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2018 was a transformative year for the Beacon Food Forest!

BFF expanded from being an all-volunteer neighborhood group into registering a nonprofit organization under the name Food Forest Collective (FFC). The Beacon Food Forest itself continues to be designed and maintained by an extraordinarily dedicated group of core volunteers, as it has been since the project’s inception in 2009. The nonprofit FFC, however, has been able to hire two part-time staff that are now providing support in the fields of operations, fundraising and outreach. Currently, the Beacon Food Forest is the FFC’s only project site, but activities may eventually expand to growing and supporting other community food forests.

The FFC’s vision is a world where every community participates in creating local food ecosystems. The second major development of 2018 was the start of construction for Phase 2 of the Food Forest, which will double the size of cultivated land! We have already completed about 65% of the major earthwork and will begin building soil in early 2019.

As we continue to work towards creating an ecosystem that benefits all species, BFF volunteers have formed a dedicated Pollinator Team that is now caring for bee hives on site and expanding our understanding of how to optimize the Food Forest to create habitat for these particularly integral species in our food system. Thanks to the efforts of our volunteers and FFC staff we were able to host more than 25 tours and special work parties in 2018, in addition to our monthly Community Work Parties, enabling us to share the joy of working and being at the Food Forest with many visitors from near and far.

We were also very excited to be contacted by a number of other national and international food forest projects and to be able to support their growth by sharing our experience. Most importantly though, the Beacon Food Forest continues to be visited by many local families who share in the bounty of public food on public land by harvesting every last tomato, bean, and berry that we grow.

Curious how much we shared in 2018? Read on!
Phase 2 Expansion

In July 2018, the Beacon Food Forest broke ground on the first major earthworks project since the Food Forest was started in 2012. The existing area of planted and cultivated land in the Food Forest totals 1.75 acres, which we call Phase 1, and this new construction of Phase 2 will eventually add another 1.75 acres, ultimately doubling the size of the Food Forest and bringing the project halfway to the full land allotment of 7 acres. Phase 2 will include more P-patches, ADA accessible pathways and raised beds, Food Forest and community gardening as well as another gathering plaza for classes and community events.

Beacon Food Forest (BFF) volunteers are working in conjunction with the Seattle Conservation Corps (SCC), with advisement from Barker Landscape Architects and the City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods P-patch Program. SCC has performed the siting of paths and beds, grading of the soil, and operating the heavy machinery; BFF volunteers have dovetailed with SCC to construct walls and install irrigation piping. We have taken special care to obtain recycled, natural, and long-lasting materials wherever possible. Walls are built from urbanite, which is large slabs of recycled concrete like sidewalks, and steps and hose bib posts are constructed using natural cedar wood.

By the end of 2018 we had fully completed irrigation and wall-building on the east side of 16th Ave. We also partially completed irrigation and wall-building on the west side of 16th Ave, including several urbanite walls that will retain new hexagonal P-patch gardens and that lay the foundation for ADA accessible pathways and gardening beds.
Community Work Parties

In 2018, volunteers from all over Seattle continued the tradition of gathering on the third Saturday of each month to steward the land. There were also special occasions throughout the year where volunteer groups tended to specific on-site needs. These work parties remain integral to the Food Forest’s success and are a time for people to connect and learn new techniques in sustainable farming and gardening. With tasks that vary depending on the season, we were able to progress all of our key initiatives during these on-site get-togethers.

These activities were fueled by BFF’s newly evolved volunteer committees such as the Pollinator and Native Prairie Teams, as well as more established groups such as the Compost Crew, the Helix Annual Garden Team, and the Nutrition Team that keeps our volunteers fed during the work parties. Our Phase 2 expansion work also gave volunteers plenty to do in 2018. Namely, commercial-grade irrigation installations and retaining wall construction offered opportunities for many to build new skillsets.

