2026 Sprouting Chefs Annual General Report



Barb Koyanagi – Executive Director,
Sprouting Chefs

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Land Acknowledgement



We honor all the First Peoples Principles of Learning by doing our best at Sprouting Chefs to include their teachings wherever possible. Most especially, we honor their past sufferings by ensuring that each child in each of our programs knows that they matter and they are loved.

It is in this spirit that we all at Sprouting Chefs Society would like to acknowledge that we have the privilege of teaching, learning and connecting on ancestral and unceded homelands of the Coast Salish Nations of Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish territories. We are grateful to continue to learn as many of the lessons all our elders teach us.

Sprouting Chefs Society AGM 2026 – Executive Director's Message



Central themes for this past 2025/2026 school year have been around responsibility, reverence, trust and surrender. The ability to respond to the fact that both school gardens at Forest Grove and Edmonds needed something radical to shift and change if we were to continue to be sustainable. Surrendering any and all efforts of when these bins would arrive and be set up at both schools was a huge personal challenge trusting when it finally did happen, and that the timing would be right. Profound lessons when much anxiety was present within me, in the wait to eventually set up the new bins and plant in seeds and crops for the new year. This lesson was shared with the students at Forest Grove while we waited in anticipation for the bins to arrive. This became a perfect follow up for the anxiety management classes in the fall season and helped many students and teachers with the discussion of trust and surrender.

The change of the school gardens was the main focus of most of the 2025 2026 season. Between preparing the garden bins at Edmonds by emptying them and moving plants around to dismantling the Forest Grove structure, leveling a 6 yd layer of gravel and lining new garden paths, much effort physically and mentally was focused on. What I hope is evident in reviewing this past year in this report is that community matters. Coming together in unity over a shared project to make things better for all truly was defined by this major project. Starting with the Garden Club students themselves at both schools with the emptying of the bins to seeing former alumni of Forest Grove and the main parent who helped the project in the beginning were all evidence of a garden creating a chance for community to come together.

Cooking and growing food continued as well with the 10th year anniversary of the cooking classes at Forest Grove as well as 10 years of our summer camps. The gardens slow to start, still produced a variety of edible plants to learn about. Tomatoes and pumpkins started in the greenhouse at Burnaby Mountain, thrived in the elementary gardens. Companion flowers added unique opportunities to discus relationships while bulbs planted on the hill at Forest Grove delighted the entire community with a riot of colour after Spring Break.

Thanks to strong funding support from our donors and a healthy grant from Open Road Foundation, we were able to acknowledge and thank the teachers at Edmonds Community School via a luncheon created by the students in the cooking classes and some garden club members as well with a generous donation of various food supplies from the Greater Vancouver Food Bank.

Ending the year in appreciation, healthy food and a chance to gather was a great way to head into the summer season of our Summer Wellness and Cooking Camps. These camps saw a majority of former campers return to continue to have fun together via cooking, crafting, outdoor activities and a few poker games too!

Our volunteer alumni continue to return to help us lead activities and we are hopeful that a new batch of teen leaders who experienced our first ever Teen Leadership Wellness Camp will also help us Sprout More Chefs in the future. Pride is definitely felt when these alumni go from student to teacher as seen with Owen Ebose leading a day at the teen leadership camp, Casey Lo returning to Garden Club as a volunteer in the 2026 fall season, and Nathan Lo returning right on time to help set up the new garden bins at Forest Grove with the water reservoir system.



My hope with the following report is that our funders and donors continue to feel the impact of their support. There is a sense of hope that our new garden spaces can provide deeper lessons of the First People's Principles of Responsibility, Reciprocity, Respect and Reverence along with the various virtues we do our best to deepen while growing food and Sprouting Chefs.

I would also like to sincerely thank the Board of Directors of Sprouting Chefs. From the insight and guidance of developing various curriculum for our programs to the financial and governance support, Sprouting Chefs Society truly is in good hands.

