful programs in other cities with urban gun violence and large concentrations of vacant property, and is designed to engage community members in reclaiming spaces that have contributed to violence. Research has found that improving the appearance of vacant lots through greening can reduce violent crime in the area and also create positive impacts on a wide range of other outcomes, including mental health and broader community wellness.

In 2020 we are looking forward to continuing greening efforts in these communities and to find ways to empower community members to become stewards of these spaces.



READI

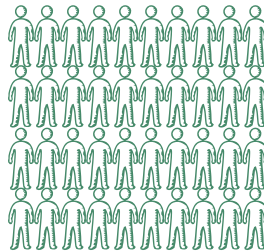
Grounds for Peace 2019

in numbers



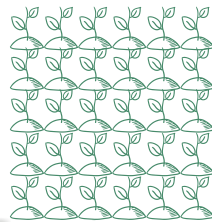
3 Communities

were engaged in the project
Woodlawn, Englewood, North
Lawndale



40+ crew members

learned landscaping techniques



30 lots

were activated through Grounds
for Peace



Food Access

Program Area

Beyond building knowledge and awareness of healthy food, urban agriculture, and food systems, Urban Growers Collective also increases access to healthy food. By doing so, we hope that we can improve quality of life, ultimately improving community health, well-being and economic vitality.

We are working to increase access to healthy food through two programs; the Fresh Moves Mobile Market and community farmers markets.

- **Fresh Moves Mobile Market** uses retro-fitted vehicles to bring healthy, fresh, affordable produce out to the community. By partnering with community centers, health centers, and schools, we are able to meet people where they are already at and reduce transportation barriers.
- Our community farmers markets offer accessible introductions to our work, gives participants an avenue to learn marketing skills, and serves as an outlet to sell the sustainably grown, nutrient dense produce from our farms.

