



# FREDERICK FOOD SECURITY NETWORK

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



*"Bringing fresh produce to Frederick's low-access areas with environmentally responsible urban agriculture."*



<http://hood.edu/FFSN>



@FrederickFood



@FFSNhood



# MESSAGE FROM THE FFSN PROGRAM MANAGER

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As I reflect on everything that has happened this past year, four words come to mind, sadness, excitement, humbling and bizarre! Sadness, because Connie Ray, our first program manager, left the position to relocate with her family in March after she had worked with us for almost 3 years. Excitement, because we applied for grants, many of them being awarded to us which allowed us to continue working in our community. Humbling, because I see how much still needs to be done. But most of all, this has been a bizarre year! Working and living during a pandemic is a once in a lifetime experience (I hope) which came with a lot of uncertainty. All of our network partners rallied together and made this year an exceptional one, as you will see in the following pages. The Frederick Community is a shining star in all of this, showing compassion, fortitude and determination. We all knuckled down and made this year count. We made sure we did our best to slow the spread of food insecurity, to help with food access when it was needed most, and support our network partners as best we could.

I have been so lucky to have acted as the Interim Manager for this past year and couldn't have asked for better partners, community members, and students that I have worked with. I am very proud to see the support from the student body at Hood College for this program. The dedication and grit that I have seen in all the students who have worked for the FFSN, in the garden fields, greenhouses, and offices, gives me that warm fuzzy feeling, that the next generation of leaders are among us and they will do great things!

I know that as we move into 2021, the experiences we have been through have made us stronger, and unless some other freak disaster strikes, we will be back on track to break our records for pounds of produce grown and distributed and hours of volunteer work. Together, we can continue to work toward improving food access and food insecurity in Frederick City.

*Claire Hudson*

Interim Program Manager

# MESSAGE FROM THE GREENHOUSE MANAGER

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The 2020 season began as it has for the past two years, starting hundreds of tiny seedlings and planning with our partner garden coordinators. In March, things changed rapidly. Shutdowns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic required us to find new ways to operate and distribute food.

Our small but incredibly dedicated group of students and volunteers ensured that our seedlings were tended to and that our partner gardens were planted on time.

One of our greatest achievements was our Annual Spring Plant Sale which far exceeded any of our expectations. As people were spending more time at home that meant they were able to plant in their gardens, and we were able to meet the demand for vegetable starts as local nurseries were selling out fast.

As harvest time approached, our partner gardens required more attention than usual due to office closures. We still managed to harvest and distribute thousand of pounds of freshly grown produce. The community need seen during the Thanksgiving holiday required a different approach. Food donations collected from our friends, neighbors and kind strangers provided meals for over 50 local families.

I am so very proud to be a part of this group. I am inspired by the leadership, students and volunteers who stood by in unconventional conditions to help local families in need. I am looking forward to seeing us grow in 2021, and what ever comes afterwards. We may be small, but our impact this year has been immeasurable.

*Jennifer Carpenter*

# PARTNERSHIPS

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## Boys and Girls Club of Frederick County

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The FFSN joined forces with the Boys and Girls Club of Frederick in 2018 when they helped build two Vegetable Rain Gardens and installed a pollinator garden at their Burck St. location. Since 2019, children attending the BGC after-school and summer programs have been participating in planting and maintaining the vegetable gardens. Plans are in the works for an expansion in 2021.

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## The Frederick News-Post

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The Frederick News-post garden has been operating for a decade, growing to now 135 food plots, pollinator plots, and several beehives. This garden joined the FFSN in 2019 for help with produce distribution and plot maintenance, which has been a challenge for them over the years.



# PARTNERSHIPS

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## **The Islamic Society of Frederick County**

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The Islamic Society of Frederick County joined the Frederick Food Security Network in 2018. The Islamic Society assists children in gardening and distributes produce through their food pantry as well as through FFSN distribution partners. In 2019, the FFSN helped erect eight traditional raised garden beds, three Vegetable Rain Gardens, and a pollinator garden.

