

2021 Annual Report
Regional Environmental Council

ABOUT US

Our mission is to **bring people together to create a just food system** and to **build healthy, sustainable, and equitable communities** in Worcester, MA and beyond.

OUR CORE PROGRAMS

YouthGROW

We provide economic opportunity and personal / professional development to Worcester youth through urban agriculture

UGROW

We help the Worcester community grow their own food through our network of 60+ urban gardens, including community and school gardens

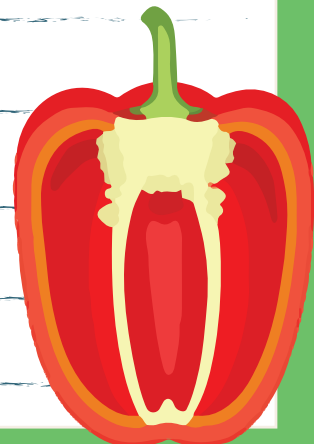
Farmers Markets

We support local farmers and bring fresh, local produce to those who need it through our Mobile and Standing Community Markets

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Full Time Staff

Steve Fischer	Executive Director
Grace Sliwoski	Director of Programs
Ajayi Harris	Development Director
Steven Murphy	Administrative Director
Ashley Carter	Farmers Market Program Coordinator
Stacie Brimmage	YouthGROW Coordinator
Noel Allen	Community Gardens Coordinator
Eliza Lawrence	School Gardens Coordinator
Tom Trepanier	Farm Manager
Gwen Weissinger	Communications Associate
Erika Akerson	Development Associate

Board of Directors

Rubin Williams	President
Julie Orozco	Vice President
Ted Hudson	Treasurer
Judi Kirk	Clerk
Eve Gilmore	
Zach Dyer	
Alison Bryant Ludden	
Stephanie Crist	
Jennifer Madson	
Francisco Valdez	
Pablo Hernandez Itriago MD, MS	
Justin Amevor	
Gabriella Guzman-Jerry	
Carl Rubin	

Commonwealth Corps Members

Amina Ameur	School Gardens Volunteer Engagement Specialist
Max Macort	Youth Volunteer Engagement Specialist
Christine Tosti	Group Volunteer Engagement Specialist

YouthGROW Mentors

Adeline Hebert
Katie Flanagan
Laddy DeLuca Lowell
Madi Brady
Max Macort
Nathan Lewis
Rachel Coskey
Tamar Rubin Calvert

