

# 2022 Annual Report

## COMMUNITY UPDATES

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The 2022 Local Food Action Plan Annual Report Community Updates document contains crowdsourced updates provided by public, private, nonprofit, and other community partners. Updates are listed in alphabetical order by organization name and page numbers are listed in the table of contents.

The 2022 Annual Report includes two additional elements – an Executive Summary and an interactive [StoryMap](#) with videos, photos and interviews. Scan the QR Code to see our stories come alive in the StoryMap and visit [columbus.gov/LocalFoodActionPlan](https://columbus.gov/LocalFoodActionPlan) to download our reports and other resources.



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### Local Food Action Plan Goals:

 **A:** Enhance coordination and communication among existing food resources and agencies.

 **B:** Improve access to and education about healthy food, affordable food and local food.

 **C:** Increase the role of food in economic development.

 **D:** Prevent food-related waste.

 **Equity:** Advance a fair and just food system for ALL people, free of discrimination.

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## American Heart Association, Central Ohio

As a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives, the American Heart Association (AHA) is committed to driving forward sustainable solutions for nutrition security and in May 2022, published a policy statement on [Strengthening U.S. Food Policies and Programs to Promote Equity in Nutrition Security](#). As outlined in the statement, the intersection of nutrition and health presents an opportunity for organizations focused on food access and health to collaborate to support individuals at risk of nutrition insecurity.

To examine this further in central Ohio, the American Heart Association hosted a community-based workshop in June 2022 to help identify opportunities to enhance nutrition security through collaboration between those operating within and across the healthcare, food access and community sectors. This conversation brought together local community leaders working in food access and healthcare.

The full overview document reflecting workshop discussions, including topics such as current successes as well as challenges and gaps, is provided for reference. Opportunities and potential next steps for collaboration are also highlighted. The American Heart Association is currently working to identify actions in support of efforts to strengthen and/or build upon work being done to advance nutrition security in the community.

## Broad Street Presbyterian Church Food Pantry

In 2022, the Broad Street Food Pantry operated the Fresh for All project, paying nine local sustainable farms to deliver \$35,694 of fresh produce to the near east side food pantry. All farms selected represented at least one marginalized identity (BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, female, first generation or urban) and six were from Franklin County.

Selected farms then collaborated on a produce delivery schedule in the winter of 2022 that met the needs of the pantry shoppers and farm capacity. To alleviate the economic burden of the farms, they were pre-paid half of their expected produce value before the growing season began in a community-supported-agriculture model.

Each week between April and December 2022, the pantry received deliveries of fresh, local produce to supplement the pantry's regular offerings. Farmers enjoyed providing fruits and vegetables for their community and shared that "having a guaranteed sale on a bi-weekly schedule was nice." Pantry staff and shoppers appreciated the quality and variety of produce, none of which was wasted at the point of distribution.

The Fresh for All project meets a triple benefit of providing community members with fresh, healthy food, farmers with a guaranteed, meaningful source of income, and low-waste, low-transport resource use. The pantry and farmers hope to continue to refine their processes and expand to like-minded institutions in the coming years.

## Bronzeville Growers Market

The Bronzeville Growers Market (BGM) celebrated its fifth season of serving the near east side of Columbus, specifically within the community of Bronzeville. This anniversary was noteworthy in that this is an organic development, with limited access to federal funds and no city or state monies until late this year. BGM serves the community with affordable, nutritious produce in a culturally relevant setting with services related to needed resources. BGM joined the FarmSHARE (Serving Health and Racial Equity) program in 2020, which provided funding for produce. This partnership has enabled them to sell produce for \$1 per pound, while similar produce is sold at other local markets for five times that amount. This produce was also obtained from a certified, organic, African American, woman farmer based outside of Columbus.

BGM also has grown in the number and diversity of vendors that are represented. There are produce vendors, meat and fresh flower vendors, and artisans with various crafts. These vendors add flavor and an additional incentive for residents to visit the market. In addition, BGM has hosted weekly activities such as plant swaps, preparation of fresh produce, how to develop a container garden, and a celebration of National Farmers Market Week among others. Institutional partners have included the Wexner Medical Center, OSU Extension Services, the Columbus Fire Department, and Parks and Recreation among others. Each week, BGM also hosts live instrumental or vocal music. Besa has supported BGM with volunteers who have assisted vendors with unloading and loading their spaces.

BGM serves as a community hub during the summer as residents have access to a safe space to meet and mingle, discuss community affairs, and share new ideas. It also serves as a base for the Bronzeville Urban Growers, a network of neighborhood backyard growers who are often growing for the first time. Each family - which is provided with three 50 gallon bins, soil, soil additives, seeds and starter plants - is encouraged to attend market activities in general and specifically regarding growing. Some have gone on to produce and sell at the market while others produce only for the immediate family or dropped out of the program. BGM anticipates strengthening this arm during 2023.

### City-County Community Garden Grant

For over 12 years, the City of Columbus, Franklin County and Scotts Miracle-Gro have collaborated on an urban garden grant. The Earth Day event at Franklin Park Conservatory resumed its in-person celebration of urban agriculture this year after a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In an effort to secure food access and availability in neighborhoods, many communities took to growing their own food, which led to an increase of garden grant applicants - a trend expected to see in 2023. A total of 69 gardens were awarded this year, with the City of Columbus awarding 32 community gardens and the county awarding 37 gardens. Of the 32 city awardees, 19 (or 60%) were located in CelebrateOne neighborhoods.

Community gardens make a big impact on access to nutritious food, community engagement and vacant lot beautification, especially through partnership with the Land Bank. Urban agriculture benefits the local food system, economy and the environment.

### City-County Local Food Board - Zoning Recommendations Project Team



In January 2021, the Columbus & Franklin County Local Food Board created the Urban Agriculture Zoning Recommendations Project (Action C-6 of the Local Food Action Plan) to identify zoning recommendations and best practices that enable and support small scale urban agriculture in Franklin County. In early 2022, Franklin County concluded a semester partnership with The Ohio State University's City & Regional Planning program and received the final report from the studio titled "Zoning for Local Food." The OSU studio report identified top level recommendations for the allowance and regulation of urban agricultural activities, zoning code case studies examining best practices, and a collection of annotated references for background research. The Action C-6 Project Team, composed of members of the Local Food Board, the Franklin County Local Food Council, community members, and local government staff, engaged in a process to assess these findings and consider them for inclusion in the Project Team's future final report. The Project Team's work paused during the second half of 2022 as other priorities took precedence, including the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding recommendations and the Local Food Board's Racial Equity Study implementation. The Project Team's work will resume in 2023 with an aim toward publishing the final report by the end of the year.

