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OUR MISSION

"Food, What?!" is a youth empowerment and food justice organization. At FoodWhat, youth engage in relationships with land, food and each other in ways that are grounded in love and rooted in justice. We provide meaningful space where youth define and cultivate their empowerment, liberation and well-being.

OUR PROGRAM

Youth from Watsonville to Santa Cruz join the FoodWhat Crew through our Spring Internship, Summer Job Training and Fall Project Management programs. FoodWhat youth use organic farming, nourishing food and loving community as vehicles to grow on their own terms and in lasting ways. As a FoodWhat Crew, we grow, cook, eat and distribute fresh, healthy food while also addressing local food justice issues.

OUR IMPACT

FoodWhat's impact is a direct result of the way youths' wisdom, experience and personal gifts are honored. As such, FoodWhat is a safe space where youth are centered as agents of their own future. Youth use their strength to access opportunities that lead to radical diet change, critical job training, personal growth and more. Many youth share that through FoodWhat, they find healing, inspiration and family.

OUR VISION

We envision liberation in all ways, love at all levels and well-being in all forms for youth and our community.







A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Friends.

At the start of our 13th year, FoodWhat received EcoFarm's prestigious Justie award, which honors advocates who center social justice within organic farming. This was a poetic moment, because 13 years ago to the day, I was walking around those same conference grounds putting up flyers saying "Santa Cruz Youth Farm Coming Soon". I was looking for partners, land, resources, and funding for what we now call "Food, What?!".

It's humbling, 13 years later, to build community with you in supporting youth. To know that we've built a vast network and that we're part of a constellation of

partners all dedicated to youth wellness and liberation. To know we walk in the footsteps of movements for people's dignity and that we're now super activated in the relationship-building, agency-building, resilience-building, and self-love that supports every young person who steps onto the farm. To know that youth having their hands in the soil is healing and at a time when that is so needed. To see them put down their cell phones for a hot minute and look each other in the eye to share stories, to cook and eat and create community together.

Another quick story to share on our 13-year trajectory. At the beginning of the summer, Uriel (FoodWhat alum and now staff), and I traveled to the state capital to receive the California Non-Profit of the Year award from State Senator Bill Monning. Now most of the time, I wear a FoodWhat t-shirt and Carharts on the farm with the youth crew, but my wife kindly shared with me that this would be a good time to put on a suit and tie. So as all good non-profit leaders do, I listened to my loved one. When Uriel and I parked in the garage, the temperature in Sacramento had already hit the triple digits and I asked him if I should wear my tie. He smiled and said no. But I could tell there was more to the story, and I asked him why not, and he paused and finally said, "Well, actually, I don't like your tie." But this is what I love about the relationships we forge at FoodWhat. They're just completely real.

Now on a personal note, as a Jew, I started this 13th year thinking, "This is awesome! FoodWhat is finally getting its Bar Mitzvah!" And in my people's tradition, that is a significant rite of passage. What I've come to realize is that FoodWhat really serves as a rite of passage for many youth. Present in numerous cultures, rites of passage serve as an important tool to make sense of the world as we grow in different directions. They serve as lights or landmarks along the way that help us remember we are on the right path, simply because it is our own. This path belongs to us in the same way it belonged to those that came before us and the same way it will belong to those who will follow us. These moments remind us that we weren't where we were before — we are growing.

FoodWhat, to me, is a reminder that moving forward in a challenging time is possible...and in fact, it is happening. If you could hear each and every story that Irene, David, Lupita and I get to hear from young people, you would hear the will to reclaim, restore and rebuild what is broken and make real their visions. Youth are a central force in our movement forward and I am so humbled to be alongside them, and you, in this work.

In solidarity,

Doron Comerchero

own Comerchero

"FOOD, WHAT?!" STAFF



Moriah BarrowPrograms and
Operations Coordinator

Moriah couples her dedication to youth and justice with her versatile skill set to support all organizational functions.



Doron Comerchero *Executive Director*

Doron continues to believe he has the best job in the world while leading the organization with heart, laughter, and intention.



Mary Hillemeier Farm and Culinary Manager (outgoing)

Mary is a farmer who is passionate about the transformative power of growing your own food and preparing it with joy.



David RoblesFarm and Culinary
Manager

David is a farmer, activist, and artist who loves to use his skills to cultivate community and resilience among youth.



