



# The Giving Common

An Initiative of the Boston Foundation

[www.thegivingcommon.org](http://www.thegivingcommon.org)

## Growing Places Garden Project, Inc.



### General Information

325 Lindell Avenue  
Leominster, MA 01453 0145  
(978) 598-3723 801

**Website**

[www.growingplaces.org](http://www.growingplaces.org)

**Organization Contact**

Joanne Foster [staff@growingplaces.org](mailto:staff@growingplaces.org)

**Year of Incorporation**

2001

# Statements & Search Criteria

## **Mission Statement**

At Growing Places (GP), we believe in the power of gardening to improve lives. We help individuals, families, and communities realize the many health, economic, and social benefits of gardening by building gardens and the skills to maintain them in low-income communities in central Massachusetts.

## **Background Statement**

In 2001, Harvard, Massachusetts residents Kate Deyst and Cindy Buhner were inspired to launch the Growing Places Garden Project by the story of Dan Barker, founder of the Home Gardening Project Foundation, who in 1984 began donating raised-bed vegetable gardens to needy people in the Portland, Oregon area. Kate and Cindy believed they could bring the power of gardening to communities in central Massachusetts. In their first season, they built five gardens using their own tools and hard work. Since that modest beginning, Growing Places has created over 250 gardens and provided support to over 1,000 low-income people in North Central Massachusetts. Organizationally, GP has successfully matured beyond its founding board and unpaid volunteer staff. In November, 2012, the GP board of directors voted in its third generation of officers.

## **Impact Statement**

Collaborations with partner organizations and individual gardeners, along with the support of thousands of volunteers, have made it possible for us to build gardens and grow gardeners across the region. A few samples of some of our most recent projects include;

- 3 School Gardens in Fitchburg—provide nourishment for the mind and body for hundreds of school children.
- A senior center deck in Leominster—10 container gardens line the sundrenched deck of the Leominster Senior Center providing a healthy, community building activity and access to fresh, healthy vegetables for 10 low-income seniors.
- A veteran's home in Gardner—at the edge of the parking lot at the residential home for 11 single, low-income vets, 4 raised bed gardens offer fresh, affordable food and a healthy outlet for stress reduction and overall mental wellbeing.
- A reclaimed lot in Fitchburg—the Prichard Street Garden helped to reclaim a vacant, trash strewn lot in downtown Fitchburg. In partnership with the Twin Cities CDC, the community garden provides access to affordable, healthy fruits and vegetables to 9 low-income households and has helped to build a sense of pride in enjoyment the Elm St. neighborhood.

GP has identified the following strategic goals and programming priorities for FY2013:

- Development and implementation of impact assessment metrics and tools aligned with the new GP logic model,
- Strategic participation in regional collaborations addressing socially just food systems.
- The development and implementation of a comprehensive volunteer recruitment, retention and evaluation strategy;
- Development of program and project models that are adaptable to meet the needs of the individuals, families, and communities we work with; and,
- The development of programs and activities which can develop and build a network of gardeners who can support each other, and help to sustain gardening in the region.

## **Needs Statement**

- 1) 1. Capacity: We struggle to keep up with the demand for our services. We need a staff position dedicated to operations and volunteer recruitment and coordination. At 30 hours a week this would require an additional \$25,000 a year, at a minimum, in operating support.
2. Capital: We need additional tools and equipment to support our gardening installation and maintenance. A few key items include: Pick Up Truck—6 foot bed, doesn't have to be new, but in good condition--\$15,000-\$30,000, 4-6 Hand Drills—for building frames and frame repairs--\$200-\$400 each
3. New Office Space: we currently maintain two spaces, an office and a warehouse. We would like to find one space where we could bring both aspects of our operations under one roof. We need an office to accommodate 4-5 people, a small meeting space, and warehouse space at a minimum of 2000 sq feet, with a loading dock. Cost up to \$1500 month, adding \$8400 to our annual operating expenses.
4. Volunteers: To serve 50 gardeners each year, we need to recruit, train and support 50 mentors.
5. Organic Garden Materials: We would like to have the ability to create our own compost or develop a partnership with an organic compost developer who would supply to our gardeners at free or little cost. The same goes for seedlings. Our ideal would be to have our own greenhouse facility to start and care for seedlings.