– Barb Koyanagi, Founder/Executive Director

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Thank You and Acknowledgement

We are extremely grateful for the support of our various sources of financial funding for 2025/2026 year:

Private Investment via Bruce Forster and Pat Stephenson – Top Donor (After School Programs at Edmonds Community School – Garden Clubs, Seed to Table Program at Forest Grove & Edmonds Community School in Fall 2025 Season)

Open Road Foundation – In School Program at Edmonds Community School, Forest Grove Elementary, Summit Program at Burnaby Mountain Secondary for the 2026 Season.

Katherine Forster – Top Donor (Fall Classes and After School Programs General Support)

McGrane Pearson Endowment Fund held at the Vancouver Foundation– Top Sponsor (Teacher Appreciation Lunch at Edmonds Community School, Forest Grove Garden Club – Fall 2026)

Feeding Futures Funding – District Funder – After School Cooking Classes at Edmonds Community School, All 3 Seasons

Greater Vancouver Food Bank – In Kind Donor, Food & Snack Donations, Grant for the Winter Edmonds After School Cooking Classes, 2026

West Coast Seeds – Seed Donation

Various Private/Individual Donations – Scholarships for 3 Cooking Class Students at Forest Grove

Gratitude for Our Awesome Volunteers!

Sprouting Chefs is creating a sense of family thanks to having the majority of our volunteers come from the various programs we teach. Students from cooking classes and our camp programs are returning each summer to help us in our camp program. Former cooking class students are returning to the kitchen at Forest Grove to help lead, inspire and most of all, clean up after each class.

Best of all, post secondary alumni are returning to teach what they have learned in their journeys of life to not only inspire but to assure our younger students that through hard work, focus and ambition, achieving goals is possible.

We have also had a great group of new volunteers not connected to former classes join us in the gardens at both Edmonds and Forest Grove who have found us through our website or the Public Health Association of BC Rise Up program.

All in the end create an atmosphere of fun learning and safe support. Pride most notably for me is when these volunteers also help and support each other; evident as they wash up after a class or camp day, hearing their banter, laughter and kindness with each other.





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Impact Stories of Legacy

Gardens Move and Change



Both school gardens at Forest Grove Elementary and Edmonds Community School had various issues that were hard to ignore midway through the summer of 2025. The Forest Grove Garden was breaking down after 14 years of housing soil and plants. There were too many bins at Edmonds causing volunteer fatigue with watering taking up to 2 hours where during the heat wave, volunteers were watering twice a day.

The solution to both issues was to request that 10 of the metal garden bins at Edmond be shared with Forest Grove Elementary after the wooden garden structure was disassembled and taken away.

This was the main message shared with students, staff and community members at both schools and was also a way to create a connection between the communities.

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Digging out the bins at Edmonds began first in the fall season with Garden Club members working very hard to dig out the native plants to move to the front of the school area from 3 of the metal bins. Garden Club, being sponsored by you as our investors, meant this project could be completed.





The task of digging out the bins at Edmonds was completed just before Spring Break with the help of Garden Club students as well as students helping at recess and lunch.



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On the other side, Forest Grove Garden Club began the dismantling of their garden structure from October to mid November. A final dismantling of the remaining space was completed on a weekend in February where former families who helped build the garden in 2011 returned to help.



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By Spring Break, both gardens were ready with 7 empty metal bins coming to Forest Grove and 3 metal bins going to Byrne Creek Secondary to create an easier space to manage at Edmonds.



Waiting for the bins to arrive became a major lesson in patience, trust and surrender with Barb weaving these mindful lessons into classroom lessons with the students and teachers. Regularly scheduled seed classes in April could not all happen due to the lack of the bins arriving at Forest Grove. The message was to trust that whenever the bins did arrive, there would be enough time and classes to help grow a variety of crops for the summer.