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## **The Religious Coalition for Emergency Human Needs**

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The Religious Coalition operates emergency and family shelters and offers homelessness prevention services. As of 2020, the FFSN has helped install an additional 11 garden beds, an herb spiral, and beehives. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the offices were closed making this particularly challenging in finding enough volunteers to help in the garden.



# PARTNERSHIPS

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## **Hood College/ Frederick Health**

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Hood College and Frederick Health Hospital joined forces in 2017 to turn an unused lot on Hood's campus into an urban garden. In 2018, they joined the Frederick Food Security Network. The FFSN has supported the Resource Garden with student workers, produce distribution assistance, and construction of additional beds and most recently, a greenhouse.

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## **Scott Key Center**

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Frederick County-owned Scott Key Center granted the FFSN use of two greenhouses in 2019 to aid in year-round growing. The Network is now able to provide produce for more months of the year than the traditional outdoor growing season. Currently, the Network utilizes its AmeriCorps interns and one hired part-time student to maintain the greenhouses. So far it has had great success in producing vegetables in winter.



# PARTNERSHIPS

## Distributors

Normally, (pre-COVID) the Frederick Food Security Network partners with a number of community organizations to efficiently distribute produce to low-income Frederick residents. This year, many of our distribution sites were under lockdown and their offices closed. However, we were fortunate to maintain our regular distribution model with two organizations. Each Wednesday throughout the growing season, Chris Bard and Jordan Heerbrandt (pictured) collected produce from the cold storage room at Hood College. We are grateful for their partnership in the important work of distributing the produce to our community in a timely manner.

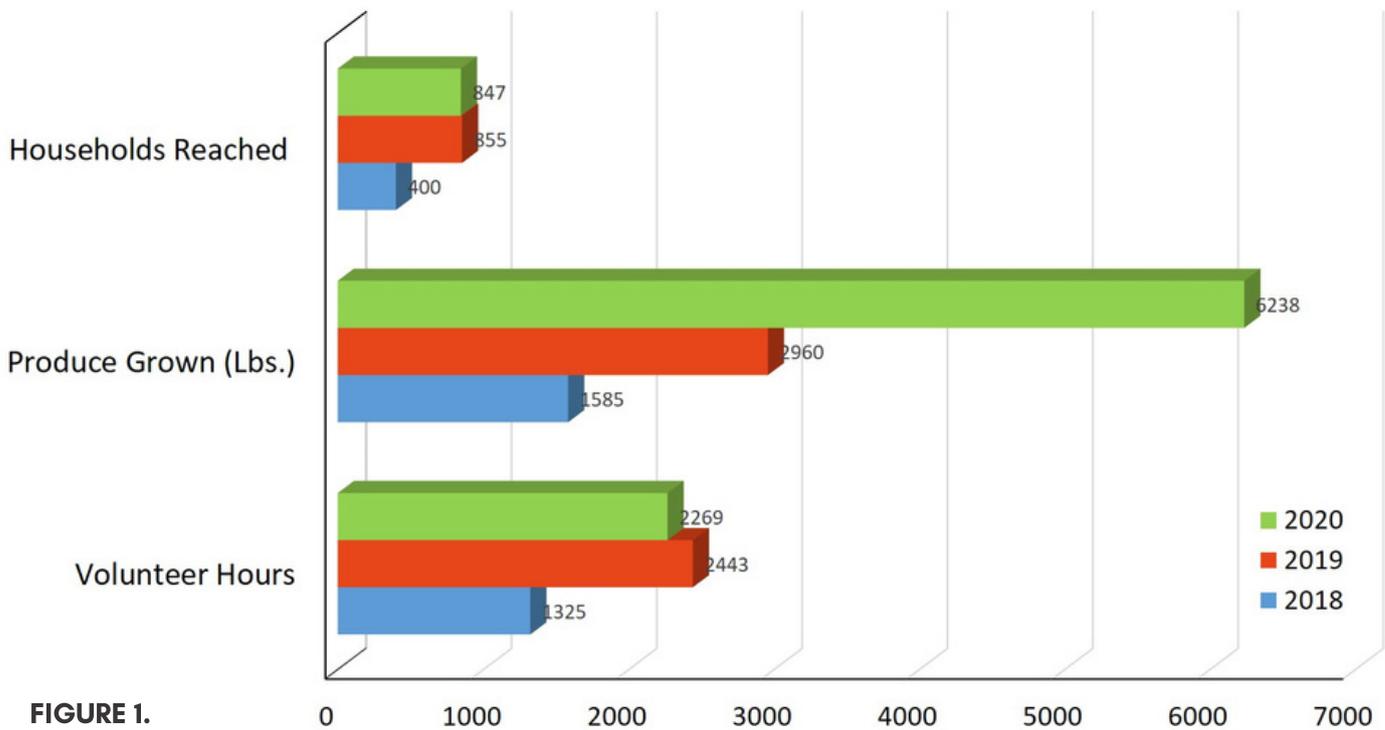
Other garden partners, such as the Boys and Girls Club, and Islamic Society of Frederick were able to distribute produce from their gardens directly to their members.