YouthGROW Junior Staff

Keiran Agyapong
Simone Barjolo
Owen Chase
Timia Gayle

Farm Mentor

Valeria Nyonkuru



Program Evaluation

Luca Barrett

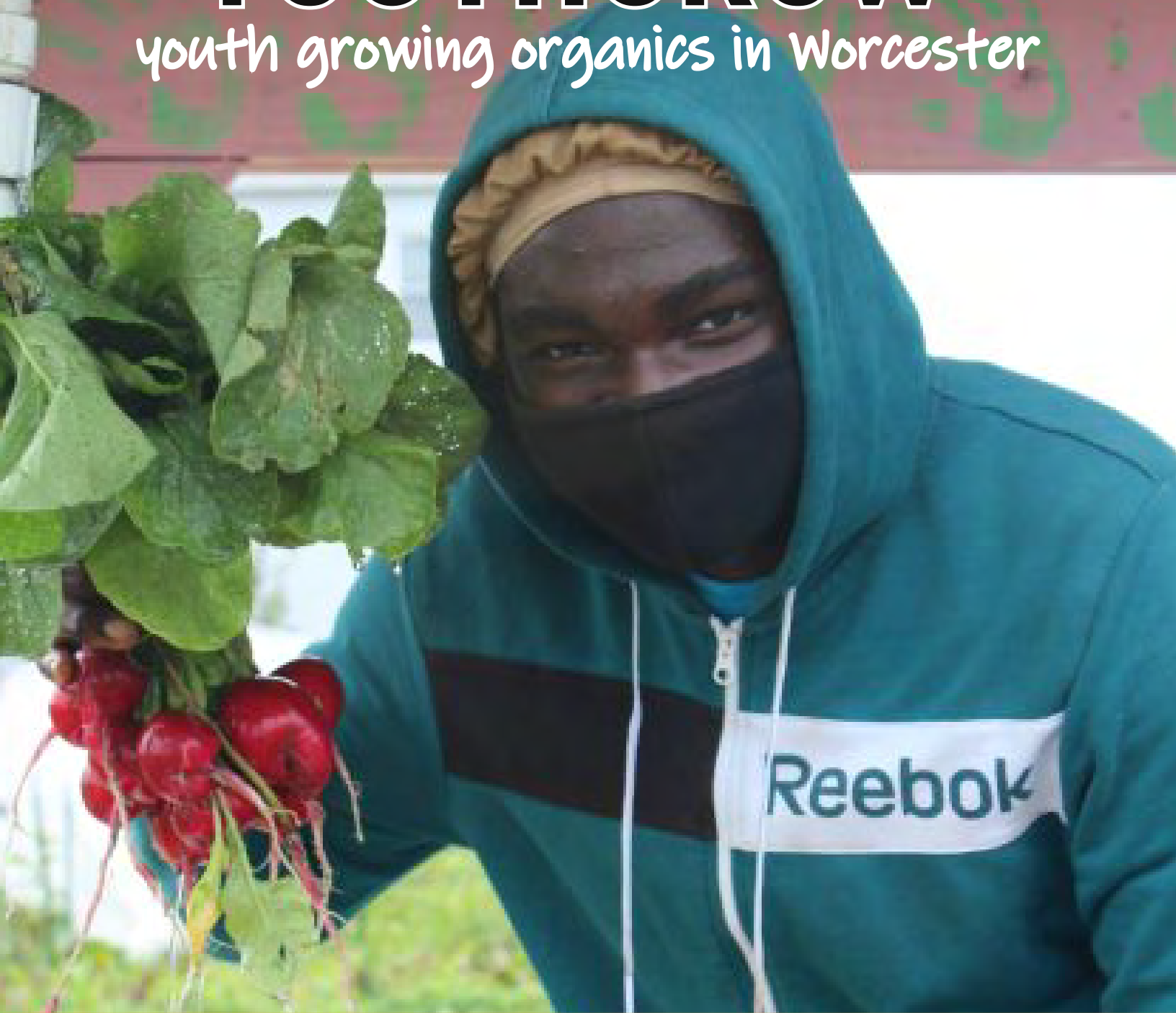
Farmers Market Managers

Max Marcotte
Katie Flanagan
Macy Drude
McDavid Rodriguez
Amanda McConnell
Duncan Drapeau
Zach Wiff
Annabel Boateng



YOUTHGROW

youth growing organics in Worcester



We were very excited to return this year to a full in-person summer session at each of the YouthGROW farms. **In 2021, we employed a total of 37 youth, 10 of whom held formal leadership roles. Youth grew over 4,000 pounds of food and generated over \$9,000 through produce sales,** which helped to support youth wages throughout the year.

37
youth
employed



2,000
hours of volunteer
time at the
YouthGROW



4,586
lbs of produce
grown at the
YouthGROW farm

This year we developed **a number of new and exciting partnerships to serve the members of our YouthGROW program.** We were fortunate to bring in Sha-Asia Medina of **The Village**, an Afrocentric cultural, learning, and healing center and Main South neighbor of the REC, to facilitate a 6 week training on racial identity and healing. We paired Sha-Asia's sessions with on-farm yoga classes, to practice techniques for centering the mind and body and to decompress after difficult conversations as a community. YouthGROWers identified this program as a highlight of the summer and it was a critical piece in building a community of trust and support.

The YouthGROW program worked with the **Woo Sox, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, and UMass Memorial Health** to build and maintain a rooftop garden at Polar Park. We partnered with **Northeastern University** on a community climate resilience research project where members of YouthGROW were trained in research practices, did outreach, and led their own community focus groups. Youth supported the School Gardens network by visiting gardens weekly to weed and harvest. We worked with two local artists on our second mural at the Main South Farm, through a collaboration with **POW! WOW! Worcester.** Youth Leaders and Junior Staff met with the artists to brainstorm and share their ideas for the mural. During the summer session they worked together to complete the art installation!