We were fortunate to have consistently successful turnouts, often with over 100 volunteers on any given Saturday. And dozens of additional volunteers from near and far participated in auxiliary work-parties based on additional needs at especially busy times. With so many people spending time on-site, we worked to ensure that all feel welcome at the Food Forest and to offer activities for a range of interests and abilities. Musical performances, documentary filming, and guest speakers were also part of the mix, in addition to New Volunteer Orientations.
Food & Nutrition Team

The Nutrition team has been coordinating the sharing of food at BFF Community Work Parties and special events since the beginning, fueling our volunteers and visitors with fresh, nutritious meals. They strive to use produce from the site or that is otherwise locally grown whenever possible. Doing this allows us to have conversations with our neighbors and provide education to the public about the role food has in our health and communities. The team coordinated 11 monthly work party lunches in 2018 each of which fed 80-100 people. The Nutrition Team also hosted a Peace Festival for more than 100 local visitors and international guests from the Peace Boat (see p. 12).

Helix Garden Update

This year was another great success in the Helix Giving Garden! We grew and planted more than a hundred tomato plants from seed along with chard, cucumbers, green beans, bok choi, tatsoi, lettuces and summer and winter squashes. Altogether, our guests picked about 1,380 pounds of vegetables from this two thousand square foot garden during the summer. The most successful vegetables in 2018 were our tomatoes and green beans that never seemed to stop coming!

This year we supplied small paper bags for our guests and asked them to log what they picked. Volunteer Leiah Rasmussen stamped these with BFF logo so our reputation for shared abundance would spread in the neighborhood. The Helix, as for all of BFF, demonstrates that shared abundance rather than competitive scarcity can be part of the global movement for a regenerative agriculture and economics.

In the fall we turned several of the pods in the wettest part of the Helix into a blueberry patch. We took some 20 of our blueberry shrubs languishing in dry areas of the forest and gave them a location that should help them be more productive in 2019.

Our thanks to all who helped grow, as well as harvest from the Helix Giving Garden in 2018!
Native Guilds & Wetland

What started as a much needed clean up and restoration of a 1500 square foot wetland in 2016 has grown to a Pacific Northwest native plant guild of over 5000 square feet. In 2018 we accomplished the following: Native sedges, rushes, bullrushes and forbs have filled in the original wetland area. Invasive weed cover is less than 1%.

Food and craft plants such as Typha latifolia, Sagittaria latifolia, Schoenoplectus acutus and various Carex species have been established. 1600 square feet of native grass/sedge land was planted with a variety of bulbs and graminoids including Camassia quamash, Festuca roemerii, Carex inops, Camassia leichtlinii, Carex arcta, Fragaria virginiana, Dichelostemma congestum and Fritillaria affinis. A shrub border of Salix sp. and Garrya elliptica was partially planted.

Berry guilds containing Rubus spectabilis, R. leucodermis, R. parviflorus and Vaccinium ovatum were planted. Conifer plantings were consolidated in one area. The Native Guilds were weeded once a month resulting in less than 1% weed cover in the wetland proper and less than 5% in the remaining Native Guilds. Water table measurements were also taken monthly. Each work party included training in species identification, planting and/or wetland management. We successfully harvested wapato tubers (Sagittaria latifolia) and someone in the community has been harvesting cattail (Typha latifolia) leaves.

In 2019 we plan to expand the prairie guild, finish the buffer planting and fill in previously planted areas with additional plants. By the end of 2019 90% of the Native Guild should be planted.
Plant Report

2018 was our sixth year with plants in the ground at BFF. It was another warm weather year – 4th warmest year on record. In addition, we did not have much measurable rain from May to early November although overall rainfall was close to average. Our rain fell over a shorter period of time, with several significant wind storms and heavier rain causing more erosion of soils and flooding. Seattle also had several weeks of smoky skies in August and some of the worst air quality of the area since the mid-1980’s. The focus is to help established and new plants at BFF to continually adapt to more extreme weather conditions with climate change.

The plants of our region have been stressed by the more extreme weather and some species are showing more disease. Apple and Pear trees had more diseases and pests and less Apples and Pears were harvested. When volunteers realized that many of the Currants were infested with currant borer we removed several plants and burned the canes to kill larvae. BFF lost a Heartnut Tree and more Raspberries seemingly to poor drainage in some areas (heavy clay soil or wetland conditions). However, many Raspberry patches are doing very well and need to be pruned/contained for better harvest and/or supported with trellises.

