

## Additional Activities

There was never a dull moment in 2017 — whenever it seemed as if activity might quiet down, new and exciting opportunities would present themselves! These fresh opportunities included:

- Determining how to make excellent use of a donated pickup truck to add to our mosquito fleet of vehicles, which included two refrigerated vehicles for moving fresh, local produce.
- Expanding support to the two Community Gardens on 21 Acres' campus in various ways and dedicating more resources to help gardeners learn about water-wise, chemical-free growing practices.
- Celebrating three former 21 Acres employees who launched a new, separate organization, Farmstand Local Foods, for marketing, aggregating, and distributing food from small, sustainable farmers to wholesale buyers.
- Growing membership significantly — beyond 400 people — and continuing to build a sense of community among those who chose to belong to 21 Acres and engage fully in the membership program.
- Hosting Tuesdays@21, a dynamic, free discussion and film series that helps people explore sustainable issues and ways to embrace climate action.

## Expressions of Gratitude

As we reflect upon 2017 and the years leading up to it, we feel a tremendous sense of gratitude to the community. We thank all of you, including our volunteers and members, for investing in 21 Acres. You inspire us each and every day by giving your time and support to programs, bringing friends and family to campus to take on projects, enjoying classes, and shopping in the Farm Market!



## Looking ahead

We are very much looking forward to working with the community to build on all that we've learned. In the coming years we'll be reinvigorating and revising the membership program to involve more people and inspire further, concrete steps to mitigate climate change. We are in the process of building on the interpretive center concept to create more dynamic, interactive engagement opportunities for guests who visit campus. On the farm, the new greenhouse and rocket mass heater are helping to extend production into shoulder seasons, allowing our farmers to grow more food for the community. In our kitchen, we plan to bring the greater farming community and individual farmers even further to the forefront of our culinary program and will continue to articulate and share our sourcing guidelines widely. We remain steadfastly committed to inspiring future generations through our ever-expanding youth education programs and, to this end, we will continue to host many children for field trips, farm camps, and cooking classes. Finally, we will support local farmers who practice sustainable and regenerative production methods in myriad ways. Already, in 2018 we are measuring and articulating impacts in all these areas and we look forward to disseminating our work more widely while staying focused on and committed to our mission: *inspiring action to solve climate challenges by learning as a community to grow, eat and live sustainably.*

We are further measuring and articulating impacts in all the areas that we conduct work and look forward to disseminating those more widely.



# 2017 Annual Report

## CENTER FOR LOCAL FOOD & SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Here, at the 21 Acres Center for Local Food & Sustainable Living, we remain committed to our mission of inspiring *action to solve climate challenges by learning as a community to grow, eat and live sustainably.* To this end, we strive to provide an engaging center for people to connect, learn, and explore with one another. We demonstrate sustainable farming practices on our acreage with a focus on rebuilding soil first. We bring thousands of children onsite to experience the farm, the youth garden, and the green building, fueling their curiosity for learning and discovery. We pay farmers fair prices for product that we use in the commercial kitchen and the Farm Market, consistently demonstrating our commitment to pay more than traditional wholesale pricing, which has historically inadequately compensated producers. We inspire new cooks, teach culinary skills and reinvigorate creativity in home kitchens. This past year, we've deepened our engagement with the community in all of these areas and more, while also expanding our reach. The result is supporting a growing group of educated consumers who are seeking knowledge and access to local, sustainable foods. Among the best rewards of this focus on education is getting to be a catalyst that sparks enthusiasm for change and hearing sentiments from visitors who feel more hope and a sense of solidarity among the greater community of people committed to climate action.

All of us at 21 Acres are grateful to our colleagues, volunteers, members, and the community at large for contributing to our success: 2017 was a robust year of activities and accomplishments and we're pleased to share the details here.



