Dear Supporters and Friends,

Crunch, crunch, chew, swallow......“This kale salad tastes like 10,000 angels!” exclaimed a little girl as she tasted the salad that she made with her classmates and a Sierra Harvest guest chef. We tend to eat a whole lot of fresh veggies here at Sierra Harvest, and our work comes alive when we hear and see how we are changing the eating habits and lives of our youth.

This year was filled with memorable achievements that have fulfilled our mission one child, one farmer, and one family at a time. Kids’ taste buds exploded through their farm to school experiences. Harvest of the Month alone moved six tons of local produce into the mouths of 6000 school children. Over 650 children visited the Food Love Project Farm on field trips.

The growth of our Farm to School program has led to a demand for more local food and more farmers. Training farmers is an important part of our history, and we are planning to launch a farm business incubator program where small farmers can gain not only the skills to grow food – we’ll teach them how to have a thriving farming business. As our local food economy grows, we want to make sure that it includes everyone. We work with families that have little access to fresh food by teaching them how to grow a portion of their own food at home. In February of 2014 we launched the Sierra Gardens program, which teaches families how to grow food right in their own backyard. Sierra Gardens families are losing weight, learning to cook what they grow, and planning meals based on the season and what they can pick that afternoon right from their own garden.

But we don’t just grow food. We are growing the organization, and have enjoyed building capacity from two mainly volunteer-run organizations (Live Healthy Nevada County and Living Lands Agrarian Network), to a non-profit organization with 12 part-time staff, 18 Farm to School liaisons, nine board of directors members, and a half-million dollar budget. We have almost outgrown our office space that is just one year old! We have streamlined our operations and delivered savvy, timely communications to you. We hired a stewardship coordinator and... here’s the big news – received our 501c3 status!

At Sierra Harvest, we enjoy sharing our passion for food and farming with our community. At a time when Americans are spending billions on healthcare, we are cultivating change at a grassroots level that will not only improve our local economy, it will help our community to be more self-reliant, and simply feel better. We believe that everyone deserves a seat at the table and that the food on that table should be outrageously fresh and produced by local farmers in an economically viable way. We hope to see you at our table in the New Year!

Aimee Retzler and Malaika Bishop
Co-Directors, Sierra Harvest

Jennifer Singer
Board President
Children

Programs

The Food Love Project: An educational farm that inspires a love of good food through field trips, summer camps, community service days, and U-pick vegetables.

Food Corps Projects: Food Corps Service Members build and tend school gardens and establish and support local food procurement for school meals.

Farm to School Education: Children plant, nurture, harvest, share, and enjoy fresh local food through a variety of educational experiences, including:

- Harvest of the Month tastings in 240 classrooms
- Weekly produce stands featuring produce from partner farms
- Classroom visits by farmers and chefs
- Field trips to partner farms

Accomplishments

- Provided Farm to School education to 6,000 school children and their families.
- Grew Farm to School program from 12 to 19 schools, reaching 86% of the K-8 students in Western Nevada County with produce stands, farm field trips, farmer visits and fresh produce tastings.
- Distributed 20,500 lbs of local produce into schools in the last two years.
- Served 670 individuals with 1,700 educational experiences at the Food Love Project.
- Produced Tasting Week, where 22 chefs and nutritionists conducted cooking classes for 2,500 kids in 19 schools.
- Facilitated monthly fruit and vegetable tastings in 240 classrooms, where 80% of students liked the fruits and veggies they tried.
- Conducted in-depth cooking and gardening classes at Seven Hills, Yuba River Charter and Silver Springs schools.

Laura Peterson
Georgette Aronow
“I just wanted to thank Sierra Harvest for sending kiwis into our school. Eli (who is a super picky eater) came home requesting that I buy him kiwis! He has never liked them before! I happily bought him some, and am grateful that he now wants to eat them!!! Keep up the good work!”

Lizary Jones (Parent, Nevada City School of the Arts)

“This is the best morning ever!”
“No, this is the best SCHOOL DAY ever!”
“No, this is the best morning ever, including weekends!”

(exchange between two Yuba River Charter School 2nd Graders at a Sierra Harvest field trip)

“The teachers cannot stop talking about their field trips to your farm (The Food Love farm). There was praise at the board meeting this week too about how it’s one of the best field trips EVER! Everyone wants to go back in the spring.”

Michelle Bacon (Parent Union Hill School)

“This salad is so delicious I could eat this every day of my life.”

(Clear Creek student on his third helping of kale salad)

Students who participate in garden-nutrition education programs have a lower risk of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, are more physically active and more cooperative, have higher self-esteem and leadership skills, and do better in school. Sierra Harvest provides over 5,000 hours of garden and nutrition education each year.

University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center Fact Sheet #3
Farm Educator Internships

Teaching kids about food and farming is becoming a career path. There is an increasing demand for educators who can teach kids (and adults) about the value and pleasures of growing, cooking, and enjoying good, healthy food. This year, two new garden-nutrition educators gained experience through 950 hours of training over eight months. They cultivated a plot at Lost Hill farm, took their produce to the farmers market, learned Permaculture design, and learned how to inspire children to love good food through helping run the programs at the Food Love Project.

