



**MADISON AREA
FOOD PANTRY GARDENS**

Annual Report 2023

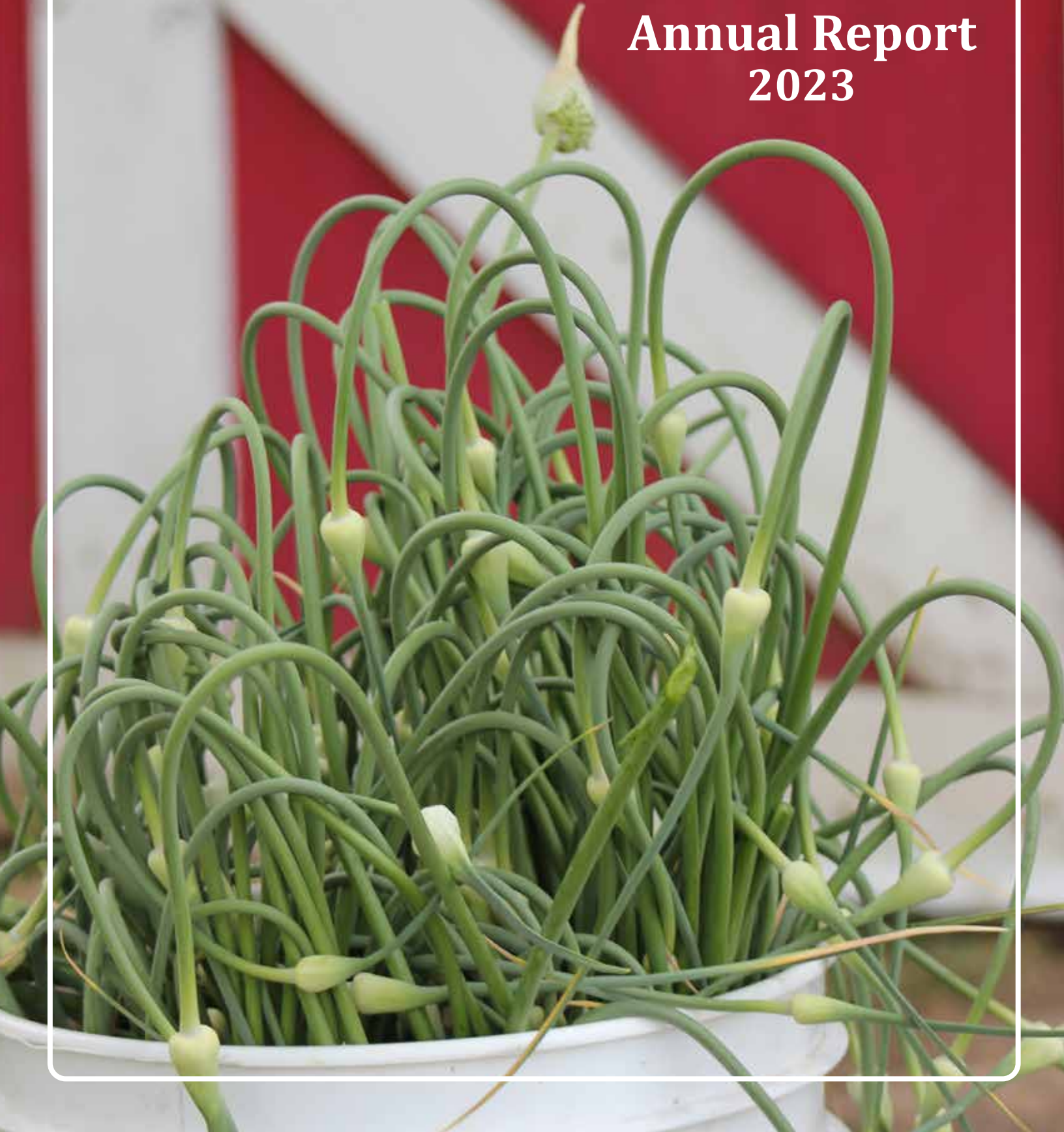


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Celebrating Tom Parslow

Honoring 14 Years as our President

It's difficult to know where to begin when we think about all the ways Tom has transformed our organization because the breadth and depth of knowledge that he brings is, quite frankly, immeasurable. After 14 years of leading us, Tom is retiring as our President.

Before he joined Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens, Tom was an agricultural teacher and agent for over two decades at Mauston High School, Waunakee Community High School, University of Wisconsin, and County Extension in Juneau County. He is extremely passionate about agriculture and educating individuals of all expertise levels.