*In 2020, we partnered with the following organizations to distribute produce:*

- 1) The Housing Authority of Frederick (Lucus Village)**
- 2) Frederick Community Action Agency**



# PROGRAM TRENDS



**FIGURE 1.**

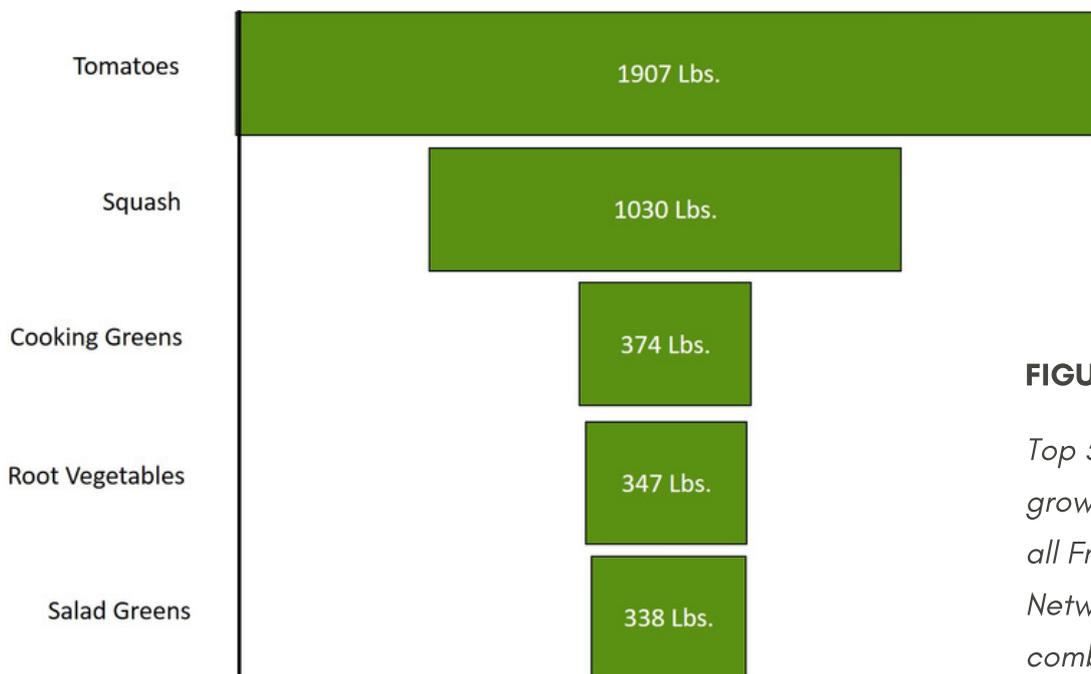
*Growth in volunteer hours, produce grown, and households reached over the last 3 years*

2020 was a particularly difficult year. Despite that, the Network was able to grow more than double what we grew in 2019! Our gardens produced over 3 tons (6238 Lbs.) of produce and even during a pandemic, we found a way to get it to where it was needed most.