*Mission: We inspire action to solve climate challenges by learning as a community to grow, eat and live sustainably.*

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# Board President

*It's remarkable to see such passion and commitment from each person affiliated with 21 Acres, some of which is documented in this 2017 Annual Report. How this commitment has been turned into action by finding ways to bring about more sustainable agriculture and use of alternative energy sources is inspiring, especially knowing the effort is to ultimately impact climate change. Someone once said, when we lose the word "alternative" in reference to energy, we will have arrived.*

*I encourage you to take a few minutes to look over the report so that you better understand how the organization is addressing critical issues by re-building infrastructure that will demonstrate ways to improve our broken food and energy systems.*

*The good news is we're not alone in these endeavors, which makes getting there possible. There are hundreds and hundreds of non-profits, for-profits, individuals, families, farmers, teachers, indigenous people, universities, and groups taking part and doing amazingly good work locally, nationally and worldwide, some of it documented by people like [Paul Hawken](#) and [Naomi Klein](#). A few years ago, a research team at the [Rodale Institute](#) in Pennsylvania calculated that if our food and animal feed were raised sustainably, we could keep emissions below disaster levels — just by keeping carbon sequestered in the soil... and, at the same time, we could still produce enough food to feed people.*

*There is still hope and many pathways to enact change; we welcome your ideas and feedback. Cheers!*

Gretchen Garth, Board President



## Reflections on 2017

It was a very industrious and full year on the 21 Acres campus as we worked to build a community of learners while striving to meet our mission of *inspiring action to solve climate challenges by learning as a community to grow, eat and live sustainably*. Below are some highlights from 2017. This past year we:

- Celebrated reaching our five-year milestone of being a community education center. All year long we hosted educational events, provided free activities, conducted special programs and gave away gifts to members and the community expressing our gratitude for so many years of support.
- Welcomed thousands of people to experience our campus with two, fun community events: Bee Sweet and Get Squashed! These were free and open to all!
- Created two very special 100-mile meals; one with an Asian-inspired theme and one featuring local honey. Each meal was a memorable educational and sensory experience!
- Hosted field trips and farm camps for thousands of kids and dozens of schools that inspired and taught kids about farming and food systems and how sustainable agriculture can proactively address climate change.
- Introduced an Interpretive Center concept and program to engage visitors in deep and meaningful ways by using short, experiential learning opportunities to create "Aha" moments, leading more people to embrace steps for climate action.
- Engaged volunteers, for more than 5,000 hours, to help with campus stewardship. Volunteers worked alongside our staff and learned while generously dedicating their time.
- Closed the year with a Salmon Homecoming Dinner – a fun-filled evening that included Native American storytelling and flute music by local performer, Paul Cheoketen Wagner, dynamic conversation about salmon habitat restoration, and a delicious dinner featuring our Pacific Northwest salmon. All ingredients for this dinner were sourced from sustainable farms located within 100 miles of 21 Acres! This event was the pinnacle of the year and provided us time to reflect on our organizational mission in action.

# Highlights from the Year

## Building a community of learners

In addition to continuing to build a community of learners, we also built on the following priorities:

- Being cognizant of our collective carbon footprint on campus and among the staff. We worked on measuring, reporting and reducing our overall impact, establishing a baseline from which we can strive to improve.
- Improving soil restoration on the farm, moving from sustainable to regenerative farming methods for carbon sequestration and, eventually, for improved production. Embracing truly regenerative practices means that we fully no-till practices and continue to recharge the farm without reliance on a tractor.
- Ensuring that our LEED Platinum Certified Building stays relevant as a dynamic center for discussion and discovery as, over time, it becomes more efficient and provides inspiration for others seeking greener building options.
- Prioritizing education in all events, tours, and activities, in addition to classes, in order to foster a greater understanding of the food system, the production methods used by local farmers, and the importance of sustainable and regenerative farming to combating climate challenges.

We prioritize education in all events, tours, and activities to foster a greater understanding of the food system.



## Youth Education

Across 21 Acres' campus, staff and volunteers work in specialized areas while coordinating across departments to address overarching priorities. In 2017 our youth education team focused on:

- Hosting more than 1,200 students for field trips on the farm and providing a STEM-based curriculum fostering critical and creative thinking skills. Kids of all ages, from preschool through high school, explored a working farm and learned how sustainable farming can help combat climate challenges.
- Expanding our summer farm camp program with additional weeks and new themes, which resulted in a robust group of young people with firsthand knowledge of what it's like to spend time on a working farm. These kids are now fully equipped to communicate the value of eating local by sharing their experiences with others.
- Building an understanding among young visitors (and their adult chaperones) that farms and farmers who use regenerative practices have the ability to mitigate climate change and help heal the planet.
- Improving our Children's Garden by adding new bed space, semi-permanent structures, and many new, perennial plants. We continue to progress the garden towards a more engaging and lasting state so that thousands more children can have a greater understanding of how food grows, why sustainable and regenerative farming is important, and how they can contribute to improving the food system.

