THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL
OF CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

Regional Environmental Council of Central MA (REC) is an environmental and food justice nonprofit organization incorporated in 1972 in Worcester, MA. Our mission is to bring people together to build healthy, sustainable and just communities in Worcester and beyond.

The REC is driven by the belief that a vibrant, healthy community is one in which everyone has access to healthy and affordable food, clean air to breathe and water to drink, and safe places to live, work, learn and play. The REC's current programs include:

YouthGROW (Youth Growing Organics in Worcester) is a summer and afterschool youth development and employment program that provides jobs and opportunity for 35-40 low-income teens on two urban farms.

UGROW (Urban Garden Resources of Worcester) is a network of over 60 community and school gardens and urban farms involving more than 600 gardeners and urban farmers and 2,000 public school students.

REC Community Farmers Markets bring healthy, local food from dozens of area farms to thousands of families in Worcester's most food-insecure neighborhoods at 18 weekly locations via two full-season farmers markets and a mobile farmers market.

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MEET THE TEAM

Personnel

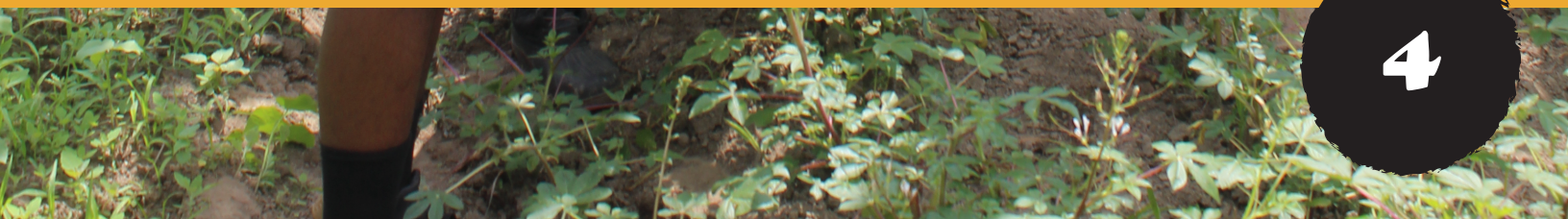
Steve Fischer	Executive Director
Grace Sliwoski	Director of Programs
Ajayi Harris	Development Director
Ashley Carter	Community Farmers Market Program Coordinator
Stacie Brimmage	YouthGROW Coordinator
Pat Barnosky	UGROW Coordinator
Steven Murphy	Administrative Director
Tom Trepanier	Farm Manager
Eliza Lawrence	School Gardens Manager
Mckenzie Moise	Program Evaluator
Amanda Velazquez	Farmers Market Manager
Alex Taubman	Communications AmeriCorps VISTA
Marin Smith	Development AmeriCorps VISTA
Max Marcotte	UGROW Volunteer Engagement Volunteer
Erika Akerson	School Gardens Volunteer Engagement Volunteer
Katie Flanagan	YouthGROW Volunteer Engagement Volunteer
Gabriella Guzman Jerry	Junior Staff
Kelvyn Pacheco	Junior Staff
Jefferson Zziwa	Junior Staff
Tevaughn Dixon	Junior Staff
Yeimi Ayala	Junior Staff

Board of Directors

Rubin Williams	President
Ted Hudson	Treasurer
Stephanie Crist	Clerk
Eve Gilmore	Immediate Past President
Zach Dyer	
Hanh Lam	
Emily Linhares	
Alison Bryant Ludden	
Jennifer Madson	

YOUTHGROW

In 2019, the Regional Environmental Council (REC) celebrated YouthGROW's (Youth Growing Organics in Worcester) 16th year providing youth development through urban agriculture in Worcester, MA. Since our first summer in 2003, YouthGROW has become a robust year-round youth leadership-development and employment program providing jobs and personal growth experiences each year to Worcester teens on two urban farm campuses in Worcester's Main South and Bell Hill neighborhoods. This year, 38 teens were employed on our two farm sites for our six week summer intensive program, producing 4,000 pounds of food while they gain job and life skills via our "PLUS" curriculum---Professional development, Life skills, Urban agriculture, and Social justice.

