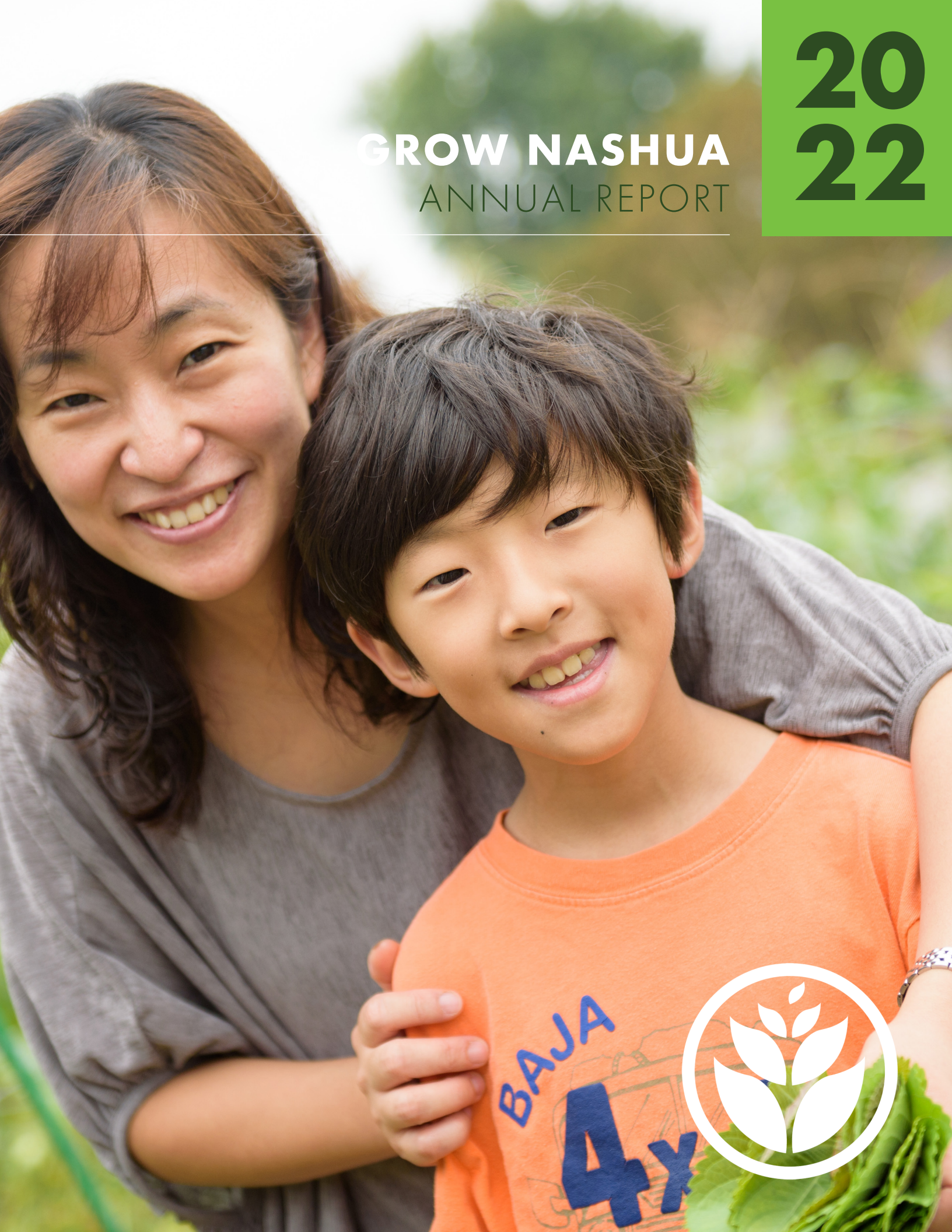
GROW NASHUA
ANNUAL REPORT

2022



GROW NASHUA

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A MESSAGE **FROM JUSTIN**

Founder & Current Executive Director

Grow Nashua is a movement as much as it is an organization. We are made up of Nashua neighbors, some with resources and some in need of a caring hand. Our vision is to one day see a community that is interconnected, believes in abundance, and makes decisions that equitably utilize our abundant community resources. This year our programs have really fallen into step and we continue to work hand-in-hand with our program participants giving us a built-in feedback loop that allows us to listen, adapt, and serve in the best way possible.