## Service Categories

Community & Neighbourhood Development

Nutrition

## Geographic Areas Served

Growing Places prioritize opportunities to work in areas of greatest need, where we can build upon existing projects and that of our partners, in Clinton, Fitchburg, Leominster, Gardner, and Shirley [but consider other towns on a case by case basis].

Please review online profile for full list of selected areas served.

# Programs

## **Building Gardens**

<b>Description</b>	GP installs raised bed and container food gardens in backyards, community and institutional settings. Groups of volunteers help install the gardens and they are designed based on need and for sustainability. All garden beds and/or containers, soil and amendments, seeds and seedlings and educational materials are supplied at no cost for two years to all GP Gardeners. After the second year, GP gardeners will be invited to purchase materials at discounted prices through a GP Gardener Club.
<b>Budget</b>	\$75,000
<b>Category</b>	Community Development, General/Other Community Development, General/Other
<b>Population Served</b>	Poor, Economically Disadvantaged, Indigent, Families, Children and Youth (0 - 19 years)
<b>Program Short Term Success</b>	In the short term we aim to reduce the barriers and improve access to fresh, healthy produce, to see our garden recipients increase their intake of fresh, healthy foods, to build their skills and confidence in growing, harvesting and using the food from their gardens, to increase physical and outdoor activity, improve a sense of emotional wellbeing and increased pride in enjoyment in neighborhoods and to promote sustainable gardening practices. Lastly we seek to provide meaningful and satisfying volunteer opportunities.
<b>Program Long term Success</b>	Our long term goal is that the gardens will be sustainable and that 80% of gardeners will continue gardening after 5 years. We hope to see a decrease in the use of pesticides/herbicides/fertilizers by GP gardeners, increased use of healthy soil management practices, including composting, and sustainable water management, including use of rain barrels.
<b>Program Success Monitored By</b>	Program outcomes are measured utilizing participant surveys that are distributed at the end of the growing season for 5 years, staff and volunteer mentor observations, and through partner observations.
<b>Examples of Program Success</b>	Nine-year-old DeAundre Wiggins heard about a Growing Places garden at school just about the same time his dad lost his job and was about to be deployed to Afghanistan and his grandmother passed away from cancer. DeAundre's mom, Diane Wiggins-White, applied to Growing Places because she wanted a garden not only feed her family, but also to give DeAundre something to do to help take his mind off his troubles and to make his dad proud. According to Diane, the first-year garden was a huge success. "We began to eat more vegetables and I was cooking a lot more," she said.

## Education and Support

<b>Description</b>	<p>All GP Gardeners are offered educational materials, including a comprehensive Growing Guide, seasonal newsletters, handouts and occasional workshops about planting, harvesting, healthy eating and using food from the garden. Nutrition Education: GP offers information and education to teach people of all ages how to utilize the produce from their gardens and to encourage the consumption of fresh produce throughout the year. We provide nutrition and cooking classes directly and in partnership with Cooking Matters® (of Share Our Strength).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Youth Education: We offer gardening workshops for our school and child-care based garden sites aimed at helping young people gain an understanding how food transforms from the garden to the table and to inspire future food gardeners.</li><li>- Adults: We offer periodic workshops regarding planting and harvesting, along with our annual Gardeners' Gathering, in partnership with the Trustees of Reservation--a regional educational and community building event in March which offers educational workshops on vegetable gardening targeted to mentors, seasoned GP gardeners and potential volunteers.</li></ul>
<b>Budget</b>	\$35,000
<b>Category</b>	Community Development, General/Other Community Development, General/Other
<b>Population Served</b>	Poor, Economically Disadvantaged, Indigent, Families, Children and Youth (0 - 19 years)
<b>Program Short Term Success</b>	In the short term we seek to increase knowledge about fresh healthy eating, to build the skills and confidence of our gardeners in growing, harvesting and using the food from their gardens and to promote sustainable gardening practices.
<b>Program Long term Success</b>	We hope that we will have inspired future food gardeners in the children who participate in our programs. Our long term goal is that the gardens will be sustainable and that 80% of gardeners will continue gardening after 5 years. We hope to see a decrease in the use of pesticides/herbicides/fertilizers by GP gardeners, increased use of healthy soil management practices, including composting, and sustainable water management, including use of rain barrels.
<b>Program Success Monitored By</b>	Program outcomes are measured utilizing participant surveys that are distributed at the end of the growing season for 5 years, staff and volunteer mentor observations, and through partner observations.

