

2023

Annual Report



Letter from our Executive Director

Over the past year, I've witnessed growth, collaboration, adaptability and grit throughout our programs, among our participants and from our community.

Farming is a continuous, cyclical process; it is in the nature of farming to adapt, to learn from the previous growing year and to do better. That spirit pervades our organization. We build on the past and grow. We have gradually increased the number of positions offered in our program from 17 to 25 positions in 2023. The quality of programming and the work our participants accomplished in 2023 was the best I've ever seen. We also increased the number of Feed 2 Birds shares, which are weekly produce boxes given to community members facing food insecurity, through partnerships with nonprofits, from 45 to 60.

We lost dear HGP friends in 2023 and very recently—a reminder to make every minute count.

Reading Food Inc. 2: Inside the Quest for a Better Future for Food, this line jumped off the page at me: “I had basically exempted myself from seeing myself as a change agent, based on assumptions and beliefs I had been carrying for years.” We want to be a place where you can be a change agent, whether it is as a CSA member, donor, volunteer, or store customer. We want to be a place where you can see yourself making a difference.

I'm proud to share that the Homeless Garden Project was awarded the UCSC Chancellor's Innovation Impact Award–Community Changemaker. The award recognizes an “organization in the Santa Cruz region that has contributed significantly to driving regional economic prosperity through innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship, or support for growing the innovation ecosystem in close collaboration with the university.”

With deep thanks for your partnership,

Darrie



A beautiful video was produced by the University in conjunction with the award. Simply click the image to the left to watch it now.



A Catchafire volunteer is making a difference. Gabriel Palma did the layout for this report. Connecting with HGP from Sweden, halfway across the globe, Gabriel says, "Volunteering is a big deal for me. It's all about personal growth and giving back without expecting anything in return. I love that it lets me use my skills for causes I care about. It's not just about time. It's a chance to grow and make a difference." This spirit of generosity fills me with hope!

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Transitional Employment Program 2023

91%

of graduates secured employment

83%

of graduates secured housing

18,086

Number of paid transitional
employment hours provided

390

Number of social work hours provided

Insights from our Trainees

Trainee Spotlight: Eric & David

Eric

Peace and
Connection
on the Farm

"It wasn't long before I discovered that HGP is so much more than a job. It's a strong connection to community, to resources, to strong support. In such a short time here, I feel I've progressed far past what standard employment would have gotten me. I'm housed. I've made strong friendships. I've gained confidence in my abilities. I found a passion for the greenhouse that will certainly never leave me. I discovered a love of sowing seeds & tending the seedlings till they're ready for the garden beds, & I seem to have a knack for greenhouse work." Read more [here](#).

David

Moving from
Disconnection
to Connection

"The Homeless Garden Project presented itself to me when I was searching for a way back into life, but wasn't sure how to make that happen. As it turns out, the garden specializes in just this problem. Evan sat me down and told me how the trainee program worked—how the garden acts as a stepping stone to help reintegrate me back into life. A life that has always scared me, and made me want to seek safety and hide. But this was completely different. The garden transformed into precisely the thing that I needed at the time. It was gentle, welcoming, compassionate, and kind. But most importantly, understanding." Read more [here](#).

Employer Partners

In support of our mission, we have created mutually beneficial partnerships with local businesses and successfully matched Homeless Garden Project graduates with employment opportunities through our Employer Partner Network. There are multiple ways to be a part of the Employer Partner Network, and hiring our trainees is only one - we also have several events coming up that can allow you to get involved and be a part of the solution in our community.

Some Current Employer Partners:

California Department of Parks and Recreation,
City of Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation,
Santa Cruz Metro, The Garden Company,
Superior Foods, In-Home Supportive Services,
New Leaf, Whole Foods, Housing Matters





Program Innovations

Community Collaboration: Homeless Garden Project & Sobriety Works

The collaboration between the Homeless Garden Project and Sobriety Works offers comprehensive Recovery Support Services (RSS) to both current HGP trainees and program graduates. Guided by a former Homeless Garden Project social work intern, now serving as the Clinical Director & Behavioral Health Therapist at Sobriety Works, this collaboration is dedicated to empowering individuals on their journey toward sobriety and stability. These services are provided on our 3.5-acre organic farm, enhancing the therapeutic environment.

