

THE COMMUNITY KITCHEN, INC. GLEANING PROGRAM

END OF SEASON REPORT, 2013

The Community Kitchen, Inc. (TCK) of Keene NH launched a gleaning program in mid-July, 2013. Efforts to develop the program had been under way for several years. Duck Caldwell of Boston Area Gleaners had developed a concept paper for gleaning through TKC, the University of New Hampshire Farm to School program launched a new gleaning project providing technical and financial support to six new gleaners across southern NH, and financial support also came from the NH Charitable Foundation and the Bishop's Charitable Assistance Fund.

PROGRAM START-UP



In the first weeks of the program, the Gleaning Coordinator, Sarah Harpster, benefitted from guidance and orientation from the TCK Executive Director, Phoebe Bray, from Kin Schilling and Hazel Gershfield, who run the gleaning program in neighboring Hillsborough County, and directly from Duck Caldwell at her Boston Area Gleaners site. The gleaner was provided with a variety of reference materials and leads to get oriented to gleaning, including materials provided by NH Farm to School. NH Farm to School provided follow-up support through the season, including a meeting for all six gleaning programs in September in which tips were provided on end-of-the-season activities and how to prepare for the next year.

The gleaner was also connected to employees of C & S Grocery Wholesalers who were tending garden plots on two work sites in Keene where the produce was designated for distribution through TCK. Sarah met with the employees as well as Antioch University New England interns who were providing gardening technical support through Community Garden Connections. It was agreed that Sarah would harvest produce from the two garden sites tended by the employees twice a week.

OUTREACH

Sarah focused on raising community awareness about the gleaning program, with the goals of recruiting volunteers to harvest produce and reaching out to farmers with the hopes that they would invite the gleaners to harvest on their farms. Outreach efforts included:

- Two press releases to The Monadnock Shopper and the Keene Sentinel. One was sent announcing she was hired and the start of the program, the second one talked about the success of the first month of the program. The first was published in the Shopper, the second led to a front-page article in the Sentinel.
- An evening informational event at the Keene Public Library called "What Is Gleaning?" Attendance was three people, but publicity around the even helped spread the word about gleaning to the community.
- A ten-minute radio spot with Phoebe Bray on the Dan Mitchell Show.
- Use of Facebook for announcements about gleaning outings and pictures documenting gleanings that were done.

- Preparing half-page informational hand-outs for vendors at the Keene Farmer’s Market, hand-delivering them to the vendors, and explaining the program and encouraging them to participate.
- E-mail outreach to specific farmers recommended by community members.
- Responded to a call for volunteer help at Tracie’s Community Farm, spent several hours volunteering, and explained the gleaning program while on site.
- Developing a comprehensive list of farmers in Cheshire County who produce fruits and vegetables (with significant help from Amanda Littleton of the Cheshire County Conservation District), preparing a letter of introduction to the gleaning program, and sending it to 43 farmers.
- Preparing a brochure for the community at large about gleaning. It focuses on recruiting volunteers, explaining the usefulness of a gleaning program, and promoting the variety of ways citizens can help bring fresh local produce to hungry community members.
- Tabling at Keene Farmer’s Market and at two Monadnock Food Coop Member Appreciation Days.

Around the first week of the gleaning program, a local business called Deep Roots Massage and Body Works started a promotion at the Saturday Keene Farmer’s Markets. The program, called “Will Massage for Food,” incentivized market shoppers to donate produce to TCK. For every dollar they spent buying food for TCK, they received one minute of massage time – and they could accumulate up to 60 minutes to redeem at Deep Roots. With the permission of the market coordinators, the gleaner began setting up a tent at Saturday markets for both the gleaning program and the Will Massage for Food program. Shoppers could drop off produce and receive “massage bucks” and sign up as volunteers for the gleaning program. At the end of the market day, many Farmer’s Market vendors donated unsold produce and bread to the gleaning program as well. The gleaner also collected unsold produce at the end of the Tuesday markets at Keene Farmer’s Market.



GLEANINGS

In 2013, the program made about 20 gleaning visits to local farms, collecting about 11,626 pounds of food on the farms. We visited 8 different farms in the region. The gleaner also visited Cheshire Garden Farm and discussed gleaning there with Patti Powers. She planned to have us glean tomatoes, but lost her remaining crop to frost. She later had an employee deliver 46 pounds of pears and peppers to TCK, so we have not counted them as a gleaning visit, but we can say that we worked directly with 9 area farms.