The number of households receiving produce remained similar to those in 2019. This is partly due to working with fewer distribution partners as a result of the restrictions placed on us all during the pandemic. We also saw a slight dip in the number of volunteer hours logged, which is directly related to the pandemic cobbling everyone's efforts.



# PRODUCTION



**TOTAL:  
6,238 LBS.**

**FIGURE 2.**

*Top 5 produce varieties grown in 2020 by pound from all Frederick Food Security Network garden partners' combined totals*

In total, we grew and distributed 65 different varieties (almost double from 2019) of vegetables, fruits, and herbs. Figure 2, highlights the top 5 categories of vegetables grown by weight.

2020 produced a bumper crop of tomatoes weighing in at 1,907 Lbs. followed by a wonderful variety of squash which included summer, butternut, acorn, zucchini, and pumpkins.

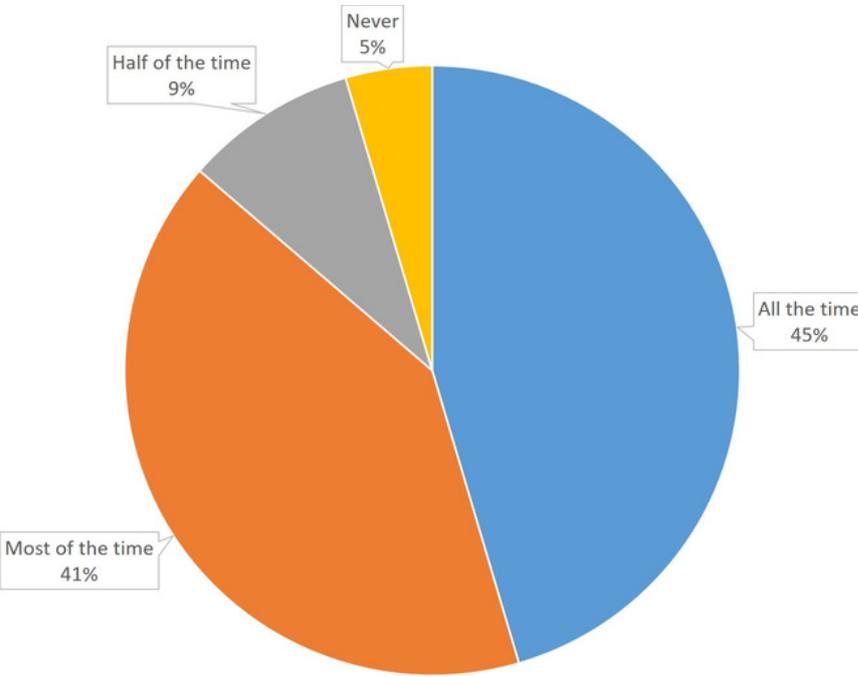
Cooking greens include vegetables like collards, kale and Asian greens.

Root vegetables include radish, carrots, turnips, and beets. Finally, salad greens include lettuce, spinach, and mustard greens.



# SURVEY RESULTS

We surveyed our produce recipients to get an understanding of our impact and input for future changes and improvements. Due to the pandemic, this year our survey responses were much lower (n=22) compared to 2019 (n=84).



**FIGURE 3.**

When asked if they **had a reliable way of getting to a grocery store when they need to**, many do not. We have identified 6 food deserts in Frederick City, these data suggest that many people still have difficulty getting to a grocery store to purchase food.