## Examples of Program Success

"I'm a frustrated farmer at heart," said Beverly. New to gardening when she received her GP garden in 2011, Beverly has now expanded her original, 3 raised beds with 2 more beds dedicated just to squash. "I think I had about 30 winter squash," she said. I've always wanted to have a garden, but the whole thing was too overwhelming to me. I'd think, 'How do I get started? I don't even know what I'm doing.'" When a friend told her about GP, she said "instead of feeling 'I can't do this,' I thought, 'Oh, I can!'" "I learned that less is more; that by spreading the plants out, they'll get more sun and more nutrition." She and her children even tried some new vegetables. "We ate the kale all summer long, and now I'm addicted to kale!" Beverly said. "Then I learned 101 new ways to prepare kale. " "I can definitely say that Growing Places got me going. I probably wouldn't be gardening now if I hadn't had some help."

## Building a Community of Gardeners

<b>Description</b>	<p>Recruiting, training and assign garden mentors: GP's Garden Mentors are the key to our gardeners' success. Mentors serve as our key volunteers who encourage our gardeners throughout the growing year and provide one-on-one gardening coaching and advice.</p> <p>Identify, train and support Garden Ambassadors: Ambassadors will be selected from our most experienced and enthusiastic gardeners and comprise both backyard and community gardeners. The Ambassadors will aid GP's mission of growing gardeners by modeling successful raised bed garden techniques, and being willing to be our showcase vegetable gardeners.</p> <p>Building a Gardeners Network: Each of the models described above includes a strong commitment to building individual and community capacity to garden through the development of mentors and ambassadors. Gp will organize communities of gardeners, to include all current and past GP gardeners, private vegetable gardeners and gardeners from existing community gardens.</p>
<b>Budget</b>	35,000
<b>Category</b>	Community Development, General/Other Community Development, General/Other
<b>Population Served</b>	Poor, Economically Disadvantaged, Indigent, Families, Children and Youth (0 - 19 years)
<b>Program Short Term Success</b>	In the short term we seek to increase knowledge about fresh healthy eating, to build the skills and confidence of our gardeners in growing, harvesting and using the food from their gardens and to promote sustainable gardening practices.
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<b>Program Success Monitored By</b>	Program success is monitored through the number and quality of mentors we recruit, mentor evaluations, and gardener evaluations.

## Examples of Program Success

The Ambassador will be implemented in the spring of 2013. A sample of the success of our mentoring program: A desire to help others and learn about raised- bed gardening prompted Laura Kischitz to volunteer for Growing Places. “What we learned as a family on the Growing Places’ garden builds, we replicated here at home,” Laura said. Soon after, Laura became a mentor. In her first year, Laura mentored two families. This past season, she mentored Ray and Monika, a father and his adult daughter. “Monika and Ray were so excited to grow their own food. They became interested in having a garden because one of Monika’s children had an allergic reaction to pesticides and chemicals in food,” explains Laura. “Over the summer we were sharing recipes. When I went back to deliver garlic I had my dad with me. He and Ray just hit it off. Monika and I are planning a play date for them! My intention is to continue this relationship.”

