



2016 ANNUAL REPORT



Common Threads connects kids to healthy food in the garden, in the kitchen, and at the table. We want kids to grow up making food choices that are good for their bodies, their communities, and the environment.

OUR VISION:

All children have the resources, information, and experiences they need to make healthy food choices every day.

All kids are exposed to foods that set them up for a lifetime of healthy eating

Healthy food and healthy food education becomes an expected norm, simply part of a basic education.

A no-fail recipe for growing healthy kids

Start with ample moral and financial support (that's YOU!)

Add **teachers, parents, and administrators at 19 partner schools across Whatcom County** who have committed the space and time in the school day for kids to learn about healthy food.

Sprinkle liberally with the passion, intelligence and creativity of **9 full-time AmeriCorps service** and the **91 volunteers who contributed 3,065 hours of volunteer service in 2016.**

Add the warmth of the sun, the moisture of the rain, the buzzing of bees and the wriggling of worms... and voila! You've got kids learning to make choices that set them up for a healthy, happy life!

When kids eat better, they learn better, act better, and feel better.

Thank You for your commitment and generosity. Your support is growing a generation of healthy, happy kids.

Laura Plaut, Executive Director

**BECAUSE OF YOUR SUPPORT—
KIDS ARE FALLING IN LOVE WITH
HEALTHY FOOD.**

*"It's not nutrition if the kids won't
eat it."*

We sometimes hear this excuse from adults who want to dumb down kid food, or who worry about getting into a battle of wills over healthy food.

At Common Threads, our approach is all about helping kids fall in love with healthy choices. As the comments at right reveal, the idea that "you must eat this because it's good for you" really never enters the equation!



*"I don't know what it is you guys do,
but my son loves kale."*

—This particular comment came from a mom at Cordata Elementary School, but we hear similar stories almost every day!



Mom: "Did Aine really eat salad today? She never eats salad!"

Aine: "I did Mom; I LOVE kale!"

—A conversation overheard between Silje and Aine, a parent and kindergartener, Lowell Elementary School

.....
***"I have a confession.. during recess I went to the garden
and ate broccoli without permission. It was just too good
to resist!"***

—3rd grader Silver Beach Elementary

.....
***"I think this is going to taste awesome...because we did
all the work!"***

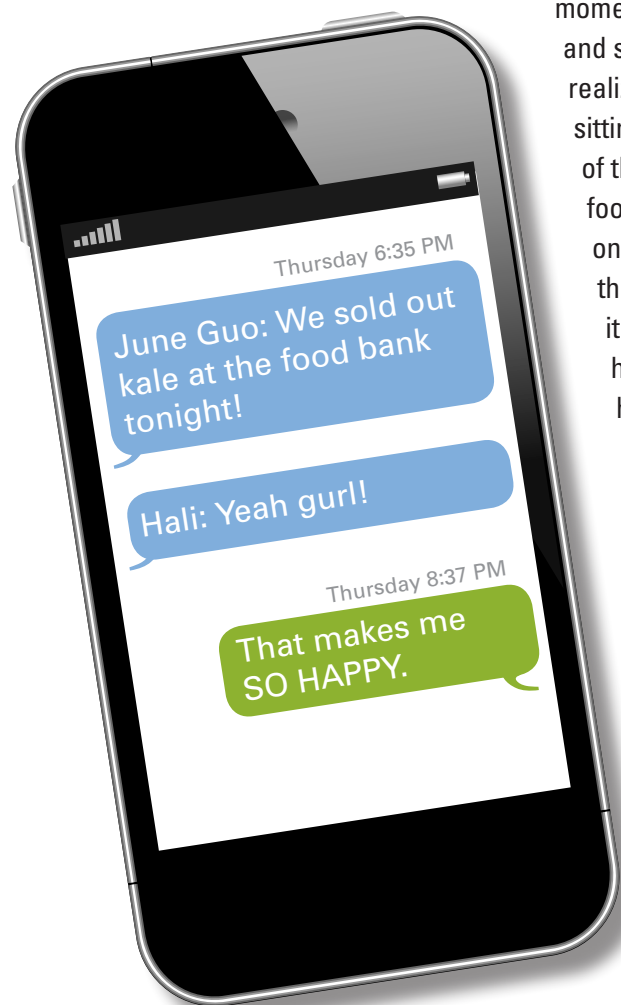
—4th grader at Columbia Elementary

In addition to gardening and cooking classes at schools, your support allows Common Threads to help families fall in love with healthy food at places like the Bellingham Food Bank's Mobile Pantry programs at Alderwood and Cordata Elementary.

