



# GROWING GREAT

2019

20th Anniversary



Annual Report  
2019



GrowingGreat's  
Mission:

To empower children to make healthy food choices through hands-on science and garden education

# Celebrating 20 Years

As a pioneer in school garden programs in Los Angeles since 1999, GrowingGreat has reached hundreds of thousands of children and their families with hands-on nutrition, garden, STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) and literacy education. Our 20th anniversary is a celebration of program expansion from preschool to high school, in Spanish and English, during and after school, and always with the opportunity to enjoy fresh, healthy foods. We are committed to low-income families in cement-covered Los Angeles where a school garden may be a child's only experience with living, growing things. Since 2017, we have

extended this commitment to thousands more children nationwide through our My First Garden network. *We believe every community should have access to fresh produce and all children should experience the joy of growing fruit and vegetables in their own garden.*

We couldn't do this work without your generous support. To learn more about our programs, please email us at [info@growinggreat.org](mailto:info@growinggreat.org).

Jennifer Jovanovic  
Executive Director



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## Early Childhood Education: Ages 2-6

GrowingGreat's early childhood programs support seven schools in low-income neighborhoods in Los Angeles: Maple Primary Center, a K-1 public school in South Los Angeles, and six Para Los Niños Head Start preschools. These programs focus on hands-on STEM in garden and nutrition education. We provide professional development to teachers who blend GrowingGreat's multicultural program into

their existing curriculum. We also work directly in the classroom, engaging students with hands-on, garden-inspired activities from *All About Apples* to *Wiggly Worms*. At Maple Primary, we make a special effort to reach students with disabilities (approximately 14% of students district-wide), customizing our activities to their needs. All activities include read-aloud stories and sing-along songs in addition to healthy snacks.

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"GrowingGreat helps us teach children to try new things and respect the likes of others. In interactive lessons, students use all five senses to learn about fruits and vegetables and make connections to their favorite books and stories. I know all of my teachers, especially my special needs teachers, love to have GrowingGreat visit their classrooms as many times as possible. It is rare that children with disabilities get hands-on science programs just for them."

- Sharyn Clark, Principal, Maple Primary Center, Los Angeles Unified School District, CA



+ Elementary Nutrition and Garden Education: Ages 5-11

From kindergarten to fifth grade, children in GrowingGreat-supported schools receive nutrition and garden education aligned with grade-level math, reading, science and social science standards. Our nutrition curriculum teaches children the basics of what’s in their food (e.g., proteins, fats, and carbohydrates) and how to know if food is healthy (e.g., reading nutrition labels). Our garden activities go further: where does food come from, how is it grown and what does it taste like straight from the source? GrowingGreat’s professional educators assist students in planting and tending their gardens until their creations are harvested. We bring nutrition education to life!

“From developing the incredible scope of the GrowingGreat curriculum with our own science standards to getting to know the needs of our community, GrowingGreat has done an amazing job. Their entire staff is extremely professional, experienced, creative, and a joy to work with!”

- Meg Baltazar, Director of Teaching and Learning  
Echo Horizon School  
Culver City, CA

+  
 Teen Programs:  
 Ages 12-18



The importance of healthy eating doesn't stop after elementary school; neither does GrowingGreat. Since 2015, our GrowingGreat Chefs program has reached teenagers in Downey, Inglewood and Lawndale. This work plays an especially important role in low-income, largely immigrant neighborhoods with high risk of childhood obesity. Studies estimate that adolescents age 12-19 eat twice as much junk food as younger children. In response, GrowingGreat teaches students about healthier alternatives available at their fingertips through joint nutrition and cooking classes. Mixed with science and math, these lessons enable teenagers to become independent - even authoring their own cookbooks - and to share their culinary creations with friends and family, becoming spokespeople for healthy eating in their communities.

"Through our partnership with GrowingGreat, our students meet chefs, learn about healthy eating, and cook meals that are both health-conscious and cost-effective. When they go on to college, these skills are more important than ever. Additionally, the hands-on learning aligns with our school's best practices and helps our students learn through relevant and engaging content. GrowingGreat helps turn our students into community leaders."

-Alison Diaz, Executive Director  
 Environmental Charter Schools  
 Lawndale, CA



## + STEM for All Ages

STEM is an essential part of all GrowingGreat activities, but is perhaps best integrated into our program at St. Anthony of Padua School in Gardena. Here, GrowingGreat offers regular classroom visits and professional development for K-8 teachers and students. *STEM Inside and Out* utilizes St. Anthony’s STEM Lab and experiential outdoor garden learning space. This prepares seventh and eighth graders to become leaders in garden education, ready to implement similar programs at their high schools. At St. Pius X St. Matthias Academy, for example, high school students now lead their own GrowingGreat STEM garden program. If STEM is the future, GrowingGreat is at the helm of innovative learning for the next generation.

