Shelley L. Blades
Executive Director

When I say that Lynchburg Grows broke new ground in 2017, I mean it literally, metaphorically, and historically. We are farmers who literally break ground every day to prepare, plant, and harvest. We are farmers who broke metaphorical ground in 2017 with the launch of Fresh Rx, a new veggie prescription program. And finally, we broke ground in the historical sense. For the first time since Lynchburg Grows opened in 2003, every greenhouse growing space is occupied.

And grow we did! In 2017, Lynchburg Grows and its wonderful, hard-working staff pushed out 52,000 servings of produce. The Veggie Van, the CSA, and local restaurants received the bulk of these servings, but we also introduced the Fresh Rx program. Each week during Fresh Rx, members of the community arrive at Lynchburg Grows with a prescription for veggies. Over the course of an hour, they sit for a cooking demonstration, doctor-led food advice, and a nutrition lesson. At the end of each session, participants fulfill their prescription by selecting produce for their own share of the harvest.

Lynchburg Grows actively seeks to improve the lives of its employees by offering meaningful work to fulfill a mission that aims to improve the well-being of Lynchburg residents. Now more than ever, we pursue our mission in a clear and productive way. Thanks to your support and contributions, we look to 2018 with a great deal of hope and energy.

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How We Grow

One of our top priorities for the past two years was to get all the beds in all the 70,000 square feet of greenhouses into production. After digging a lot of spent soil out of raised beds and filling them with compost, we are excited to report that 2017 was the first full season in Lynchburg Grows’ fourteen-year history that the farm was at 100% growing capacity.

We’ve worked hard keeping all that space in production and the result is our biggest harvest season so far. The farm produced 23,924 pounds of food, which translates to 59,810 servings that fed our community. The food goes to the members of our Veggie Box community supported agriculture program; to customers of the Veggie Van, our mobile produce market; to participants in our new FreshRx Veggie Prescription program; and to the hungry through donations to area food banks and charities.

From May to November, the perfume of roses wafted out of Greenhouse #3, marking the heritage of Lynchburg Grows as the biggest supplier of cut flowers on the East Coast during the early 20th century. We gave our rose bushes extra attention and care in 2017, with the help of many volunteers and the Hill City Master Gardeners. We sold flowers at the farm and donated them to Meals On Wheels and church groups that took them to the sick and home-bound to brighten their days.
**Volunteers**

Our employees farm hard every day, but we couldn’t get it all done without our volunteers, who donated a collective 7800 hours helping out on the farm in 2017. Groups from local businesses and from colleges near and far helped us bring raised beds into food production, cleaned out the root cellar, repaired greenhouse glass, weeded and then weeded some more, along with many other tasks.

Some of our volunteers came regularly every week to help with planting, harvesting, and processing. Some came to perform court-ordered community service and found themselves changed by their time on the farm. Some performed Herculean tasks like reworking the wiring for the cooling system in our biggest greenhouses. (Thank you, Scott Wilson) and coordinating all the volunteer drivers for the Veggie Van (Thank you, Amy McCarty!).

Our community partners deserve a special shout-out, too, because thanks to Lynchburg City Schools we hosted hundreds of students who visited the farm, learned how we grow vegetables, tasted a veggie straight out of the ground, and got connected to their food.

Thanks to Virginia Cooperative Extension for helping us find a wonderful intern and for helping us get our FreshRx program up and running. Groups from William & Mary and the University of Miami chose to spend their spring breaks with us and did amazing amounts of work. We’re also eternally grateful to both the Lynchburg College Bonner Program and St. John’s Episcopal Church for bringing us the most intrepid, tireless, dedicated, reliable volunteers ever.
In 2017, we continued our long-standing commitment to donating food to feed the hungry and homeless in our community. We donated 9,300 pounds of produce to the Society of St. Andrews, the Salvation Army, the Lynchburg Area Food Bank, and Lynchburg Daily Bread. About two thirds of that total amount was grown in the greenhouse managed by volunteers from St. John’s Episcopal Church.