Kayla Kumar *Development Director*

Kayla secures resources and cultivates community partnerships that are impactful, down-to-earth, deeply heartfelt and supportive to FoodWhat youth.



Irene Juarez O'Connell Programs Manager

Irene is an experienced mentor, educator, and youth advocate who is passionate about intersections where creativity meets empowerment for lasting, impactful change.



Lupita Sanchez *Programs Manager*

Lupita has a passion for theater, grassroots organizing and transforming communities through youth leadership, creativity, and collective action.



Puiyee Tse *Finance Manager*

Puiyee comes to FoodWhat with a love of numbers and over 20 years of experience in nonprofit finance in Santa Cruz County.



Uriel ReyesFarm Coordinator

A FoodWhat youth back in 2015 and current staff member, Uriel brings relevance, strong leadership, and tons of fun to our Watsonville farm-based programming.



Abi Junior Staff Member



Natasha Junior Staff Member

SPRING INTERNSHIP

Spring brims with energy and possibility on the FoodWhat Farm. For their first time, youth set foot on this piece of land which will come to support a form of their well-being, liberation and power. Every big journey starts with one key step such as this. It is this drive toward what is possible that defines the foundational growth youth go on to experience throughout FoodWhat.

Even with a rainy start, FoodWhat youth showed up strong and got the job done. For 11 weeks, they stewarded their food system as organic farmers, experienced the benefits of healthy foods by preparing and eating nourishing meals together, developed a working toolkit that supported their path to meaningful work, and found themselves surrounded by love in a community that has their back.

What's more, as we know, many youth cannot afford to engage in even the best, zero-cost youth programs due to extreme financial pressures on low-income communities in this county. Over 80% of FoodWhat youth are key wage-earners in their home as their families survive these inequities. In order to acknowledge the dignity of their work and address this disparity, FoodWhat youth are paid a graduating wage throughout our entire program. In Spring, they also earned two school credits.

66 Youth Successfully Completed the Spring Internship











Youth Impact

80% of Spring youth shared they were more interested in trying to cook something they made at FoodWhat on their own.

82% of Spring youth shared they felt more motivated to finish high school.

As a result of their time at FoodWhat:

90% of Spring youth shared they were more confident in themselves.

FoodWhat: 95% of Spring youth shared they learned more about organic farming.













STRAIGHT FROM THE YOUTH

What is your favorite memory of FoodWhat this Spring?

All the laughs we had and fun moments we had with all the interns and staff, and all the opportunities I have from FoodWhat.



I really liked how we went out to that place to look over the hill. I thought it was beautiful. I liked the nature view and just talking about how to release stress.



My favorite memory of my time at FoodWhat was when I planted the apple trees since I named them with my grandparent's names.



Making and trying new food with new people.



The farming that we did the past 11 weeks, you learn new skills and methods.





David Robles // Farm and Culinary Manager

David Antonio Robles is a farmer, activist, and artist who loves to use his skills to cultivate community and resilience among youth. As the grandchild of migrant farmworkers, David's farming roots run deep. He recognizes the power that food has to connect the individual to their culture, their community, and their environment and hopes to guide young people through that process. David's first year as staff truly showcased his passion for agriculture, community...and FOOD! His first season was a special one, with late rains creating opportunities to facilitate solution-building with youth. During those rainy stretches, David leaned into the youth for inspiration. Their commitment to the farm, their food, and their personal growth motivated him to finish strong. With a new crew of youth and a host of new skills. David can't wait to start his second year.

SUMMER JOB TRAINING

The energy of the Spring creates a mountain of momentum which youth capitalize on through their Summer Job. This season is full of youth cultivating their power and growing deeper and deeper towards the opportunities in front of them. The Summer centers meaningful work—that which is rigorous, thorough, ethical, and community-serving—while incorporating healthy working habits that honor dignity and well-being.

The Summer Crew jumped right in and created new ways of growing. Once a week, youth would lead their own lunches, often bringing to the kitchen their favorite meals from home. Youth incorporated fresh, healthy produce into the preparation of these homestyle meals. When youth share FoodWhat is like family to them, this is one powerful way they bring that sentiment to life.

The Summer also saw the beginning of an important series of food access, stewardship and educational projects, such as harvesting produce to take home to their families, running a new prescriptive farm stand that brought healthy food to patients with diabetes, maintaining school gardens and engaging in intensive workshops that were designed to support their growth.