## City-County Local Food Board - Racial Equity Study & Workshops



The Columbus and Franklin County Local Food Board collaborated with the Franklin County Local Food Council on the [Racial Equity Study](#) and strengthened/solidified their engagement through two racial equity workshops. The first workshop on June 30 focused on internal formation: the structure and function of both entities, and asked *if* the current structure and function of the Board and Council serve racial equity. Members arranged into small mixed groups to create a concept map around what kind of structure and function can serve racial equity. At the end of the workshop, each small group presented their concept maps and discussed the similarities and differences in each. The common themes in each conceptualization include:

- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Need to create intentional spaces for diverse community engagement.
- GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION: Need to have geographical representation - different areas of the city and county face different kinds of challenges and many challenges need a neighborhood level solution led by neighborhood residents.
- PAID EQUITY ADVISORS: Ensuring that community members who are engaging with us are compensated for their time.
- CONNECTING THE DOTS: Importance of joining groups and movements that are already in place and happening. No need to reinvent the wheel.
- POTENTIAL MERGER: Possibility of merging the Board and Council into one new entity that would include paid Equity Advisors or transitioning toward a “Food Equity Coalition” model as seen in other cities like Dayton and Baltimore.

The second Racial Equity Study workshop was on Oct. 7, where the focus of the conversation was the people and partnerships in the food system network. The workshop engaged in a network analysis activity and mapped both existing and emerging networks and highlighted the organizations that the board would like to prioritize partnering with as it broadens engagement to ensure that it sees, sows, serves and supports Black and brown communities through the Local Food Action Plan.

The next steps of the racial equity workshops include a second round of food system network analysis, with an addition of power lines to indicate the priority and capacity of partner organizations to engage in local food work. The network map functions as a model of how local food work is done by community organizations with local government funding in a coordinated way through community engagement and capacity building. The next phase of the Racial Equity Study will include an engagement strategy with each of the priority partnership organizations that will be created for and by communities in Columbus and Franklin County.

## City-County Recommended Local Food System ARPA Investments



The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) enacted [The Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds \(SLFRF\) program](#), which earmarked \$350 billion dollars for state and local governments to support their response to and recovery from the COVID-19 public health emergency. One of the allowable uses of these funds was to address the negative economic impacts of the pandemic, including supporting the health of communities and helping reduce the economic harms to households, small businesses, impacted industries, nonprofits, and the public sector.

Both the City of Columbus and Franklin County were awarded significant SLFRF dollars and both local governments identified the local food system as a key area of investment to address the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 and improve overall community health.

Starting in the second half of 2021, the City-County Local Food Team and City-County leadership engaged in discussions with a wide range of local food system stakeholders and a review of key existing plans (e.g., Local Food Action Plan, Rise Together: A Blueprint for Reducing Poverty, City

of Columbus Climate Action Plan, SWACO Food Waste Action Plan, LFAP Racial Equity Study) to identify key priority areas, shovel-ready projects, and community partners with the capacity and expertise to implement these projects. These discussions included appointed members of the City-County Local Food Board and members of the Franklin County Local Food Council.

While Franklin County and the City of Columbus have had separate and parallel processes, the City-County Local Food Team and members of the City-County Local Food Board have ensured consistent, clear and strategic coordination at every step. Both Franklin County and the City of Columbus decided early in the process to focus on addressing racial/health equity, expanding food access, and building local food economies from farm to fork and back to farm.

As of the end of 2022, the City of Columbus and Franklin County identified a series of recommended investments that, if implemented, would do the following:

- Expand funding for community gardens and the critical infrastructure that supports urban agriculture.
- Strengthen farm to school activities for pre-K-12 teachers and schools and create new opportunities for food and nutrition education through the Recreation and Parks system.
- Support BIPOC farmers and expand food access in low-income and disinvested neighborhoods.
- Create new sites for aggregating, processing, packaging, storing and distributing local food.
- Increase redistribution of foods in primarily disinvested communities in order to prevent food waste while improving future emergency food preparedness.
- Create a Food Equity Coalition that would include a range of key local food system partners.

In 2023, both Franklin County and the City of Columbus hope to begin distributing funding to community partners to implement these projects.

### City of Columbus - City Council

On July 25, Columbus City Council awarded \$1 million to the Mid-Ohio Food Collective in support of the agency's purchase of shelf-stable and fresh food. Columbus City Council was selected as one of 10 cities that will be part of the inaugural cohort of the National League of Cities' Race, Equity and Leadership (REAL) Institute. The REAL Institute will help teams of local leaders reflect on lessons learned and the challenges to strategically align priorities and structures to support governing for racial equity, build stronger buy-in and skills to navigate resistance, and build skills in infrastructure building and coalition building. Councilmember Favor and her team took a tour of the Mid-Ohio Food Collective's headquarters on Oct. 12.

### City of Columbus - Keep Columbus Beautiful

The City of Columbus hosted its first pumpkin composting drop-off for residents. This free service helped divert organic waste from going to the landfill and is a major step towards the city piloting food waste programs in the near future. The City of Columbus Department of Refuse plans to open five food waste drop-off sites in 2023.

### Columbus City Schools - Farm to School Program

The Columbus City Schools Farm to School program grows curiosity and confidence through community gardening in Ohio's largest school district. The program was founded in 2018, starting with 18 school gardens and growing to 78 school gardens by 2022. The goal of the program is to engage and educate students through experiential learning where students are engaged in hands-on experiences and reflection. Through these experiences, students plant, harvest and taste what they grow. Students learn about cooperation and the stewardship of caring for living things and are exposed to different career paths in agriculture. Teachers use integrated garden lessons to teach students the importance of where food comes from and the nutritional value of the produce grown. The program also provides an essential opportunity to discuss disparities in access to fresh

produce in underserved communities in central Ohio and the vital role food production plays in the local and larger economy. This program supports Goal B of the Local Food Action Plan: improves access to and education about healthy food, local food and affordable food.

This year, CCS Farm to School is participating in a pilot program through its partnership with OSU Extension, Growing Teachers through the Seasons, led by Carol Smathers and Tim McDermott. The goal is to create a step-by-step calendar-based curriculum for teachers to garden with their students throughout the school year. The program provided 47 participating teachers with indoor Aerogardens, LED grow stations, and soil for outdoor raised beds using season extension.

### **Community Development for All People**

The All People's Fresh Market, the key component of Community Development for All People's Healthy Eating and Living (HEAL) program, provides free, healthy food to central Ohio residents. Any household earning under 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline can visit the market and receive a basket of fresh produce once a day, each of the five days a week that the market is open. In 2022, the All People's Fresh Market saw a 20% increase in the number of families seeking food assistance compared to 2021. In 2022, the fresh market provided 72,107 baskets of fresh, healthy food to 13,667 unique families (43,415 individuals).

Many of the families served at the fresh market in 2022 had never utilized food assistance services before in their lives. Market members shared that inflation was taking a toll on their budgets and that the market helped alleviate some of that stress. Surveyed shoppers shared that the food they received through the fresh market helped to make a positive impact on the health of their families. Specifically, market members reported that the produce they get from the All People's Fresh Market has helped them better manage their chronic health conditions, lose weight, eat less junk food, and get their children and grandchildren to eat healthy food and enjoy it.

