



2019 ANNUAL REPORT





Student Snapshot - Liliana Rodriguez-Flores

7th Grade Cascade Middle School

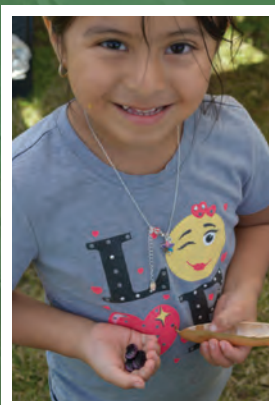
How does being in Garden Club make you feel?

It makes me feel great about myself because I'm going outside and I'm not just sitting inside my house in a small area. I'm doing something good for the planet.

What are some things you've learned in Garden Club?

Today I learned that we cut the plants to put the garden to sleep. I've also learned to be really careful with the fruits and stuff, especially with like plums because they are very ripe and if you aren't careful or stack them then they smooch together. I've learned different dishes from different areas and how to use everything properly and how to be safe; how to cut with pretty much zero chance of hurting myself. The first time I got to use the stove I told my sister about it in the car on the way home; I was so excited.

When we cooked pizza we used fruits and veggies and pretty much other than the cheese it was a vegan pizza. The blackberry pizzas were so good, it burned your face but it was still good.



What is your favorite part of Garden Club?

I like planting then seeing the plants the next week, how they've grown, especially over a season like I planted tomato plants at the end of the year then next year saw all the tomatoes fully grown and it was nice seeing them. It was fun. At the garden all the people are really nice and fun to hang out with. When I'm in the garden I know I did a good job today and I helped people. I used to want to do that but I didn't know how to and then I came to Garden Club.



2019
by the **NUMBERS**

3

Garden Rabbits:
Sam
Satou
Sorrel

70

After School
Garden Club
sessions

521

fruit trees,
bushes and vines
maintained in 19
separate gardens

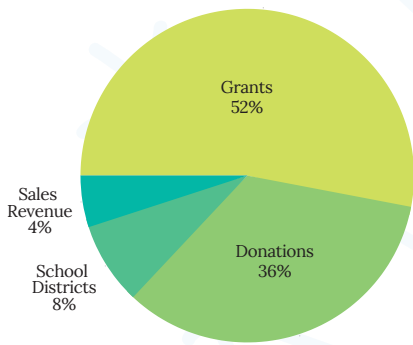
525

volunteers gave
5,200 hours of
their time and
talent to support
our work

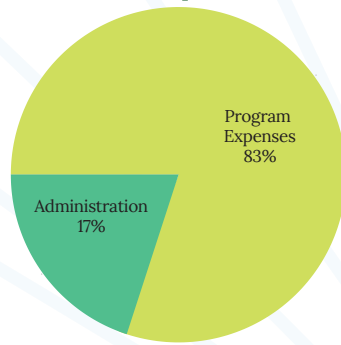
772

students
experienced a
garden-based
lesson during
their school day

2019 Revenue



2019 Expenses



2019 Budget

Our 2019 budget increased by 9% from 2018. Our overall budget was \$329,271, with 83% of that going directly to program expenses: after school garden clubs, cooking classes, garden-based lessons, garden recesses, summer produce sales, produce distribution, and special events.

Thanks to generous corporate and individual donors, our donations were up by 23% this year. We are very grateful!

Become a Perennial Donor

Did you know you can join our Perennial Donors by making a monthly recurring donation to LCSG that is automatically debited from your account?

Any amount—even \$10 a month—helps us so much.

Visit www.LCSchoolgardens.org, click the 'Donate' button, and you will see a link to 'Become a Perennial Donor'. Thank you!

LETTER from the DIRECTOR

2019 gave us so many reasons to celebrate here at Lower Columbia School Gardens. At one of our Harvest Festivals this fall, a student told me he had given “magic beans” from School Gardens to his grandmother for her birthday. I witnessed another kind of magic during a cooking lesson when a student asked, “can we have *more* cauliflower? I didn’t know this stuff was good!”

But it’s not wizardry that makes our gardens spaces where kids’ lives are changed, where kale is enjoyed and anxieties are eased by nature, connection and caring; it’s much simpler than that. It’s the intentional way we mentor, nurture and welcome each student we work with, just like all the living things we care for in our gardens. That’s why so many kids find their niche with us, and why I overheard a Garden Club student tell a group of their peers, “If any of you are ever lonely, you should

just come find me. I’m lonely too.” We’re creating communities of kindness and wellness in each of our 19 school gardens.

Thanks to unprecedented support this year, in the form of time, money and generous in-kind services from you, our local community, these stories of change and transformation are not uncommon. Thanks to you, our talented, dedicated and compassionate staff are able to spend their time empowering kids and families through real food and hands-on learning.

If you’re feeling the need for connection and a little magic in your own life, we hope you’ll join us to dig in the dirt and marvel at the wonders of the world in one of our gardens in 2020.