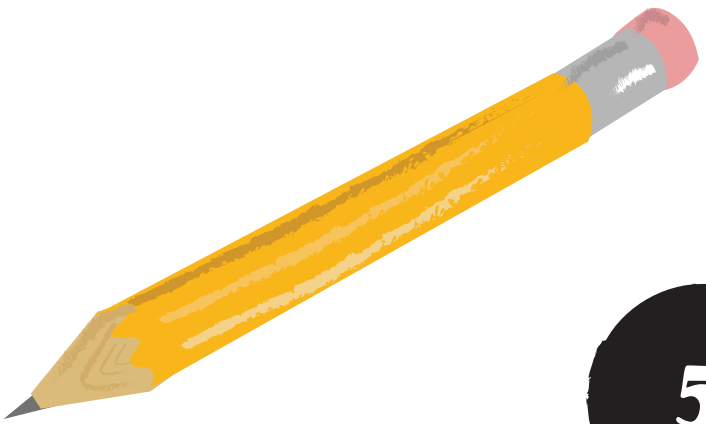


2019 YOUTHGROW HIGHLIGHTS

Twelve teens held leadership positions in the YouthGROW program this year, serving as Junior Staff and Youth Leaders. These young leaders planned our summer curriculum and coordinated interviews and hiring decisions for new youth applicants. This year, YouthGROW received 281 applications and our teens conducted 180 interviews- all one on one! Youth were supported in their efforts by our adult staff, which grew this year to include our new Farm Manager, Tom Trepanier and Farm Mentor, Valeria Nyonkuru. Working together, Tom and Valeria improved our on-farm production, including growing more high-demand culturally significant crops, including callaloo, long gourd, aji dulce, jilo, and calabaza.

The YouthGROW team expanded their knowledge of regional food justice and farming efforts by visiting Soul Fire Farm, Gardening the Community, Nuestras Raices, Global Village, and World Farmers Flats Farm in 2019. Youth built relationships with youth leaders across the region and partnered with Gardening the Community (Springfield, MA) to jointly offer a plenary workshop for the youth track of the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (NESAWG) conference in Jersey City, NJ this fall. Teens also expanded their growing skills to incorporate hydroponic growing through a new partnership with Boston College and the National Science Foundation.

In addition YouthGROW programming, our farms also served as space for education and community building for over 200 community members and volunteer groups who participated in weekly open farm hours, farm tours, and workshops. In 2019, there were 45 plant varieties grown for harvest on the YouthGROW farms. Some of this produce was donated to YouthGROWers and their families and neighbors but the majority was sold in food insecure neighborhoods via the REC's Mobile Farmers Market. Market sales of produce grown on the YouthGROW farms yielded $13,000 in sales supporting our work. In fall of 2019, we began construction of low tunnels on our farm, with support from the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, as part of efforts to extend the growing season to better serve our community.



REC COMMUNITY FARMERS MARKETS

2019 marked the 12th season of the REC Community Farmers Markets. Our Farmers Market Program included again this year two stationary markets, a mobile market, and our fourth full year of winter markets. With your support, we were able to serve 14 Mobile Market stops weekly, from June through October, in addition to Monday, Friday, and Saturday markets at Beaver Brook and University Park. All REC Markets accept are certified to participate in the Healthy Incentives Program and accept SNAP, WIC, and Senior Coupons, as well as credit, debit, and cash.

REC COMMUNITY FARMERS MARKETS

Demand for fresh and local produce in Worcester continues to be high. Sales at our Mobile Market grew 17% with 82% of all sales coming from SNAP/HIP, WIC, and Senior Coupons (all subsidies for low-income customers). In order to continue to meet the needs of our community, we are excited to share that 2019 marked the introduction of a second Mobile Market vehicle to our "fleet!" With support from the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, and the George F. and Sybil H. Fuller Foundation, we were able to purchase and refrigerate a new 2019 Ford Transit which was used this season to serve 27 community events and pop-up markets, including piloting market stops in Southbridge and Webster. In the future, we expect this new vehicle will enable us to expand the Mobile Market program's reach in Worcester and in other communities throughout Southern Worcester County.

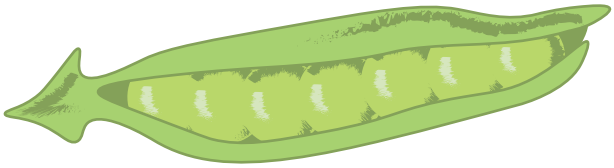
In 2019, we partnered with 20 vendors at our Beaver Brook and University Park Farmers markets, including 12 local farms. Our combined markets served an average of 700 customers weekly, with over 80,000 pounds of produce sold on the Mobile Markets alone. In addition to providing needed healthy food access points, our markets hosted 19 healthy cooking demonstrations in partnership with UMass Extension, voter registration and education, drop-in soccer clinics for children through Pickup 4 Soccer, weekly play groups with Worcester Family Parntership, and free lunch for children every Saturday at University Park through the Worcester Public Schools' Summer Eats Program. The Main South Community Development Corporation has been a key partner in organizing programming and outreach for the University Park Farmers Market.