### **Community of Caring Development Foundation**

From its inception, the Community of Caring Development Foundation has lived out its daily mission to create a connected community. Its work primarily serves the Linden community, focusing on the 43211, 43219 and 43224 zip codes.

Racial Health & Equity - The Community of Caring Development Foundation operates several programs through a successful public/private partnerships model and have provided more than \$70,000 in academic scholarships and access to affordable housing for more than 1,000 families. Since 2018, the foundation has more than \$300,000 in community grants to serve youth and families in Linden. Funded programs include the Royal Oak Chess Academy, WE ARE LINDEN, the Sports Leadership Academy, the Parable Project, the Brick Initiative, Kingdom Image Arts, Our Brothers Keeper, and Remember Us Urban Scouts.

Food Insecurity - For over 10 years, the foundation has worked to address food insecurity through the Bread of Life Food Pantry, which has provided over 300,000 meals. In October 2022, it took over the operation of the Linden Fresh Market, located in south Linden. Since assuming operations, the Community of Caring Development Foundation has served an average of 135 families per day and has distributed over 180,000 pounds of food provided by the Mid-Ohio Food Collective.

Entering 2023, the foundation builds on what has been established by launching Leadership Linden, focused on equipping the next generation of Columbus community leaders and Linden100, a unique wealth building employment initiative that will give employees an ownership stake in the company where they work.

### **Council of Development Finance Agencies (CDFA)**

Linking development finance and food systems can be a daunting undertaking for any community. Research on the current ecosystem of food systems finance has positioned CDFA to identify key

strategies for the path ahead in this work. The [CDFA Food Systems Finance Best Practices Guidebook](#) defines how traditional development finance tools can be used to launch and expand food and agricultural-related businesses and projects, and create successful food systems finance programs at the local and regional levels.

### **Cultivate CDC**

Cultivate CDC's Milo-Grogan Garden Collective is a network of three garden sites in the Milo-Grogan neighborhood whose mission is to cultivate community through equitable food access and neighborhood beautification. Partners include the Milo-Grogan Civic Association, the Milo-Grogan Community Recreation Center and RTNI. In 2022, Cultivate launched its inaugural Summer Youth Garden Program, engaging five neighborhood youths in a summer-long, hands-on growing experience. Through the Garden Collective, over 50 boxes of produce were distributed to neighbors.

### **Economic Community Development Institute (ECDI)**

ECDI Food Fort works with entrepreneurs looking to start and grow their businesses in greater Columbus and central Ohio. ECDI's work focuses on business incubation, job creation in underserved communities and jobs that pay a prevailing wage. The work extends into SBA lending, allowing ECDI the ability to assist with capital needs for entrepreneurs who are underserved by traditional banking. Providing wrap around business support along with lending, ECDI is working to help Columbus' small food business owners grow along with their communities. In addition, ECDI manages an urban garden program in association with the Urban Farmers Coalition, providing free produce in food insecure neighborhoods and education around fresh and healthy food. ECDI is working to grow programming and impact in order to combat food insecurity and the number of food deserts in the area.

### **Family Adolescent Child Community Engagement Service (FACCES)**

The FACCES nonprofit is located at 2515 Lockbourne Rd., Columbus. FACCES provides services and resources to over 32 zip codes in central Ohio's urban communities. THE FACCES Food Education program engaged 10,638 people in 2022 and is committed to the overall health of children by supporting the caregivers that love them.

- FACCES Fresh Market provided 8,000 people with groceries and household items in 2022. Families can choose to receive items via the drive-through or through convenient, no cost delivery service.
- FACCES Urban Greenhouse is a classroom where community members learn about how they can grow food in their own home gardens. In partnership with Central State and Ohio State University, the curriculum covers agriculture, hydroponics and aquaponics. The 1,800 sq. ft. greenhouse/classroom houses an 800-gallon fish tank, garden beds and soilless growing structures that give participants a hands-on learning experience.
- FACCES Farm Stand is where the freshly harvested fish and vegetables are distributed on a weekly basis.
- The FACCES Kitchen hosts cooking classes where families cook under the direction of the FACCES resident Chef. Recipes include ingredients grown in the FACCES Urban Garden and foods distributed during FACCES Fresh Market.

Through the collaborative efforts of the youth, community members and partnerships, over 340,000 pounds of food have been distributed through the combined FACCES Food Education programs in 2022. Visit [www.TheFACCES.org](http://www.TheFACCES.org) for up-to-date program, services and volunteer opportunities.

### **FarmsSHARE**

In response to COVID-19 and its effects on Ohio farmers and urban growers, the Ohio Farmers Market Network created FarmsSHARE (Farms Serving Health and Racial Equity) in 2020. The



program was designed to address disruptions to the local food economy, specifically for direct-to-consumer producers experiencing delayed, altered or canceled farmers markets and restaurant relationships. More specifically, this program supports urban growers and Ohio farmers, community-based organizations who feed their communities, and Columbus residents with a focus on Black, Indigenous and people of color.

In year three, the Ohio Farmers Market Network built upon the previous two, welcoming a new host and evaluating the program through a Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA), conducted by Columbus Public Health. An REIA is a holistic assessment and racial equity evaluation conducted through a variety of methods which may include community scan (quick needs assessment, demographic data), short surveys, interviews, community input board, and small focus groups. In this case, the REIA team hopes to gain an understanding of key stakeholders' viewpoints of FarmsSHARE, thoughts about the sustainability and expansion of FarmsSHARE, and observations of needs or gaps within the program.

While the REIA results and program evaluations are not yet complete, FarmsSHARE can report \$20,000 worth of locally grown, Ohio produce purchased in 2022, and continued financial support to host organizations.

### **FarmsSHARE - Racial Equity Impact Assessment**

The FarmsSHARE program was piloted in 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown to address disruptions to the local food economy, specifically for direct-to-consumer producers experiencing delayed, altered, or canceled farmers markets and restaurant relationships. As stated in the program description, FarmsSHARE is a program to purchase fresh produce from Columbus urban growers and Ohio farmers, with an emphasis on Black, Indigenous and farmers of color, during the peak growing season to distribute weekly in communities of Black, Indigenous and people of color in Columbus, Ohio. With continuous funding from former Columbus City Councilmember Priscilla R. Tyson and the Kroger Zero Hunger Zero Waste Foundation, FarmsSHARE was able to extend its activities for an additional two years. With the program recently completing its third year and having sights on expansion and sustainability in the near future, Columbus Public Health's Center for Public Health Innovation (CPHI) conducted a Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA).

The purpose of this REIA was to ensure that the FarmsSHARE program continues to apply a racial equity lens to its current operations, programming and decision-making, and to inform future growth and expansion of the program to allow greater racial equity and inclusion. The REIA approach was grounded in the Principles for Equitable and Inclusive Civic Engagement (Kip Holley, 2016) and the Racial Equity Impact Toolkit by the Kirwan Institute (The Ohio State University) with a focus on inclusive language, acknowledgment of power and positioning, and lens of appreciative inquiry. The assessment's goals were to gain an understanding of key stakeholders' viewpoints of FarmsSHARE, stakeholders' thoughts about the sustainability and expansion of FarmsSHARE, and stakeholders' observations of needs or gaps within FarmsSHARE.

