

## OVERVIEW

The gleaning project collected 32,872 pounds of produce in 2017, the second *smallest* annual total in our five-year history. Thirty-eight volunteers gave us about 213 hours of service this year. We saw an increase in the number of individual home gardeners as well as commercial farms donating to gleaning in 2017. We had 29 individual home gardeners donating produce as well as 17 different commercial growers, including Pete's Stand, one of the largest growers in the county, which participated in the project for the first time in 2017. We received donations from eight charitable gardens, including three that are not primarily growing food for The Community Kitchen. Our largest charitable garden, the Cheshire Fair Farm, which had operated in 2015 and 2016, was closed in 2017.



## OUTREACH & ADVOCACY

In 2017, outreach and advocacy encompassed several areas of work, including program promotion, cooking classes, community education, work on local food infrastructure development, and self-advocacy work with community members facing food insecurity. Program promotion to potential volunteers was carried out through tabling at the NOFA NH Conference, the Earth Day Festival, and at two Saturday sessions of the Keene Farmer's Market, as well as through Facebook posts and emails to a list of interested volunteers. I conducted pre-season outreach to farmers by having a sit-down meeting with the operators of Pete's Stand farm as well as making door-to-door visits to about a dozen additional farms in Cheshire County that are listed as vegetable producers in the *Monadnock Table* magazine. Some of these visits resulted in speaking to farmers, though in many cases, brochures were left without seeing the farmers directly.



I continued to partner with the Cooperative Extension and Keene State College Dietetics program to offer innovative cooking workshops for food insecure people. The desired outcome was to develop these workshops to really help participants take advantage of seasonal, local produce. However, low attendance and other logistical challenges led myself and the other partners to agree to set aside this effort in June of 2017, after about a year and a half of trials.

The gleaning project was involved in extensive community learning projects with undergraduate nutrition students at Keene State College in 2017. First, I worked with a senior student, Alexis Marsh, who undertook a 120-hour internship with the gleaning program. Alexis' internship included harvesting in the charitable gardens at C&S Wholesale Grocers and UPS, conducting a focus group project with volunteers at The Community Kitchen, making gleaning trips to several local farms, and visiting the NH Food Bank and its dedicated community garden in Manchester. In the fall, I worked with other staff members from The Community Kitchen on several phases of a semester-long class project called "Health and Wellness Living Learning Collaborative: Hunger on KSC Campus." The class included 24 first-year students, all of whom toured The Community Kitchen and attended my classroom presentation on hunger issues. Eighteen of the students also visited the charitable garden at C & S Wholesale Grocers at

Optical Avenue, participated in harvesting, and learned about gleaning, hunger, and food systems with myself and Antioch PhD student Jessica Gerrior. Finally, I gave a classroom presentation to an undergraduate class on advocacy at Keene State College and took two students from that class on gleaning trips to Picadilly Farm.

I began a grant-funded project in 2016 aimed at stimulating the development of local food hub efforts in the Monadnock Region. The project was carried out in collaboration with Monadnock Farm and Community Coalition and involved the temporary hiring of two assistants, Anne and Daniel Prial, to help carry out research. The principal products of the project were a convening on March 10<sup>th</sup> of food system constituents in the Monadnock region to identify priorities for local food infrastructure, as well as a report on findings. The report also outlines examples of other local food hubs, efforts to grow local food infrastructure in the region, and various players in the local food scene (farms, restaurants, large institutional buyers, markets, farmer's markets, etc). Since the completion of the report, MFCC Director Roe-Ann Tasoulas and I have had more in-depth conversations with Food Connects/Monadnock Menus about their future plans for development. We have learned that the community of Winchester is considering options for infrastructure development and continued to monitor developments around an idea for a commercial kitchen at a farm in Keene. Meanwhile, PhD student Jess Gerrior is developing a web-based project that tells the story of local food systems in the region, a project that could be a key piece of marketing infrastructure as the site becomes operational.

In the summer of 2016, I began to engage directly with local people facing food insecurity, specifically, people who regularly participate in hot meals at The Community Kitchen. I began to serve as the liaison to Monadnock Interfaith Project (MIP) as MIP undertook a bi-monthly "listening session" project to hear the challenges and concerns of community members who experience economic insecurities and partake of the hot meals program. In 2017, the MIP project at The Community Kitchen turned toward identifying real community problems faced by guests of the hot meals program, developing leadership skills, and working together toward addressing a real, and hopefully "winnable" issue. This process included presenting a leadership training series called "Making a Difference" that was completed by 8 participants, and identifying public toilets as an issue around which participants want to build a campaign. The campaign will be undertaken in 2018.