By the time they arrived, several classes participated in leveling 6 yds of gravel and adding soil saved from the original garden into the new metal bins from Edmonds and, most notably, timing aligned for Nathan Lo finishing up his university studies, to return to help set up the water reservoir systems with the Gr. 6/7 students who the trust and surrender lesson was shared with.





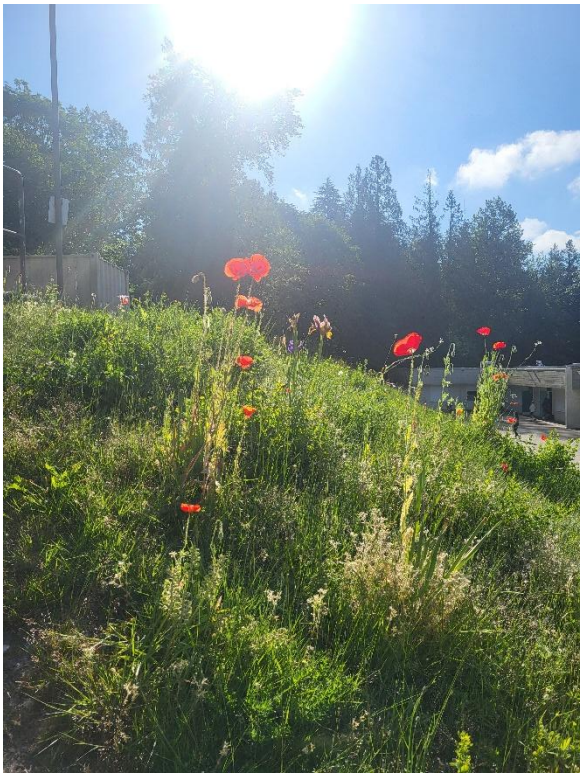
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Bulbs on the Hill at Forest Grove

Through a separate grant a staff member at Forest Grove secured for the bulbs themselves through Bulbs 4 Kids, Sprouting Chefs facilitated a school wide project of planting bulbs on the hill beneath the school garden thanks to donor support. This project also highlighted how the changing climate might effect the growth of these bulbs with the older students, integrated science lessons with how bulbs need to have cold stratification to grow, deepening the meaning of biodiversity and importance of pollinators as well as some cultural aspects of where these various bulbs originated. Most of all, the kids really loved digging holes before each class with at least 20 kids arriving at recess and lunch to pre dig on the hill.

The result was a riot of color that bloomed just before and after spring break all the way through the end of the year, with crocuses, mini irises, daffodils, tulips and later, poppies and lupine.





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Pen Pal Project - Connection

To deepen the connection between the 2 schools these garden bins were being moved between, Sprouting Chefs created a pen pal project where 8 intermediate classes at Forest Grove were matched with 8 intermediate classes at Edmonds. Students learned about the gardens changing in the winter season classes when Edmonds would be sharing their garden bins with Forest Grove. This was to soften the change they would see in the spring and to create an opportunity where students at Edmonds would be able to share a valuable resource. This was something new since most of the population at Edmonds are at risk and high need. They now had a chance to share and help another community while creating potential new friendships as well.



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Writing letters to each other was a new and very fun experience for most of the students. Many asking to write more letters and excited to receive letters in return. Students at Forest Grove learned that most of their pen pals did not originally come from Canada but what they all had in common were their shared interests.