### Self-reported benefits of receiving produce

- 20%** reported a reduced financial strain of food shopping
- 18%** reported eating more vegetables than they otherwise would have
- 13%** reported trying new vegetables or fruits
- 10%** reported an increased sense of community

*Other reported benefits included improved mood, trying new recipes, and more nights spent cooking at home.*

## Suggestions for Next Year

We asked recipients what we can do better in 2021. Here's what they said and what we plan to do about it.

### Access to purchase organic produce

73% of the recipients would like an option to purchase organic produce in addition to receiving it for free

### Volunteer opportunities

86% of recipients have expressed some interest in volunteering in the Network gardens

### Communication about where/when produce is available

Continue posting on social media & working with partners to better advertise

### Nutrition and health information

Add nutrition and health information to our current recipe sheets & expand the library to include more!

# SURVEY RESULTS

How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted our community?

## Self-reported impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

**28%** reported money was spent on rent and other expenses rather than fresh produce

**16%** reported missing 1 or more meals per day during lockdown

**14%** reported they became food insecure

**8%** reported losing their jobs or becoming furloughed as a result of the pandemic

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be felt for many months, if not years.

In a 2017 analysis, Hood College identified 6 food deserts in the City of Frederick. Nationally, food deserts disproportionately affect low-income and Black and Hispanic populations. Frederick City shows the same trends according to the latest ALICE report. Data is still emerging, but we fear that the expanse and number of food deserts in Frederick City will temporarily, if not permanently increase as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Troublingly, food insecurity is associated with obesity, hypertension, heart disease, depression, cancer, and other chronic health problems. Also, on average, low-income households have been shown to consume fewer fruits and vegetables when compared to middle and higher-income populations, exacerbating health disparities.

We have seen from our community that the need for food access is more important now. The Network plans to continue to expand to meet that need.



# WHO RECEIVES PRODUCE?

In 2020, we distributed produce to approximately 847 low-income Frederick households. Here is some information from a small sample of people who received produce based on recipient surveys (n=22). This information reflects the survey respondent only and not the total number of households who received produce.

**88%**

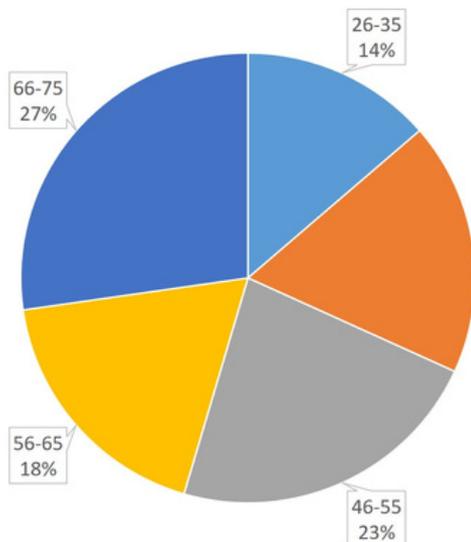
have children in their household.

**18%**

report that they NEVER can afford the food their family needs without cutting back on other expenses



Age



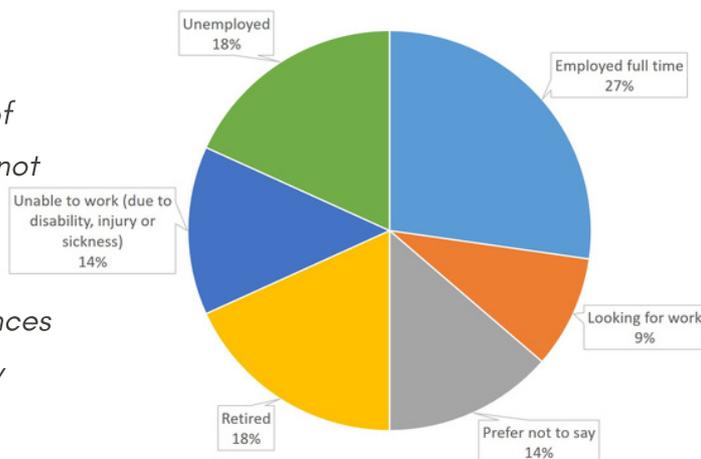
**FIGURE 4.**

*Distribution of ages of survey respondents, not reflective of other household members; we are reaching a wide variety of ages*