“Our students and faculty enjoy GrowingGreat STEM lessons because they are hands-on activities, incorporating health and nutrition, led by seasoned professionals. As principal, I like the fact that the GrowingGreat staff guide and teach our classroom teachers and give ready-made templates for them to incorporate right away in their own science classes. This is wonderful for new and novice teachers. More experienced teachers enjoy the ease of the implementation of lesson plans, and are encouraged to teach more STEM lessons in their classes. The students love GrowingGreat!”

– Angela Grey, Principal  
St. Anthony of Padua School  
Gardena, CA



# Parents Too



GrowingGreat’s pioneering work with teachers nationwide does not exclude a child’s first true teachers: his or her parents. By providing parents with an understanding of nutrition, access to fresh, nutrient-dense whole foods and a fun, positive way to reinforce their child’s learning, GrowingGreat equips them with the tools they need to build healthy families. We introduce nutritious recipes, healthy eating habits and hands-on STEM activities they can do at home. We empower these dedicated caregivers, regardless of income or English language level, to take the lead in their children’s health and education. In just one example, our 2018 Family Harvest Festival at Keck Early Learning Center, held in a tiny, fenced-in play space in downtown Los Angeles, brought together 128 preschoolers, 64 parents and 16 teachers (not to mention, dozens of fruits and vegetables). In addition, over 200 parents throughout Los Angeles learn to teach GrowingGreat’s curriculum themselves in their children’s classrooms.



*GrowingGreat was founded in Manhattan Beach, CA by Marika Bergsund, Peggy Curry, and Lori Sherman, three parents with the goal of inspiring healthy eating -- planting seeds today, growing healthier communities tomorrow!*

“I love the excitement the students have when they see the GrowingGreat parents preparing for a lesson. They are so enthusiastic and curious! And the curriculum empowers them to become proactive about the food choices they make. GrowingGreat sets them up for a lifetime of healthy choices.”

- Clare Flynn, Parent Volunteer



## + GrowingGreat Nationwide

Beyond schools, STEM labs and supper tables, GrowingGreat believes that nutrition and garden education have a place in all learning environments - including science centers and children's museums. Led by GrowingGreat, the My First Garden network provides interactive experiences that teach children and families how a seed grows or where food comes from, providing nutrition information and healthy snacks for those in need. Preschoolers use beginning math and science skills to study fruits and vegetables they haven't encountered and eat their experiments! The curriculum, found in museums across the U.S., includes GrowingGreat's *Play with your food/Juguemos con la comida* series -- ten ready-to-use activities connecting science, garden, nutrition and literacy, in both English and Spanish. In 2018 alone, 100 educators received My First Garden activities at the Association of Science-Technology Centers and the National Association for the Education of Young Children conferences, in addition to 200 more museum staff through two national webinars. The network remains open to all, including institutions that don't have a garden or nutrition program -- yet.

"GrowingGreat's My First Garden network has been a great opportunity to weave together our garden, garden-related exhibits, and cooking programming for vulnerable children, including families experiencing homelessness. GrowingGreat is a fantastic source for museum-friendly activities and provides us with a collaborative community for sharing best practices."

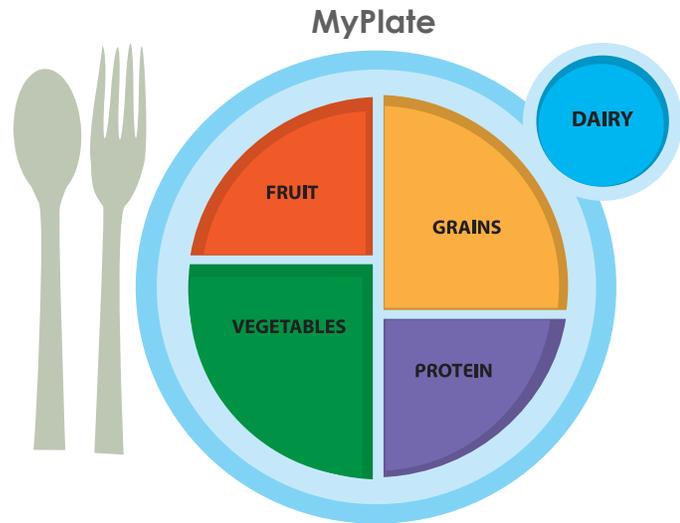
- Hardin Englehardt  
Vice President, Play  
Marbles Kids Museum  
Raleigh, NC

