



GAINING GROUND

# Gratitude Report





OUR VISION

We envision a future where everyone has equitable access to healthy, sustainably grown produce.

OUR MISSION

To provide free, sustainably grown, fresh organic produce to people experiencing food insecurity.

We do this with the helping hands of a diverse community of volunteers who work and learn with us on our farm.



# Thank you!



October 2023

Dear Friends,

Over three years into my tenure as executive director of Gaining Ground, I still find myself humbled and grateful to be part of this incredible community.

The word community comes alive on the farm every day, as we grow food together in a spirit of respect, mutual aid, and reciprocity. These values also guide our relationship with the soil, as a no-till organic farm. We believe that how we relate to the natural world can positively influence how we relate to one another, and vice versa. Farming reminds us that we are part of an ecosystem.

At Gaining Ground, we also have an expansive understanding of the word “neighbor,” believing that the entire region is affected when anyone experiences food insecurity. That’s why we farm. It will take systemic change to achieve lasting food and land justice. As we farm for long-term resilience, we address the here-and-now needs of community members through free, organic produce.

This work is made possible by you, and our whole remarkable community of farmers, staff, board members, volunteers, partners, and donors. **Together in 2022, we grew and donated over half a million servings of nutrient-dense food!**

This work we do in community has resonance beyond the amount of food grown and donated. Just recently, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy declared that our society is suffering through an epidemic of loneliness and isolation. When I read this, I thought about the culture of Gaining Ground. So many people come to us to volunteer and, in the process, end up making new friendships with our staff and other volunteers, or deepening their bonds with classmates and co-workers.

The farm is a place of belonging that is an antidote to the isolation in our society. If you haven’t yet experienced the joy of volunteering at Gaining Ground, we warmly welcome you to join us.

Thank you for being part of the Gaining Ground community!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being larger and more prominent.

Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director

# Community Impact

Here are just a few examples of what your generosity and support made possible in 2022.

“There is a wonderful sense of camaraderie and *joie de vivre* among us—as well as a spirit of, ‘Let’s get this done!’ Earlier this season we were planting broccoli and cabbage before a storm. The plants were in—four rows of each crop—and we were securing row cover with heavy sandbags as thunder clouds rolled in. Being in an open field and hearing thunder inspires one to finish what they’re doing, quickly, and get inside—which we did!”

**CHRIS LUNDBLAD,**  
MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY  
FARM TEAM



## 115,373

**POUNDS OF NUTRITIOUS PRODUCE DONATED**

After a season of record-setting rain, 2022 brought a critical drought to Massachusetts. With your help, we still grew an abundant volume of food for people experiencing food insecurity.



## 500,000

**INDIVIDUAL SERVINGS OF FOOD DONATED**

This metric accounts for variable weight among crops, among other factors. Pounds tell only part of the story.



## 100–300

**BOXES OF PRODUCE DONATED EACH WEEK**

Banana boxes are a hot-ticket item at Gaining Ground, because we use them to carefully pack up our freshly-washed harvests for weekly donation.



## 1,200

**HOUSEHOLDS SERVED**

Our produce is distributed in more than 40 communities, most within 20 miles of the farm.



## 3,128

**VOLUNTEERS AGES 5 TO 90**

Including the community on the farm is part of our mission, and volunteers truly make our work possible. In 2022 we engaged almost 30% more helping hands compared with the year prior.



# 6,910

## VOLUNTEER HOURS

That’s just about 288 days! Volunteers may spend their farm hours hand weeding, seeding and transplanting crops, applying compost to beds, making bouquets from freshly cut flowers, and much more.



# 42%

## YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

Young people—including school groups and our High School Farm Team—make up a large percentage of our volunteers. Along the way, they learn about food justice and sustainable food systems.



# 16

## HUNGER-RELIEF PARTNERS

Our distribution partners are the bridge from farm to community. Their unwavering commitment to mutual aid inspires us to grow the highest-quality food we can.



# 52

## POWERHOUSE CROPS AND 127 VARIETIES

Food is medicine. You helped us grow and donate a wide variety of produce that’s rich in vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients shown to reduce the risk of chronic disease.



# 14

## NEW CROPS

Among our new crops was jiló, or scarlet eggplant, a Brazilian specialty requested by our partners at Daniel’s Table in Framingham.



