

GOV SHAPIRO AND AG SECRETARY REDDING VISIT YORK FRESH FOOD FARMS

Shapiro Points to York City Farm as an Example to Others

► **PRODUCE:** The governor visited York Fresh Food Farms during Urban Agriculture Week.

By: Anthony Maenza
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For an estimated 35,000 people in York County, getting food is a challenge.

Getting healthy food is an even bigger challenge.

During Pennsylvania's Urban Agriculture Week, Gov. Josh Shapiro came to York City on Tuesday [July 11, 2023] to tour the city's only urban farm, York Fresh Food Farms, and explore what it means to those who have limited access to fresh produce.

"In a state with a powerhouse agriculture industry, known for the quality of all of our produce and other goods, it's unthinkable that hunger lurks in the shadows the way it does today," Shapiro said.

York Fresh Food Farms, a nonprofit that launched in 2016, has distributed between 14 and 16 tons of produce annually into areas that don't have access to it.

"When you walk in and out of these greenhouses, you just sort of marvel at folks who are really good at doing what they do," said state Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding during the event.

What York Fresh Food Farms is doing is what Urban Agriculture Week is all about, Redding said.

"Discovering folks who are toiling away in their work and at the same time feeding their neighbors and feeding their communities," Redding said.

The farm uses mini buses to take its fresh produce out to York City neighborhoods where access to food might be the local convenience store. [Farm Manager Bruce] Manns said it is easier to take the food to the people than it is for the people to find a way to the food.

"Passionate people, people who are truly dedicated to their cause and one another, they're the engine that makes our commonwealth move forward," Shapiro said, "Bruce, you are one of those passionate people. I am so impressed with what I see here."

source: <https://www.yorkdispatch.com/story/news/local/2023/07/12/shapiro-points-to-york-city-urban-farm-as-an-example-to-others/70402498007/>



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INTRODUCTION

Every year brings us new challenges and opportunities. York Fresh Food Farms could not overcome those challenges and take advantage of those opportunities without the generous support of our employees, volunteers, customers, contributors, community partners, foundations and government funders. And York Fresh Food Farms' Board of Directors deserves special mention for its outstanding work this year to prepare York Fresh Food Farms for an amazing future. **THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR SUPPORT.**



One of the high points of the year was Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro's visit to the Farm – his family has a vegetable garden and he was particularly interested in learning about the varieties of cucumber, tomato and peppers York Fresh Food Farms grows – but Gov. Shapiro and Secretary Redding's visit to celebrate urban agriculture was just one day in a full year of farm activities.

Another high point of 2023 was the creation of a strategic collaboration between UPMC Memorial and York Fresh Food Farms to create a year-round working farm on the UPMC Memorial campus at 1701 Innovation Drive in West Manchester Township. Plans for the Project have been under discussion for more than two years. All of us at York Fresh Food Farms are excited about the Farm to Hospital Project at UPMC Memorial that will promote the critical role food plays in overall health and demonstrate York Fresh Food Farms' commitment to, and UPMC Memorial's community health and educational initiatives focusing on, fresh, healthy food and eating a healthy diet. York Fresh Food Farms is the Farm Manager for the Project. The Farm to Hospital Project includes three 2500 SF high tunnels for growing a variety of vegetables and herbs. High Tunnels 1 and 2 were finished and planted lettuces and other winter-hardy vegetables during the first week of December 2023. High Tunnel # 3 was finished last week and will be planted in February 2024.



Although York Fresh Food Farms and its Mobile Produce Market focus on bringing affordable produce into York City neighborhoods, donations of fresh produce are also an important part of our work to address food access inequalities. Two solid partnerships developed around produce donations this year with Lifepath Christian Ministries and Cornerstone Youth Home. Both organizations use the donated produce in the meals they prepare for their clients and residents.



Cornerstone Youth Home, a residence for children of homeless families while their parents secure permanent housing, receives regular donations of produce from York Fresh Food Farms. “I generally pick up a large box of vegetables and fruit from the farm once a week,” says Jadira Morales, Director at Cornerstone. “Sometimes the kids are with me, and they love exploring the farm and asking the farmer LOTS of questions.” Jadira says the kids really like having ready access to fresh fruit, and are eating vegetables that some of them have never tried. “Our cook does amazing things with the donated produce and recently made a pumpkin soup that some of the kids really enjoyed.” Parents are surprised to hear that their children are eating vegetables that they haven’t eaten before. “We are so grateful for the donated produce from York Fresh Food Farms.”

Other recipients of donated produce included: Caring Ministries, Catholic Harvest Food Pantry, New Hope Ministries, Spanish American Resource Center, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the York County Food Bank, and Penn State Extension Nutrition Links Program (SNAP-Ed). Produce donated in 2023 exceeded 9,800 pounds.

This year York Fresh Food Farms staff focused on reducing waste at the Farm. In July, York Fresh Food Farms received a Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful – Healing the Planet grant that will enable York Fresh Food Farms to compost vegetable trimmings and spoiled produce and purchase a flail mower that cuts and chops spent field plants, like tomatoes, eggplant, okra, and calabaza vines into mulch. The biomass from composting and mowing with the flail mower will provide nutrients and minerals to improve soil health. Next year, York Fresh Food Farms can use its composting experience to encourage others to reduce food waste.



York Fresh Food Farms works hard to collaborate with the City of York, and many other community organizations to cultivate community health through agriculture, access and affordability. The first Farm Swap, a conversation between York Fresh Food Farms and several community partners, was held in April. Participants from Lifepath Christian Ministries, Community Progress Council, Hannah Penn School’s Community of Hope, York City Police Department’s Youth and Community Outreach program, and several board members met to dialogue about the needs of each organization’s constituencies and how to increase awareness of York Fresh Food Farms and its work to increase access to healthy food in the City of York. The small-group format generated enthusiastic discussion and planted seeds for future cooperation and collaboration.

VOLUNTEERS AT YORK FRESH FOOD FARMS

Volunteers are vital to the success of the work on the Farm and at the markets. This year volunteers had a huge impact at York Fresh Food Farms and played major roles as mentors, maintaining the pollinator gardens, with farm work and prepping vegetables for the markets. Volunteering not only makes a difference for York Fresh Food Farms and the lives of the families we serve, but also provides real benefits to the volunteers themselves. In 2023, we estimate volunteers contributed 4,309 hours of service to York Fresh Food Farms. We especially thank Patty McGuire of Seven Valleys, PA, for sharing her management and decision making skills and work experience and knowledge with the Mobile Produce Market this year.



Volunteers at York Fresh Food Farms come as individuals and in groups. Girl Scout Troop #20483 marched with us in York's annual St. Patrick's Day parade, which returned in March 2023 after a two-year hiatus for the pandemic. The scouts handed out many bushels of apples from Brown's Orchards to parade-spectators, especially the kids. York Fresh Food Farms' parade entry -- featuring Farm Manager, Bruce Manns, on the blue tractor, the Mobile Produce Market bus, Annalisa Gojmerac driving Sunshine (her yellow pick-up truck) and the Girl Scouts -- all decorated with shamrocks -- earned an honorable mention.