Through this partnership, participants have had access to over 90 hours of Recovery Support Group sessions since 2022, which focus on recovery, relapse prevention, coping skills, and grief management. These sessions are conducted by Sobriety Works, a licensed addiction treatment center in California, in a confidential group setting specifically tailored for active Medi-Cal beneficiaries.

“I go to a lot of meetings, but having this group once a week in a very casual setting was a good addition to my program of recovery. Meghna, the group leader, is awesome. The convenience of it was definitely a bonus for me. I’m already here, at work [on the farm], why not spend a little more time on something important? But it was also fun! It was a way for me to get a lot closer to my coworkers – we check in and tell stories about life, all through a lens of how to stay sober. I was always telling people how awesome this group is.”

– HGP Trainee



Our Farm

Our Natural Bridges Farm has been Certified Organic through the California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) since 1991. We are proud that our organic techniques enhance the local natural environment and demonstrate agriculture practices that are one of the key solutions to climate change.

19,303

lbs of veggies produced
(a 21% increase from 2022)

46

CSA Shares

60

Feed Two Birds shares

106

Boxes of organic vegetables, herbs and flowers
per week produced for 23 weeks

Benefits to the environment

There are many benefits of organic agriculture. They include:

- the promotion of biodiversity
- improvement to soil health such as carbon sequestering
- building organic and mineral matter
- encouraging soil microorganism growth

We don't depend on the use of chemical pesticides or herbicides, which supports a healthier environment and a source of healthier, fresh food for local communities. Other benefits of our organic, small scale approach ripple into our local community and natural environment.

Benefits to the community

- Our CSA and organic techniques foster relationships.
- Beyond connecting consumers to their food source, our farm reinforces the social fabric between our Santa Cruz urban and rural areas.
- Our farm nurtures the support and growth of the vibrant Santa Cruz community and helps to create an exceptional working environment for our trainees, while offering welcoming spaces for Santa Cruz locals and visitors.

Caring for the future

Organic agriculture considers the medium- and long-term effect of agricultural techniques implemented and aims to produce food while establishing an ecological balance to promote soil fertility or prevent pest problems. Organic agriculture takes a proactive approach as opposed to treating problems after they emerge.





Our Volunteers

"Volunteering at HGP provides a unique space to interact with and learn from people who are experiencing homelessness, dismantling stereotypes and fostering meaningful connections across our community. It reminds us that amidst life's challenges, the human spirit endures, and through acts of service, we build a brighter future where everyone belongs."

– Omar Guzman, Volunteer Coordinator

1,205
volunteers

6,947
hours

6,000
lunches prepared by volunteers

38
volunteer groups



Groups include:
Packard Foundation, Twin Lakes Church, 1440 Multiversity, Google, Salesforce,
Santa Cruz Warriors, Sun Rise Rotary, and Monarch Elementary.



Insight from our volunteers

“It’s a pleasure to go to the Farm each Friday. I live locally and it’s an easy bike ride. I turn up because I like to work the land. Over time, as I got to know several of the Trainees, I find that volunteering became a connecting pleasure too. I’ve met some truly good folks here, and shared their passion for planting and growing. We can share a smile about how good things become as they grow before us.

I feel very happy to contribute to the Farm. A roof over one’s head should be a given, & I am happy to be a part of the help that Homeless Garden Project provides. I enjoy the work immensely and am grateful for the community of folks I have been introduced to.”

– Martin Bailes, farm volunteer

“I enjoy cooking and like the challenge of making delicious and satisfying food for 30 plus folks with different tastes and dietary needs. The appreciation that I receive from all of the trainees and volunteers and staff definitely warms my heart. I enjoy getting to know everyone at the HGP, and have a deep fondness for many of the trainees, so I am happy that I have the opportunity to make their lives a tiny bit better by giving them the gift of a good lunch.”

– Ellen Baker, volunteer cook

Our Enterprise

Our enterprise is a “social enterprise,” meaning a revenue-generating business with a mission. We call our enterprise “Value-added” from an agricultural term; we “add value” to materials grown on our organic farm in our programs--flowers, herbs, fruits and more--to create over 40 products.