We were able to deepen our partnerships with the Worcester Division of Public Health and the Coalition of a Healthy Greater Worcester in 2019 to support their efforts to reduce health disparities in the Latino community of Worcester. With their support, we were able to conduct targeted customer focus groups for Spanish speaking customers and piloted sofrito and sancocho "meal kits" at markets, featuring local produce. We also collaborated to develop more responsive marketing tools including running a series of ads in Vocero, the largest Spanish print publication in Central Massachusetts, developing large format signage for all our market sites with inclusive language and information about the MA Healthy Incentives Program translated into Spanish, Vietnamese and Albanian, and premiering an ad campaign on the outside and interior of city buses in English and Spanish promoting the REC Farmers Markets and HIP.The Farmers Market 2019 team hired five YouthGROW alumni who worked as Market Managers this summer and winter while they were on college break. We were additionally supported by 19 talented and hardworking Farmers Market interns and myriad community volunteers and organizational partners.

UGROW

In 2019, REC's Urban Garden Resources of Worcester (UGROW) community & school gardens network supported 67 community and school gardens. UGROW was able to support this large number of gardens by providing direct resources, technical support, volunteer engagement, and community organizing. REC continues to provide organic seedlings to all gardens in the network free of cost (which we grow at the greenhouses at the College of the Holy Cross and Worcester Polytechnic Insitute), and we work with the City of Worcester's Department of Public Works and Parks to coordinate the delivery of free compost at all of our garden sites. We delivered over 100 yards of compost to our sites with the help of the city.

UGROW



In 2019, we built 8 new community gardens and 5 new school gardens and provided educational workshops and technical support to gardens across the city. We welcomed two Commonwealth Corps members to our team in 2019 to help support volunteer engagement in the UGROW network. With their support, we partnered with over 200 volunteers who contributed over 2,500 hours of time supporting school and community gardens in Worcester. These volunteers helped construct 20 new raised beds at garden sites throughout the network, assisted with needed maintenance and improvement projects, and led community gardens serving as many as 30 gardeners at a single site. We partnered with YOU, Inc. and the Worcester Youth Center to train and work with consistent groups of teens who, along with YouthGROW participants, supported numerous garden sites throughout the summer. In fall of 2019, we broke ground at Coes Pond Park/Stearns Tavern, where our team is constructing an ADA accessible community garden in partnership with Seven Hills Foundation and with funding from the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts. The garden will be open to the public in the summer of 2020 with activities for children offered weekly.

The UGROW team worked to increase the capacity of gardeners of all ages in 2019 with over 50 workshops, serving over 1,000 student and adult gardeners. Topics included seed starting, soil health and compost, hydroponic growing, and cooking from the garden. We worked in partnership with the Worcester Food Policy Council and Worcester State University to co-host Worcester's first School Gardens Conference, an event which germinated several new partnerships supporting school gardens. We look forward to continuing to grow Worcester's community of gardeners in 2020!

REC is a grassroots environmental and food justice organization located in Worcester, Massachusetts, New England's second largest city. Incorporated in 1972, REC has been dedicated to building healthy, sustainable and just communities in Worcester and beyond for over 45 years.

Our members, staff, board and volunteers work together to accomplish this mission by:

- Developing and coordinating programs that bring community members together to address environmental and food justice issues in our neighborhoods
- Organizing neighborhood residents, including youth, and training community leaders to tackle environmental and food justice issues in our neighborhoods
- Providing events and forums for environmental and food justice education, networking, visioning and problem-solving in Worcester and beyond
- Advocating at local, state and national levels for public policies that foster environmental, food and social justice, ensure ecological sustainability and equitable access to clean air and water, open space, local, organic and nutritious food, clean energy, green jobs, and healthy homes, schools, workplaces and neighborhoods

REC ANNUAL EARTH DAY CLEANUPS

This year we also organized the 30th Annual REC Earth Day Neighborhood & Garden Cleanups. With the continued support of the City of Worcester's Department of Public Works and Parks, National Grid, and the commitment of numerous local businesses, universities, elected officials and organizations, more than 1,200 volunteers cleaned up over 100 tons of trash at 100 sites across the city—the largest and most successful effort in the event's 30 year history.