Summit Program at Burnaby Mountain Secondary



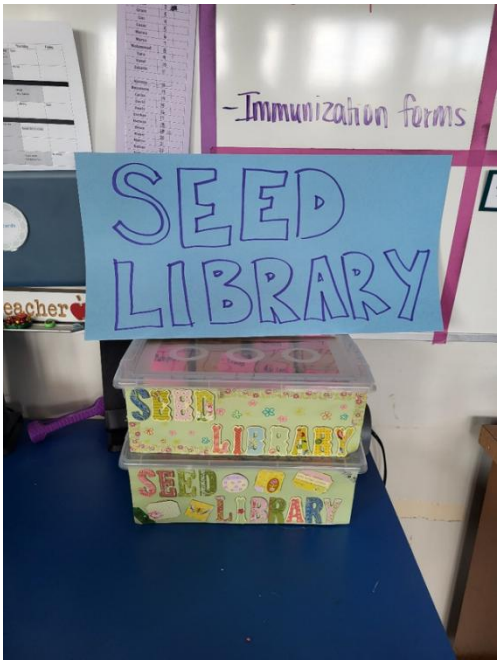
Sprouting Chefs continued to teach lessons in the greenhouse of Burnaby Mountain Secondary alongside the teachers in the Summit Program which supports students challenged by mental health issues. Many of these students did not attend classes regularly but would attend a class that would be taking place in the greenhouse where they had the chance to grow food in one of the soil tables.

Students were paired together and given the choice of potential crops to grow including beans, radishes, lettuces, lavender, and tomatoes. Success varied according to which students were most committed to their crops. One student found a small broccoli seedling growing in his table and continued to nurture it all the way till the end of the year when he brought it home. This same student went on to apply to work in Europe in the WOOF organization where he was able to live with a family with room and board covered while working in their farm. He also secured a landscaping job as well as 2 other students in the program.

This project gave the teens a sense of purpose when they helped care for a variety of seedlings the elementary students planted in the winter and then housed in the greenhouse until they were ready to be moved into the school gardens.

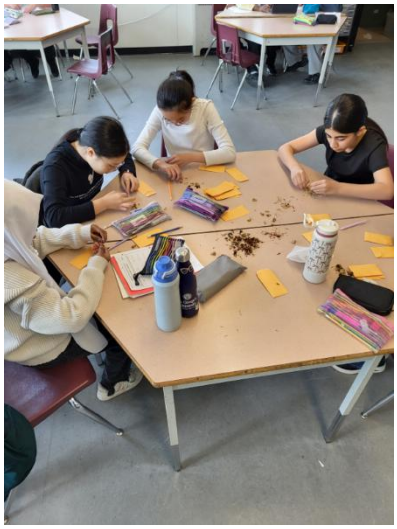
One nature loving student from the Summit Program on the autism spectrum also joined us at Forest Grove Garden Club as a volunteer where she found a sense of purpose and joy at being outside with the children, soil, plants and insects too!

Seed Library at Edmonds Community School



Each year, Sprouting Chef strives to create opportunities for Gr. 7 students to leave a legacy project behind at their school. From planting a tree to setting up a new way of growing food, students have had many opportunities to learn about service and giving back.

Creating a Seed Library at Edmonds Community School with Division 2 was such a legacy. Sprouting Chefs visited Division 2 over a series of classes starting in the fall season when seeds were available to harvest in the garden. The idea of a seed library was introduced as well with the basic idea that a large variety of seeds had been collected over the past few years and would be too much to plant in one garden. These seeds would be packaged and shared with the community with the idea that they would grow at home in a garden or pot, seeds would be saved from the plants and returned the following year to re share again.



A follow up visit in the winter season thanks to the support of our funders, allowed Sprouting Chefs to deepen the appreciation of seeds connecting the Black History theme teaching that seeds from nations where black slaves were stolen from also carried hope with seeds woven into clothing or into their hair as they traveled to North America. Students were divided into groups that included a mini team focused on communication and marketing to build the awareness of the seed library via school posters, website information and a written email shared to the school principal to send to the wider community. Another group focused on packaging the saved seeds and finally a group that would supervise the library itself once set up in the spring season. This highlighted the unique challenge of communication in a school where English is not the first language.

The division 2 teacher appreciated this lesson and project so much that we are continuing this project in the 2026/2027 school year and the division 2 teacher at Forest Grove is willing to do the same.

