



SCHOOLYARD  
**ROOTS**

Growing gardens. Growing minds.



**Annual  
Report**

—  
2022

# A Letter from Our Team



## Dear Friends,

In 2012, we taught our very first garden lesson at University Place Elementary school. Ten years later, our Gardens 2 Schools program has grown incredibly! We've shared our gardens with tens of thousands of students, hundreds of classroom teachers, and an **incalculable** number of bees, bugs, and butterflies! While the past decade has seen changes to our personnel, our goals, and even our name, we've remained committed to the same mission: to grow our **community** through food and education.

When we reflect back upon 2022, so much stands out! We taught **4,450 students** over the course of **1,505 garden lessons**. We harvested over 350 lbs of produce, including sugar snap peas, strawberries, sweet potatoes, and collard greens. We used much of that produce to make garden veggie dip, green smoothies, sweet potato hash, and braised greens with our students. On one particularly momentous day in September we found almost every life cycle stage of gulf fritillary butterflies at the Tuscaloosa Magnet School, including caterpillars, chrysalises, and butterflies!

We had some really amazing moments in 2022 and many favorite events. We participated in Tuscaloosa City Schools's **Summer Learning Program** and loved the opportunity to experience a new season in the garden, which was overflowing with **blackberries, carrots, and flowers**. In April, we partnered with the University of Alabama's Nutritional Anthropology Department to host a Family Food Event at Woodland Forrest Elementary. Students and



their families joined us on a beautiful Saturday morning to learn some garden-inspired recipes. We had a wonderful time **connecting over food** and cooking. Our time together deepened the students' engagement in noticeable ways the next time they came outside with their classes!

2022 was a year of change and growth for our organization. At the beginning of the year, we introduced a **new Garden Educator**, Leah Stern. During the summer, we were joined by our **new Program Director**, Sandie Champion, who has nearly three decades of teaching experience in TCS, where she loved bringing her 4th grade students to the Verner garden to work with Schoolyard Roots. These exciting additions to our staff have made us an **even stronger organization** and will help us to realize our vision for our programming. After a decade of teaching, we've learned much and are ready to apply our knowledge to creating the best programming we can for the next decade. We have much to look forward to in the years to come, but we're most excited to witness again and again that sight we **truly love**: students in our gardens with **dirt on their hands, smiles on their faces, and wonder in their eyes.**



**Rooted in gratitude,**

*The SYR Team*



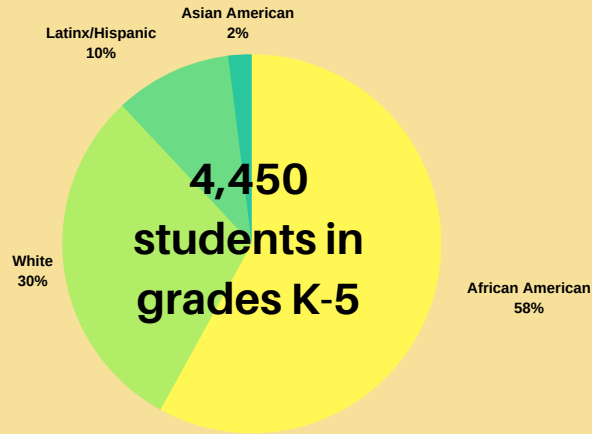
## What We Do



Schoolyard Roots cultivates curiosity and connections through hands-on learning gardens. We engage communities with food and nature to inspire, delight, and bring classroom concepts to life.