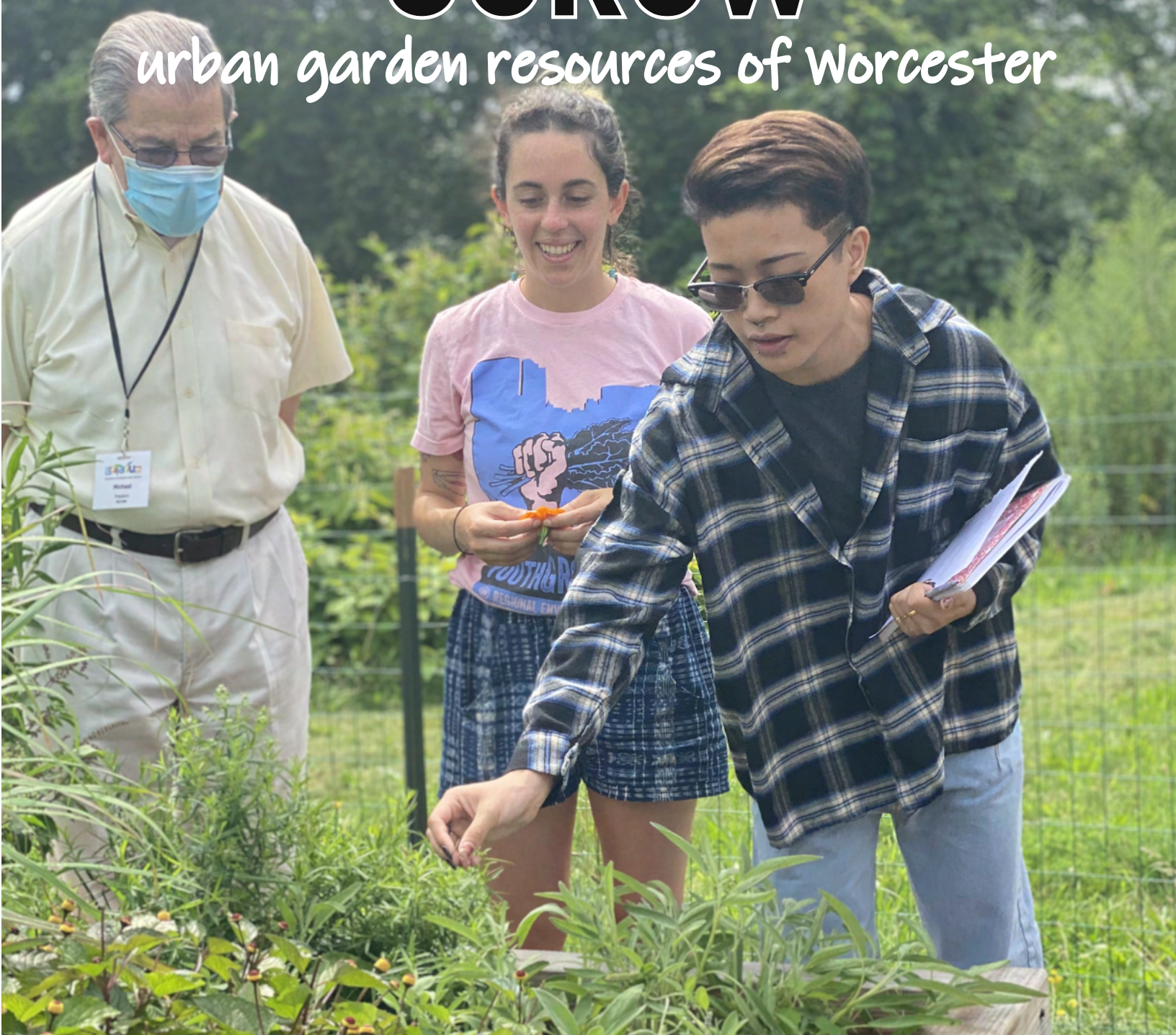
A small team of youth developed a partnership with **Earn-a-Bike** and worked over the summer to repair 25 children's bikes that were given to families living in Great Brook Valley. We also partnered on a very exciting project with **UMass Prevention and Research Center** to offer training for our youth in evidence based research around the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this partnership, our youth participated in a community competition to develop social media content promoting the vaccine. YouthGROWers were thrilled to be recognized with awards for the categories of both individual and group submission for teens in this contest.