The CPHI Core Team interviewed the program's six growers and seven host sites, and also surveyed each host site's community. The team was able to gather 76 community surveys for the seven host sites. The report will be released in the winter of 2023 and will include recommendations on how to improve the FarmsSHARE program.

### **Food Rescue US - Columbus**

In 2022, Food Rescue US - Columbus added to its network 30 new donors of fresh food and 21 additional social service agencies that receive rescues of donated food. Food Rescue US - Columbus volunteers now complete 180+ rescues each week, from Grove City to Worthington and Hilliard to Whitehall. Five farmers markets, two secondary school kitchens and two hospital kitchens now regularly donate surplus food with us.

Food Rescue US - Columbus also has focused on reducing post-pantry waste, rescuing food that local food pantries cannot use or will not be able to distribute before it spoils. It now works with more than 10 pantry locations and has rescued thousands of pounds of food this year.

Finally, Food Rescue US - Columbus received a 2022 OHIZ grant from the Ohio Department of Health to produce and administer, in collaboration with community partners on the near west side, a needs assessment that helps identify what kinds of food and food assistance are available in the Franklinton and eastern Hilltop neighborhoods, what residents perceive to be their most significant barriers to food access and what resources would best help support resource pantries and other informal sources of food assistance. Many of the regular receiving agency partners on the west side provide resources without access to large-scale food bank assistance, and they are facing a variety of challenges due to gentrification, rising food costs and volunteer burnout. Food Rescue US - Columbus' goal is to understand residents' needs and ideas as well as the needs and opportunities experienced by resource providers in the area.

### **Franklin County Food Business Portal**

The Franklin County Food Business Portal connected food businesses and entrepreneurs with the valuable resources and services needed to play, launch and grow a business in Franklin County. The portal hosted over 2,200 unique site visits, with 78.5% of those coming from new visitors. Additionally, six food and agricultural business entrepreneurs were connected to direct services from OSU Extension and the Small Business Development Center.

### **Franklin County Local Food Council**

The Franklin County Local Food Council deepened its collaboration with the Local Food Board this year through engagement on the Racial Equity workshops. In the spirit of Kip's Racial Equity Study, the partnership helped to *embrace gifts of diversity* that both the Council and Board have, and strengthen internal formation. The dialogue on structure and function, and discoveries through network analysis mapping, will help shape future decisions as the Local Food Action Partners expand and broaden engagement with the greater community.

### **Franklin Park Conservatory & Botanical Gardens**

While lush gardens and biomes are what the Franklin Park Conservatory (FPC) is often known for, many of its programs also engage the community and educate gardeners. In 2022, FPC added the new Growing to Green class series, the Communal Garden. This free garden series focuses on vegetable production and cultivation techniques and is open to all gardeners - beginners and advanced.

This summer, 19 Teen Corps interns from 13 schools across the greater Columbus area participated in the eight-week program. Teens work and learn in a dedicated garden, growing produce and selling it through their stand at the conservatory's Farmers Market. The Farmers Market hosted 28 vendors, 17 of which were new, and there was no fee for vending. Of the vendors, 20 were BIPOC or women-owned, elevating economic opportunity for under-represented and economically marginalized business owners. The conservatory's market facilitated \$30,000 in sales by small business vendors, contributing directly to the local economy through person-to-person transactions. Throughout the summer season, \$8,009 in WIC benefits were redeemed at the market, along with \$2,960 in EBT (SNAP) and PP (Produce Perks) incentive dollars. Approximately 4,300 individuals shopped at the market throughout the summer, hailing in large part from zip codes 43203, 43205 and 43213.

Visiting the Franklin Park Conservatory and connecting with nature was made more accessible for 43,000 people who purchased Museums for All tickets (reducing ticket fees from \$25 to \$3 for people who participate in SNAP, EBT, WIC, and Medicaid) or attended Community Day - up 65% from last year.

## **Franklinton Farms**

Franklinton Farms is a nonprofit urban farm with a mission to nourish neighborhood wellbeing and connection through farming, gardening and education.

Franklinton Farms provides hyperlocal produce and offers garden education programs to Franklinton neighbors to create a more resilient, sustainable local food system. In response to food insecurity in Franklinton, Franklinton Farms offers sliding-scale prices, delivery, limited free distribution, a “U Pick” garden and other community garden spaces. Franklinton Farms continued its free warm season farm stand in south Franklinton, reaching the most isolated and vulnerable part of the community, which is predominantly Black and/or Somali American. It’s known that knowledge is integral to food sovereignty, and the Farms cultivates the skills for growing food in people of all ages. The Farms’ therapeutic and academic Garden Education initiatives served 700+ individuals in 2022 in schools and community spaces and on-site in the Patrick Kaufman Learning Garden.

Franklinton Farms softly launched its food truck, Lettuce ‘NJoy, in October 2022. It will be fully operationalized in 2023 to bring fresh vegetables and prepared, veg-forward meals (as well as tips for preparing veggies in the most delicious way possible) to the farthest reaches of Franklinton.

Franklinton Farms is also committed to partnering for food system resilience in other food-insecure Franklin County neighborhoods. The Farms is launching the Community Growers Network, a two-year initiative funded by USDA Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production program and Osteopathic Heritage Foundation, to convene civic and agricultural leaders embedded in eight vulnerable communities and support these Urban Growers who produce in and for their low-income neighborhoods.

## **Greater Columbus Growing Coalition**

The Greater Columbus Growing Coalition finished its 11th year of operation, growing membership to over 400 gardeners and successfully hosting over 150 flower and live plant drops in the City of Columbus. The Coalition participated in over a dozen events during National Garden Week, including garden tours and special events at eight member community gardens, OSU Waterman Farm and Franklin Park Conservatory. The program is committed to supporting civic agriculture by providing resources such as general liability insurance so its members can participate in farmers markets and scholarships to support member community garden projects.

## **Growing and Growth Collective**

Growing and Growth Collective (GGC) was founded in June 2020 by a small group of near east side residents who are concerned about the neighborhood’s longstanding history of concentrated poverty and food insecurity. The initial goal was to leverage one community garden on Greenway Avenue to amplify the number of local Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) in urban agriculture, but GGC quickly transformed into a network of six greenspaces and a team of volunteers that is now an initiative of PACT.

The mission of GGC is to improve health outcomes, deepen community engagement and foster economic empowerment through the facilitation of responsive, culturally-relevant and evidence-based programming centering on: agricultural education in cities; food access and affordability; comprehensive health and wellness; and, equitable community development.

Ultimately, GGC wants to aid in building a healthy relationship between BIPOC and the land. Volunteers are committed to fostering an empowering narrative around BIPOC engagement in agriculture and promoting agriculture as a multigenerational way of life for BIPOC, but in a manner that honors ancestral heritage and promotes dignity.