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Teacher Appreciation Lunch at Edmonds Community School



The ability to bring together cooking class and garden club students to create a meal for their teachers using ingredients from the school garden as well as donated items from the Greater Vancouver Food Bank was an opportunity Sprouting Chefs took on with a sense of pride and privilege. Privilege because finding time during the end of the year was the first challenge with all the various events, field trips and teacher fatigue. Pride from witnessing a variety of students come together for the first time to work very hard to thank their teachers.



We were asked to create this event since it was one of the first times the teachers were appreciated at all in the form of a luncheon. Teachers who work tirelessly to help some of the most underprivileged students in the Burnaby area without a strong parent advisory committee to raise funds to thank these teachers themselves. Sprouting Chefs took up the opportunity to have the teachers pause for a lunch time to come together in the gym of their school to share a meal of pasta made from a tomato sauce, a lentil salad flavoured with pickled radishes and fresh herbs from their school garden, tomato burrata basil salad and an amazing vanilla cake made by our own assistant, Cat Zimmerman finished with fresh local strawberries sliced entirely by 2 8 yr old garden club students.

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Alumni Reunion

Sprouting Chefs continued a new tradition created the year before of bringing together former alumni students from our programs at the end of the school season in the form of a pizza meal and visit to the new Forest Grove School Garden Space.

Although the chance to re connect with myself to my former students is a focus of this event, what I most encouraged the group of alumni to do more was to connect and share stories with each other. The few Gr. 12 students moving on to university were encouraged to chat with the current university students, Caio, Casey and Katarina to learn about their experiences. Grade 8 and 9 students simply gathered to chat and share stories of their upcoming summer plans.

Ending our brief time together in the new garden space was also special. Appreciating all the hard work of the current Garden Club and community creating the new space meant a great deal coming from several students who originally learned in the old garden who were excited by the new changes of the garden as it stands now.



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Our Programs

Sprouting Chefs provides 4 main programs across 2 elementary schools Forest Grove and Edmonds, with additional support provided to Burnaby Mountain Secondary. These programs are:

- our Sustainability and Wellness Classes which provides a range of in-classroom teachings
- our After School Cooking Classes utilizing as much as we can from the garden and basic cooking skills
- our Garden Clubs providing after school programs at both schools for students to foster connection with the earth and their community
- our Summer Camps integrating wellness and sustainability learnings with fun, food and adventure

Sustainability and Wellness Classes – Edmonds Community School and Forest Grove Elementary



Sprouting Chefs has continued to be fortunate in having donations from private investors which allowed for the continuation of our programs starting in mid September. From seasonal exploration lessons in the garden, to bulb planting to visiting the labyrinth,.

November has been the month Sprouting Chefs focuses on providing mental health tools to manage anxiety to all students at both Forest Grove and Edmonds Community School. These classes provide safe spaces to identify what anxiety is, how it feels in our bodies, tools to manage including breath work as well as deeper discussions based on age levels. These classes set Sprouting Chefs a part from other garden and nature based programs and highlights why we consider ourselves to be a holistic educational service.

Moving the gardens around was definitely a main focal point and did provide some logistical issues when it came time to plant the gardens as we did not have clear dates on when the metal garden bins would finally arrive at Forest Grove. In the meantime, Sprouting Chefs focused on building the understanding of why the gardens were moving around with each of the classes at each of the schools.



Funding support for our in school program this past year was thanks to funding provided by **Open Road Foundation**. Thanks to this support, starting in January, Sprouting Chefs provided several activities for students to learn about the gardens being moved around and to create a connection between the two main schools we work with including the pen pal project.

Composting and waste management was introduced to 4 younger classes through housing worm bins in their classroom at Forest Grove.

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The tower garden was also a feature for another Gr. 6/7 class at Edmonds.

Gr. 6/7 students at Forest Grove set up a water reservoir system for their new bins which was a full circle moment since this system was created by a former Forest Grove student, Casey Lo who's brother Nathan Lo, came in to help in early May.

A medicinal herb tea garden is also slowly growing to be another place where students can learn how food is medicine and medicine is food.