Food & Farming Events

To date, 6,500 community members have attended our 100+ farm events which celebrate our local food culture. This year, Sierra Harvest produced potlucks at ten different farms, showcasing our local farmers and connecting the community to where our food is grown. We also hosted three soup nights with farm fresh soups, a contra dance, three farm guild meet-ups for farmers to share skills, resources and ideas, and we supported the Nevada County Food and Farm conference. This year’s keynote speakers were Amigo Cantizano, Elaine Ingham, Owen Habultzel, and Wes Jackson. Finally, Sierra Harvest launched a county-wide local food and farming events calendar where hundreds of people can learn about upcoming cooking and gardening classes, u-picks, farmers markets, and more, all in one place.

“In the past eight months as a Sierra Harvest intern, I have grown as a teacher and a farmer. I feel confident standing in front of a large group of children and teaching and engaging with them. The internship has completely changed my life.”

Gracie Schatz (Farm Educator Intern)
Sierra Gardens

The Sierra Gardens program provides families with a garden, starts, seeds, mentorship, and cooking and gardening classes for a two year period. This year we supported 18 gardens. Of these, 13 received scholarships. Families in the program grew over 2,000 lbs of produce in their first growing season. Participants are losing weight, planning their meals based on what they harvest from their gardens, feeling better, and getting outside together as a family!

“The Sierra Gardens program has helped my daughter and I eat healthier, save money, and learn more about gardening together. I cannot say thank you enough. Great program!”

Celeste and Triniti Vega (Sierra Gardens Scholarship recipients)

“Before the garden, I was limited as to how much fresh vegetables I could budget for. With the garden, my kids and I have been able to have fresh vegetables every day and a great variety. I’ve been able to put some up to use throughout the winter and I’m already planning for next year. Thank you, Sierra Harvest—you’ve made our lives so much richer.”

Deb Rossovic (Sierra Gardens Scholarship recipient)

“We tried for two years to grow something in the garden area that we had. NOTHING grew or would die soon after planting. We rarely ate fresh produce because of a limited income. Sierra Harvest came in and helped us understand sustainability and composting and the need for healthy soil. We learned so much! Thank you so much Sierra Harvest for the wonderful garden and all the terrific information!”

Susan Pellerin (Sierra Gardens Scholarship recipient)
Sierra Harvest Team
Back row: Erika Kosina, Melynda Rainsbarger, Carlyle Miller, Leo Chapman, Katie Turner
Front: Aimee Retzler, Amanda Thibodeau, Malaika Bishop, Elizabeth Brandley

Farm to School Liaisons
Aleata Barrett, Andrea Maher, Kate Strolle, Katie Merrill, Kimberly Bell, Michele McDaniel, Pam Hemminger, Popp West, Rachel Wegman, Raelynn Noel, Rosie Mariani, Sarah Griffin-Boubacar, Shannon Friedberg, Sydney Joyce, Theresia Heinzle Evans, Vanessa McLaughlin

Special thanks...
to these donors who make our work possible
A to Z Supply, Aimee Retzler, Animal Welfare Institute, Anni McCann, BSC, Banner Grange, Barbara Roemer & Glen Miller, Bill Sikes, BioChar LLC, BriarPatch Coop, Carlos Trujillo, Carlyle Miller, Clientworks, Connie Parsons & Gregory Archbald, Deb & Leo Chapman, Dennis Fournier & Charles Grande, Elizabeth Matson, Environmental Celebration Institute, Erika Kosina, FarmsReach, Flour Garden Bakery & Café, Forever Flowering, Inc, Galen Ellis, George Noile, Elster Ranch, Gregory Archbald, High Caliper Growing, Inc., Hills Flat Lumber, Jane & Philip Yager, Kriseda & Steven Smith, Laura Hash, Laura Jorgensen, Laura Thorne, Malaika Bishop, Margo Cooper, Marisha & Tad Finkler, Nevada Museum of Art, NID, Patricia, Kaminski & Richard Katz, Patrick Rodysill, Peaceful Valley Farm Supply, Phil & Carol Turner, Rachel & Matt Berry, Ray Bryars, Rebecca Coffman, Richie & Anni Marks, Rincon-Vitova Insectaries, Inc., Rob & Suzanne Ferraggiaro, Robert & Jan Wenzel, Sandra Barington, Sara Heick, Shana Maziarz, Sierra Food, Wine, Art, Jeff & Shannon Pelline, Simply Country Inc, Soroptomist International of Grass Valley, SPD Market, Susan Nance, Susie and David Bavo, Sweet Roots Farm, Sweetland Garden Supply, Tiana Rockwell, The Edwin Perkins Foundation, Transformation Trust, Vital Landscaping. Also funded in part by the California Department of Food and Agriculture’s Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and by the USDA Farm to School Grant Program.

and to our core Volunteers and Program partners
Mission

To educate, inspire, and connect Nevada County families to fresh, local, seasonal foods.

Vision

Sierra Harvest envisions a thriving local food economy where residents of all ages have access to nutritious, local, seasonal food through strong connections among farmers, schools, and the community. We envision a network of financially viable farms providing good food for the community, where health and wellness is the norm and people are engaged in growing, harvesting, preparing, and sharing fresh food.

In 10 years, we envision:

- Twenty new farm businesses employing hundreds of young farmers
- A food network that grows 25% of the food we consume, locally
- All school meals are cooked from scratch and garden and nutrition education is part of the core curriculum
- 300 families that used to struggle to put food on their table will be confidently growing food for themselves and their neighbors, right in their own backyards