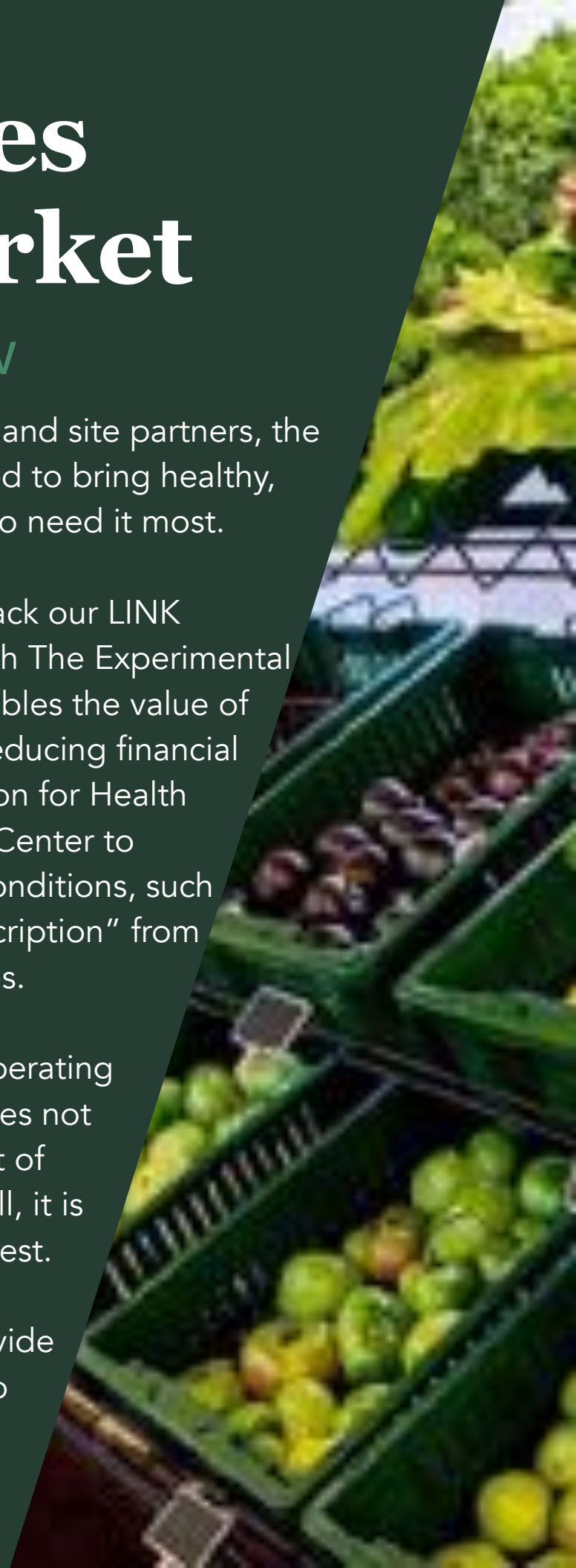
Fresh Moves Mobile Market

Program Overview

Thanks to the support of our funders and site partners, the Fresh Moves Mobile Market continued to bring healthy, fresh affordable produce to those who need it most.

This year we were excited to bring back our LINK matching program, in partnership with The Experimental Station's LinkUP IL. This program doubles the value of customers' LINK purchases, further reducing financial barriers. We continued the Prescription for Health program with Howard Brown Health Center to provide clients with existing health conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease, a "prescription" from their dietitian for fruits and vegetables.

In 2020, we are looking forward to operating Fresh Moves in a new vehicle that does not require a CDL. While our current fleet of retro-fitted vehicles has served us well, it is time to give them a much-deserved rest. The new vehicle will further support cooking demos, and continue to provide an immersive shopping experience to the community.



Fresh Moves 2019

in numbers



4 Vehicles

were in our fleet of Fresh Moves Mobile Markets



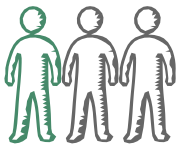
12 sites

were on our year-round schedule



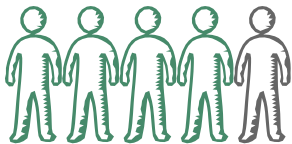
3,000+ purchases

were made on the Market



1 in every 3 people

In our service area had low food access at the half-mile radius



4 in every 5 people

In our service area were low income



Favorite Fruit

1. Bananas

\$707.30 sold

2. Strawberries

\$666.75 sold

3. Avocados

\$645.75 sold



Community Engagement

Program Area

The communities we serve are at the core of all of our work. By engaging the communities around us, we work together to create nourishing environments for everyone. We believe that these spaces are essential to addressing trauma and inequality in our communities.

UGC has four main areas for getting our neighbors involved:

- **Art on the Farm** creates public art with and for community members, and supports local artists through our artist in residence program.
- **Public Workshops** offer unique opportunities to learn about a variety of urban agriculture related topics.
- **Community Gardens** provide spaces on our farms to cultivate personal gardens.
- **Volunteer and Internship Opportunities** provide hands-on experiences and expose people to the work on our farms.

Art on the Farm

Program Overview

What's growing on at the farm? Not just growing! Through our "Art on the Farm" Urban Growers Collective integrates visual arts into our work, amplifying healing through collaboration with nature and one another.

It began with our Grant Park "Art on the Farm" Potager Farm. Established in 2005 in partnership with the Chicago Park District, the park is located at Congress and Columbus. This "landscaped" urban farm demonstrates how to grow an abundance of vegetables, culinary herbs and edible flowers in a beautiful and productive way.

