2018 was a landmark year for GrowGood. We opened our greenhouse and began selling produce to restaurants and at a farmers market. We bought a van to transport our products. We added equipment and streamlined our post-harvest facility so we can more efficiently process our produce. We established a farm-to-table culinary program for the Bell Shelter clients. And one of the participants in our Temporary Employment Program not only moved on to his own apartment but has become our assistant farm manager. In November, we happily learned that we can attract a crowd: Our Day of the Dead celebration drew about 150 people.

All of that we accomplished while holding close our mission. We are determined to do everything we can to make ourselves financially sustainable without sacrificing the delivery every week, year-round, of hyper-local food into the kitchen of The Salvation Army Bell Shelter.

Mary MacVean
Executive Director
ABOUT GROWGOOD

GrowGood is a Los Angeles-based nonprofit urban farm with a mission to use urban agriculture programs to empower people and transform communities. Since 2011, GrowGood has worked with The Salvation Army Bell Shelter to farm a 1.5-acre parcel of land adjacent to the shelter, which is the largest west of the Mississippi. The shelter provides comprehensive transitional care for up to 500 homeless men and women, a third of them veterans. GrowGood’s mission manifests in these ways: by providing nutritious, fresh produce to the shelter kitchen; by providing employment training and meaningful resume-building opportunities on the farm and in a culinary education program for people with the greatest barriers to employment; and by managing a therapeutic green space for spiritual and emotional healing.

GrowGood’s farm consists of a half-acre of row crops, 14 raised garden beds, an orchard with about 70 fruit trees, a chicken coop with 20 chickens and a California native plant area with more than 300 drought-tolerant plants. Our growing areas are connected to a state-of-the-art drip irrigation system generously donated by Netafim. New this year is our 1,440-square-foot, computer-controlled greenhouse. GrowGood farm manager Katie Lewis has worked this year to take advantage of every nook of space to grow food for the Bell Shelter as well as for our restaurant clients. A small space that perhaps had been left empty now is, for example, a spot for marigolds or amaranth or another plant valued by our clients.

2018: BY THE NUMBERS

$25,000  Market value of the 9,000 lbs of produce we provided to the shelter’s kitchen

$9,000  Total corporate volunteer day earnings

21  Graduates of the Culinary Training Program

$7,112  Social enterprise earnings from Aug-Dec, 2018
Even amid railroad tracks, factories and warehouses, GrowGood works to farm in tune with nature, growing delicious food and maintaining healthy soil and a welcoming habitat for plants and creatures. We use no chemical additives, but make compost -- in part with the brush and food scraps from our own land -- and plant cover crops to help keep our soil vibrant. We strive to attend to the health of the land as well as what we take from it. The farm continues to be a place that brings people together.

In 2018, GrowGood delivered more than 9,000 pounds of just-picked, organically grown produce with a market value of more than $25,000 to the shelter kitchen. That produce is used by the kitchen staff and by the students in GrowGood’s Culinary Program to serve about 6,000 meals a week in the Pregerson Dining Hall. We carry our harvest into the kitchen in our wagon -- a habit that leads to subtly profound impact and conversations about the source of the meals.

And we welcomed our volunteers who contributed nearly 3,000 work hours. Our volunteers come from the neighborhoods around GrowGood, as well as from UCLA, Whittier College, Girl Scouts, and other organizations. We are growing a community of people who want to get their hands dirty on a farm thriving in an urban landscape, as well as those doing their part to improve the lives of people who have been homeless. Our volunteers also include people living in the Bell Shelter; one resident who is a carpenter built us a new chicken coop. Another helped build beds for our greenhouse.
SOCIAL ENTERPRISE TAKES HOLD

With the completion of the greenhouse, GrowGood moved to the next level with our social enterprise efforts. We are regulars at the Saturday farmers market in the L.A. neighborhood of Silver Lake. That's in close proximity to many of our restaurant clients, which include Botanica, Wax Paper, Porridge & Puffs, Trash Fish and Cookbook.

Ryley Schlachter, who had been working at One Gun Ranch in Malibu, came to GrowGood as our commercial manager in August. She has worked to plant food in the greenhouse and to find clients for our harvests. By selling beautiful and delicious specialized produce such as micro and petit greens, pea shoots and edible flowers, we intend to increase our ability to support ourselves. The GrowGood staff also has collaborated to develop herb salts, teas and other shelf-stable products, and in a nimble effort to take advantage of holiday fairs began making wreaths using the boughs from many plants.

As well, we began a series of on-farm workshops that use our plants to teach the community (both the shelter and the wider Los Angeles community) such skills as natural dyeing, making herbal tinctures and tea blending. In addition to funds raised from seminar fees, we can sell our products at these events. Income from the greenhouse was $1,400 the first month, and by December, farm income overall had grown to total over $11,900 for 2018.