"YouthGROW is a program that helps teens understand that change can happen when we get together and work towards it. Eating healthy is beneficial for you and the people around you. Engaging with the world is a beautiful thing and YouthGROW helps with that. YouthGROW brings the best out of you."
Ymaniliz Roman, YouthGROW Core Youth



UGROW

urban garden resources of Worcester



REC's UGROW program supported our network of 60+ community and school gardens and the broader gardening community in Worcester this past year. **In 2021, we built 17 raised vegetable bed gardens, 2 pollinator gardens, and planted 10 fruit trees.** We offered 64 workshops, with 6 being offered virtually and the rest offered in person and outdoors, with topics ranging from soil erosion to cover crop planting.



UGROW HIGHLIGHTS

We bid farewell to Program Coordinator Pat Barnosky in the Spring but **were excited to welcome Noel Allen as our new Community Gardens Coordinator this Fall.** You may remember Noel as our former Farmers Market Coordinator but her original REC connection was as a member of the UGROW Community Garden network!

We launched summer support programs at North High, Vernon Street School, and May Street school, bringing in youth, community partners, and elders to help step up and keep the gardens growing strong throughout the summer months. **We worked especially closely with North High, where we ran a full summer youth program, in partnership with the EcoTarium.** Students were able to show off the fruits of their labor at a garden visit with Congressman McGovern this fall.

In the late summer, with funding from the United Way of Central MA, we hosted mini farmers' markets and a garden-themed storytime for preschool and toddler aged "shoppers" at the Boys and Girls Club of Worcester, Central Community Branch YMCA, and YWCA Central MA. We hosted minimarkets for preschool and toddler age "shoppers" at the Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, and YWCA, paired with a garden themed story circle.

We're thrilled to announce **we will be expanding this successful "Farm to Preschool" program citywide, in partnership with Edward Street Child Services, through a generous United Way of Central Massachusetts Community Challenge Grant!** At the close of the year, in partnership with our community garden volunteer leaders we developed a new UGROW workshop series that will launch in March of 2022!

8,035
seedlings distributed

67
gardens in
network

947
students
impacted

64
gardening workshops



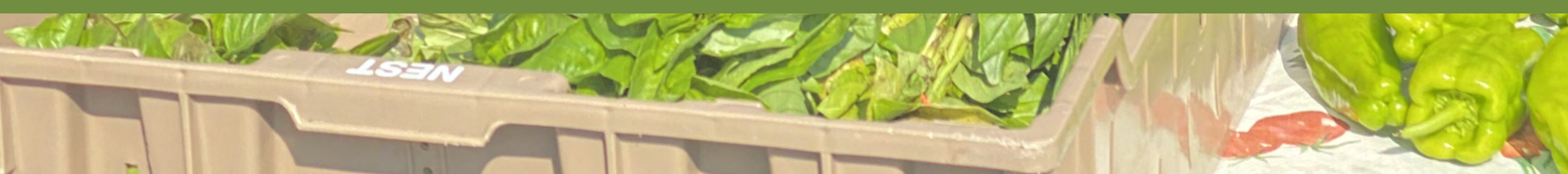
"Having the REC come with their farmers market was awesome for our children! We need more programs guided towards gardening and fresh foods for our children to learn from."
Myrtle Okai, Lead Preschool Teacher,
Central Community Branch YMCA



FARMERS MARKETS



With the help of dedicated staff, community supporters and generous sponsors, **we offered uninterrupted and safe access to local, farm fresh produce to food insecure areas of our region all year long.**



FARMERS MARKETS HIGHLIGHTS

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2021 kicked off with a relaunch of the curbside pre-order program we developed in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We expanded the program to offer **a fully customizable online marketplace with instructions in 4 languages and with 6 pickup locations in Worcester and Webster, MA.**

We partnered with Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center and Worcester Housing Authority to distribute 200 bags of produce and information about the MA Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) to housing authority residents. This state program provides \$40-\$80 of fresh local produce to SNAP recipients every month. We also provided training about the HIP program to early intervention specialists, Health Outreach Champions at the Community Builders, Inc., Central MA Housing Alliance Staff, and service providers across the state in collaboration with Project Bread.

All REC Markets in 2021 remained certified to participate in the Healthy Incentives Program and accepted SNAP, WIC, and Senior Coupons, as well as credit, debit, and cash.

