

FINDING STRENGTH IN THE FIRE

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



Cultivating a healthy and just food system from seed to table

We tend to think of healing as something binary: either we're broken or we're healed from that brokenness. But that's not how healing operates, and it's almost never how human growth works. More often, healing and growth take place on a continuum, with innumerable points between utter brokenness and total health.

—Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands*



Dear friends and family of Pie Ranch,

When Jered, Karen, and I first stepped onto this ancestral homeland of the Quiroste Tribe almost 20 years ago, we envisioned not just a place to grow food and bake pies but a space to heal our connections to ourselves, each other, and the Earth. Now as we reflect back on the year 2020, we see more clearly the continuum of this healing journey we are experiencing individually and collectively as an organization, as a society. 2020 tested us all, from utter brokenness to total health. We experienced despair, gratitude, heroism, transformation, and grief through navigating the challenges of white supremacy, climate change, COVID-19, wildfires, and political upheaval. Fortunately, throughout it all, we displayed the capacity to respond with the support of our beloved community.

While we had to pause our youth and public programs in 2020, we were able to fortunately keep some activities going like smaller internships on and off the farm, educational videos created by our skilled staff, and volunteer work days. COVID helped intensify our mission to build health and justice in the food system by revealing the necessity to bridge food insecure families and economically insecure farmers. Thanks to our partnerships with [Fresh Approach](#) and other community based organizations, we packed and delivered over 20,000 organic food boxes to distribution sites around the Bay Area.

Then the CZU wildfire sent us running and destroyed thousands of acres of beautiful forests, habitat for the mountain lion, grey fox, great horned owl, newts, among other creatures. The flames devoured the 1863 Steele family farmhouse which was on the registry of historic places, home to our staff, and reflection point on thousands of tours. The outpouring of love, support, and generosity from friends, family, and neighbors was staggering. To the many first responders, we forever owe you a debt of gratitude for your selfless and tireless actions to protect what you could. Thanks

to our incredible community support and the ability to fast track the historic farmhouse rebuild, we will soon begin construction, honoring the past while building a resilient future with green building design. The destructive yet healing powers of the wildfire also revealed the interconnectedness of history, land, food, and justice. The near erasure of Indigenous communities and knowledge of tending the land, the overgrowth of invasive species like eucalyptus trees, combined with the cumulative effects of climate change, led to these catastrophic fires destroying homes, livelihoods, plant and animal life.

Through our ongoing partnership with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and Land Trust, we were able to immediately come together post-fire and begin the restoration process. Tribal stewards skilled in forestry began taking down the burned eucalyptus trees and other plants along our riparian corridors and hillsides. We will be following their lead on a vision of repair with native plants that are culturally important to the tribe and will help to protect our sensitive waterways and wildlife corridors. While the fire was catastrophic, the healing potential is even greater. 2020 clarified our greater vision of growing a multiracial community of growers and eaters along the coast from San Francisco to Santa Cruz: Black, Indigenous, all People of Color, women, LGBTQIA folks, and others who have been denied the possibility of tending the earth and owning their own land-based businesses and homes. The Cascade Regenerator Program on our neighboring property supported projects with the [Amah Mutsun Tribal Band](#), [Brisa Ranch](#), [Lunaria Flower Farm](#) and continues to grow. At the core of this work is collaboration and healing; caring for the land and our communities by weaving together traditional ecological knowledge with regenerative agriculture and climate smart farming principles.

Last year also brought us into a formal partnership with the organization [Be Present Inc.](#), helping to deepen and grow our commitment to equity and justice by building their empowerment model into the policies, relationships, and culture of Pie Ranch. Pie Ranch is grateful that through all of 2020's challenges, changes, and growth, we kept moving forward, not perfectly, not completely healed, but in community and with an increasing awareness and openness to our own collective evolution.

With a grateful heart,
Nancy Vail

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Vail". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent and larger than the last name.