# 240

## YARDS OF COMPOST APPLIED

As a no-till farm, we prioritize soil health. In 2022 we doubled our typical compost application, to increase rates of organic matter that correlate with fertility and resilient crops.

“Above all I have realized that if we work together as a community, we can be so much more successful. Even within the past year, I have continued forming new relationships with every volunteer session, and I have learned more about the farm and the importance of no-till farming. This organic farming approach allows us to slow down and appreciate what the soil has to offer and how we can give back to the land and to the community.”

**CECILIA HETLING,  
MEMBER OF THE HIGH SCHOOL  
FARM TEAM**

*About the photos, left page, from top to bottom: a colorful yield from late summer; wintertime spinach harvest in a high tunnel; donations ready for pick-up; a bounty of carrots for the Westford Council on Aging; members of the Community Farm Team at work.*

*About the photos, right page, from top to bottom: members of the High School Farm team pull carrots; volunteers at Daniel’s Table prepare to distribute produce; bok choy; scarlet eggplant, also known as Jiló; transporting compost.*



# Sowing Seeds of Connection

## Investing in Community Health

**Improving access to farm-fresh foods, to ensure healthy people at all ages.**

The Greater Lowell Community Foundation (GLCF) believes that access to healthy, local food is as much about social justice as it is about health.

As COVID-19 exacerbated food insecurity all around the region, GLCF made it a priority to help people put more healthy food on the table. We improved community access to organic fruits and vegetables during the pandemic by providing grants to support local organizations like Gaining Ground.

Gaining Ground has a proven track record of giving nutritious options to under-served families who want a healthier lifestyle for a better future.

More recently, Gaining Ground received a GLCF grant to address youth food insecurity, by expanding produce distribution to three Head Start locations in Lowell and one in Dracut. This award allowed them to supply fresh produce to the kitchen staff at each location to be incorporated into healthy meals for the children.

Survey data from our nonprofits, not surprisingly, showed the need for more availability of fresh, nutritious produce. Investing in our local nonprofit farms has been one way to counter this need. Additionally, their commitment to growing culturally-relevant foods that are significant to families in communities in Greater Lowell has been so meaningful.



Left to right: Jennifer Aradhya, Anna Kelchlin, Jennifer Johnson, and Sharon Kim

We are honored to invest in an organization that has been so impressive with its ability to grow beautiful, nutritious produce and distribute it where it is most needed in our community. GLCF is grateful for the continued partnership.

**JENNIFER ARADHYA  
GREATER LOWELL COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

*The GLCF grant allowed Gaining Ground to supply fresh produce to the kitchen staff at three Head Start locations to be incorporated into healthy meals for the children.*

**JENNIFER ARADHYA, GREATER LOWELL COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**



*To feel seen, wanted, accepted by this program has been absolutely amazing.... Feeling accepted in a community where you can sometimes feel like you don't belong is huge. Every week, I came to the farm and felt so welcome.*

L., FOOD FOR FAMILIES PARTICIPANT

## A Meal Together

**What a serving of fresh vegetables can mean to a family.**

Last summer was a very difficult time for me and my family. I live in Concord with my three children, and my oldest daughter was getting ready to go to college. I was saving every penny that I could in order to cover her expenses, and it was very challenging to keep food on the table for my family.

I always tell my kids not to judge people based on what they see because you never know what someone is going through. You wouldn't know that sometimes we go without food. And there are so many families with similar situations. I'm grateful that the farm continues to help my family, even if we might not look like we need it.

I was connected with the Food for Families program through Bonny, community services coordinator for the Town of Concord. Last winter, we would often spend the week eating ramen noodles or peanut butter and jelly. Then I started to go to the farm to pick up my bag of food every Saturday in the summer. At home, I'd go through the bag together with my two younger daughters and I remember they would get so excited: "You got flowers! Oh my gosh! Can we make a salad?"

That would be our favorite thing to do together. I would pick up the food and we would have a beautiful, fresh salad made from the veggies that came in the bag. We would have a meal together and I remember sitting at the table with my children and seeing how happy, how excited, how appreciative they were. They had no idea where the food was coming from—the only thing that mattered was that this was fresh, good food.