Some soil core samples were taken in November. Results suggested that soil above 16th Ave. S. is not completely clay the way the soil in the Lower Bench is. More soil testing is needed to better understand what is happening with the various layers of the soil and how this is affecting plants. Some research is being done into digging larger and deeper tree wells before planting trees in Phase 2, in order for drainage to be better for the trees. We continue to add organic matter around most plants - compost from what we create in our compost bins at BFF to feed the plants and soil life, and arborist wood chips as a top layer on the ground to suppress weeds, increase breadth of soil organisms, and assist the soil in retaining more water.

The BFF Watering Team did not get set up until early Summer 2018, so many plants did not receive any significant water from the end of April until the end of June. Most watering volunteers were watering plants only once per week, so we used less municipal water this year – one of our goals for the site to be more self-maintaining. Some plants however died because of the lack of water – namely many Blueberries. In Fall 2018, we moved most of the Blueberries to the Helix area which has soil on the moister side. We amended and mulched the soil with lots of wood chips to build the soil acidity for Blueberries and have them located together to be watered more often than other plants at BFF (2 – 3 times/week – depending upon weather).
Plant Report cont’d

It turned out to be too labor-intensive for our limited number of core volunteers to maintain the entire Helix Giving Garden with nothing but annual vegetables. Therefore, we began replacing some of the annuals with popular edible perennial plants (for example a Blueberry patch).

We are noticing that not many people harvest Gooseberry or Aronia. But more people are learning about Honeyberry’s delicious fruit, so we want to add more of these which are mostly doing well!

Much progress has been made within the Native Wetland area, the design and implementation of which is being lead by David Perasso. Many volunteers persevered at removing invasive plants throughout the wetland area and planted Rushes, Sedges, Camas, Willows, Red-twig Dogwood, Ninebark, and Wapato. They harvested Wapato in fall!

We continue to review all Plant Guilds (the community of plants around each tree), seeing how they interact and deal with the weather and site conditions. Certain plants that are quite prolific on site -- Mints, Angelica, Aster, Cardoon, Lupine, and several of the plants that were used for Pollinator studies, including Tarweed (many self-seeding species). We are still in need of greater variety among nitrogen-fixing plants (more beans, peas, and Ceanothus are a few we’d like to plant more of in 2019) and plants that provide nectar and pollen for birds and insects. Our Pollinator Team is reviewing which plant species we need to add or subtract to assist a diversity of pollinator insects in thriving. Another practice is to leave some patches of bare soil for ground-nesting bees and other insects.

In fall 2018 we started having more coordinated Plant Team meetings in order to plan plantings for Phase 2. In 2019 we plan to continue honing our Phase 2 plant list and solicit public input on which plants are most popular that also work with our site conditions. We also plan to review the practices we use in pruning BFF trees and shrubs, comparing different philosophies about how and when to prune. Lack of volunteer capacity and knowledge have resulted in less-than-ideal pruning practices and some shrubs and trees appear to never have been pruned. Other trees have been improperly pruned by the general public in efforts to harvest parts of the tree or to take propagation materials to plant at their own homes. We plan to offer more pruning classes in 2019.

Other educational goals for the Plant Team are: offering more classes that include guided hands-on work on essential gardening tasks at BFF; and better educating volunteers on how to distinguish weeds and invasive/aggressive plants. The Food Forest would also benefit from a scientific recommendation for an Integrated Pest Management plan.
Community Engagement

Ask nearly any of the Beacon Food Forest’s long-time volunteers what the project is about and they will tell you: “Growing food and stewarding the land are important, but what matters most is coming together as a community.” The goal of BFF has always been to inspire our community to gather together, to be inclusive and welcoming towards everyone, and to benefit anyone in need of food, community and a healthy environment. This mission has attracted thousands of volunteers over the years, as well as media attention, so that now, in the project’s tenth year, we are starting to see it’s influence spread and inspire the creation of food forests in other states and even around the world. While we are delighted to see the model of urban food ecosystems spreading far and wide, the focus of our work remains rooted in creating a public space by and for the local community in North Beacon Hill. Our concern to represent and equitably include the diversity of perspectives and needs in our multiethnic neighborhood led us to take part in an anti-racism training and begin centering equity considerations more in all we do.

