



# From the Director



## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Wow, right?

Throughout this historic year, we have been so grateful for the way our community has stuck with us - thank you! I am proud of the way our team rose to the occasion with creative solutions to bring the gardens to students and families. When schools closed in March, we had 14,500 seedlings in the greenhouse and 19 gardens ready for planting - what to do? We became production farmers, growing and distributing thousands of pounds of fruits and vegetables. We identified lunch pick-up times as an ideal way to connect with students and families: every week our team has been at the schools, distributing plants, seeds, and container gardens for the first part of the year, then transitioning to fresh produce and cooking kits.

In 2021, expect to see new gardens sprout up at Wallace and Lexington, more community partnerships, more free farm stands, and more kids and families empowered to grow and cook their own good food, interacting with their environment in a way that brings health and repair to them as well as to the earth.

As we start to see kids back at school and in the gardens (so brave in their little masks) we know there is a lot of healing that needs to take place; we are grateful to be in a position to facilitate some of that restoration.

As many of you know by now, School Gardens are about much more than just hands-on science lessons - we are growing core elements of a healthy, resilient community where love, kindness and inclusion rule. We thank you for being a part of it!

Gratefully,

Ian

# Nichole's Story

I served an Americorps term with Lower Columbia School Gardens in 2016-2017. I chose LCSG because of the time I had spent volunteering in the Columbia Heights Elementary school garden when my son was in kindergarten. Though I took it for granted at the time, that year working with school gardens was one of the most joyful and fullest I have had. After my term ended, I stopped reaching out to community and friends and ended up in a pretty dark place. I lost touch with my normally hopeful and optimistic outlook on life.

In 2020, I was hired on again as a seasonal employee to help with programs. It felt like coming home. In March there was a full week of garden programs



Caelum Walker, age 1

before COVID-19 was upon us, where I was teaching children about decomposition while they squealed with delight at all the wiggly creatures we uncovered in the soil. I couldn't withdraw into myself; the garden pulled at me to engage with nature and the safe connections with people who were teaching kids to respect all

lives, even the wiggly worms and humble potato bugs. We taught children to speak kindly to the creatures, even if they seemed different.



Nichole Walker with her two older children, Ethan Rogen, age 13 and Avery Rogen, age 11

When COVID hit, my focus shifted to homeschooling my children. But then summer came and the gardens were open for small, physically-distanced work gatherings. Avery, my 11 year old daughter discovered she loves to plant beautiful flowers. My 13 year old son worked until he sweated one day hauling wood chips. Both of them told me they feel like they have people who mentor them in the garden. My one year old, Caelum, stood for the first time, barefoot in the Cascade Middle School garden. I felt the pieces of my heart healing and reassembling.

This summer was a time of growth and reconstruction for me. Each person in the gardens fed me and helped me find a way to thrive again. I found a way to reach out and trust the healthy connections I have all around me. I believe in myself again.

The kindness that is so intentional in all you do in the gardens counts for more than you might realize. I know it takes effort; and I am so grateful to have benefitted from all that kindness and generosity.

Nichole Walker

## 2020 Impact



**5,090**

pounds of garden-grown produce distributed to our community

**1,700**

plant babies sent home with families to grow their own food

**180**

recipe kits distributed to families

**60 lbs**

of Makah Ozette potatoes rematriated

**290**

heads of garlic harvested

**330**

container gardens distributed to families

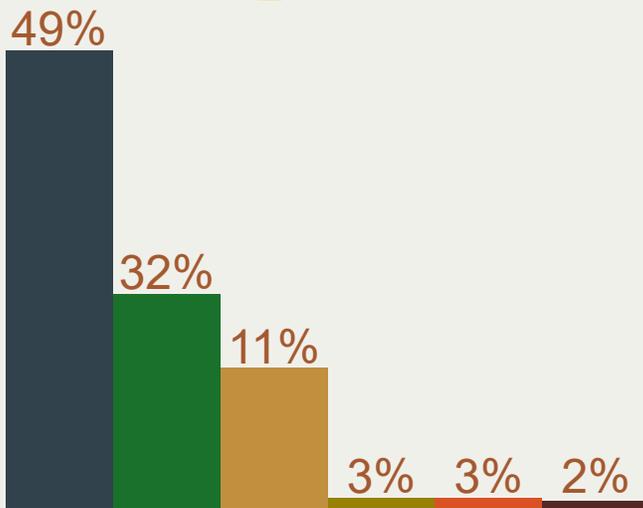
More than  
**14,500**

seedlings started in our greenhouse



# Budget Snapshot

2020 Total Revenue:  
**\$390,750**



- Grants
- Private Donations
- PPP Loan
- School District Funding
- Program Revenue (Plant and Produce Sales)
- Corporate Donations

## Become a Perennial Donor Today!

Supporters who make a monthly contribution to LCSG help us tremendously. You can sign up for a recurring debit from your checking account or credit card on our website [www.lcschoolgardens.org](http://www.lcschoolgardens.org) by clicking the 'Donate' button. Thank you!

## Volunteer Today

LCSG typically engages more than 500 volunteers each year. There is something for everyone; whether you like working with kids, being alone in a garden, or stuffing envelopes, please join us! No gardening experience is necessary.

- Volunteer at After-School Garden Clubs
- Work with students during garden-based lessons during the school day
- Help us during summer produce sales, pizza sales or plant sales
- Volunteer to weed and/or water a garden during the growing season
- Help out during our fall Harvest Festivals

To learn more or to volunteer, email [info@lcschoolgardens.org](mailto:info@lcschoolgardens.org). Volunteer trainings are currently on hiatus, but we are happy to orient you on a case-by-case basis.

During COVID-19, physical distancing will be observed, masks are required for volunteers and we are limiting the number of volunteers at a time in gardens to keep our staff and volunteers safe and slow the spread of the virus. Some volunteer opportunities are not currently available due to program alterations during the pandemic.



# From our Staff

From all of us at School Gardens, thank you for supporting real food and hands-on learning in Longview and Kelso in 2020 and beyond.

Gratefully,  
The LCSG Team



*From L to R: Ian, Sorrel Rabbit, Julia, Sam Rabbit, Erin, Satou Rabbit, Emily, Karen, Lauren, Dexter, Hillary*

## 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.

**Growing Food and Community on Cowlitz Tribal Land**



LCSG is a United Way partner agency



**Lower Columbia School Gardens**

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**Follow Our Adventures!**

“Steve the Rabbit”  
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[www.tinyurl.com/yycfscpb](http://www.tinyurl.com/yycfscpb) or search  
“Lower Columbia School Gardens”

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