## GLEANINGS

Several key factors impacted gleaning results in 2017 as compared to previous gleaning seasons. These included the weather (cold and wet season), changes in partnering farm's operations, loss of a gleaning assistant position, and my own time management choices that resulted in fewer pounds of produce gleaned over the course of the year. In 2017, a total of 32,872 pounds of produce were gleaned. This compares to 41,542 pounds gleaned in 2016, a year in which the harvest was impacted by a late-spring frost that devastated tree fruit crops, followed by a drought that impacted many other crops. By comparison, gleaning totals in 2015 were 52,602 pounds, 38% more than 2017.



Our project benefitted from a new relationship with Pete's Stand in Walpole, which brought in almost 6,700 pounds of produce in 2017. On the other hand, the introduction of more operational efficiencies at Picadilly Farm also impacted gleaning totals in 2017, reducing their contributions by 6,600 pounds compared to 2016. In 2015 and 2016, the gleaning program hired seasonal gleaning assistants to harvest from charitable gardens at the Cheshire Fair, C & S Wholesale Grocers (2 garden sites in

Keene), and UPS. The primary reason for this position was the amount of support needed for the Cheshire Fair project, which produced 12,000 pounds of food in 2015 and 10,000 pounds of food in 2016. When the farmer did not have the funding to continue the project in 2017, The Community Kitchen did not hire a gleaning assistant, and I took over the duties of harvesting at the three remaining gardens twice a week.

While the combination weather, a reduction in gleaning needs at Picadilly Farm, and the closing of Cheshire Fair Farm can explain most of the reduction in gleaning pounds in 2017, I think that numbers could have been higher if I had focused more time on recruiting volunteers and developing relationships with larger, commercial fruit and vegetable operations. I can especially discount the factor of weather as a significant factor in reducing gleaning opportunities when I look at the five other NH Gleans programs, all of which had their most successful year yet. On the other hand, a look at my data illustrates the issue with using the gleaning coordinator's time to make regular visits to small operations. Throughout the season, time was carved out on Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday mornings to visit the two C & S Wholesale Grocers Gardens, the UPS Garden, and the Keene Farmer's Market. I made 102 visits to these sites, with an average gleaning of 25 pounds per visit. By contrast, I made 89 visits to commercial farms, with an average of 286 pounds gleaned per visit. This indicates the importance of finding other people to tend to these regular duties, especially as they stand in the way of scheduling more gleaning opportunities at commercial farms.

The number of contributors to the gleaning program has continued to expand since our records began in 2013. In 2017, 29 individuals ("home gardeners") donated 851 pounds of produce; 8 charitable gardens donated 3,154 pounds of produce; and 17 commercial growers donated 28,602 pounds of produce to the gleaning program. The charitable or community garden sites that donated to the gleaning program in 2017 were the Antioch Campus Garden, C & S Garden at Optical Avenue, C & S Garden at Summit Road, Community Garden Connections Westmoreland Garden Project, Keene Housing Authority, Liberty Mutual Garden, UPS Garden, and the Wheelock School. Although many of the new commercial farms donated only small amounts of produce in 2017 (and most of them dropped off the produce directly at The Community Kitchen), it is worth noting that six of these farms were first-time participants in 2017. The new participants include Angel Wing Farm, Fertile Fields Farm, Little Greens (microgreens), Pete's Stand, Rick's Vegetable Stand, and Wingate Farm.

Returning participants in 2017 included Cheshire Garden, Green Wagon Farm, Keene Farmer's Market, Maple Lane Farm, Mayfair Farm, New Dawn Farm, Nye Hill Farm, Picadilly Farm, Pisgah Farm, Tracie's



Community Farm, and Walpole Valley Farm. The following producers each contributed over 1,000 pounds of produce in 2017:

Producer	Pounds
Picadilly Farm	9482
Pete's Stand	6669
Green Wagon Farm	4287
Maple Lane Farm	3430
New Dawn Farm	1289
Keene Farmer's Market	1190
Westmoreland Garden	1164
Tracie's Community Farm	1105

The gleaning project collected 70 different types of food in 2017, ranging from 1 pound of raspberries to 5,830 pounds of summer squash. We collected less than 100 pounds of each of 40 types of produce. In the case of crops like herbs, microgreens, and blueberries, these smaller quantities nevertheless represented fairly significant investments of gleaning time, as well as high nutritional and market values. The highest quantities of produce gleaned in 2017 can be seen in the table below:



Crop Type	Pounds
summer squash	5830
cucumbers	3828
apples	3595
corn	3347
sweet potatoes	3912
winter squash	1981
potatoes	1010
kale	927
lettuce	872

carrots	840
tomatoes	668
turnips	441
green beans	390
pears	350
eggplant	331
peppers	314
peaches	292
beets	286
radishes	279

watermelon	254
cherry tomatoes	238
kohlrabi	183
broccoli	182
swiss chard	151
celery	140
braising greens	133
cabbage	125
fennel	107