In terms of how he became involved with MAFPG, Tom says, "I had gotten to know Emmett Schulte through the University and at church. On a cold winter day, he called me and asked if I wanted to grow vegetables. That would be interesting, I thought. Let me follow you around. So, I followed him around for a year. He put a lot of miles on that old truck of his." Tom laughed, "After that year, I took over as the Garden Leader of Lacy Garden around 2008."

By 2009, Tom had become president of MAFPG, and he mostly deeply enjoyed spending time with the volunteers.

Tom explains, "I didn't know I was going to be as involved with the volunteers. I thought I had signed up to grow vegetables." Tom chuckled, "My favorite part is the kids coming out. I love making it an educational experience, teaching them about how food is grown."

In the beginning of the garden's history, Emmett Schulte was paying for the expenses out of his own account. Tom found an attorney to write the bylaws. With the new bylaws, the gardens were able to open a separate bank account and send in forms for Corporation Articles to become a nonprofit organization. With Tom's vision and perseverance, this became the official beginning for Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens. Not only was Tom instrumental in forming the non-profit, but he is also passionate about bringing others on board. So was the case with now Vice President of MAFPG Larry Binning.

Tom exclaimed, "I met Larry Binning at a Retiree Meeting for the University. He showed some interest, and you don't have to tell me twice!"

We are so truly grateful for the many years of service that Tom has put into MAFPG. We aren't kidding when we say we wouldn't be here without him. Tom's passion is simply unmatched, and he brings a smile to everyone's face with his impressive gardening knowledge and compelling anecdotes. Thank you, Tom ❤️



The *Why* behind our mission

Fresh produce and other food prices continue to climb. As a result, there are nearly 35,000 individuals in Dane County who experience food insecurity according to Feeding America. In our local schools, 1 in 5 students receive free or reduced-price hot lunches.

At MAFPG, we believe that food can be medicine. Access to healthy food is important for the prevention and treatment of chronic health issues. We plant. We grow. We feed.

29 entities received MAFPG produce in 2023

Badger Prairie Needs Network
Bayview Foundation
Bethel Lutheran Church
Catholic Multicultural Center
East Madison Community Center
Extended Hands Mobile Food Pantry
Good Shepherd Food Pantry
Goodman Center Food Pantry
Healthy Food for All / FEED Kitchens
Heights Unlimited Community Resource Center
Lussier Community Education Center (LCEC)
LCEC Grab and Go Cooler
Madison College Food Pantry
Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District
Weekend Food Program
Meadowood Neighborhood Center
Medic Free Clinic
Middleton Youth Center
Neighborhood House Community Center
Oregon Area Food Pantry
Specialty Care Free Clinic (Formerly BSP Free Clinic)
St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry
The Allied Food Pantry
The Hmong Institute
The River Food Pantry
The Vine Church Food Pantry
UW Capstone
Waunakee Food Pantry
WayForward Resources
West Middleton Lutheran Church
Weekend Food Program



*PHOTO: Emmett Schulte Food Pantry Garden Leaders
Msgr. Jim Uppena, Dick Reynolds and Tim Kreeger 4*

GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

2023 Growing Season

110,324 lbs.

of fresh produce grown and gleaned,
all donated to 29 local food pantries.

10,000 Hours

of volunteer efforts by businesses,
schools, churches, individuals & families.

**2023 Volunteer Hours =
4.8 Full-Time Employees!**

2 Million+

pounds of produce donated in the over
two decades of providing produce to
our community.

PHOTOS (Top) Students at Pope Farm Elementary planted pumpkins and ornamental gourds at Forward Garden in the Spring. Our Farm Manager delivered their produce back to the school for their "Trunk or Treat" event for their PTO Fundraiser.

(Middle) Volunteers from Turning Point Madison help inspect and clean butternut squash at Forward Garden to be donated to local food pantries. Turning Point Madison works on job skills and independent living skills with individuals with disabilities.

(Bottom) The Gleaning Team gleanes green cabbage from University of Wisconsin Experimental Farm in Arlington, WI. About 1/3 of our produce donated each year is gleaned from area farms and individual gardens.



OUR GARDENS

EMMETT SCHULTE GARDEN

Garden Leaders: Fr. Jim Uppena, Tim Kreeger
and Laura Green
11214 Midtown Road, Verona