Making much of this possible was the purchase of a van for deliveries, thanks to a grant from The Ahmanson Foundation. And GrowGood Board member Andrea Theodore and her husband, Bob Gray, donated an industrial salad spinner that enables us to process large amounts of greens. That equipment was among the improvements we’ve made to our post-harvest station, where our crops are weighed, washed and readied for sale.

Finally, GrowGood welcomed seven corporate volunteer groups, and we earned $9,000 from them beyond their generous work contributions. Those volunteers provided us with some income and with some important improvements, including a decomposed-gravel path to make GrowGood more accessible to those who use walkers or wheelchairs, murals, and screen shelves to dry herbs and flowers.

A Tourism Cares participant said her high point takeaway was working with and getting to know shelter clients. That contact and social interaction heightened the experience and made it more real for her.

GrowGood also now publishes a twice-monthly newsletter to provide regular contact that everyone who has an interest in our work. Sign up is available on the GrowGood website and includes more than 2,400 active subscribers.
In partnership with the Salvation Army, GrowGood in 2018 designed and launched a culinary training program that is truly farm to table. Using the farm harvest, students learn skills needed to work in the food industry. The shelter kitchen is their laboratory, and they prepare ingredients and dishes for people who eat in the dining hall that serves approximately 6,000 meals per week. Under the direction of Eric Tomassini, a chef and farmer, and instructor April Ventura, 32 students began the 12-week program; 21 have graduated. Eight have found meaningful jobs in L.A.

Over the course of the year, the program has hosted guest chefs, cooked for corporate volunteer groups at the farm and catered the reception for the opening of the nearby Oasis apartment buildings. In December, the program was honored at the kickoff event for The Salvation Army Red Kettle fundraising season.

“The availability to start my life over, and believe that it was even possible before GrowGood was just a dream. What a priceless gift and blessing that is now my reality.”

- Krista Tufts, a culinary graduate working at the Downtown Women’s Center
Not quite three years old, the Transitional Employment Program (TEP) offers clients of the shelter the opportunity to build a resume, gain essential employment skills while they earn income. The farm hires up to five clients for fourth-month terms, helps them write resumes and provides classes in the soft skills needed for any job. In 2018, TEP hired five clients, totaling more than 2,400 paid hours. Three of our recent TEP participants have permanent jobs and have left the shelter to live independently.

Among those three is Velva Flemings IV, who came to GrowGood’s TEP more than two years ago. He found he loved farming, and he was not only good at growing food but was terrific at managing volunteers. In 2018, Velva was promoted to assistant farm manager.

In 2019, GrowGood intends to increase our TEP cadre, providing opportunities to work at the farmers market, and take on other roles that grow out of our social enterprise program, including customer service, deliveries and records-keeping.

A challenge of the Transitional Employment Program is that the shelter’s population is an inherently unpredictable employee group. We cannot always quantify participants’ experiences; and it’s not always easy to consistently train new, inexperienced farm workers. However, this kind of supportive work environment is empowering. The people we hire face myriad challenges from mental health or substance abuse issues, to past trauma, to health issues, on top of currently living in the shelter; the fact that we were a productive, peaceful place for people to work is truly special.

For one of the potluck lunches we hold at the farm, a TEP participant named Rouben offered to share his cultural cooking (Armenian barbecue). He got special ingredients, worked really hard, cooked a truly delicious meal and then stood around beaming while everyone enjoyed the food. “This is peace,” he said.
GrowGood offers Food for Life Skills classes for clients enrolled in the shelter’s residential treatment center for addiction recovery and various mental health conditions, including PTSD. About 25 people attend each of the two classes a week in the native garden outdoor gathering space. Classes focus on nature, meditation, gentle yoga and other healthful living habits. Yoga, meditation and spending time in nature have been shown to reduce stress and anxiety, lower blood pressure, promote better sleep, improve mental clarity and lower one’s risk of depression.

Jayne Torres and Millie Huer lead the sessions. Both are trained and certified by the Veterans Yoga Project. Jayne, the Program Cultivator at GrowGood, is also an L.A. County Master Gardener and co-founder of the DTLA Ur-Bin Garden Network. Millie is a certified yoga teacher and co-founder of First Nature Yoga, which teaches nature-based yoga.

And thanks to a partnership with Cliff Gardner, the shelter’s activities director, a weekly meditation and yoga class began for shelter clients, as well as a weekly meditation class for shelter and GrowGood staff.

"The mission is to inspire and cultivate the awareness that nature is we and we are nature and to explore through study and mindfulness practice the interconnectedness of all beings and things present in our lives."

- Millie Huer

"Now I don't ruminate, I meditate."