Harvesting and tasting classes in both schools also continue to be a key ingredient to the success of our classes with classes come outside when crops are ready to explore what grew, how crops can vary in flavor and the simple joys of how all plant parts can be edible including the flowers.

After School Cooking Classes – Empowerment, Diversity and Inclusion



Donations via the Giving Tuesday campaign in later fall 2025 allowed for 3 students from Forest Grove to be sponsored on scholarships into our Winter Cooking Classes. These students enjoyed learning along side their classmates to make a variety of basic meals including homemade ramen, Chinese New Year dumplings and hot pot as well as having the chance to create their own recipes at the end of the season.

The after school cooking class at Edmonds Community School was funded through the Burnaby School District via Feeding Futures a BC Government initiative dedicated to creating and expanding school food programs. This allowed Sprouting Chefs to host 3 seasons of cooking classes to close to 60 students in the Edmonds community.

Although we are grateful to teach multiples of children, our preference is to continue having the same students' season to season year to year to truly note their growth, increased skills and improved eating habits. Another side effect of our cooking programs is the fact our students develop an increased sense of confidence, pride, responsibility and teamwork with parents noting how their children participate more in cooking together at home. When our student's step into their own kitchens with their families, they understand the importance of timing, dividing tasks and duties of a recipe as their overall satisfaction.

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Garden Clubs - Community



As the gardens were being moved in the 2025/2026 season, Garden Club and the team of students enrolled in these programs were integral to the success and new set up of each of the school gardens at Forest Grove and Edmonds. These two groups were also connected via pen pal letters as a way to get to know each other, honor and thank the Edmonds students from the Forest Grove students and as a way to introduce the lesson back into the classroom as well.



Both groups of Garden Club members worked extremely hard starting in the fall season of 2025 and into the early spring of 2026. Main activities were the emptying of the bins at Edmonds and the garden structure at Forest Grove. Other activities also included fall nature based crafts, indoor planting of future late spring crops, re seeding areas left from the gardens being moved, monitoring worm bins at Forest Grove, setting up a new hoophouse structure with Pablo from University Highlands at Edmonds and adding colour and art to the garden area by painting the bins.

Garden Guardians were also created thanks to an idea proposed by a volunteer at Edmonds where students were encouraged to think of what the garden needs and creating super heroes or folk stories similar to garden fairies and gnomes. Students really enjoyed the process of putting their imagination of super hero characters together with their love of their school garden at both schools.



Finally, a main highlight at the end of the growing season each year is the harvesting of potatoes planted just before Spring Break, housed in the greenhouse at Burnaby Mtn and brought back for the students to care for until the right moment. The squeals of delight of the students digging through to find as many potatoes as possible is always a very fun sight to witness.

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Summer Wellness & Cooking Camp at St. Timothy's



Summer 2026 was the 10 year anniversary of the Wellness and Cooking Camp Program. In 2016, campers first gathered at Lochdale Community School.

2017 saw the first wellness aspect of our program with the introduction of morning yoga sessions and mindfulness crafts in the afternoon. The first few sessions of these camps were small with up to only about 12 children with one week hosting 10 girls where we were able to explore deeper questions of life purpose and vision. I remember fondly sharing the creation of Sprouting Chefs with some of these 13 year old girls who shared with us that our honest authentic stories were truly inspirational and gave them hope for themselves as well.



10 years later, we can proudly say that we have hosted multiple campers from across the lower mainland where we are most proud of the fact that we also have a great group of campers who continue to join us after 3 to 5 years and who are now learning to become volunteers and staff, they believe in and love the program that much.

Main goals continue to be teaching the various virtues of trust, patience, confidence, self love and gratitude via our various activities of morning yoga sessions with our partner, Yoga Buggy, cooking meals made together using as many seasonal local ingredients as possible and exploring ways creativity can be an antidote to anxiety in the afternoons. A natural side effect we are thrilled to see has been the increased confidence, pride, responsibility and teamwork creating a place of belonging.