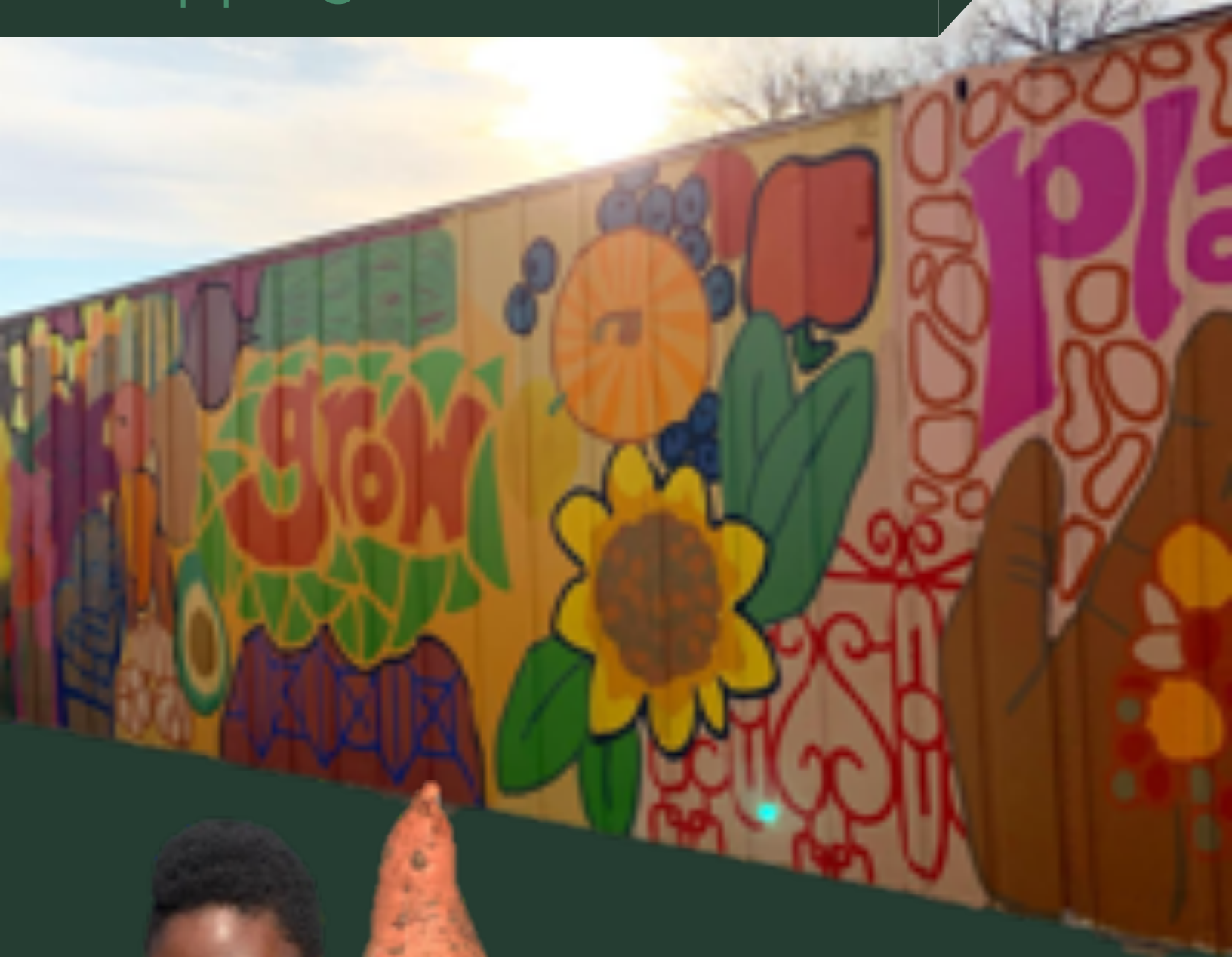
This year, we incorporated art into our programming at the South Chicago Farm. Through a series of art making workshops, artist in residence program, and a collaborative mural, UGC engaged our farm community and the general public in the visual arts. We partnered and connected artists and program participants for the co-creation of collaborative works. These works are site-specific narrative explorations that complement the activities of the farm and have the capacity to expand.

We are excited to share with you some of the art that has been happening on the farm. And can't wait for the program to continue in the new year.



Art on the Farm

Shipping Container Mural



Alexandra Antoine is our Artist in Residence. This season she collaborated with our Youth Corps to work on shipping container murals, as well as explore a variety of mediums in public workshops on our farms.