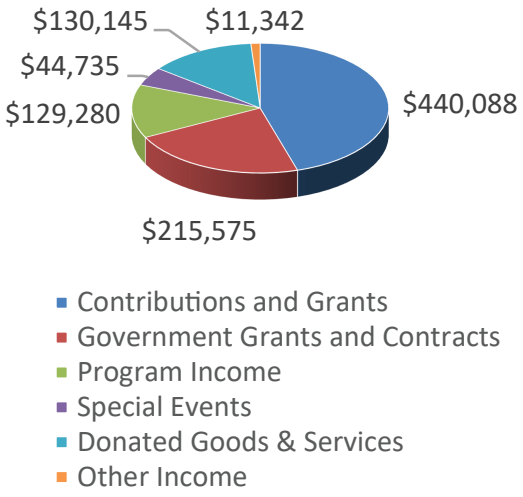
REC ANNUAL PLANT SALE AND SPRING GARDEN FESTIVAL

In 2019, our highly successful Spring Garden Festival & Plant Sale was held in May on the Worcester Common (in back of city hall). This event, hosted in partnership with the City of Worcester, the United Way of Central MA, and other local businesses attracted more than 1,000 participants from Worcester and surrounding towns and raised over $22,000 in support of our programs.

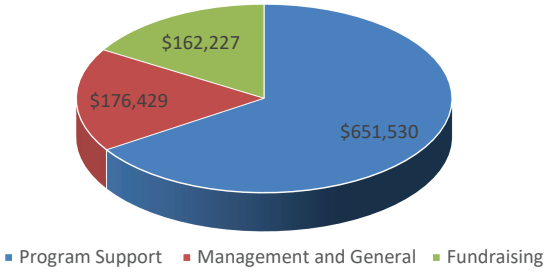
FY 2019 FINANCIAL REPORT

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

SUPPORT & REVENUE			
Contributions and Grants	$	440,099	45.3%
Government Grants and Contracts	$	215,575	22.2%
Program Income	$	129,280	13.3%
Special Events	$	44,735	4.0%
Donated Goods & Services	$	130,145	13.4%
Other Income	$	11,342	1.3%
Total Support & Revenue	**$**	**971,165**	**100%**



EXPENSES			
Program Support Services	$	651,530	65.8%
Management and General	$	176,429	17.8%
Fundraising	$	162,227	16.4%
Total Expenses	**$**	**990,186**	**100%**
Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	**$**	**(19,021)**	

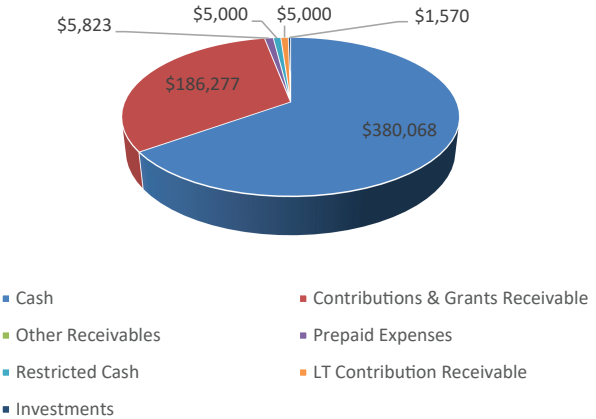


STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS

Cash	$	380,068	
Contributions & Grants Receivable	$	186,277	
Prepaid Expenses	$	5,823	
Total Current Assets	***$***	***572,168***	
Fixed Assets - Net	***$***	***84,903***	

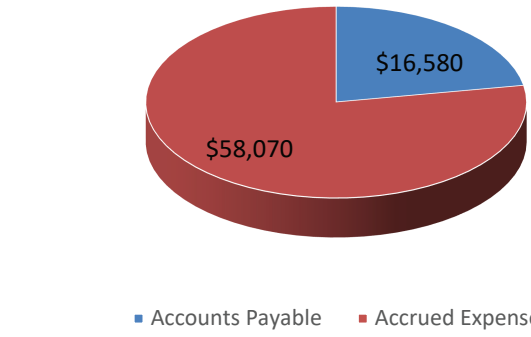


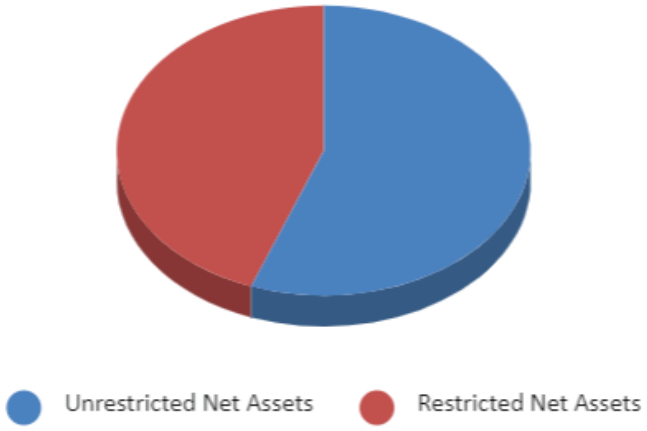
OTHER ASSETS

Restricted Cash	$	5,000
Investments	$	5,000
Investments	$	1,570
TOTAL ASSETS	**$**	**668,641**

FY 2019
FINANCIAL REPORT (CONT.)