Pie Ranch Co-Founder and Executive Director

OUR VISION

Pie Ranch is a working organic farm, an education center and an organization building partnerships for a healthy and just food system. We envision a world in which:

- All people have access to healthy food, and know and value where their food comes from;
- Farmers have access to knowledge, land and capital to build sustainable farms directly linked to local residents, businesses and schools;
- Agricultural lands are preserved and enhanced for generations to come.

OUR FOCUS

Youth Education

Although the farm had to pause its traditional experiential youth programming when COVID struck, Pie staff pressed on with its mission to engage with the next generation of mindful eaters, environmental stewards and food justice leaders. Along with Pie's robust offering of online curriculum evident in its [TikTok](#), [Instagram](#) shorts and longer [This Here Nature video series](#), the program team started a collaboration with partner school, Pescadero/Middle High supporting its burgeoning garden program. Pie teachers engaged youth (outside, masked and distanced) with woodworking tutorials, garden skills and school beautification projects. Additionally, Team Pie crafted a Zoom/onsite learning hybrid with five interns at Design Tech High School. This hybrid engaged students with utilizing social media for positive change as well as working in the more traditional model of directly participating in agricultural endeavors (outside, masked, distanced) alongside our farm team at Pie Ranch.

Design Tech High School Intern, Charles Gates describes his experience:

"There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that my two week internship at Pie Ranch has helped me become more aware of where our food comes from. I don't look the same way at carrots or strawberries. My whole experience here was fantastic, and I have learned lessons to last a lifetime. Pie Ranch really is doing important work, and it's work that directly impacts the communities around it. The people here are some of the kindest and most caring people that I've ever met, and it's been a pleasure working with all of them. Pie Ranch has changed my life for the better, and I can't wait to come back to help out more. Thank you!!"

Although the program team has proven itself adept at pivots (helping to create and execute the Food Hub, throwing themselves into editing and production of online curriculum and traveling offsite to support in person, COVID-safe learning) they are looking forward to welcoming students back to the farm in 2021!



Farmer Pathways

The 16-year old Pie Ranch Apprenticeship program

came to an end in August of 2020 with the loss of our historic farm house and apprentice program housing to the CZU fire. In many ways the heart of Pie Ranch, this beloved building was called home by over 100 revolving Emerging Farmers and Pie Ranch staff. Turning to the expeditious needs of land, riparian, and program restoration post fire at HomePie, the critical effort of fostering the next generation of organic, climate-friendly farmers centered on the Cascade Farm Regenerator in 2020. Currently hosting two regenerator farms, [Brisa Ranch](#) and [Lunaria Flower Farm](#) alongside projects with the [Amah Mutsun Tribal Band](#) and [Land Trust](#), the program at Cascade seeks to partially address the gross injustice of land acquisition at the expense of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color by providing access to the 418-acres just north of HomePie. Not necessarily a place for just new farmers (the three owners of Brisa Ranch bring a collective experience of several decades to their business), Cascade is envisioned as a place for farmers, land stewards, and farm adjacent businesses to grow markets through HomePie's existing contacts (Brisa's beautiful strawberries and broccoli found its way into Food Hub boxes and Brisa took over the existing Pie Ranch CSA in 2020), share resources and knowledge, and further the mission of a more just and healthy food system. Alongside the ongoing work of repairing the water systems, buildings and crops damaged from the fire, the Regenerator Program staff completed work on its MOUs with the participants in the program, continued work on infrastructure and equipment, and persisted in advocating for more affordable housing for those in farm-related work here on the Coastside and beyond.

Food Hub

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Pie Ranch transitioned from providing educational programs to working to secure organic produce for families and folks

experiencing food insecurity in our Pescadero community and the greater Bay Area. The Food Hub was originally part of the Farm Fresh Food Relief initiative, a collaborative effort among a network of Bay Area farms and food justice nonprofits to get good produce off the farms and into the community. Concord based food justice nonprofit Fresh Approach secured the group a grant from the USDA to continue the project on a large scale—by the summer of 2020, Pie Ranch was churning out 800 produce boxes a week for families in need.

