How two Capital Roots programs implemented projects in local communities that helped expand green infrastructure and improve the transportation network, the natural environment and community pride.
We grow, educate and provide.

From the opening of its first gardens in 1975, to the dynamic and multifaceted organization of today, Capital Roots has worked to reduce the impact of poor nutrition on public health in the Capital Region. We organize community gardens, improve access to healthy food, offer nutrition and horticulture education for all ages and coordinate urban greening programs in Albany, Rensselaer, Schenectady and southern Saratoga Counties.

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FROM OUR FOOD HUB
By Amy Klein, Chief Executive Officer

It’s a new year and a new decade. That calls for some serious reflection.

Someone was reminiscing recently about the year 2000 when everyone was in a panic that computers wouldn’t work and banks wouldn’t be able to dispense money. It sounds farfetched now, but it was very real as we were busy saving all of our data onto disks and printing hard copies. This talk brought back memories not just of the simple technology of the time, but also where Capital Roots was 20 years ago: there were four of us, working out of a basement apartment, making a difference with our community gardens and urban tree planting programs.

Fast forward two decades and Capital Roots has a staff of 35 working from the Urban Grow Center – our regional food hub and (soon to be) center for adult job training and small business incubator. The organization now operates 12 different programs making a difference in the lives of 275,000 people each year in our region. Our staff, board, volunteers and donors have a lot to be proud of. Together we have accomplished so much.

These two decades of growth haven’t been quick or easy. They’ve been slow, required hard work and done in response to community need and a void in services that are not being supplied by any other organization. A past donor said to me recently, “You’ve grown. You don’t need my help anymore.” Nothing could be further from the truth, and I’d like to share a poignant example of why I think that.

In Minnesota, an organization called Growing Power, whose leader won a MacArthur Genius Award, closed down. Why? Here’s what one of their colleagues had to say; “Growing Power, because it was the big kid on the block, often didn’t receive the funds needed to fulfill its educational goals due to the assumption that it had enough. That assumption was wrong, and Growing Power’s work suffered due to lack of consistent funds from both individual donors and foundations. I can’t stress this enough, if you value the work people do, you must support that work.”

I’m sharing this because it’s an important lesson for us all. Each of us makes the work of Capital Roots happen. So as we prepare for a new year with new projects, think about what makes you proud to support this organization. What program or project do you feel is so important to our community that we must keep it going?

Will it be the new community garden that we are building in the City of Albany in the Pine Hills neighborhood that will allow more than 50 families to grow their own food? How about the expanded schedule for the Veggie Mobile®? Farm gleanings for Squash Hunger, or teaching hundreds of school children about healthy eating? Maybe it’s the fact that we are helping small struggling farmers sell hundreds of thousands of pounds of food to schools, daycare centers, senior centers and more. Whatever it is that makes Capital Roots’ work important to you, I hope you’ll be with us with your support in this next decade. We really can’t do it without you!

Wishing you and yours a Happy and Healthy New Year.
Everyone knows we all use the same roads to get where we need to go. While some roads do a great job of getting drivers to and from, those very same roads can act as barriers to walkers and bikers when they have to cross wide, busy intersections during daily commutes. This Fall, we undertook two projects meant to make roads and neighborhoods safer, more accessible and greener for all.

On two brisk fall mornings in late September, Capital Roots hosted a “See and Be Seen” Healthy Streets campaign in Rensselaer and Cohoes—together with city officials and police officers from each community—to stop traffic in school zones and put safe-driving materials directly into the hands of hundreds of drivers. The campaign was funded by the Capital District Transportation Committee and aimed to encourage drivers to slow down along busy roads and major intersections.

Joe, a bus driver for the Rensselaer City School District, volunteered his time in between morning runs at the Rensselaer event. As he passed out traffic safety information, he explained how he often sees other drivers fail to slow down or stop for pedestrians, including for young children. “It’s not once in a while,” Joe said, “It happens every day.” Kim, a crossing guard for the Cohoes Central School District, ushers hundreds of students across Columbia Street in Cohoes every day on their way to school. She said she feels like she’s risking her life each and every time she steps out to stop a vehicle, but to her, ensuring the safety of her students is worth it.

While the traffic stops may have seemed like a nuisance to our morning commuters, having the involvement of impassioned advocates like Joe and Kim who live and work in these communities serves as a reminder that there are more important things than being on time.