25 Youth Powered Summer Jobs

Summer 2019 Highlight

The 2019 Summer saw the launch of FoodWhat's Prescriptive Produce Farm Stand in partnership with Salud Para La Gente and Lakeside Organic Gardens. Salud health care providers prescribed patients with diabetes a weekly voucher to the youth-run farm stand stationed right outside one of their Watsonville clinics. At the farm stand, clients redeemed their voucher by choosing from an abundant selection of produce that included carrots, broccoli, chard, cucumbers, cauliflower, peppers, tomatoes and more. The FoodWhat Youth supported their community in this process by sharing their own stories of how they connected with healthy food and by making sure everyone received the food that they needed. This new project was a great success with over 3000 lbs. of nourishing food distributed to those with the highest need, as well as in supporting them to integrate this healthy produce into their diets in a lasting way. This youth-led farm stand created an intergenerational community space at the intersection of youth power and community health.



Youth Impact

 $85^{\%}$ of Summer youth shared they were more interested in growing their own organic food.

85% of Summer youth shared their family cooked with more healthy food using their weekly produce share.

As a result of their time at FoodWhat:

100% of Summer youth shared they were eating more fruits and vegetables.

100% of Summer youth shared they learned how to work hard and finish strong in a job.

STRAIGHT FROM THE YOUTH

What does growth look like for you?

I buy more organic stuff now. My foster parents buy food, but I've been going to the grocery store on my own. I've bought kale, I've bought spinach. Greens too. Before I would eat whatever I could find at the house. I'd eat Fast Food too, yeah. I used to go to McDonalds. I don't do it as much anymore. I just felt a difference in my energy. From eating fast food to eating greens and stuff definitely changed my mood



Aaron

I learned a lot about harvesting and planting. I never focused on doing all of that. And then, over the summer, that's where I learned a lot more about the spacing of the plants and how to harvest the correct way. My mom always talked about farming. She grew up on a farm in Indiana, Ohio and Michigan. It felt important to learn things that my mom did to see her part, what she did and what she had to do. I just wanted to see it from her point of view and how she did all of this.



Jacob

I come every day. I haven't missed a day. It's a surprise because I don't go to school every day. I feel like now since I've started this job I'll be able to get to school on time and be there. Especially coming here, it was so much earlier in the morning than school. If I can get up at 6 in the morning to come here every day, I can get to school on time.



Coco

Coming here made me see another perspective of life. I didn't even like school or anything like that when I first started the program. Then I started the program and I started to see a little hope. The staff actually supports you and aren't just like "oh, ok." The staff actually went and looked for me. Someone cares, you know what I mean? That's something I really liked. And something I needed at the moment. Now that I'm done and looking back, I see my mentality really changed a lot.



Yvonne















Junior Staff

Abi and Natasha served as Junior Staff for 2019. They were incredible in these roles! These women completed their first year with FoodWhat in 2016 and 2017, and applied into this advanced leadership role with the intention of supporting the next generation of FoodWhat youth. Abi and Natasha led icebreakers, facilitated harvests, meals and workshops, and gave each young person on the farm the time and attention they needed toward their personal growth. Abi is currently at Cabrillo studying Early Child Education and at the end of the summer she shared how being Junior Staff was at the perfect intersection of education, emotional care, and farming-- something she connects deeply with her family on. As her closing thought, she said that she'll likely still move towards engaging with little ones, but working with teens opened her up to new possibilities of which age group she will eventually serve!

FALL PROJECT MANAGEMENT

In Fall, all of the hard work youth invest in themselves through their year at FoodWhat is ready for harvest. Along with the abundance springing from the farm—sunflowers, marigolds, squash, cherry tomatoes and more—youth are also ready to harvest the loving community, lasting relationships, deeper connections, honest conversations and hopeful visions they've grown. By now, youth have internalized new narratives they have crafted through this work and are owning and sharing all they have to give.

After months of learning, training, and growing, FoodWhat youth step into real-life community-building roles that cement their narrative of capability and worth. To this end, youth co-manage our two farm sites, continue preparing their weekly produce boxes, fully manage the prescriptive farm stand, and run FoodWhat farm businesses like our catering, flower and pie operations.

Two youth also trained as Community Educators, bringing the workshops that shaped their understanding of health, justice and power to their peers in high school classrooms. This year, these farm-based businesses also acted as a re-entry point for FoodWhat alumni who plugged back into the highly supportive space of FoodWhat.

