2021

2021 Sprouting Chefs Annual General Report



Barb Koyanagi – Executive Director,
Sprouting Chefs
10/18/2021

Sprouting Chefs Society AGM 2021 – Executive Director's Report



As the fall season is in full swing with leaves changing into various shades, the pause to reflect on how far we have come to appreciate where we are is ever important during these uncertain times. In the first month of the school season, it was still unknown how we could provide our services with conflicting messages in the news media and in the surrounding communities of the schools we provide our services in due to the ongoing Covid pandemic. Despite these uncertainties, financial restrictions, and the actual soil in one of our gardens depleted, our focus continued to be what CAN we do to make things better?

What has been affirmed during these challenges is that no one person can do every thing. As our programs were offered to smaller groups of cohort students, what was noted was that a smaller group did not necessarily mean less work was accomplished. These smaller groups of students were comprised of very committed talented students who had skill sets for gardening or cooking or even better, a wide open curiosity to learn more. Often in the school gardens, students would remain past the end times to finish a certain task and what was also wonderful was to have previous alumni students return to help.

A value of Home was affirmed in these spaces. A sense that everyone belonged and was accepted as they were.

The other value that continuously is affirmed in our programs is that of Love; love of oneself, love of others, love of our food and love of the earth. In each of our programs we focus on at least one of these love values to foster a sense of holistic education.

Although we have proven resilient during these times, weathering storms of financial uncertainty to be met with generous support after reaching out to the community, or when the gardens themselves have had to withstand the various extremes in the climate, intense heatwaves and the need for watering, what is very clear is that Sprouting Chefs has only lasted through this pandemic of 2020 and 2021 because of every bit of support it has been given. By coming together with school community coordinators, school principals, youth volunteers, parent association committees, the students and teachers themselves, Sprouting Chefs has been able to bridge the pandemic with a renewed sense that we will and can continue.

As we see in nature with dandelions and even tomatillos growing in the cracks of sidewalks, we know we are all strong and resilient as humans. As a sustainable non profit, what is clear, is that we are even stronger, brighter and more creative when we come together as a community that works together towards a common goal. For us, this goal is simply to be better than the day before, leaving the area better than when we found it and placing as much hope into the minds of the students we work with than what was there before.

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

During the many pauses of time when we simply were not able to provide our regular services, a practice of reflecting on what we have already done in the past and the abundance of what is already here was a common theme during conversations regarding confidence and anxiety with the students. Reflecting to the students that they have been in a state of amazing service to their community whenever they gathered to tend to the garden spaces of their school has reinforced this confidence. The practice of learning how to cook for themselves was an act of service to take care of themselves and their families as well are each of the ways I am proud we continued our mission to provide holistic education to the youth we work with. **– Barb Koyanagi, Founder/Executive Director**

Thank You and Acknowledgement

We are extremely grateful for the support of our various sources of financial funding during a year when the viability of our organization was in serious question. These funds allowed us to provide programs from February of 2021 to July of 2021.

Forest Grove PAC - $6,500 (In School Seed to Table Classes Forest Grove Elementary Program, April to June, various garden materials and supplies)

TD Friends of the Environment $6,500 (In School Seed to Table Classes, Windsor and Edmonds Elementary Program, soil delivery for Edmonds)

McGrane Pearson Endowment Fund - $5,000 (After School Garden Club activities at Forest Grove and Windsor Elementary)

ASSAI Funding - $9,580 (After School Sports and Art Initiative Funding via the Burnaby School district) – After School Garden Clubs, Virtual Cooking Classes and a 3 week Summer Session at Edmonds Community School

Various Private/Individual Donations $2,271.26

Inspirational Stories

Stragglers or Committed Garden Club Members?

Although the Garden Clubs at Forest Grove, Edmonds and Windsor Elementary were considerably smaller groups than before the pandemic, the groups that did come together to provide their service of helping their school gardens, were extremely committed to the tasks at hand. At Windsor Elementary, there were 2 new Gr. 7 students who had a thirst for all things plant knowledge with fantastic curious minds, questioning the why of what we were doing, and remaining sometimes up to 45 mins past the end times of the sessions just to complete a mundane task of weeding.