York Fresh Food Farms welcomed 22 York Hospital/ WellSpan Health ER residents and their supervising physician for their annual service project at York Fresh Food Farms on August 31st. The York Hospital ER residents have been volunteering at York Fresh Food



Farms since 2018. They come for a half day in the late summer/early fall to harvest vegetables, this year butternut and acorn squash, tomatoes and peppers, pull up the spent plants of crops that have



I was a volunteer at York Fresh Food Farm from April to October of 2023. I initially thought of volunteering three times a week, but this 64-year-old body knew twice a week was enough. As a volunteer, I think I learned some-thing new every day at the Farm: water drip systems, plant spacing, weed control, pruning, harvesting, food prep, etc. By far, the best part was meeting so many awesome people who worked as a team to get the many daily tasks done. It was rewarding, at the end of the day, to see the refrigerators full of fresh produce, ready for York markets.

- Lauren Hoenstine



finished fruiting, remove plastic mulch, irrigation lines, trellises and other plant supports and weed rows of cabbages, broccoli, and cauliflower. August 31st was a beautiful, sunny day. The group of resident doctors accomplished a lot of important work around the Farm and had fun working in the fields and the high tunnels, an experience very different from their hospital jobs.



I began volunteering at York Fresh Food Farms the summer of 2021. My focus at that time, and the following summer, was to tame and nurture the pollinator garden which borders the urban farm area on Fairlane Drive. I enjoyed my work and was impressed by the mission of the organization to make equal access to fresh healthy produce a reality for the residents of York City. When I retired from full time work in January of 2023, I was able to expand my volunteer hours and duties at York Fresh Food Farms. Since that time I've been introduced to and experienced several things that have enriched my life.

- *Witnessing the miracle of a tiny black speck buried in a small plug of dirt, transform into a lush green plant that produces fresh food.*
- *Tending the "Garden of Eden" growing in high tunnels in the dead of winter with only the sun to provide heat.*
- *Watching large rows of dirt transform into a variety of foods from asparagus to zucchini.*
- *Handling vegetables I never heard of before and learning different ways to prepare them.*
- *Knowing my work and sweat equity contributed directly to providing nutrition for others.*
- *Meeting people I never would have come in contact with - customers at the mobile markets, college student summer workers, kids from ARC helping with harvesting, Fireside neighbors walking past the farm sharing comments of appreciation for the green space in their neighborhood, and the Governor of PA who visited the farm.*

All of these things happened in about a nine month period. Now that the cycle is in its dormant stage, I find I miss the sights and smells of the Farm, and the proximity to the passionate people who possess the skills to make it happen at York Fresh Food Farms. Volunteering is largely a "giving" activity, but I'm grateful to have received all of the above and long for February when it can begin all over again.

- Karen Yingling

For the past three years, 11th and 12th grade students from York Academy Regional Charter School have volunteered at York Fresh Food Farms. Janet Miller's CAS (Creativity, Activity, Services) class learned about York Fresh Food Farms in 2020 during the COVID shutdown, when students were asked to find a volunteer activity on their own. One student chose York Fresh Food Farms. Ms. Miller was intrigued, as York Fresh Food Farms is only 1/2 mile from York Academy's Upper School, and she has brought her whole class to volunteer for the past two years. The students learn about food insecurity and food deserts and study York Fresh Food Farms' website prior to coming to the farm. At the Farm, they help with harvesting, prepping vegetables, fall cleanup and, of course, sampling the produce. "Some of the students have home gardens, and others have never seen how food is grown or put their hands in dirt. All of them really respond positively to the experience," Ms. Miller says. Below are some photos from York Academy's visits and what the students had to say:



- *I think that it is a good thing to work outside because it's a good experience and you can learn a lot of things just by working outside. Helping out at the farm is good because you get that feeling you're helping others with their work and giving back to the community. Helping at the farm is a good mental break because you get to be outside and look at new things that you've never seen before. – Nic*
- *Before this I didn't know that purple sweet potatoes existed and I am excited to try them now. – Lily*
- *At first I wasn't comfortable with picking plants for them but as I did it, it felt more relaxed. – Pedro*



- *Although I've only gone once, the experience gave me a new view on the workers at York Fresh Food Farms. Being there for a short amount of time tired me out a bit, but those workers who work at the farm work even harder and for longer. It made me have a lot more respect for the people who work at York Fresh Food Farms, and the dedication they have to raise these goods is something that is worthy of respect and acknowledgment from everyone. – Edward*
- *York Fresh Food Farms is something that needs to be supported so that we can get people out of Food Deserts and Food Swamps. – Reiley*
- *At the York Fresh Food Farms, I helped to de-weed the raised beds. I hate dirt and I'm generally afraid of bugs. However, I overcame this and chose not to freak out too much when bees would fly near/around me. At York Fresh Food Farms, I helped prep sweet potatoes for washing and selling! They were huge and covered in dirt, and normally I'd freak out and shy away from handling things like that, but I ended up enjoying the work and finishing the whole basket faster than Nicolas could wash them. – Ady*
- *I enjoyed working outside in the farm with my hands. It's not something I would like to continue in my life for the future, but it's fun to do in your free time, it's outside, and you can help out the community. It felt great knowing I was helping people in the community that want fresh fruits and vegetables for an affordable price. – Arialis*



- *One of the most important aspects of CAS is our involvement in the community outside of the school. One of the ways we do this is lending a hand at the York Fresh Foods Farm. It is about a 5 minute walk from our school. At the farm we assist in anything they need help with. For example, at the farm I've picked tomatoes and washed potatoes. Other people have washed squash, peeled potatoes, picked peppers, and sorted vegetables. The people at the farm are very nice and explain exactly what they need done thoroughly. When we pick vegetables we separate them into bins that are able to be sold and others that will be given away because they aren't good enough to sell. – Ruby*
- *Honestly, going to the Farm for the first time, I was very closed minded. I didn't want to get dirty so early in the morning. It was also very hot and I wasn't with any of my friends. However, by the end of the time there, I became more open minded to the process. I felt in a better mood after being physically active and was a little excited by the food that was there. – Nalani*

Other groups that volunteered at York Fresh Food Farms in 2023 included The ARC of York County (this was The ARC's 3rd year coming to York Fresh Food Farms once a week from June to October to wash and prep vegetables and other tasks to help the Mobile Produce Market), York College for Spartan Service Day (October 14), the Loeblein/Baldwin family, missionaries from the Washington, D.C. area Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, York County 4H and the York City Police Youth Partnership. All of us at York Fresh Food Farms are so grateful for the generosity of all the volunteers who gave unstintingly of their time to help forward York Fresh Food Farms' mission.