FORWARD GARDEN

Garden Leader: Matt Lechmaier
7492 W Old Sauk Road, Verona

HERSHBERGER PERENNIAL GARDEN

11214 Midtown Road, Verona

KEN WITTE GARDEN

Garden Leaders: Fr. Jim Uppena, Tim Kreeger
3266 Mound View Road, Verona

ANDERSON FARM CENTER

Garden Leaders: Roe Parker, Barb Hill
and Sue & Bob Eagle
805 Union Road, Oregon

GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH GARDEN

Garden Leader: Rev. Dara Schuller-Hanson
7291 County Road PD, Verona

KNIGHT HOLLOW NURSERY

Leader: Dan Johnson
7911 Forsythia Street, Middleton

LACY GARDEN

Garden Leader: Jim McCarthy
5897 Whalen Road, Fitchburg

MADISON CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY GARDEN

Garden Leaders: Ann Ward
and Jean Einerson
7118 Old Sauk Road Madison, WI

WAYFORWARD RESOURCES FAMILY GARDEN

Garden Leader: Dan Johnson
2500 Evergreen Road, Middleton

UW HEALTH VERONA CLINIC GARDEN

Garden Leader: Dr. Mark Wirtz
100N Nine Mound Road, Verona

2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thomas Parslow, President
Larry Binning, Vice President
Mike Kepler, Treasurer
Danielle Lawson, Secretary
Brian Arndt
Dave Fahey
Sue Gullickson
Wayne Morris
Jane Mount
Rev. Dara Schuller-Hanson

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Sue Gullickson, Chair
Brian Arndt, Development Director
Dave Fahey
Anne Inman
Mike Kepler
Matt Lechmaier