# + Impact

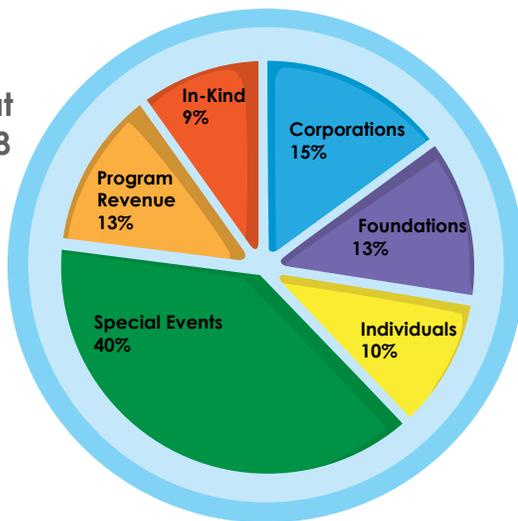
GrowingGreat is a results-driven organization. A recent sample survey of middle school students revealed that, three years after their experience:

- 97% remembered an important GrowingGreat lesson (e.g., eat healthy, be positive in trying new things, practice moderation)
- 76% still found these lessons to be impactful
- 72% read the food labels at grocery stores, as recommended by GrowingGreat
- 100% like fruits
- 93% like vegetables

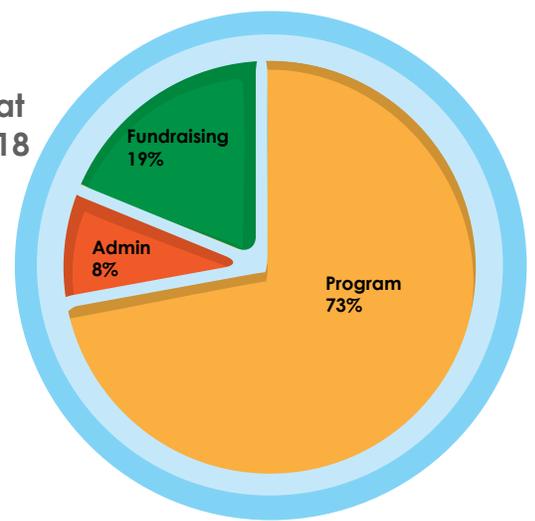
These results are achieved by a lean staff, maximizing each dollar donated by prioritizing program spending.



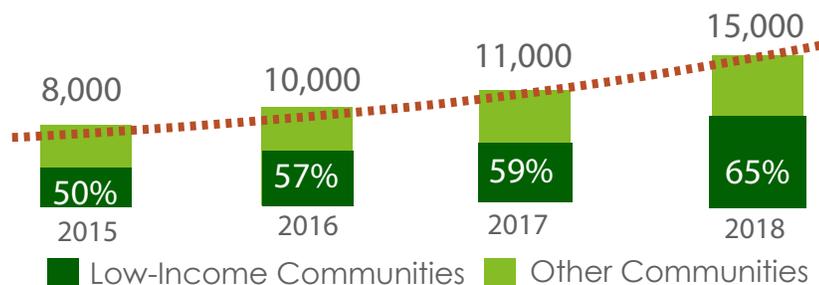
**GrowingGreat Revenue 2018**  
\$374,058



**GrowingGreat Expenses 2018**  
\$372,492



**Children Impacted Per Year**



We envision a world in which all communities have access to fresh, minimally-processed foods; all parents are empowered to make healthy food choices for their families; and every school garden is an outdoor STEM Learning Lab.



## + Strategic Initiatives 2019-2022

### 1) Strengthen core partnerships in under-resourced communities

- Start a new GrowingGreat-led elementary school partnership
- Coordinate and expand efforts with other garden organizations
- Maintain national collaboration for PreK-12 STEM and literacy
- Develop and implement an effective impact evaluation

### 2) Focus program delivery on four methods that ensure adherence and efficacy, demonstrating one program working at scale for each:

- GrowingGreat staff visit schools and teach our programs
- Collaborations with experienced educators who teach programs on their own with our support and curriculum
- Free consultations to under-resourced schools
- Create and share hands-on science and literacy-based activities

### 3) Engage parents in Spanish- and English-speaking households

- Offer family garden festivals in under-resourced communities featuring planting, cooking, and hands-on activities
- Review every aspect of written and spoken programming to assure we are inclusive of Spanish-speaking families

### 4) Increase program online visibility and accessibility

- Continue to expand social media presence
- Update website and online curriculum to become mobile-friendly
- Use social media to increase Fall and Year-End giving



