



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 2024

Dear Friends,

Farming is synonymous with hard work. If you've ever visited Gaining Ground (or any farm for that matter!) you've seen firsthand the skilled mental and physical labor required to tend the land and grow abundant, healthy food.

While not all of us may be called to farming work, there is at least one kind of work we are called to as humans and community members. The poet Mary Oliver wrote, "To pay attention. This is our endless and proper work." We are grateful for the way our community takes this call to heart.

Our talented and compassionate employees pay attention to the land, the soil, the seedlings, and the farm's entire ecosystem to grow an abundant amount of delicious and nutritious food. We pay attention to the needs expressed by our hunger-relief partners, and to the root causes of food insecurity.

Care and attention show up in our volunteer community with every weed pulled, bucket of compost spread, and box of food delivered.

Gaining Ground financial supporters pay attention to the rising rates of food insecurity in our region such as the recent report from the Greater Boston Food Bank showing that more than a third of adults in Massachusetts experienced food insecurity last year—a higher percentage than in 2022. Our supporters also pay attention to the undeniable climate shifts we are experiencing, highlighting the need for regenerative farming and a strong local food system.

The care and attention of our entire community make Gaining Ground's work possible. With this base of support, we are able to grow healthy, delicious, and culturally connected food that people want to cook with and like to eat. This support also makes our expansion project possible. With this expansion, Gaining Ground is not only increasing the amount of food we can provide to our community; we are restoring soil health to a historically significant piece of land.

Gaining Ground's success is deeply rooted in the care and attentiveness of our entire community. Together, we are cultivating a more resilient and sustainable future for all.

With gratitude,

Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director

Photo, cover: Gaining Ground farmers transplant spring seedlings.

Photo, left: Community Farm Team members transplant butternut squash seedlings at Gaining Ground's new fields in the Minute Man National Historical Park.

Measuring Our Impact

With your support in 2023, we broke new ground and reached new heights in our hunger relief mission.

“It’s like this whole wheel of gratitude: I’m super grateful that Gaining Ground is here in Concord, that we have such easy access to it, that we’re invited to volunteer, that we can bring our families, that we can meet peers we may not know in the community, and that we can feel the gratitude from people who receive the donations. Then we bring it back to you.”

MOLLY CONSTABLE
NATIONAL CHARITY LEAGUE VOLUNTEER



124,367

POUNDS OF NUTRITIOUS PRODUCE DONATED

That’s 511,000 servings of food—one of our highest annual yields to date. Together we directly increased the volume of fresh, organic produce available to our neighbors.



2,100

HOUSEHOLDS SERVED WEEKLY

The food we grew in Concord nourished about 10,000 individuals and families in 40+ communities, from toddlers to senior citizens.



4

SEASONS OF GROWING AND GIVING AWAY FOOD

Hunger doesn’t slow down in the winter, so we regularly assess and improve our capacity for year-round production on the farm. Limited winter distribution may include storage crops and fresh, leafy greens and roots that survive in protected structures called high tunnels.



5.1

ACRES OF LAND LICENSED FROM THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

We embarked on a milestone expansion into Minute Man National Historical Park, to grow more food for hunger relief. We also hired our first-ever Director of Agriculture to guide the project.



300–500

BOXES OF PRODUCE DONATED EACH WEEK

It takes a village of dedicated volunteers to transport our freshly-washed donations from Virginia Road to communities across Eastern Massachusetts, typically within 24 hours of harvest.

3,364

VOLUNTEERS FROM 80+ TOWNS

We welcomed 7% more helping hands last year compared with 2022, including a quarter more unique visitors! Volunteers contributed 7,816 hours during the season.

16

HUNGER RELIEF PARTNERS

The incredible organizations that distribute our produce form the bridge from farm to community. Last season we began two new partnerships, with UTEC in Lowell and La Colaborativa in Chelsea.

50

POWERHOUSE CROPS, INCLUDING 146 VARIETIES

Food is medicine—especially food that holds cultural memories and stories. You helped us nourish a diverse community with diverse ingredients that are rare to find in pantries and shelters. Our crops included specially-requested flour corn and cassava.

2,285

FRESH CUT FLOWER BOUQUETS DONATED

Not only are flowers beautiful, but they help us grow food by attracting and nourishing the pollinators that our crops rely on for reproduction and fruit bearing. We sowed flowers in our eight native hedgerows and across 1,000 feet of bed space, so we could offer joy and beauty, as well as calories.