14 Youth Managed 50+ Fall Projects













Youth

90% of Fall youth shared they were more interested in going to college.

impact 100% of Fall youth shared they were more interested in taking care of themselves.

As a result of FoodWhat:

their time at 100\% of Fall youth shared they were more confident in their ability to lead others.

The FoodWhat Mural



The mural project is one of a kind here on the Farm. FoodWhat youth wanted to share a story that touched on ancestral wisdom, indigenous farming traditions, growing food in community and our beloved farm cats. In order painted what they saw around them, but who they are. In it, you can see the way youth view the earth not only as living, but nurturing, in the way they've youth find yet another medium to reflect how interconnected we truly are.

EVENTS

Educational Events: Strawberry Blast and Harvest Festival

FoodWhat youth brought together over 550+ Santa Cruz and Watsonville students to engage in our two farm-based, experiential learning events known as the Strawberry Blast in Spring and Harvest Festival in Fall. At these events, students have a hands-on day exploring their local food system. Students also have an opportunity to connect with a network of youth, health, environmental and justice organizations available in our community.



Family Gathering: End-of-Summer Family Dinner

As a way to celebrate the successful completion of their Summer Job, youth invited their friends and family to a special night at FoodWhat. This year, we held this dinner at our Watsonville site located on Live Earth Farm. It was extra special as the meal prep was led by the mother of FoodWhat Junior Staff, Abi. Youth joined in this celebratory meal, offered gratitude, and shared their stories of growth with all in attendance.



Alumni: Dig Day

Each year, FoodWhat alumni get together to reconnect, starting with the first ever FoodWhat Crew to the most recently completed FoodWhat Crew year (2007 - 2018). This year, we held some FoodWhat famous ice-breakers, enjoyed delicious snacks and dug a few beds to support the current crew. The majority of alumni shared that FoodWhat played a role in their personal growth, their completion of high school, their career trajectory and their relationship with healthy food.



Benefit Celebration Dinner: Grounded in Love, Rooted in Justice

At this year's benefit, we enjoyed an incredible meal put on by local chefs and FoodWhat youth while celebrating another inspiring FoodWhat year. Both current and alumni youth shared stories about the big things made possible when youth are given the safe space to grow on their own terms, engage in meaningful work and form deep relationships.

