



Annual Report

—
2025

A Letter from Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As I look back on 2025, **my heart is full** – full of gratitude for this community, and full of wonder at what we are growing together. Because of your generous support, **thousands of students** across Tuscaloosa spent this year with their hands in the soil, their curiosity sparked in ways that only a garden can do.

This year, our 12 partner school gardens were as **bountiful** and alive as ever. From the first seeds of fall to the harvests and cooking lessons that filled our schoolyards with excitement, students experienced the full, **joyful** cycle of growing food. They tasted vegetables they'd never tried before, practiced patience and **collaboration**, and did it all outside, **together**, in spaces that belong to them.

What moves us most is not just what students learn in our gardens, but who they become there. We see it in the child who, after weeks of tending a plant from seed to harvest, beams with a **pride** that no worksheet could ever produce – **curious, capable, and connected** to the living world around them.

None of this happens without you. Your belief in this work – and in Tuscaloosa's children – makes every garden lesson, every cooking class, and every farm stand possible. We are so **grateful** to be doing this alongside such a committed and generous community. Looking ahead, we remain passionate about deepening our roots in the schools we serve and dreaming boldly about the future we are building together – one garden, one student, one seed at a time.



Rooted in Gratitude,

Nicole Gelb Dugat

Nicole Gelb Dugat, Executive Director

2025 By The Numbers



1,554 garden lessons taught.



4,884 students engaged through Gardens 2 Schools.



382 new students engaged through TCSS Teaching Farm partnership.



97% of teachers said the garden program improved their students' connection to the natural world.



100% of principals said the garden program improved their students' understanding of science standards.



“The biggest impact of the school garden program is how it helps students **connect with nature** while learning **responsibility** and **teamwork**. It’s a space where **curiosity grows** right alongside the plants.”

J. Cameron, 1st Grade Teacher,
University Place Elementary School



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.



Students We Serve

- **75%** of our students attend Title 1 schools.
- **71%** are eligible for Free & Reduced Lunch.
- **18%** of our students are learning with disabilities.
- **9%** of our students are English Language Learners.

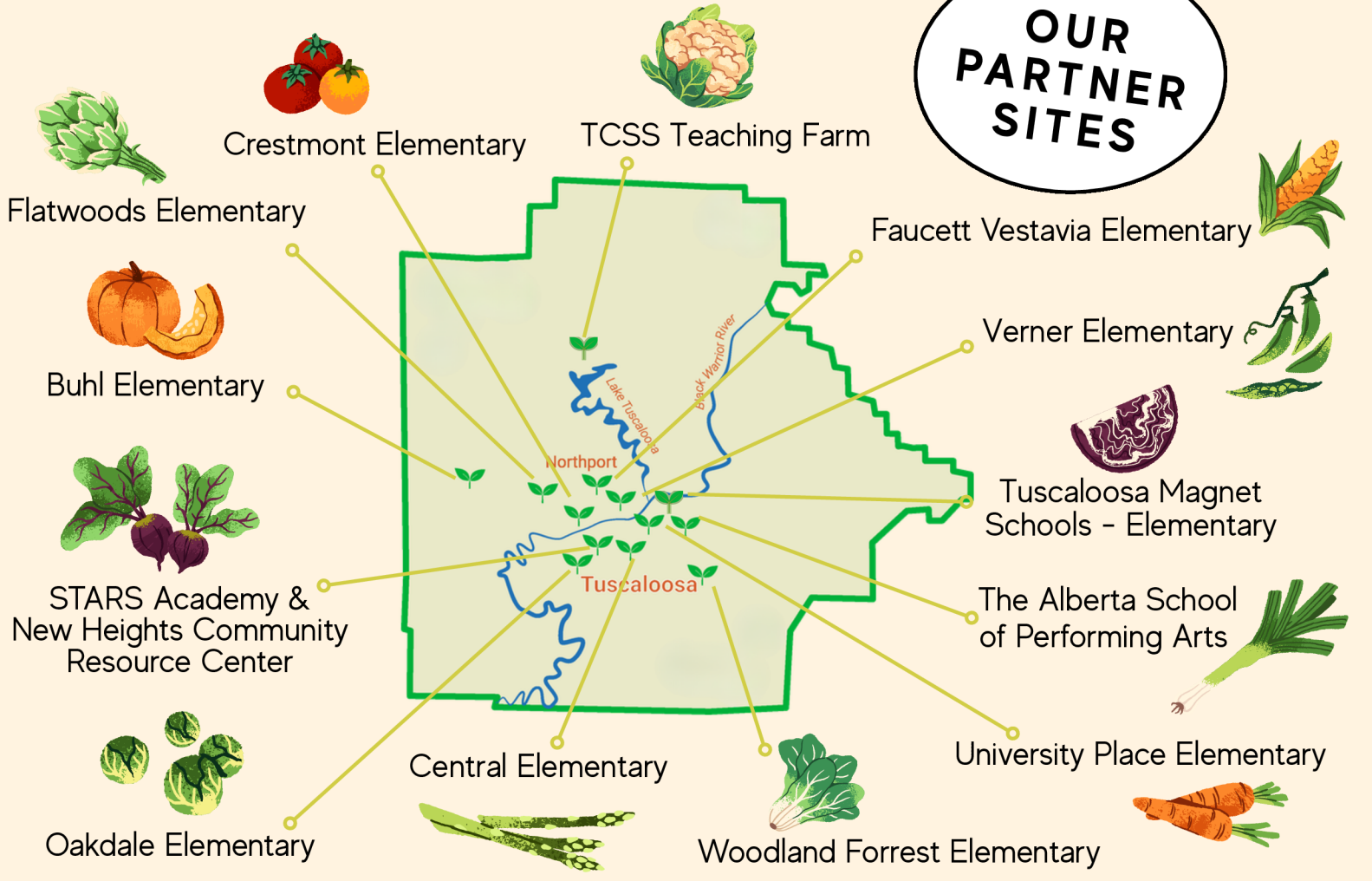
New Partnership!