## Program Comments

### CEO Comments

A comprehensive evaluation and planning process completed this winter included a scan of community assets and needs and extensive interviews with our stakeholders. The process has heightened our sensitivity to issues of particular concern to our partners, peer organizations, our gardeners and the communities we serve. This knowledge has led us to embrace several key organizing principles:

- Gardening can contribute to: the mental and physical health and well-being of individuals and families; the development of social relationships and connections that can lead to more vibrant communities; and the creation of a socially just food system.
- Responsible stewardship of our resources requires us to concentrate our efforts in communities of greatest need. We prioritize opportunities to work in Clinton, Fitchburg, Leominster, Gardner, and Shirley [but consider other towns on a case by case basis].
- Gardening “takes root” in situations where prospective gardeners understand and are prepared for the commitment it takes to sustain a garden and where partner organizations can work with us to build logistically and financially sustainable programs.
- Gardening is not a “one size fits all” proposition; our models must be adaptable to meet the needs of the individuals, families, and communities we work with. Similarly, for each project we undertake, we must identify clear, measurable outcomes and hold ourselves accountable to them.
- GP does not just build gardens; we build the capacity to garden. This entails mentoring new gardeners until they can succeed independently through one-on-one support and ongoing education, building cohorts of gardeners who can support each other, and nurturing local champions of gardening.
- Volunteers are one of our greatest assets; their satisfaction is a significant outcome. We provide volunteer opportunities that are programmatically effective and personally rewarding.
- GP is part of a network of organizations and agencies that can work collaboratively to address related issues such as hunger, nutrition, obesity, food security, and socially just food systems. GP should strive to offer programs that complement and enhance comprehensive regional strategies and give a voice to the value of including gardening in their conceptualization.

# Management

## CEO/Executive Director

**Executive Director**

Ms. Joanne C Foster

**Term Start**

Oct 2011

**Email**

joanne@growingplaces.org

### **Experience**

Joanne Foster, Executive Director joined Growing Places Garden Project in October 2011. Joanne brings more than 25 years of leadership and management expertise and has helped advance several important missions in North Central Massachusetts.

Most recently Joanne served as executive director of House of Peace & Education, Inc. (HOPE) where she led the organization through a transition from its founding vision to an efficient, strategic organization offering high quality services to women, children and families in need. At HOPE, she was instrumental in strengthening core programs, increasing collaboration within the community, and generating support to sustain the mission.

Prior to joining HOPE, Joanne served as interim executive director for Worcester Common Ground, co-executive director at Oak Hill Community Development Corporation, and several other notable organizations in both the public and private sectors. Joanne holds an MBA in Social Policy from the Heller School at Brandeis University and a BA from Assumption College.

## Former CEOs

**Name**

**Term**

Ms. Jodi Briedel

Apr 2008 - Mar 2011

Ms. Dolores Thibault-Munoz

Mar 2011 - Oct 2011

## Senior Staff

### **Ms. Gaynor Bigelbach**

**Title**

Garden Manager

**Experience/Biography**

Gaynor grew up gardening in Wales, UK where the soil is rich, dark red clay and rainfall is abundant. Convinced that television was a smart career move for an English grad, she moved to London and spent several years in darkened editing suites and cramped production offices. If she hadn't lived above a florist's store, and had access to a postage stamp garden she might have realized sooner, rather than later, that tv production was not for her. After spending a year in India, Gaynor moved to the US with her Midwestern husband David and raised two sons whilst taking on jobs as a freelance journalist, environmental educator, gardener and greenhouse assistant. Having left a small series of urban vegetable gardens behind her as the family moved further and further towards central mass, Gaynor has put down roots, in every way, in Shirley. She is very excited to be part of Growing Places Garden Project and is looking forward to getting to know the Growing Places' volunteers and gardeners.