Young visitors learn that farms and farmers who use regenerative practices are helping to mitigate climate change.



# LEED Platinum Building and Grounds

We continue to prioritize the relevancy of our LEED Platinum Certified building as it matures, while also continually improving our grounds:

- 21 Acres is committed to adhering to LEED operations’ standards, paying close attention to energy consumption, operating costs, and the quality of the indoor environment. With proper maintenance, costs and climate impact will continue to decrease over time, while equipment life will increase.
- Our wetland restoration project has continued to grow and thrive. The mitigation requirements of King County, which include a 3-year monitoring period, were completed and approved in 2017. The area is expected to open to the public soon, complete with walking trails and a self-guided tour of our native edibles educational garden.
- We made numerous improvements across campus including: building a covered bicycle rack for our increasing number of bike visitors; installing more educational and directional signage, as well as two new engaging interactive displays; adding more picnic tables; and improving the bridge to the farm. Over the course of the year, many other projects were completed to facilitate the use and enjoyment of 21 Acres, both inside and out.



Our LEED Platinum Certified building continues to improve over time as operations costs decrease and equipment life increases as it matures.

## Farm Market

The Farm Market Team conducted nearly 10,000 customer transactions in 2017. (This represents over a quarter-million-dollars being funneled into our local food system!) The Farm Market supports local farmers and entrepreneurs who are dedicated to sustainable growing and sourcing practices by:

- Purchasing over 8,000 pounds of Certified Organic and chemical-free strawberries, spinach, nectarines, apples, peaches, pears, cherries, grapes, celery, tomatoes, bell peppers and tomatoes - all twelve of the items on the EWG's 2017 Dirty Dozen List. These select items are heavily produced in Washington State; we support farmers who use the most sustainable practices, bolstering community access to these popular fruits and vegetables (minus the nasty chemicals!).
- Minimizing food waste on all fronts, including buying imperfect produce from farmers, offering customers gently bumped and bruised produce at a discount, facilitating bulk buys for customers, and donating extra produce to the local food bank. Decreasing food waste directs more money to farmers, keeps food out of the waste stream, and helps feed hungry people.
- Fostering the growing community of local food supporters and creating tools to help customers contribute in myriad ways, such as providing tried and true recipes for sharing, donating change to assist with food access programs, gifting yards of fabric to our local Morsbags chapter, and providing direct feedback about what products and services are needed in the Farm Market.

The Farm Market exclusively sources fresh, frozen and preserved foods from nearby farms who use sustainable, chemical-free practices.

# Certified Organic Farm

Our team continues to maintain Organic Certification for the 21 Acres Farm by keeping strict adherence to WSDA regulations. Indeed, we go far beyond certification requirements, employing many additional sustainable and regenerative practices, including minimizing the use of fossil fuels, embracing no-till practices, and rebuilding soil health without relying upon extensive external inputs. In 2017, we focused on:

- Successfully securing GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) Certification, readying the farm for the new Federal Food Safety Modernization Act.
- Continually renewing our commitment to stewardship of the land and waterways by maintaining our Salmon Safe Certification while being mindful of the creek that borders our farm and the runoff that is effectively managed by our bioswales.
- Adopting no-till practices whenever and wherever possible, limiting tractor use and tillage to almost nothing, resulting in less compacted soils that will provide a beneficial microbial environment for plants and eventually lead to much more productive farmland.
- Improving overall resilience on the farm by: initiating widespread use of diverse cover crops to create soil spaces, penetrate clay layers, and facilitate no-till practices for pasture management and soil building; establishing in-row, permanent pollinator habitats; adding a seventy-five foot worm bed; and establishing a wind row.
- Growing specialty crops of fruits and vegetables including heirloom varieties, culinary herbs, edible flowers, and lesser-known foods; ultimately providing more than 3,500 pounds of produce to the 21 Acres Farm Market for loyal customers and long-time fans of the farm.
- Incorporating a flock of chickens into the farm plan, to help with soil fertility and pest control, and raising four lambs for rotational livestock grazing.
- Conducting variety trials as part of our youth curriculum—testing four varieties of peas, seven of lettuce, and twenty-six of tomatoes— to identify seeds that perform well in farming conditions unique to the Sammamish Valley. Engaging volunteers in the planning, design, and construction of raised beds, garden spaces, and other special features across the farm, while also creating a new volunteer rewards program offering fresh produce to all farm volunteers.