50+

FARMERS TRAINED IN NO-TILL AGRICULTURE

“It changed my perspective to see the system actually working.” With generous grant support, we offered three free workshops that inspired other growers to minimize soil disruption, celebrate biodiversity, maximize photosynthesis, and promote climate resilience.



“Last summer, the High School Farm team was working together to grow lettuce in Alaska, one of the fields at Gaining Ground. We’d go there almost every time we met, consistently weeding the beds so all the plants could grow to their fullest potential. We put all this care into the lettuce, and it ended up just how we wanted: with a big harvest to donate.”

SADIE CONSTABLE
(MOLLY’S DAUGHTER)
NATIONAL CHARITY LEAGUE VOLUNTEER,
HIGH SCHOOL FARM TEAM ALUM

Photos, left page, top to bottom: a spinach harvest; volunteers at East Boston Soup Kitchen package Gaining Ground produce; Avery Indermaur harvests winter carrots; Mark Congdon prepares fields at the Minute Man National Historical Park site; boxes of Gaining Ground produce await pick-up and distribution. Photos, right page, top to bottom: Kari Bender demonstrates tasks for volunteers; Eastie Farm Youth Climate Corps members harvest garlic; Bountiful beets; Zinnias attract pollinators and make beautiful fresh flower arrangements; Mark Congdon transplants a tomato seedling at the Minute Man National Historical Park site.

Cultivating Equity

Investing in Community Health

A holistic funding approach that centers community care.

The Boston Foundation (TBF) is committed to bridging the region's most significant disparities. The aftermath of the pandemic has exacerbated food insecurity. Our Food, Fuel, and Shelter Fund supports organizations helping individuals struggling to buy food, pay for utilities, or cover rent.

Gaining Ground has received a Food, Fuel, and Shelter grant for the past two years. There is no formal application or reporting process for this grant. Instead, conversational interviews allow us to have a more personal and holistic understanding of the work. It allowed us to understand the significance of Gaining Ground's farm expansion to serve even more people. Our approach goes beyond simply evaluating applications and numbers, as it provides an opportunity to hear directly from the organizations about their challenges, successes, and future goals. Beyond the numbers, we value how Gaining Ground leans into equity in their work.

Gaining Ground exemplifies community care. The relationships they have built with their partners are authentic and meaningful, driven by the community's need. They utilize feedback to refine their processes and to grow culturally significant produce. As an advocate of sustainable farming, Gaining Ground also enhances soil health. They broaden access by subsidizing transportation for farm visitors.

Rather than relying solely on one program officer, our approach involves a decision-making team that covers



Left to right: Candace Burton, Program Officer, Safety Net Grants and Quynh Nguyen, Associate, Safety Net Grants.

various departments within the foundation. The inaugural Food, Fuel, and Shelter Forum, conceived by this team, provided Jennifer Johnson and other Executive Directors with increased exposure to TBF staff, donors, and other nonprofits. Furthermore, instead of conducting traditional site visits, the team actively participates in pre-arranged events such as Gaining Ground's An Evening on the Farm.

Partnering with an organization dedicated to providing fresh, organic produce with such attention and care is a privilege.

**CANDACE BURTON
PROGRAM OFFICER, SAFETY NET GRANTS
THE BOSTON FOUNDATION**

*Gaining Ground exemplifies community care.
The relationships they have built with their partners are authentic
and meaningful, driven by the community's need.*

CANDACE BURTON

At House of Hope, meals are provided for us, and I love that we receive fresh, local veggies from the farm. It's high-quality food—not in a can, not processed, not packaged. It tastes better. I'm getting something nutritious, and so is my kid.

ANONYMOUS HOUSE OF HOPE RESIDENT

Around the Table

How fresh, healthy food nourishes a family through challenging times.

I always like to have fresh vegetables. Before I came to House of Hope, I grew a garden. My parents weren't big veggie eaters, because we were poor and food banks didn't offer veggies. But I started my own garden when I could, and shared this with my kids and my neighborhood community.

We love to cook together and play games when we can. One of our traditions is Sunday dinner—me and my kids and their dad, and my sister and her kids. We go through different recipes and make a special meal, snacking on carrots, green peppers, and cucumbers while we cook. Once on New Year's Eve we made all the Chinese food from scratch. When I have my own place, we can do that even more.