## Staff Information

<b>Full Time Staff</b>	1
<b>Part Time Staff</b>	1
<b>Volunteers</b>	150
<b>Contractors</b>	0
<b>Retention Rate</b>	1%

## Staff Demographics - Ethnicity

<b>African American/Black</b>	0
<b>Asian American/Pacific Islander</b>	0
<b>Caucasian</b>	3
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	1
<b>Native American/American Indian</b>	0
<b>Other</b>	0

## Staff Demographics - Gender

<b>Male</b>	0
<b>Female</b>	4
<b>Unspecified</b>	0

## Formal Evaluations

<b>CEO Formal Evaluation</b>	Yes
<b>CEO/Executive Formal Evaluation Frequency</b>	Annually
<b>Senior Management Formal Evaluation</b>	Yes
<b>Senior Management Formal Evaluation Frequency</b>	Semi-Annually
<b>NonManagement Formal Evaluation</b>	Yes
<b>Non Management Formal Evaluation Frequency</b>	Semi-Annually

## Plans & Policies

<b>Organization has a Fundraising Plan?</b>	Under Development
<b>Organization has a Strategic Plan?</b>	Yes
<b>Years Strategic Plan Considers</b>	1
<b>Date Strategic Plan Adopted</b>	Dec 2012
<b>Does your organization have a Business Continuity of Operations Plan?</b>	No

<b>Management Succession Plan?</b>	Yes
<b>Organization Policy and Procedures</b>	Under Development
<b>Nondiscrimination Policy</b>	Under Development
<b>Whistleblower Policy</b>	Yes
<b>Directors and Officers Insurance Policy</b>	Yes
<b>Is your organization licensed by the Government?</b>	No
<b>Registration</b>	Exempt
<b>Permit?</b>	Yes

## Collaborations

Growing Places develops strong relationships and engages collaboratively with a number of institutions and community based organizations in the region who are engaged in related issues such as hunger, nutrition, food security, and community health and wellness. Some of our key partners include Montachusett Opportunity Council (MOC), Twin Cities CDC, and Cleghorn Neighborhood Center all in Fitchburg, WHEAT Community Services, and the Child Parent Partnership in Clinton, Heywood Hospital, and Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center in Gardner, Share Our Strengths' *Cooking Matters*® and housing authorities across the region. A new partnership with the Community Harvest Project of North Grafton, MA has resulted in the award of four AmeriCorps VISTA's, two of which are placed at Growing Places and two at Community Harvest and who will work with the two groups over the next three years to build our capacity to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables to low-income people in the region. We were very proud that our commitment to collaboration was recognized with an Excellence Award in Nonprofit Collaboration by the Mass Nonprofit Network in 2010.

## Awards

### **Awards**

<b>Award/Recognition</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Year</b>
Collaboration Award	Mass Nonprofit Network	2010

# Board & Governance

## Board Chair

<b>Board Chair</b>	Ms. Andrea Freeman
<b>Company Affiliation</b>	Mass Public Health Association
<b>Term</b>	Oct 2012 to Sept 2013
<b>Email</b>	drea.freeman@gmail.com

## Board CoChair

<b>Board CoChair</b>	Ms. Suzanne Hays
<b>Company Affiliation</b>	Independent Marketing Consultant, Harvard, MA
<b>Term</b>	Feb 2013 to Sept 2013
<b>Email</b>	Shays@tiaa-cref.org

## Board Members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Status</b>
Ms. Cynthia Caron	Adjunct Professor, Clark University, Dept. of Int'l Development, Worcester, MA	Voting
Ms. Andrea Freeman	Mass Public Health Association	Voting
Ms. Alvara Gjylapi	AVP/Credit and Loan Review Officer, UniBank, Whitinsville, MA	Voting
Ms. Suzanne Hays	Independent Marketing Consultant	Voting
Mr. Richard LeBlanc	Ag-tourism, Website Coordinator, MA Agricultural Development, Boston, MA	Voting
Ms. Brenda Picard-Muniz	Housing Counselor, Twin Cities CDC, Fitchburg, MA	Voting
Mr. Paul Taylor	Retired Pastor and Professor, Shrewsbury, MA	Voting

## Board Demographics - Ethnicity

<b>African American/Black</b>	0
<b>Asian American/Pacific Islander</b>	0
<b>Caucasian</b>	6
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	1
<b>Native American/American Indian</b>	0
<b>Other</b>	0 0