In 2025, Schoolyard Roots proudly forged a new partnership with the **TCSS Teaching Farm** to expand **hands-on agricultural learning** across Tuscaloosa County. Together, we support K–12 experiential education — from high schoolers building and tending organic raised-bed gardens to elementary students exploring a **living classroom** of livestock, orchards, pollinator gardens, and beehives. **We can't wait to see how this partnership grows!**

We are grateful to Tuscaloosa's One Place, the Alabama Department of Human Resources, The Children's Trust Fund of Alabama, and the Tuscaloosa County School System for making this partnership possible.



OUR PARTNER SITES



Crestmont Elementary

TCSS Teaching Farm

Flatwoods Elementary

Faucett Vestavia Elementary

Buhl Elementary

Verner Elementary

STARS Academy & New Heights Community Resource Center

Tuscaloosa Magnet Schools - Elementary

Oakdale Elementary

Central Elementary

The Alberta School of Performing Arts

Woodland Forrest Elementary

University Place Elementary

Welcome to Our 2026 Board of Directors!



Charles Edwards,
Board President



Hudson Cheshire



Kyle Chestnut



Mary Luda Crenshaw



Wesley Eldridge



Evans Fitts



Sandy Guin



Laura Hopson



Lane Jones



Melissa Kent



Robert Lanoux



Michael Martone



Betsy Myers



Amanda Reyes



Victoria Salazar



Monique Scott



Andre Taylor



Maggie Yancey

Meet Our Staff



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Our Garden Superheroes



**Thank you to our Garden Superheroes
for helping us grow in 2025!**



Lynne Adrian
Alabama Department of
Human Resources
Helene Arndt
Belle Art Study Club
Kathryn Bettis
Virginia Brazil
Karen Burgess
Tony Buttery
Kelly Cebulko
Central Mesa
Sprague Cheshire
Hudson Cheshire
Kyle Chestnut
Tanquil Collins
Clint Crawford
Mary Lauda Crenshaw
Lesslie Crowell
Mary Allison Crowell
Steve Davis

Druid City Brewing Co.
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Fleta Edwards
Mike Evans
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John Fitts
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Claire Friday
Susan & Harry Gabriel
Andrea Glenn
Corderro Green
Sonja Griffith
Katie Grissom
Sandy Guin
Madeleine Hill
Carol & Jerome Hoffman
Laura Hopson
Carmen Hudson
Mildred Jackson

Lane Jones
Will Kenan
Melissa Kent
John Koster
April & Ralph Lane
Robert Lanoux
Emily & Jack Leigh
Lifeline Solutions, LLC
Michael Martone
The McClanahan Family Fund
Eva & Elliott McPherson
Mercedes-Benz
William & Gabriella Merriman
Jean Minges
Valery Minges
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Misty Moon
M'Kayla Motley
Betsy Myers
Amy Nyland

