



SCHOOLYARD  
**ROOTS**

Growing gardens. Growing minds.

# Annual Report

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2024

# A Letter from Our Executive Director



Dear Friends,

As I reflect on 2024, I am filled with **gratitude** for the unwavering support of our Schoolyard Roots community. **Thanks to you**, thousands of students across Tuscaloosa experienced the **joy** of hands-on garden education, connecting with nature, academics, and fresh, **healthy** food.

This year, our 12 partner school gardens thrived, providing students with opportunities to plant, harvest, and cook with the produce they grew. With over **1,500 garden lessons taught**, children explored **science**, teamwork, and **creativity**—all through the simple yet powerful act of growing food. At each of our partner schools, students found confidence and **connection** in the garden, proving once again how **transformative** this work can be.

Looking ahead, we're excited to keep growing. With your continued support, we can reach more students, spark more curiosity, and cultivate **lasting change** in our community. Thank you for believing in the power of gardens to inspire and educate. **Together**, we are planting the seeds for a brighter future.



**Rooted in Gratitude,**

Nicole Gelb Dugat, Executive Director



# 2024 By The Numbers



**1,575** garden lessons taught.



**4,280** students engaged.



**100%** of teachers said SYR provides a positive learning experience for their students.



**96%** of teachers said the garden program is a highlight of their job.



**95%** of teachers said the garden program improved their students' willingness to try new things.



# 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.







# Our Schools

We proudly partner with **12** 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**

**STARS Academy - Verner Elementary**

# Who We Serve

- **4,280** students in grades K-5
- **73%** of our students attend Title 1 schools.
- **71%** are eligible for Free & Reduced Lunch.
- **17%** of our students are learning with disabilities.
- **9%** of our students are English Language Learners.

## WHY SCHOOL GARDENS?



**Increased fruit  
& veggie  
consumption**

**Increased  
science &  
academic  
achievement**

**Increased  
teamwork &  
responsibility**

**Increased care  
for community &  
the environment**



“The garden is an amazing way to keep students **connected** with nature and give them something to **look forward** to. Even on the most stressful days, we are all **happy** and **engaged** in the garden!”

Caroline Fraser, 4th Grade Teacher,  
Tuscaloosa Magnet School Elementary





# Our Staff



**Nicole Gelb Dugat,**  
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**Emma Busby,**  
Garden Program Assistant  
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“The students take a sense of **ownership** with the garden and it builds a sense of **community**. It allows **all** of our students to feel that they are a part of something **special**.”

Genea Monroe, Principal  
Faucett-Vestavia Elementary School



# Welcome to Our 2025 Board of Directors!



Andre Taylor,  
Board President



Hudson Cheshire



Kyle Chestnut



Mary Lauda Crenshaw



Charles Edwards



Evans Fitts



Sandy Guin



Laura Hopson



Lane Jones



Melissa Kent



Dr. April Lane



Robert Lanoux



Michael Martone



Nicole Montalto



Betsy Myers



Amanda Reyes



Victoria Salazar



Monique Scott

# Our Garden Superheroes

Thank you to our Garden Superheroes  
for helping us grow in 2024!



Alabama Power Foundation  
Amy Nyland  
Andrea Glenn  
Andy Spaulding  
Drs. April & Ralph Lane  
Awards Company of America  
BCBS The Caring Foundation  
Black Kow Compost  
Camp 1831  
Canterbury Episcopal Chapel  
Central Mesa  
Charles Edwards  
Chief Chris Williamson  
Christ Episcopal Church  
Chuck & Sue Rowe  
Cindy Gelb

Claire Friday  
Crimson Scholars  
City of Tuscaloosa  
Craig Worley  
David Ricchiute  
Drake Printers  
Elliott Smith  
Emily and Jack Leigh  
Fleta Edwards  
Fran Oneal  
George and Carolyn Walters  
Jenny Shemwell  
John Koster  
Jonathan & Rebecca Young  
Junior League of Tuscaloosa

Karen Burgess  
Kathryn Bettis  
Kiwanis Club of  
Greater Tuscaloosa  
Lance Simpson  
Lesslie Crowell  
Lorrie Lane Gallery  
Lynn Allen  
Madeleine M. Hill  
McClanahan Family -  
In Memory of Ruth & Elmer Carlin  
Michael Martone  
Michelle Magliocca  
Michelle Woodward  
Mildred Jackson