Date	Farm	Crop(s)	# Gleaners	# Pounds
8/2	Green Wagon Farm	Corn	1	175
8/7	Tracie’s Community Farm	Mesclun mix, kale	3	100
8/14	Tracie’s Community Farm	Mesclun mix	2	91
8/14	Coll’s Farm	Corn	3	525
8/17	Abenaki Springs	Green and yellow wax beans	3	31

8/27	Stonewall Farm	Tomatoes	3	135
10/23	1780 Farm	Peppers, eggplants, lettuce, kale, green beans	~30	127
9/4	Green Wagon Farm	Corn	2	600
9/19	High Hopes Orchard	Apples	3	750
10/6	High Hopes Orchard	Apples	6	1500
10/9	High Hopes Orchard	Apples	7	1800
10/18	High Hopes Orchard	Apples	2	550
10/22	Stonewall Farm	Lettuce, arugula, mustard greens, Asian greens	4	80
10/23	Maple Lane Farm	Apples	4	1120
10/25	Abenaki Springs	Eggplants, peppers	1	103
11/4	Stonewall Farm	Lettuce, spinach, arugula, mustard greens, Asian greens, kohlrabi, cabbage	5	474
11/8	Maple Lane Farm	Apples	3	1200
11/11	Maple Lane Farm	Apples	2	800
11/12	Maple Lane Farm	Apples	3	1080
11/25	1780 Farm	2 turkeys	n/a	40
12/4	Stonewall Farm	Cabbage, kohlrabi	5	345

It should be noted that the produce gleaned on 12/4 was frozen and most of it was lost due to the damage. In the table above, the Gleaning Coordinator is counted as 1 gleaner, so it is shown that there were some events with no volunteers included. The twice weekly gleans at C & S Grocers are not included in the table. Those gleanings were mostly done by the Gleaning Coordinator alone, though two volunteers assisted on one occasion. Where an approximate number of 30 gleaners is noted, the entire first grade of Cheshire Elementary School and their chaperones came to 1780 Farm and gleaned for TCK as part of a school activity. The 1780 Farm also donated two turkeys to TCK and the Gleaning Coordinator made a trip to the farm to collect the turkeys.



OTHER SOURCES OF GLEANING PRODUCE

Almost half of the produce gleaned during the first season came from the gleaning events listed above. Other sources of produce were local farmers who dropped off extra produce or called our drivers to collect food at their locations, farmer's market vendors, and home gardeners. The gleaning program collected the following produce from the community:

- 494 pounds of produce from Antioch University New England's on-campus garden and their garden in Westmoreland, run through the Community Garden Connections program
- 658 pound of produce from the two Community Garden Connections-supported, employee-run gardens at the C & S Wholesale Grocers sites in Keene
- 372 pounds of produce from the Cheshire Fairgrounds garden
- 46 pounds of produce from Cheshire Garden
- 185 pounds of produce from Coll's Farm in addition to the 525 pounds of corn gleaned

- 1251 pounds of produce from Green Wagon Farm in addition to the corn gleaned at two gleaning events
- 2690 pounds of produce from the Keene Farmer's Market
- 1850 additional pounds of apples delivered directly to TCK from High Hopes Orchard
- 1492 pounds of produce dropped off at TCK during work hours (9 am to 5 pm, Mon-Fri) by home gardeners from across the community throughout the season
- 84 pounds of fresh produce donated by community members attending a screening of "A Place At The Table" at the Colonial Theater on November 17th
- 4080 pounds of apples, delivered from Monadnock Berries in late December as they closed out their cold storage facilities for the season



These sources brought in an additional 13,203 pounds of produce during the season. The total gleanings for the season were 24,829 pounds of fresh produce from all sources – gleaning events with volunteers as well as drop-offs, Farmer's Markets, and events. With the loss of the final gleaning to frost damage, the gleaning program provided about 24,480 pounds of fresh local produce to the community in 2013. Over 50% of the produce gleaned was apples, due to a very abundant apple crop in 2013.

VOLUNTEERS

Most volunteer recruitment took place at the Keene Farmer's Market. Volunteers were officially "signed up" when they filled out a form including liability release and image release clauses. Volunteers filled out forms at recruiting opportunities and were then added to an e-mail "Gleaning Alerts" list. For most gleaning events, the gleaning coordinator recruited sufficient volunteer help through e-mail gleaning alerts, though on some occasions, gleaning alerts were also posted on the TCK Facebook page. If gleaning volunteers came to an event before they had signed forms, they would sign forms before starting work. Other than the Keene Farmer's Market, volunteer recruitment took place in public at the Monadnock Food Coop on two Member Appreciation Days and during one afternoon at Antioch University New England. Some volunteers were added to the Gleaning Alerts e-mail list after learning of the program through Facebook or the media and taking the initiative to contact the Gleaning Coordinator and request to be added to the list. The list currently has 58 members, though only 22 individuals have volunteered on gleaning events. Individual gleaners provided 142 hours of time to the gleaning program. Most of this time was provided in service to direct gleaning activities (harvesting fruits and vegetables), though a total of about 15 hours were provided between two volunteers who helped with sorting, weighing, and transporting produce from the Farmer's Market.

GLEANING AND EDUCATION

Our gleaning program was partially funded through NH Farm to School program, and it was important to share some of the gleaned produce with local public schools, as well as to connect gleaning with education. The Gleaner and Director sat down with Maureen Wells, the food program manager of School Administrative Unit 29, in October and discussed how we could share gleaned produce with the schools. After that, we made two deliveries of apples to the schools, totaling 1320 pounds of apples.