Art on the Farm

Workshops



Public Workshops

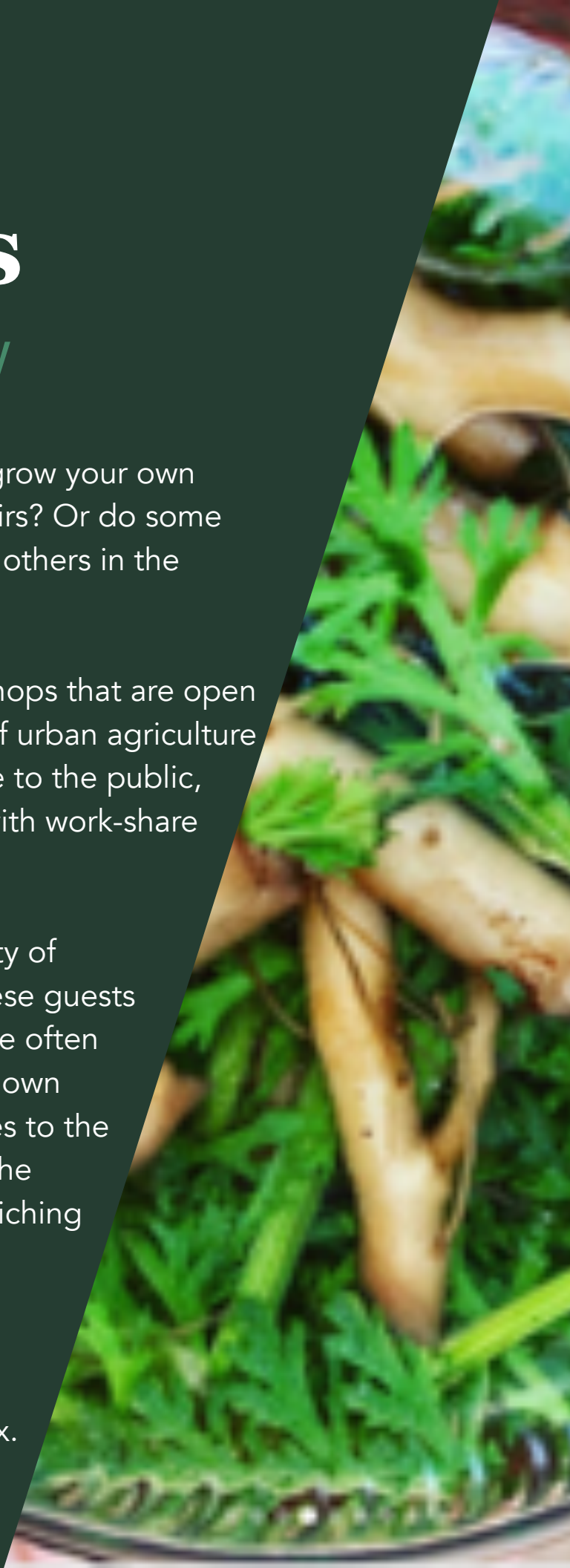
Program Overview

Have you ever wanted to learn how to grow your own mushrooms? Make your own herbal elixirs? Or do some goat yoga? Thanks to your support and others in the Collective, you can!

Throughout the year, we provide workshops that are open to the public that cover a wide variety of urban agriculture related topics. To make these accessible to the public, we price them at a sliding scale along with work-share options.

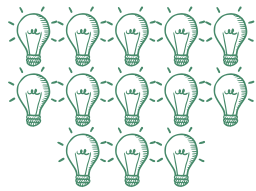
This year we invited guests from a variety of disciplines to lead workshops. While these guests set the curriculum for each workshop, we often found that all participants brought their own unique knowledge and lived experiences to the table. With this, everyone learned and the co-produced knowledge created an enriching environment for all.

In 2020, we are looking forward to improving our most popular workshops, and incorporating new ones into the mix. We hope you can join us!