One new initiative this past year included a scholarship program for our Veggie Box program. Thanks to donations from our generous Veggie Box members, we were able to fund two season-long memberships for families who wanted to improve their health by improving their diets, but couldn’t afford the high cost of fresh, organic food. We also donated two Veggie Box shares to Miriam’s House for their clients to use.

Also new was a partnership with Hill City Master Gardeners, who grew produce in their demonstration garden at Humankind, then brought it to us to take out on the Veggie Van and give away to anyone who needed it. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church also grew food for the Van in two beds at Lynchburg Grows. Our Van customers greatly appreciated the free tomatoes, beets, carrots, cucumbers, melons, and sweet potatoes!
Purposeful Jobs

Our employees with physical and mental disabilities are at the core of our mission and the heart of Lynchburg Grows. Not only do they do the lion’s share of the farm work, they also teach everyone they meet a little something new about love and acceptance. While we work to fulfill the Lynchburg Grows mission to serve them, we also observed in 2017 -- as in all years prior -- that our employees serve us and the organization in too many ways to count.

All of our employees were excited to update their skills and learn new ones this past year, as we constantly strived to improve our farming practices. When we changed our traditional practice of logging harvest amounts with pen and paper in favor of entering them on a computer, our harvest workers rose to the technological challenge. We also looked for opportunities to expand leadership skills. Everyone involved shared our employees’ feelings of accomplishment when Joseph Schriffer successfully led a group of volunteers through their tasks at the farm and when Chris Price brought down the house with his first-ever public speaking engagement at our annual Greenhouse Dinner event.
More than a quarter of Lynchburg residents live in neighborhoods that lack grocery stores or other access to fresh food. The Veggie Van completed its third year visiting these food desert areas, helping to fulfill the food access aspect of our mission.

Piloted by a cadre of volunteer drivers and helpers, the Van serves as a mobile produce market that stops in seven different locations and runs year-round. In 2017, it made 356 stops, providing food desert residents with fresh, local produce at reduced prices. It also carried free items, such as baked goods donated by Panera Bakery.

We held the inaugural sessions of our FreshRx veggie prescription program in late 2017, thanks to the generous support of Centra Foundation. Participating local doctors identify patients with diet-related illnesses who are willing to make lifestyle changes, then write them a prescription to FreshRx. The patients attend nine weeks of nutrition and cooking classes at Lynchburg Grows, taught by a nutrition educator from Virginia Cooperative Extension. At the end of each class, participants take home a bag of fresh fruit and produce so that they can try the recipes at home. At the end of the nine-week session, all of the participants reported that their health had improved. They also found new friends and allies during the group classes, creating community around good food.
With more of the farm in production than ever before in Lynchburg Grows’ history, we were able to increase membership to 115 families. Shares not only included produce from Lynchburg Grows, but also fruit and veggies from other local farmers and orchards, along with specialty products from local food artisans. It appeared the word was out about the quality, quantity, and variety, because all membership slots were filled and there was a waiting list for the entire season.

The Veggie Box

Our community supported agriculture program, The Veggie Box, underwent significant improvement and expansion in 2017 and its most successful year yet. Instead of the two winter and summer CSAs of years past, the Veggie Box ran for one long season, from March to December. We also changed the structure to give members more freedom of choice when they select their fruit and produce for the week.

Number of Families Served

115

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**Financial Information**

**Income**

- 44% foundations & trusts
- 28% earned income
- 13% private support
- 6% corporate & business
- 9% partnerships

- foundations and trusts: $164,900
- corporate and business: $24,350
- private support: $49,283
- earned income: $106,462
- partnerships: $32,000

**Expenses**

- 28% operations
- 16% administration
- 26% staff
- 30% program costs

- operations: $49,987
- administration: $29,649
- program costs: $54,589
- staff: $45,881
Our success is due to fantastic volunteers, supporters, and donors like you. We particularly want to thank the donors below for their generosity in 2017.