Similar commitment was seen at Forest Grove with returning alumni student, Ms. Casey Lo, who now heads our Youth Committee. Casey would often not only stay much past the end time of a Garden Club at Forest Grove but would also bring her wonderful dog, Sheba, to keep us all company. Sharing her sprouting wisdom of growing plants and food ideas with the younger students, Casey also demonstrated a commitment to the organization itself by volunteering her time so freely with the Garden Club, Summer Session at Edmonds and now as Youth Committee Head gathering teens together for future Sprouting Chefs events and projects. Her connections with other youth organizations such as Youth to Sea and the initiatives she is starting at her current high school, Burnaby Mountain Secondary are testimony to her dedication not only to Sprouting Chefs but to the environment itself. Casey has been with us for most of her youth and we are so grateful for her continued presence, energetic spirit and enthusiasm.



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

Seed to Table Classes – Forest Grove, Edmonds and Windsor Elementary



Planting seeds at each of the school gardens in the spring of 2021 was accomplished thanks to the various donations and funding we received. Students enjoyed the opportunities to be outside and learn ways we are all connected. Mother nature provided wonderful and serendipitous moments of curiosity with worms emerging from the grass at Edmonds, bees visiting the overgrown blackberry bushes at Windsor, and the younger primary students really enjoying the opportunities to collect a variety of insects at all 3 schools. Bees and lemon balm provided a wonderful way to deepen the connection that nature can provide us. Many students at Edmonds are still getting used to being around insects at all. Before visiting the bees at the radish blossoms, students were first taught some basic anxiety relief methods using the breath while deeply inhaling sprigs of lemon balm growing abundantly in their bins. Their ultimate goal was to also be able to hold a bumble bee just like their fellow students at the model school, Forest Grove. It was amazing to see the transformation of some of these students as they embraced the courage to be around the bees and eventually for some, even be able to hold one.



With this funding, we were able to visit the schools both in April to plant the various crops and again in June to harvest and send home the crops to the families. Most successful were the garden bins at Edmonds, being made of galvanized metal, these bins warmed the soil to provide an abundant spring harvest. Crops at Forest Grove and Windsor, despite being the oldest of the school gardens we've been working in, struggled to produce. Challenges provide opportunities for deeper learning, and it was noted that the soil at the garden at Forest Grove has been working very hard for the past 3 years. Regenerative gardening practices, no tilling the soil, leaving as many plants in the soil as possible, composting and planting a diverse amount of crops including a wildflower garden, were noted in the classes at Forest Grove as a result. Many radishes, greens, tomatillos, and peas did end up in the bellies of many of the Forest Grove students however. At Windsor, students continued to enjoy taking home sprigs and transplants of lemon balm, chard, and mini handfuls of salad leaves despite the lack of other crops. Despite not being able to eat many of the crops, the students were thrilled to just be in their garden spaces with lovely cards of gratitude given to us as proof.

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

10 Year Anniversary of the Forest Grove School Garden



Although we were not able to officially celebrate the build and creation of the first edible school garden in Burnaby at Forest Grove Elementary due to the Covid pandemic, we at least managed to acknowledge a few of the students who were integral to the success we now have. At one of the Garden Clubs in the spring of 2021 at Forest Grove, while improving the school outdoor labyrinth, Ms. Rosie Chady, an original member of the Garden Club since 2012, came out of the trails as we were sending our gratitude to the students who helped us come up with the idea of the labyrinth at all. Rosie and her sister Anna were part of this conversation, and the current Garden Club student of 2021 were able to thank her in person.





After 10 years of growing a variety of crops, feeding multiple children and their families, as well as having deep discussions on the various virtues,it is also noted that the garden structure itself at Forest Grove will be undergoing a few repairs just when this report was written. Big thanks to Steve Cook, current parent at Forest Grove for his generous donation of building supplies and time during a very rainy wet weekend to repair the sides of the garden structure. Returning alumni Garden Club students including Ms. Casey Lo, Will McMahon, Katarina and Mattias Callingham as well as a former cooking class student, Reily Reid, Megan Wallace and a few extra teen volunteers, all need to be acknowledged and thanked for their help.

It is important to note that the build and creation at all could not have happened without a variety of support. I often refer to Merrill Boyle, former parent of Forest Grove, as my Wonder Twin who in the beginning of this project and now model program was integral to its current success. Merrill and her positive attitude, spirit and enthusiasm made it possible to overcome so many obstacles we faced in the beginning of this project. From the proposal stage of

addressing all 12 issues against the project at all, gardening late into the evening at times, reviewing multiple grants, tracking all the various costs, and her famous “wine o’clocks” will always be remembered with so much gratitude.



Reno Ciofii, former Assistant Superintendent of the Burnaby School District saw himself as the “grease in the wheel” to keep our ideas flowing but also provided a strong sense of belief and support to continue despite the time it took to have the garden built. Noula Neufeld, former Forest Grove PAC President, wrote the initial grant to the Home Depot Foundation that secured the funds to build the garden. Deb Taylor, former principal at Forest Grove, was a guiding force and bridge between the school and the district connecting us to others who added their “grease to the wheels of change” including Ms. Brenda Mumford, former Board Trustee who advocated for the project to go forward via the Building and Grounds Committee and who also granted us the initial final approval in April of 2011.