Our goal is to bring the beauty and freshness of the farm to customers in every product. Our value-added products are handcrafted, artisanal products including bath teas, beeswax candles, baking mixes, seasonings, lotions and more!

The social enterprise is made up of our workshop, Downtown and Capitola Stores, an online store and wholesale accounts.



\$397,530 2023 Enterprise Sales

2023 Top 5 sellers

All Natural Salve (1 oz) - 686 sold

All Natural Salve (4 oz) - 467 sold

Gardener's Soap - 456 sold

Citrus Vanilla Lip Balm - 434 sold

Lavender Shortbread Baking Mix - 409 sold

A Selection of our Wholesale Partners:

- New Leaf Markets (Aptos, Capitola, Westside, Downtown, Half Moon Bay)
- The Garden Company
- The Smithsonian
- Procure Impact
- 11th Hour
- Verve

A Selection of Local artisans and Consignment partners:

- Deerhaven Soap
- California Jam Queen
- India Joze Chai
- Rivas Honey
- Alta Coffee
- Justin Allen Arts

Leadership

Staff

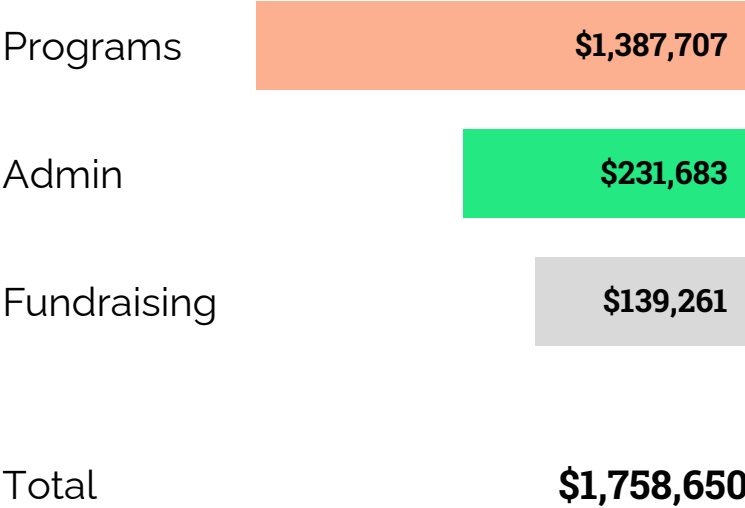
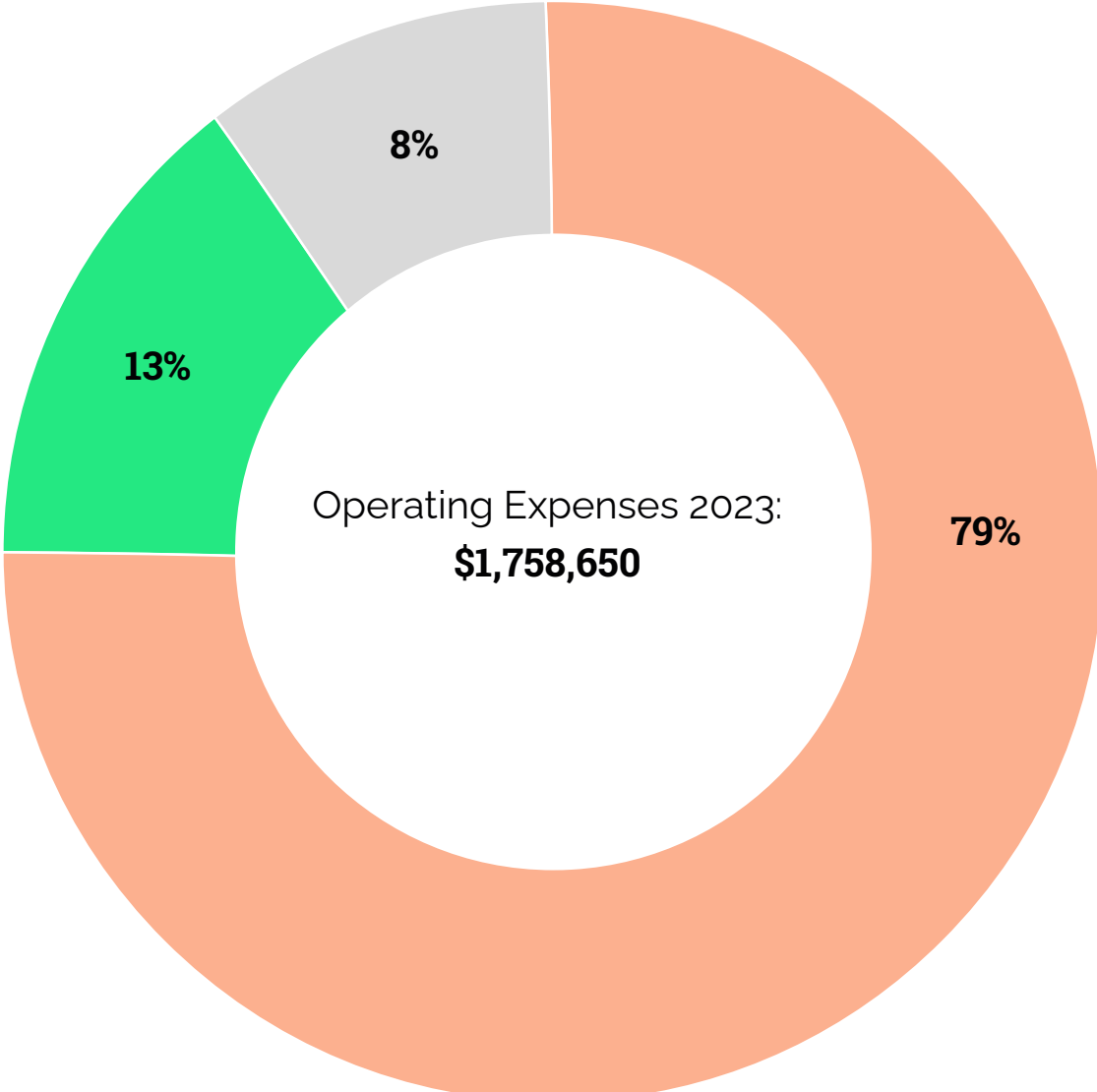
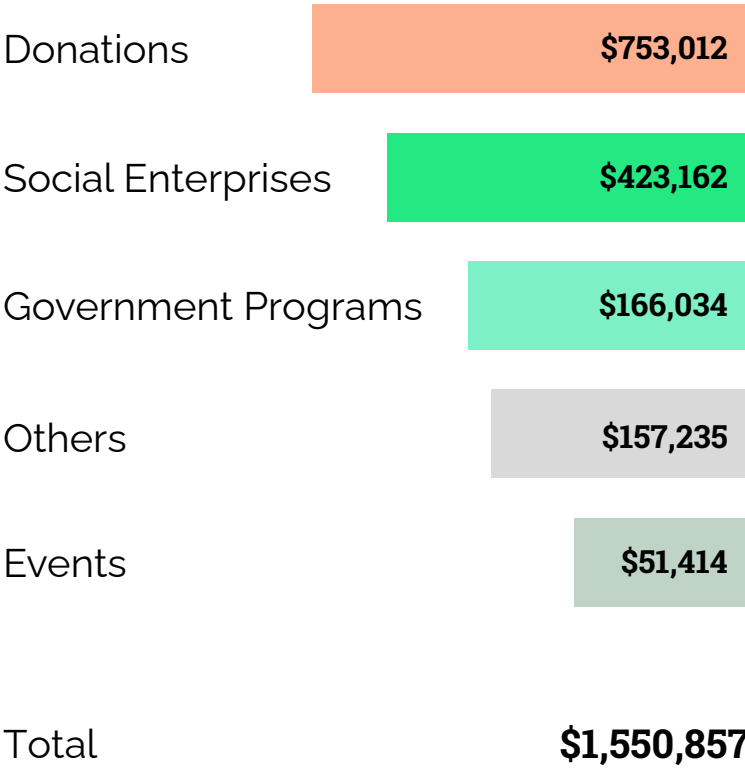
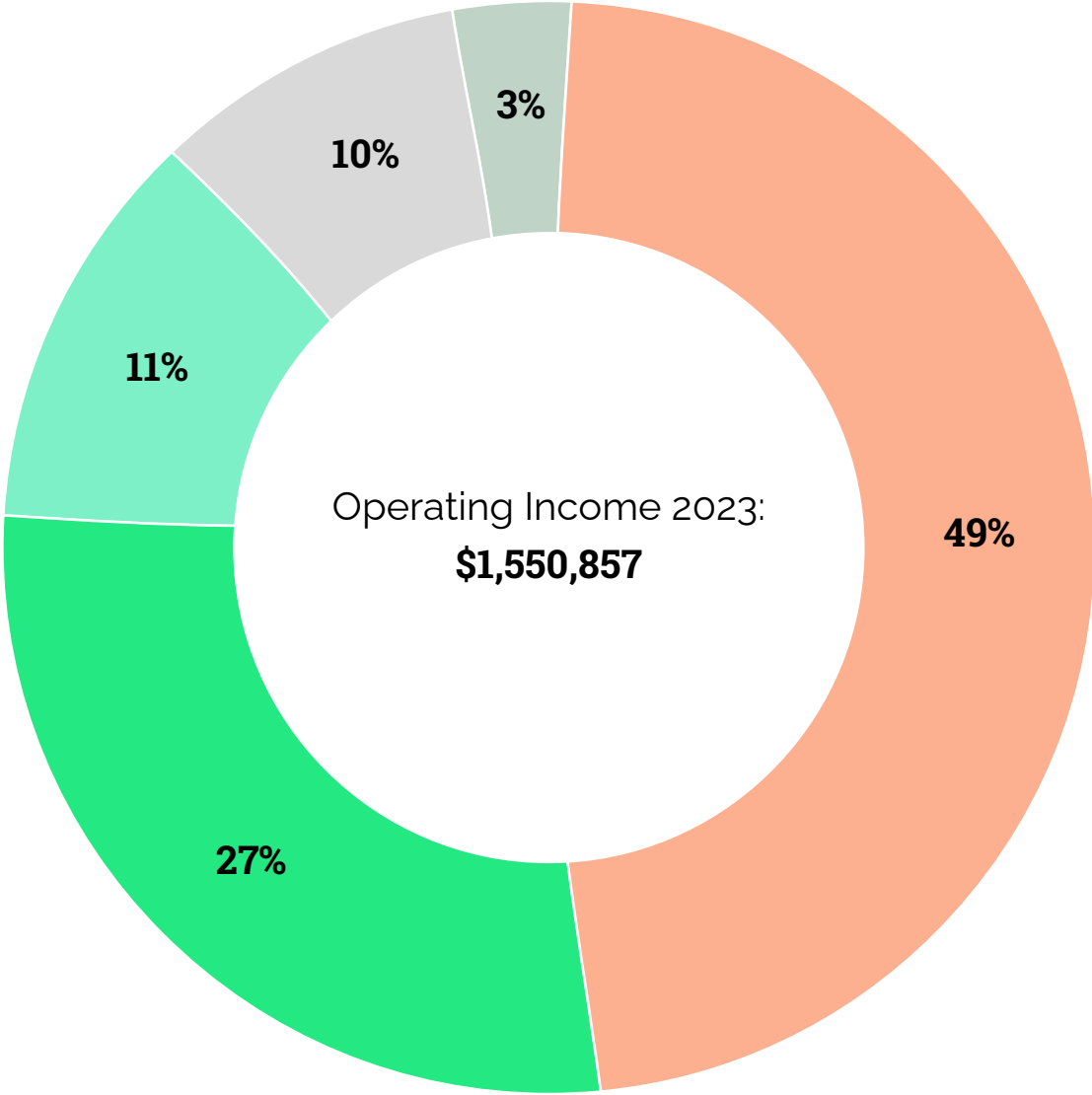
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*67% of 2023 government funding was one-time Employee Tax Retention Credits funding.