**FIGURE 5.**

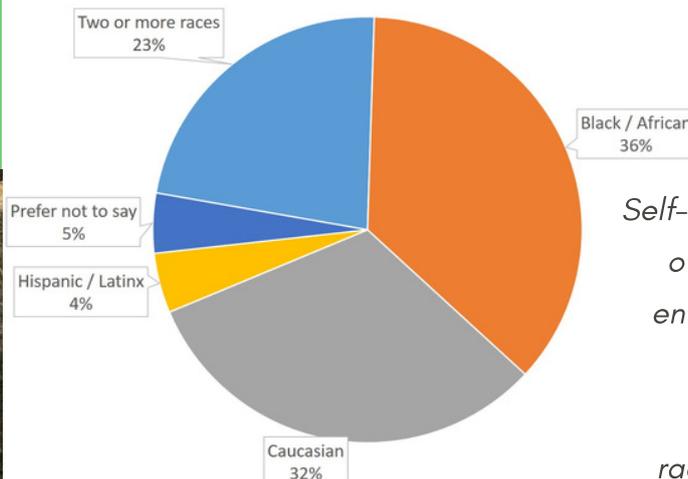
Self Reported Employment Status

*Self-reported employment status of survey respondents, not reflective of entire household; clearly a variety of circumstances for those reached by FFSN*



**FIGURE 6.**

*Self-reported race/ethnicity of survey respondent, not entire household; primarily Black and Caucasian recipients but multiple races/ethnicities reached*



# PRODUCE RECIPIENT ANECDOTES

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"The produce has helped tremendously. Produce is really expensive and I am trying to stay healthy. I share meals or items with others. The people here are fantastic and patient. Thank you to the wonderful staff and volunteers."



"[produce] helped with the financial burden in this very difficult year."



"My family is able to eat more produce: it allows me to buy other foods."

"Helped my children to eat better"



"[It] has been a great blessing for me throughout COVID-19. Jordan, the lady who delivered the vegetables, she is a blessing."

"Fresh is better nutritionally and soulfully"



# WHAT'S NEW



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FOOD FOREST  
INSTALLED



1

GREENHOUSE BUILT



1

FOOD DRIVE



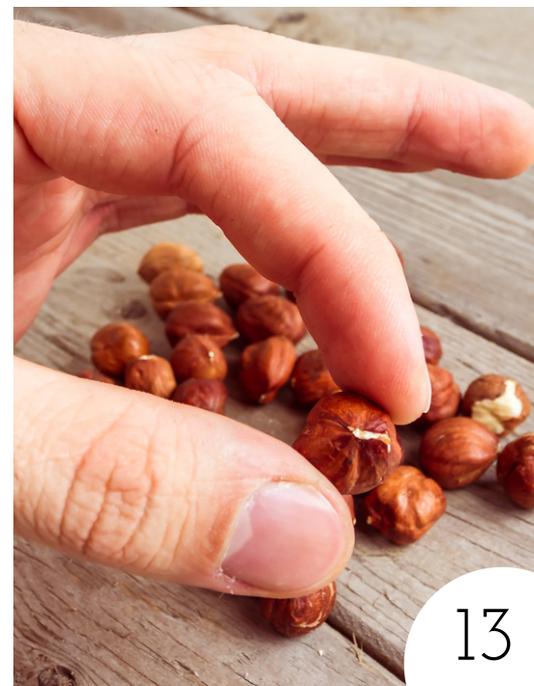
1

PAVILION BUILT



1

PANDEMIC



# EVENTS

## Virtual Garden Kick-Off

The beginning of our growing season looked very different to past years. We couldn't celebrate in person in our usual way with a picnic and spring planting activities so instead we launched our growing season virtually. We held an Instagram "plant with us" campaign where participants posted themselves planting in their gardens and participants were entered into a draw to receive a prize of donated soaps from Single Barrel Soaps. We held our annual Plant Sale during our virtual kick-off, which got folks out to buy their plants and get excited about growing.