URBAN FARMING



Picking calabaza, Sept 2023



Harvesting broccoli, Feb. 2023

At York Fresh Food Farms' farming is the foundation for all we do to increase access to healthy food and to enable York City residents to eat a healthy diet and live healthier lives. The fact that York Fresh Food Farms grows its own vegetables, herbs and berries, allows York Fresh Food Farms' Mobile Produce Market to offer the produce it sells at low prices and work towards everyone in the community, especially low-income families, having access to affordable, healthy, fresh food.

York Fresh Food Farms goals for its urban farming program are:

- To provide high quality produce to low-income and food insecure families.
- To address food access inequities.
- To spread the word about nutritious, good tasting vegetables and eating healthy.
- To increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables in the City of York, PA for a healthier community.

Farming at York Fresh Food Farms is a year-round production-agriculture operation that follows commercial organic vegetable farming methods. The Farm's key assets include: ➤ 1.5 acres at our urban farm headquarters at 150 Willis Road with use of a garage next door and the parking lot at the intersection of Parkway Boulevard and Willis Road and approximately 4 acres under cultivation behind 1195 Roosevelt Avenue,¹ (the two locations are just one mile from one another), ➤ a semi-trailer converted into a building with a veg prep area, storage/office space and a cold room, ➤ a 10'x14' walk-in refrigeration unit, with a 2nd walk-in refrigeration to be added in the spring of 2024, ➤ two heated greenhouses, a vacuum seeder and germination chamber, a heated incubator for starting seeds, ➤ three 2,500 SF high tunnels (and we hope to add a 4th in 2024) and one 1150 SF high tunnel,² ➤ one compact pick-up truck and one large, long-body farm truck, and ➤ one blue compact tractor with a variety of accessories, including a fork lift.

¹ The farm headquarters at 150 Willis Road, the parking lot at Willis Road and Parkway Boulevard, where the Parkway Farm Stand is held on Saturdays, and the adjacent garage used as office and storage space are on land provided by the Housing Authority of the City of York. The acreage behind 1195 Roosevelt Avenue is provided by TrueNorth Wellness Services.

² The installation of the first 2 high tunnels and enclosing and heating the veg prep area in late 2019 allowed York Fresh Food Farms to move from seasonal to year-round farming over the winter of 2019-2020.



To grow as much produce as possible on the few acres available, Farm Manager Bruce Manns uses plastic and straw mulch (as a weed barrier and to retain moisture in the soil), drip-line irrigation and fertigation³ to increase water use efficiency, reduce foliar diseases, prevent erosion and increase yields. Crop productivity and yields are maximized through carefully considered high tunnel or field placement, use of trellising, optimizing field-bed turnaround and succession planting (planting a second or third crop when the previous crop is fully harvested) and an effective integrated pest management plan.

As a steward of the land he farms, Bruce is committed to a continuing regenerative agriculture program to improve the soil. This includes cover cropping in the off season with buckwheat, annual rye grass and crimson clover, mulching spent plants with the flail mower and composting to renew and improve the soil with nutrients and biomass.

York Fresh Food Farms grows about half its crops from seed. Growing from seed saves money and allows us to grow special varieties and special cultural varieties of vegetables that our Mobile Produce Market customers want. The crops not grown from seed by York Fresh Food Farms come from Miller Plant Farm (Seven Valleys, PA), the largest grower of commercial transplants in the region.



Planting seeds with the vacuum seeder, Feb. 2023



Seedlings growing in the greenhouse, early March



Flats of transplants grown at Miller Plant Farm, early April

³ Fertigation is the process by which organic soluble fertilizer and soil amendments feed growing plants by being injected into the irrigation system.

2023 has been a good year at the Farm. As of the end of November, the total of produce harvested was 30,910 pounds. We should reach 32,000 pounds by the end of the year. The Farm Manager identifies several crops for special mention this year:

- We had a very good year growing our “Hot Peppers” The performance and yield in our high tunnel #4 was outstanding and well received in our mobile markets.
- The early season brassicas (cabbage, cauliflower, collards, and broccoli) were top sellers with mobile market customers.
- The high tunnel tomatoes provided us with a dependable harvest from early July through mid-October. 2023 is the longest season we have had yet for tomatoes.



Planting at 1195, April 2023



Collards, kale, lettuces, zucchini harvested at 1195, June 2023



Harvesting Brussel sprouts, Sept. 2023

Farmers are always concerned about providing the right nutrients to each crop and controlling pests. This year, in late fall, with the advent of morning dew falls, the potential for fungus growth and insect pressure from whiteflies and squash beetles increased. The Farm Manager is working with Pro Farm Group (Davis, CA) on a new, diverse, organic, biobased program for 2024 to better treat these problems.

The Farm Manager inspects the crops in the high tunnels and in the field many times each week. When he noticed tomato plants with excessive leaf curl in one high tunnel, he sent tissue samples to Waypoint Analytical, Inc. (Leola, PA) for testing. High concentrations of calcium and sulfur were the culprits. Next year, we will be testing the soil before spring planting and adjusting the minerals included in the fertigation program for the tomatoes grown in the high tunnels. The fertigation formulations are tweaked every year to better enhance crop health and overall quality and quantity.

Last year's Year End Report set out a number of recommendations/goals for York Fresh Food Farms' urban farming program. Below are the Farm Manager's comments on efforts to meet those goals this year.

- *Holding regular weekly staff meetings did not work for my schedule or the various starting times for farm staff members. But we were able to work together, coordinate and effectively communicate through task lists I sent out to the farm staff every morning. We will continue to use group texts as a primary means of communications going forward into 2024*
- *We have started earlier plantings (weather permitting) of our high tunnel tomatoes, and plan on moving the planting to the first week of April with the goal of having tomatoes for July 4th.*
- *We have done well in organizing, and cleaning of our tools, harvest baskets etc. Early in the season, we had problems with the losses of harvest knives, pruners, and gloves, but by mid-summer things have gone well with no more losses.*
- *I am currently working with Michael Senft, the farm hand who is continuing to work through the winter and plans to continue with York Fresh Food Farms for the long term. As I perform tasks, I am inviting Michael to watch then perform them. This will enable me to delegate to Michael who in turn will be able to guide and direct the same to others.*
- *As part of our Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful Grant, we now have three rotatable compost tumblers. We are using these for our vegetable trimmings and plant material and plan to use the resulting compost in our garlic beds.*



Spaghetti squash, July 2023



Harvesting kale and weeding, Aug. 2023

Farming Recommendations/Goals for 2024

- *Implement a schedule (program) for more effective succession planting to bring our crops to market on a timelier basis without unnecessary pauses. This would include implementation of schedules for both our field and high tunnel crops. Earlier to market increases our impact over the whole market season.*
- *Install raised beds for our radish and turnip to reduce weeding, provide space for succession plantings and add possibilities for carrots as well.*
- *Upgrade the roof on high tunnel #2 with double roof material and a solar powered fan to improve heat retention..*
- *Improve outreach and community engagement, through strategic partnerships like the Farm to Hospital Project at UPMC Memorial and through daily posts on social media, newsletters, local media coverage and public service announcements.*

- *Improve our educational initiatives by promoting urban agriculture, home gardening and eating a healthy diet at market stops, farm visits, and with special events.*
- *Build and strengthen collaborations with City of York health-oriented nonprofits like Katallasso Family Health Center, LifePath Christian Ministries, Community Progress Council and others.*
- *Work with the York City Restaurant Group to establish some meaningful commercial supply opportunities.*

My perspective on farming in 2023

This past growing season has been a challenge particularly in the labor front with many days of only one or two people in our fields. This caused a delay in harvesting with some crop loss as well. The folks who came on board since June have proven reliable in their work although attendance has been spotty for some.