# Who We Serve

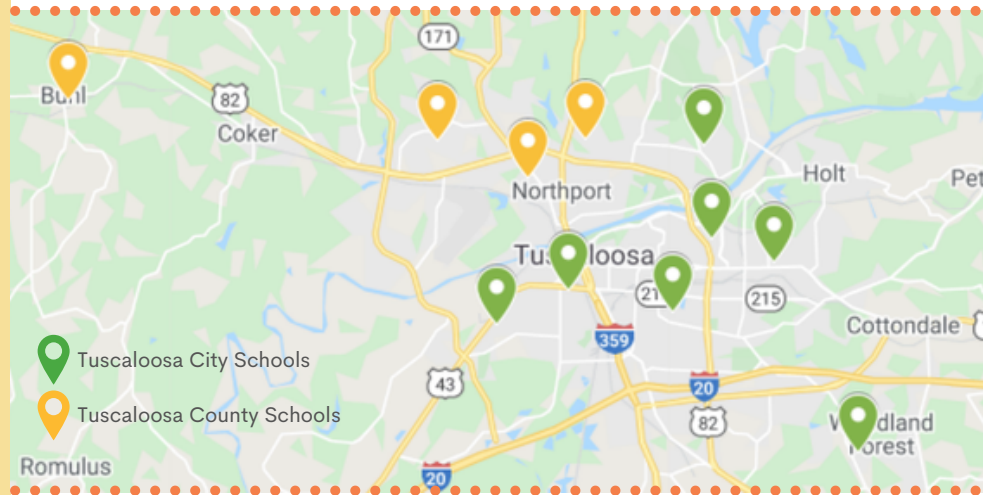


- 72% of our students attend Title 1 schools.
- 49% are eligible for Free & Reduced Lunch.
- 18% of our students are learning with disabilities.
- 9% of our students are English Language Learners.

# Our Schools



We proudly partner with eleven Tuscaloosa-area elementary schools across both city and county districts.



Buhl Elementary – Central Elementary – Crestmont Elementary  
Faucett-Vestavia Elementary – Flatwoods Elementary  
Oakdale Elementary – Tuscaloosa Magnet School-Elementary  
Woodland Forrest Elementary – University Place Elementary  
The Alberta School of Performing Arts – Verner Elementary

# Meet Our Team!



**Nicole Gelb Dugat,**  
**Executive Director**  
nicole@schoolyardroots.org

*"I love seeing people from all over the Tuscaloosa community come together to cultivate joyful, meaningful garden experiences for our students!"*



**Tom Rathe, Garden Educator**  
Faucett-Vestavia Elementary, Woodland Forrest Elementary, Central Elementary, Oakdale Elementary  
tom@schoolyardroots.org

*"I love seeing our students engage with nature and develop curiosity about everything that lives in the garden! Our school gardens are sources of excitement for our students and points of pride for our partner schools, and I'm proud to be a part of it!"*



**Wells Addington,**  
**Development Coordinator**  
wells@schoolyardroots.org

*"I love using my skills to help keep gardens growing and students learning! I love our mission and it feels great to do good!"*



**Natalie Wulf, Lead Garden Educator**  
Buhl Elementary, Tuscaloosa Magnet Schools - Elementary, Verner Elementary, Flatwoods Elementary  
natalie@schoolyardroots.org

*"I love sharing the abundance of nature with our students! I love that no matter the season, there's something new to learn and joyful experiences awaiting us."*



**Leah Stern, Garden Educator**  
University Place Elementary, The Alberta School of Performing Arts, Crestmont Elementary  
leah@schoolyardroots.org

*"I love being able to watch our students find joy and excitement in our gardens through discovery and exploration!"*



**Kelly Allen,**  
**Operations Manager**  
kelly@schoolyardroots.org

*"I love hearing the educators' stories every day! I love hearing how much fun they and the students have in the gardens; it makes my work incredibly fulfilling!"*



**Anne Wynn,  
Program Assistant**

*"I love seeing kids  
light up when they  
discover the garden!"*



**Cy Salvant,  
UA Work Study  
Student**

*"I love seeing the impact  
this has on the local  
community and being able  
to pay it forward and give  
back!"*



**Lauryn Elliott,  
UA Work Study  
Student**

*"I love when the kids  
see their seeds start  
to sprout and give!"*

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW PROGRAM DIRECTOR!



**Sandie Champion,  
Program Director**  
[sandie@schoolyardroots.org](mailto:sandie@schoolyardroots.org)



*"I love working with an amazingly  
dedicated and talented staff who are  
excited when the students get dirty,  
ask questions and make new  
discoveries. Realizing that a small  
staff impacts over 4,000 students a  
year with an amazing outdoor  
experience is something I truly love!"*

Sandie joined our team in August 2022 and we are so happy to have her. She is a veteran Tuscaloosa City Schools teacher with 29 years of classroom experience and a passion for outdoor classroom learning. She is looking forward to building relationships with our partner schools.

**Welcome Sandie!**



# Thank You to Our 2022 Board of Directors!



Kim Ingram,  
2022 Board President



Karen Bownes



Linda Carroll



Que Chandler



Lindsey Deal,  
2022 President Elect



Evans Fitts



Melissa Kent



Ben LaPish



Michael Martone



Nicole Montalto



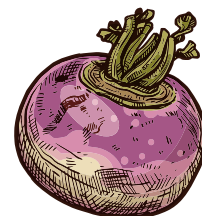
Rev. Andy Spaulding



Andre Taylor



Susan Woods





"I love how **enthusiastic** my son gets during garden lessons and the **hands-on learning** that comes with them! Through Schoolyard Roots garden lessons, our children get to witness **firsthand** the things that happen right outside our doors, which they may only read about otherwise."