Morgan Sawyer & Pivotal Mortgage  
Nick's Kids Foundation  
Northport City  
Patricia & James Pilkinton  
Reese Phifer, Jr. Memorial Foundation  
Ringer Wilks Co.  
Romay Davis Grant  
Dr. Regina Harrell  
Sarah Ann Ratliff  
Southeastern Grocers Gives Foundation  
Susan Whitt  
Susie B. Smith  
TMSE PTA  
Tombigbee RC&D Council  
Tuscaloosa Co. Farmers Federation  
Tree House Farm & Nursery  
Tuscaloosa One Place  
Tuscaloosa City Schools  
Tuscaloosa County School System  
UA Capstone Agency  
UA Center for Service and Leadership  
UA Council on Community Based Partnerships

UA Greek Programming Board  
UA Serve Bama  
UA Department of English  
United States Department of Agriculture  
United Way of West Alabama  
VeloCity Cycles  
Virginia Cade  
Walmart  
Will Kenan  
UA Yarn Nation



THANK  
YOU



# Our Annual Fundraiser

SCHOOLYARD ROOTS PRESENTS OUR 4TH ANNUAL

## A MOVEABLE FEAST!

A Roving Celebration of Local Food & Farms in Support of School Gardens

OCT. 1ST - OCT. 6TH, 2024



### Our Farm Partners

Belle Meadow Farm - Fat Squirrel Peppers

Hale Farms - Katie Farms

Lar-Ren's Farm - Leavelle Farms

Snow's Bend Farm

Schoolyard Roots Gardens

Underground Forest

Wallace Homestead

### Our Restaurant Partners

Alcove International Tavern

Black Warrior Brewing Co.

Central Mesa - Chuck's Fish

Druid City Brewing Co. - Five Bar

Jalapeño's Downtown - Monarch Espresso

River - Southern Ale House

Sugo - Turbo Coffee

TOGETHER, WE RAISED **\$59,000** FOR GARDEN EDUCATION!



# THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS!



TUSCALOOSA • NORTHPORT • DEMOPOLIS



Alabama ONE Aspire Foundation - Fitts Architects - Bryant Bank  
The GRAY GROUP at Keller Williams - Alberta Veterinary Clinic  
H.A. Edwards, Inc. - Nucor Steel Tuscaloosa  
Tuscaloosa EyeCare - Prince Glover Hayes  
Thornhill Capital Management - STM Weather  
Scott & Joy Nichols - TUSCOM Technology Solutions  
Ward Scott Morris Architecture, Inc.

Alabama Power - Award Company of America  
The Books of Michael Martone - Cade & April Warner - Cadence Bank  
Drake Printers - Emily & Jack Leigh  
Echols, Taylor & Associates PC - Fitts Agency, Inc.  
Hudson-Poole Fine Jewelers - Hunt Refining Company  
Jamison Money Farmer PC - The LVP Warehouse Tuscaloosa  
Manna Grocery & Deli - Dr. & Mrs. Paul J. Allen - Peco Foods  
The Radiology Clinic - RiverFall Credit Union - Toulmin Kitchen & Bath  
Treehouse Farm & Nursery - VeloCity Cycles

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

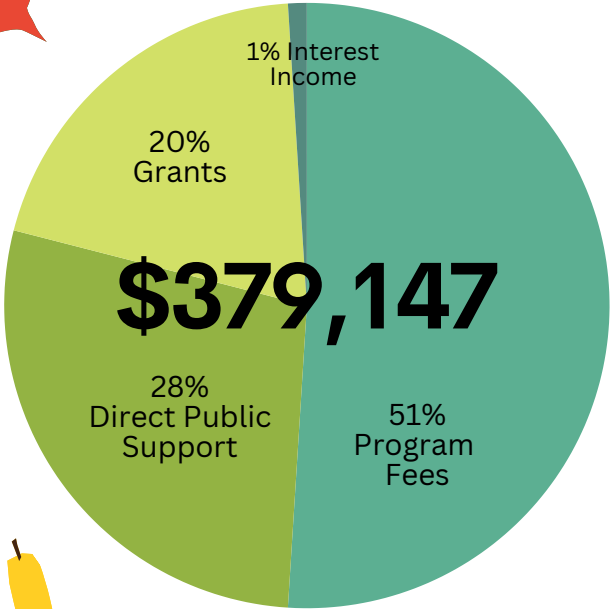
Jude Weaver - Neel Alexander - Rachel Wakefield - Sarah Ferguson - Claire Dabbs - Ms. Simmons' 4th Grade Class - Ben's Bread  
Barry's Bees - Drs. April and Ralph Lane - Melissa Kent & Laura Hopson - Big Leaf Pottery - Lorrie Lane Studio  
Bloom Flower Truck - Susan Hamner - Abi Brewer Fine Art - Beck's Blissful Bites - Surreal Coffee Roasters - Carly Gelb - Kate Bakes  
Splinters - Hotel Indigo - Balancing Breath Yoga - Local Clay Works - Slumber Camp Tuscaloosa