$100,000 and up
The Al Stroobants Foundation

$500 - $999
Edward Milton
Marc Schewel
Carl Schilling
Jane & Kenneth White
Dorothy & Max Guggenheimer
Rivermont Pizza
Mary Jane & Bill Hobbs
Kappa Meadows
James Burrus
Beth & Stuart Fauber
Meriwether Godsey
Education & Research Foundation
M4K Lynchburg
Larry Bassett
Wiley | Wilson
Automated Conveyor Systems
Bank of the James
Lilly Greenwald
Roger Vaden

$10,000 – $15,000
Centra Foundation
Anonymous

$5,000 - $9,999
Nancy Peters
Greater Lynchburg Community Trust
Donna S. Clark Charitable Foundation
St. John’s Episcopal Church
Kay & Kent Van Allen

$2,500 - $4,999
McKinnon & Harris Inc.
Leslie & Kim Payne

$1,000 - $2,499
Ann & Rodger Fauber
Terry & Robert Brennan
The Imperial Charitable Trust
Dawson, Ford, Garbee, & Co
Jane & William Davis
Jill & John Fees
Isabella’s Italian Trattoria Restaurant

We are also very grateful to the 178 people who each gave between $10 - $499. Those donations added up to a total of $16,681.90 for the year!

To learn about all the ways you can give, please visit:
www.lynchburggrows.org
So much happened on the farm in 2017, we want to share with you some highlights of the stories behind the numbers.

**Packing Shed Renovation**

The Packing Shed building serves as our office, food processing, food storage, and sales area for the farm. Its electrical system is old, its sole bathroom is not ADA compliant, and its heating and cooling system does not exist. Therefore, it is with great excitement and anticipation that we announce the receipt of a $125,000 grant in 2017 from The Al Stroobants Foundation that will allow us to embark on the first phase of renovating the building and addressing all of these problems in 2018.

**Intern at the Tiny House**

The Tiny House was built several years ago to provide housing for farm help, but was never fully finished until this year. Our board members pitched in to paint and clean and our first on-the-farm intern joined us for the summer. Diedre Clare-An worked so hard for us for three months and accomplished an impressive amount on the farm.
New Greenhouse Doors

This was the year we had new doors installed on all of the greenhouses, which, to us, was a really big deal. The old, wooden doors they replaced were of unknown age and origin, but they were in various states of disrepair and some of them barely functioned. We are very grateful to Genworth Foundation for the $5,000 grant that allowed us to purchase the doors and to Jack Crombie of Crombie Consulting for organizing all the skilled workers who installed them at no charge.

Annual Events

We had two fantastic farm events in 2017, both of which we'll repeat in 2018. For our spring event, Salad Days, we created a giant salad bar composed of ingredients we grew plus toppings donated by local restaurants. For A Greenhouse Dinner, our exclusive fundraising event in the fall, we set a table for 75 in our biggest greenhouse and serve a gourmet, farm-to-table meal prepared by a local chef.

Community Compost

Thanks to a Fulbright grant written and managed by Erika Mork, Shelley was able to design these beautiful cedar bins and build them with help from St. John’s volunteers. They’re available for anyone to dump their household food scraps. Besides adding vegetable matter from the farm to the bins, we also use food scraps from local restaurants and colleges. Veggie Box members participate by contributing their household scraps. The bins produce beautiful, black soil that we use in the raised beds to grow even more food!
Our People

2017 Board of Directors

L. Kimball Payne, III, President
Lynchburg City Manager (retired)

Kevin Camm, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Stephanie Fees, Scratch Pasta Co.

Dr. Scott Lowman, Institute for Advanced Research & Learning

John Matheson, Areva (retired)

Sam Meeks, Sedalia Consulting (retired)

John Paul Neblett, OrthoVirginia

Stuart Overbey, So Far Media

Carl Schilling, Genworth Corp.

Rick Sorenson, Woods Rogers Attorneys At Law

Eugene Tweedy, Tweedy Mentoring

2017 Staff

Shelley L. Blades
Executive Director & Farm Manager

Jennifer Porter
CSA Manager & Assistant Farm Mgr

Kelly Mortemousque
Administrative Assistant

FARMERS

Gary Dillard
Karen Harris
Keith Kervin
Latrell Langhorne
Chris Matheson
Chris Price
Joseph Schriffer
Markey Witcher

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