Sprouting Chefs Annual General Meeting 2020 - Founders Message



It is an understatement to say that the past few months of 2020 have been a mixed bag of emotions with the current COVID Pandemic which none of us could have predicted. As many of our members and community remember, we were at a critical turning point in 2020 with funding support for our two main school garden programs in question and as a result had to face the very real possibility of Sprouting Chefs folding as a result.

A Go Fund Me Campaign was launched which successfully raised the awareness and support of the surrounding community with a total of $2,955 raised. Although this amount has not been enough to cover the cost of a full year's worth of programming, combined with donations received from our long time supporters from the **McGrane Pearson Endowment Fund** $3,500 and an unexpected donation from the **Smith S.H.A.R.E Foundation** for nearly the same amount, we are in a better place than where we were giving us the hope to continue.

Success is measured in a variety of ways. Over the years, the marker of success for Sprouting Chefs has been the impact the programs and services we have provided to students we have been able to connect with. Success can also be measured in ways we contribute to society and our community, how we help transform the lives of youth and how we transform the land to be more sustainable. 2020 saw a variety of these successes; from children cooking at home with their families via our virtual cooking classes to children planting their own gardens with their families as they were a part of our Garden Clubs. When word reached some of these families that Sprouting Chefs needed funds, the response from the kids themselves was truly impactful back to us. One set of siblings as example, are currently saving their allowance to donate to us.



Our shifts during the COVID pandemic resulted in continuing to provide ways families could stay connected to nature via our school gardens. Giving families opportunities to help the gardens thrive by watering when they could to helping with harvesting the foods that grew, helped shift perspectives into a place of service and away from all the uncertainties.

With the upcoming year still in question for many of us and still for us at Sprouting Chefs, it is my firm belief that what has resulted during this time of pause when we all came inside to reflect on what is truly important, is that above of all outdoor learning has tremendous value, the need for more wellness programs for children and youth are needed more than ever and the basic life skills of growing and cooking your own food are as important as ever too.

As we continue to evolve to meet the needs of our school communities, we will continue our best to be a source of inspiration, hope and resiliency to those who need it most. **Barb McMahon, Founder/Executive Director**

2070 Birch Grove Place, Burnaby, BC V5A 4A3
Info@sproutingchefs.com | www.sproutingchefs.com | PH: 604-505-0074

Acknowledgement of Sponsors/Donors

Thank you to those donors and sponsors which have allowed many of our events, services and programs to continue during 2020.

Private Donors – Lorna Koyanagi - $1,200 towards the Free Community Lunch Event at Forest Grove, Community Members via Go Fund Me Fundraising Campaign generated funds of $2,955

West Coast Seeds - $350 worth of seeds

Whole Foods Market Giving Program - $1,000

Vancity Branch Partnership Grant - $500

McGrane Pearson Endowment fund held at the Vancouver Foundation - $3,500

Smith S.H.A.R.E Foundation - $3,215

AGM Sprouting Chefs 2020 Elementary Program Highlights

The following is a list of highlights for the Sprouting Chefs Elementary Program created which matched our goals of Engagement, Building Community and Fostering Relationships. Included in our Elementary Program are: Free Community Lunch Event, After School Garden & Cooking Clubs & The Seed to Table Program as per below.

Community Lunch Event at Forest Grove



We were honored to have the support once again, to create a Free Community Lunch Event at Forest Grove Elementary in January of 2020. Sponsorship of this event came from a donation of $1,200 from Ms. Lorna Koyanagi who was also able to attend the event along with some of our board members hosted by our all star team of cooking class kids, Connor, Jeremy, Noa and Xeniya all students who have been cooking in the After School Cooking classes for the past 4 years.



As it was a stellar summer for growing tomatoes, we were able to harvest enough that were then frozen to create our famous tomato pasta sauce for the school community. Salad greens and other ingredients that could not come from the garden, were provided by a donation of funds from our friends at Whole Foods Market in Burnaby. Pasta and olive oil were once again offered to us at a discounted rate from our friends at Ciofi's Market.

Students stepped into the role of preparing, cooking, and serving the meal to the school community. A team of advanced cooking class students took on the role of making the pasta sauce and we had a great new group of students serving the meal itself. After providing this event with some of the same students, we were able to find our flow and created a well-organized event thanks to the efforts of the kids themselves.