In many ways, the Food Hub has gone beyond our early hopes of mission alignment: our staff is engaged in hands-on work that directly benefits eaters who have a right to organic, fresh produce, we source food directly from small, organic farms whose markets were impacted by restaurant closures and we've grown relationships with several community centers, food banks and organizations at the center of the fight for a better, more localized food system. Although the USDA no longer funds the Farm Fresh Food Relief Initiative, the Food Hub continues on a smaller scale with boxes being sent to Pescadero and a few partners in the East Bay and San Francisco.

Local Food and Farm Bill

One project that had been in the works for years finally gained significant traction in 2020—a regional effort to increase democracy in the way food gets to tables in the Bay Area. Similar to how the Federal Farm Bill dictates how significant resources go to support farmers and provide food assistance, we've imagined a more local version that is directly accountable to the communities within our "Food Shed."

To get there, we embarked on a multi-year work plan that began with a Phase 1 scoping and feasibility study in the first half of 2020. This was led by our Director of Partnerships and Strategic Initiatives and three other colleagues with significant experience in community development, participatory research, and food & farm policy. With every interview conducted and national research into similar efforts, we felt affirmed that it was needed and time to further such work in the Bay Area. We took our initial findings and applied for a Regional Food Systems Planning grant of the USDA and were awarded two-years of funding to engage new partners—[The Center for Whole Communities](#), [UC Cooperative Extension](#), [Stanford University's Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity](#), the [Santa Clara County Planning Department](#), and [50+1 Strategies](#)—to facilitate the community-led visioning and planning of a just, sustainable and resilient Bay Area food system and then design the structures and policies for a new regional food district that we hope to move forward as a ballot measure across the multiple Bay Area counties.

Much more work lies ahead, but this project is off to a great start, partly fueled by the pandemic clarifying the vulnerabilities of a hyper-globalized and industrial food system; and the resiliency, joy, and tangible nourishment that local farms can provide for the region.



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Lillie Allen, Founder, [Be Present Inc.](#)

We, at Be Present, honor Pie Ranch's ongoing commitment to equity and its dedication to exploring issues of race, gender, class, and power by consistently doing the essential work of building relationships that transcend all forms of difference.

Pie Ranch's vision of and activism toward an inclusive world where all people have access to healthy food and where just food systems thrive are values that our organizations share. Pie Ranch brings immense integrity to the work we do together. We appreciate partnering with an organization that creates trust-based alliances with activists and communities across the country. And, in a world where each one of us is responsible for creating justice for all, Be Present has a true and long-lasting community partner!

Rita Mancera, Executive Director, [Puente de la Costa Sur](#)

In the early days of the pandemic, Pie Ranch was one of our first partners. Together we addressed the need for economic security as our community members lost their jobs or had their work hours reduced. In partnership, along with a hub of other farms, provided fresh fruit, vegetables, plant starters, grains, and meat to 200 households. Such a welcoming sight to see the Pie Ranch truck and their friendly staff arrive every week. It made us feel we were not alone in these efforts. Even when they were being directly impacted by the pandemic and later by the fires, they showed up for their community.



**OUR 2020
IMPACT**



Sara French, Director of Development, [Amah Mutsun Land Trust](#)

Amah Mutsun Land Trust knows we can always count on our friends at Pie Ranch. The strength of our partnership was especially apparent in 2020, which was a year of challenges. Pie Ranch stepped up in many ways to support the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and its Land Trust—from distributing food to Tribal families affected by COVID-19, to giving our Native Stewardship Corps a place to stay after the CZU fires destroyed our program headquarters, to helping us tap into post-fire recovery resources. 2020 was hard but it would have been harder without the friendship and support from our partners at Pie.



Donna Dubinsky, [Lemala Fund](#)

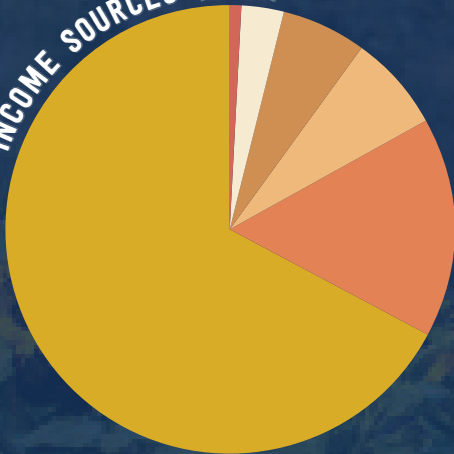
Pie Ranch is a real asset for our community, inspiring us to think more broadly about food justice. We continue to support Pie Ranch for their vision of how to ensure the production and distribution of healthy, delicious, local food.