## Board Demographics - Gender

<b>Male</b>	2
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<b>Female</b>	5
<b>Unspecified</b>	0

### Board Information

<b>Board Term Lengths</b>	3
<b>Board Term Limits</b>	2
<b>Number of Full Board Meetings Annually</b>	12
<b>Board Meeting Attendance %</b>	80%
<b>Written Board Selection Criteria?</b>	Under Development
<b>Written Conflict of Interest Policy?</b>	Yes
<b>Percentage Making Monetary Contributions</b>	100%
<b>Percentage Making In-Kind Contributions</b>	100%
<b>Constituency Includes Client Representation</b>	No

### Standing Committees

Board Governance

Finance

Development / Fund Development / Fund Raising / Grant Writing / Major Gifts

# Financials

## Fiscal Year

<b>Fiscal Year Start</b>	Oct 01, 2012
<b>Fiscal Year End</b>	Sept 30, 2013
<b>Projected Revenue</b>	\$160,600.00
<b>Projected Expenses</b>	\$160,301.00
<b>Endowment?</b>	No
<b>Spending Policy</b>	N/A
<b>Credit Line?</b>	No
<b>Reserve Fund?</b>	Yes
<b>Months Reserve Fund Covers</b>	6

## Detailed Financials

### **Revenue and Expenses**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	\$144,222	\$155,600	\$121,607
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$140,481	\$148,110	\$131,169

### **Revenue Sources**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Foundation and Corporation Contributions</b>	\$37,529	\$78,450	\$58,500
<b>Government Contributions</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Federal</b>	--	--	--
<b>State</b>	--	--	--
<b>Local</b>	--	--	--
<b>Unspecified</b>	--	--	--
<b>Individual Contributions</b>	\$94,660	\$63,984	\$59,826
<b>Indirect Public Support</b>	--	--	--
<b>Earned Revenue</b>	\$2,530	--	--
<b>Investment Income, Net of Losses</b>	\$169	\$281	\$509
<b>Membership Dues</b>	--	--	--
<b>Special Events</b>	\$9,334	\$12,885	\$2,772
<b>Revenue In-Kind</b>	--	--	--
<b>Other</b>	--	--	--

### Expense Allocation

Fiscal Year	2013	2012	2011
Program Expense	\$107,491	\$80,007	\$84,035
Administration Expense	\$12,903	\$61,711	\$46,061
Fundraising Expense	\$20,097	\$6,392	\$1,073
Payments to Affiliates	--	--	--
Total Revenue/Total Expenses	1.03	1.05	0.93
Program Expense/Total Expenses	77%	54%	64%
Fundraising Expense/Contributed Revenue	14%	4%	1%

### Assets and Liabilities

Fiscal Year	2013	2012	2011
Total Assets	\$104,799	\$101,068	\$93,578
Current Assets	\$103,830	\$99,221	\$92,130
Long-Term Liabilities	\$0	\$0	\$0
Current Liabilities	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Net Assets	\$104,799	\$101,068	\$93,578

### Short Term Solvency

Fiscal Year	2013	2012	2011
Current Ratio: Current Assets/Current Liabilities	--	--	--

### Long Term Solvency

Fiscal Year	2013	2012	2011
Long-Term Liabilities/Total Assets	0%	0%	0%

### Top Funding Sources

Fiscal Year	2013	2012	2011
Top Funding Source & Dollar Amount	--	--	--
Second Highest Funding Source & Dollar Amount	--	--	--
Third Highest Funding Source & Dollar Amount	--	--	--

## Capital Campaign

Currently in a Capital Campaign?

No

## Comments

### Foundation Staff Comments

Financial summary data in charts and graphs are per the organization's financial review for FY2013 and IRS 990s for FY2012 and FY2011. Contributions from foundations and corporations are listed under individuals when the breakout was not available. Expense breakouts for 2011 Fundraising and Admin. were obtained from the Form PC on file with the state of Massachusetts. For fiscal year 2012, expense detail was provided by the organization and the Form PC. The organization is working with its preparer to better illustrate its expenses for fiscal year 2012.