Special thanks to Ms. Selena Yip for once again overseeing the cooking of the pasta, orchestrating a flow from the kitchen to the tables and ensuring that everyone had enough. A clean up crew of parents were also instrumental in the success of this event. Teachers and students all look forward to this event every year now with the smells of garlic and tomatoes wafting down the halls, building the anticipation of a great meal cooked by our fantastic students.

After School Garden Club – Forest Grove, Edmond's, Byrne Creek

Despite our After-School Garden Clubs this year being cut short due to COVID, our students still managed to gather in the early months of 2020 to start a huge amount of tomato seedlings. Seeds this year came from both a donation of seeds from our friends at West Coast Seeds as well as the efforts of harvesting and fermenting seeds by the Garden Club members.



Students learned the time it takes to squeeze seeds from tomatoes, ferment them and then allow them to dry before planting both at Forest Grove and Edmond's Community School. Garden Club students at Edmond's used the seeds saved from the Gr. 7 class at the school who participated in the Seed to Table Program.

The Edmond's Garden Club saw fewer numbers than our other programs. An attributed factor to these smaller numbers was due to a less formal registration process as well as this being the first year the program was offered. Although numbers were small, there was one student that never missed an opportunity to be outside in the garden. Alvin, a student on the autism spectrum, was particularly affected by having a space in the school to connect with, the school garden bins. He can often be found in the garden space during all times he can be there. Despite his challenges, the garden brought a sense of grounding, stability, and place for him to explore using his senses over and over again.





Byrne Creek Garden Club students were offered the opportunity for a hands-on workshop during a Saturday morning in the early months of 2020. Students showed up in science classroom early Saturday morning to learn the benefits of worms, worm castings and the benefits of healthy soil when growing tomato plants. Barb also was invited to give some feedback about their garden boxes which were in dire need of repair. Information was shared about what crops would work best in each bin for the upcoming year as well as ways to improve their system of growing.

After School Cooking Classes – Forest Grove, Stratford Hall



Food, food, glorious food! So many amazing recipes were created by the students at Forest Grove and Stratford Hall. From a variety of brunch ideas for the Advanced class to homemade Mexican tacos, Japanese themed meals and creative desserts were all explored in the Winter 2020 classes.

Classes at Forest Grove are offered throughout the school year in 3 sets of seasonal sessions: Fall, Winter and Spring. Students are divided into skill sets as this program has been running since 2016 with Beginner and Advanced sessions. Having the school garden to access for a variety of ingredients, this program at Forest Grove is seen as the model.



A true testament to our program also was seen with the sponsorship support of one of our beginner students, Reena, by a set of teachers at Forest Grove. Reena displayed enormous potential as a future chef with her awesome knife skills, enthusiasm to try new foods and existing knowledge of food. She was set to be bumped into our Advanced class for having both the skill and maturity to continue in the program.

Our Advanced students were on the path to further strengthen their skills with all 12 Advanced students who have been in the program for the past 4 years coming back to back seasons throughout the year. Recipes featured in the Winter in the Advanced classes included ideas the students had themselves as a way for them to direct the program. This season was exciting for a few of our students who were advanced into this class from the beginner program including Audrey, Elliott, Wesley and Ella.



Success of this program comes from the extra support and leadership we have from our assistant chef leaders, Rebecca Douglas, Andy Bains and our youth volunteers, Mini Zhang, Anita Mirsham, and Wendy Feng.



Rebecca also was the chef leader of our new program hosted at Stratford Hall which was a huge success during the winter of 2020. She led a group of 10 students through a variety of recipes highlighting local ingredients.

Seed to Table Program



"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow"

What better way to have hope for the future than having kids learn about seeds and what it takes for them to grow into food. Seed counting and sorting was a focus for our primary students during the first few months of 2020. K and Gr. 1 students were invited to sort a variety of seeds that were saved from their school gardens as well as seeds we had on hand. These classes were well received by the teachers and kids a like. The students were challenged to sort as many seeds as possible according to size, shape, and texture some managing to organize and classify up to 15 different varieties.

Forest Grove Gr. 6/7 students were posed an idea of creating legacy for the school grounds by finding a site for a rain garden; a place to plant specific plants to filter out the collected rain fall before the water enters the drainage system. Right on point, the day the students were set to follow through on this task, the weather cooperated with a heavy down pour much to the disdain of the students! They were asked to tour the school to see where water collected most and where said water would also enter the drainage system of the city. Sadly, this project was not completed due to the classes not as active later in the year due to COVID.