Fran Oneal
Kathryn Oths
Joe & Sarah Pearson
James & Patricia Pilkinton
Reynolds, Reynolds & Little
Robert Reynolds
Amanda Reyes
Leslie Rorty
Chuck & Sue Rowe
Susan Rue
Victoria Salazar
Camille Samples
Monique Scott
Jenny Shemwell
Lance Simpson
Elliott Smith
Richard Smith
Susie B. Smith
Andy Spaulding

Thornhill Capital Management
Tuscaloosa City Schools
Tuscaloosa County Schools
TCSS Agriscience Teaching Farm
Tuscaloosa One Place
Susan & Steve Tucker
UA Black Lawyer Student Association
UA Center for Service & Leadership
UA Greek Programming Board
UA Water Institute
Ed Walker
Carolyn Walters
Alicia Wasula
Susan Whitt
Chris Williamson
Winn Dixie
Michelle Woodward
Craig Worley

Grantors

Alabama Department of
Agriculture & Industries
BCBS The Caring Foundation
Christ Episcopal Church

City of Northport
City of Tuscaloosa
Community Foundation of West
Alabama
Nick's Kids Foundation
Reese Phifer Memorial Foundation
United Way of West Alabama
USDA Patrick Leahy Farm to
School Grant
Walmart Store #5248
Walmart Store #5256
The Whole Kids Foundation
Southeastern Grocers Association's
Romay Davis Grant

In-Kind Donors

Award Company of America
Black-Kow Compost
Drake Printers
Wes Eldridge & Rachel Wakefield
Regina Harrell
Home Depot
Lowe's

Manna Grocery & Deli
Vincent Shakir
Treehouse Farm & Nursery
VeloCity Cycles
The Westervelt Company



Our Annual Fundraiser

SCHOOLYARD ROOTS PRESENTS

A MOVEABLE FEAST

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

TUESDAY, SEPT. 23 - SUNDAY, SEPT. 28



Our Farm Partners

Snow's Bend Farm - Leavelle Farms
Southern Food Lab
Wallace Homestead
Underground Forest
Fat Squirrel Peppers
Hale Farms
Schoolyard Roots Gardens

Our Restaurant Partners

Chuck's Fish - Five - Sugo
The Sanctuary on 25th
The Alcove - Central Mesa - River
Jalapeño's Downtown - Southern Ale House
Monarch Espresso - Turbo Coffee
Druid City Brewing Co.
Black Warrior Brewing Co.

TOGETHER, WE RAISED **\$65,000** FOR GARDEN EDUCATION!

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS!



MATS • LINENS • UNIFORMS • RESTROOM SERVICE

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA*



University
Medical Center



April R. Lane, PHD, Licensed Counselor - Bryant Bank
Cadence Bank - Fitts Architects - H.A. Edwards, Inc.
Nucor Steel Tuscaloosa - Scott & Joy Nichols - STM Weather
The Books of Michael Martone
Tuscaloosa EyeCare - Ward Scott Morris Architecture, Inc.

Alabama ONE Aspire Foundation - Alabama Power
Cade & April Warner - Dr. & Mrs. Paul J. Allen
Echols, Taylor & Associates PC - Emily & Jack Leigh
Gym KYNG, LLC - Harper Chambers Lumber
Higginbotham Insurance Agency, Inc. - Hudson-Poole Fine Jewelers
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Manna Grocery & Deli - Nixon Companies - Peco Foods
Prince Glover Hayes - Raymond James & Associates - Ringer Wilks Co.
RiverFall Credit Union - TUSCOM Technology Agency, Inc.

Thank You to Our Silent Auction & Plant Pull Partners!