-Lindsey Deal,  
2023 Board President & Parent





# Why School Gardens?

Last year we surveyed 89 partner school teachers. We found...



**100%** said that our program makes a positive impact on students!



**96%** said that students improved their connection to the natural world!



**93%** said that students are more willing to try new fruits & vegetables!



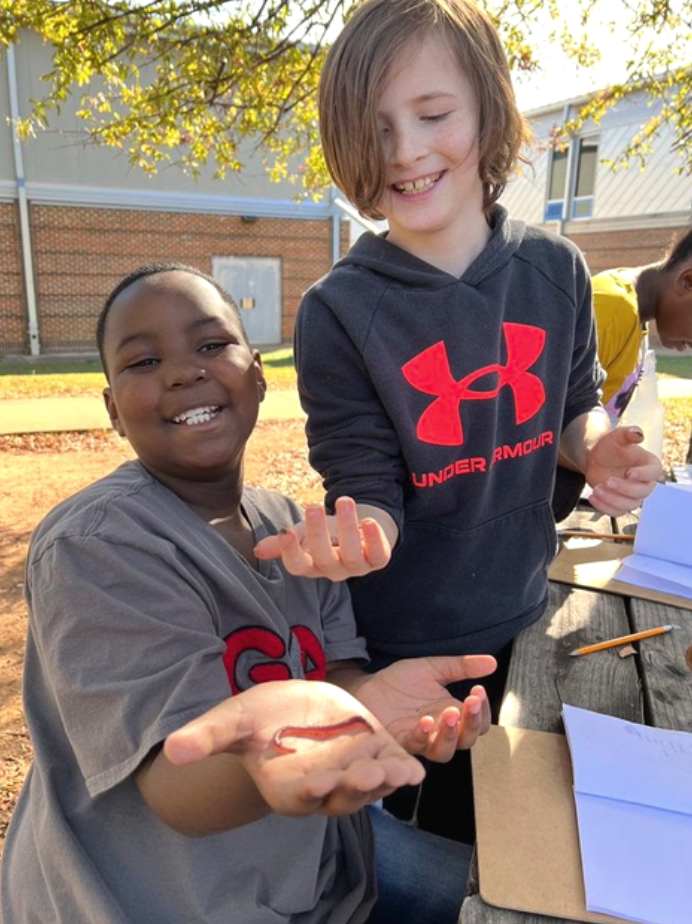
**89%** said our program was a highlight of their job!



"I think the most positive impact has been my students' **love for nature** and their respect for it. They are getting much better at recognizing the importance of **taking care of our Earth** and to leave plants, animals, and insects alone. They are much quicker to just **observe** things now!"

-Kelly Feith, 1st Grade Teacher, Woodland Forrest Elementary

# Hear From Our Principals



Our partner school principals showed unanimous support for our work in 2022! **100%** of them said that our programming:



Helped meet the academic goals of their school.



Helped meet the behavioral and cultural goals of their school.



Improved students and teachers sense of pride for their school.



Improved students enthusiasm for learning.



Improved students ability to make classroom connections to the real world.



"My students **LOVED** digging in the soil to find sweet potatoes. They enjoyed all of the insect life they found along the way."

-Jordan Smith Scott,  
4th Grade Teacher,  
Buhl Elementary



# Our Garden Superheroes

Thank you to our Garden Superheroes  
for helping us grow in 2022!



Alabama Department of  
Agriculture and Industries

Alpha Kappa Alpha

Amy Martone

Amy Nyland

Andrea Glenn

Black Gold Compost Co.