The reaality of this past year was that inflation continues to squeeze low-income families that are already spending a disproportionate amount of their income on basic needs. The “food at home” category on the CPI over the last two years has added over to 20% to the cost of fresh food, the 1st choice cut when grocery shopping due to high costs and spoilage potential. Fortunately Grow Nashua continues to innovate new programs to meet this need.

We are also spreading our impact by spinning off employees into their own programs in the past few years ex: Greater Nashua Food Council, Grasshopper Landing, and Karpawich School Composting for example! So if you have something on your mind that needs to be actioned in our community, but you just don't know what to do about it add your voice by clicking here and we’ll reach out to help you get started!

We treat everyone we serve and meet like family and encourage you to reach out when the time is right to join this movement to a unified community!

JUSTIN MUNROE

VISION
MAONO

TO CREATE A MORE RELIABLE AND JUST FUTURE, ONE NEIGHBORHOOD AT A TIME.

Crear un futuro más confiable y justo, un vecindario a la vez.

Kuunda wakati ujao wakitumaini na haki zaidi, kwa ujirani wakipe kee.

MISSION
UTUME

Kuanganisha wakaaji wa Nashua kwa kulima, Ku kula na kushurulikiya vifaa vya udongo.

Conectar los vecindarios de Nashua a través de cultivar, alimentar y cuidar de los recursos de la tierra.

CONNECTING NASHUA'S NEIGHBORS THROUGH GROWING, EATING, AND CARING FOR EARTH'S RESOURCES.

GROW NASHUA
AT A GLANCE

For seven years straight, our outreach has doubled in the number of people we serve, and 2023 will continue that trend with an anticipated 4,000 participants served!

Last year our "Growing Spaces" hosted 350 residents who consumed 7,500 pounds of veggies. Our "Growing Education" kicked it up by hiring a new director that has 18+ years classroom teaching experience and allowed us to reach 340 students both in person and virtually with garden, nutrition, and cooking classes.

Our "Lil' Free Farmstand" gathered 15,000 pounds of excess veggies from gardeners & farmers which were then shared with families in three different neighborhoods. By connecting with those families, we not only supplied needed food but also connected with them on a personal level so we could offer additional outreach (think financial wellness training, alignment with heating & food assistance, and even distributing 200 winter coats)!

"We're all building our world, right now, in real time. Let's build it better" - Lindy West

Curbside Compost is approaching 1 million pounds of diverted food waste from the city's landfill, reduced methane emissions, and created new green jobs.

MORE THAN YOU THOUGHT!
OUR PROGRAMS

GROWING EDUCATION

Imagine if our children grew up knowing the importance of caring for our soil, that knew what to do with seeds to make them sprout, and the important impact that nutrient dense food has on their bodies!

Through our Growing Education program in three low income elementary schools we are bringing them this knowledge! Grow Nashua offers fun and interactive learning experiences where children are given a platform to share their experiences, use critical thinking/questioning, and increase their own environmental and food literacy.

URBAN GROWING SPACES

Let's make a shift for the next generation from just being "food consumers" to being "food producers". We have urban garden sites in eight different neighborhoods throughout Nashua so that families with children can easily walk to grow their food near their homes!

We bring everything together for our families and keep it free and easy to participate all while making social connections with their neighbors in the Growing Space. Everything is free and we provide seedlings, water, nutrients, and hands-on garden education throughout the season to help our families have a successful and abundant harvest season!

LIL' FREE FARMSTAND

We have food deserts in Nashua where it is difficult to easily get to stores that sell affordable, healthful foods. So we strategically place Lil' Free Farmstands there each weekend during harvest season!

The idea came to light when thinking about how many folks grow extra in their garden and just don't know what to do with it. With 20,000 households in Nashua there must be enough generous neighbors willing to share their extra fresh veggies with those that are less fortunate.

We took a guess and we were right... in our first two years giving out over 9,000 pounds of fresh veggies and looking to grow that by 150% this year.