The season kick off was a success, albeit very different!



**Frederick Food Security Network**  
• VIRTUAL KICK-OFF EVENT •  
MAY 11-15

**Plant Sale at Scott Key Center-**  
11050 Rocky Spring Rd., Frederick, MD 21703

- Preorders
- Purchases

**Virtual Tours of our Gardens-**

- Video tours of our gardens posted throughout the week on our social media accounts

**"Plant with Us" Social Media Competition-**

- Send us a home video of you gardening to be featured on our Instagram and win special prizes!

<http://food.edu/FFSN> [@frederickfood](https://www.instagram.com/frederickfood) [f /ffsnhood](https://www.facebook.com/ffsnhood)



THE FREDERICK FOOD SECURITY NETWORK'S

## Virtual kick-off has commenced!

Stay tuned all week long for garden site tours, plant sale updates, viewer-submitted videos, competition winners, and more!



PRODUCE GOAL  
3,000



## Food Forest Installation

To celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day (April 22) in partnership with the Islamic Society of Frederick and SilvoCulture, volunteers installed over 30 fruit and nut trees on the grounds of the Islamic Society of Frederick. The perennial fruit and nut trees will provide the community with food for years to come. We are looking forward to the first harvest celebration.

# EVENTS

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## Annual Plant Sale

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Our plant sale this year was very successful! Given the situation, we had to make changes to how we got the plants in peoples hands. We had a drive up area where people could pick up their pre-orders.

We raised \$4,888 from the sale, selling over 950 vegetable and flower seedlings.

## Round Table Meetings

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The Frederick Food Security Network hosted numerous roundtables throughout 2020. Most of our meetings were on Zoom.

On May 26, Rick Hood from Summer Creek farm offered our Network members a virtual training on organic pest management. This valuable training provided our garden coordinators with some great tips on how to deal with various infestations of aphids, slugs, stink bugs and more.



# EVENTS

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## Alternative Spring Break

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On March 10 and 11 this year we had a great group of students and staff who volunteered their time over spring break. The group helped to prepare garden beds at the Religious Coalition for Emergency Human Needs and the Islamic Society of Frederick.

Students and staff pulled weeds, mulched, painted signs and turned compost.

## Gaia Greenhouse and Pavilion

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The construction of the timber frame greenhouse (affectionately called Gaia), picnic tables, pavilion and signage were all completed in the spring.

The space allows for a comfortable location for students and staff who are sorting produce for distribution.

Our new greenhouse is also a beautiful space to grow our winter crops and extend our growing season.



# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

## Grants awarded in 2020:

- Helen J. Serini foundation
- Ausherman Family Foundation
- Delaplaine Foundation
- Capital Group
- AmeriCorps

## Continuing grants:

- Ausherman Family Foundation

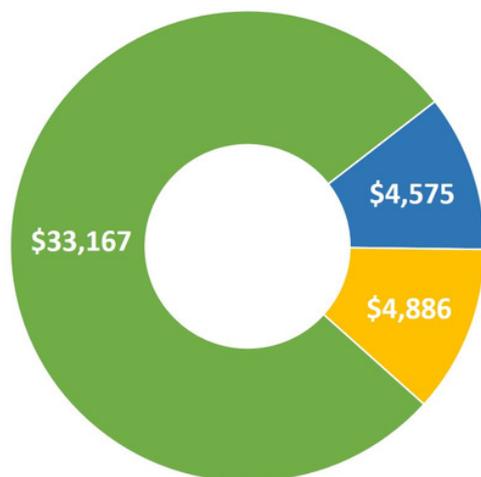
## Gifts:

- Common Market
- Frederick Steeple Chasers Running Club
- Ms. Connie Ray
- Mr. David Muns
- Mr. & Mrs. Ryan
- Arelene Harchut
- Kelly Landis
- Alexis Grant

## Funds were spent on:

- Supplies for growing vegetables such as Soil, seeds, fertilizer, gardening tools, mulch, hoses, pots, labels and other consumables
- Cold storage supplies such as compostable bags, rubber bands and other consumables
- Materials to maintain the greenhouses such as hose trolleys, timers and other consumables
- Student worker stipends
- Program manager salary & benefits

Funds raised in 2020



■ Grants ■ Donations ■ Fundraising



# STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Our shining stars at the Network are our students!

Throughout 2020 we were able to employ 8 students on a part-time basis. Each of them worked for varying lengths of time but all put their hearts into the work.

While working for the network, students were helping garden coordinators get their vegetables planted and harvested. Students helped maintain the greenhouses which allowed us to extend our growing season and prepare for our annual plant sale.

We are very lucky to have a core group of 4 students who have worked with the Network, some of them for multiple years!

Three students volunteered their time in the gardens for a share of the produce. During the beginning of the lockdown our international students were stranded, without the ability to work and earn an income. The produce they received in return for their help in the gardens allowed them to create some wonderful dishes too!



# IN THE NEWS

"CUUUUUT!" -- That's what we all wanted to say to the year 2020! But the film kept rolling, and our network made quite a few appearances in the news this past year.

First, on Earth Day 2020 (April 22), our network was featured on the local WDMV news station spotlighting the "food forest" our network established at The Islamic Society of Frederick, one of our network's gardening partners. The food forest features more than 30 trees and shrubs that include black walnut trees, currant bushes and paw paw trees to name a few.

Our network was then featured again on the WDMV on June 11, this time focusing on the increased demand our network had from the Frederick community as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, an increase in Frederick residents became food insecure as a result of the pandemic, and our network took a toll trying to provide an increased amount of produce to those in need.

Lastly, as our network was becoming increasingly in-demand by the Frederick community, the Delaplaine Foundation Inc. stepped in to donate \$7,500 to our network (as a Covid-19 emergency relief fund), which our network used to employ two more garden workers. This increase in work-force allowed our network to keep up with the increase in demand our network has seen this pandemic. The Frederick News-Post wrote an article about our Delaplaine grant on June 26.

## Frederick Food Security Network awarded grant

For The Frederick  
News-Post Jun 26, 2020

f t e b

Delaplaine Foundation Inc., has awarded Hood College's Frederick Food Security Network \$7,500 in COVID-19 emergency funds to hire two agricultural assistants during the peak of the growing season for 10 weeks. These hires will allow the FFSN to provide fresh produce to the people who need it most.

"This generous donation from Delaplaine Foundation Inc., will allow us to hire two students to help in our five community gardens and three greenhouses," said Claire Hudson, interim FFSN program manager. "This donation couldn't have come at a better time. It will allow us to keep our operations going during this busy time, and it will give our students, who have either lost their jobs or internships



**SPIKE IN COMMUNITY GARDEN NETWORK DEMAND  
FREDERICK, MD**

## BREAKING NEWS



**Frederick Food Security Network plants more than 30 "edible landscape all-stars"**



# PHOTOS



# PHOTOS





## FREDERICK FOOD SECURITY NETWORK

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The Frederick Food Security Network (FFSN) is a community gardening program based out of the Hood College Center for Coastal and Watershed Studies. We are establishing a network of community gardens in Frederick, MD in order to improve food security for low-income residents of low-access areas, reduce local water pollution by diverting rooftop runoff for use as irrigation, and promote better eating habits in the Frederick community.

You can learn more and follow along with our efforts at the following sites:



[hood.edu/ffsn](http://hood.edu/ffsn)



[@FrederickFood](https://www.instagram.com/FrederickFood)



[@FFSNhood](https://www.facebook.com/FFSNhood)