In the end, it was the community itself who came out on a Victoria Day long weekend to lay the foundation of the garden with their kids in tow and with the help of Gary Miller of Home Depot. Many of these parents are long gone from the school with their children graduated from high school even but their legacy remains in the form of a garden space for the current students, teachers and community. Every time I see little ones sitting under the current cherry blossom tree that now stretches out to provide much needed shade, I tell the story of how 10 years ago now, students in Gr. 6/7 planted that tree as a true sign of generosity understanding that they themselves would not enjoy its shade but that the future students would.







Cooking Classes Go Virtual



Thanks to funding provided by the After School Sports and Art Initiative via the Burnaby School District with it's focus to provide after school program opportunities to at risk youth, Sprouting Chefs was able to create a unique at home cooking class experience. Although this group was small made up of Gr. 6/7 students who were both in the Garden Club and the cooking classes, funding allowed for each of the students to learn how to cook dinner for their families once a week for 8 weeks via Zoom calls for 2 sessions. Growth was noted over this time frame with each of the students being able to cook along by only viewing on a screen and guided through recipes in each of the stages where in the end, a complete meal was made for their families. By the end of the sessions in June however, the entire group noted it was the most fun when we were all finally able to gather in person for 1 last session at the school itself. The pure joy of both harvesting a few ingredients from the garden bins, cook together in person and then sit down and eat together, a simple joy was abundantly appreciated by all.

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

Summer Session Edmonds Community School

For the first time, Sprouting Chefs offered a summer program to the students at Edmonds Community School over a 3 week time frame. This was a first for us as our usual summer program has only been a 5 day session. With the challenge of providing up to 14 days to the same students, inspiration largely came from the students enrolled in the program itself. We focused on all the aspects of our total programs from mental wellness conversations around a virtue highlighted each day and wellness crafts, as well as the garden bins at the school being well maintained. What sparked the students the most as we often see however, is when the roasting pans, cutting boards and knives came out and the kids were able to eat the fruits of their labors from earlier in the year. The program was a continuation of the Garden Club and Virtual Cooking Classes at Edmonds after all. The difference was the group of students we had not only came from the Edmonds Community but also included new students from other areas of Burnaby. We were able to spark an interest in gardening with some of these students for the first time thanks to the ability to also cook up some fun recipes with the kids.



Out of all the activities that were accomplished during this summer program, the most notable highlight for me as a director was the ability to allow the youth volunteers to shine their strong light. Measurements of success included Owen Ebose leading the group through conversations about sustainability and sharing times of pure joy in connecting with the kids themselves, Shayla Bramabala, a new youth member and recent Gr. 7 graduate of Edmonds showed incredible potential with her leadership, service and responsibility skills. Casey Lo also came in during the last week of the camp but also helped with the initial planning of this program infused the last few days with a sense of fun with

making both a solar oven with the kids as well as an awesome zucchini chocolate loaf. She also learned the fine art of not telling the kids all the ingredients until well after they have consumed said zucchini chocolate loaf!

A Look Ahead - Building a Team

As we continue our mission of providing holistic education to the schools we teach at, we are committed to adapting and evolving to ensure we're focusing on the right things at the right times. This is what the pandemic has taught us. Despite the overwhelm of the state of the world and the stress levels of teachers at the various schools, what is right at the time in each moment is the focus. Sometimes it is welcomed to just sit and listen to the sounds of the forest, breathing and pausing with a group of overactive students! The students themselves who continue to bring their curiosity to the gardens or kitchen tables or outside, remind us how to stay present. The plants and soil who have weathered the drought of the summer of 2021 remind us of true resiliency and who have only really thrived thanks to the community of volunteers who continued to water and care for the gardens.

With the anticipation of a better year ahead with funding on its way, what is clear is we accomplish much more when there are a variety of people behind our cause. As we expand our programs and continue right where we are at the 3 schools we have been focused on, our hope is to bring in new team members with a broad range of experiences and skills. What will continue to be the focus no matter the backgrounds or experiences are the passion to help youth. The vision is to change the world in the end. But as I said to the youth that gathered when this report was written, for now, it is enough to just make whatever space you are in better than it was. I believe we have done that this past year and I know we will continue to as well into the future thanks to the help of all who have supported us and the new people we invite in as well.