

Lower Columbia School Gardens
empowers our community
by connecting kids and
families with real food
and hands-on learning.
Through dynamic
garden and cooking
programs, we
cultivate health,
equity, life-long
learning, and
stewardship
of the world
around us.

LOWER COLUMBIA
SCHOOL GARDENS

2018 Annual Report

In 2018...

125

After School
Garden Club sessions

100%

middle school students
reported feeling calm or happy
after Garden Club, even when
they arrived feeling angry,
sad, anxious,
disappointed or frustrated

1,748

students experienced a
garden-based lesson during
their school day

80%

5th graders reported that they
felt more ready to learn after
being in the garden

313

fruit trees maintained

145,380

square feet of garden space in
Longview and Kelso

524 volunteers gave **5,988**
hours of their time and talent to
support our work

4,600

students were served

From the Director...

When a small group of volunteers launched this nonprofit in 2010, I doubt any of us imagined we'd be where we are today: 18 school gardens, 5 staff, 2 AmeriCorps, hundreds of volunteers, serving thousands of kids each year with weekly programs. We get frequent calls from groups around the state wondering how to replicate what they see happening in Longview/Kelso. When asked, "so, how exactly are you guys pulling this off?" I always let those people know that our community deserves much of the credit for the success—in the absence of school district funding for garden programs, local individuals and businesses consistently step up to donate funds, equipment, supplies, services, and to give their time to work alongside students in the garden or kitchen, help build and maintain gardens, and lend a hand with special events, and fundraisers.

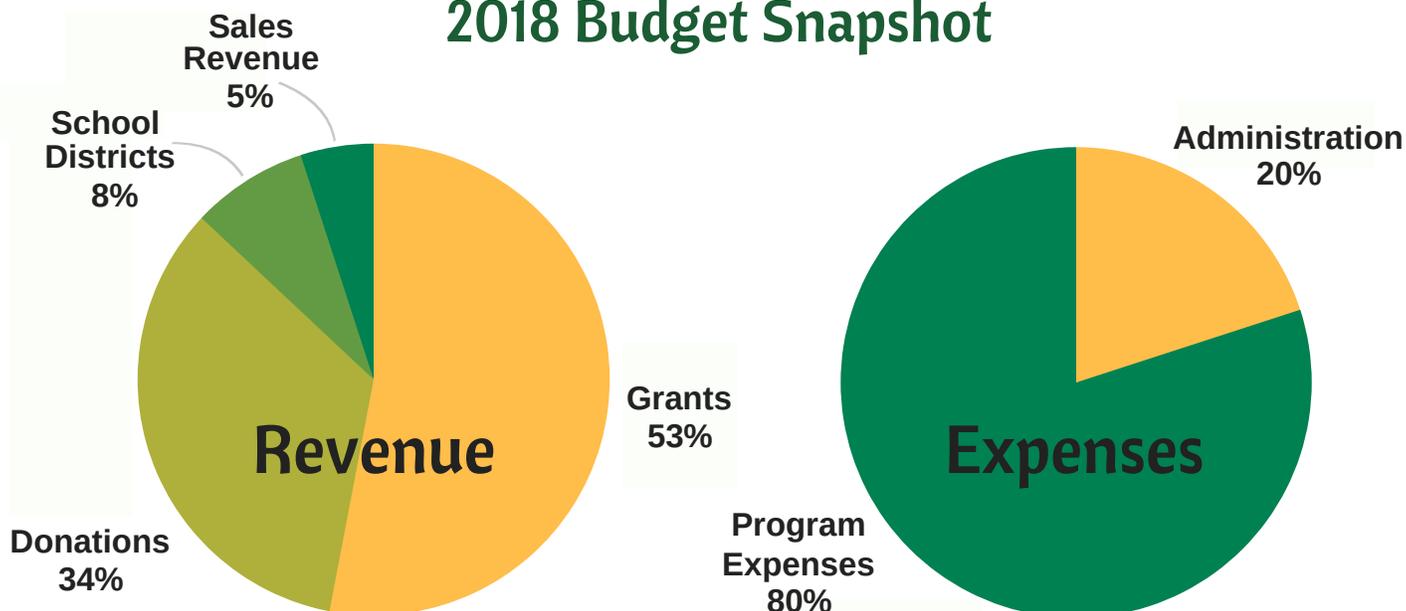
Even as LCSG has rapidly grown and expanded, we have been intentional about preserving our values. If you show up to a garden during a lesson or program, you will see kids actively engaged in hands-on exploration and discovery, connecting with nature, connecting with good food. You will see them working in small groups with a caring adult, where every voice can be heard. You will see a healthy mix of work and play—kids of all different abilities and learning styles being successful, gaining confidence and real-world skills. You will see kids learning the importance of bio-diversity, organic growing practices, and why we show kindness, respect, and empathy for every living thing. You will see kids freely being themselves in a place they feel safe and accepted.