Capital Roots’ Urban Greening program, which celebrated its 30th anniversary this year, also led two community tree plantings this fall across Watervliet and on Upper Congress Street in Troy. With funding from TD Bank and the support of volunteers from the Watervliet Tree Committee, Bergmann Associates and the Watervliet Senior Center, Capital Roots planted a total of 50 trees in four parks and at 20 residences around the city. The following day, volunteers planted nine trees in front of businesses on Upper Congress Street in Troy that sponsored the plantings.

Mike lives alone in a white, two-story house in the Port Schuyler neighborhood of Watervliet. The home, which sits right across the street from Pershing Green Memorial Park, has housed three generations of Mike’s family. The property is dotted with different varieties of trees which help tie Mike to his home and community because, to him, trees are family.

“The large Baldwin apple tree in the side yard—that’s Granddad,” Mike said. “The other fruit trees, those are all from my uncle.” The trees planted by his relatives help tie Mike to his home and community and being able to plant his own tree gave him an opportunity to continue the family tradition. Not only are trees an enduring reminder of the past, they beautify neighborhoods, raise property values and clean the air and water for our future neighbors.
For eight years, the Healthy Stores program has worked to build relationships with convenience store owners in Capital Region cities to support healthy food access for low-income families and seniors living in neighborhoods with low supermarket access. More recently, the program has connected with a new category of retail outlets, serving an entirely new demographic: students on college campuses.

Capital Roots started delivering produce to SUNY Schenectady County Community College (SCCC) in August 2019, and the food is flying off the shelves. Products are tailored to the on-the-go schedules of students, faculty, and staff who are looking for a healthy snack between classes and produce to take home and cook for a quick dinner.

This new partnership is providing healthy foods to students, many of whom are on limited budgets and living without full kitchens. The store manager is also seeing an increase in business, which helps with his bottom line. Finally, with many of the healthy snacks being delivered to SUNY SCCC coming from local farmers and food businesses, the local food economy is being supported through this new partnership.

“Having Capital Roots products available in the Canal Side Convenience store has increased traffic in the store, not only of students, but faculty and staff as well. The faculty and staff at SUNY Schenectady are thrilled to have fresh fruits, vegetables and dry goods available,” explained Donna Tessitore, the Executive Director of the Faculty Student Association at the college.

Partnerships are being made with other college campus stores in the Capital Region, using the success of the SUNY SCCC store as momentum to bring healthy produce to students and college staff. Capital Roots believes that healthy food is a right, and not a privilege, and we are excited to bring healthy retail food access to a new constituent group, supporting students’ success in their pursuits of higher education.

The product is always fresh. The quality is there and the price is so affordable. The students love purchasing the produce to snack on between classes and the benefit is they are eating fresh, healthy snacks at a price they can afford.

“So much of our work has been done with children, or seniors, that it feels like there’s an entirely new age range that we are serving with this partnership,” explained Healthy Stores Organizer James Surano. “The program has been very successful, rapidly rising in quantity to two deliveries a week, with students ‘raiding’ the deliveries as I’m trying to put them on shelves.”

Interested in having a healthy store on your college campus or in your neighborhood?

Contact James, Healthy Stores Organizer
healthystores@capitalroots.org
518-274-8685
Capital Roots’ Board Member Deborah Bennett wins AFP’s Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser Award

Congratulations to Capital Roots’ Board Member Deborah Bennett, who won the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP)’s Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser Award during National Philanthropy Day. Not only does Deborah serve on the board at Capital Roots, but she is Co-Chair of our Autumn Evening in the Garden event and Capital Campaign Steering Committee. Time and time again Deborah shows up and works hard for the causes she is passionate about. Capital Roots is so lucky to be one of them!

Capital Roots wins DEC’s Environmental Excellence Award

Capital Roots was honored to receive one of four NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Environmental Excellence Awards alongside I-Square, New York Botanical Garden and The Wild Center. This award recognizes our efforts to advance regional sustainability, and allows us to reflect on the impact our Urban Grow Center has had on our neighborhood and the environment. The Environmental Excellence Award is truly a celebration of our staff and supporters for the last five years of grassroots work we have all put in to make this dream a reality.

Thank you, Albany Business Review!

Capital Roots was honored to be named one of the Albany Business Review’s Healthiest Employers of 2019 for our commitment to workplace health and wellness! We are honored to stand alongside the 24 other companies in the Capital Region, (many of whom are our partners) that actively work to make health and wellness a priority in the workplace.

Awards

Staff have shopping hours at our Produce Market daily.