## VOLUNTEERS

I was not as successful as usual in turning out volunteers in 2017. Many gleaning alerts emails did not result in any volunteers attending the gleaning event in question. According to records on Gleanweb, 47 new volunteers joined the volunteer pool in 2017. Ten individuals signed up for gleaning events through Gleanweb, accomplishing an estimated 45 hours of work in 2017. The internship of Keene State student Alexis Marsh contributed 120 volunteer hours to the gleaning program. In addition, an estimated 30 hours were contributed by volunteers who did not officially sign in. These cases include a volunteer who receives gleaning alerts emails and showed up to a glean without signing up on Gleanweb, a Keene State student who volunteered on a glean as part of a class project, and a crew of volunteers, including

children, who were recruited at the last minute by Jessica Gerior to harvest apples. In addition to these undocumented hours, 18 students from the “Hunger on KSC Campus” class each spent an hour helping to glean at the C & S Gardens at Optical Avenue. Therefore, approximately 38 individuals provided approximately 213 hours of volunteer service to the gleaning program in 2017. By comparison, in 2015, an estimated 90 individuals offered an estimated 560 hours of service to the gleaning program. This means that 58% fewer volunteers provided 62% fewer hours of service in 2017 as compared to 2015.



## STORIES

In the spring, I was contacted by Karen Balnis from Keene State College and she said that she had an undergraduate nutrition student in her senior year who was interested in undertaking an internship with the gleaning program. Alexis Marsh spent 120 hours working on the gleaning project between June and September. I wanted her to get a broad picture of where gleaning fits into the food system, what kinds of issues are implicated in poverty, health, food access, and farming, and the charitable food system. She had a couple of key components that she wanted to include in her learning experience and then I added a couple more elements, such as a tour of NH Food Bank and its dedicated garden in Manchester, some gleaning trips to commercial farms (the core of her work was to help me harvest charitable gardens, saving me the necessity of some of the visits I would have had to make to them), and endless chatter from me about everything I have learned from four years of working and reading in this field. Working with Alexis was inspiring because she is just about half my age right now, but full of hope and determination to address some of the wicked problems in our world. Whereas I can sometimes feel like poverty and food systems are on depressing trajectories, Alexis was ready to roll up her sleeves and turn things around. In fact, at the end of her internship, she said she was strongly considering going in to farming, something that she had not truly considered previously.



In the late spring, I received a Facebook message from a mom who serves as a Girl Scout leader to her two elementary school-aged daughter’s troop, #11305. Her troop was looking for a community project and they were interested in learning about gleaning and contributing to the project. I visited their troop meeting and explained the gleaning project. For some of them, it was an introduction to understanding hunger, especially how it manifests in their community. The Girl Scouts Troop ran a shelf-stable food drive at their school and walked it down to The Community Kitchen on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. They took a tour and learned about the pantry and hot meals services. The troop also created hand-made posters to raise awareness in the community and among their school peers about hunger and the programs at The Community Kitchen.

Working with a whole class of Keene State freshman was another highlight of the 2017 season. In October, I gave a classroom presentation to the class and then helped lead groups of them on tours of The Community Kitchen. The best part of the project for me was bringing them out to the C&S Wholesale Grocers garden to help harvest and learn more about growing food. This was an extra credit opportunity and about 2/3 of the class participated, choosing from 4 dates to visit the garden. Jess



Gerrior, the PhD fellow and garden education coordinator with the project joined me for these educational adventures. What was especially fun was seeing students sense of discovery and curiosity wake up. Because they were college freshmen, I could see many of them were generally carrying around a fairly cook attitude. Some of them kept it the whole time they were in the garden. But there were some who started getting excited about the things they saw in the garden. Tasting stevia leaves and seeing that this low-calorie sweetener comes right out of a green leaf! The scent of freshly picked lemon grass! Finding out how to know when an eggplant is ripe and how to pick green beans. And playing guessing games about what kind of vegetable it is when it has gone to seed. I have never had the opportunity to work with pre-school aged children on early sprouts programs, but I believe that I got to witness just as much delight and discovery with a group of college freshmen. It was fun, and I hope it makes a difference to the students as they follow their dreams of becoming coaches, nurses, and community health professionals.