The Collective brings together novices, experts and anyone in between who wishes to build and strengthen land-based skills, acquire and maintain property for personal sustenance and food-oriented entrepreneurial endeavors, learn about the benefits of specific foods for good health, and help make fresh produce available to community members in a convenient and affordable way.

### Highland Youth Garden

In 2022, Highland Youth Garden (HYG) continued to serve the community by growing minds, growing food and growing community in partnership with its Hilltop neighbors. HYG grew nearly 4,000 pounds on site, all of which was donated to its low income community. Another 1,600 pounds of fresh produce was donated to HYG by another grower, totaling 5,600 pounds that were distributed via the free Garden Market to nearly 1,300 people, 84% of whom live on the Hilltop. HYG hosted 727 visits from elementary aged children during after school or summer hours and 2,667 visits from elementary aged students during the school day. The Green Teens worked a total of 2,207 hours earning \$11/hour to help the HYG garden and run the Garden Market, putting all those dollars into the pockets of Hilltop and Franklinton families. HYG also reduced food waste by composting on site. HYG is grateful for support from Franklin County and the City of Columbus, which will allow the group to offer its first Summer Garden Camp in 2023.

### The Kroger Co.

As Ohio's grocer, Kroger's core business provides convenient access to affordable food, medication, health services, essential supplies and more for its associates, customers and communities. In 2022, the Kroger Columbus Division directed over \$4 million in charitable giving - including food and funds - to local non-profit organizations in Columbus and Franklin County. Of this, \$2.5 million focused on improving food security in communities where the Kroger Co. operates, reflecting its Zero Hunger|Zero Waste mission.

Kroger is proud to support the following organizations through funding and associate volunteerism: Columbus Urban League, Mid-Ohio Food Collective, Stonewall Columbus, YWCA Columbus, LifeCare Alliance, Kaleidoscope Youth Center, African American Male Wellness Initiative, Jewish Community Center, UNCF Columbus, the Community Shelter Board, and many more great organizations within Columbus and Franklin County.

### LifeCare Alliance

LifeCare Alliance serves Franklin County with an array of nutrition services addressing the needs of underserved and vulnerable populations.

Since 1973, LifeCare Alliance has been the Meals-on-Wheels provider for Franklin County. During the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for meals grew to 70% above pre-pandemic levels. In 2022, this demand remained high and shows no signs of receding. In 2022, LifeCare Alliance delivered nearly 1.1 million meals to 6,175 Franklin County residents.

LifeCare Alliance further meets the nutritional needs of Franklin County seniors through 26 community dining centers. This includes Carrie's Café, where seniors gather for hot meals, companionship and a variety of activities. The dining centers re-opened post-COVID-19 pandemic in 2022, and 3,000 clients received 54,000 meals through the program.

In 2022, LifeCare Alliance also provided 4,342 deliveries to Franklin County households where at least one family member was actively battling cancer. These deliveries represented more than 190,993 meals for families living at 150% of the federal poverty level.

The agency further served 130 individuals in Franklin County living with HIV/AIDS. These clients received 15,000 home delivered meals and 200 personalized grocery orders representing 5,000 meals.

From its humble beginnings in 1898 when the concern was assuring that babies had access to a supply of safe milk in order to curb infant mortality, to today when the focus is keeping seniors, and those with medical challenges safe, independent and living in their own homes, LifeCare Alliance has always led the way in addressing food insecurity for the most vulnerable of Franklin County's citizens.

## **Local Matters**

2022 was a momentous year for Local Matters.

Local Matters elevated its food access work through the launch of the Veggie Van mobile app and implementation of delivery services, expanding the community's ability to conveniently access fresh, affordable and high-quality produce. Local Matters' 16 community gardens flourished this year, providing a safe and welcoming foundation for food education programming and on-site partners, as well as producing fresh produce for the Veggie Van.

Local Matters engaged a variety of people in its food education programming – from preschool to senior living facilities – and held its first community cooking classes in the on-site Education Center. Local Matters' educators led classes at 10 Columbus Recreation and Parks Department sites this summer using an inclusive and hands-on curriculum that allowed students to explore different countries and cultures from their own classrooms.

Local Matters launched its Community Advocates Group in January and in the months following, group members met with elected officials, representatives of corporate partners and attended AG Noir Day at the Ohio Statehouse. Through their monthly meetings, the Community Advocates discussed critical topics like emergency food preparedness and provided constructive feedback on Local Matters' services.

Local Matters released its most extensive Voters Guide to date with candidate questions focused on food access, education and advocacy. Additionally, Local Matters saw rekindled volunteer engagement following the pandemic through events like garden clean-ups with partners like Fifth Third Bank.

In total, Local Matters reached over 10,000 people with food access and education in 2022.

## **Lutheran Social Services (LSS) Food Pantries**

LSS Food Pantry distributions in Franklin County provided over 1.2 million meals to 32,330 unduplicated people from January – November 2022. The hub on Champion Avenue offers online ordering and generous amounts of healthy, fresh food five days a week. LSS weekly drive thru distribution in partnership with Linden's Church on Oakland Park serves 300 households in two hours on Wednesdays. LSS pantries served 49 Franklin County zip codes in 2022, but the top zip codes are on the south side (2,000 households) and Linden (over 1,500 households).

LSS is partnering with local growers, including South Side Family Farms and The Garden District, to create the Champion Avenue Community Garden adjacent to the LSS pantry. The goals are to promote racial and health equity, provide opportunities for community development and contribute to the development of a healthy food system on the south side. These growers have also provided fresh produce for those LSS serves.

In partnership with the Mid-Ohio Food Collective, LSS distributed 935,000 pounds of produce in Franklin County in 2022. The strong direct retail partnerships have allowed LSS to divert over a million dollars' worth of frozen meat and fresh bread from landfills to kitchen tables.

A recent capstone project completed by an OSU Medical Dietetics program intern revealed that LSS offers over 75 servings of fresh fruits and vegetables to each household at every visit. A full shop provides five days' worth of food per person per visit.

### **Methodist Theological Seminary of Ohio (MTSO)**

In 2022, MTSO continued its food justice work in Franklin County and the surrounding areas in a variety of ways, including:

- Supported four graduate level interns with internship stipends. These interns worked in Columbus neighborhoods and programs through the community food and wellness initiative, including one at LSS Food Pantries, two at Franklinton Farms (one simultaneously at Food Leads), and one in the Hilltop at Sacred Table.
- Provided ongoing deliveries of fresh Seminary Hill Farm produce to the LSS Food Pantries, Food Leads, and Sanctuary Night in Columbus and LSS Food Pantry and PIN of Delaware.
- Served as a partner with Franklinton Farms to support the new Columbus Grower's Network.
- Hosted a group of students from HBCUs for a Food Sovereignty event with Rev. Heber Brown through a Lilly grant.
- Continued to provide courses that explore issues of racial/health equity, food sovereignty, food justice, access, impacts of climate change on directly impacted communities and related.