We resumed in-person farmers' markets in June at Beaver Brook Park and University Park on Mondays, Fridays, and Saturdays and served 10 Mobile Market stops weekly in Worcester, Southbridge, and Webster on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Although our markets were scheduled to close at the end of October, because of the critical need for healthy food access heightened by the pandemic, we made the decision to extend our full Mobile Market schedule through the month of December again this year.

We offered 8 "pop-up" markets at locations not served by our usual schedule and made weekly produce donations to Buen Samaritano Food Pantry and Worcester Community Fridges. We spent the final two weeks of the year preparing for the launch of indoor winter markets which began in January of 2022!

92%
of customers
using federal
nutrition programs

22
unique
market
stops

11
local
vendors
supported
at
market



95,521
lbs of produce
sold at market

"During the pandemic, I had to learn how to manage food stamps and the REC's produce at mobile markets helped me do that. Going to these markets also exposed me to people of different cultures, languages, and economic backgrounds."

Christine Tosti, *Farmers Market Customer*



EARTH DAY CLEANUPS



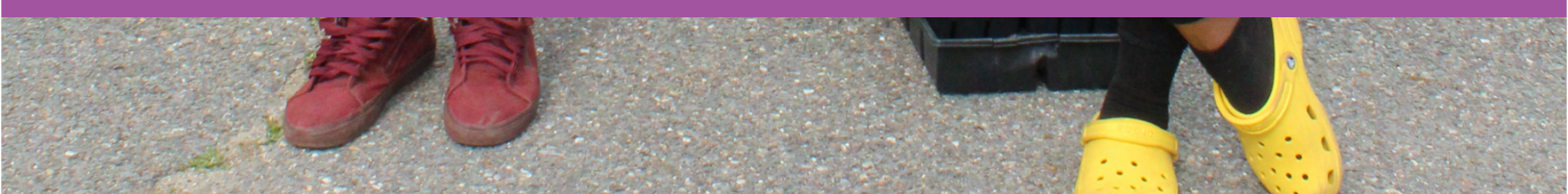
The annual REC Earth Day Neighborhood and Community Garden Cleanups resumed in 2021 after a year off due to the pandemic. In partnership with the City of Worcester Department of Public Works and Parks and with support from our lead sponsor, National Grid, over **600 volunteers** collected **57 tons of trash** from over **55 cleanup sites** across Worcester!



ANNUAL PLANT SALE



We hosted our annual Plant Sale in May where we sold over **\$15,000 seedlings to 300+ community members**. With your help, we raised enough funds to donate over 5,000 vegetable seedlings to community gardens across Worcester. We continue to offer sliding scale payment and accept HIP/SNAP for seedling purchases as part of our comprehensive efforts to increase access to affordable local food here in Central Massachusetts!

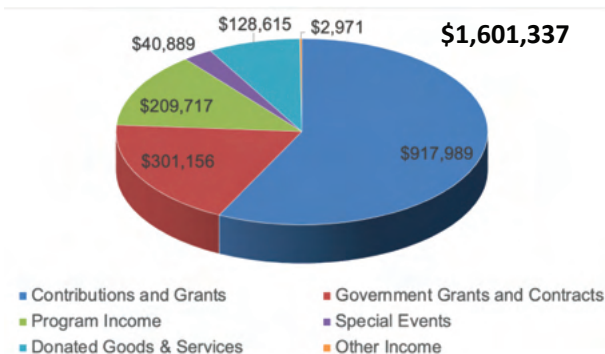


Fiscal Year 2021, in spite of the ongoing pandemic, was another solid year for the REC. Donors and donations were up substantially. We continued to increase program spending year-to-year. Our Farmers Markets remained an efficient revenue generator and reached more people during challenging times. A tough year, but a rewarding one.