POLICY COMMITTEE

Wayne Morris, Chair
Danielle Lawson
Rev. Dara Schuller-Hanson
Fr. James Uppena

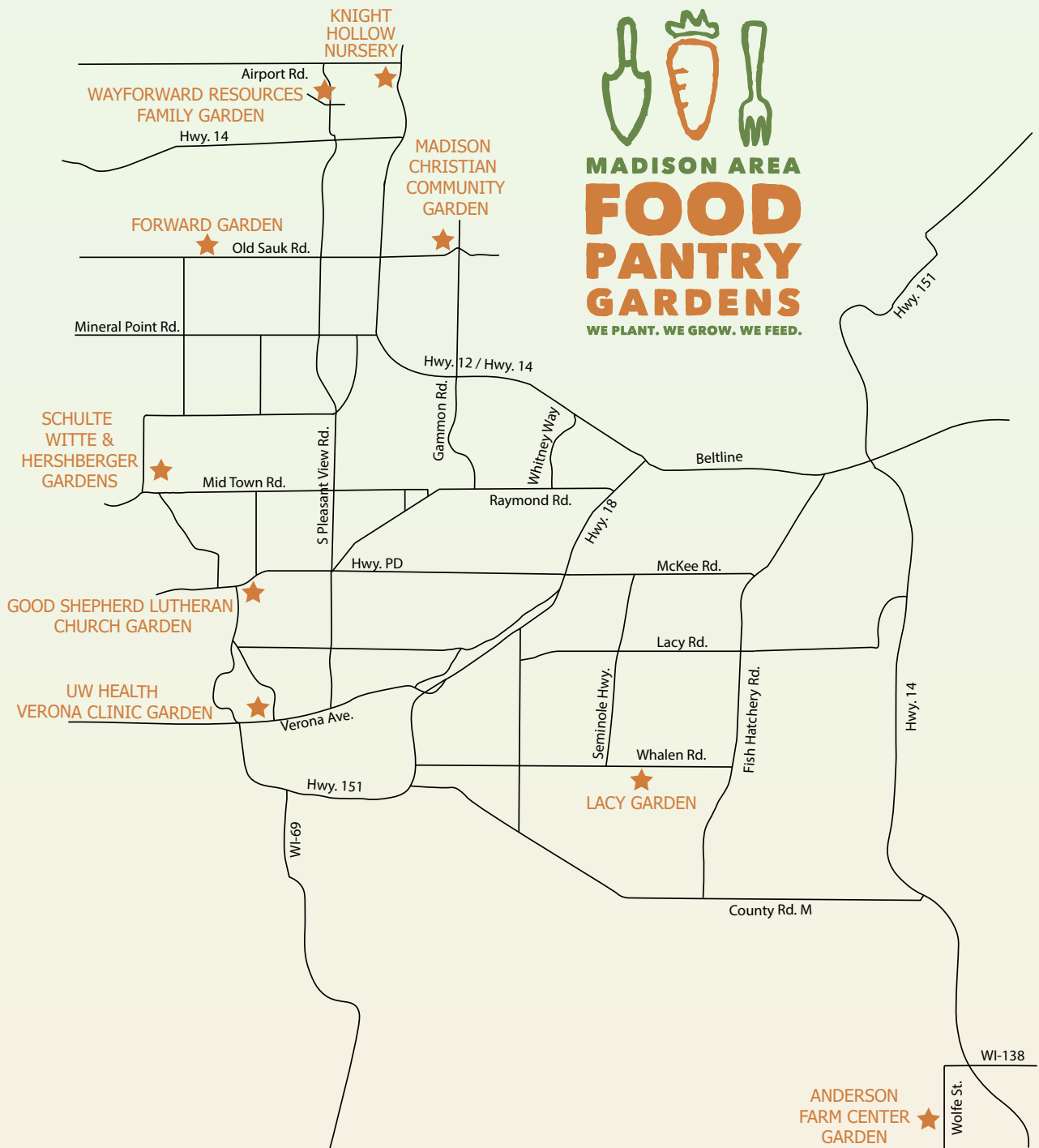
MARKETING COMMITTEE

Taylor Penn, Co-Chair
Darcie Van Dop, Co-Chair
Brian Arndt
Kristin Friel
Emily Guenther
Linda Hershberger
Kristi Jones
Matt Lechmaier
Thomas Parslow
Janie Starzewski

GLEANNING TEAM

Dan Johnson and many dedicated volunteers

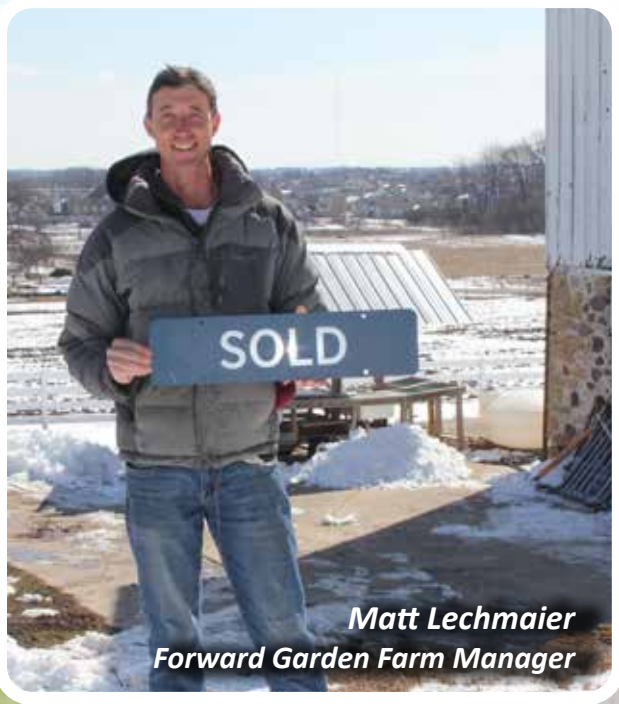




2023 Produce Distributed

- | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Acorn Squash | Celery | Habaneros | Red Onions |
| Apples | Chard | Hot Peppers | Serrano Peppers |
| Banana Peppers | Cherry Tomatoes | Jalapenos | Shishito Peppers |
| Basil (Holy & Italian) | Chili Peppers | Kale | Snow Peas |
| Beets | Cilantro | Kohlrabi | Strawberries |
| Bell Peppers | Collard Greens | Lemongrass | Summer Squash |
| Bitter Melon | Cucumbers | Melon | Sweet Corn |
| Blueberries | Daikon | Mixed Peppers | Sweet Peppers |
| Bok Choy | Eggplant | Okra | Sweet Potato |
| Broccoli | Fennel | Parsley | Tomatillos |
| Bush Beans | Garlic | Poblano Peppers | Tomatoes |
| Butternut Squash | Garlic Scapes | Pole Beans | Watermelon |
| Cabbage (Red & Green) | Grapes | Popcorn | Winter Squash |
| Carrots | Green Beans | Potatoes (Red & Yukon Gold) | Yellow Onion |
| Cauliflower | Green Cabbage | Raspberries | |

Moving Forward at Forward Garden



Matt Lechmaier
Forward Garden Farm Manager

We are pleased to announce that the purchase of Forward Garden is official! Purchasing Forward Garden was an important 2022 goal for MAFPG. We officially closed on the property March 30, 2023.

Owning the 15-acre property — consisting of 12 tillable acres and three acres of buildings — protects it from potential development. While housing developments fill the surrounding area, Forward Garden will be dedicated solely to garden space and related farming infrastructure. Additionally, ownership allows MAFPG to employ a more sustainable long-term approach to cultivating Forward Garden.

“Taking ownership of Forward Garden will allow us to increase biodiversity, minimize chemical inputs and tillage and implement other regenerative agricultural practices which will help create a healthier ecosystem to grow our produce,” shared Farm Manager

Matt Lechmaier. “Through improved farming practices and improved infrastructure, we will be able to improve both the quality and quantity of our annual donation of locally grown culturally relevant produce and amplify our impact in the emergency food system even further. We are excited to continue to invest in these agricultural best practices with a contemporary farming mindset.”

MAFPG’s purchase of Forward Garden was possible thanks to a successful Phase I Capital Campaign comprised of donations from various individuals and community organizations and a grant from Dane County. MAFPG previously leased Forward Garden from its former owners, the Pope/Zoerb family.