We did not make direct outreach efforts to educational programs in the first season, but did have opportunities to work with educational groups. We received a request from the Keene State College Alternative Spring Break program to organize a volunteer experience for their 17 team leaders. We brought the group to TCK on a Saturday morning and they spent two hours peeling and processing apples. We made 98 pounds of applesauce that was used in hot meals and the pantry program. A group of Environmental Studies students from Antioch University New England requested an opportunity to glean as part of a civic ecology class. They gleaned 1800 pounds of apples, delivered them to TCK, and had a tour of the facility. I was invited to an end-of-season gleaning at the 1780 Farm, which routinely engages in educational activities with the local Chesterfield Elementary School. The day I gleaned on the farm, approximately 30 first graders and their chaperones came out to the farm and helped me glean 130 pounds of peppers, eggplants, and green beans. My last gleaning took place at Stonewall Farm on December 4th. The three preschoolers who attend the Wild Roots Program helped harvest cabbage, brought it to TCK, weighed it, and had a tour of the facility.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

As noted above, The Community Kitchen and the Gleaning Program collaborated with many groups in the community to accomplish the goal of providing fresh local produce to community members in need. We also collaborated with local groups on the broader advocacy goal of raising awareness about hunger in the community and ways to actively address the issue. The Monadnock Food Coop convened several local organizations around holding public showings of the movie, “A Place At The Table,” which discusses issues of poverty, hunger, and obesity in America. The Monadnock Farm and Community Coalition spearheaded a large community showing of the movie on November 17th at The Colonial Theater in Keene, and TCK’s Executive Director and Gleaner served on the planning committee, helped organize and publicize the event, and advocated that people who came to view the film could bring food donations (including fresh produce) in lieu of admissions. Film viewers donated 500 pounds of food, including 84 pounds of fresh produce.

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first gleaning season was very successful given the short start-up period. Its success can be attributed to the strong community connections already in place when the program launched, and the solid infrastructure provided by TCK. The gleaning program can build on the momentum and relationships it has begun to develop over the first season. Over the course of the first season, the following ideas have come to the gleaner’s attention and seem worth pursuing in the future:



- Acquire an intern. The programs we are most interested in are Antioch University New England’s Environmental Studies, 225-hour, internships and the Keene State College dietetic internships. We are exploring these and other internship programs.
- Help develop software for tracking gleanings. We have heard a project is under way and would very much like to have something more flexible than spreadsheets for tracking our data.

- Incorporate more community advocacy into our work. We want to speak to community action groups and faith communities to further advocate that people work to stem hunger. Besides raising awareness, we hope to continue to expand our pool of volunteers and produce providers through this kind of outreach.
- Increase the engagement of current volunteers. Besides sporadic gleaning opportunities, we will carefully develop other opportunities for volunteers to engage in the gleaning process including: picking up produce from Farmer's Markets and farm stands; tabling events and advocacy events (with the gleaner); and harvesting produce at designated community gardens that need to be gleaned several times a week and delivering the produce to TCK.
- Help expand the infrastructure that supports gleaning. Specifically, TCK is working on a plan to fund and then install a new walk-in freezer, which will allow for expanded refrigeration space that can be used for the gleaning program. The gleaner will help support efforts to find grant opportunities for this project.
- Encourage more gardening for charity in the community. Connect with community gardens and older "plant a row" programs and help ensure that more fresh produce is planted that is designated for donation to the gleaning program (or other charity food programs).
- Engage other farmer's markets. We gleaned from the largest farmer's market in the county in 2013, but did not reach out to the other 6 or 7 markets in the county. We will connect with others in future years.
- Engage more farmers. We identified 43 fruit and vegetable producers in the county and were able to receive produce from 10 of them (plus other large gardens such as Cheshire Fair and Community Garden Connections in Westmoreland). One strategy for reaching out to farmers is to offer volunteer time to key farmers and get conversations started about how gleaning services can be useful to them. We can also participate in events such as Farm Appreciation Night, speak to granges and agricultural commissions, and send out mailers advertising our gleaning services early in the season.
- Organize "value added" food processing activities. Volunteers learn useful skills when making sauce, canning, blanching, drying, and freezing food, and this extends the season that the produce will be available to TCK guests. These activities are also ideal for groups who want to schedule a volunteer activity with some anticipation. We will plan value added food processing events in collaboration with other community partners.

The gleaning program at TCK started off with a very positive first season. Community members have been eager to lend their support to the program, and TCK guests have been excited to make use of the fresh harvest they were able to access through the program. Some of the success can also be attributed to an unusual bounty of apples in 2013. We look forward to building on the success of 2013 in the year to come to ensure that more of the produce in our region that can be gleaned will feed our hungry neighbors and reduce the sting of food insecurity in our community.