Our team is transitioning from sustainable practices to truly regenerative growing methods by employing a wholistic approach across the farm.

## Community Partnerships, Education, and Research

We continue to honor a concept upon which 21 Acres was originally founded: to be an education center for exploration and discovery. Over the past year, we fulfilled our role as an alternative learning campus by:

- Collaborating with the World Affairs Council to host a Venezuelan agricultural entrepreneur and supporting his funding “pitch” to start a value-added import business.
- Providing an immersive educational experience for three Japanese students from Toyo University in Tokyo, organized by a global educational network in Bellevue. This was an exploratory opportunity to begin the formative stages of building a more robust program to host international guests.
- Partnering with Songaia Cohousing Community on a food forest and on-campus educational experience for their interns.
- Hosting high school, undergraduate, and graduate students from the Seattle Academy of Arts and Sciences, Sustainability Ambassadors, Pierce College, Cascadia College, Bastyr University, and the University of Washington Bothell and Seattle campuses, providing a convening ground and communal space to conduct learning related to food systems and climate action.
- Responding to myriad requests from high school students to serve as a resource for developing their diverse school projects – from writing and literature, to science, film, and more.
- Continuing native plant trials, in conjunction with the King Conservation District, on the 21 Acres campus to test beneficial insect habitat creation with the intent to share the results with the community.
- Partnering with Impact Bioenergy to test their liquid digestate as a possible plant nutrient supplement. The research results will help Impact Bioenergy and other producers better understand this as a potential positive farm input.
- Launching a college partnership through UW’s Carlson Center for Leadership and Public Service. New internship positions were developed, including an Urban Gardening Educator and Appropriate Technology Educator.



# Dedicated Volunteers

21 Acres benefited enormously from volunteers – more than 5,070 volunteer hours were logged in 2017, an increase of 47% over the prior year. These generous community members positively transformed key areas such as the wetlands, food forest and bioswales, in addition to the farm. Last year the volunteer program included:

- Providing culinary job skills training to a core group of community volunteers as well as students from Bastyr University. Participants learned how to source and prepare food using all-local ingredients. Plus, they gained insight into how to manage a kitchen in the most sustainable manner by minimizing wasted energy, limiting excessive water use, avoiding plastics for production and packaging, and paying careful attention to eliminating food waste.
- Providing a location for two new Eagle Scout projects on campus, bringing the total to 26. This is a result of a multi-year collaborative relationship between local Boy Scout Troops and 21 Acres, helping young men successfully complete their Eagle Scout projects and meet this important milestone.
- Hosting students from the Adult Transition Program. Quarterly since 2016, students have been completing a 12-week internship rotation at 21 Acres. There is currently a wait list for this desirable experience. Students work on the farm; our facility team teaches them about day-to-day management of a LEED Platinum Certified building; and the kitchen team provides the students with a light culinary experience. These students leave campus with bolstered resumes reflecting real work experience and knowledge about sustainable issues.
- Serving as a regular resource for companies who are focused on team building and wellness initiatives. For example, Panasonic Avionics has consistently brought staff to volunteer over the years and now they’re establishing a regular volunteer schedule.
- Dedicated individuals, including Alex Greene, a doctoral student who is researching the role that prairies play in healthy ecosystems, take a leadership role in spearheading campus projects. You can see Alex’s work on the farm where the Glendon Biofilters are located. Alex planted and tended to sixty feet of Camassia spp. in the Organic plots of field two for transplanting and he harvested some of the Camas for the kitchen’s culinary experiments.