Our deepest thanks to all those that have worked so hard to make this vision a reality. We are so excited to see the last several years of hard work and dreaming pay off. Here’s to more opportunities to serve our community!

Infrastructure Repairs Begin

We are excited to see our newly owned property transforming with several initial infrastructure improvements. With these improvements in the works, Forward Garden is sure to look different and become safer and more functional before the start of our next growing season. More details on the repairs below:



PHOTOS (Top left) Renovations have begun at the Forward Garden barn. The floor in the basement was broken up and removed in June 2023. A temporary flooring of gravel was installed before final phases take place later in 2024. The concrete removal allows us to repair cracks and erosion in the foundation, and will enable us to create a floor with one uniform level rather than the six levels of concrete that were added over the past 111 years.



(Middle left) The lower level windows are also being modified to improve natural lighting in the area where many of our volunteer supplies are stored.

(Below left) In August 2023, property improvement continued as we said goodbye to one of our silos that was no longer in usable condition.



Before



After

(RIGHT) During the four years that Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens has been growing produce at Forward Garden, there have been two seasons with extended dry periods that have affected the quality and quantity of vegetables available for donation to local pantries. Without a well, watering during drought conditions must be done by hand. Volunteers are tasked with filling gallon buckets with water and walking along the 4 acres of crops to distribute water to the plants, a very time-consuming and inefficient process.



Beginning in December 2023, Sam's Well Drilling and Sauk Plains Plumbing & Pumps began the work of drilling a new well on the property. This new well paves the way for a new pump, hydrants, and drip irrigation system. Not only will drip irrigation provide a more efficient use of water, but this new irrigation system will also ensure reliable access to water regardless of the weather.



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▼
• This new renovation phase would not be possible without the generous financial support of Springs Window Fashions, Cummins, Inc., Steve Stricker American Family Insurance Foundation, Evjue Foundation, and several individual donors; and consulting and in-kind contributions of Brian Schramm with Headwater Companies.



MAFPG Vice President Larry Binning removes boulders impeding the vegetable production with his trusty skid steer.



University of Wisconsin students of Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies process cauliflower harvested from Forward Garden into steamable bags.



Springs Window Fashions Volunteers help us kick off our 2023 growing season by transplanting pepper plants.

Development Highlights

The 2023 season was a year for the history books as we are now property owners with the purchase of the Pope/Zoerb homestead property – home to Forward Garden. After more than 20 years working the land of several local generous landowners, owning the property will allow us to move forward with infrastructure improvements needed to optimize our growing operations.

We also purchased a used cargo van as we were in desperate need of a larger vehicle to reliably transport our produce to nearly 30 local food pantry and other community food program partners throughout Dane County.

During this time of significant capacity building, we continue to look for ways to maximize our potential through courageous collaboration with other community-based organizations. For example, our surveys of pantry guests indicate a desire to receive partially processed produce. Growing and donating a beautiful head of broccoli sounds admirable, but if it doesn't get consumed by a family because they don't have time to cut it up and steam it, it's of no value if it gets thrown out.

This past year we hosted UW students from the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies who harvested several vegetables then took them to the Slow Food UW-Madison Kitchen where they cut the cauliflower into florets that were packed into steamer bags (pictured left). After processing was complete, the bags were loaded up by Healthy Food For All Dane County and distributed throughout the Madison area.

As we look to move the needle on nutrition security through increased produce consumption among both kids and adults, it will take more collaboration and careful coordination of logistics among several community partners to provide more convenient-to-consume produce to our neighbors in need.

Although the 2023 season was difficult with long sustained drought conditions and several poor air quality days, thanks to the hard work and dedication of our thousands of volunteers, MAFPG overcame that adversity and donated over 110,300 pounds of produce to our neighbors in need.