There is so much more work to do—just because a school has a garden doesn't mean every student has regular access to it. As we press forward, I am deeply grateful to be working with a committed team that cares so deeply about kids and the planet, always pushing for progress, always asking "how can we serve more kids, with greater impact, and how can we bring a lens of equity, inclusion, and social justice to bear on every last thing we do?" And I am grateful for the strong support of our community that makes this good work possible—thank you!

Onward,
Ian



2018 Budget Snapshot



Annual Budget: \$300,800

Meet Jaden...

Why did you sign up for Garden Club when you were a 6th grader?

I didn't have very many friends at the time, and it seemed like it would be fun and a chance to meet people. Also, a green thumb runs in the family. Well, actually I'm more of an animal whisperer than a green thumb.

How does Garden Club make you feel?

It makes me feel like I can be calm. I feel a lot of energy during school, but then when I get to Garden Club on Thursdays a calm comes over me. It also makes me happy. Most of the time I'm happy, but it's an artificial kind of happiness. When I'm at Garden Club it's real happiness. Kind of like how you can get those fake sugar packets at a restaurant, instead of real sugar.



What are some things you've learned in Garden Club?

I learn how to garden more. How to cook—I was never inspired to cook before but then I got to do that in the garden. It gets me away from electronics, and stops me from playing on my phone as much. I also learned, "don't scare animals, don't harm them"—like the spiders, beetles and stickbugs on the ground. "Don't hurt the trees, and don't bug the bees." I also learned how to pick an apple. Don't just grab it off the tree, but turn it first and the joint will disconnect if it's ready.

Is there anything else you'd like to share about Garden Club?

I was the kid who sat in the back of the class, who everyone thought was weird. I was stuck in a cell and the only two feelings that weren't stuck inside the cell were anger and sadness (so I was pretty much only angry or sad most of the time). Coming to Garden Club was like finding a lock pick on the ground to be able to open up that cell. It didn't force me out of my bubble—it gently nudged me out. Now I also have happiness, joy, fun, wanting to learn, wanting to start a conversation. The reason I kept coming back—each day at Garden Club is like unwrapping a new present. And if you want to make some friendships you didn't think you'd make, that's the place.



Jaden, 8th grade student at Monticello Middle School

Our Wish List – can you help?

LCSG is always in need of the following items. If you would like to donate, contact 360-431-6725 or info@lcschoolgardens.org for drop off locations. Thank you!

- Kid or Adult XS, S, or M gardening gloves
- Good quality (no plastic please!) hand tools - shovels, rakes, hand trowels, etc.
- Felco #2 Hand Pruners
- Wheelbarrows (steel handles, never-flat tire)
- Mason jars - all sizes
- Permanent markers
- Caravan Canopy 10'x15' Classic tent - white
- Camp Chef 2-burner propane stoves
- 9" or larger tablet/iPad
- Dump trailer
- Cedar lumber for benches, picnic tables



Volunteer Spotlight: Pat Reistroffer

"The garden is the teacher. Students learn how to grow and prepare food, but that is only the beginning. I have seen students develop many other qualities while being in the garden: patience, careful watchfulness, curiosity, freedom, exploration, cooperation, compassion, and creativity. I have heard students say they come to the garden because they feel accepted. I have seen students use skills in the garden that weren't recognized in their classroom. I have watched teachers bring a student out to the garden to help them calm down and be able to return to their classroom and be more focused.

One of the hardest things is to have to turn students away due to a lack of volunteers. I volunteer because after teaching for 40 years, I wanted to give back to a community that supported me in my career. We need all types: waterers and weeders, garden club leaders, special event help, building expertise—whatever you have to give whether it's working with kids or behind the scenes, **email info@lcschoolgardens.org to see how you can get involved."**

Pat Reistroffer serves on the LCSG Board of Directors, runs Garden Recess at Catlin and Barnes Elementary with her husband Bob, and volunteers countless hours in other gardens and for special events.

Thank you, Pat!



Make your donation a monthly one and become a Perennial Donor. Even \$5 or \$10 per month does so much to help us accomplish our mission.

Donate at www.lcschoolgardens.org/donate today.

Thank you!