At House of Hope, meals are provided for us, and I love that we receive fresh, local veggies from the farm. It's high-quality food—not in a can, not processed, not packaged. It tastes better. I'm getting something nutritious, and so is my kid. It also means we can keep up our routine. My teenage daughter had veggies before she came here, and she still has veggies now.

A healthy meal provides a sense of security. I don't have to worry about what I'm going to do tonight or tomorrow for food. I know we will eat well.

At mealtime, the two of us sit outside if it's nice weather, or sit in the House of Hope dining room. We talk about the day—what my daughter did at school, or with her friends. Other times it's just me for dinner, enjoying my alone time.



Fresh veggies arrive at House of Hope.

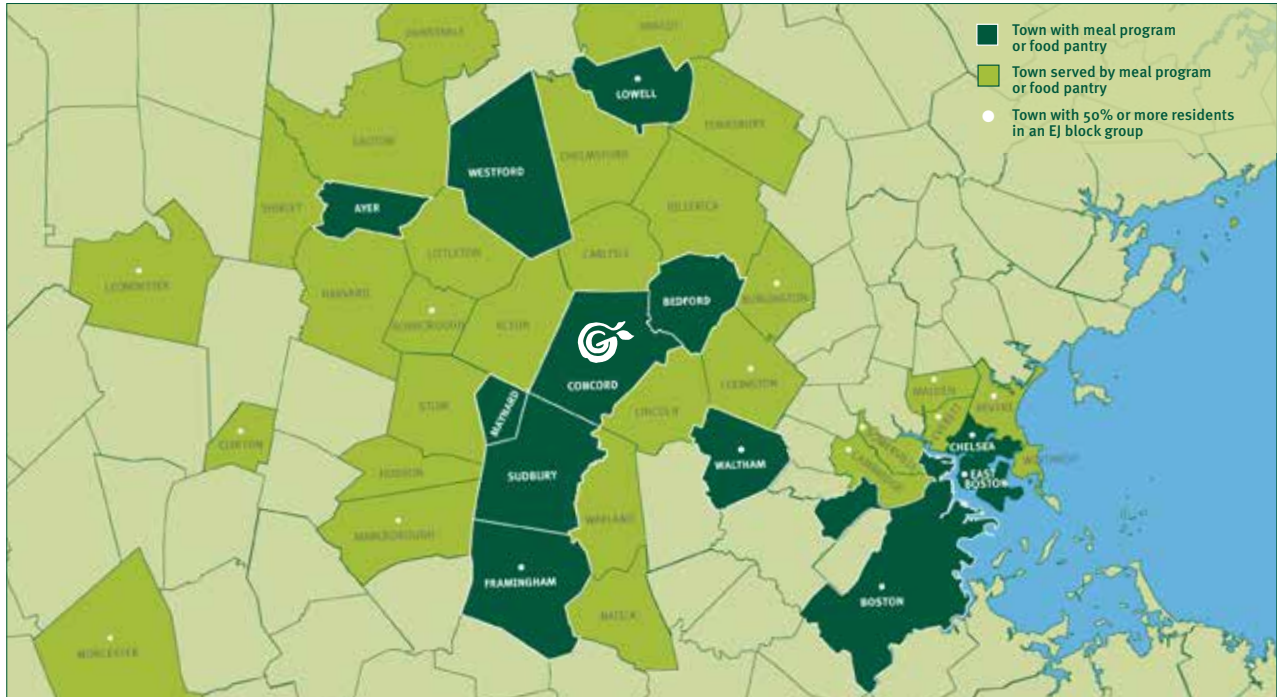
One of our favorite meals from Chef Paul is the lo mein, with broccoli and carrots from the farm. Once he cooked up a leafy green—similar to bok choy. I had never heard of it. I wasn't sure I would like it, but it was delicious, and I even learned how to cook it. It was a nice surprise.

I am also excited to visit the farm at Gaining Ground, to see how they do it. Maybe I can get some tips on how I can do my own garden, maybe potatoes in a bucket. I know someone with a balcony, so I might try. Gardening relaxes me—knowing I can grow something from start to finish.

ANONYMOUS HOUSE OF HOPE RESIDENT

Mapping Our Reach

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.