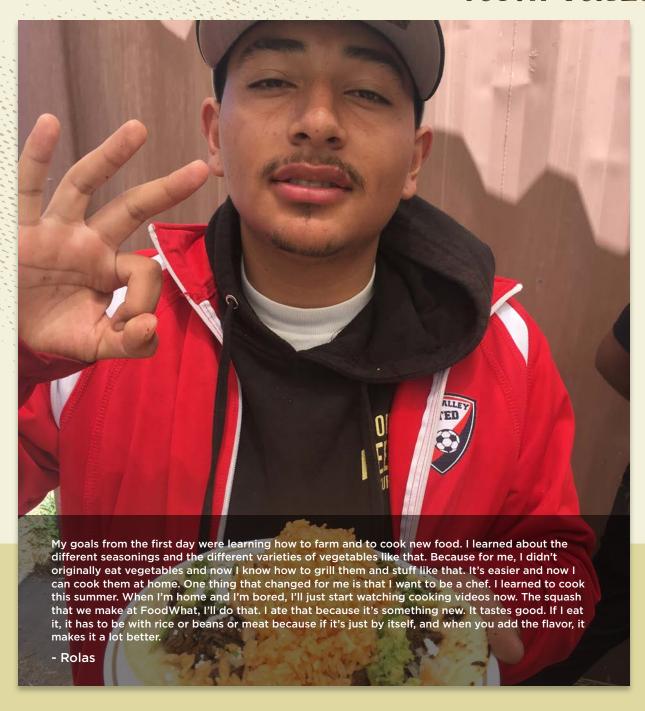


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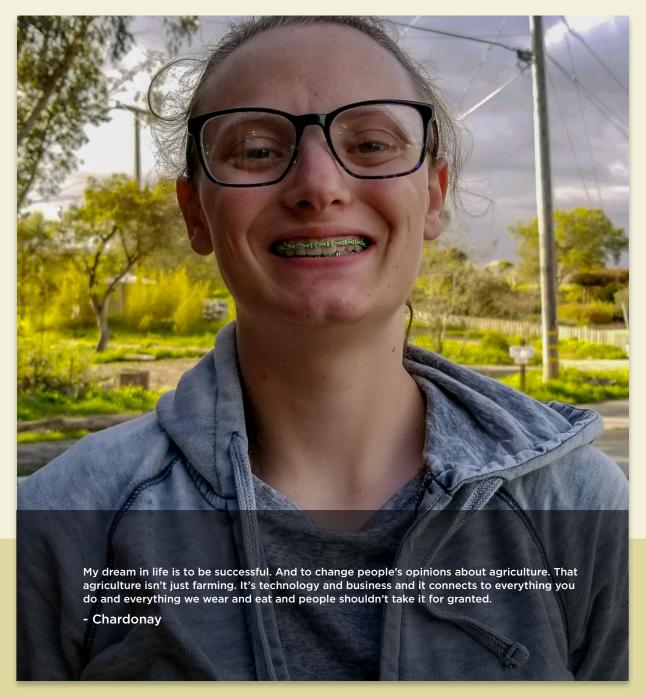
Lupita Sanchez // Programs Manager

Lupita is a local community activist, trauma-informed youth advocate and mentor dedicated to radical education. Born and raised in Watsonville, Lupita has 8 years working closely with community organizers. She has a deep and personal connection to those she serves. Lupita's capacity to create and inspire change lends itself well to this work (so does her contagious laughter). Her background as a high school Ethnic Studies teacher, a certified counselor for youth survivors, and a community organizer informs her ability to support youth in a unique way. She has a passion for applied theater, grassroots organizing and transforming communities through youth leadership, creativity, and collective action. She holds a BA in Education and Theater Arts from UCSC and Auckland University, NZ.

YOUTH VOICES

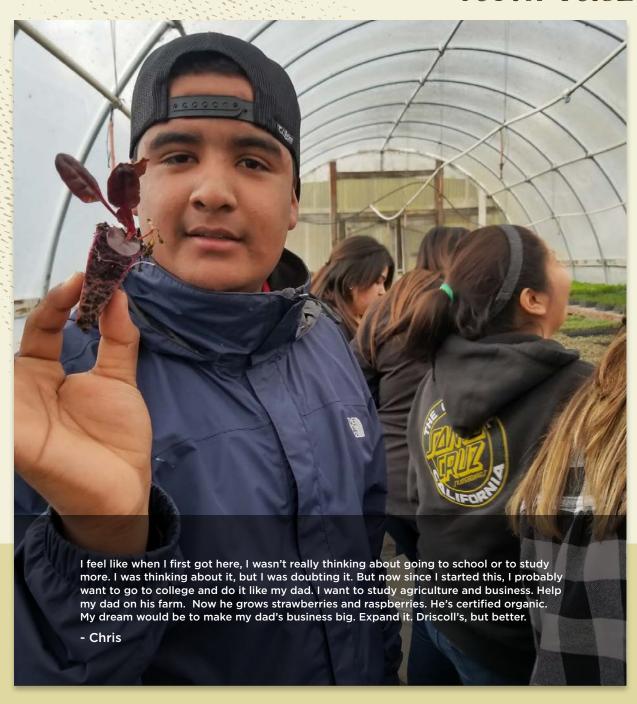


OF EXPERIENCE





YOUTH VOICES



OF EXPERIENCE

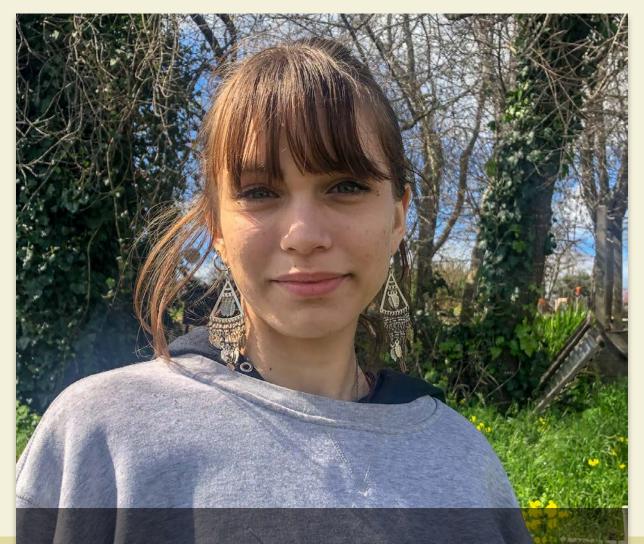




YOUTH VOICES



OF EXPERIENCE



There was a point where I was completely overwhelmed (in the summer job), and I thought I couldn't come anymore, but I did. The staff members were really encouraging. One time I came to work late and I felt like I was going to get scolded because I didn't come to work the day before. But the staff said they were happy I was there and that made me feel like I wanted to come. Because they genuinely cared. It's not just a professional job thing.