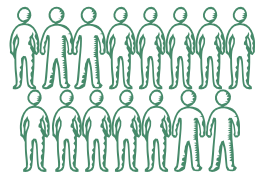


Public Workshops 2019

in numbers



13 workshops
were held covering topics from
composting to bee keeping



148 participants
Attended our workshops this
summer



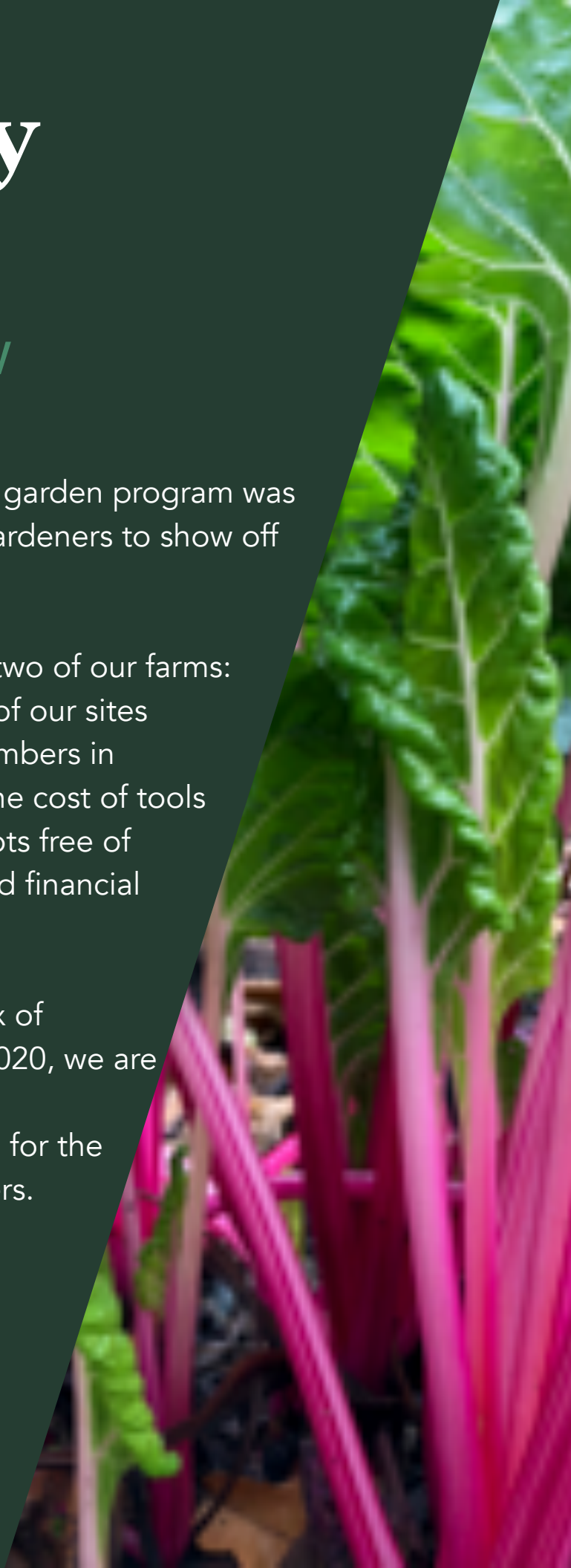
Community Gardens

Program Overview

Thanks to your support, our community garden program was able to continue to provide space for gardeners to show off their skills and get their hands dirty.

Our community gardens are housed at two of our farms: South Chicago and Jackson Park. Both of our sites provide 10'x10' plots to community members in exchange for a \$25 donation to cover the cost of tools and compost. However, we offer our plots free of charge for those that have demonstrated financial need.

This year, we were excited to have a mix of returning gardeners and new ones. In 2020, we are looking forward to rearranging the two community garden sites to create space for the growing number of community gardeners.



Community Gardens 2019

in numbers



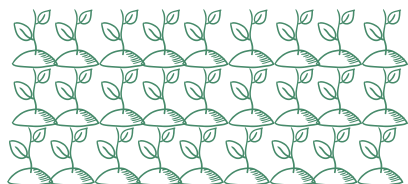
2 farms

were the sites of our community gardens



19 gardeners

participated this growing season



2,100 square feet

Of land was cultivated by gardeners



Volunteers and Interns

Program Overview

Whether you are a seasoned gardener or have “accidentally” killed every house plant you’ve ever owned, Urban Growers Collective could use your help! We offer a wide variety of volunteer opportunities to groups and individuals who want to learn more about our work and support our operations.