We interface with the wider community in Beacon Hill and beyond through our presence at events and conferences, by giving tours of the Beacon Food Forest to students and other interested groups, and by making the site available for other nonprofits and educators to host their own activities (from foraging to sketching). And we continue to gratefully receive community support in the form of in-kind and monetary donations (see p. 18), and volunteer groups from businesses and schools who come out for a day of community service and help grow and maintain the Food Forest outside of our monthly work parties (see p.15).

This year we were also fortunate enough to have Seattle University student Caroline Pedro join BFF as an intern in October, heading the coordination of food donations that supplement our work party lunches and planning improvements to our existing gravel and woodchip pathways. We also enjoyed working with Beacon Hill high school students Melat Ermyas, Leija Farr and Julie Le who chose the Food Forest as their community service site.
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

BFF was created by and for residents of North Beacon Hill. While the ethnic diversity of local residents is generally represented at our Community Work Parties and we have had core volunteers from many backgrounds shape BFF over the years, our current committee and board members are far less ethnically diverse. We have begun taking steps to understand and change this dynamic, recognizing that it is integral to BFF’s identity as a community driven project that we bring a wide range of perspectives to our decision-making processes and organizational culture.

As a first step in addressing this concern, the Food Forest Collective hosted a three-day anti-racism training for all BFF core volunteers as well as FFC staff and board members. The training was specifically tailored to BFF and issues of equity in the food system and environmental movements. It was facilitated by a racial equity consultation team made up of graduates of Antioch University’s Urban Environmental Education program.

We were able to start important conversations among our white volunteers and between them and POC staff and volunteers. In order to more consciously incorporate a focus on equity into our organizational culture we have begun to implement the following changes: Creating awareness at each of our meetings for who is not currently represented and how the decisions made at that meeting will impact them; recruiting ethnically diverse board members who bring a variety of experiences and perspectives to their decision-making for the Food Forest Collective; and actively encouraging conversations about the intersections between food access and racial equity among our volunteers, at Community Work Parties and with our neighbors in Beacon Hill.

Collaborations & Consultation

In 2018, we were in contact with 14 nascent community food forests and urban farming projects from around the country and abroad, and were able to share our experience and advice on how to successfully start and maintain this kind of project. We are so excited to see food forestry taking root in more communities!

We collaborated with Beacon Arts on several occasions: At the Culture Fest Vol. 3 the Beacon Food Forest was recognized along with Solid Ground for our food access work. On Earth Day (April 21), we hosted a celebration and Community Work Party that featured a live and unplugged concert by The Marshall Law Band as well as the art project Blue Skies by Crick Lont which raised awareness about noise pollution from air planes over Beacon Hill. Artists and volunteers shared information about how to take action against air and noise pollution based on studies done by University of Washington students, Cleveland High School and El Centro de la Raza.

Once again, BFF was also the host site for the annual Backyard Barter and one of the stops on Rainier Valley Food Bank’s Urban Ag Bike Tour. For Pollinator Week in June a field day to explore pollinator habitat at the Beacon Food Forest was organized in cooperation with the NW Pollinator Initiative, The Common Acre, and Washington State University entomologists.
Peace Boat Visit

The Beacon Food Forest had the pleasure of hosting the Peace Boat on their visit to Seattle in 2018. Seattle was the final destination of their world tour, visiting countries from Japan via the Middle East to America with a message of global cooperation and cultural exchange. The Peace Boat is a non-governmental organization promoting peace and environmental justice; their request to visit the Beacon Food Forest was the latest indication that the activities of the Beacon Food Forest community are gaining world-wide interest. The Peace Boat visit took place on August 7th, 2018 which was a very hot Tuesday. In spite of the workday, many Beacon Food Forest volunteers came to give their support and provide a delicious, healthy meal representing many cultures and flavors. The Peace Boat organizers also contributed some snacks from Japan and donated three young Mulberry trees to our gardens in honor of peace between our nations and people. Peace Boat participants enjoyed musical performances by local musicians performing rap, hip-hop and folk in honor of the rich diversity of American music styles. There were tours of the gardens, silk screening of t-shirts, and a string of flags hand-sewn from recycled fabrics was provided so visitors could write their personal message of peace on each flag. At the end of the day, the long strand of flags was divided in half and shared between the Peace Boat and the Beacon Food Forest. Our Japanese friends boarded their bus, a few of the older visitors were shedding tears of gratitude as they shook our hands to say goodbye. Perhaps this was a day they had dreamed of after having suffered the aftermath of the war between our nations? The visitors cheered and waved as the bus pulled away and the feeling of long-distance reciprocity and care for the earth was resounding through the Food Forest.