My focus has been to grow and offer excellent local produce to a community which has limited choices. To this end we are continuing our efforts to make our offerings convenient and affordable. We are still however doing a poor job getting our message out to York, and I personally want to focus on two things, marketing and education for this coming year.

With our opportunity to collaborate with UPMC Memorial Hospital going forward into 2024, I hope this message spreads through to the York City patients who are served there and helps us serve them and grow our mission

Urban farming here in York has been an adventure over the years and I am looking forward to new opportunities to serve and collaborate with other organizations in the years ahead. Thank you for having me as your Farm Manager. As an optimist I believe that good things are ahead for York Fresh Food Farms.

- Farm Manager, Bruce Manns



Behind 1195 Roosevelt Avenue, April 2023

PRODUCE SALES AT YORK FRESH FOOD FARMS

Although York Fresh Food Farms' Mobile Produce Market is the main distribution point for our farm-fresh produce, in 2023 we focused on promoting and improving all four of our produce sales programs: Winter Markets, FarmShares, the Mobile Produce Market and our Family Produce Box program in partnership with the School District of the City of York (YCSD).

York Fresh Food Farms' Winter Markets were launched in December of 2022 at 4 York locations. This year, the Winter Markets are being held at White Rose Senior Center, York's Arthur J. Glatfelter YMCA, and at the Parkway Farm Stand (at Willis Road and Parkway Boulevard), adjacent to York Fresh Food Farms' headquarters at 150 Willis Road. York Fresh Food Farms' other program of winter produce sales is FarmShares, a weekly box of fresh produce, ordered online, and delivered for free within the City of York to customers with transportation issues or access limitations (other customers arrange to pick up their weekly box at 150 Willis Road). Customers sign-up and pay online with debit/credit or SNAP.⁴ Accepting SNAP removes another access barrier for customers to purchase farm-grown produce. FarmShares is available 52 weeks of the year.



York Fresh Food Farms works hard to promote its Mobile Produce Market and our low, affordable prices for fresh, local produce to SNAP participants in Spanish and English by highlighting the fact that the Mobile Produce Market “accepts SNAP/EBT, WIC and Senior Farmers Market Checks,”⁵ WellSpan Market Bucks (a vegetable Rx program) and other food assistance programs for low-income families with signage on the two mobile market vehicles, on its schedule cards and flyers, and through social media. In addition, York Fresh Food Farms partners with The Food Trust (Philadelphia, PA) in an incentive program

⁴ SNAP is USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as Food Stamps.

⁵ The Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) is a PA Department of Agriculture program that provides \$24 in \$6 checks to low-income seniors and WIC families to purchase fresh Pennsylvania-grown fruit and vegetables.

for SNAP shoppers that gives customers back \$2 in Food Buck coupons, to use at the mobile markets, for every \$2 that they spend using SNAP, up to \$10 per purchase.

2023 was the third and final year of the ARPA⁶ funded Family Produce Box program in partnership with the YCSD. From June 5th to August 7th, York Fresh Food Farms supplied the school district with 1,160 boxes of fruit, vegetables and eggs that were distributed to food insecure families as part of the district's summer school program. For each of the 10 weeks, between 50 and 200 boxes had to be assembled and filled on Monday, then stored in the walk-in overnight for pickup on Tuesday morning. This was a very demanding commitment for the mobile market staff and volunteers to prep all the produce and pack all the boxes in a very short period of time. Volunteers from The ARC of York County came every Monday to help and work alongside other volunteers and our intrepid market and farm staff to get the job done.



2023 was the 6th year of York Fresh Food Farms' Mobile Produce Market, our farmers-market-on-wheels. The Mobile Produce Market ran from June 1st to November 4th (22 weeks) with 11+ neighborhood market stops each week, plus special events. The Mobile Produce Market sells the produce grown at York Fresh Food Farms at low, affordable prices, with York Fresh Food Farms' vegetables supplemented with produce purchased from other York County farms, mainly crops that York Fresh Food Farms does not grow, sweet corn, melons, peaches and apples.

LUNES:	WIC • 130 W. Market St. • 12:00pm - 2:00pm
LUNES:	Wellington Homes • 724 E. King St. • 12:00pm - 2:00pm
LUNES:	Parkway • Corner of Wills & Parkway • 3:30pm - 5:30pm
MARTES:	Parkway • Corner of Wills & Parkway • 12:00pm - 2:00pm
MARTES:	Lee's Food Market • 564 N. Pershing Ave. • 3:30pm - 5:30pm
MIÉRCOLES:	Carriage Works • 50 S. Highland Ave. • 12:00pm - 2:00pm
MIÉRCOLES:	Springdale • Near 915 Arlington Rd. • 3:30pm - 5:30pm
MIÉRCOLES:	J & J Food Mart • 258 W. Maple St. • 3:30pm - 5:30pm
JUEVES:	White Rose Senior Center • 27 S. Broad St. • 12:00pm - 2:00pm
JUEVES:	Hannah Penn • 413 Boundary Ave. • 3:00pm - 5:00pm
VIERNES:	York Towne House • 200 N. Duke St. • 12:00pm - 2:00pm
VIERNES:	rabbittransit Transfer Station • 213 W. King St. • 3:30pm - 5:30pm
VIERNES:	YMCA • 90 N. Newberry St. • 3:30pm - 5:30pm
SÁBADO:	Parkway • Corner of Wills & Parkway • 10:00am - 2:00pm



YORK FRESH FOOD FARMS 2023 MERCADO MÓVIL DE PRODUCTOS AGRÍCOLAS

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⁶ American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law by President Biden on March 11, 2021. ARPA guaranteed direct funding to all cities, towns and villages in the United States. Starting in July, 2021, the YCSD used part of its ARPA funding to provide boxes of fresh produce from York Fresh Food Farms for the district's food insecure families.