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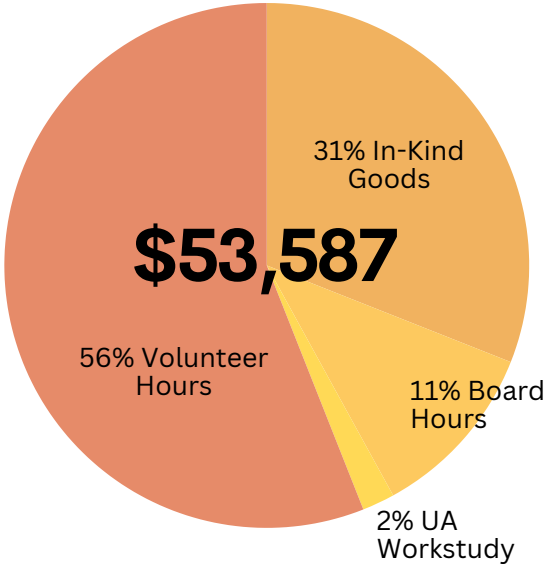
Ajian Sushi - Alexandra's - Avenue Pub - Bradley's Market - Brown's Corner Buffalo Wild Wings - Chick-Fil-A - Central Mesa - Confetti Interiors  
DAQ Shack - Decades Pub & Grill - Ernest & Hadley Booksellers - Fruit Lovely - Glory Bound - Half Shell Oyster House - Innisfree Irish Pub  
Loosa Brews - Mark's Mart - Nothing Bundt Cakes - The Pants Store - Pat's Florist & Gourmet Baskets - Peterbrooke Chocolatier - Publix  
Strange Brew Coffeehouse - Taco Casa - Taco Mama - The Plant Lady - The Shirt Shop - Tazikis Mediterranean Cafe - The Wine Market

# Our Finances

## Monetary Income

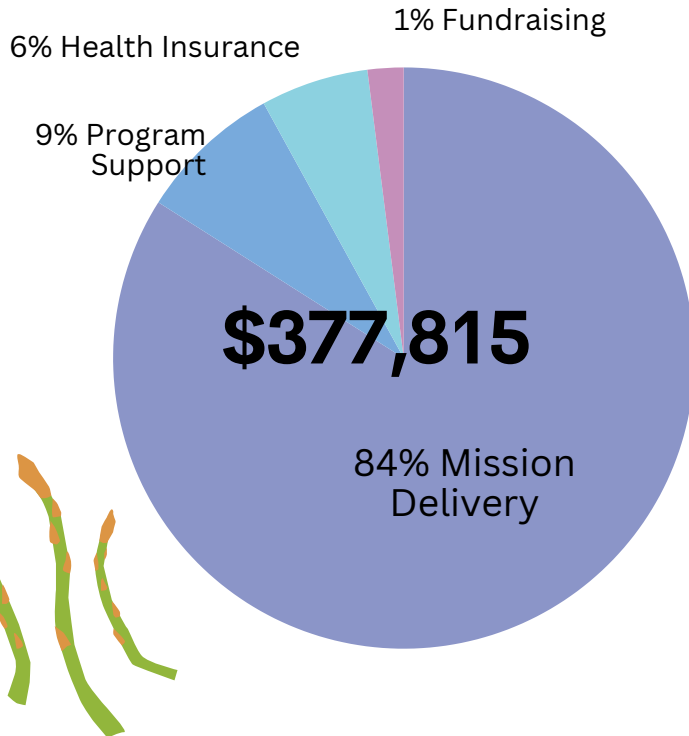


## In-Kind Support





# Expenses





# SCHOOLYARD ROOTS

Growing gardens. Growing minds.

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



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



**@schoolyardroots**



Interested in joining our community?  
Reach out to Nicole Gelb Dugat, Executive Director  
[director@schoolyardroots.org](mailto:director@schoolyardroots.org)