*A volunteer packs free produce shares for the Food for Families program.*

To feel seen, wanted, accepted by this program has been absolutely amazing. Being a minority in Concord can sometimes be very challenging. Feeling accepted in a community where you can sometimes feel like you don't belong is huge. Every week, I came to the farm and felt so welcome.

My family was able to have fresh food. This helped us so much. But the experience of how I felt when I walked onto the farm every Saturday mattered just as much. It was life-changing for me and my home.

L., FOOD FOR FAMILIES PARTICIPANT



# Statement of Financial Position

As of December 31, 2022 (Unaudited)

	TOTAL
<b>Assets</b>	
<b>Current Assets</b>	
Bank Accounts	1,157,957.94
Accounts Receivable	295,278.00
Other Current Assets	-32,883.00
Total Current Assets	\$1,420,352.94
Fixed Assets	586,239.80
Other Assets	0.00
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$2,006,592.74</b>
<b>Liabilities and Equity</b>	
<b>Liabilities</b>	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	4,893.81
Credit Cards	40.38
Other Current Liabilities	11,725.54
Total Current Liabilities	\$16,659.73
Long-Term Liabilities	0.00
Total Liabilities	\$16,659.73
Equity	1,989,933.01
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	<b>\$2,006,592.74</b>

The 16 meal programs and food pantries we partner with serve clients from more than 40 Massachusetts towns throughout Greater Boston, Lowell, and the MetroWest area.

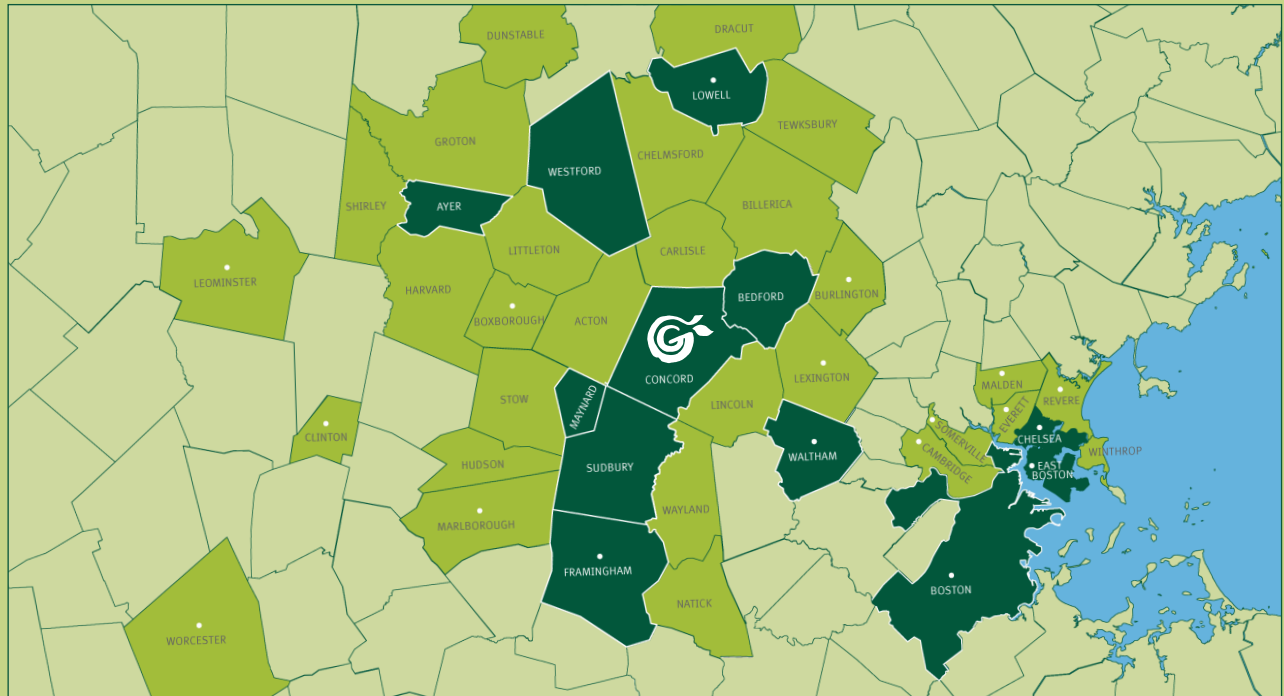
## Defining Environmental Justice (EJ) Populations

In Massachusetts, Environmental Justice populations are identified by factors such as income, English isolation, and race. These communities often bear a disproportionate burden of environmental hazards, including climate-related issues and limited access to fresh food. In 2022, all of our partners distributed produce among at least one EJ population. We have highlighted towns and cities where 50% or more of residents live within EJ neighborhoods.