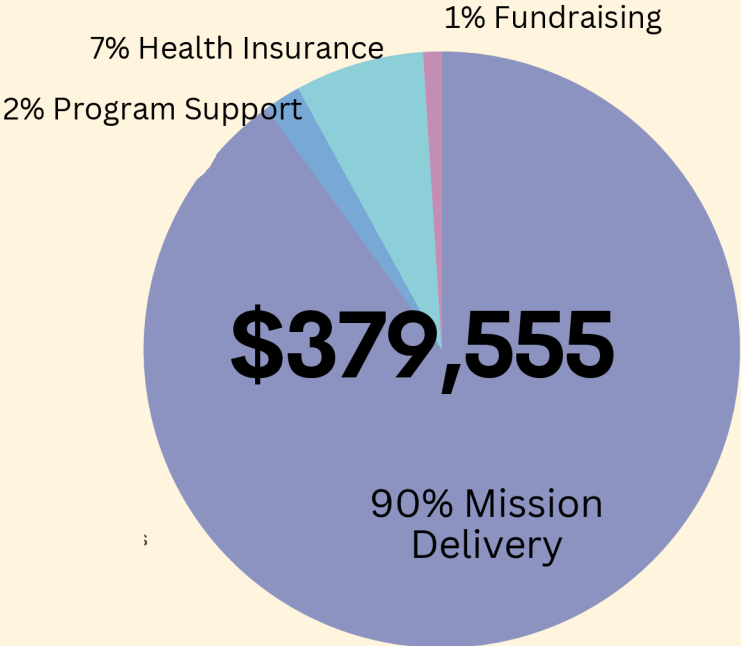
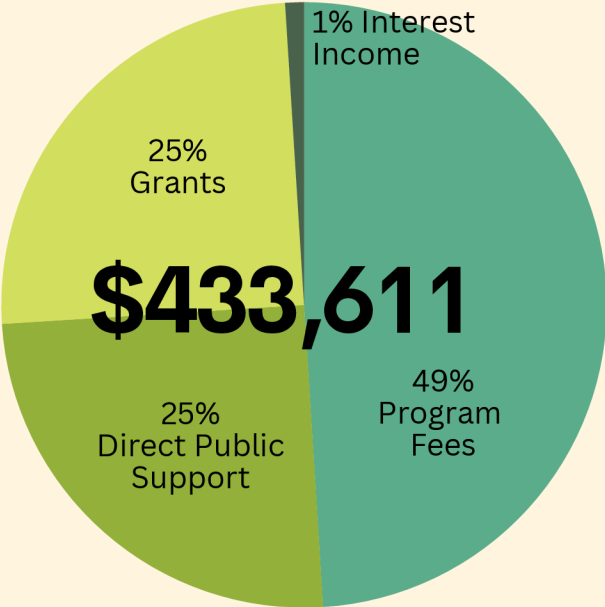
Abi Brewer Fine Art - Amy Smoot - Anne Franklin Lamar - Balancing Breath Yoga - Barbara Grimes - Barry's Bees - Beck's Blissful Bites
Belle Meadow Farm - Ben's Breads Tuscaloosa - Betsy Myers - Big Leaf Pottery - Bloom Flower Truck - Carly Gelb - Chuck's Fish
City of Tuscaloosa - Claire Dabbs - Druid City Makerspace - Ginny Busby - Greg Randall - Hotel Indigo - Jude Weaver - Kate Bakes
Kristy Andrews - Lane Jones - Lex Grimes - Linda Lochman - Lindsay Mims - Local Clay Works - Lorrie Lane - Lululemon
Michael Martone - Ms. Simmon's 5th Graders - Neel Alexander - Rachel Wakefield - Sandie Champion
Sawdust & Splinters Makerspace - Sherry Hall - Simmy's Creations - Slumber Camp - Sugar Lab - Susan Hamner - Susan Lyons
Surreal Coffee Roasters - Taco Casa - Underground Forest - Wes Eldridge

Avenue Pub - Central Mesa - Chuck's Fish - Decades Pub & Grub - Five - Fruit Lovely - Heritage House - Monarch Espresso - Pat's Florist
Peterbrooke Chocolatier - Snows Bend Farm - The Alcove - The Parlor Ice Cream Shop - The Plant Lady - The Shirt Shop - The Wine Market

Our 2025 Finances



INCOME



EXPENSES





“One of my favorite memories in the garden was watching the students **plant seeds** for the first time. **Their excitement was contagious** as they carefully placed each seed into the soil, gently covered it, and watered it with so much **hope** and curiosity.

It was a special moment of patience and possibility.”

Lawanda Matthews, 3rd Grade Teacher
Oakdale Elementary School





**DONATE
TODAY**



SCHOOLYARD ROOTS

Growing gardens. Growing minds.

P.O. Box 2374

Tuscaloosa, AL 35403

205.523.5450

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