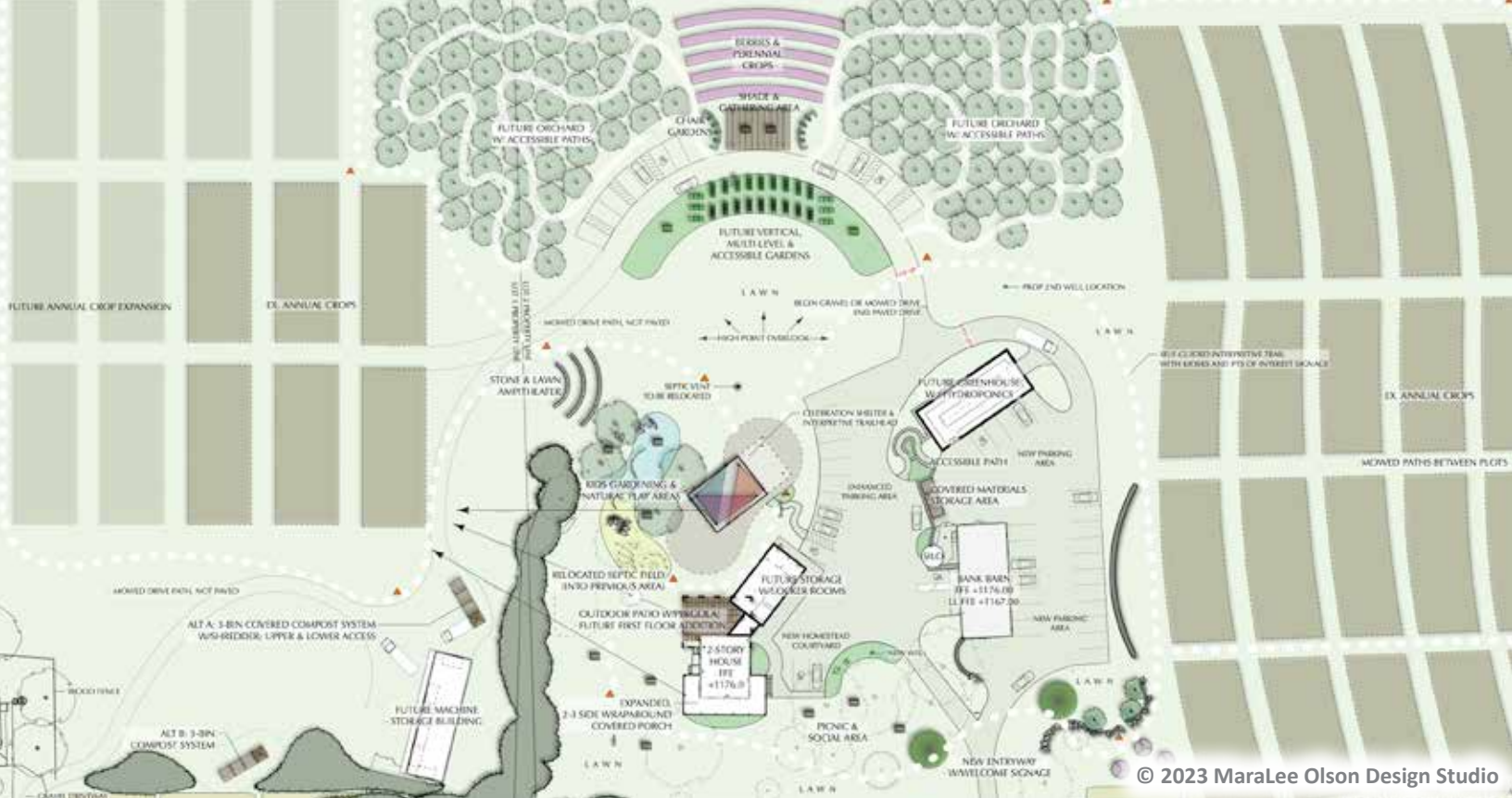
Over 150 donors (individuals, religious organizations, corporations, foundations, and local businesses) provided financial support to cover operational costs such as seed, soil enhancements, weed fabric, fuel, equipment maintenance, and more. A special thanks to the nearly 30 area businesses who sent out several groups of volunteers to give back to the community by spending time at one or more of our 10 food pantry gardens in the area during the 2023 season. MAFPG could not accomplish all that it does without this incredible support!

This is a really exciting time of capacity building across MAFPGs' network of 10 gardens. Your support of our mission and vision has put us in a healthy position to be primed for co-creating programming with community partners to improve community-level nutrition security for individuals and households for years to come.

With your ongoing support, we look forward to an even more exciting and impactful 2024!

In community health,

Brian Arndt, Development Director (Volunteer)



Next Up 2024 Planning

As we continue to be grateful for the purchase of Forward Garden, we also look towards how we can optimally use this property to expand our mission.

Above is a rendering designed by MaraLee Olson Design Studio showing how we anticipate capacity building by growing into the Forward Garden property over the next several years

As previously mentioned in an earlier article, we have a 2024 goal of installing a drip irrigation system. Our next steps include:

- Hydrants
- Lateral Pipes
- Dripper Emitters
- Control Valves

We have also started the renovation process of the existing barn. The barn basement is our main storage area. The upper level holds produce during cleaning and distribution that doesn't go in the cooler, and can be used for organization events. Barn renovations are already underway, but we hope to complete the following barn improvements in 2024:

- Barn Siding
- New Infrastructure Steel Beams and Footings
- Concrete Basement Floor

- New Windows
- New Doors
- Update Electrical Wiring

We have plans to design a new machine shed directly west of the residential home on the property (current machine shed photo below). The new machine shed will have far better access for storage of large equipment and allow for an expansion of the existing cooler space in the old machine shed.