*Please note that this is our unaudited Statement of Financial Position. You will be able to access our fully audited 2022 financial statements as well as the complete lists of our 2022 donors and volunteers on our website at [www.gainingground.org/our-story/gratitude-reports-and-financial-statements/](http://www.gainingground.org/our-story/gratitude-reports-and-financial-statements/)*



# Mapping Our Reach



Town with meal program or food pantry
  Town served by meal program or food pantry
  Town with 50% or more residents in an EJ block group

PARTNER LOCATION	PARTNER(S)	TOWN(S) SERVED
AYER/DEVENS	Loaves & Fishes	Ayer, Devens, Dunstable, Groton, Harvard, Littleton, Shirley
BEDFORD	Bedford Food Bank	Bedford, Carlisle, Concord, Billerica, Burlington, Lowell, and more
BOSTON	Bridge Boston Charter School	Boston (Roxbury)
	Women's Lunch Place	Boston (Dorchester, Roxbury)
FRAMINGHAM	Daniel's Table	Framingham
EAST BOSTON	East Boston Community Soup Kitchen	East Boston, Boston, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Revere, Somerville, Waltham, Winthrop
	Eastie Farm	East Boston
CHELSEA	Salvation Army	Chelsea, East Boston
CONCORD	Food for Families	Concord, Carlisle
CONCORD/MAYNARD	Open Table	Acton, Bedford, Billerica, Boxborough, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Concord, Framingham, Hudson, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, Lowell, Marlborough, Maynard, Natick, Stow, Sudbury, Waltham, Wayland, Westford
LOWELL	Community Teamwork/Head Start	Lowell, Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Tewksbury, Westford
	House of Hope	Lowell
	Lowell Transitional Living Center	Lowell
SUDBURY	Sudbury Food Pantry	Sudbury, Acton, Clinton, Concord, Framingham, Hudson, Leominster, Marlborough, Maynard, Natick, Stow, Waltham, Wayland, Worcester, and more
WALTHAM	Watch City Market/Healthy Waltham	Waltham
WESTFORD	Westford Council on Aging	Westford





*The 2023 Gaining Ground Team*

*From left to right: Jennifer Johnson, Chrissie Edgeworth, Danielle Capalbo, Ava Lublin, Avery Indermaur, Dayanna De La Rosa, Geoff Nelson, Rachael Walton, Maddie Weikel, Kari Bender, Anna Kelchlin, and Allison Goodwin*

# It Takes an Ecosystem

## **Reciprocity, respect, and cooperation guide our work on the farm, and make our impact possible.**

Without community members like YOU—who embody these values and share your gifts with our team—we could not grow and donate such an abundant volume of nutritious, organic produce for those of us experiencing food insecurity.

Here are some ways that you and people you know may continue to support Gaining Ground:

### **Visit the farm**

There's no substitute for working in the soil with your hands, smelling freshly-harvested cilantro nearby, or seeing a skillful team of farmers steward the land. We encourage you to experience Gaining Ground for yourself. Come pay us a visit, meet our team and volunteers, and learn more about the no-till principles that guide us in agriculture and mutual aid.

### **Become a volunteer**

Camaraderie is a through line for volunteers who find friendship and deeper meaning on the farm when they come to help. Whether you're volunteering as an individual, bringing your family, or participating with a school or corporate group, we'd love to welcome you. We strive to accommodate helping hands of all ages and abilities.

### **Get our updates**

We operate year-round and share updates in all seasons. You may hear from us in the winter, when we're maple sugaring, or in springtime when volunteer sign-ups begin. We use our newsletter, social media, and website to announce on-site workshops, participation at regional conferences, special art exhibits on the farm, job opportunities, and more. We also spotlight community partners.