### **Mid-Ohio Food Collective**

The Mid-Ohio Food Collective (MOFC) saw unprecedented demand for food assistance in 2022 throughout its 20-county service area due to ongoing fallout from the pandemic and historic inflation. In Franklin County alone, the first 10 months of 2022 saw nearly 750,000 customer visits representing 121,000 families – a double digit increase from the previous year - alongside a significant spike in first-time customers. Nearly 38 million pounds of groceries were distributed in Franklin County, including 25.3 million pounds of fresh food.

Critical in meeting this dramatic increase was support from the Franklin County Commissioners, who provided \$2.5 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars and the City of Columbus, which granted \$1 million in ARPA funds. These dollars were critical in offsetting inflationary and supply chain issues.

Two Mid-Ohio Markets opened in 2022, providing expanded food options and social services access. The Mid-Ohio Market at Norton Road serves the local Latinx community by providing culturally appropriate food and dual language services. It also offers housing counseling to offset the area's high eviction rate. The second Market was a transition of St. Stephen's in the Linden area into a Mid-Ohio Market, offering greater food availability in conjunction with social services.

The Mid-Ohio Farm on the Hilltop has begun construction to provide locally grown fresh food while serving as an agricultural educational center for urban residents. The past year saw the opening of Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4, with an emphasis on providing food and gardening space to a large community of new Americans.

### **Mid-Ohio Market at Columbus State Community College (CSCC)**

The Mid-Ohio Market at Columbus State (located at 400 Grove St. on the Columbus campus) is a source of nutritious food for students who are struggling to provide food for themselves and their families so they can more fully concentrate on their education without worrying about consistent access to fresh produce and other staples, and the community at large.

In 2020, CSCC partnered with the Hope Center for College Community and Justice at Temple University to deploy the #RealCollege Survey. Among survey respondents approximately 39% of survey respondents experienced low or very low levels of food security. Moreover, 40% of survey

respondents could not afford to eat balanced meals and 42% worried about running out of food before they had money to buy more food. Additionally, 33% of students cut the size of meals or skipped meals; 31% ate less than they felt they should because there wasn't enough money for food; and 18% reported losing weight because there wasn't enough money for food. Food insecurity affects students' personal life and academic performance. This study also found that female students, Pell-grant recipients, first-generation, LGBTQ, parent, African American or Black, and Native American students experience basic needs insecurities at a higher rate at CSCC.

Students who used the market had a higher success rate and were retained at a higher rate than the overall undergraduate student population. Between Jan. 1 to Dec. 13, 2022, the Mid-Ohio Market at Columbus State had 20,021 service events, reaching 3,396 unique families and 11,455 individuals.

### **Ohio Department of Agriculture - Ohio Proud**

In 2022, the Ohio Department of Agriculture's (ODA) marketing program Ohio Proud added more than 20 school districts to the "On the Menu" program. Schools may use the Ohio Proud logo if serving local, Ohio Proud foods in their cafeterias. This activity is part of ODA's Farm to School (F2S) Grant, which also has created regional team leads within the existing statewide network to better communicate and share F2S resources in geographic areas.

ODA and the Ohio State University Extension kicked off a third year of Ohio's Victory Gardens in 2022. Thousands of seed kits were available for free to the public to get people planting their own gardens at home. This program received a Specialty Crop Block Grant to expand the program to additional counties in 2023.

The department launched a "Zero Waste Space" pilot at the Ohio State Fair. In this space, fairgoers are encouraged to limit waste and learn what can be composted and recycled. ODA partnered with commodity livestock organizations in the Taste of Ohio Building to use compostable products in their food service. The pilot will continue in 2023 and expand to other areas of the fair in following years.

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks, Ohio Department of Jobs & Family Services and ODA announced a new Ohio CAN (Community, Agriculture & Nutrition) program. Historically underrepresented producers can sell food to the Ohio Association of Foodbanks and the products will be distributed to Ohioans in need through the 12 Feeding America food banks and 3,600 member charities across all counties.

### **Ohio Farmers Market Network (OFMN)**

The conclusion of the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grant, "Growing Central Ohio Markets Through Public/Private Partnerships: Planned Growth, Professional Development and Collaborative Branding for Farmers, Food Producers and Market Managers" in the fall of 2021 did not conclude the work of the Ohio Farmers Market Network (OFMN) and central Ohio farmers market managers and vendors. In fact, the immense impact of COVID-19 during the second half of the grant requires OFMN to recommit itself to strengthening central Ohio farmers markets through communication, collaboration and professional development.

Thankfully, most central Ohio farmers markets reopened. For some, those openings welcomed new leadership, new vendors and a new vision for their market's role in serving the community and food producers. But for some, those openings also came with a great sense of loss - market managers who moved on to other work, vendor businesses which closed under the pressure of a closed economy, and individuals who perished from COVID-19. Even so, this "reset" of life and economy has been met with hopefulness and dedication to the future of a resilient, reliable regional food system.

In 2023, the OFMN network will focus on in-person networking and professional development opportunities, including the return of the Central Ohio Vendor Fair, the Market Manager Certificate Program and the Ohio Farmers Market Conference. Supporting the people who power farmers markets is a top priority for OFMN, and the foundation to a strong, sustainable farmers market community.

### **Ohio Food Policy Network (OFPN) - Virtual Convening on High Tunnels**



The City-County Local Food Team (Karima Samadi and Brian Estabrook) led a statewide conversation on behalf of OFPN to discuss best practices, statewide challenges, and advocacy opportunities related to the use of high tunnels. High tunnels are a key agricultural tool that allow for year round growing in urban, suburban, and rural settings. The Virtual Convening panel educated participants on what high tunnels are and how they work and then moderated a vibrant discussion on current challenges related to state and local building/zoning code policies. In addition to the Local Food Team, the panel included Dr. Brittany Jones (Growing Back to Your Roots, Toledo) and Dr. Matt Kleinhenz (OSU Extension, OSU CFAES).

As a result, the Local Food Team met with the City of Columbus Building and Zoning Services Department to discuss and confirm that high tunnels within Columbus are exempt from building code standards, reducing the barriers for local growers.

### **The Ohio State University - Buckeye Institutional Supported Agriculture (ISA)**



In 2022, ISA wrapped up the Buckeye ISA program by connecting agriculture education-focused nonprofits and home gardeners in the ISA network with resources that would allow project stakeholders to continue carrying out the Buckeye ISA mission (teaching gardening and promoting agriculture and health literacy) beyond the grant period, which ends at the end of this year. Big accomplishments from this year include setting up Franklinton households with a community tool library, supporting the construction of a farm stand that will be run by South Side Family Farms on Thurman Avenue, and providing all active ISA participants with materials that will allow them to continue growing in future seasons. ISA facilitated connections between ISA households and OSU student organizations, courses and interns and highlighted the program during field trips and a panel at the Sustainable Agriculture Education Association conference, which spawned connections between ISA community partners and education-industry stakeholders. OSU staff helped ISA participants apply to six grants this year that will continue this work. (No award results have been announced yet.) Going forward, all of the groups involved in the program (led by organizations around Columbus and SE Ohio) have independent plans to continue this work and continue supporting their most engaged households.