PARTNER LOCATION	PARTNER(S)	TOWN(S) SERVED	*
AYER/DEVENS	Loaves & Fishes	Ayer, Devens, Dunstable, Groton, Harvard, Littleton, Shirley	25
BEDFORD	Bedford Food Bank	Bedford, Carlisle, Concord, Billerica, Burlington, Lowell, and more	24
BOSTON	Bridge Boston Charter School	Boston (Roxbury)	4
	Women's Lunch Place	Boston (Dorchester, Roxbury)	1
CHELSEA	La Colaborativa	Chelsea, East Boston, Everett, Lynn, Revere, Malden	1
CONCORD	Food for Families	Concord, Carlisle	20
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	27
EAST BOSTON	East Boston Community Soup Kitchen	East Boston, Boston, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Revere, Somerville, Waltham, Winthrop	3
	Eastie Farm	East Boston	3
FRAMINGHAM	Daniel's Table	Framingham	2
LOWELL	Community Teamwork/Head Start	Lowell, Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Tewksbury, Westford	8
	House of Hope	Lowell	10
	Lowell Transitional Living Center	Lowell	7
	UTEC	Lowell, Lawrence, Haverhill	1
SUDBURY	Sudbury Food Pantry	Sudbury, Acton, Clinton, Concord, Framingham, Hudson, Leominster, Marlborough, Maynard, Natick, Stow, Waltham, Wayland, Worcester, and more	26
WALTHAM	Healthy Waltham	Waltham	3
WESTFORD	Westford Council on Aging	Westford	25

* Number of Years as a Gaining Ground Partner

From Farm to Partner

The food we grow sustainably at Gaining Ground is donated fresh to people in need—typically within 24 hours of harvest and 25 miles of the farm. Here’s how it gets to our partners at Women’s Lunch Place (WLP) in Boston, and how farm-to-table ingredients help the day shelter nourish 2,200 women per year.

PICK-UP

1



By noon, the farmers have harvested, washed, and packed the day’s bounty. Banana boxes filled with nutritious produce accumulate outside the barn, ready for our partners to pick them up. WLP volunteer Maria Cassidy and her son load donations into their car and set off for Newbury Street.

2

LOAD-IN



About 45 minutes later, the fresh herbs and vegetables are handed off to WLP Executive Chef Inna Khitrik, who gently slides each box down a ramp that connects with the kitchen. Harvest can be heavy!

SORT AND STORE

3



Kitchen Assistant Titania Kelly takes stock of each crop as it comes down the ramp. Some ingredients are labeled and chilled in the walk-in fridge. Others get used right away. “The food is always fresh,” Titania says. “I love when it arrives.”

PREP AND COOK

4



“You can’t get any fresher than produce from Gaining Ground,” says Mark White, Assistant Kitchen Manager. Volunteers help the kitchen team prep ingredients for breakfast and lunch service. WLP serves about 450 healthy, scratch-cooked meals per day—six days a week.

TAKE HOME

5



What about the leftover produce? WLP sends it home with clients who are housed but experiencing food insecurity. They also provide hunger relief at Mass and Cass by sharing their harvest with peer organizations. “It’s a treasure to have fresh vegetables and herbs to offer our guests,” Inna says.

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 2023, all of our partners distributed produce among at least one EJ population.

Nourishing Migrant Families

In 2023, Massachusetts welcomed a historic number of people migrating from their home countries in search of asylum, safety, and opportunity. Virtually all of our partners played a role in connecting these individuals and families with food.

Statement of Financial Position

As of December 31, 2023 (Unaudited)

	TOTAL
Assets	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	\$1,528,011.55
Accounts Receivable	\$245,000.00
Other Current Assets	\$-11,838.30
Total Current Assets	\$1,761,173.25
Fixed Assets	\$585,198.26
Other Assets	\$27,488.00
TOTAL ASSETS	\$2,373,859.51
Liabilities and Equity	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	\$3,077.39
Credit Cards	\$38.00
Other Current Liabilities	\$18,607.34
Total Current Liabilities	\$21,722.73
Long-Term Liabilities	\$27,938.00
Total Liabilities	\$49,660.73
Equity	\$2,324,198.78
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$2,373,859.51

Please note that this is our unaudited Statement of Financial Position. You will be able to access our fully audited 2023 financial statements as well as the complete lists of our 2023 donors and volunteers on our website at www.gainingground.org/our-story/gratitude-reports-and-financial-statements/



FROM OUR PARTNERS

Jocie McCaffrey
Food Coordinator at Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry, Devens
“We love the variety and especially just having fresh produce. When we ask clients what they like getting most from the pantry, fresh vegetables and fruit always come up.”

