



2020-2022 Gratitude Report



The Kingston YMCA Farm Project's mission is to educate, nourish and connect the Kingston community with our urban farm.

To Our Community

This is Kingston YMCA Farm Project's first report since the pandemic and we are finally catching our breath to reflect on the work of the past few years as we plan for our 10th growing season. While we experienced many changes because of the pandemic, we maintained a robust youth employment program and a bountiful urban farm. We also opened a public playground and created a pollinator garden.

The farm, Y Park, pollinator garden, and community garden together form an oasis for the community to enjoy. People are pleasantly surprised when they come upon our lush farmscape, unique natural playground, ecologically beneficial pollinator garden, and vibrant public growing space. Over the past few years, we have greatly expanded habitat to support productivity on the farm, biodiversity, and public gathering space.

We are thankful for the opportunity to work closely with our young staff. During the pandemic we developed deep connections to our youth staff and their families by investing in their well-being and supporting them in all aspects of their lives, including access to fresh food, maintaining safe, in-person connections, and fundraising for families in times of extreme stress. Now more than ever we see the importance of a strong, connected community through locally grown food, and meaningful ways for youth to be engaged in those processes.

We are a small, flexible, and dedicated organization that quickly adapts to the needs of our youth and the larger community. We see this especially as our Youth Crew meaningfully engages in their community and deepens their understanding of how to create the world in which they want to live.

We're excited to share our accomplishments! We were able to continue our deep investment in the community during the pandemic. We work hard and we celebrate joyfully and we thank you for your support of this.

Gratefully,
KayCee, Susan, Pat + the Youth Crew



Food Production & Access

Our youth-run farm produces over 5,000 pounds of produce each year on just one-third of an acre. After harvest, we sell what we grow at our farm stands in the Y.

- The farm stand stayed operational and thriving through the pandemic and drought. We operated our Farm Stands for nine months of each year, uninterrupted by Covid.
- In partnership with Hudson Valley Farm Hub, our Winter Farm Stand brings an amazing array of vegetables to the community from November through February.
- We proudly accept SNAP and Farmers Market Nutrition Program checks distributed through the Office of the Aging and WIC.
- In 2020, we transitioned our Tuesday Farm Stand to the Pine Grove entrance to the Y, offering twice weekly Farm Stands at the Y.
- Supporting food sovereignty, we created and implemented the Kingston Garden Bed Project. Over the course of two seasons we built and installed 75 garden beds for community members and organizations in Kingston.
- We donate a portion of our harvest to Kingston's Community Fridge network and through direct partnerships with local organizations and individuals.
- As one of the collaborating members of the Kingston Emergency Food Collaborative, we responded to urgent food needs during the initial shutdown by procuring local food and assisting with meal distribution from the YMCA.
- Our Community Garden coordinates 28 garden beds for residents to grow their own food.
- Our greenhouse produces thousands of seedlings for our farm, community gardeners, Kingston Garden Bed Project gardeners, and our public Seedling Sale.



Compost

We now serve as a hub for the community to drop off food scraps for composting. One of our college-aged Empowerment Coordinators received a Barnabus McHenry Fellowship from Open Space Institute to pilot this community composting project at the farm. We partnered with the Community Compost Company for training and to build 3 composting systems located at the farm and community garden. We also implemented a pumpkin composting program to encourage the diversion of pumpkins from the landfill. We encourage you to divert your food scraps from the landfill and bring them to us!

Youth Development

During the pandemic, we prioritized keeping youth employed and engaged as a tool to produce food for the community and to provide connection during an unprecedented and isolating time. We created new roles for Farm Crew alumni as **Empowerment Coordinators**. They planned, organized and led the **Kingston Garden Bed Project** in 2021 and advocated for **Sojourner Truth Day** legislation.

We continue to offer year-round employment and learning opportunities for high school students from the City of Kingston. The heart of our program is the Farm Crew. Crews of eight high school students learn every aspect of urban agriculture. They start seeds in the greenhouse, prepare beds for planting, seed and transplant seedlings, move compost and wood chips, water, weed, harvest, and wash and weigh the vegetables. Farm Crew members run the farm stands which provide the opportunity to interact with community members.



Farm Crew

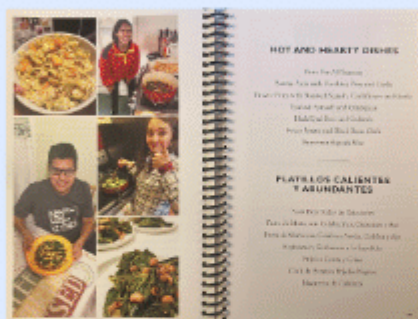
- We run three seasonal Farm Crews to plant, maintain, harvest, and steward the greenhouse and farm.
- Following the seasons, teens employed on the Farm Crew do all the work on the farm.
- In 2022, we joyfully welcomed the return of JAM, a group of peer organizations that also support youth in agriculture. We hosted 60 high school and college aged students from across the Hudson Valley.
- We began a Summer Farm Crew favorite, Lunch and Learn. During peak summer, each week a local chef prepared a meal for the crew. The chefs shared their cultural culinary histories as well as their school and career paths.
- In early 2020, we welcomed a commercial kitchen in a shipping container to the farm complex.



Winter Cooking Crew

The Cooking Crew meets weekly to create multi-course meals from scratch. Using produce from the Winter Farm Stand, youth learn lifelong skills: knife skills, real world math, recipe reading and alteration, teamwork, and breaking bread together.