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts Payable	$	16,580
Accrued Expenses	$	58,070
Total Current Liabilities	***$***	***74,650***
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted Net Assets	$	330,858
Restricted Net Assets	$	263,133
TOTAL NET ASSETS	**$**	**593,991**
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	**$**	**668,641**





During Fiscal Year 2019, REC continued to position ourselves financially to meet and to increase our commitment to the Greater Worcester Community. Revenue-generating strategies implemented in the past year have resulted in record returns in areas such as individual giving (doubling the amount from the past year) and event sponsorship. The investment of a portion of our FY 2019 funding in a second mobile market van has allowed us to expand the impact of that program outside of the Worcester city limits for the first time. The number of community and community school gardens was increased in FY 2019. Our YouthGROW initiative remains the single largest and most effective program of its kind in Worcester due to the generosity of our donors, funding which supports and enhances both the strength of our staff and the breadth of the program.

Total Revenue and Support in FY 2019, at $971,165, exceeded our budget target. Especially strong were government grants, in-kind donations, mobile market sales, and our Annual Plant Sale. Although personnel expenses came in substantially below what was budgeted, our total spending for the year exceeded revenue by $19,021, or 2.0%.Once again, we ended the year in a positive cash position, at $380,068, ensuring that plans implemented in FY 2019 to strengthen and expand the organization will continue into FY 2020.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

We are so grateful to thank the over 500 individual donors and supporters who make our mission possible throughout Worcester and Central Massachusetts. **Thank you!** In addition, we'd like to thank the foundations, government agencies, and businesses listed below that also provide essential support.

Our Funders:
United Way of Central Massachusetts, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, US Department of Agriculture, Commonwealth Corps, AmeriCorps VISTA, Merck Family Fund, Blue Piano Fund, Sudbury Foundation , UMass Memorial Health Care, Hermann Foundation , DCU for Kids, George I. Alden Trust, UNFI Foundation, Alice Willard Dorr Foundation, Fallon Health, Fred Harris Daniels Foundation, Green Leaf Foundation, Stoddard Charitable Trust, Fletcher Foundation, City of Worcester, Patagonia , Reliant Foundation, Melvin S. Cutler Charitable Foundation, Project Bread, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Hanover Insurance Group Foundation, Ruth H & Warren A Ellsworth Foundation, French Foundation, Hoche Scofield Foundation, People's United Community Foundation, Redemption Rock Brewing Co., Clif Bar Family Foundation, J. Irving England & Jane L. England Charitable Trust, MA Food System Collaborative , Worcester Arts Council, Plourde Family Charitable Trust, Whole Kids, Agnes M. Lindsay Trust, Harvard Pilgrim Healthcare Foundation, Webster Five Foundation, TD Charitable Foundation, Schwartz Charitable Foundation, Greater Worcester Community Foundation, and Fields Pond Foundation.

REC Annual Earth Day Cleanups Sponsors
National Grid, UMass Medical School, AbbVie Bioresearch Center, CCR Wealth Management, LEC Environmental Consultants, Standard Auto Wrecking Co, Inc., Vibram Corporation, Worcester Common Ground, EcoTec, Inc., Assumption College, A.J. Letourneau, Inc., Blue Hive, E. L. Harvey & Sons, Mill Street Motors, Worcester State University, Tighe & Bond, Davis Publications, St. Pierre Manufacturing Corporation, Cyr Electric, United Way of Central Massachusetts, Mass Audobon Broad Meadow Brook, and Mechanical Bliss.

REC Community Farmers Markets Sponsors:
Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture, George F. and Sybil H. Fuller Foundation, Project Bread, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, UniBank, Wegmans, Cornerstone Bank, Country Bank, Clark University, People's United Bank, Harvard Pilgrim Healthcare Foundation, Farm Credit East, Organic Valley, Rollstone Bank, Seabury Heights, Unitarian Universalist Church of Worcester, and United Way of Central Massachusetts.

REC Spring Garden Festival & Plant Sale Sponsors:
Whole Foods Market, United Way of Central Massachusetts, Bay State Savings Bank, Tufts Public Health Plans, Mass Cultural Council, Reliant Medical Group, and Park Print.

REC Fall Harvest Party - Celebration on the Farm:
Newbury Investment Partners, Raymond James Financial Services, Worcester County Food Bank, Miller Fence.