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As mentioned as part of the Garden Club activities, Gr 7 students at Edmond's were taught how to harvest seeds from cherry tomatoes, which were then fermented, dried, and saved to plant later for the school garden. A food and nutrition component were also included in this lesson with the health benefits of tomatoes as well as a few ways best to cook tomatoes from ketchup to tomato sauce.



Special note that the excess of tomato seedlings were offered to the community as a fundraiser where $200 was raised in donations using these seedlings.

Early Spring 2020 – COVID Hits

The COVID 19 Pandemic affected the Sprouting Chefs programs in a variety of ways with schools shutting down. We were unable to provide our Spring After School Cooking Classes at both Stratford Hall which had an enrollment of 17 students, and Forest Grove which had students enrolled in both the Advanced and Beginner classes.



Alternatively, we offered families the opportunity to continue to cook together virtually at home with 5 families signing on for Zoom classes where a variety of recipes were created from Buddha Bowls to Mexican Churros. This proved to be a challenge for some while other families enjoyed the experience to cook together in a formal way once a week. Recipes were sent out ahead of time so parents could shop and prepare some ingredients. Barb demonstrated the main parts of the recipes with the families completing the rest just in time for dinner.



The Seed to Table Program which was planned to continue at both Edmond's Community School and Forest Grove in early April of 2020, were also affected with us not being able to teach all 16 divisions in either schools. A challenge was faced about what to do to sustain the gardens while schools were closed. A big inspiration for us to continue was the enthusiasm of the newly appointed principal at Forest Grove, Mr. Kurt Gurney who saw the school garden as a way for the community to stay connected during a time of great uncertainty. Similar sentiments were felt at Edmond's who were about to embark on the task of continuing their meal program with daily lunches distributed to the community.

The school gardens went from being an educational resource to a source of food for the communities. Seeds were planted in both gardens by Barb herself to demonstrate that life goes on, food will always be needed and more than ever, healthy crops to boost immune systems and relieve anxiety are highly valued.

A total of 9 families were given food grown in the school garden at Forest Grove. Feedback from this effort was incredibly positive with the families very open and willing to eat the veggies grown right from the school garden more

than they would normally. Several bags of crops harvested at Edmond's were shared and distributed to as many families as possible by the Community Coordinators and staff.



As a way to share our story and spread the awareness of our efforts, CBC highlighted Sprouting Chefs via an interview with Barb at the Forest Grove Garden on Wednesday June 10, 2020.

June 2020 - the testing ground

We were enthusiastically invited back to both Forest Grove and Edmond's when schools re opened in June of 2020 to work with small cohort groups in the outdoor spaces of the garden, garden bins and labyrinth areas. Our main focus with these classes were to highlight the foods growing in the garden that would support our immune systems garlic, dark leafy greens, oregano rich with Vit C and antioxidants as well as the plants that would calm our nervous systems and help with anxiety; lavender, lemon balm, and root vegetables.



Student were invited to explore the garden, help us weed and maintain the space and harvest the crops that were ready. At Forest Grove, many students enjoyed the challenge of holding bees and worms.

Edmond's saw a modified program with only a few classes and students participating including a set of siblings who chose to do online learning only but joined Barb in the garden to help with harvesting.





This was a challenging time for us as there was little word from our grants that we were waiting for. A Go Fund Me Campaign as mentioned was created to rally the support for our charity organization raising enough for us to continue in the Fall season.

A Word from Owen Ebose

It was during this challenging time when we were faced with the serious question to continue, that one of our beloved students, Owen Ebose, reached out to inquire about volunteer opportunities with us in the summer sparking our reason why.

Owen was first connected to us in the spring of 2016 as a Gr. 7 student at Lochdale Community School as one of the most engaged students Barb has ever taught; enthusiastically curious about soil and growing his own garden at home, bright eyed front and centred during her class. Owen, as a result of his strong curiosity with our program was then invited to participate at our 2016 fundraiser and was then sponsored by Larry Koyanagi, one of our voting members and advisors, to join us at our cooking camp in 2016 as a camper. He then joined us as a volunteer/mentor the following year in 2017 at Gardenworks.

Owen's Story:

Growing up can be difficult. You face new challenges every day, whether it is learning a difficult subject in school or navigating your way through endless drama.