Young visitors learn that farms and farmers who use regenerative practices are helping to mitigate climate change.



# Culinary Education

21 Acres’ culinary program starts with the farm and we truly implement farm-to-table practices. Ingredients are grown just steps away from the kitchen, or they are harvested from farms nearby. In 2017, we:

- Introduced more people to embracing seasonal foods by hosting 50-plus culinary classes providing hands-on education about topics such as how to: make cheese, homemade pastas and sausages, make vegetarian and plant-forward meals; and how to marry international flavors with local ingredients. These students now have a full repertoire of dishes to cook at home and ideas for approaching cooking if they don’t have a recipe.
- Expanded youth culinary education program to offer a full series of Cultivating Cooks: 101, 201 and 301, graduating kids who have confidence in preparing local food in the kitchen.
- Supported professional cooks and chefs in furthering their understanding of local food systems and how to bolster their food service and ultimately strengthen the local food economy.

# Commercial Kitchen

21 Acres provides commercial kitchen services and incubation support to artisan producers and farmers so that they can strictly adhere to food safety regulations and can successfully sell at farmers markets and into the traditional commercial marketplace. This was a particularly successful year because:

- Two new artisan food businesses outgrew the 21 Acres kitchen and expanded their capacity to meet the demand from distributors and commercial grocers.
- Our kitchen team collaborated with more farmers to test product recipes, conduct tastings and explore value-added production opportunities for bumper crops.
- We purchased tens of thousands of dollars from local, sustainable farmers, including forward contracting with producers in the off season to grow significant volumes for the 21 Acres kitchen to use for value-added processing; thereby providing farmers with cash flow during the leanest time of the year and guaranteeing our chefs have quality product at the height of the season.
- We introduced a wide range of new fresh, frozen and shelf-stable products from the 21 Acres Kitchen to the Farm Market, expanding our own line and, thereby, providing customers with a larger selection of pesticide-free foods made with all-local, sustainable ingredients.
- Food waste was minimized to almost nothing across all kitchen operations; the ultimate goal is getting to zero waste.

Our kitchen team worked with farmers in the off-season to plan for high season needs and committed to purchase significant volumes of food.

# Food Access

Improving local food systems, means improving access for all participants, regardless of financial means. To this end, we explored potential solutions and, in 2017 we:

- Launched two pop-up farm stands providing access to fresh, local fruits and vegetables to underserved communities in Shoreline and Northgate. Grew a local following of customers with a double-up matching program to help people afford twice the amount of fruits and vegetables.
- Expanded the Harvest Share program to provide fresh veggie boxes to more than 140 individuals and families. Provided social support and created a sense of community by sharing recipes, tips and tricks for eating on a budget and ways to help young children at their fruits and veggies.
- Started a new Community Workshop series to help people learn how to cook or, for those with more experience, to share kitchen skills with others while focusing on how to eat good food on a budget.

# Special Events

All events at 21 Acres have an important element of education about them. We strategically integrate learning opportunities about agriculture and the local food economy in all that we do, whether it’s a public or private event. In 2017, events included:

- A busy summer with Fridays on the Farm for ages 21 and over, Saturdays on the Farm for Families, plus Shakespeare in the Acres, and other events with local food, music, artisan crafters, Salmon Safe Certified Wines and sustainably produced local beers. Guests visited the farm and learned about how food production changes over time in order to more fully understand seasonality and seasonal eating.
- Orchestrating three special meals featuring themed menus and all ingredients sourced from farms within 100 miles, and most from much closer to 21 Acres. These included: Salmon Homecoming Dinner in the fall and two summer lunches, one featuring honey and the other featuring an Asian-pacific menu.
- Providing a venue for organizations such as HopeLink, to conduct retreats, hold celebrations and enjoy festive activities. We regularly worked with Salmon Safe Certified wineries for wine release parties – using 21 Acres’ “green building” as the ultimately appropriate location for events featuring commitments to sustainability. This led to thousands of people experiencing the farm and campus who might not otherwise have done so.

Learning opportunities about local food systems and sustainable agriculture and strategically integrated into all events.