Read the Peace Boat report on their visit here: http://peaceboat.org/english/?page=view&nr=705&type=20&menu=64

Tours & Presentations

Offering tours to groups from near and far is an important part of our outreach and is closely tied to our education program. Our volunteer tour guides continue to tell our story to local groups from around the city and region and to groups from as far away as Taiwan. In 2018, we hosted fewer tours than in previous years, needing to focus our volunteers’ time and energy on auxiliary work parties to lay the ground for our Phase 2 expansion before the rainy season set in. We did host approximately 150 visitors across more than 14 tours, plus giving mini tours to new volunteers at our Community Work Parties.

Tours included but weren’t limited to the following groups: The North West School, Bellevue French Immersion Preschool, J.R. Albert Foundation (IL), YWCA Girls Without Limits Camp, SW Youth & Family Services, Rainier Valley Leadership Academy, Green Plate Special summer camp, Epoch Foundation (Taiwan), Alderleaf Wilderness College.

We also shared our vision by tabling at events such as the Beacon Hill Festival and Antioch University’s Urban Environmental Education graduate program networking event. We were also invited to introduce the Food Forest to the Starbucks Partners (employees) Sustainability Team who followed up by volunteering on site.
BFF Around the World

Volunteers are sharing the knowledge they've gained working with the Beacon Food Forest in communities around the world. They're part of BFF extended family, doing work that inspires others to care for the earth and support a sustainable lifestyle.

**Philadelphia:** Michael Muehlbauer is organizing the Fair-Amount Food Forest, an initiative to create a community-driven and educational public food forest, in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park. He also works for the Philly Orchard Project, a nonprofit support organization that helps community organizations plant and maintain orchards and food forests in Philadelphia.

**Guinea:** George Winn is nearly finished with his two-year Peace Corps service in rural Guinea, West Africa. George has served as an agroforestry volunteer working with a local beekeeping cooperative on reforestation and improved beekeeping. He had the chance to learn the Pular language and eat lots of Jollof rice and Cassava leaf sauce. In about two months you might see him back at the Food Forest.

**New Zealand:** Peter Wells is working with the Ōtākaro Orchard in New Zealand which has become a rare shared vision between grassroots community, businesses, local and national governments. The 1/2 acre site in the city is home to a public food forest, an amphitheater, and a living building with office space and a cafe. The project is set for completion in Spring 2019.

**Vietnam:** Kristine Schiman spent 7 months interning with a rural organic farmer, supporting the set-up of a contract farming system, and is now living in Da Nang, teaching English to children age five to ten.

**Worldwide:** Glenn Herlihy, BFF co-founder, and his family are on a world school trip intending to visit or volunteer on farms and in community gardens throughout Asia and Europe. Glenn and his family recently visited volunteer Kristine Schiman in Vietnam.

**China:** Melanie Coerver and her wife are in Beijing for a three-year work assignment. Melanie is volunteering with the Beijing Energy and Environmental Network - aiming for pollution reduction and a coal-free China. She's enjoyed learning about (and eating) new vegetables, fruits, and mushrooms.

**Nepal:** Jonathan Lee splits his time between California and the Himalayas. In Takure, Nepal, he has been working with Conscious Impact, a group formed in response to the 2015 earthquakes to meet global challenges with sustainable solutions and help deep transformation take place in rural communities. Their programs currently consist of natural building, sustainable agriculture and reforestation as well as youth empowerment. Jonathan also traveled to New Zealand to collaborate with BFF core volunteer Peter Wells.

**Nicaragua:** Kenji Nakagawa left Seattle on his bicycle and pedaled all the way to Nicaragua, scattering 10,000 BFF vegetable seeds all along the way. He says he is "applying everything BFF taught me." He's engaged in building a children's giving garden on Ometepe Island, with a program that currently feeds around 200 free meals a week made of locally sourced ingredients to local children.