Each year, the Farm to Table fundraising event enables us to provide our programs in low-income communities free of charge. Farm to Table features celebrity chefs from throughout Los Angeles. We are honored to have built relationships with Vartan Abgaryan (71Above), Nyesha Arrington, Michael Cimarusti (Providence), Josiah Citrin (Mélisse), Anne Conness (Jaffa, Sausal), Michael Fiorelli (Love & Salt), Neal Fraser (Redbird), Roy Garcia (Broken Spanish), Alan Jackson (Lemonade), David LeFevre (M.B. Post, The Arthur J, Fishing with Dynamite), Dustin Lewandowski (Wolfgang Puck Bar & Grill) and Diana Stavaridis. These chefs create our annual culinary feast of fresh, local and gourmet cuisine served under the stars at the property of award-winning advertising agency 72andSunny, supported by our honorary chairs Michael and Andrea Zislis (Shade Hotels).

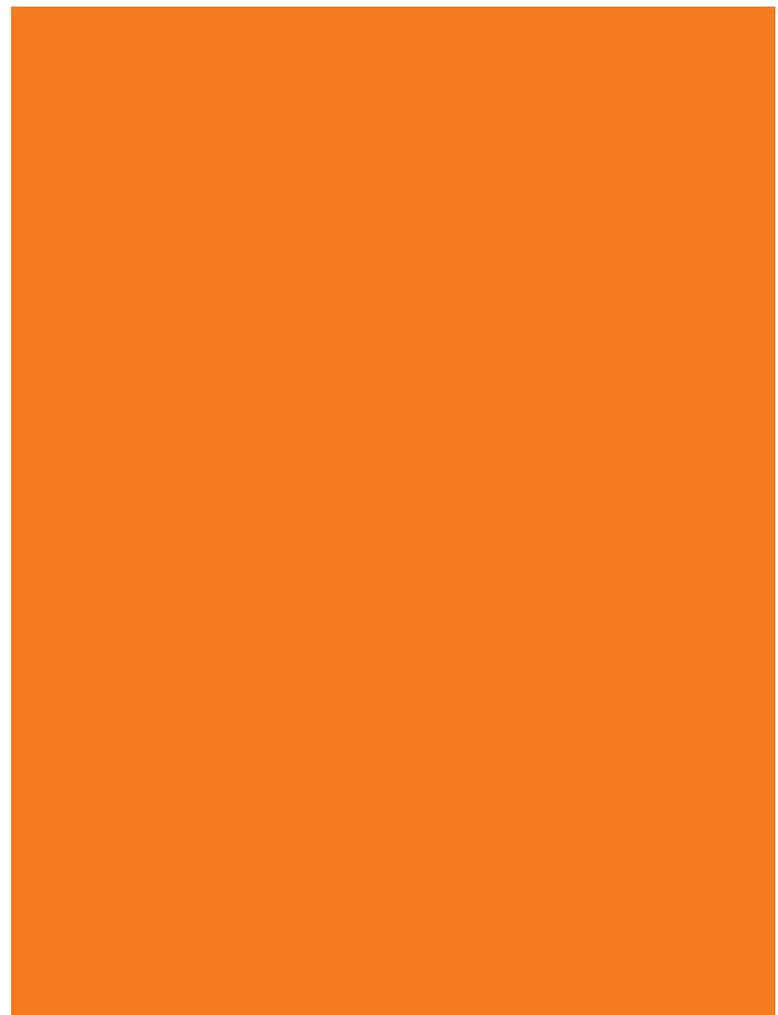


We thank our lead donors who have each given over \$30,000 since GrowingGreat was founded in 1999.

- Aetna Foundation
- Astellas USA Foundation
- AstraZeneca
- Boiler Family
- Clif Bar Family Foundation
- Culver City Education Foundation
- Curry Family
- David P Watson Foundation

- Earthbound Farm
- Fineshriber Family Foundation
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- Newman's Own Foundation
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- Rosenberg Family
- Sherman Family
- Steinmetz Family Foundation

GrowingGreat celebrates our 20th anniversary continuing to look forward, not back. Founded in Manhattan Beach elementary schools, this small but mighty nonprofit quickly grew to impact more and more children and their families. By 2008, GrowingGreat expanded outside of the South Bay and began reaching thousands of children in low-income neighborhoods. By 2014, GrowingGreat was transforming school gardens across greater Los Angeles into outdoor STEM Learning Labs, fully integrated with classroom curriculum. By 2016, GrowingGreat's programs expanded from elementary schools to preschools and high schools and, by 2017, to science centers and children's museums across the United States, reaching thousands more children and parents with activities in Spanish and English. GrowingGreat now impacts over 15,000 children per year, 65% in low-income communities.



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GrowingGreat is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.