

Gardeners for Regional Organic Wellbeing (GROW!) 2019 Annual Report For Trinity Lutheran Church

We have now completed our 11th year of gardening on the grounds of Trinity Lutheran Church facing Buchanan Street. With the church providing space to grow organic vegetables for our community and especially for the Food Bank, i.e. Community Action Partnership, and the United Methodist Church for their free weekly lunches, in 2019 we have been able to provide our community with over **2700** pounds of nutritious food for some of our most at-risk residents. In another productive year, GROW continues to move ahead with its mission of providing more food security for residents of Boundary County.

Our fourth Farm to Table event this past September engaged the community, including other small local producers in the area, and encouraged conversation about healthy food production in our county. Our successful fundraising dinner uses produce from the community garden as well as additional donated organic vegetables, fruit, dairy products, and meat from other local growers and supporters. This event, which was held at BeeHaven Flower Farm this year, helps all of our partners in the Farm to Table Fundraiser event become better acquainted and shows what we can do when we work together, particularly in terms of a local food system. In addition, the event encourages participants to support each other and Buy Local!

This year, GROW received a \$2500 grant from the City of Bonners Ferry through their Blue Cross of Idaho High Five grant to help fund our new Little Free Garden project. These raised bed gardens offering free produce to communities are similar to the nationwide Little Free Library project, run by volunteers and located throughout our community. This year, we created 22 Little Free Gardens, which can be viewed at <http://www.littlefreegarden.com/map>. One of the gardens is located on the west side of TLC. Another garden, a perennial herb garden, is located on the grounds of the TLC-GROW garden. We recently applied for an additional \$2500 as we have at least 10 more businesses who would like to participate next year.

One of our board members, Tony Klinkhammer, donated mushroom spawn and bark chips so that we could create a mushroom bed of Garden Giant (*Stropharia rugosoannulata*). This species is edible and it also helps enrich the soil as it breaks down bark chips. This mushroom demonstration bed will be used when we teach mushroom cultivation courses through the University of Idaho (UI) Extension office.

George Bevan, another GROW Board Member, created a wooden sign for the TLC-GROW garden gate. This beautiful sign, created in the lab at our local library, thanks TLC for allowing us to use this ground for the community garden.

GROW Supporter Michael Richardson, owner of Skywalker Tree Care, regularly donates chips to the TLC-GROW garden. Through his generosity, we were able to create a new central path in the garden. We used grant funds to purchase landscape fabric as an underlayment to deter weeds.

For the second year in a row, two volunteers from the UI Extension Master Gardener program planted a children's garden in one of the TLC-GROW garden plots. A granite marker with inscription donated by Shirley Anderson, from her family owned business North Idaho Granite, marks the children's garden. These two Master Gardener volunteers worked with the preschool at Trinity Children's Center to arrange biweekly visits to the garden all summer. We hope to continue this popular program next year.

All the members of GROW and others who work in the garden are volunteers except for the Garden Manager. Last year GROW members, UI Extension Master Gardeners and members of the community provided over 900 hours of volunteer labor in the garden, at raffle sales, Farmers Markets, the Farm to Table event, GROW meetings, and in committee work. Many of our volunteers still work, some have gardens at home, and some are retired but have numerous volunteer responsibilities. We hope to bring more volunteers and members into our organization's endeavors in 2020.

The Garden Manager is GROW's only paid position. The Garden Manager plants, weeds, harvests, assists with clean up, handles scheduling of volunteers, attends meetings, assists with our Farm to Table event, and reports to the board on a variety of topics. We are fortunate to have Josh Nichols in that position; his knowledge of gardening and all it entails is invaluable. GROW officers and board members are listed below.

GROW continues its history of fiscal responsibility while maintaining its focus on providing healthy food to the community as mentioned above and seeking an expanded community awareness and support of food sustainability for Boundary County. Because of the costs of the Garden Manager, port-a-potty rental, water, and other miscellaneous expenses, we held one raffle this past year. Membership dues continue to assist us in our operations. Revenue from participation in three Farmers Markets helped us meet expenses and provided the opportunity to share our mission, interest people in joining and volunteering, and sell garden produce.

Trinity Lutheran continues to offer their land to us which supports GROW's work in the community by providing: healthy, organic produce to those in need, a place to grow food for those who are unable to garden where they live, a meeting place for community members, seasonal employment, organic gardening and food-related classes, volunteer opportunities in and out of the garden, and an introduction to adults and children to organic gardening, and more. We welcome TLC's input and involvement in any and all aspects of our organization.

Thank you!

Submitted by:

Kate Painter, PhD
UI Extension Educator
Boundary County

GROW Board Member

Officers:

President – Gray Henderson (as of Nov. 2019; Kate Painter previously)

Vice President – George Bevan

Secretary – Julie Newcomb

Treasurer -Gerry Ann Howlett

Board members: Marciavee Cossette, Deanna Lauber, Judi Nissen, Kate Painter

Website: www.GrowBoundaryCounty.org



Children showing off produce from the Children's Garden, TLC-GROW Garden, 2019.



Granite marker donated to mark the TLC-GROW Children's Garden plot.