Since York Fresh Food Farms' produce travels almost zero miles farm-to-table, the Mobile Produce Market can keep its prices for fruit and vegetables low and affordable for a customer base that has been especially hard hit with inflation and high food prices. For each market, the market staff loads Mobile Produce Market's two vehicles (purchased from rabbittransit) with produce, drives to the market stop, sets up tables and, if the sun is out puts up an awning for shade, and serves customers from the surrounding neighborhoods. With their bright green color and unique design, created by Sue Ann Kline of Kline Graphic Designs (York, PA), the bus and van are widely recognized throughout the City of York.



2023 Mobile Produce Market by the Numbers		Compare
(per market tally)		2022
# Regular Market Stops	14	15
Total # Market Days	221	272
Total # Regularly Scheduled Markets	210	265
Total # Special Events	11	7
# Markets cancelled	98*	39
Total Sales	\$29,187.50	\$27,591.34
Total SNAP/EBT	\$4,105.16	\$4,017.00
Total Food Bucks (SNAP)	\$1,692.00	\$1,252.00
Total FMNP	\$6,240.00	\$5,272.00
Total WellSpan Market Bucks	\$495.00	\$530.00
Total # Transactions	3,406	3,225
Average # Sales per Market	15	12
Average Revenue per Market	\$132.07	\$101.44
Average Purchase	\$8.57	\$8.56
Food Assistance \$ as % of all sales \$	42.94%	46.29%

* The number of cancelled markets is based on the published schedule of 14 Mobile Produce Market stops per week for the 22 weeks of the 2023 Mobile Produce Market. No market stop had 22 markets in 2023. Our markets in the poorest neighborhoods, at J&J Market and Lees Market, were stopped after 8/2 and 7/25, respectively, and J&J had no markets in June. Non-Saturday Parkway Farm Stand markets were stopped after July 18. Other markets were discontinued at various times in October.

Although the 2022 Mobile Produce Market ran for 22 weeks, the same number of weeks as 2021, we held 51 fewer market days than last year, including special events this year 221 versus 272 market days in 2022. Nevertheless, total sales revenue increased this year from \$27,591 to \$29,187.



White Rose Senior Center



York Towne House

The Mobile Produce Market serves a diverse, low-income demographic. To measure whether the mobile markets are reaching low-income families, York Fresh Food Farms tracks the number and value of sales by the source of payment being one of several food assistance programs for low-income families. In 2023, the number of Mobile Produce Market sales increased to 3,406, but the percentage of food assistance sales dropped to 42.94%. For the past 3 years, mobile market sales have been below the level of participation and interest experienced in the pandemic year of 2020, when pre-vaccine fear of indoor shopping increased the number of customers and our customers were from a greater mix of income levels: sales in 2020 reached a high of 4,142, but with food assistance sales of only 35.40%.

Table 1. Food Assistance Sales in Dollars and as a Percentage of Total Sales by Year

Types of Food Assistance	2023 Food Aid Sales by Type	2023 Food Aid Sales as % of Total Sales	2022 Food Aid Sales by Type	2022 Food Aid Sales as % of Total Sales	2021 Food Aid Sales by Type	2021 Food Aid Sales as % of Total Sales	2020 Food Aid Sales by Type	2020 Food Aid Sales as % of Total Sales	2019 Food Aid Sales by Type	2019 Food Aid Sales as % of Total Sales
FMNP Checks	6,240	21.38%	5,272	19.11%	5,664	22.41%	5,676	13.90%	3,145	15.50%
SNAP	4,105	14.06%	4,017	14.56%	5,294	20.94%	6,573	16.10%	1,637	8.10%
Food Bucks	1,692	5.80%	1,252	4.54%	1,854	7.33%	818	2.00%	336	1.70%
WellSpan Market Bucks	495	1.70%	530	1.92%	675	2.67%	1,010	2.50%	540	2.70%
Heart Bucks			652	2.36%	592	2.34%	371	0.90%	2,050	10.10%
NENA Coupons			182	0.66%						
York City Wellness Coupons			865	3.14%						
	\$12,532	42.94%	\$12,771	46.29%	\$14,079	55.69%	\$14,448	35.40%	\$7,708	38.10%



The 2023 Mobile Produce Market set an all-time record for the highest revenue generated at a single market at the second annual wellness event at York City Hall for city employees held on June 22nd (last year's event was on September 9, 2022). The total sales for the City Hall market were \$1,244.00. For the entire 2023 Mobile Produce Market season, the average amount spent per customer was \$8.57; at the City Hall wellness event the average sale was over \$10 because the City handed out \$10 mobile market coupons to city employees.

Table 2. Comparison of Key Mobile Produce Market Statistics

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
# of Regular Market Stops	14	15	15	15	10
# of Special/pop-up Markets	11	7			
# of Market Days	221	272	263	264	178
# cancelled markets	98	39			
# of Sales	3,406	3,225	3,064	4,142	3,326
Average # Sales/Market	15	12	12	16	19
Average \$/Market	\$132.07	\$101.44	\$97.89	\$162.50	\$113.89
Average Sale Amount	\$8.57	\$8.56	\$8.25	\$9.84	\$6.10
Total MPM sales	\$29,187.50	\$27,591.34	\$25,276.99	\$40,746.00	\$20,272.76

Mobile Market Stops

The Mobile Produce Market's most successful markets are at locations where customers are already gathered (e.g., a senior center, apartment building, WIC office or transit center) and where the market stop host organization actively promotes shopping at the Mobile Produce Market to its constituents with posters and signage, or on Facebook and other social media or with coupons or some combination of these. York Fresh Food Farms tries to locate its mobile market stops in the lowest income areas. It is often difficult to find the right location in a neighborhood.



rabbitransit, July 2023



YMCA, July 2023



Parkway Farm Stand, July 2023

Table 3, below, shows the market locations based on total sales in 2023 and shows the market stops in order of the percentage of food assistance sales (from largest to smallest), the top five stops for the average sales amount and for the average revenue per stop.

