Looking back on 2019, we reflect on a year of change in staff, space, leadership, and plans. We started to see our strategic plan, Roots and Wings, shape our work. More than anything though, we had a year of tremendous growth, all made possible with the hard work of our staff and board members, and the unwavering support from our donors, volunteers and friends. With your help, we’ve given more people access to gardens and growing resources through the Community and Backyard Garden programs. We’ve shared our Salad Days model conceived and tested in Gloucester Public Schools to districts throughout the Commonwealth through an enhanced consultancy model.

And while it seems strange to be reflecting back on 2019 when so much in our world is changing due to the pandemic, we are overwhelmed with gratitude and hope. We are grateful to you for what we’ve been able to accomplish with your support and we are relieved that we made some important changes that have prepared us to address the present day needs in our community.

We owe tremendous thanks to all in our community of growers and supporters for what we are sharing in this 2019 Annual Impact Report.

Stay well,

Lara Lepionka, Founder & Executive Director

Brian Orr, Board President

August 2020
Backyard Growers’ mission is to cultivate healthy, connected, environmentally sustainable communities and to fight for food justice by teaching people how to grow some of their own food. We provide resources and support to establish vegetable gardens at homes, housing communities, organizations, and schools, and offer learning opportunities in growing and preparing fresh produce.

2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Pediatrician, Brian Orr Pediatrics
Larry Oaks, Vice President
CEO & President, Mainstay, Supportive Housing & Home Care
Elizabeth Redmond, Treasurer
CFO, Pathways for Children
Suzanne R. Gosselin, Clerk
Owner & Clinician, Harbor Health Group
Jennifer Perry
Director of Operations, The Open Door

2019 STAFF

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Retired non-profit professional, Wellspring House and North Shore United Way
Sophie Courser-Kellerman
Farm Manager, Alprilla Farm
Heidi McGrath
Retired teacher, O’Maley Innovation Middle School
Jen Zola
Volunteer Outreach Specialist

Lara Lepionka, Executive Director
J Harrison, Interim Program Director (Jan-May 2019)
Corinne Lippie, Program Director (May 2019-present)
Aria McElhenny, Development Director
Courtney Allen, Communications & Outreach Manager
Emily Brown, FoodCorps Service Member (August-December)
Abby Johnstone, FoodCorps Service Member (January-July)
Meghan Stratton, Associate Director of School Programs
Addy Shreffler, Garden Educator
2019 was the first year of Backyard Growers’ 3 year Strategic Plan, From Roots to Wings. Here are some milestones and accomplishments from the year for each of the 3 goals.

**GOAL 1**
Expand and deepen Backyard Growers’ involvement in Gloucester

**Key Accomplishment:** We created a vibrant learning, growing and collaborative space at Willowood Community Garden. Backyard Growers’ volunteer Mentors, Joel Emerson and Peter DeNigris, along with our FoodCorps Service Member, Emily Brown, held a garden time together every week with residents of Willowood Park, a low-income Gloucester Housing Authority Development.

“Backyard Growers’ work at the GHA’s Willowood Gardens Development has transformed a once-blighted area and brought a better understanding of the cultural diversity within that neighborhood through the shared experience of building sustainable gardens.”

- David Houlden, Executive Director, Gloucester Housing Authority
Strengthen Backyard Growers’ organizational systems and infrastructure to support current operations and future growth

Key Accomplishments: Backyard Growers initiated an Annual Board Retreat and also strengthened internal financial controls. We secured a new, centrally-located office space to host vibrant community events and affinity organizations, including a social justice panel (pictured above), a Cape Ann Local Food kick-off gathering, regular Cape Ann Climate Change meetings, and Extinction Rebellion meetings.

Develop a practice consulting to groups working to establish gardening programs in geographic areas beyond Gloucester

Key Accomplishments: In 2019, Backyard Growers developed a Consulting Program Business Plan and expanded our program model to Western Massachusetts via our largest consulting client through a partnership with Ascentria Care Alliance.
LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS & WELCOMING VOLUNTEERS
Volunteers are the Backbone of Backyard Growers

We are grateful for the dedication of our corps of volunteers who help with new gardener mentoring, garden maintenance, and help with administrative and special events work. In 2019, we had the help of 250 volunteers contributing 960 hours of service.
“I moved to Gloucester from Roslindale in 2018 to be closer to my spouse’s work and the natural beauty of Cape Ann. I left a house with a long tended garden for a downtown condo, so I felt blessed when I discovered the beds at Burnham’s Field just around the corner. It’s such a joy to get my hands dirty and watch the vegetables mature, get out in the sun’s warmth and meet new folks.” - Paul Romary, Community Garden Volunteer