- A participant
DON'T TOSS IT, COMPOST

GrowGood’s compost program has grown in partnership with the nonprofit L.A. Compost, which has established hubs around the city to encourage residents and institutions to divert what they can from landfills. L.A. Compost’s Laila Tamborini spent time every week at GrowGood teaching staff and offering community workshops in composting. It’s a joy for us all when the cycle is completed when we send food into the shelter kitchen and then take back the peels and stems to use to make rich new soil. Tens of thousands of pounds of food have been diverted in this way.

In 2019, we hope to establish a regular business of taking the food scraps of our restaurant clients for compost, and working with other organizations to increase our soil production.

DIVERSITY ABOVE AND BELOW GROUND

We are a diverse group of people who bring a variety of skills and attitudes to a common purpose of creating community, growing food and improving the world. We also grow a remarkable variety of produce throughout the year, shifting as the seasons shift. New in 2018 was an array of edible flowers that brighten our land and find their way to the salads of our social enterprise clients: borage flowers, marigolds, calendula. In addition to unusual varieties of staples such as beets, carrots and lettuce, GrowGood cultivates lemongrass, Asian long beans, moringa, heirloom tomatoes, ice plant, breakfast radishes and dozens more. Our list of herbs also has grown as we develop more teas and salt blends.
IN GRATITUDE

Our efforts would quickly wilt without strong volunteer participation. Jayne Torres has cultivated relationships with nearby schools (2019 will be the fifth year for the environmental studies class at Whittier Christian High) and other organizations and our growing community presence is paying off. While we could never thank enough everyone who has to make GrowGood thrive, here are a few supporters who have helped us in 2018:

- Cheesecake Factory’s Kix Nystrom and his wife Lisa have been a major supporter of GrowGood, bringing truckloads of food and equipment to the culinary program, and bringing his staff to work with the culinary students.
- Dean Pregerson shopped for and delivered our trailer, which in 2019 should be retrofitted as a walk-in cooler.
- UCLA’s civic engagement course regular sends enthusiastic, hard-working student volunteers.
- Law Offices of Snell & Wilmer
- Steve Lytle and the staff of the Bell Shelter respond to nearly all of our requests and support us in myriad ways.
- Robert Gray helped us upgrade our post-harvest area and donated many hours to us.

Thanks to our major supporters

- Amnon and Katie Rodan Family Foundation
- California Community Foundation
- Century Housing Corporation
- Clif Bar Family Foundation
- Harry & Bernardine Pregerson
- Peter Lowy
- Rajani and Shanthi Maddhi
- REDF
- Rodan & Fields LLC
- Roy & Patricia Disney Family Foundation
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- Schwab Charitable Foundation
- Sun Shine on You Foundation
- The Ahmanson Foundation
- The Cheesecake Factory Oscar & Evelyn Overton Charitable Foundation
- The Jewish Community Foundation
- The Richard J. Riordan Fund
- The Weingart Foundation
- University of Southern California
STAFF AND BOARD UPDATES

GrowGood is delighted to have two new board members.

Andrea Theodore is executive vice president and CMO at Pharmavite, which makes NatureMade vitamins and supplements. She is in charge of leading marketing, strategy and venturing into new emerging spaces for the company. And she has more than two decades of experience in consumer goods at Pepsico Emerging Nutrition and Procter & Gamble.

Jorge Inda Meza works for Anheuser-Busch as the head of marketing for western North America and is responsible for communications strategy and partnerships and brand programs. He has worked in Europe and Mexico as well.

Farm manager Katie Lewis took classes on soil and chickens. Executive Director Mary MacVean completed the Executive Director Leadership Institute, offered by Executive Service Corps.
2018 FINANCIALS

REVENUE
- Individual and Business Contributions: $120,424
- Foundation Grants: $305,636
- Event Revenue: $918
- Reimbursed Program Expenses: $61,903
- Produce Sales: $13,672
- Other Revenue: $1,122
- TOTAL INCOME: $502,553

EXPENSES
- Payroll Expenses and Taxes: $204,447
- Contract Services: $56,809
- Office Expenses: $11,619
- Advertising and Promotion: $858
- Conference and meetings: $480
- Depreciation: $6,030
- Insurance: $25,985
- Office, Printing, Supplies: $2,389
- Other Program Costs: $1,972
- Other Expenses: $7,397
- TOTAL EXPENSES: $317,986

STAFF AND BOARD

Brad Pregerson, President
Andrew Hunt, Treasurer
JJ Figlin, Secretary
Mark Anderson, Board member
Andrea Theadore, Board member
Jorge Inda Meza, Board member
Mary MacVean, Executive Director
Jayne Torres, Program Cultivator
Katie Lewis, Farm Manager
Eric Tomassini, Director of Culinary Programs
Ryley Schlachter, Commercial Manager
Velva Flemings IV, Assistant Farm Manager
Albert Viera, Farmhand
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