**Hawaii:** BFF co-founder Jackie Cramer is working at a Waldorf school on the Big Island of Hawaii.
Education Initiatives

Workshops and classes at the Beacon Food Forest are organized and hosted by a team of volunteers that call themselves the Education Collective. In 2018, the Collective held eight classes and one bigger workshop at the Beacon Food Forest, as well as hosting several mini classes at work parties, such as seed starting. The Education Collective also participated in the celebration hosted for the Peace Boat crew by demonstrating herbal tea making with herbs from the Food Forest. BFF’s education program served one hundred and one students this year (with eighteen reduced rate and fifteen scholarship tickets), in classes ranging from Principles of Permaculture to Plant Propagation and Planting for Pollinators. One of the highlights was hosting Native Cowichan elder Della Rice Sylvester who taught a class in medicine making at the Food Forest for the second year in a row. Net proceeds were $787.55 for the Beacon Food Forest after the deduction of teacher stipends and honorariums, materials costs and fees to Grow, our fiscal sponsor. As part of ongoing efforts to better organize our work together with FFC staff we introduced a standardized teacher contract and liability waiver. In 2019, the Education Collective will be developing more structured annual programming and will work to integrate anti-racism education into its processes and curriculum.

Tiny Trees Partnership

At Tiny Trees in Jefferson Park, children enjoy the Food Forest at least once a week. Whether they are working in their garden or foraging for berries, it is truly one of the highlights of being at school. Children get to plant and take care of their own garden, growing things like tomatoes, squash and sunflowers and learning throughout the year about how to care for their plants in every season. In the spring and summer, berry picking is an activity that children love and enjoy. They learn to navigate through prickly bushes and how to identify which berries are ripe and ready for picking. There are even opportunities for literacy: students ask about identifying signs to learn which plants grow where and they even do some “writing” by making letters in the gravel with sticks. Students also have the unique experience of learning about bees firsthand by observing them pollinating plants in the Food Forest and by seeing their hives. Whether they are exploring the different areas of the site, admiring the artichokes, looking for berries or making bouquets, the Food Forest is one of our favorite learning experiences at school and children look forward to every “Food Forest Friday”!

Nichole Bigwood, Emily Kline and Sarah Alper (Tiny Trees teachers)
**Volunteer Efforts**

We tracked a total of 12,810 volunteer hours at the Food Forest in 2018!

The Beacon Food Forest continues to be community-powered, with volunteers planning and executing all the on-site work – and many hours off site to plan these activities. This year, approximately 35 core volunteers regularly attended volunteer committee meetings, weekly summer work parties (“Sunset Labs”) and other auxiliary planning meetings and on-site work sessions, as well as contributing individual volunteer hours by writing the newsletter, soliciting food and material donations, hosting community service volunteers, orienting new volunteers, mentoring interns, and giving tours. Core volunteers organize their work in the following committees: Site Development Committee, Education Collective, Compost Crew, Pollinator Team, Native Guild, and Outreach Committee. The board members of the Food Forest Collective are also volunteers, many of which are simultaneously involved in the hands-on work on site.

In addition to our core volunteers, we also received support from a number of visiting volunteer groups who contributed their community service or corporate volunteering hours to the Food Forest. These supplemental work parties were invaluable in helping us complete additional projects in the Phase 2 expansion while simultaneously maintaining Phase 1 of BFF. Among the groups and volunteers that stewarded the Food Forest this year were the Upward Bound students from Rainier Beach High School, the UW Foundation for International Understanding, students from Seattle Arts and Sciences and Nathan Hale High Schools and Seattle Central College, as well as a group of Google employees. We could not have kept the Food Forest and Giving Garden flourishing without these energetic and community-minded young people working alongside our regular volunteers.

**Kimberly’s Story**

Kimberly Leeper met BFF co-founder Jacqueline Cramer in 2010. “We loved each other instantly and are still good friends!”

Kimberly was taking a Permaculture Design Class for residential landscape design at the time and curious to learn about Jackie’s design of a potential food forest in Beacon Hill. Kimberly attended three community meetings at which input for the BFF design was gathered and got hooked. In 2012, she joined the sheet mulching fun at BFF’s first ever Community Work Party and has been a core volunteer ever since!