On a smaller scale, we also look to acquire additional material handling equipment such as carts, dollies, and a pallet jack to reduce injury risk to volunteers, as many crops are very heavy. We are also exploring acquisition of an electric UTV in addition to the other material handling equipment.

It will be another exciting year of improvements, and we are eager to transform our new property to better serve our community. ■

PHOTO (Right)
The existing machine shed is nearly falling apart with large gaps in the siding and broken doors and windows.





Fresh snow sprinkles the compost pile at Forward Garden

Not Just Produce

MAFPG Looks to Grow its Composting Efforts

Since its inception in April 2022, Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens has been piloting a composting program to collect compost from local businesses and individual households to be used at Forward Garden.

The program has collected more than 60,000 pounds of pre-consumer compost by partnering with BeneBlends, Forage Kitchen, UW Health Verona Clinic, and Eplegaarden to compost their pre-consumer produce scraps. MAFPG volunteers are also encouraged to bring their food scraps from home to add to the garden's compost. In 2023, Food, Faith and Farming Network provided a \$1,500 grant to MAFPG to support the effort.

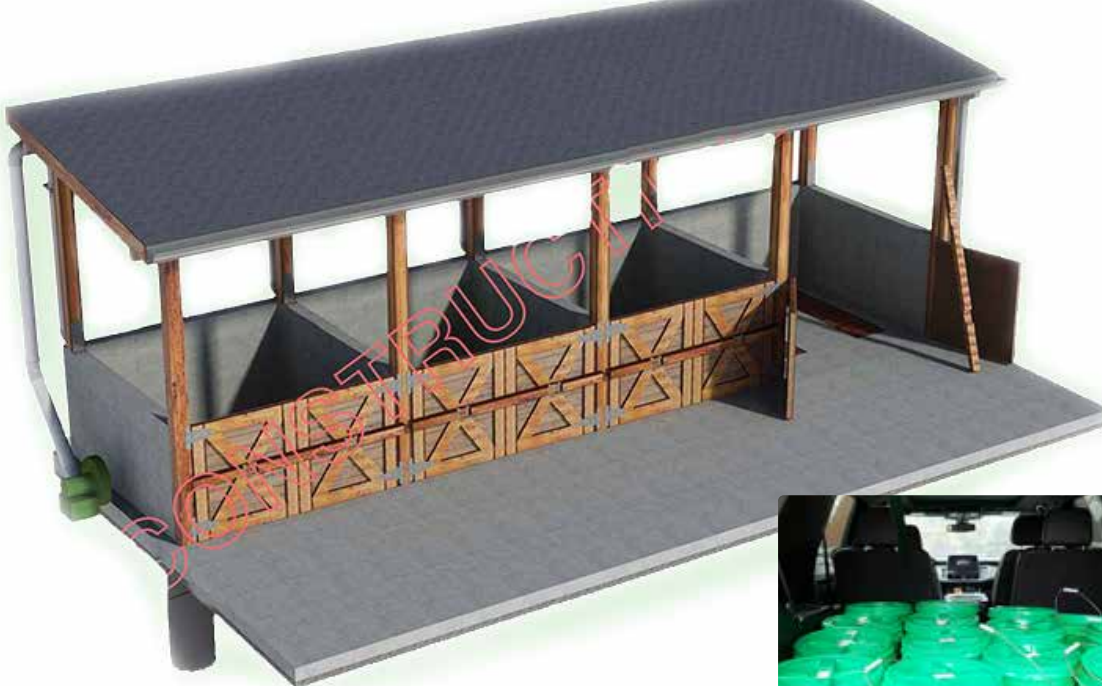
MAFPG's Compost Team is comprised of eight volunteers who pick up full buckets of pre-consumer food scraps. The compost pile also receives contributions from others who contribute yard waste and a woodworker who donates sawdust.

Laura Behrends, Owner of BeneBlends in Madison, was approached by Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens Development Director, Dr. Brian Arndt, in the beginning of the compost program to see if her business would like to participate.

"I always had a vision of composting with my business because I wanted to reduce food waste, but I wasn't sure how to make the process work. So when Brian approached me about the program, I was thrilled. It has been so seamless working with MAFPG," Laura shared.

"Volunteers come twice a week to pick up full compost buckets, then return them after the compost is delivered to Forward Garden, which is just 2 miles away," Laura continued. "I cannot say enough good things about the program and how amazing the volunteers have been. I am so pleased to be minimizing food waste. It's been great for us!"