This year, companies, student groups, and community members joined us on our farm to lend a helping hand. They weeded, watered, harvested, and even helped to fix-up a Fresh Moves vehicle!

We also hosted four interns in our internship program. These interns received a hands-on experience of urban farming. Immersive internship experiences are important because they build portable skills, create opportunities to put theories into practice, and expose people to urban agriculture and the food system.

In 2020, we are looking forward to welcoming everyone to our farms again.



Volunteers and Interns 2019

in numbers



4 interns
participated in our hands-on
internship program



235 Volunteers
got their hands dirty on our farms



550+ hours
of work on our farms

A group of Barilla US volunteers show off their freshly harvested chard on our Grant Park farm.

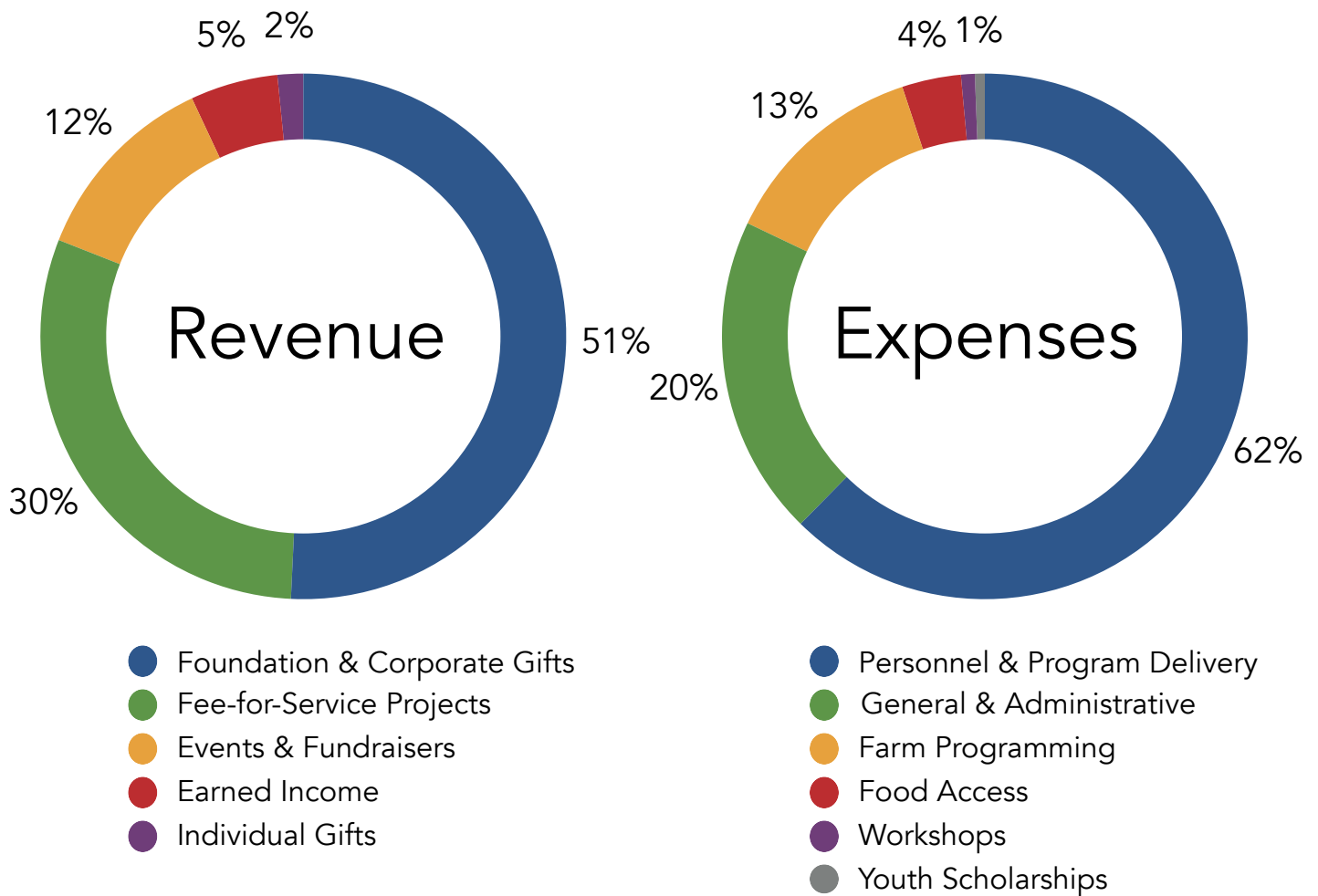


Largest Groups

- 1. Jack & Jill of America**
35 Volunteers
- 2. Rush Day School**
26 Volunteers
- 3. Medical Home Group**
25 Volunteers



2019 Financials



Revenue

Contributions	\$606,488.00
Foundation Gifts	\$529,310.00
Corporate Gifts	\$58,855.00
Individual Gifts	\$18,323.00
Fee-for-Service Projects	\$350,201.00
Events and Fundraisers	\$139,780.00
Earned Income	\$62,047.00
TOTAL Revenue	\$1,158,516.00

Expenses

Personnel & Program Delivery	\$647,628.00
General & Administrative	\$204,855.00
Farm Programming	\$133,238.00
Food Access	\$37,690.00
Workshops	\$8,826.00
Youth Scholarships	\$6,310.00
TOTAL Expenses	\$1,038,547.00

*This information has not yet been audited

Thank You

Urban Growers Collective would like to acknowledge the generous support of the following contributors for making our work possible.

\$50,000+

After School Matters
Barilla US