What has kept her coming back to the Beacon Food Forest? “I love how community and ecology come together here. I love all the people I’ve met at BFF. And the site gives me a chance to see permaculture ethics and principles in action. The hands-on experience is key to really understanding the principles.”

Having been a public school teacher in her first career and now running her own sustainable landscaping business, Kimberly also wanted to teach at BFF. She has been an integral member of the Education Collective for many years now, organizing and teaching a variety of classes. A highlight was teaching the three-part Food Forest Stewardship program in 2016 that gave participants a comprehensive skill set for caring for a food forest garden. “What’s most meaningful to me is seeing people working together to accomplish something, and seeing how much someone can learn at just one work party. Foraging is also a great offer to connect people back to the land. Visitors get so excited about foraging – that gives me a lot of joy! I’ve also learned so much myself, about guilds and plants and community building and food forest design. I also think it’s great that we’re focusing more on equity now and I took away a lot from the anti-racism workshops. Next up, I would love to plan a summer camp for kids and teach a full Permaculture Design Class!”
How Much Did We Share?

A total of **2,821 lbs** of fruit, vegetables and herbs were harvested at the Beacon Food Forest in 2018, mainly by neighbors visiting the site and collecting produce according to their needs. Our on-the-vine food sharing strategy continues to be successful in sharing *public food on public land* with virtually nothing going to waste.

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Grants and Donations

In The Green

The Food Forest Collective (FFC) maintained a net positive financial position over the past year which included two significant milestones: Our first staff hires, two half-time positions at 20 hours/week each, and the start of Phase 2. Staffing is funded by two Bullitt Foundation Grants and Phase 2 development is supported by a City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods Grant (more below about both grants).

In summary (see details under “Accounting Our Story!” below), our general 2018 operations looked like this:

Revenues: $211,000 (Includes a major grant awarded in 2017, but not recognized until 2018)
Expenses: $125,000
Net: $  86,000

Given prior 2018 funds available, FFC has access to just under $128,000, at the start of the 2019 fiscal year. This includes provision for a $40,000 payment for Phase 2 construction that was due to be paid.

Accounting Our Story!

A big challenge has been consolidating and getting our books in order, especially as we have grown from a City of Seattle Neighborhood Group to a formal Washington State Nonprofit with anticipation that we will soon be a fully-fledged Federal 501(c)3.

GROW has been and continues to be our fiscal sponsor to give us the umbrella of full nonprofit tax status. This allows us to receive tax-deductible donations and apply for nonprofit grants until we get the Federal designation.

In the meanwhile, due to requirements of the Washington nonprofit designation, we had to establish our own bank account for auditing purposes. Plus, we also enacted our own accounting system with a new chart of accounts, in line with generally accepted practices for nonprofits. We were incredibly fortunate to receive several months of support from volunteer bookkeeper Amanda Auger who went above and beyond (while working at her full-time accounting job!) and who made the organizational transition so much easier for us. Then, in December 2018, we contracted with Rising Sun Accounting to do our bookkeeping, manage payroll, and ensure that we pay all our fees and taxes appropriately and on-time.

Moving forward, FFC and our Development and Operations Coordinator will continue to improve our budgeting process and further professionalize accounting controls with all the volunteer teams and projects that collectively make things go and grow!

Staffing Up, Payrolling Out

As our largest ongoing expense, approximately 30% of 2018 expenses, we accepted challenging fiscal and liability responsibilities as new employers of part-time staff. Ensuring that they are fairly compensated is a priority objective in our budgeting. Two Bullitt Foundations grants, one awarded in 2017 (not recognized until 2018) and another in summer 2018, are supporting our payroll and related services. Together they total $100,000 and have allowed us to greatly accelerate the capacity of the Food Forest Collective. Having dedicated, well-skilled staff to perform fund raising development, coordinate operations and do community outreach has been a blessing.
Grants and Donations cont’d

City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods – Phase 2 Ground-Making Grant

An extension until November 2019 of a $100,000 City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods Grant is funding this work. As of the end of 2018, $47,000 remained for finishing the project which should meet budget. City of Seattle permitting and construction delays have been the major brakes in advancing progress with Phase 2, but we are now back on track to completion this coming summer.

2018 Grants

The Bullitt Foundation has generously extended its funding support, two grants totaling $100,000, to help FFC establish itself as a nonprofit organization, support staff, and gain diversified funding to grow and support the replication of the Beacon Food Forest model.