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

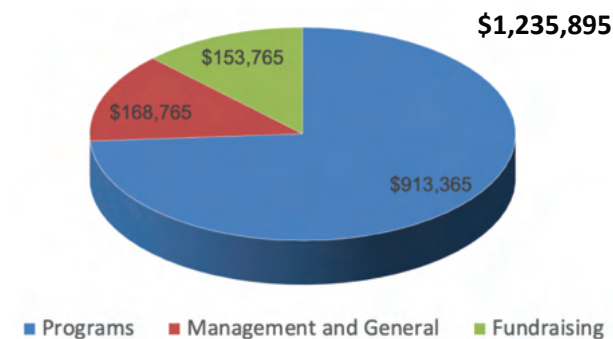
SUPPORT & REVENUE

Contributions and Grants	\$ 917,989	57.3%
Government Grants and Contracts	\$ 301,156	18.8%
Program Income	\$ 209,717	13.1%
Special Events	\$ 40,889	1.8%
Donated Goods & Services	\$ 128,615	8.0%
Other Income	\$ 2,971	0.1%
Total Support & Revenue	\$ 1,601,337	100%



EXPENSES

Program Support Services	\$ 913,365	73.9%
Management and General	\$ 168,765	13.7%
Fundraising	\$ 153,765	12.4%
Total Expenses	\$ 1,235,895	100%
Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	\$ 365,442	



In FY21 total Revenue increased by 29% over FY20 led by a 32% increase in contributions and a 73% increase in government contracts and grants. The total number of donors to REC continued to increase, up 15% from the previous year. We spent almost \$90,000 more on programs while decreasing program support costs by 5% versus FY20.

Total cash at year-end was \$785,232. This is a 34% increase from FY20, the equivalent of 232 operating days (at FY22 budgeted spending). Sustainability, a primary strategic objective, was enhanced by a year-end operating reserve of \$128,518.

ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS

Cash	\$	785,232
Contributions & Grants Receivable	\$	201,543
Contributions Receivable	\$	2,500
Prepaid Expenses	\$	7,854

Total Current Assets \$ **997,129**

OTHER ASSETS

Restricted Cash	\$	5,000
LT Contribution Receivable	\$	25,000
Property and Equipment	\$	125,115
Investments	\$	2,153

TOTAL ASSETS \$ **1,154,397**

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable	\$	33,126
Accrued Expenses	\$	79,738
Current Portion of Notes Payable		

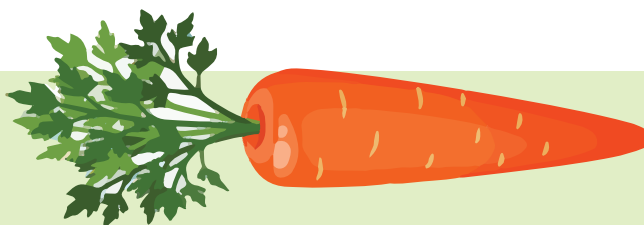
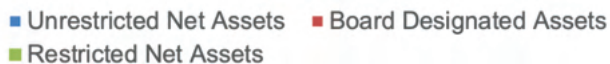
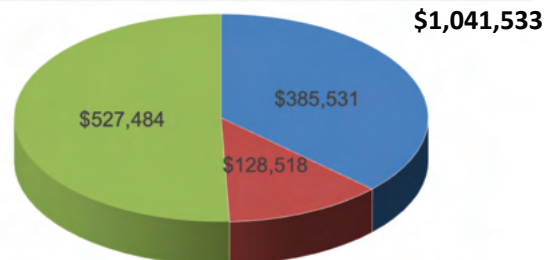
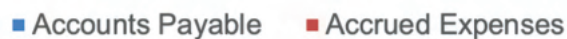
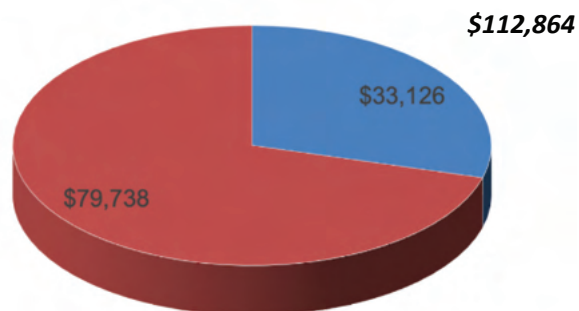
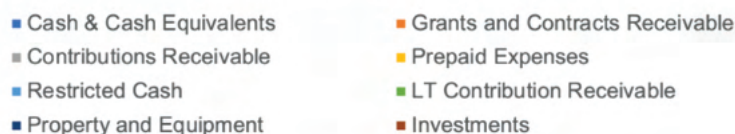
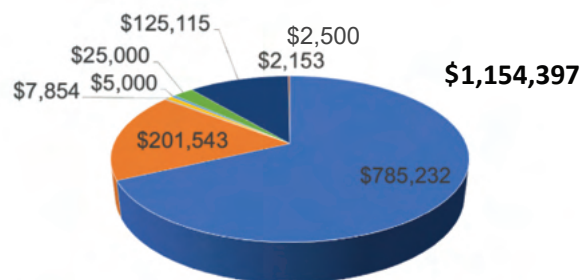
Total Current Liabilities \$ **112,864**