Table 3. Sales by Location

	Location/ Stop	Total Sales \$/ Stop	# Markets/ Stop	Total Transactions/ Stop	Total # SNAP/EBT Transactions /Stop	Average # Transactions /Stop	Stops' Average sale amount	Average revenue/ Stop	Total SNAP & Food Bucks \$ as % of total Stop Revenue	Total FMNP \$ as % of total Stop Revenue	All Food Assistance \$ as % of total Stop Revenue
	White Rose Senior Center	\$4,858.55	21	549	99	26	\$8.85	\$231.36	24.72%	42.19%	71.75%
	Hannah Penn	\$2,799.50	19	255	22	13	\$10.98	\$147.34	12.41%	47.51%	64.03%
	York Towne House	\$4,200.50	21	485	77	23	\$8.66	\$200.02	29.71%	20.00%	50.18%
	Wellington	\$1,123.15	16	148	23	9	\$7.59	\$70.20	26.98%	22.26%	49.24%
	WIC	\$2,317.40	17	316	37	19	\$7.33	\$136.32	11.05%	37.54%	48.80%
	Lee's	\$211.50	4	25	7	6	\$8.46	\$52.88	45.39%	0.00%	45.39%
	Carriage Works	\$1,401.50	19	147	31	8	\$9.53	\$73.76	36.14%	5.71%	41.85%
	Parkway Saturday	\$3,162.50	21	284	41	14	\$11.14	\$150.60	27.62%	12.33%	40.90%
	J&J Market	\$208.50	4	36	4	9	\$5.79	\$52.13	27.34%	9.59%	36.93%
	Parkway Not Saturday	\$447.50	10	56	12	6	\$7.99	\$44.75	27.37%	0.00%	27.37%
	rabbitransit	\$1,350.00	18	288	28	16	\$8.69	\$75.00	18.52%	7.41%	30.00%
	YMCA	\$2,062.00	20	287	22	14	\$7.18	\$103.10	13.00%	7.27%	21.97%
	Springdale	\$2,280.50	20	250	14	13	\$9.12	\$114.03	6.53%	5.70%	12.23%
	Totals	\$26,423.10	210	3126	417	15	\$8.45	\$125.82	21.49%	23.50%	46.86%
Special Event Markets											
6/1/2023	Spring Open House at Y3F	\$96.50	1	9	3	9	\$10.72	\$96.50	3.11%	0.00%	3.11%
6/2/2023	Spring Open House at Y3F	\$149.20	1	12	0	12	\$12.43	\$149.20	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
6/3/2023	Spring Open House at Y3F	\$392.95	1	22	5	22	\$17.86	\$392.95	1.27%	0.00%	1.27%
6/17/2023	NENA Block Party	\$184.75	1	29	1	29	\$6.37	\$184.75	0.54%	0.00%	0.54%
6/22/2023	City Hall Pop Up	\$1,244.00	1	120	0	120	\$10.37	\$1,244.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
7/8/2023	Special Event	\$109.50	1	20	0	20	\$5.48	\$109.50	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
7/14/2023	Messiah Church Event	\$218.50	1	25	1	25	\$8.74	\$218.50	0.46%	0.00%	0.46%
7/21/2023	Messiah Church Event	\$85.00	1	7	0	7	\$12.14	\$85.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
7/26/2023	Hygiene Drive Hannah Penn	\$65.50	1	8	0	8	\$8.19	\$65.50	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
8/1/2023	Willis Lane Special Event	\$95.00	1	10	2	10	\$9.50	\$95.00	2.11%	21.05%	23.16%
10/3/2023	Fall Open House at Y3F	\$123.50	1	18	0	18	\$6.86	\$123.50	0.00%	8.09%	8.09%
	Totals	\$2,764.40	11	280	12	25	\$9.87	\$251.31	0.43%	1.09%	5.39%



Parkway Farm Stand, June 2023

Last year's Year End Report set out a number of recommendations/goals for York Fresh Food Farms' Mobile Produce Market. Here are the comments on work towards meeting those 2022 goals:

- *Efforts to promote the Mobile Produce Markets, and specifically efforts targeting low-income customers, included community events, printed flyers distributed in neighborhoods, and social media. York Fresh Food Farms maintained visibility through events such as the St. Patrick's Day parade, Go Green in the City, spring and fall Open Houses, and events sponsored by community partners. All print materials inform customers that York Fresh Food Farms accepts various food assistance program payment methods. Customers are asked prior to purchase how they will be paying--with SNAP, FMNP checks, Food Bucks, etc.--and the benefits of these programs were explained.*
- *York Fresh Food Farms received a grant from the York County Community Foundation to fund Taste! a program of recipe demonstrations, tastings, nutrition education and resources for customers. Unfortunately, we had no success in trying to recruit candidates to do cooking and recipe demos and so were not able to launch Taste! in 2023. Plans continue to staff and offer Taste! in 2024 and 2025.*
- *Documented procedures for mobile market staff were created and implemented with new employees. Sales and cash procedures that were previously handwritten and error-prone were converted to electronic recording, and systems were implemented to standardize documentation of harvest, donations and the various sources of payment at the mobile markets.*
- *A variety of methods for improving display, names and pricing of produce were trialed this year, however none were sustainable through multiple packing/unpacking of market supplies. Based on experience gained during the summer season, new signage will be created and implemented in time for the 2024 Mobile Produce Market season.*
- *Produce rotation processes were developed and will be documented for farm and market employees to ensure consistency. Most of the produce harvested, if not sold through mobile market stops or FarmShares, was donated. York Fresh Food Farms prides itself on sending very little produce to waste, however we will continue work towards the goal of zero waste.*



Winter Market at White Rose Senior Center, January 2023



Mobile Produce market Recommendations/Goals for 2023

1. Make a successful transition with two key hires, a Farm Manager and an Operations Coordinator, as a high performing team to lead York Fresh Food Farms.
2. Complete an assessment of each mobile market stop and survey customer shopping habits and produce preferences, the survey to be used to determine the number and locations of market stops for 2024 and which vegetables and fruits to grow and/or purchase for resale.
3. Increase and improve community outreach, community engagement and market promotions to reach more low-income customers, increase Mobile Produce Market and FarmShares sales and encourage enrollment in and use of SNAP and other food assistance programs.
4. Provide nutrition information and food skills education at mobile market stops, with tip sheets and recipes to help Mobile Produce Market customers learn how to select, store, and prepare our wide selection of fresh fruits and vegetables and shop smart on a budget.



Parkway Farm Stand, June 2023



York Towne House, July 2023



Walking home from the market at White Rose Senior Center

THE COMMUNITY GARDENS PROJECT

Community gardens not only grow plants, they grow experiences, opportunity, and imagination. Nature provides wonderful ways to learn about the world, and when combined with a questioning mind open to new ideas, the entire city magically transforms from an unyielding hard world of asphalt into a healthy, living and breathing, beautiful edible environment, full of surprising discoveries and unlimited potential for learning.



Project Manager Annalisa Gojmerac has been managing York Fresh Food Farms' Community Gardens Project since 2017. The Community Gardens Project has grown from one garden in 2017 at 351 Cottage Hill Road to four community gardens today. The land for the community gardens is owned by the Redevelopment Authority of the City of York (York City RDA) and licensed to York Fresh Food Farms to maintain as public garden space from April to November.