BlueCross BlueShield of Alabama &

The Caring Foundation

Carol Hoffman

Cecilia Wulf

Charles Edwards

Chris & Adrienne McGee

Chuck & Sue Rowe

City of Tuscaloosa

Claire Friday

Craig Worley

Cynthia Maloney

Cynthia Gelb

Debbie Bond

Drs. April & Ralph Lane

Elizabeth Downs

Elliott Smith

Erin Miller

Eva McPherson

Fleta Edwards

Fran Oneal

Jessica Reed

John & Sage Hickman

John Fitts

John Koster

Jonathan Sapp

Karen Burgess

Kathryn Bettis

Lamar Advertising

Lance Simpson

Leah Nielsen

Leslie Nydick

Liza White

Lynn & Mike Allen

Lynne Adrian

Madeleine Hill

Marian Mancini

Mercedes-Benz

Michelle Woodward

Mildred Jackson

Nick's Kids Foundation

Noah Bly

Northport Lowe's

Pat & William Patton

Randall Brown

Reese Phifer, Jr. Memorial Foundation

Robert Reynolds

SEG Gives Foundation  
Sprouts Foundation  
Susan Whitt  
Susie Smith  
The Community Foundation  
of West Alabama  
The Daniel Foundation  
The Miller & Ellinger Families  
The Malone Family Foundation  
The University of Alabama  
Tombigbee RC&D Council  
Tree House Farm & Nursery  
Tuscaloosa City Schools  
Tuscaloosa County School System  
Tuscaloosa Public Library  
Tuscaloosa's OnePlace  
UA Center for Community-Based  
Partnerships  
UA Center for Service and Leadership  
UA Department of Anthropology  
UA Honors College  
Honors Action Program  
UA Work Study Program

UNFI Foundation  
US Department of Agriculture  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
of Tuscaloosa  
Virginia McPhearson  
Willie King

Thank you for  
being a part of  
the SYR  
community!



# Our Annual Fundraiser

SCHOOLYARD ROOTS PRESENTS

## A MOVEABLE FEAST

A ROVING CELEBRATION OF LOCAL FOOD AND  
FARMS IN SUPPORT OF SCHOOL GARDENS

THANK  
YOU!



SEP 26 - OCT 2

### Our 2022 Farm Partners

Belle Meadow Farm  
Leavelle Farms  
Snow's Bend Farm  
Wallace Homestead

### Our 2022 Restaurant & Brewery Partners

Alcove International Tavern - Black Warrior  
Brewing Co. Chuck's Fish - DOMO  
Druid City Brewing Co. - FIVE Bar - Monarch  
Espresso Bar - River - Southern Ale House -  
Turbo Coffee

TOGETHER, WE RAISED **\$48,000** FOR GARDEN EDUCATION!





## Thank You to Our Sponsors!



Spire Energy – University Medical Center  
The Westervelt Company

Bryant Bank – Carrie Fitts Real Estate – Crimson2Go – Drs. April & Ralph Lane – Emily & Jack Leigh  
Fitts Architects – H.A. Edwards Real Estate, Inc. – Harper Chambers Lumber – Nucor Steel  
Tuscaloosa, Inc. – STM Weather – Thornhill Capital Management  
Alberta Veterinary Clinic – April & Cade Warner – Brion Hardin Construction Co., Inc. – Corder Real Estate  
Echols, Taylor & Associates, P.C. – Ellis Architects – Hudson-Poole Fine Jewelers – Manna Grocery & Deli  
McAbee Construction – MedCenter Urgent Care – Peco Foods, Inc. – PLAIN AIR, a new book by Michael  
Martone – TotalCom – Tree House Farm & Nursery – Tuscaloosa EyeCare – Ward Scott Architecture  
EatMyBeats – Fitts Agency, Inc. – Pritchett-Moore Insurance, Inc. – Way, Ray, Shelton & Co., P.C.