The National Environmental Education Foundation recently awarded a grant to the Food Forest Collective to the amount of $8,000 to support three hands-on volunteer education and learning events in 2019, to be planned and held in partnership with students from the Environmental Studies Department at Seattle University. The focus of these events will be on building the resilience of public lands and will teach participants how to build healthy soil through sheet mulching, increase resilience through diverse plant guilds, and use rain gardens to mitigate soil erosion and manage stormwater runoff.

Community Donations

Beacon Food Forest is a permaculture experiment which has yielded not only food but a sense of belonging and shared experience for people in Beacon Hill and greater Seattle. One way that local businesses and individuals contribute and share ownership in the Food Forest is through donations. We were fortunate enough to receive generous in-kind donations of materials and talent as well as charitable monetary donations from the following individuals, businesses, foundations, artists, and service providers:

Incorporation & Board

After many years successfully building and maintaining the Beacon Food Forest as an all-volunteer effort, we decided to incorporate as a Washington State not-for-profit and apply for Federal status as a tax-exempt charity. It was August 2017 when we received our Articles of Incorporation from Washington State to be a state nonprofit. Our nonprofit corporation is the Food Forest Collective, and the Beacon Food Forest continues as our main project. In early June 2018, we submitted our Form 1023: Application for Recognition of Exemption under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. In November 2018, we called the IRS, who shared that our nonprofit status should be granted in about 30 days, however by the end of 2018 the application was still pending. We are grateful for the pro bono legal assistance for these processes and ongoing organizational questions which we received through Wayfind.

A highlight of 2018 was hiring our first two staff members!

Through the beginning of the year we accepted and reviewed applications, and in January and February we conducted phone screenings followed by in/person interviews. On March 1, 2018, our first two staff members began their work with us, filling Community Outreach Coordinator and Development and Operations Coordinator roles. The Bullitt Foundation granted us first year funding for these two half-time positions. In August 2018, the Bullitt Foundation granted us funding to continue our staff positions for another year, to expand and build the capacity of the Food Forest Collective. This grant was awarded in the Foundation’s Resilient Cities, Healthy Communities program category. Our staff have been invaluable to the Food Forest Collective through their time spent fundraising, expanding our community partnerships, organizing our records, and streamlining processes. In June 2018, our staff supported our Food Forest Collective Board retreat, which allowed us to intentionally discuss our vision, mission, values, and organizational goals through 2019.
Our First Staff

Development and Operations Coordinator

Lavanya Madhusudan, MSW, MPH is passionate about food justice, environmental justice and community-driven solutions. She has worked for over a decade at the intersection of grassroots community organizing, advocacy and research with marginalized populations in the United States and India to improve the effectiveness, ethics, impact and sustainability of health and social programs and policies by centering the communities most affected.

She has extensive experience working with various types of nonprofit organizations and brings this expertise to aid the Beacon Food Forest in establishing itself as a nonprofit organization under the name Food Forest Collective. Lavanya earned a Bachelor of Arts in Health and Societies from the University of Pennsylvania, Master of Public Health with a focus on Community-Based Public Health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Master of Social Work with a specialization in Community Action and Social Policy from the University of Maryland.

Community Outreach Coordinator

Carla Penderock loves fostering connections between people, cultures and with our environment. With a Master of Arts in Cultural and Social Anthropology, and having lived and worked in Germany, South Africa and the United States, stepping into dialogue with diverse people and communities comes naturally to her.

Carla previously managed development cooperation projects with African non-profit and community-based partner organizations in the areas of sustainable livelihoods creation and agroecology, did public relations for the European Commission’s Environmental Management System, and gained hands-on farming skills through an apprenticeship on Seattle Tilth’s farm. She is now bringing together her experience in communications, community partnerships and sustainable farming to support the Beacon Food Forest in sharing its story and inviting diverse audiences to participate in its programs. Carla thrives in creative teams, loves organizing projects and spaces, and aims to never stop learning.
Content Credits

Thanks to all of the people who have shared their words and images throughout the Report. Below is a list of writers and photographers who contributed. Additionally, each photographer’s initials are included in the bottom right corner of their respective images.

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