- Indy



A BIG YEAR!



The Release of Research on FoodWhat's Impact

A five-year longitudinal research project on FoodWhat was completed this year, affirming the impact of our model on youth well-being, liberation and empowerment. We shared these findings with our community, including all levels of the local education system, non-profit leaders, government officials, local business owners, researchers and other community members. You can find the research paper on our website.

The Justie

FoodWhat received the 2019 Justie Award from EcoFarm which honors advocates who center social justice within ecologically-sustainable agriculture.





Nonprofit of the Year

FoodWhat received the 2019
Nonprofit of the Year Award
from Senator Bill Monning for
our district! "FoodWhat?! has
done a tremendous job in
empowering the youth of Santa
Cruz County through using
sustainable agriculture," stated
Senator Bill Monning.

Proclamation from the City of Santa Cruz

To celebrate our work in the Santa Cruz community, received this local honor when the Santa Cruz City Council proclaimed November, 26th 2019 as "FoodWhat Day"!



FINANCIAL REPORT



2019 INCOME

Foundation Grants - 27%

Individual Donations - 26%

Donor-Advised Grants - 25%

Corporate Grants - 11%

Government Grants & Contracts - 10%

In-kind Donations - 0.5%

Earned Income - 0.5%

2019 EXPENSES

Program - 55%

Fundraising - 19%

Administration - 14%

Youth Salary & Stipends - 12%



FIVE-YEAR FINACIAL GROWTH

Expenses



FoodWhat officially becomes a countywide organization after solidifying our South County site. This expansion set the stage to serve hundreds of Watsonville youth locally for years to come and respond to a major increasing demand from Watsonville youth for FoodWhat opportunities.



FoodWhat creates and fills our first stand alone Program Manager position making possible increased scale, scope, and depth of programming.



FoodWhat launches as an independent nonprofit, entering a pivotal stage of long term sustainability and organizational growth.



FoodWhat receives
highest marks
achievable on our
first full financial
audit. FoodWhat also
conducted significant
organizational
visioning for the
short, medium, and
long term.

\$588,000



FoodWhat receives and disseminates major research on our model to local educators, nonprofits, foundations and government officials, validating our position as a key resource in youth empowerment work countywide.



\$358,000

\$457,000

\$453,00

\$670,000

SUPPORTERS

We're deeply grateful to the many generous donors, sponsors and community partners who fuel FoodWhat programs:



















































































Our core partners, CASFS at the UCSC Farm & Garden and Farm Discovery at Live Earth Farm, generously provide field space, greenhouse space and technical expertise as a part of their long-standing commitment to FoodWhat.

Special thanks to Life Lab and Live Earth Farm for years of partnership.

Big Appreciation To Our Key Collaborators

Abby Bell

Alfredo Avila, Baktun 12 Theater Company

Ana Melgoza, Mesa Verde Gardens

Arty Mangan, Bioneers

Bruno Nel

Cabrillo College Horticulture Department

California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)

Center for Farmworker Families

Common Roots Farm

Community Agroecology Network

Consuelo Alba. Watsonville Film Festival

Gabriela Sanchez, Jovenes SANOS

GEAR UP

Gera Marin and Vanessa Quezada

Homeless Garden Project

Isaias Gebre, Indigenous Surf Club

Ivania Angel Design

Jacob Martinez, Digital NEST

Jean Kratzer, KSQD Radio

Jeanne Howard Good Times Santa Cruz

Vitaban Inggibatar Drainet at El Daiara CD

Mari Jo Pelzner, PUI P ink design

Maria Cadenas and Brando Sension,

Santa Cruz Community Ventures

Guest Chefs

Beverlie Terra, Cabrillo College
Cesario Ruiz and Chris Davis, My Mom's Mole
Claudia and Kevin O'Connell
Diego Felix, Colectivo Felix
Kenny Woods, 1440 Multiversity
Noelle Katz Iturregui
Ojan Asadolahi
Stephany Buswell

Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP)
Moretta Browne, Edgar Flores and Claire Riesr
Queer Ecology
Patrick Littleton, PVUSD School Gardens
Pie Ranch
Rooted in Community
Rubi Sami, Rising Root Wellness
Salud Para La Gente
Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau
Santa Cruz Community Farmers' Market
Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History
Santa Cruz Volunteer Center
Sewa Yuli, Mi Xantico Catering
Tawn Kennedy, Bike Santa Cruz County
The Diversity Center, Santa Cruz County
Tish Denevan, Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk
Watsonville Farmers' Market

FoodWhat Flower Business Customers

Café Ella in Watsonville Charlie Hong Kong Companion Bakeshop Cafe Delmarette Ella's at the Airport El Valle Produce Food Lounge Penny Ice Creamery Steamer Lane Supply Tabby Cat Café The Reef

Your Future Is Our Business

Youth Power Champions

\$10,000+

Alec and Claudia Webster

Anonymous

Appleton Foundation

Central California Alliance for Health

City of Santa Cruz CORE Investments

City of Watsonville

Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County

Dignity Health Dominican Hospital

Harbourton Foundation

Kaiser Permanente, Northern California

Community Benefit Programs

Meadow Fund at the Silicon Valley

Community Foundation

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Newman's Own Foundation

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Santa Cruz County Office of Education

Santa Cruz County Probation Department

The CommonPlace Fund at RSF Social Finance

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The Nicholson Foundation

UNFI Foundation

Youth Outside

Job Preparedness Patrons

\$5.000 - \$9.999

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The Ida and Robert Gordon Family Foundation
Serena Rivera and Chris Wilmers
The Clif Bar Family Foundation

Healthy Youth Heroes

\$2,500 - \$4,999

Branwyn and Ken Wagman

Elena Cohen and Steve Ritz

The Parker Family Foundation

James LoPrete of

The Frank and Gertrude Dunlap Fund

New Leaf Community Markets

Ralph Alpert of the Spring Fund at Community
Foundation of Santa Cruz County

Sarah and Sam Clarkson

Cararrana Carr Clarks

Sunshine Gibbs

Toni Taylor

Sustainable Future Supporters

\$1.000 - \$2.499

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Andrea Mollenauer and Shaw Dunton

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David Soares and Suz Howells*

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Lakeside Organic Gardens

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Sheldon Logan and Trissia Brown*

Shmuel Thaler and Kathy Cytron

Tony and Claudia Serrano

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\$500-\$999

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Alexander Wolf and Rachel Ball

Angela and Kurt Meeker

Anna Finn*

Aurelio and Elsa Gonzalez*

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Bobby Pelz and Lindsay Parker*

Bruce and Kris Neustadter

Brvan and Charlotte Kett

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Ellen Busman

Gerald Brown, Elise Atkins and Sherri Brown

in honor of Doris Brown

Harry and Sherry Comerchero

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at Community Foundation Santa Cruz County

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Salud Para La Gente

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Cynthia Druley of The Druley Family Fund at

Community Foundation Santa Cruz County

Thomas Nelson and Jennipher Lommen

Valerie Webb of Twin Lake Church

Wavne Crabbs and Marc Zammit*

William J. Codiga Family Foundation

FoodWhat Stewards

\$250 - \$499

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Alison Blackduck and Chris Matthews

Andrew Bacaylan

Andy and Carmen Kumasaka*

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Francine Goodwin

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Kate and Ira Pohl
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Kris Sidman-Gale and Jacob Sidman

Youth Development Fund at Community Foundation

Santa Cruz County Lenny and Geri Wolff*

Mimi Kihn Hall and Thom Hall*

Nicki Zahm*

Nora Brink of Distinct Property Management

Patrick and Sam Foster*

Paula Marcus and Aryeh Nanas

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Rose Ashford and Felix Fields Stephen and Carmella Dautoff Suna Lock and Josh Fischer Sylvia and Scott MacDonald

Viki Marache Brown

Wayne Crabbs and Marc Zammit*

Wilma and Gus Gold*
Zach and Tina Friend

FoodWhat Roots

up to \$249

Adam Spickler and Scottie Johnson

Adelia Barros-Parker

and Jason Parker

Alison and Brandon Niizawa

Alliee DeArmond

Ana Espinoza and Jerry Lopez

Ana Paula Teeple

Andrea and Bruce Willy

Andrea Cohen and Philip Andrew*

FoodWhat Roots cont.:

Dana Jacobson*

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