As a young child, I was always searching for my purpose. I bounced around from one friend to another, tried countless new activities, and constantly altered my personality to fit in. I seemed to believe that life was supposed to be this way. Always struggling to succeed, never finding an environment to call home. I lived this way for much of my time in elementary school. Then, I met Barb at Sprouting Chefs. She came in to teach a lesson on gardening and compost. I was an older student, so I was more focused on preparing for high school. I was not expecting to enjoy these activities and was prepared to leave as soon as possible. As she started telling us about the beauty of nature, the importance of respecting the Earth, and how we are all connected, I began to listen. She explained what compost was, and how we can reuse our waste to better the environment around us. I remember seeing worms digging through the bin and wondering how any creature could find a home in such a terrible place, surrounded by degrading matter. Barb explained that worms play a key role in our ecosystem, enhancing soil quality.



I began to think about the similarities between myself and those worms. We were both parts of an interconnected environment. The difference was the worms had found their purpose. Even though many are disgusted by them and their living conditions, they are still contributing to the world around them in a meaningful way. I realized that I did not have to please everyone and that what mattered was my happiness. For the rest of the session, I was extremely engaged, asking questions, and participating in every activity.

Afterward, I began attending Sprouting Chefs camps and started volunteering for the organization. Since that day, my life has completely changed. I have found a true home amongst like-minded individuals who are loving and caring.



I now have a passion for sustainability and the environment and am a climate activist. I owe all of this to Barb and her program. She works with every student to ensure that they feel loved and welcomed. She engages students and sparks passion within them, something that many teachers are unable to do. I have spoken with students and parents who described the impact Sprouting Chefs has had in their lives, praising Barb as their mentor.

We desperately need more programs like this in schools across the world. Many students, like me back in elementary school, are lost. They have no passion or interest, and do not care for long lectures and boring activities. The teaching style present in Sprouting Chefs programs is different from anything I have come across before. Every student who passes through leaves with a newfound interest in sustainability and healthy living. Barb changed my life, and I am committed to helping her do the same for more youth across the world. As we face a climate crisis, education is key. Not only is Sprouting Chefs a fantastic extracurricular program, but it is an organization that should be integrated into schools and institutions everywhere. Sprouting Chefs has inspired a generation of future politicians, scientists, executives, and world leaders who will fight for this planet.





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Summer Work Bees – Recycling the Teens into EnvironMentors

School gardens always face the challenge of how they will be maintained each summer. Sprouting Chefs engages the community via the garden clubs by inviting families to volunteer to water and maintain the gardens each week in July and August. Forest Grove had a very dedicated group of families working each week to water, weed and harvest what they could. Edmond's saw 1 main family support the garden bins along with a community group of youth volunteers from the B'hai group.







Work Bees were also facilitated throughout July and August, hosted by Sprouting Chefs where we were delighted to welcome back Vanessa Woo from our summer camp program along with her friends. Owen also joined us, curious and supportive as ever. Tasks during these work bees included harvesting a variety of crops, watering, weeding, drying of herbs which were then packaged into teas.

Financials & Budget – Khalid Hosenbocus

- See Appendix A

Look Ahead – Ways We Will Continue to Shift and Become More Resilient, Possibilities and Opportunities



With smoke filling our skies this mid September, school starting back with much anxiety, and the struggle to keep going, it is now more than ever, that there is a calling to rise together. It will take all of us to step up and help wherever we can, to become more resilient and create a new way of life for the children of our communities. Sprouting Chefs has been fueling students with knowledge about food, how to take care of ourselves and the earth for 10 years, planting seeds both metaphorically in the fertile minds of all the children and youth we have taught as well as planting literal seeds in the ground. We are leaning back into the lessons we have taught about how to continue to care for ourselves, each other and this precious earth we all share as our home. Despite not knowing for sure how we will continue, we know that we will be doing our best to continue providing as many resources to those who need it most, the children, communities, educators and supporters we are connected to. And thanks to stories like Owen's, we know our mission is being felt and has served a purpose.

Our ideas are flowing around providing our learning resources online, creating videos to demonstrate ways of nurturing gardens at home and at school, compiling our volumes of recipes into sources of inspiration while also trying to sustain ourselves as an organization through grant applications and sourcing funds from family and corporate foundations as well as being open to new ideas. This is no small task, but we continue to be fuelled with the inspiration that we have made a difference in the lives of youth. There is still much work to be done to continue to empower children and youth with not only skills they learn in the kitchen or garden, but to inspire them that they themselves have the power to change our world with their own creative innovations for a better future, a New Earth.

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