The 2023 Community Gardens Project by the Numbers

\$60,740 – the value of supplies, materials, plants and volunteer hours given to the City of York community in 2023
\$12,852 – the value of 504 hours of volunteer time spent at the community gardens
\$15,000 – the City of York–Bureau of Health 2023 community gardens grant
\$2,500 – the amount of the American Heart Association grant used for improvements at the North Pershing Garden.
4,200 – the number of pounds of produce donated by the Community Gardens Project to the York community
432 – the number of volunteers: students, neighbors, individuals, groups of all ages

Community Gardens Project Recommendations/Goals for 2024

- *2024 will see a significant environmental improvement with the Codorus Creek Greenway project, right next to the Cottage Hill Garden. All the community gardens can embrace and support this game-changing urban initiative. Connecting to and supporting the Codorus Creek Greenway can be as simple as updated educational displays or planting sunflowers and native plants that support clean water and create habitat for insects, birds and animal life in tandem with growing food for humans. Inclusion of arts-based projects for kids and families is another way to get gardens occupied and active in their*

neighborhoods as they grow produce. Plans are in the works for a “We call York home!” project with kids building and decorating birdhouses that can go home to be hung or placed throughout the gardens.

- All the gardens need benches, a permanent shade structure and up-to-date informational displays with educational, nutrition and environmental content.
- The Church and Court Garden. Several dead arborvitae bushes along the fence-line need to be replaced.
- The Cottage Hill Garden. New gates and supporting fence posts on either side of the gates need to be replaced in 2024, as repeated use has weakened them.
- The North Pershing Garden. This garden needs to have a source of water. The best water source would be to connect to the City of York water supply, but the cost estimate to hook up is \$5,000, including repairing the sidewalk that will have to be torn up to run a water line. A mural is planned for the small masonry brick wall at the back of the garden that is now cleaned, primed and “art ready.”
- The South Queen Street Garden. A project to be undertaken next year, in coordination with Keystone Kidspace, will build more bird houses to be mounted on the 12 fence posts that surround the garden. This garden needs a sign, and a mural is planned for the large wall at the back of the garden. The present footprint of the garden was sized to accommodate the scaffolding required to support a mural artist, but once the mural is completed, the planted area of the garden can expand.

The Church and Court Garden at 335 S. Court Street

Due to heat and drought early in the season, growing at the Church and Court Garden was concentrated exclusively on native plants and maintaining a zero-water garden. This “teachable moment” revealed natives successfully thriving in hot, dry conditions and beautifying urban areas with floral delight. Most urban areas had brown to non-existent grass due to water restrictions, yet this garden had rich green plants offering habitat and healthy support systems to a wide assortment of insects and bird life. Several volunteer groups (Uptown York Rotary, York Garden Club) doubled the size of Church and Court’s compost pile and took vigorous plants and transplanted them into other gardens throughout York City. Volunteers from local restaurants seeded three different types of culinary mushrooms in straw bales.



York College students participated in the annual Spartan Service Day, spreading hardwood mulch on pathways, weeding, picking up garbage, transplanting natives into pots, digging out compost and cleaning the garden shed. Environmental Horticulture students from York College replanted native plants using donated *York Dispatch* newspapers as mulch, and the mulch sparked some lively conversations about York County history. The paper on which *The York Dispatch* was originally printed came from pine trees grown and pulped in York County, and now returns after many years back into York County soil.



The Cottage Hill Garden at 351 Cottage Hill Road

The Cottage Hill Garden grew mostly produce this year. This garden is very successfully embedded in its neighborhood and continues to be a favorite of local school kids and families. Cottage Hill neighborhood kids helped plant in spring, water plants in summer and fall and, on their way home from school, harvest produce for their families' supper. This fall, volunteers added new straw bales, donated from the York State Fair, so that next year above-ground straw bale horticulture can continue. The peach and plum trees, grapes, and blueberries recovered extremely well after last year's spotted lantern fly infestation, and after being professionally pruned, we harvested the most peaches ever.



York College students spread soil, weeded, raked, harvested, trimmed, created a fresh compost pile, and planted donated bulbs and mums in October. The tiller was used to dig up rows and then spread lime and straw. The neighborhood school kids, as "old hands" at helping in the garden, enjoy the novelty of showing college students how to perform garden tasks.

The North Pershing Garden at 516 N. Pershing Avenue

The Uptown Rotary Club took on the North Pershing garden work as a volunteer project during a very hot summer, with additional help from York College students and neighbors. The neighbors' work in mowing the grass, whacking the weeds and keeping up on neighborhood cleanliness was greatly appreciated. And three kittens discovered in the garden were successfully adopted by neighborhood families.

Volunteers cleared the garden's concrete back wall of vines and then primed the wall with 3 coats of paint. The wall now awaits a painted mural next year. The area where the North Pershing Garden is located primarily consists of aging rental properties, overgrown trees, and leaf-clogged gutters where mosquitos can breed. Alerted to this situation, York City maintenance workers will hang bat and bird houses next year to attract mosquito predators to eradicate the pests.

Classes from Head Start and Lots of Love Daycare at the Jefferson Center (located across the street from the garden) came to enjoy the springtime daffodils they had planted last fall, plant sunflowers and cucumbers in the spring, transplant native purple coneflowers in summer and relocate strawberry plants in the fall. Teachers, students, and neighbors all received delicious cucumbers, and the student-volunteers were served sliced cucumber snacks. We grew so many cucumbers that students took them home and gifted them to neighbors for as long as the plants kept producing.



The South Queen Street Garden at 500 S. Queen Street

Collapsed underground water pipes prevent The York Water Company from providing water to the South Queen Street Garden. Therefore, anything planted at this garden must be drought tolerant. Last year, the soil at the South Queen Street Garden was improved and planted with a mix of native plants and flowering bulbs. The plants came up surprisingly well in 2023 considering there was no winter snowmelt and very little spring moisture to sustain plant life. An 8 year old from the neighborhood named Ruby took it upon herself to hand water the first year plants at the garden, and she's a real hero for doing so. The South Queen Street Garden is an excellent example of how local drought tolerant native plants can adapt, thrive and beautify urban areas. Volunteers built and decorated birdhouses and mason bee homes in late fall that will be mounted on posts next year.



Projects/Partnerships

Codorus Creek Critter Crosswalks. Annalisa Gojmerac created, designed and installed the first animal-themed crosswalk in 2019 with funding from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and a S.H.A.R.E. grant. That project was expanded this year with grants from the York County Trail Towns Program and Downtown Inc./York County Economic Alliance to create 5 more crosswalks featuring nature-based images that will be installed at pedestrian crossings adjacent to Codorus Creek.



York State Fair. The Community Gardens Project again hosted a booth at the York State Fair, handing out information and recruiting volunteers. This year's entry also had a table in Agricultural Hall featuring a variety of gourds decorated with incised and hand stained traditional Pennsylvania Dutch hex art.

York Arts Festival/York Arts Week. Annalisa participated by painting a large sunflower on behalf of the Community Gardens Project. (Photo from [The York Dispatch](#), taken by Dawn J. Sagert.)



Central York HS. Plastic trays and pots from the Community Gardens Project (used for starting seeds) were donated to Science Department at Central York High School where an energetic science teacher is reactivating the long unused greenhouse and starting an extra-curricular horticulture program.