Interested in supporting the work we do at Pie Ranch? Visit pieranch.org/take-action to learn more about how you can help us further our mission of cultivating a healthy and just food system from seed to table!

OUR 2020 FINANCES

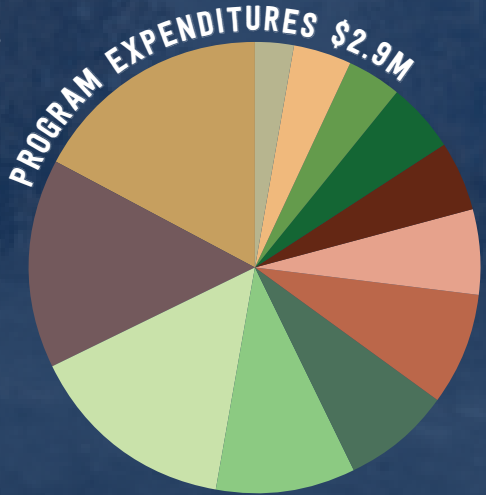
INCOME SOURCES \$2.9M



- Grants and Donations (Unrestricted) 67%
- Food Hub Subcontracting 16%
- Wildfire Insurance Refunds 7%
- Farm Revenue (Net) 6%
- Miscellaneous 3%
- Rental Income 1%
- Educational Programs 0%

Total: \$2,948,218

- Food Hub Program 17%
- Wildfire Recovery Reserve 15%
- Cascade Regenerator Program 15%
- Emerging Farmers Program 10%
- Farmstand 8%
- Fundraising 8%
- Food Education Programs 6%
- Wildfire Recovery 5%
- Capital Improvement 5%
- Capital Campaign Expenses 4%
- Admin & Facilities 4%
- Regional Partnerships 3%



Total: **\$2,948,218**

OUR 2020 RESULTS





20,321

boxes of healthy food nourished people in need throughout the region from April to December



18

distribution sites



7

youth interns



47,770

visitors at the Farmstand



100%

Pie Ranch

retention of employees during the pandemic shutdown



600+

giving donors in the 2 months after the wildfire



3

Cascade farm projects



4,065

Lemon Ollieberry Buttermilk pies sold, the #1 pie in 2020!

OUR SUPPORTERS

Thank you to every incredible donor who assisted in our perseverance. The community is better for it!

Foundations &

Government:

11th Hour Project, a program of the Schmidt Family Foundation
Bank of America Charitable Gift Fund
Bothin Foundation
Chan Zuckerberg Initiative
Charities Aid Foundation of America
Commonplace Fund of RSF Social Finance
Community Alliance with Family Farmers
Dirk & Charlene Kabcenell Foundation
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Silicon Valley Community Foundation
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The David & Lucile Packard Foundation
The Dean Witter Foundation
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Youth Outside

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Abigail Adams
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Marc Tarpenning
Marcia Sitcose
Marco Dyer
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Margaret & Jamis
MacNiven
Margaret Bivins
Margaret Carlson
Margaret Carlson



Margaret Robinette
Margi Power
Margine Sako
Margo Hoover
Margret Esguerra
Margret Werner
Maria Chambers Hutchins
Maria Gutierrez
Maria Soares
Maribeth Portz
Marie Jaen
Marie Sayles
Marie Yuann
Mariel Rios
Marilyn O'Toole
Mark & Adriana Shuman
Mark & Devon Laycox
Mark Haynes
Marsha Torkelson
Martha & Jeff Tedesco
Martha Richards
Martha Zambrano
Marty Cattaneo
Mary & James Coyne
Mary Ann & Richard
Draeger
Mary Burns
Mary Ellen Joseph
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