Rob Slattery
Operations Manager at Open Table, Maynard
“Your produce always looks beautiful and fresh as can be! Thanks for what you do.”

Anonymous
Guest at Food for Families, Concord/Carlisle
“So fresh, so tasty—absolutely love Saturday mornings and seeing what’s in our bag. I cooked up the bok choy the same day and it was delicious.”

Tom McGowan
Volunteer at Sudbury Community Food Pantry, Sudbury
“The real winners in our work together [are] of course the families of our clients. The produce [from] Gaining Ground is just what those families need and often cannot afford.”

Jill Tsakiris
Program Manager at Open Table, Maynard
“Clients were surprised and delighted with the snapdragons.”



The 2024 Gaining Ground Team

*From left to right:
Mark Congdon
Allison Goodwin
Avery Indermaur
Madison Latiolais
Chrissie Edgeworth
Maddie Weikel
Ava Lublin
Kari Bender
Rachael Walton
Jennifer Johnson*

Grow with us.

Visit the farm

You're invited to be on this land with us, to witness our work and reflect on the collective action it takes to deeply nourish one another with care and attention.

Become a volunteer

We're truly a community farm, and welcome folks of all abilities to work and learn with us in the fields. Volunteers include families, classrooms, corporate teams, faith groups, and other community organizations.

Follow us online

In every season, we have exciting updates to share on social media, our website, and through our monthly e-newsletter. You can expect uplifting community stories, seasonal reflections, recipe ideas, information about no-till agriculture, and much more.

Become a monthly donor

We have never sold a single vegetable, fruit, herb, or flower. That's only possible because of generous community members like you, who share our vision of equitable food access and contribute financial gifts of all sizes. You may give once, or on a recurring schedule that works well for you.

For more information about how to get more involved visit us at <https://gainingground.org/support-us/> or email us at office@gainingground.org or call 978-610-6086.

Special thanks to:

Anna Kelchlin, our Farm Manager from 2021 to 2023, for her outstanding leadership. We wish Anna success at the farm she founded, Late Bloom Farm in Haverhill, MA;

Amy Capofreddi, **Shilpi Desai**, and **Jen Flint** for their many combined years of service on the Board of Directors;

Dani Capalbo, our Communications and Development Manager from 2023 to 2024, for her ability to invite folks into our mission with her compelling narratives and beautiful photos;

Concord resident **Bouke Noordzij** for his tremendous, perennial volunteer contributions to our production and infrastructure; and

Photographer **Tony Rinaldo** for his generous donations of time and talent, capturing beautiful images of our work on the farm.

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

2024 STAFF AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board officers

Sue Mildrum, *President*
Lisanne Wheeler, *Vice President*
Sigmund Correa, *Treasurer*
Kristen Van Damm, *Secretary*

Board members

Catherine (Katie) Bekel
Christa Collins
Laurie Engdahl
Sam Hiersteiner
Michael Leahy
Jyotsna Mulgund
Karen Perkins
Ashley Perssico
Yvette Philip
Joe Rigali, *Emeritus*
Lucy Rosborough, *Emeritus*
Polly Vanasse

Staff

Kari Bender, *Farm Co-Manager*
Brenna Broderick, *Development and Communications Manager*
Mark Congdon, *Director of Agriculture*
Chrissie Edgeworth, *Farm Co-Manager*
Allison Goodwin, *Operations Director*
Avery Indermaur, *Volunteer and Outreach Manager*
Jennifer Johnson, *Executive Director*
Madison Latiolais, *Field Crew Member*
Ava Lublin, *Assistant Grower*
Geoff Nelson, *Groundskeeper*
Zoe Tallmadge, *Field Crew Member*
Rachael Walton, *Assistant Grower*
Maddie Weikel, *Assistant Grower and Education Coordinator*

Gaining Ground Gratitude Report 2023 Edited by Jen Flint. Layout by Liz Chambers. Photography by Tony Rinaldo LLC, Danielle Capalbo, Mark Congdon, Christine Savage, and Maddie Weikel.



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