CURBSIDE COMPOST

It is easy in modern times to feel like we can't have a local impact on something as big as greenhouse gas or the fact that our landfill has only 5-7 years left before it is full because "What can one person do?"

Well, Grow Nashua provides an avenue through our local food scrap collection services that has already diverted over 360,000 pounds of food waste from our landfill to date, is creating green energy, and returning nutrients back to the soil. An easy step in the right direction to stepping into a greener!

"Change works at the speed of trust"

2022
INNOVATE

Imagine a city that was interconnected with one another in a way where resources were shared, neighbors knew each other, and people cared about one another. Grow Nashua believes this future is possible and each day is taking steps to bring our community closer to this point.

Our latest initiative, the Lil' Free Farmstand, is shifting our community's mindset from scarcity to abundance by making the helpful connection between backyard gardeners that have extra produce and families struggling to put fresh food on their dinner tables. This program is unique in that it focuses on bringing "new produce" into the charitable food system. Grow Nashua aggregates veggies that exist in the community and brings them directly into the neighborhoods that do not have stores selling affordable, healthy foods aka food deserts. This decentralizes free fresh food from pantries and brings it into the most economically marginalized neighborhoods. This is not only important to address hunger but also critical to directly combat the prominent chronic disease issues of our area, like obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.

We believe that to provide someone with nutrient dense food is to provide them with the fuel they need to take positive steps in their lives. This coming year we will be gathering extra fruits & veggies with the addition of our Lil' Free Veggie Truck that will allow us to pick up nutrient dense produce and get them into the hands of families within 24 hours. Most people don't realize that nutrients leave veggies fast; one study in the Journal of Food Chemistry found that broccoli could lose up to 70% of its vitamin C and beta-carotene and 50% of its antioxidant activity in just six days.

The best part about this program is that it can work anywhere and we have already heard of two other communities that have launched their own Lil' Free Farmstands!

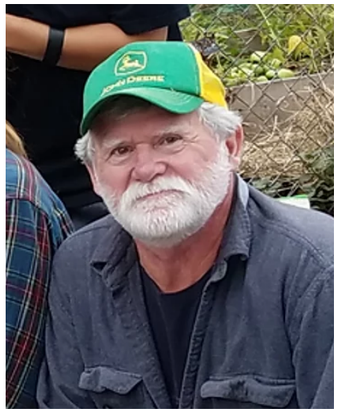
2022
AMPLIFY

My son asked me one day, “what if we all worked together?” It’s a fair question and powerful to think of the possibility! Grow Nashua is adept at engaging with the community and providing opportunities for community members to volunteer and gain awareness around the 10,000 people, locally, that struggle to put food on the table.

We have built schedules and systems to manage volunteers from college interns, to individuals, to corporate groups; utilizing 8,000 volunteer hours since inception in 2015. We were assisted by over 370 volunteers over 4,200 hours last year, helping to support, maintain, and expand our Growing Spaces program.

Our Garden Tender volunteers are a wonderful addition and example:

"They act as a local presence in the space, someone to ask questions of, someone to notice when something breaks, someone watching out for the unusual, and someone that can keep the overall garden a positive environment throughout the season. Their success lies in the success of the gardeners to grow, connect with one another, and enjoy the space."



DAVID
Garden Tender

TEAM SPOTLIGHT

I first met Justin during a “What can senior citizens do for Nashua” seminar where he was speaking about Grow Nashua and I felt that I could contribute to the program. Then Justin learned that I knew my way around tools, and I've been with the program ever since. That was about three seasons ago and since then we've built a lot of raised beds and moved several tons of mulch and potting soil!

Having grown up on a medium sized dairy farm with a large garden, I thought I knew something about growing veggies. But every time I listen to Justin explain the finer points of fall plot coverage or organic fertilizer, it becomes painfully obvious that I did not know as much as I thought I did. So, working with Grow Nashua has been a learning experience for me.

Last summer I was the Ash Street Garden tender, which I thoroughly enjoyed. It was so rewarding to watch the plants grow to harvest and see the joy that was evident on the faces of the planters as they worked their plots. My wife and I have relocated from New York, where we had small gardens off and on over the years. Demands of work drew me away from gardening and working at Ash St. brought the memories of those gardens back.