- During the shut-down, we sent recipes and ingredients home each week and youth cooked for their families.
- In 2021, the Winter Cooking Crew worked with Julia Turshen to create a bilingual cookbook!
- In 2022, the Winter Cooking Crew ran a pop-up restaurant in the lobby of the Fuller Building.
- Community Cooking prepares and packages meals as mutual aid for Kingston's Community Fridges. This is a new program that officially began in 2022 in addition to our Winter Cooking Crew.



BARK

The Empowerment Coordinators proposed a name change for BARK in 2021 which now stands for Building a Resilient Kingston. BARK engages in environmental stewardship around Kingston and in our pollinator garden and Y Park playground.

- The BARK Crew, with Hudson Valley Bee Habitat and KaN Landscape Design, spent a spring and summer learning about pollinators and their habitat before designing and building a pollinator garden next to JFK Elementary School.
- The team participated in Community Science projects in 2021 and 2022, helping the NYS DEC's Hudson River Estuary Program collect data on glass eel migration in the Hudson River.



Youth Design Team

The Youth Design Team empowers youth voices in the design of public spaces in the City of Kingston. Youth work with a range of professionals to learn how to approach a design process that is inclusive and responsive to community needs. The first project of the Youth Design Team, working with KaN Landscape Design, was the creation of the **Y Park**, a naturescape, all-ages accessible playground next to the farm.

- We guided a team of 12 youth to research and design the **Pine Street African Burial Ground**. Their final public presentation was in March 2020 with a crowd of over 100 attendees and live feed on Radio Kingston.
- The youth voice was engaged to assist with planning and design for the new **Broadway Bubble**. The team spent four months researching and designing a plan for Broadway that culminated in a bilingual presentation to stakeholders and invited guests along with several public outreach events.
- In Fall of 2022, the Youth Design Team served as voice, survey consultants, and designers for the public green space located at the new **Prince & Grand** intersection. Public meetings will be held during Winter 2023.



*Photo credit: Kristopher Johnson



Social Justice

Our commitment to antiracism and social justice is year round. We empower our youth crew to take action and lead. We fostered a nurturing and Covid-safe environment for youth to engage in person to process the world, explore community, and take action while integrating a social justice lens.

- We crafted an **antiracist statement** to guide our work: "We are committed to antiracist action through our work in the food system, through youth empowerment, and through social justice driven initiatives."
- The adult and youth staff participated in two **Language Justice** trainings led by Hudson Valley Farm Hub's Language Justice Team. The first training culminated in an art show at Arts Society of Kingston.
- Youth-led **Hot Topic Tuesdays** provided educational opportunities for the team.
- Youth staff spoke at and protested with **Wednesday Walk for Black Lives**.
- Youth Crew merged **art and activism** to bring attention to Black Lives Matter on the Schwenk Drive Utility box.
- The Youth Crew worked with community members to create a **Say Their Names Memorial** installation at the farm.
- A group of Youth Crew artists designed and painted a **Food Sovereignty mural** on our container kitchen.
- Our Farm Crew led the initiative to create **Sojourner Truth Day**, now a legal day of recognition on Nov. 26 in Ulster County and the City of Kingston. The NYS Senate passed a resolution in 2022. We are hopeful that NY State will recognize Sojourner Truth Day in 2023 legislation. The youth decided that a team of BIPOC women under the umbrella of Harambee would best champion Sojourner Truth efforts moving forward.



sojourner truth day



Farm-based Education

Our farm-based education programming brings over 500 students and summer campers into the farm to learn, explore, wonder and discover the magic of growing food and connecting to the earth.

- Through generous support from individuals and foundations, we provided free educational programming for Kingston public schools and City of Kingston summer camps.
- We provided farm-based experiences to the Y's Camp Starfish. In addition to visits to the farm, campers prepared a farm-based recipe with the Y Farm team, and received a bag with fresh vegetables and a recipe to prepare at home.
- Youth educators planned and led weekly programming for the Y's Camp Starfish.
- During the school shut-down, we facilitated bilingual virtual field trips to elementary school classes that typically visit the farm in person. In the spring of 2022, George Washington classes returned to in-person field trips at the farm.
- Just before shut-down, we presented Corn to Tortillas, a bilingual classroom lesson in collaboration with the Hudson Valley Farm Hub. Students learned how corn is grown and harvested, and made their own tortillas - all with simultaneous interpretation in the student's preferred language.
- College classes from Bard and SUNY New Paltz regularly visit the farm to enhance classroom learning through participation with community projects like ours.
- The farm provides a setting for laughter, curiosity, and teamwork while learning.



Y Park

The Y Park is open to the public year-round and consists of a naturescape playground and pollinator garden.

- Our youth-designed, natural playground opened to the public in June of 2021.
- We converted an inaccessible and overgrown area into a pollinator garden that is now teeming with biodiversity.
- The Youth Crew worked with Hudson Valley Farm Hub to build a rain collection system.
- We installed benches in the pollinator garden to invite community members to soak in the beauty of a colorful and comfortable respite in Midtown.
- The Y Park hosts our Community Fall Party with more than 200 people in attendance each year.
- We have plans to expand the beneficial habitat and public space in 2023. Stay tuned for volunteer opportunities!

Follow us on social media

 [yfarmkingston](#)

 [KingstonYMCAFarmProject](#)

 kingstonymcafarmproject.org

The Kingston YMCA Farm Project is a program of the
YMCA of Kingston + Ulster County, a registered 501 (C)(3).