2019 PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Action, Inc.
Cape Ann Farmer’s Market
Cape Ann YMCA
City of Gloucester
Endicott College
FoodCorps Massachusetts
The Food Project, Inc.
Gloucester Housing Authority
Gloucester Public Schools
The Grace Center
Massachusetts Farm to School
Mass in Motion Cape Ann
Northshore ARC
North Shore Health Project
Pathways for Children
Rose Baker Senior Center
Sawyer Free Library
The Caleb Group
The Open Door
Wellspring
WE TEACH SCHOOL KIDS HOW TO GROW FOOD & MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES

The Impact of School Gardens
In the fall of 2019, we worked with two separate student groups from Simmons College Graduate in Nutrition program. One group worked on our school consulting expansion connected to our strategic plan and the other evaluated behavioral and attitude changes towards healthy food as a result of Backyard Grower’s repeated presence working with kids in Gloucester schools. The overwhelming results of the behavioral change analysis was: “Kids LOVE Backyard Growers and get excited when they come,” and the evaluation determined a clear positive association with healthy food leading to a change in attitude among children in Gloucester elementary schools as a result of Backyard Growers.

Some of the things the research team observed kids at Veterans’ Memorial Elementary School saying during our Kale Monster Smoothie taste test in fall 2019:

“Veggies are super healthy for you”

“Veggies make you big and strong”

“My new favorite veggie is kale because I loved this smoothie so much”

“I’m going to try to make this with my mom and add new ingredients to it”
Antoinette is a refugee from Congo who spent most of her life in a refugee camp in Uganda. She and her mom have garden beds in Backyard Growers’ Community Garden at Willowood Park Housing Development. Antoinette and her mom, Demeteria, speak Swahili, as does Backyard Growers’ garden mentor, Joel Emerson. This connection through language and food has grown well beyond the perimeter of the garden.

“I can say that this garden has done a great job and a wonderful thing for our family because it is the one which connected us to Joel. Knowing Joel is very important to our family. He has helped us a lot. [Back] home, that’s what we do, we farm and we feel happy when you see things like these red tomatoes in your garden!”
Rob and Mary Jane Green were married for 67 years. When she passed, he needed to focus on doing something interesting, nurturing and fun. So for the last two years of Rob’s life, his garden from Backyard Growers was his happy place! It became the backdrop for his birthday and other family get-togethers with his three daughters, Susan, Margi, Sarah, and Sarah’s husband Hugo. Rob also enjoyed just sitting by it and engaging in occasional conversations with those passing by.

Rob was an engineer and loved to solve programs. His garden provided a perfect habitat to continue to put these skills into practice. Planning what to grow and how to grow it was taken on with gusto. With help from Margi, he managed to source the seeds, grow seedlings and eventually harvest his favorite Hatch peppers, culminating into his favorite dish of Chile Relleno.

“This garden gave him so much joy; from planning and gridding the bed, to planting, to attending, to making trellises, the whole process was joyful to him, especially after our Mom passed.”

- Margi Green, Rob’s Daughter
**2019 Supporters**

Donors by Giving Level from 1/1/2019 to 12/31/2019

*Denotes donors of 2 years or more

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THANK YOU!  
We’re so grateful for the many generous donors who partner with us in our work.  
You provide the support that improves the well-being of our community.
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YOUR SUPPORT EMPOWERS US TO FIGHT FOR FOOD JUSTICE & FOOD SECURITY

The Impact of Giving: Ellen’s Story

Ellen Sibley was the principal at Beeman Memorial School in Gloucester and the first to welcome Backyard Growers school garden program to her community. In those early days, she helped provide valuable feedback and support to Backyard Growers educators and continues to champion our work through her financial support.

“As a former principal, I have seen firsthand that children learn eagerly and enthusiastically through the programs of Backyard Growers. The basic core of the work they do brings communities together. When I donate to Backyard Growers I know that funds will be well spent on quality teacher training and a curriculum that helps students learn how to take care of themselves and their communities by growing food together. I know my gift is making a difference.”

TAKE ACTION!

Want to help sustain and support Backyard Growers in the community? Some of the ways to take action are...

DONATE. Visit backyardgrowers.org/donate to give online or mail in.

VOLUNTEER. We’ve streamlined the volunteer application. Visit backyardgrower.org/volunteer-with-us to learn more and apply.

JOIN. Subscribe to our newsletter by online form at backyardgrowers.org or drop us a line info@backyardgrowers.org.

ENGAGE. Keep up on the latest by following us on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.
2019 REVENUE & EXPENSES

REVENUE

- Special Event $61,455
- Donations $87,789
- Grants $136,840
- Program Service Fees $21,281
- Interest $80

Total: $307,445

EXPENSES

- Program $203,202
- Fundraising $57,113
- Management & General $43,832

Total: $304,147
Backyard Growers
3 Duncan Street
Gloucester, MA 01930
978-281-0480
info@backyardgrowers.org

backyardgrowers.org

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