Our camp program has been valued enough to attract one camper from Qualicum Beach and a returning camper joining us from Brentwood Bay for a second year. Both thoroughly enjoyed themselves and their families report that they continue to cook and help at home.

Out of the total campers we had register this year, 75% were returning campers. Campers came from a variety of areas including Coquitlam, Surrey, Vancouver, New Westminster and Burnaby.

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A highlight of Week 1 of this past summer since we had so many returning campers was a record breaking plank formation during our morning yoga session where the line of campers was so long, 1 photo could not capture all 19 kids in formation as it wrapped through the entire room!

Our team included Ms. Cat Zimmerman joining us from the after school cooking program to provide the support instrumental to the success of the program with her infectious enthusiastic energy and loving grounded kindness to our campers.



New this past year was the introduction of our **Teen Wellness and Leadership Camp** where former campers as well as campers over the age of 13, came together as a group of 9 of our first teens learning how to lead. Focusing on leadership, teen campers also learned various ways to lead themselves, they explored deep questions from what they know for sure to ethical questions of when to stand up and lead others all through the activity of cooking together.

Sprouting Chefs was proud to bring back a former student, camper and youth committee leader, Owen Ebose who was one of our first campers 10 years ago at Lochdale, to facilitate a workshop on what he learned at Harvard University around government and philosophy. Campers were incredible at sharing their own stories of struggle and what they still had anxiety over the upcoming school year with Owen, Cat and I all providing a safe space to share. Creating this safe space where teen campers felt like they belonged and began to understand how aligning with others with shared values created a sense of family.

Teens explored how to create their own wellness wheels, leadership traits, self care and holistic health, various career pathways, goal setting, surrender and trust, as well as creating memorable meals together before defending their reward of receiving a leadership bracelet at the end of the week. A field trip to Bodega restaurant was not only an amazing way to learn about hospitality and running a restaurant, but the group also was led through a financial management workshop with co owner Natalie Rivas which all agreed was extremely valuable.

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It was amazing to see the group connect including one camper who was brand new to the program. Despite her lack of experience in the Sprouting Chefs programs, Linnea left feeling as though she also belonged with an awesome sense of confidence with what she was able to share with the group.



A Look Ahead – Goals of 2026/2027

Goals for 2027:

- Garden Clubs at both Forest Grove and Edmonds to be fully funded - $7,500/school
- Scholarships for Cooking Class Students at Forest Grove Elementary – 1/season, $375/student
- Scholarships for Summer Camp, 1 per week - $600/week/camper 4 weeks total
- In School Wellness and Sustainability Program - $4,500/school
- Outdoor Labyrinth at Edmonds Community School - $2,500
- Community Lunch Event at Forest Grove - $2,500

In closing this report for the past year, I am proud of the accomplishments of the various activities Sprouting Chefs was able to carry out due to the financial support of our funders. There is also a sense of reverence, one of the 4 Rs of Indigenous Learning I am embracing as I finish this report. A reverence to all those who helped this past year re build the school gardens, volunteers who gave care to the gardens over the summer months, former students returning to help and share their knowledge, staff and assistants standing beside the students to encourage and admire the students in the kitchen or outside working hard on the land. Coming together in unity to create and make a difference for all continues to be a mission and vision of Sprouting Chefs. I am proud to say we have achieved this in several ways this past year.

As the world continues to shift and change, we value and understand the need for education and youth programs to also evolve and reflect what is now needed. A place where children and youth feel they can explore their skills in the kitchen, a place outdoors where they can build and grow beautiful spaces together where in the end they can feel proud of their accomplishments individually as well as pride in the positive difference they made together as a community.

Our mission and vision continues to be a program where we allow children and youth the opportunity to shine in ways not always possible in a regular classroom. A light of ideas where our former students return and share what they are doing to make a difference in the world allowing for more hope for our younger students as well.