With gratitude and hope,



1,145

School Garden veggie pizzas made from scratch and eaten with delight

4,054

students were served at 14 elementary schools, and 5 middle schools in Longview and Kelso

More than

12,000

seeds started in the greenhouse

151,730

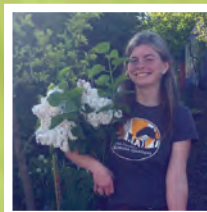
square feet of school garden space in Longview and Kelso



Emily Anderson

Garden Educator Pronouns: she/her/hers

Working with students in the garden is about slowing down, smelling the roses, listening to the robins flying throughout the fruit trees and picking berries. It is also about teaching students valuable skills and life-long lessons that they will carry with them their whole life. Being able to be that mentor that indulges their creative questioning and acknowledging the importance of patience, sharing, kindness, and uplifting their confidence in themselves has been my role at Lower Columbia School Gardens. I had never really experienced true magic until my life crossed paths with LCSG.



MEET our STAFF



Julia Brice

Garden Coordinator Pronouns: they/them/theirs

I moved from Fairbanks, Alaska to Longview in January 2016 to start working for LCSG. I coordinate the gardens at Mint Valley, Butler Acres, and Monticello and co-coordinate CVG. One of the most rewarding parts of this job is interacting with kids in small groups and hearing the honest, hilarious, earnest, and often unexpected things they have to say. Another is watching students gain confidence in their cooking and gardening skills, then seeing them teach those skills to their peers and families. I also value my kind, hard-working, quirky, playful, and passionate coworkers and the friendships I have formed with School Garden volunteers. Some of my favorite ways to recharge are spending time outside, playing music, sharing meals with friends, skiing, listening to podcasts and audiobooks, and dance parties.

Karen Clark

Garden Educator Pronouns: she/her/hers

I came to this gig through AmeriCorps, unexpectedly, and a little late in life for changing careers. I've had some very interesting jobs: I've worked at a couple different hunting and fishing lodges in the Alaskan bush, been a Y Camp Counselor at Spirit Lake (the most beautiful and magical place on earth!). Oh, yeah, I worked for a few decades in the healthcare business. Things I love about the garden: putting plants in the ground, when kids prove to themselves that their taste buds have changed, teaching children to drive a wheelbarrow, being outside, soaking up the seasons! I am looking forward to increasing my knowledge of PNW native plants. One thing you may not know about me is that I've been skydiving :)



Lauren Henricksen

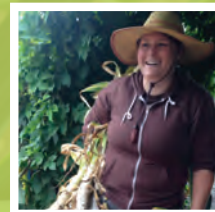
Development Manager Pronouns: she/her/hers

My part-time job is often behind the scenes, writing grants, program planning and connecting with our amazing donors. I love telling our LCSG stories to garner community support for the learning and exploration that happens in school gardens. Ensuring kids have a place to connect with the natural world, with our supportive and talented staff, and with each other in positive, nurturing ways motivates me every day. When I'm not working, I'm usually wrangling my twin six-year-olds. I love cooking and gardening in my own corner of the world, mountains of all varieties, and gathering friends around a fire.

Hillary Jensen

Garden Coordinator & Horticultural Coordinator Pronouns: she/her/hers

I started full-time at LCSG in August 2015, after one term as an AmeriCorps member. I coordinate gardens at Carrolls, Coweeman and Rose Valley, and support many others. I'm wild about kindness, truth, kitties (my kitty in particular), my partner Daniel, being a good listener, and living in a way that leaves the world better than I found it. My job is a combination of many things I love—working with (and learning from) young people who bring their excitement, curiosity, wisdom and realness to the gardens; working with plants, seeds and soil; working with adults who are also kind and respectful to, and patient with young people; and spending a lot of time outside. I am really grateful this organization exists in our community and feel pretty lucky to be part of it.



Dexter Kearny

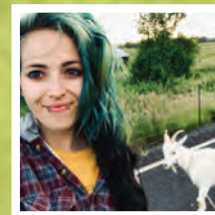
Administrative Assistant Pronouns: he/him/his

I work primarily as an administrative assistant. I keep up with data entry, donations and thank you cards, volunteer hours, and many other random tasks. I love working for the gardens because of the amazing people and the incredible work with the kids. The gardens have inspired me to plant my first tomato plants and they are sooo delicious! When I am not working for LCSG, I am co-pastoring at Longview Presbyterian Church, reading great books, playing with my cats, tossing the frisbee, or baking and eating.

Erin McKee

Garden Coordinator Pronouns: she/her/hers

The way that a garden teaches our hearts to be more open to loving each other and the world around us is so special. Working with kids and watching them discover things like the magic of eating plants they grew or the joy of gently petting a bumblebee is truly a dream. Together we learn that we must all be cultivators of the earth and that everything depends on each other—from the soil, to every living creature, to what we consume as humans. One of my favorite parts of School Gardens is showing students that no matter what they are going through in life they can always find support, acceptance, and purpose in the garden from all of our kindhearted staff and volunteers. Kids deserve the very best we can give, and I intend to give them a lot.