On the perfect fall Sunday afternoon of October 15<sup>th</sup>, I headed out to glean apples at Maple Lane Farm with two volunteers signed up to help harvest and an ambitious load of 37 empty boxes on the van. One of these volunteers, Jess Gerrior, had informed me that she might bring her 2 daughters along, and that she would also be at another volunteer day event at Antioch that morning, and she might be able to recruit some more hands to join her for apple gleaning. When I arrived at the orchard, only my other volunteer, a Keene State student had arrived. A few minutes later, a large and boisterous group came walking up the lane. Jess showed up with eight friends and family members, including four children! One subset of the group was a family with two young sons. The parents talked about their interest in raising their sons to learn their values of giving back to the community. The family followed me back to The Community Kitchen and helped pack all 1800 pounds of apples into the upstairs cooler. The boys loved the conveyor belt and the parents took some information in order to be able to volunteer to cook and serve hot meals. This glean was an example of the best kind of experience that a glean can be – an event that not only rescues a lot of wonderful produce, but also one that’s fun and educational and builds community.

#### LESSONS & 2018 PRIORITIES

- 1) I saw in 2017 that I can’t take for granted the community awareness of gleaning and momentum I built for the program in the first year. I need to continue to put a strong effort into marketing the program, directly recruiting volunteers, especially through programs like scouts and business groups, and building relationships with fruit and vegetable producers.

- 2) I need to hand off my duties at the C & S Wholesale Grocers and UPS to someone else. The inefficiency of making time to glean at these three sites is particularly illustrated by comparing them to the two other dedicated charitable gardens that grow primarily for the Kitchen. I was able to harvest an average of 20 pounds of produce per visit at the C & S and UPS gardens, spending about an hour at each garden. Meanwhile, Liberty Mutual and CGC Westmoreland Garden Project delivered an average of 33 pounds of produce each time they made a drop-off, with little time investment required on my part (I did visit New Dawn Farm to pick up some of this produce on several occasions, but also picked up produce from New Dawn, Rick's Stand, and Pete's Stand on the same trips). My preference would be that these duties, which include harvesting at all gardens, and some more technical support at UPS, be taken over by a partner organization with a strong internship program. Community Garden Connections would be the ideal partner for this work. I will discuss this need with CGC in January and help develop any grant proposals, job descriptions, etc., necessary to transition this duty to them, or seek another alternative if necessary.
- 3) I think I could hand off Farmer's Market pick-ups to a volunteer in 2018, and I will explore options for doing so. I have learned that other NH Gleans groups that pick up from Farmer's Markets have assigned these duties to volunteers. It might also be possible to include this duty with the charitable gardens internship. Ideally, I will not need to block time in my schedule for any of these smaller garden gleans and pick-ups, thus allowing me to focus my time on organizing and overseeing gleans on farms.
- 4) I will develop relationships with other charitable food outlets in the region in 2018 in order to address a couple of opportunities. One of these is that I have learned that some of these outlets are sending volunteers to pick up local produce at farm stands, but the data from these gleans is not being captured and reflected on NH Gleans. I hope that other pantries would be willing to track that data, which can also help farmers get a better understanding of the impact of their participation in gleaning efforts. I would also like to become more efficient at moving produce, especially large bumper crops, to outlets where it will be most useful. This year I have seen that, more than ever, the wholesale market is moving a greater and greater amount of fresh produce in to the charitable food system. As a result, The Community Kitchen was often flush with seasonal produce, just as my partnering farmers were looking to share their bounties of the same crop with us. Often, when I was bringing in large amounts of cucumbers, the coolers were stocked with Canadian cucumbers that had come in from NH Food Bank. When Pete's Stand offered me a gaylord or two (about 30-40 bushels each) of watermelons, I learned that we were already scheduled to receive two gaylords of watermelons from a food bank the following day. The same kind of story was repeated with zucchini, corn, winter squash, and apples as the season went on.

If The Community Kitchen's needs for fresh produce are being so well served by the food banks and grocery stores, then it is time to find other outlets for gleaned produce. I have been hoping to help our region develop a food hub so that some produce can be processed and distributed off-season. Building a value-added food hub business is going to take many years. In the meantime, I need to explore other options for light processing (volunteer groups preserving food at The Community Kitchen on off hours? Church groups using church kitchens?), as well as pursue a range of other outlets. I will consult with my fellow gleaners, all of whom have experience working with multiple outlets, and see how I can replicate some of their models in

Cheshire County. If I have systems and relationships with other outlets (pantries, meals on wheels, schools), and more of my days are freed up for farm gleaning, I think it will be possible and efficient to move gleaned produce to other programs when The Community Kitchen is overstocked.

- 5) I plan to hold a focus group of past volunteers in the winter (February?) to assess the quality of the volunteer experience they have had with the gleaning project and seek their advice as to how to improve upon it. I would like to increase volunteer engagement in 2018 and share some larger responsibilities with the volunteers, such as picking up produce at the Farmer's Market and even helping to promote gleaning and recruit more volunteers. I hope that a focus group to consult with past volunteers will help clarify what kinds of roles and responsibilities could be delegated to volunteers, and how I can make their volunteer work meaningful, rewarding, and fun.