



# 2020/2021 GRATITUDE REPORT

[www.commonthreadsfarm.org](http://www.commonthreadsfarm.org)

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# WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE'RE GOING

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**The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy**  
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The impacts of COVID-19 and our national reckoning with systemic racism have continued to shape every aspect of our lives this past year. We hope, as you read these words, that you and your loved ones are safe and healthy, finding time each day to breathe, laugh, and smile.

During these past challenging months, your unwavering support has allowed Common Threads to listen, learn, and stretch to meet evolving community needs for food education and hunger relief, always leading with the question, “how can we help?” Thank you!

Because of you, we continue to be able to say “Yes!” - Yes to getting kids outside, masked, socially distanced, with their hands in the dirt. Yes to summer meals for children of farm workers and families living in remote areas of Whatcom County. Yes to asking hard questions, challenging assumptions, and surfacing our own blind spots as we work to build a more just, equitable and inclusive organizational culture.

These times of challenge and controversy sometimes feel like a good compost heap - hot, messy, and productive. Thank you for digging in with us, and for your continued support for growing good eaters and nourishing healthy community!

Warmly,  
Laura Plaut, Executive Director



## THE RETURN OF SCHOOL GARDEN LESSONS

In the spring of 2021, most students had returned to in person school and many schools were ready for us to resume garden lessons. Learning outside, masked, and socially distanced is a great way to reduce COVID transmission risks, and students were craving opportunities to connect with each other and the natural world. [Abundant research](#) confirms that time outside in the garden nourishes not only our bodies but also our hearts and minds!



# 3200+

STUDENTS AT 14 DIFFERENT SCHOOLS  
RETURNED TO SCHOOL GARDENS IN  
THE SPRING OF 2021

# 97%

OF TEACHERS BELIEVE THE GARDEN  
IS A PLACE OF JOY, COMFORT, AND  
SAFETY DURING THE PANDEMIC

- 97.0% of teachers said their students have a better understanding of how to care for a garden and have increased their appreciation of garden ecosystems
- 77.4% of teachers said their students had an increased sense of excitement or adventure when trying new foods
- 91.4% of teachers said that students who are less successful or engaged in the classroom can shine when they are gardening with Common Threads

## WHAT TEACHERS SAY

"My students love being in the garden! They are excited to make observations and interact with the garden materials in a hands-on way! They have learned how food grows and how to take care of plants in a garden. They built new relationships with special adults. They learned how to look closely, notice details, and record their observations like scientists. They have practiced patience and following rules to keep the garden a safe and joyful outdoor classroom. They have become inspired to garden at home. Garden class this spring coincided with our IB unit about the life cycle of plants and animals which was an excellent fit - the learning in our garden classroom enriched the learning we were doing in the classroom and vice versa. Thank you for this wonderful experience for our kids...some kids at our don't have access to gardening anywhere else in their life and it is sooo valuable for them!"



"One student who has struggled with the transition back to in-person instruction in a group setting just came alive and actively engaged with the free exploration and lessons in the garden. He dug through the dirt bed to find old potatoes and made a weed collection with labels. He became part of a learning community and exhibited curiosity through his focus and conversations with peers about the plants."

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## STORIES FROM THE GARDEN

Here are a few stories captured by our AmeriCorps Food Educators:

A couple middle school students were helping to pull out overgrown kale plants and asked, "Can we eat this?" Their AmeriCorps Food Educator said yes, and so they began to devour the kale. One student ate nearly half the plant! They asked if they could keep the plants, and took them with them to their next class. Who would have thought a bunch of middle schoolers would be so excited about kale!



One Kindergarten student was in the garden with her dad after school. It turns out they checked on how much the strawberries had grown every day on their way home from school. On this particular day she showed her dad the flowers SHE planted! She was so proud and excited.

A class of 3rd graders at Carl Cozier Elementary LOVED lemon balm. There were a bunch of beautiful + bountiful lemon balm plants in a corner on the perimeter, and every lesson the students had a blast picking the leaves. They would even put leaves inside their mask for some ~intense~ lemon balm vibes. It was silly, but cool to see the class so excited and creative.

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## SUMMER MEAL PROGRAMS

Summer can pose a unique challenge to families who count on school meals. Many school districts provide a summer meal program service, but there are usually a few gap weeks of service. Common Threads has partnered with the Opportunity Council to provide meals to kids attending summer programming at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center for the past three years. This year, Common Threads also filled in the summer meal gaps for children living in two migrant farmworker camps in Whatcom County.



# 1095

MEALS SERVED OVER THE SUMMER

# 100+

KIDS AT THREE DIFFERENT SITES  
SERVED

"One participant always liked to experiment with her meals. She'd put granola on her bagel, berry sauce and sunbutter on her hummus wrap, and always would eat what she made. I asked her if she did this at home too, and she said that her mom usually made her food. I realized that we were giving her the independence to choose for herself what she wanted to eat and how, and how exciting that was to her. Kids sometimes need to learn for themselves what food goes well together and what they do/don't like, and sometimes what they choose ends up seeming really really weird to us, but they're just learning!"

- Dana, AmeriCorps Food Educator

## HOW ELSE DID YOUR SUPPORT HELP OVER THE PAST YEAR?

### STERLING PAZ GARDEN

In partnership with Mercy Housing and Miracle Food Network, Common Threads reinvigorated a garden on property owned by the Church in Bellingham. Plots are now available for residents from nearby affordable housing complexes to use to grow food. This summer, AmeriCorps Food Educators ran programming for youth at the garden. Youth made some beautiful and tasty salads from Common Threads-grown veggies (see photo right).