Ian Thompson

Executive Director Pronouns: he/him/his

I spend a lot of time these days steering the ship, so I'm always grateful when I get to use my construction background to design and build structures in gardens, and I LOVE to involve students in that process. To see the confidence and self-esteem kids get when adults entrust them to use real tools to do real work—it's transformative. And the same is true when kids get to grow and cook their own food. I am not enthused about the rate at which we humans are covering our beautiful world with concrete, plastic, and chemicals; this work equips young people with the tools and passion needed to move us in healthier directions. To unwind, I like to prune fruit trees, ride my bike in the forest, bake bread, and hang out with family and friends at Roland Wines.

SEEDS of CHANGE

Volunteer Spotlight

"Being able to see the world from these kids' eyes is just priceless"

Nancy Stone and Nagwa Pomerinke

Nagwa has been working with the Olympic School Garden since its inception in early 2015, and Nancy began her work there in fall 2015. This duo currently run the Olympic Elementary After School Garden Club, and without their commitment to the students, there would be no garden program at Olympic.

What keeps you coming back to volunteer week after week?

Nagwa: The kids. It's just so great to see them learning about planting, and how great it is to be outside, and their perspective on everything, and the exploration.

Nancy: I understand that the need is great. In some cases I know that snack here in Garden Club is maybe the last meal they're getting for the rest of the evening. It's incredibly important that we're here for that, and it's a healthy snack and it's a reminder for them later on in their life, hopefully, that if there's food insecurity, they can grow it.

Nagwa: For some kids it's not just about gardening, it's about being with people that they trust and that they're allowed to relax around.

Nancy: When we start Garden Club with the welcome circle, we restart the day. That's what we're trying to do. So we do a lot of deep breaths, closing our eyes, and also listening to the sounds around us in the garden. We reset, and ground ourselves. So I think that's helpful. And when we come back to closing circle, people are more connected, more relaxed and feeling like this is their garden, their space.

Nagwa: I think it's empowering for them to have something that's theirs, that they care about.

Nancy: We focus on that a lot, "welcome to your garden-this is yours".



What would you say to someone who's thinking about becoming a volunteer for LCSG?

Nagwa: You can do as much as you want. I think a lot of people don't want to volunteer because they feel like they'll be roped into too much. But if everybody does a little, that would be amazing. And as a grown-up, you get just as much out of it as the kids do. You learn so much about your community, and just being able to see the world from the kids' eyes is priceless.

Nancy: Right. When you get to experience their excitement, that's the best.

Nagwa: And you never know what that's going to be. Will it be a worm? Or the raspberry tunnel?

Nancy: It's usually about the worms.

Thank you so much
Mike, Maria,
Nagwa and Nancy!



Edible Olympic

In spring 2015, ground was broken on an 8,000 sq ft garden behind Olympic Elementary's gym. Teacher **Mike Bixby** helped students start vegetable seeds in his classroom, and volunteered to coordinate weekly garden activities. Mike, and his wife **Maria Peyer** (a Kaiser Permanente oncology nurse at the time) founded a program that same year, modeled after Edible Schoolyard in Berkeley, CA. 'Edible Olympic' saw students spend their Thursdays after school being farmers in their school garden, and on Fridays after school being chefs in the Monticello Middle School home ec room. The program was wildly popular with students as well as their families, and ran for a number of seasons in order for all who were interested to have the opportunity to participate. A similar program was run by Maria and Mike with Monticello Middle School students.



Volunteer today

LCSG depends on our volunteers to accomplish our mission. There is something for everyone!

- Volunteer at an After School Garden Club
- Pull weeds or water a garden in the summer
- Make pizzas with us during Summer Concerts at the Lake
- Help us pull off our Summer Produce Sales
- Work with students in their garden during a school day
- Help out with our fall Harvest Festivals

To learn more or to volunteer,
email info@lcschoolgardens.org

Join us at our Free Volunteer
Training events in
February and September

No gardening experience necessary!



WISH LIST

Can you help?

LCSG is always in need of the following items. If you would like to donate, contact 360-431-6725 or info@lcschoolgardens.org for drop-off locations.

Thank you!



- Kid-size or adult XS, S, or M gardening gloves
- Good quality (no plastic, please) hand tools: shovels, cultivators, hand trowels, etc.
- Wheelbarrows (steel handles and never-flat tire)
- Permanent markers
- Caravan Canopy 10' x 15' Classic Tent (white)
- Camp Chef 2-burner propane stoves
- 9" or larger tablet/iPad
- Dump trailer
- Cedar lumber for building benches & picnic tables

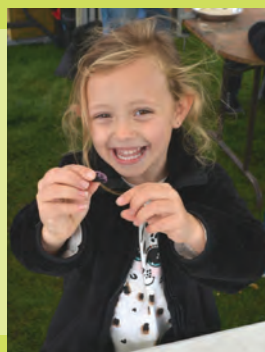
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If you would like to make a charitable bequest to LCSG in your living trust or will, please contact info@lcschoolgardens.org for more information. Thank you!

Lower Columbia School Gardens empowers our community by connecting kids and families with real food and hands-on learning. Through dynamic garden and cooking programs, we cultivate health, equity, life-long learning, and stewardship of the world around us.



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