### **The Ohio State University - Food Recovery Network Chapter**



The Ohio State University Chapter of the Food Recovery Network has documented the recovery of at least 6,291 pounds of food from various Ohio State Dining Services outlets during the fall 2022 semester which was then transferred to local agencies seeking to provide nutrition to clients. A similar amount was likely recovered during the spring 2022 semester, however, collection amounts could not be confirmed. The chapter looks forward to 2023 when a new app developed through a partnership between the chapter and local non-profit Transitus as part of Engie's Smart Campus Challenge initiative will be deployed to streamline data collection and help university and community partners visualize the amount of food recovered by the chapter.

### **The Ohio State University - Franklin County Extension**



- Master Gardener Volunteers grew and donated over 22,243 pounds of fruits, vegetables and herbs to 24 different neighborhood food pantries in Franklin County.



- The Urban ROOTS (Reshaping Outreach Opportunities through Self-Discovery launching for Franklin County youth) program kicked off October 2022. Urban ROOTS is a collaboration with the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, the Ohio State University, the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES), OSU Extension Franklin County and local community partners. Eighth graders from the urban core of Franklin County will experience hands-on and immersive learning opportunities that focus on food, agriculture, the environment and related technologies in their lives.
- Shared education through the Extension Today outreach partnership with NBC4. Completed the six-month pilot, reaching 2.7 million individuals to educate on food production, improved nutrition, healthy food preparation, and personal and financial wellness.
- The Agriculture and Natural Resources program taught 111 educational programs during the year on local food production topics for 13,745 Franklin County residents through in-person programs, hybrid programs, webinars and videos.
- Extension educators provided pilot testing an Agriculture in the Classroom project, "Growing Teachers Throughout the Seasons" with 47 Columbus City School teachers. This is a STEM-based workforce development in agriculture project creating experiential extensions of the classroom to engage elementary school youth in the opportunities in agriculture as a career path.

### The Ohio State University - Middle East Center

Melinda McClimans is leading a group that is creating a cultural heritage learning place that focuses on sustainable agriculture as a part of African American community and history. Members of South Side Family Farms, The Ohio State University and other members of the Columbus community are coming together to foster a value of cultural knowledge in relation to food and health outcomes and understanding how it is all interconnected. The main goal is to inspire young BIPOC individuals to become farmers.

### The Ohio State University - Zero Waste Initiative

One of Ohio State's most ambitious goals is to achieve Zero Waste by diverting 90% of waste away from landfills through recycling, composting, reuse, food rescue and waste prevention. In 2022, Ohio State launched an expanded composting program, increasing the buildings with composting service from 39 to over 120. The Zero Waste Initiative is striving to maximize back-of-house organics diversion efforts, as well as launch more robust front-of-house, student-centered programming. Ohio State implemented a multifaceted approach to composting, including installing over 100 new public-facing green composting bins and purchasing 5,000 individual bins for students, adding a new composting vehicle to the FOD fleet, and implementing a robust peer-to-peer education campaign to teach students how to compost. The in-person, peer-to-peer training experience gives student volunteers the tools to educate their peers about the value of integrating sustainability into their daily lives by adopting a new composting behavior. Through this program, the Zero Waste Initiative hopes Ohio State students will develop into sustainability leaders on and off campus.

Seven new drop-off locations have been established at Ohio State for staff, faculty and off-campus students. Four of the faculty and staff drop-offs were supported by a 2022 SWACO Community Waste Reduction Grant, totaling nearly \$10,000. Additionally, Ohio State collects food scraps from large-scale events, including home football games hosted at Ohio Stadium and events at the Schottenstein Center.

Ohio State also has many passionate student groups dedicated to fight food waste and hunger. Food Recovery Network collects food five days per week from food service locations on campus to donate food to community organizations, while a student organization called "Know Food Waste" has continued the photo competition initiative to spread awareness about food waste reduction and supports the student compost drop-off.

## **Osteopathic Heritage Foundations - Local Food System Investments**



The Osteopathic Heritage Foundation (Foundation) approved \$3.4 million in support of its Healthy Food Access funding strategy to reduce hunger and improve health outcomes for low-income populations in Franklin County.

Of this support, \$887,300 was approved in June 2022 to support four organizations under the Healthy Food, Healthy Franklin County Request for Proposals (RFP). The RFP was informed by key strategies and goals in the Local Food Action Plan (LFAP) which align with the Foundation's goal: To reduce hunger and improve health outcomes by increasing access to fresh, healthy, affordable and local food in Franklin County. The funded organizations include:

- Franklinton Farms: \$140,000 to provide nutrition education and increase local food production, distribution and consumption among low-income residents of Franklinton, and build capacity in other low-income neighborhoods through the Community Growers Network.
- Mid-Ohio Food Collective: \$275,000 to significantly increase the production and distribution of local, healthy food in the Hilltop and support the Farm Mentorship Program at the Mid-Ohio Farm.
- PACT: \$168,050 to provide agricultural training and increase local, healthy food production and consumption to improve community health on the near east side. Funding supports the collaborative work of Broad Street Presbyterian Church, Growing and Growth Collective, and Bronzeville Growers Market and AgriAcademy.
- Produce Perks Midwest: \$304,250 to replicate a produce prescription program serving low-income individuals with chronic diseases and expand nutrition-based programming for vulnerable, pregnant women in Franklin County.

Three additional Healthy Food Access funding awards from the foundation support its dual strategy of building capacity and supporting innovation within the emergency food system, while simultaneously investing in system efforts designed to increase access, affordability and consumption of healthy and local food in underserved communities in Franklin County. The funded organizations include:

- Dublin Food Pantry: \$125,000 to build capacity to meet the growing demand for emergency food in the community, and to increase access to and consumption of healthy food among vulnerable populations.
- LifeCare Alliance: \$450,000 to increase capacity of the Meals-on-Wheels home delivery program, serving the health and nutrition needs of older adults and individuals with medical challenges in Franklin County.
- Mid-Ohio Food Collective: \$2 million to launch the Mid-Ohio Market on the west side.

## **Produce Perks Midwest**

In 2022, Produce Perks Midwest, in partnership with Local Matters and the Ohio Nutrition Incentive Network, served food insecure households throughout Franklin County while strengthening local food economies and building equity and resiliency within local food systems.

Produce Perks: 15 Franklin County farmers markets, farm stands, mobile markets and grocery stores participated in the Produce Perks SNAP-matching Nutrition Incentive program. The Produce Perks Program served 1,000+ households, generating approximately \$100,000 in SNAP sales and \$60,000 in fruit/vegetable purchases among SNAP recipients.

The Fruit & Vegetable Coupon Program, funded through the State of Ohio, expands the number of individuals served in Ohio's nutrition incentive programming. Through a network of community partners, the program enrolled 80 Franklin County eligible households (200% of the federal

poverty line with minor children living in household) and distributed \$240 per family (a total of \$19,200) in fruit/vegetable coupons redeemable at any Produce Perks location (direct-to-consumer markets).