To learn more about this project, [watch this video featuring one of last year's AmeriCorps members, Amelia Flores](#).



### TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

For the past three years, Common Threads has partnered with NSEA, RE Sources, and Wild Whatcom to deliver solutions-focused climate change professional development for teachers. [Read this one-pager to learn about the impact this collaboration has had.](#)

### FOOD ACCESS

AmeriCorps Food Educators continued to assist Bellingham Public Schools with the Farm to Freezer project and food distribution, often supplementing food boxes with school garden-grown produce. Over 1400 pounds of produce and 1300 bunches of greens, herbs, and flowers were distributed!

A pilot project was run in East Whatcom to support families who had self-identified as facing challenges accessing fresh produce to grow fresh veggies right in their own homes. [Check out page 19 of this grow guide from Lettuce Grow to learn more about this project.](#)



## VOLUNTEERS AND AMERICORPS MEMBERS

AmeriCorps Food Educators and community volunteers are the boots on the ground and beating heart of Common Threads! In exchange for their year of service, Common Threads offers training, mentorship and a chance to explore whether career paths in education or agriculture feel like a good fit. While our AmeriCorps members give so much to this community, they also report how much they learn and grow through service, as reflected in [Margarita's](#) and [Gabe's](#) blog posts.



# 19

AMERICORPS MEMBERS SERVING  
WHATCOM COUNTY

# 160+

VOLUNTEERS SUPPORTING  
SCHOOL GARDENS

# 31000+

AMERICORPS MEMBERS HOURS OF  
SERVICE

# 1570+

VOLUNTEER HOURS

### **Would you like to volunteer in a school garden or during lessons?**

Please contact Kathy Capron, Volunteer Manager

([volunteer@commonthreadsfarm.org](mailto:volunteer@commonthreadsfarm.org) or 360-927-1590)

New AmeriCorps service positions are posted on our website when they are open. Join our e-mail list on the [website](#) to be the first to know!



## FINANCIALS & GOVERNANCE 2020

To view past 990s, please visit the [website's Governance Documents section](#).

### REVENUE: \$752,330

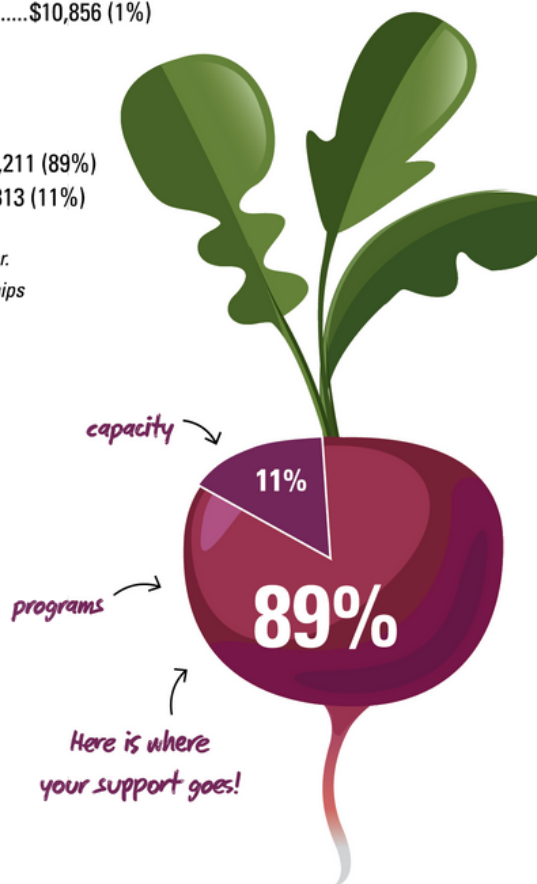
|                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Fees for service.....               | \$122,521 (17%)* |
| Grants, Individ. & Bus. Support.... | \$190,834 (25%)  |
| State & Fed. Support .....          | \$428,119 (57%)  |
| Other Revenue.....                  | \$10,856 (1%)    |

### EXPENSES: \$637,024

|               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Program.....  | \$565,211 (89%) |
| Capacity..... | \$71,813 (11%)  |

*This represents our 2020 fiscal year.*

*\*Direct service and state partnerships*



## 2020-2021 BOARD MEMBERS

Chris Casquilho, President; Casi Herrera, Vice President; Madchen Petrie, Treasurer; Nolan Davidson, Secretary; Fred Berman; Gail Knops; Susan Marshall

Interested in Board service? Please contact Laura Plaut, Executive Director (info@commonthreadsfarm.org or 360-927-1590) for more information.

## WHY SUPPORTERS CHOOSE TO DONATE

We realize there are many causes and issues worthy of your investment, and we appreciate your continued support of Common Threads. Here are what a couple of donors have told us about why they support this work. We'd love to hear why you choose to invest in this work as well ([info@commonthreadsfarm.org](mailto:info@commonthreadsfarm.org))!

Coming from a health care background, I strongly believe in the importance of healthy food and children's education about food and where it comes from. I also believe in the importance of addressing the lack of equitable access to healthy food in our community and the empowerment and benefits (physical and emotional) of growing your own food!

- Wendy Courtemanche, Common Threads donor and healthcare worker

I make a monthly automatic contribution to Common Threads because just like heat and light, the mission of Common Threads is something that make my life better every day. I can make a monthly gift a part of my budget, which feels less daunting, but allows me to give more. Giving to Common Threads as a monthly donor actually makes it easier for me to give more, so I feel like my contribution can match my zeal to grow healthy eaters!

- Chris Casquilho, Common Threads board member, monthly donor and parent of a student who has attended Common Threads' lessons

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

FOR A CURRENT LIST OF SUPPORTERS, [PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE](#)

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