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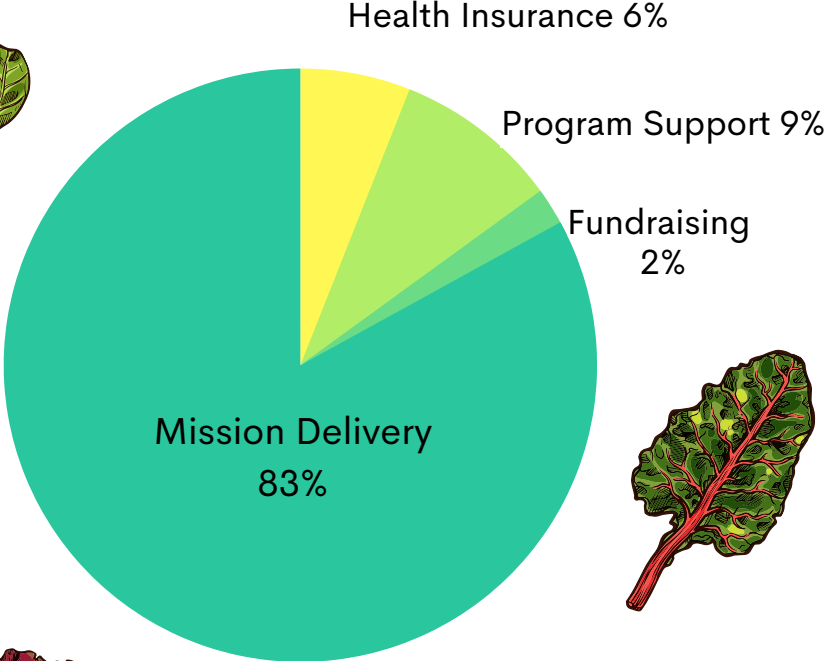
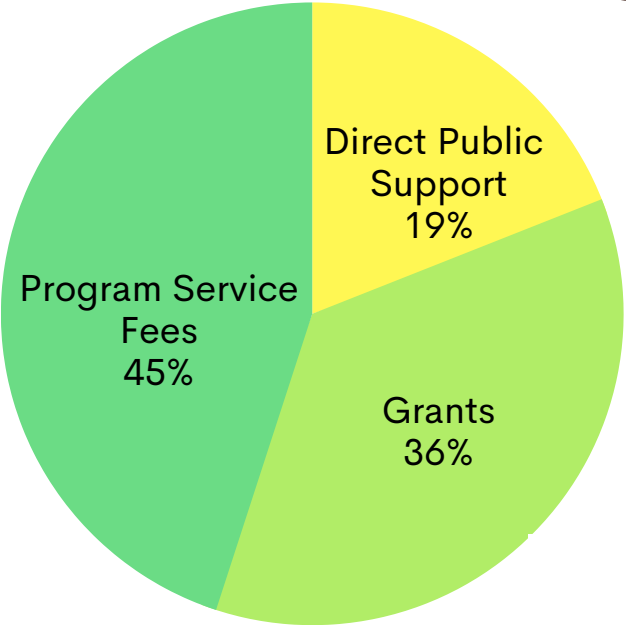
## Thank You to Our Silent Auction & Plant Pull Partners!

A "Gray"ceful Touch Massage – Abadir's – Abi Brewer Fine Art – Alumni Hall Stores – Amanda Klein Co. – Art Like You Love It – Barry's Bees – Belle Meadow Farm – Ben's Bread Tuscaloosa – Big Leaf Pottery – Blessed Bites – Bloom Flower Truck – BoogiBear Candles – Brenna Sweetman – Carly Gelb – Chuck's Fish Delightful Cookies & Treats – DOMO – Druid City Brewing Co. – Elizabeth's Wholegrain Bread – Ernest & Hadley – Fat Squirrel Peppers – Frogson Press – Honeysuckle Home – Hydralive Therapy – Jean's Apothecare – Kiersten Ellis – Kristy L. Andrews – Left Hand Soap Co. – Lifeline Solutions, LLC – Linda Lochman Lorrie Lane Studio – Madeleine's Ice Cream Chocolates – Maurice Clabaugh – Neel Alexander Art – New Creations Salon – Nova La Vega Cakery – Painted Lotus Yoga & Wellness – Poppin' Sisters Popcorn & Treats, LLC – Rachel Wakefield – Scott Honey Farm – Sipsy Wilder – Slumber Camp Tuscaloosa – Snow's Bend Farm – Splinters – Surreal Coffee Roasters – Susan Hamner Art – Sweet Olive Eats – Tea Town – The Deep Roots School of Herbal Medicine – Turbo Coffee Roasters – Tuscaloosa Garden Co. – Watkins Forge LLC – Yellowhammer Candle Co.

Ajian Sushi – Avenue Pub – Brick & Spoon – Central Mesa – Chic-Fil-A – Chipotle – Chuck's Fish – Confetti Interiors – CVS – Effie's Boutique – FIVE Bar – Fruit Lovely – Half Shell Oyster House – Heat Pizza – Hotel Indigo – House Plant Collective – Innisfree Irish Pub – Jalapeños – Jason's Deli  
Jim 'N Nick's – Juice Bar – Krispy Kreme – Loosa Brews – Lucca Boutique – McAlister's Deli – Newk's – Nothing Bundt Cakes  
Oz Music – Pants Store – Part Two – Pause; Boutique – Publix – Session Bar

# Our Finances

**2022 Income**  
**\$357,757.09**



**2022 Expenses**  
**\$356,029.00**



# Will you join us?



With your help, Schoolyard Roots is looking forward to **deepening our roots** in our community and cultivating more **veggies**, more **flowers**, and **more joy** than ever.

Donate today at

**[schoolyardroots.org/donate](https://schoolyardroots.org/donate)**

or reach out to us to find out more about what we've got growing on in 2023!



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[www.schoolyardroots.org](http://www.schoolyardroots.org)

**Follow us to keep up with  
what's growing on!**



@schoolyardroots