In August, PPM launched its Infant Vitality Produce Prescription (PRx) program in Franklin County, in partnership with Nationwide Children's Hospital, with a target enrollment of 140 pregnant teens. PRx programming provides incentives for fruits and vegetables for food insecure patient households in partnership with healthcare providers. Through monthly healthcare provider visits, enrolled patients receive health and nutrition education and access to affordable healthy foods through produce prescriptions. The Infant Vitality PRx program provides nutrition security for women at risk of poor birth outcomes, enhancing maternal and infant health within Ohio counties with the highest Black infant mortality rates.

### **Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO)**

- SWACO helped support the launch of new Food Waste Drop-Off programs in Gahanna, Whitehall and New Albany in 2022. Franklin County is now home to drop-off locations across 10 communities which together composted more than 535,092 of food waste and over 330,000 pounds of pumpkins in 2022. The City of Columbus received a SWACO grant this year to set up three sites of its own in 2023.
- The Save More Than Food (SMTF) campaign is projected to have over 10 million impressions in 2022, meaning that over 10 million individuals potentially saw the campaign through social media and digital ads, television and billboards.
- As part of their drop-off program launch, Gahanna and Whitehall ran the SMTF campaign, reaching over 15,000 residents between the two communities about the topic of food waste, how residents can prevent wasted food at home, and how to participate in their new drop off program.
- SWACO conducted a market study on commercial food waste diversion opportunities. Interviews with 30 large-scale food waste generators in the region will provide insights to what businesses are already doing to reduce food waste and what opportunities and barriers exist to doing more. The report is forthcoming and will be used to inform a strategy for engaging businesses and future programming and service offerings.
- SWACO is undergoing a two-step competitive process to identify a private partner with whom to design, build and operate a composting facility that would accept Franklin County food waste, yard waste and other compostable materials. SWACO anticipates completing the competitive process in the coming months.
- The New York Times praised SWACO's food waste reduction and recycling efforts in an article titled "[How Central Ohio Got People To Eat Their Leftovers.](#)"

### **South Side Family Farms**

2022 Highlights:

- Grew produce and distributed 240 CSA-style boxes for FarmsSHARE in south Columbus and other underserved communities.
- Sold produce at four farmers markets, two in underserved communities and all which accepted Produce Perks.
- Engaged in five formative sessions with 8th graders from South High School on community building, civic engagement and agricultural awareness and necessity.
- Hosted three cooking demonstrations with Intuition Nutrition and SNAP-Ed.
- Hosted seven youth through a City Council-funded workforce development project with three other Black farms.
- Hosted four OSU student organizations in STEM and marketing related activities.
- Hosted four collaborative volunteer events with: The Mission Continues, youth from Nationwide Children's Upward Bound Program and OSU CFAES students.
- Expanded production area by one acre and planted cover crop.

- Began construction of a new garden site at Lutheran Social Services Champion Avenue Pantry that will be used for community growing and nutritional education and a Farm Stand that will be complete by the end of the year and serve as a food storage and access point in south Columbus.
- Attended conferences, workshops, and training, including Sustainable Agriculture Education Association Conference, Black Farmers Conference, Stinner Summit, Food Sovereignty Workshop, Wallace Foundation Food Security Network training with Malik Yakini, National Farm to School Network Conference, and Ohio School Garden Conference.
- Employed two interns from Ohio State and two Americorps VISTA indirect volunteers.
- Awarded funding by USDA for the Franklinton Farms-led Community Growers Network that includes five other Black-owned farm enterprises.
- Received mentoring from SCORE on nonprofit management and business plan development.

### **St. Stephen's Community House and Linden McKinley STEM Academy**



St. Stephen's Community House, in partnership with Linden McKinley STEM Academy Urban Agriculture Career Pathway, operates a one-acre Urban Farm focusing on STEM-based Farm to School experiences and learning activities. Since July 2021, the two have been able to re-start farm production, utilizing high school students as well as staff from Linden McKinley. In 2022, the farm produced over 2,000 pounds of produce, which was distributed through the Mid-Ohio Market at St. Stephen's.

In the past year, St. Stephen's and Linden McKinley STEM Academy have incorporated Urban Agriculture principles into their STEM curriculum (After-School programming and Summer Science Camp) with hands on-learning in the Urban Farm. Linden McKinley students participated in installing water pipes, concrete work and vertical growing towers.

### **The Urban Farmers Coalition**

The Urban Farmers Coalition (UFC) is an ecosystem with a two-pronged approach that addresses issues of food insecurities, economic disparities and equity among African American neighborhoods. UCF consists of strategic partnerships that include community members, organizations, small & large businesses, and industry experts who understand working collectively within each partner's expertise or gift and maximizing the community impact.

- UFC distributed over 35,000 pounds of food to the urban community in 2022.
- Distributed over 7,000 pieces of print material promoting food access and education.
- Hosted 10 monthly community conversations with chefs, food trucks and over 25 varieties of urban gardens were represented.
- Developed a 10-week education program that provides graduates with a post-secondary certification in sustainable agribusiness approved by the board of education that launches in March 2023.

UCF is working on solutions in food desert communities all year long through education, community conversations, workforce development and culinary experiences with outcomes such as:

- Building awareness among community members, in 43207, 43205, 43211, 43206, 43210, 43232, and 43203, teaching them what a healthier lifestyle looks like in print, digital and event outreach.
- Equipping 500 community members with tools and resources that help them make healthier lifestyle choices.
- Creating career pathways within the agriculture and culinary industries. Educate and certify community members through the Urban Farmers Coalition "Teach the Grower" 10-week course. UFC partners with other education options within the network.

- Referring 500 community members to career pathway programs or to workforce opportunities.
- Connecting 30 urban gardens to additional farmers' markets to promote more sales of produce, products and services.
- Engaging 15,000-20,000 community members annually.

### What Chefs Want!

In 2022, What Chefs Want!'s (WCW's) Columbus distribution center increased sales of small, regionally grown and produced products by more than 77% over the previous year. As a result, in 2022 the WCW! Columbus distribution center delivered at least \$2.455 million in products marketed by WCW's Local Food Connection team or purchased from small Columbus-area producers by WCW's commodity purchasers.

More than 471 distinct local products were sold, showing an increase of 58 new local products added during the 2022 calendar year that had not been available in 2021. And, the number of WCW! Columbus orders that contained local food item codes more than doubled compared to 2021.

Columbus-area products that are brought into the WCW center in Columbus are also made available to other cities throughout the region, representing an excellent opportunity for local producers.

Results come from a dedicated effort by the Local Food Connection department to work with WCW's Columbus expert staff and with many teams across the larger distribution company. The goals have been to increase practices that introduce more local food into regular distribution work, build infrastructure and processes that store more local food within the Columbus warehouse, and onboard more vendors and more clients who have an interest in local food.

WCW! Columbus is proud to be part of the network of partners committed to local food and seeks to continue to integrate more local food into company-wide strategies and to increase its external partnerships in 2023.