Currently, the compost piles rotate between empty field areas at the back of the property and near the base of the barn, depending on the season. The long-term goal is to install an aerated multi-bin composting system (see page 9 for location details). Aerated composting systems convert raw organic residuals into stable compost in roughly 60 days, yielding a nutrient-rich product that is effectively free of pathogens, parasites and weed seeds.



**(LEFT) Aerated Compost Bay
Illustration Courtesy of O2
Compost Systems**

**(MIDDLE) Full buckets of compost are loaded into a
volunteer's vehicle for delivery to Forward Garden.**



**(RIGHT) Laura Behrends, Owner of BeneBlends Smoothie
and Juice Bar in Madison, is grateful for composting services.**

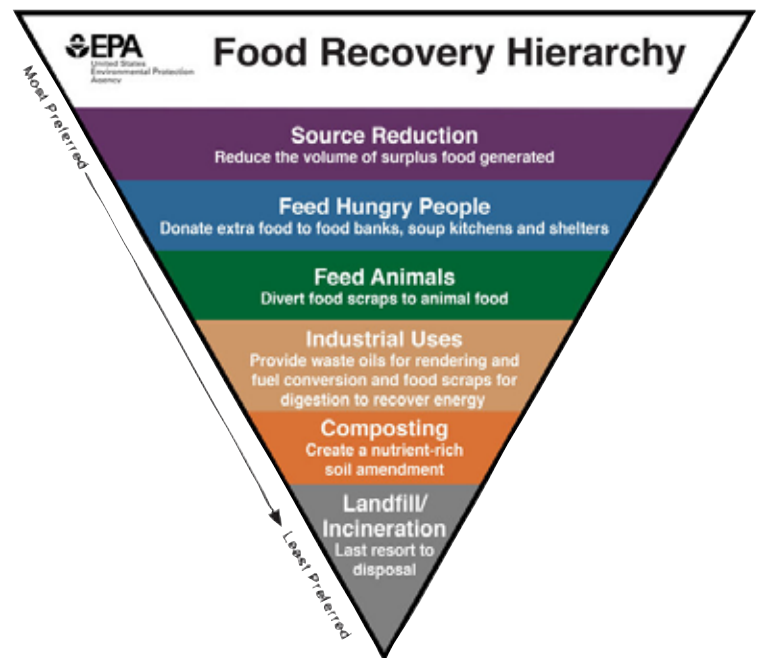


The new composting system will allow MAFPG to improve soil health by adding organic matter and nutrients back into the soil. Additionally, the new composting system will help mitigate impacts on surface and groundwater resources, significantly reduce vectors and pests (i.e., flies, birds, rodents, and larger wildlife) and eliminate offensive odors.

Why is composting so important to MAFPG? Under the direction of UW-Madison Soil Science Professor Nick Balster, the soil at Forward Garden was formally studied by several students involved in a capstone project. One of their many helpful recommendations was to use compost to improve the soil health at Forward Garden.

Composting provides several benefits. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, those benefits include:

- Improves the structure and health of the soil by adding organic matter.
- Helps the soil retain moisture and nutrients.
- Attracts beneficial organisms to the soil and reduces the need for pesticides and fertilizers.
- Reduces the potential for soil erosion.
- Sequesters carbon in the soil.
- Builds resilience to climate change impacts.



Working together with local businesses has additional benefits. Food scraps are kept out of landfills, and the enriched soil enables MAFPG to continue the mission to grow fresh, high-quality produce for our community. We're looking forward to continuing to explore collaboration opportunities with Green Box Compost, Purple Cow Organics, and others who are deeply committed to diverting food scraps from our landfill while simultaneously creating healthier soil that leads to healthier plants and higher produce yields. ■



2nd Annual Harvest Celebration

A wonderful night of fundraising at the farm

The 2nd Annual Harvest Celebration on September 23, 2023, was an amazing night that was made possible by the countless hours of hard work of our volunteers and sponsors.

Guests enjoyed dinner, drinks, dessert, live music and a chance to bid on over 70 silent auction items. This event was held at beautiful Forward Garden and partnered exclusively with local businesses.

With your help, we were able to raise over \$24,000 to help provide fresh, culturally relevant produce to create nutrition security in our community.

This event is a superb example of MAFPG's mission to maintain a strong connection with community members, businesses, and organizations as well as the success that such partnerships bring!



Our Mission

Striving to help our neighbors by providing local food pantries with first-choice, fresh, nutritious, and culturally relevant produce.

Our Members

Community members just like you along with businesses and organizations engaged in the local food system make MAFPG possible.



Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens
P.O. Box 5116
Madison, WI 53705
www.foodpantrygardens.org





MADISON AREA
FOOD PANTRY GARDENS
WE PLANT. WE GROW. WE FEED.