(story from Samantha Tengs, 2016-17 AmeriCorps service member)

Miguel's family comes to the food bank every week, and lately he has been tagging along to see what's cooking. One week, the menu item was a "Kale and Rice Salad". Miguel curiously came over to see what was happening, and asked if he could help. I told him we would be happy to have a co-chef as soon as he washed his hands, and would he mind helping me chop up

the onion? He stared at me for a moment with an unsure expression, and said, "Okay, but where is it?" I realized that the whole, raw onion sitting in front of him with the rest of the ingredients, was a new food for him. I showed Miguel the onion and explained to him that this is what it looks like before it gets added to our foods, as he normally sees it. He asked how to cut the onion and soon became an expert chopper. He didn't even tear up! After chopping the onions, we prepared the remaining ingredients and made a delicious salad. After he finished his sample of salad, he asked, "Miss Samantha, can I PLEASE have more salad? It's so good!"



WHEN KIDS LEARN HEALTHY HABITS— THEY TEACH THEM TO THEIR GROWN UPS

Common Threads cooks with every classroom at each of our partner schools four times each winter. This year's recipes included a kale-rice salad, beet hummus, applesauce, and butternut squash noodles ("squoodles!").

For these recipes and others, check out our recipe page at Commonthreadsfarm.org/recipes/



My 3rd-grade son came home from school after the Common Threads cooking lesson and was so excited about making applesauce. He right away wanted to show me how he made it and how good it tasted. Aside from showing him where to find all the cooking tools, he did everything himself, from cutting up the apples to mashing them and adding a little cinnamon. He was so proud!

I feel very fortunate that my child was afforded such a wonderful opportunity at his school. It is always an indicator when a lesson is especially worthwhile, when my child comes home excited and is able to continue what he learned independently. Gardening and healthy food preparation, what wonderful life skills!

p.s. He also used to never eat the hummus and carrots I would provide him for a snack, but after your lesson on how to make hummus, he has changed his ways! I love that he is becoming a healthy eater!

—Happy Mom





When kids garden and cook together, they're learning about a whole lot more than healthy food

With your support, kids are learning to love healthy food.

Just as importantly, they're learning **patience, careful observation, and teamwork.** They're learning that taste is **personal, cultural, and changes over time.**

They're learning that it's **important to appreciate and respect each others differences.**

They're learning that the classmate who can't sit still in the classroom to save his life can take great care in gently transplanting a seedling or building a safe home for a garden insect friend.

They're learning that **nature is powerful and fickle. Sometimes things don't grow the way we want them to, and then it's time to get curious about what the plants might need that they're not getting.**

From our dedicated AmeriCorps service members:

Last week, my fifth grade class talked about how food can be something that can show socioeconomic and cultural differences. Students shared stories of when they felt different and related it back to how being different doesn't necessarily equate to being weird. They recognized that families in our community come from different cultures and thus can eat different foods. All the students were engaged in the conversation, and I was so impressed with the respect they showed one another.

— June Guo, 2016-17 AmeriCorps service member

I'm here to empower students to rise up to their highest potential. Yes, this mainly applies in the sense of making healthy food decisions. But it only took a couple weeks of service to realize that my presence extends past food. I hope that in the small moments I share with students, I instill the desire for them to grow into compassionate, understanding, respectful human beings.

— Priyanka Anand, 2016-17 AmeriCorps service member



Standing left to right: Breanne Bartok, Samantha Tengs, Sam Foote, Emily Van Wagoner, Annika Sampson, Robyn Garratt, Laura Plaut (Director), crouching: Priyanka Anand, June Guo. Not pictured: Hali Willis. What a fantastic team!

A big thank you to our 2016-17 AmeriCorps Team. As important as teaching kids about healthy food in the garden and in the classroom, is the role that these passionate, committed young educators play as one more thoughtful, supportive, caring adult in the lives of the kids they serve.



OUR PARTNERS

Connecting kids with healthy food is a team sport! We're so grateful to be on the same team as these fabulous organizations:

Bellingham Public Schools

Mt. Baker School District

AmeriCorps/Washington Service Corps

SNAP Ed (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education – a joint effort of the USDA, Washington Department of Health, Washington Department of Social and Health Services, and WSU)

Western Washington University and the Outback Farm

Bellingham Food Bank

Foothills Community Food Partnership and FESGI (the Food Education and School Garden Initiative)

Pure Food Kids

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FINANCIALS 2016

INCOME:

Contributions\$22,324 (8%)
Program Fees\$105,116 (38%)
Grants/Foundations\$146,280 (54%)

EXPENSES:

School Programs\$174,712 (80%)
Summer Programs\$24,409 (11%)
Capacity\$18,419 (9%)