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Thank you to our donors!
Your vital partnership plants seeds of hope, and builds paths out of homelessness. We can’t do this work without you.

\$15,000 +

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- Cathy Calfo
- Enda Brennan & Patrice Boyle
- Ginny Aragon
- Jon & Susan Wittwer
- Kathleen Rose Hughes & Kate McGirr
- Nancy Loshkajian
- Naomi & Asher Brauner
- Sally Shepherd
- Suzanne MacLean

If you wish to name the Homeless Garden Project in your will or estate plans, you can include the following language:

The Homeless Garden Project, a California non-profit corporation, with business address 30 West Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz, CA, 95060. Our taxpayer identification number is: 77-0475165.

If you have already included the Homeless Garden Project in your estate plans, thank you!

Please contact Paul Goldberg, **paulg@homelessgardenproject.org** so that you can enjoy the benefits of being a member of our Perennial Legacy Circle.

Donors: Tribute Gifts

- Amy Ben-Horin - **in honor of Morghan King’s fundraising race**
- Barbara Kersey - **in honor of Jon Kersey**
- Barbara Meislin - **in honor of Stuart Kaplan**
- Carolyn Ewing - **in honor of Mark Fernquest Farley**
- Charles Franich Jr - **in honor of Mary and Steven Bignell**
- Connie Croker - **in honor of Julie Croker**
- Cynthia Ranii & Shelly James - **in honor of Anna Beth Summers**
- David A. Siegel Trust - **in memory of David and Gerry Siegel**
- Deborah Heitzenrater - **in honor of Seth Heitzenrater**
- Diane & Charlie Overmire - **in honor of Rozell Overmire**
- Donna Runnalls - **in memory of Lois G. Remmey**
- Donna Runnalls - **in honor of Lois G. Remmey**
- Elaine Fitzpatrick - **in honor of Phoenix MacKinnon**
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- Geraldine & Michael Fausett - **in memory of Pete Biocini**
- Ginny Aragon - **in honor of Earth Day**
- Helen Matthews - **in honor of Marion and Eric Miller**
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- Kate Smith - **in honor of Mark Godfrey**
- Kathryn Gordon - **in memory of Suzie MacMillen**
- Linda Charman - **in honor of Katherine Beiers’ devotion to HGP**
- Lynn McKibbin - **in memory of Angie Smith**
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- Margaret Gordon & Alan Ritch - **in honor of Jonathan Franzen**
- Martha Zuniga - **in memory of Glenn George Capps**
- Mary Ross - **in honor of Rachel Ross and Eric Lawson’s anniversary**
- Matt & Peg Guerreri - **in honor of Paul and Charlene Lee**
- Max Turri & Kim Eabry - **in memory of Steve Eabry**
- Michael McInnis - **in honor of Steven and Mary Bignell**
- Monique Martineau - **in honor of Matt Martineau’s generosity**
- Neal & Terry Cabrinha - **in honor of Ben and Anne Chiaramonte and Family**
- Pamela & Al Patrick - **in memory of Donald and Emily Clark**
- Patricia Couto - **in honor of Sue MacLean**
- Patricia Finnigan Biocini - **in memory of Pete Biocini**
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- Suzanne McLean - **in memory of Allan McLean**
- The Emily and Joseph Bodensteiner Fund - **in memory of Dr. Paul Albert Lee**
- Valerie Gresham - **in honor of Bruce and Barbara Holman**
- VM Ware Foundation - **in honor of Eniker Molnar**
- William Salmansohn & Annie Benayoun - **in memory of Muriel Salmansohn**

In memory



Paul Lee



Quentin Hancock



Rowland Rebele

We are saddened at the loss of several members of our community who truly helped shape HGP. We extend our deep gratitude to our visionary Co-Founder, Dr. Paul Lee, and to enormously impactful and generous supporters, Quentin Hancock and Rowland Rebele. The Project would not be what it is without these three incredible individuals.

Thank you and you are missed.

**“Rarely, if ever, are any of us healed in isolation.
Healing is an act of communion.”**

– bell hooks

“All flourishing is mutual.”

– Robin Wall Kimmerer

Thank you for all you do to help
Homeless Garden Project to flourish.

Photos by:
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