NET ASSETS

Unrestricted Net Assets	\$	385,531
Restricted Net Assets	\$	527,484
Board Designated Assets	\$	128,518

TOTAL NET ASSETS \$ **1,041,533**

TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS \$ **1,154,397**



GROUNDING IN GRATITUDE

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thank you to our supporters

We are so grateful to you, the 525 individual donors and supporters who make our work possible throughout Worcester and Central Massachusetts. Thank you!

In addition, we'd like to thank the foundations, government agencies, and businesses listed below that also provide essential support.

Our Funders

Greater Worcester Community Foundation, The Sudbury Foundation, Hermann Foundation, Stoddard Charitable Trust, The Fletcher Foundation, The George F. and Sybil H. Fuller Foundation, UMass Memorial Health Care, Amelia Peabody Foundation, J. Irving England & Jane L. England Charitable Trust, Albert W. Rice Charitable Foundation, United Way of Central Massachusetts, Ruth H & Warren A. Ellsworth Foundation, AmazonSmile Foundation, The French Foundation, George I. Alden Trust, Fred Harris Daniels Foundation,, The Schwartz Charitable Foundation, Frank W. and Carl S. Adams Memorial Fund, Project Bread, Alice Willard Dorr Foundation, Blue Piano Fund, Clif Bar Family Foundation, DCU for Kids, Mabel Louise Riley Foundation, Reliant Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Boston Mutual Life, Plourde Family Charitable Trust, Fallon Health, Whole Kids, Hanover Insurance Group Foundation, Melvin S. Cutler Charitable Foundation, Trustee for the Nathaniel Wheeler Trust, Worcester Garden Club, Center for Nutrition Studies, Fallon Health, The Bancroft School, Salmon Family Foundation,, Worcester Credit Union, Rockwell Foundation, Eastern Bank Foundation, People's United Community Foundation, The Agnes M. Lindsay Trust, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Forest Foundation, Wild Geese Foundation, TD Charitable Foundation, Merck Family Fund, Green Leaf Foundation, Farm Credit East, Berkshire Bank Foundation

Corporate

Fidelity Bank Worcester, Nativity School of Worcester, First Unitarian Church of Worcester, Worcester Center for Crafts, Redemption Rock Brewing Co., E4TheFuture, MathWorks, Root N Press

Government Funding

City of Worcester, Worcester Arts Council, Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General, United States Department of Agriculture, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Massachusetts Development Finance Agency



Farmers Market

Clark University, Wegmans, Workers Credit Union, Farm Credit East, Rollstone Bank, Country Bank, UniBank, Cornerstone Bank, The Food Trust / Franklin County, Webster Five Foundation, Harvard Pilgrim Healthcare Foundation, Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, United Way of Central Massachusetts



Earth Day Cleanups

UMass Chan Medical School, AbbVie BioResearch Center, Assumption College, Sustainable Comfort, Inc., Standard Auto Wrecking Co., IC Federal Credit Union, A.J. Letourneau, Inc., Worcester Common Ground, Davis Publications, Tighe & Bond, EcoTec, Inc., E.L. Harvey and Sons, National Grid, CCR Wealth Management, Massachusetts Audubon Society



Plant Sale

Mass Cultural Council, Workers Credit Union, Open Sky Community Services, Tufts Public Health Plans, Open Sky Community Services, Reliant Medical Group, College of the Holy Cross, Seven Hills Foundation, Bay State Savings Bank, United Way of Central Massachusetts



Farm Party

Newbury Investment Partners, Worcester County Food Bank, Miller Fence



The Regional Environmental Council

With your support, we're bringing people together to create a just food system and to build healthy, sustainable, and equitable communities in Worcester, MA and beyond