### **Become a monthly donor**

Donations really are like seeds: no matter their size, they can bloom into something greater. Please consider making a one-time donation (online or by mail) to Gaining Ground, or joining our monthly donor program at any amount. Financial contributions from community members like you help us pay our farmers a living wage, buy seeds and compost, maintain and repair tools, and grow from one season to the next.

### **For more information about how**

**to get more involved visit us at**

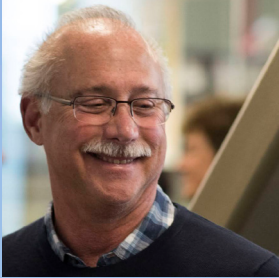
**<https://gainingground.org/support-us/>**

**or email us at [office@gainingground.org](mailto:office@gainingground.org)**

**or call 978-610-6086.**



## SPECIAL THANKS



**Gaining Ground would like to recognize Gary Vilchick for eight years of dedicated service.**

Gary recently retired from the board of directors and we are grateful for his impact! He was treasurer for most of his tenure, ensuring Gaining Ground's solid financial status. Gary also served on the Development, Investment, and Expansion Committees. We are thrilled that Gary will continue to serve on the Expansion Committee as we bring over five new acres of farmland in the Minute Man National Historical Park into production and evaluate other opportunities to further our mission.





## OUR VALUES

### **INTEGRITY—we remain true to our mission.**

We grow high-quality, fresh produce in a sustainable manner, respect and honor all individuals, provide meaningful experiences for volunteers, and maximize the generous support of our donors.

### **EQUITY—we donate everything we grow.**

We believe that healthy food is a human right. We provide our produce for free to eliminate barriers to access and maximize our impact on food insecurity.

### **INCLUSION—we welcome everyone.**

We welcome staff, board members, volunteers, partners, and donors with diverse perspectives and lived experiences.

### **INSPIRATION—we nurture joy and wonder in our fields.**

We cultivate an environment of discovery, belonging, and meaning.

### **CONTINUOUS LEARNING—we learn from others and share our knowledge.**

We embrace learning, acknowledge the contributions of other cultures and individuals to our farming practices, and always look for ways to improve our operations. We readily share what we've learned and strive to lead by example.

### **SUSTAINABILITY—we are good stewards of the land.**

We are committed to modeling sustainable agricultural practices that prioritize thoughtful use of water resources; the health of our soil, crops, and species that pollinate our crops; and the well-being of people who eat our food and all who work in our fields.

### **Gaining Ground Contacts**

- 978.610.6086
- office@gainingground.org
- gainingground.org
- facebook.com/GGConcord
- instagram.com/gaininggroundconcord

## 2023 STAFF AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### **Board officers**

Sue Mildrum, *President*  
Lisanne Wheeler,  
*Vice President*  
Amy Capofreddi,  
*Treasurer*  
Kristen Van Damm,  
*Secretary*

### **Board members**

Catherine (Katie) Bekel  
Christa Collins  
Sigmund Correa  
Shilpi Tanden Desai  
Laurie Engdahl  
Jen Flint  
Sam Hiersteiner  
Karen Perkins  
Ashley Perssico  
Yvette Philip  
Polly Vanasse

### **Emeritus members**

Joe Rigali, *Emeritus*  
Lucy Rosborough,  
*Emeritus*

### **Staff**

Kari Bender, *Co-Assistant Farm Manager*  
Dani Capalbo, *Communications and Development Manager*  
Dayanna "Day"  
De La Rosa,  
*Field Crew Member*  
Chrissie Edgeworth,  
*Co-Assistant Farm Manager*  
Allison Goodwin,  
*Operations Director*  
Avery Indermaur,  
*Volunteer Coordinator, Development Assistant, and Field Crew Member*  
Jennifer Johnson,  
*Executive Director*  
Anna Kelchlin,  
*Farm Manager*  
Ava Lublin,  
*Field Crew Member*  
Geoff Nelson,  
*Groundskeeper*  
Rachael Walton,  
*Field Crew Member*  
Maddie Weikel,  
*Assistant Grower and Assistant Volunteer Leader*

Gaining Ground Gratitude Report 2022 Edited by Jen Flint. Layout by Studio-e Design. Photography by Tony Rinaldo LLC, Christine Savage, and Danielle Capalbo.



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