2022

INTERCONNECT

What if we were all interconnected? On paper we already are, as we have more "friends" on social media than ever before and it is quick and easy to share our opinion and have them like it or cheer us on a moment later. Is that enough? Is that connection meaningful in the grand scheme?

Grow Nashua is working toward connecting real people in real life with our hands in the soil alongside them. Beyond the benefit of growing food near where they live and nutritious foods consumed, these programs allow our families to build community with their neighbors, which we believe to be equally as important to overall health! This type of real connection is what we mean when we say we are working to interconnect our community.

Imagine having a social fabric so strong that we are able to share resources, move information, and care enough that we make personal sacrifices for others' wellbeing? Well the good news is that we do! It is not easy, but we know that this type of impactful possibility comes with time and relationships and so have been building comprehensive programs since 2016. Many of the families that we serve often participate in several of our programs and sometimes even volunteer or get hired as part of our team! Anyway you slice it the closer we get the more opportunities we have to care for people.

"Change moves at the speed of trust."
- Beth Tener

BENEFITS OF SCHOOL GARDEN EDUCATION

- Positive impact on student achievement, behavior, and academic achievement.
- Instill appreciation and respect for our shared environment.
- Improve life skills, including working with groups and self-understanding.
- Potential increase in fruit and vegetable intake resulting from taste tests and willingness to try fruits and vegetables.
- Knowledge of growing and consuming their own fresh produce. A skill to be carried into adulthood with lasting health benefits.

OUR TEAM MAKES AN IMPACT

Our team and board all live or work in Nashua and are inclusive of people from different places, with varied language skills, and socio-economic backgrounds. These lived experiences of our team and community members enrich our programming and allow it to best match the needs of the community.

This year we were able to expand our staff to include experienced leaders for each of our outreach programs. In Growing Spaces; a leader with 10+ years of technical experience, master gardener, and permaculture certifications. In Growing Education; a certified teacher with 18 years of classroom teaching and a masters degree in education. In Lil' Free Farmstand; a person with 40 years of living without steady financial resources and lived experience of how people find alternative resources to survive and thrive. And in Curbside Compost; a growth manager with 20 years sales experience and a passion for environmental activism.

TONIA

Community Connector

Having a gift for seeing people and hearing where they are coming from, Tonia is a blessing to our community. She always greets neighbors with a smile and some helpful information that will help them get a leg up on poverty by utilizing available resources; not just to survive, but to thrive!

JESS

Youth Education Director

After 20 years of public school classroom instruction Grow Nashua was a natural next step. Her immersive lessons are providing our Nashua 4th graders with hands-on experience in the garden that benefits the mind, body, and soul, while being rooted in academics and social emotional learning.

GIBRIL

Compost Courier

After seeking refuge here in Nashua, we met Gibril and have built a strong relationship through our shared love of veggies. His strong work ethic is helping us grow our food scrap diversion efforts, as well as his own production farm that he co-manages with us.