Hannah Penn K-8 School. After tilling up the soil for 3 new garden plots, the grade school students planted sunflowers in front of Hannah Penn and the school's health and wellness clinic run by Family First Health and Community Progress Council. In addition, Hannah Penn's science teachers initiated a soil testing project to determine the before and after effects of planting sunflowers as a "bio-remediation soil study." The study dovetailed nicely with the school's "Walking School Bus" program that is designed to encourage physical exercise between home and school for improved health.



Refillism's mural space. The area of weeds and deeply embedded trash and rubble directly in front of the large nature themed mural at Refillism, an eco-lifestyle shop located at 38 South Beaver Street, was cleaned up and then planted with an assortment of donated plants that will look good and can survive the tough urban growing conditions. The plants will improve over time and enhance the mural.

York College's new Environmental Horticulture Degree Program. Environmental Horticultural students volunteered at the Cottage Hill Garden in spring for an introductory tour, in summer to donate and plant heirloom vegetables, and in the fall to plant native plants in a new pollinator sanctuary area.

Jefferson Center. Programs for the kids from Head Start of York County and Lots of Love Daycare/Early Learning at the Jefferson Center (across the street from the North Pershing Garden) were expanded in 2023 with regularly scheduled educational experiences involving planting and harvesting projects, garden safety, planting seeds and transplants, and companion planting vegetables with native plants.

Recycling. As part of the Community Gardens Project's zero waste plan garbage and discarded items at each garden are separated: plastics are recycled at CRDC (the Center for Regenerative Design and Collaboration) in York, metal is sold for scrap with the proceeds used to buy seeds, plants, soil, etc., glass is recycled, and cardboard is added to compost bins and piles.

WE ARE GRATEFUL for the many in-kind donations to the Community Gardens Project in 2023. The three area Lowes stores (Hanover, East and West York) continue to donate end-of-season plants, bulbs and garden supplies. York's Penn State Extension Master Gardener Program donated native plants. Rockfish restaurant donated oyster shells to the Cottage Hill Garden as traditional soil additives. Starbucks donated coffee grounds for composting. Painted Spring Farm Alpacas (Spring Grove, PA) and Melinda's Wool Farm donated sheep and alpaca fleece. Raw wool is a traditional mulch that blocks weeds, adds protein-enriched nutrients to the soil, retains moisture in the soil, and creates tilth, adding oxygen and encouraging root growth. The York State Fair donated straw bales to the Community Gardens Project again this year, so many that the extra bales were shared with other organizations focused on growing food and/or beautifying communities including: Triangle Park, York City Police Dept. After School Program, Keystone Kidspace, Codorus Rail Trail, Penny Heaven and Lebanon Cemeteries, Northeast Neighborhood Association, Horn Farm Center, Sprinkle Retirement Village Garden, Plough Tavern Historical Garden, Triple Spring Flower Farm, Devers Community Garden, Yorktown Community Park, the Garden Club of York, and Hanna Penn K-8 School. **THANK YOU.**

Donations of produce from the Community Gardens Project

Produce donations from the Community Gardens Project were less than last year due to a late planting start and springtime drought. Midseason re-planting, plentiful rain in July and August, and deeply

composted soils increased harvests and donations of cucumbers, lettuce, tomatoes, sweet and hot peppers, garlic, spinach, summer/winter squash, onions, green beans and eggplant.

The recipients of produce donations this year included: Catholic Harvest Food Pantry, Lifepath Christian Ministries, York County Food Bank, Our Daily Bread and Harvest of Blessings. Over half of the harvested produce was donated directly to garden volunteers and to residents of the surrounding neighborhoods. Produce was also donated to Lots of Love Daycare and the Head Start program at the Jefferson Center. Both programs are special recipients of harvested produce because their kids, as garden volunteers, planted the cucumbers and green peppers that they then got to eat for lunch or as snacks.

Challenges

Garbage. The York City Parks and Recreation Department donated 5 metal garbage cans which were used street-side by all 4 gardens in an effort to eliminate trash just blowing around the neighborhood. The garbage cans are constantly used for household trash and need to be emptied about once a week. Keeping up with trash collection is a lot of work, but doing so means there is less garbage polluting gardens. Buying trash bags is an additional expense, but well worth it.

Homelessness. Homelessness has been more evident in some of the gardens this year as the weather has gotten colder, with homeless individuals sleeping among straw bales, next to garden sheds or under shade awnings.

North Pershing Garden. The garden is bordered by residents, who leave large items like couches, large boxes, and TVs lying about in their back yards. These items encroach into the garden where volunteers, some as young as 4 or 5 years old, regularly work. Offers to remove manageable debris, add cardboard to compost, haul off discarded TVs to electronic trash, and call the City to remove large furniture has resulted in gained respect, and discarded trash now is mostly picked up, and areas kept tidy.

Cottage Hill Garden. The largest abandoned vehicle this year was an immense back hoe/ditch digger parked street-side for months. The City towed the vehicle away as it was leaking oil into Codorus Creek. Cottage Hill Garden is a favorite place for local kids to play, but adjacent back alleyways are a prime dumping space. The 5 abandoned/stolen/damaged/discarded bikes found this season were donated to Pedals4Peace, a nonprofit that trains kids to fix bikes that the kids then get to take home for free.



Church and Court Garden. Abandoned vehicles, vandalism, illegal behavior and illegal dumping required contacting York City RDA to request vehicle removals, calls to the police, and requests for security cameras, increased signage and patrols.



From Community Gardens Project Manager

In many ways, most gardens have expanded as far as possible in terms of creation and placement. Soils and structures are greatly improved. The transformative appearance and improved condition of each garden, for each neighborhood, is breathtaking.

Yet there are increasing levels of uncontrollable elements I can't change, like illegal dumping, abandoned vehicles, homelessness, temperature extremes, and rainfall (or lack of rainfall). The more improvement the gardens bring to areas, the more those negative issues stand out.

I need to link with organizations to provide support in terms of funding, volunteers, and generating ideas for innovative use of each site. In terms of human interaction, we progress beyond simply growing food. Generally when people are involved in gardens, there are more eyes on site and it helps prevent bad behavior.

Over time, physical things wear out, break down and need replacing. Water installation at the North Pershing Garden requires substantial funding. Adding physical structures that protect volunteers from heat and sun extremes, go beyond goals for growing food. This type of protection also allows the introduction and expansion of creative projects that foster more participation by neighborhood families engaged in activities beyond garden work.

I get asked for advice, am asked if I could use volunteers, can support projects, etc. People rely on the dependability of York Fresh Food Farms' Community Gardens Project. Participation in garden activities – people come to gardens, dig plants, pull weeds, see and learn things, harvest vegetables, all while working and interacting with others, provides stability when many other support systems have disappeared. The community gardens provide a balanced level of mental health and environmental value, as they also provide nutritional food value and community charm for each neighborhood that supports them.

- Annalisa Gojmerac