City of Chicago Department of Family
and Support Services

Moore Landscape
New Field Foundation
Margot & Thomas Pritzker Family
Foundation

Prince Charitable Trust

\$25,000 - \$49,999

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\$10,000 - \$24,999

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\$5,000 - \$9,999

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\$1,000 - \$4,999

CIBC Bank USA
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FarmAid

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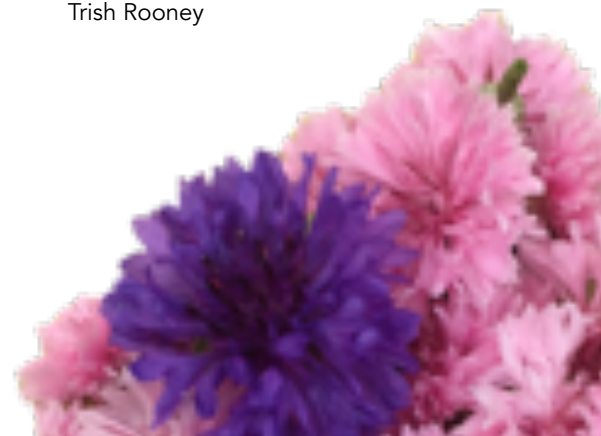
Reven Uihlein Fellars
Thresholds
University of Chicago Poverty Labs

\$250 - \$999

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Get Involved

What can you do in 2020?

Thank you for all of your support in 2019. Without you, much of our work would not be possible. Here are some ways you can get involved:



Donate

Support our work by making a contribution on our website, www.urbangrowerscollective.org



Volunteer

Schedule individual or group volunteer sessions by contacting info@urbangrowerscollective.org



Tour Our Farms

Schedule individual or group volunteer tours by contacting info@urbangrowerscollective.org



Attend a Workshop

Learn more about a variety of topics from composting to goat yoga!



Purchase Our Products

Visit the Fresh Moves Mobile Market, Farmers Markets, or our Etsy Shop for fresh fruits, veggies, and Youth Corps products



Reserve a Plot

Grow your own garden in our community gardens, located on our Jackson Park and South Chicago Farms



Follow Us on Social Media

Connect with us on Facebook and Instagram [@urbangrowerscollective](#) and on Twitter [@ugrowcollective](#)



Share Our Work

Boost our reach by sharing our work with people you know who are passionate about what we do