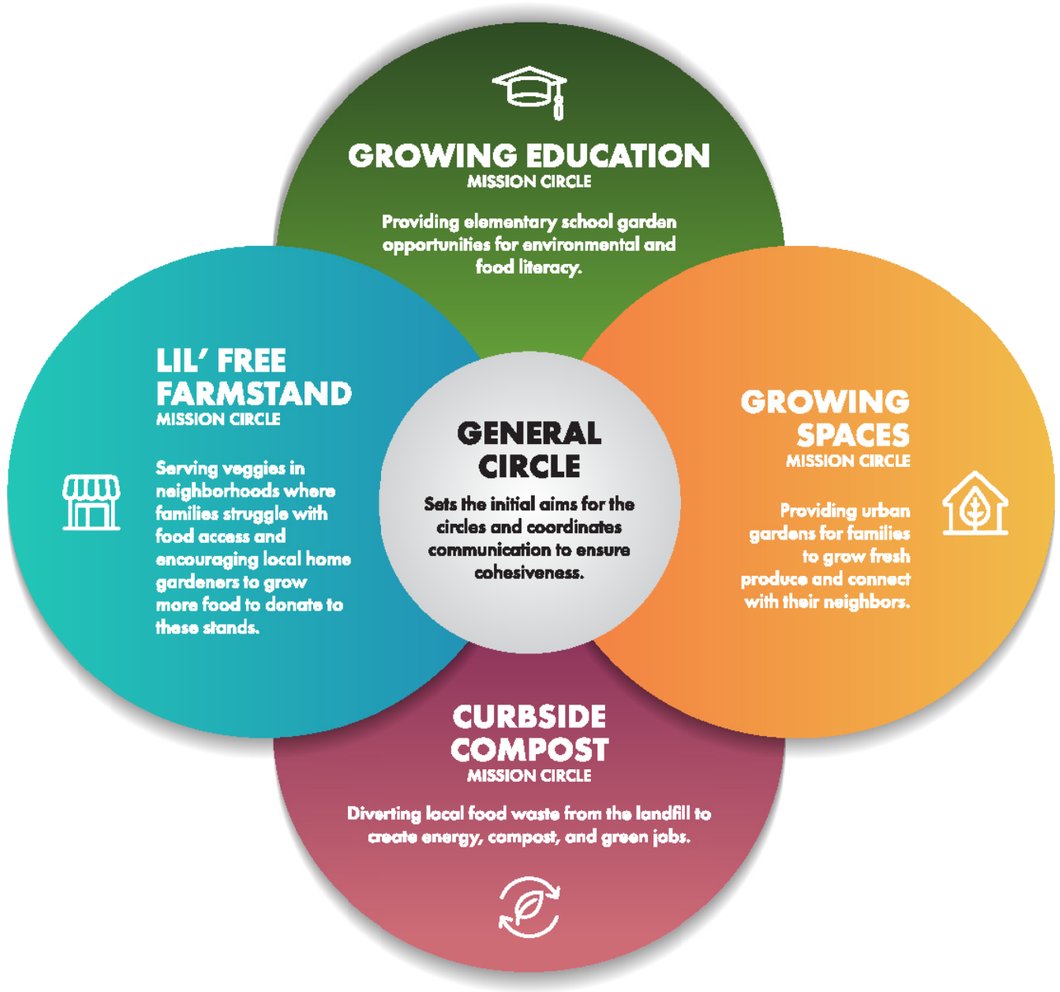
DAVE

Urban Garden Manager

We have been fortunate to have Dave's wisdom, skill, and knowledge on our team since the outset of Grow Nashua 7 years ago. His designs grace our 7 locations and his seasonal agricultural education classes keep our growers growing abundantly year after year!

MISSION CIRCLES

We've also put in place a Mission Circle which utilizes a dynamic governance model called Sociocracy with consent decision making, which decentralizes the organization and gives it more balance and reduces any single points of failure.



2022
CARE

Our mission extends beyond food and encompasses "total community care."

We love the families we serve.

We cherish the earth under our feet.

We believe in interconnectedness.

We teach our future generation.

We believe nutrient-dense food brings sustenance and power.

We know our existing food system is fragile and are working to increase our local food shed by bringing the freshest produce available to families' neighborhoods because:

fresh produce = *tastier nutrient dense produce* = *more enjoyment and consumption of nutritious produce* = *stronger physical and mental wellbeing!*

Join us to promote health and build community around the common denominator of food and community participation, leading to a stronger, more interconnected city!

IT TAKES A VILLAGE
HOW YOU CAN MAKE AN IMPACT TODAY!

Overall, our community building has been strengthened further this year through real interactions in supporting socially vulnerable neighbors and we invite you to join us, as we change not just Nashua, but look forward to developing a blueprint for other communities to replicate.

For every family, team member, or volunteer that engages with us we consider them family and know that we are here because of them (you) and only succeed when we all work together.

FINANCIAL GIVING OPPORTUNITIES:

- Donate online: www.grownashua.org/support-growth
- Become a sustaining donor
- Plan an estate gift or an IRA disbursement

Have another idea but aren't sure how to make it come to life? Email us at giving@grownashua.org so we can partner together for the growth of our community.

grow NASHUA

community partner of the United Way

2022

GROW NASHUA

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