Deborah Bennett pictured with her family and friends.
I have been gardening, on and off, with Capital Roots for almost 20 years at a few different gardens including the last six at Father Flanigan’s Farm in Troy. This spring, I was diagnosed with cancer and was informed I would need surgery followed by radiation that would put me out of commission for the whole summer. What could I do? How could I keep even a minimal garden going when I couldn’t be there to plant? Thanks to Carol’s generosity, she helped me plant my garden, watched over my plot, kept the weeds under control and harvested produce.

This is Carol: thoughtful, kind, joyful and generous. “She shares her knowledge about seeds and plants with us and always gives a hand when we need it,” said gardener Svetlana Kessler. “She is a very kind, caring, responsible and responsive person.”

Immediately upon moving to the neighborhood three years ago, Carol immersed herself in the community and in Father Flanigan’s Farm. Carol quickly became a one-woman welcoming committee befriending each new gardener. This year, she established garden picnics, in which several of us get together within the garden to socialize and share snacks and lemonade.

And as Carol assisted me with my plot, she helps others who are ill, have full schedules or out of town. Carol Murray exemplifies the community spirit in community gardening and is the heart of Father Flanigan’s Farm. We are blessed she chooses to share her love of gardening with us.

Interested in nominating a gardener? Contact Tara, Community Gardens Program Manager at gardens1@capitalroots.org or 518-274-8685.

In December 2018, Mary called Capital Roots to ask about getting involved, and we put her right to work, making calls and stuffing envelopes for our Spring Brunch fundraiser. When our Volunteer Coordinator asked her to do a shift on the Veggie Mobile, she jumped right on board!

“Yes, I love the Veggie Mobile and love working with the people,” she said. “It was pouring rain last week, yet folks were lined up, music playing, and everyone was happy waiting for us.”

Mary’s volunteer time with Capital Roots escalated when she learned about our bottle redemption program through CLYNK. “I walk in my neighborhood twice a day, so I put out a flyer asking neighbors to leave their cans and bottles in my driveway. I also asked neighbors at our lake house to save them for me, and I was waist deep in recycling bins! Hey, that’s five bucks a bag for Capital Roots!”

And even though Mary says she is “not a meeting person,” she and her husband, Michael are now working on our Capital Campaign Committee. She explains, “People can help make a difference in many ways. My mom impressed upon us kids early on if you have it, give it. I love everything about Capital Roots and what it stands for. And I’m confident in what you all are doing in the next phase of the Urban Grow Center; there’s so much energy for doing all this goodness.”

Interested in nominating a gardener? Contact Tara, Community Gardens Program Manager at gardens1@capitalroots.org or 518-274-8685.
Volunteer with Capital Roots!

Interested in giving back to your community?

Opportunities:

- Produce Project
  - Volunteer at the farm, help Produce Project students with resumes and cover letters
  - Volunteer alongside community gardeners at work parties, tend plots for Squash Hunger throughout our 56 community gardens, repair small engines on equipment
  - Volunteer on the Veggie Mobile® assisting customers and passing out Taste and Take samples, spend evenings in our food hub bagging, cutting and processing produce

- Community Gardens
  - Assist in deliveries of recovered produce to local pantries and shelters, join us on gleanings at local farms

- Food Access
  - Welcome guests and answer questions at our front desk, assist with office tasks such as phone calls, mailings, etc.

- Squash Hunger

- Administrative

Contact our Volunteer Coordinator:
  volunteer@capitalroots.org or 518-274-8685
  www.capitalroots.org/join-our-mission/volunteer/volunteer-opportunities
For the past thirteen years, Capital Roots has had the privilege of bringing local chefs and farmers together for a night of delicious local food and drinks, comradery, and philanthropy at our annual Autumn Evening in the Garden. Every September, we invite our friends and supporters to join us in supporting a new project to help our organization continue to provide access to fresh food and green spaces across the Capital Region. This year, we raised more than $88,000, all of which will be used to support Capital Roots’ 12 fresh food access and educational programs.

The true meaning of the phrase often advertised by trendy restaurants—farm-to-table—was felt in abundance at the 2019, held at the Hilton Garden Inn on September 12. Our guests—a diverse group of charitable individuals from across the Capital Region and beyond—were treated to our tastiest strolling supper to date, where 19 of our region’s top chefs were paired with 40 local farms and challenged with the task of collaborating to create a wide variety of small dishes using local ingredients.

“Now more than ever, people are beginning to ask where their food is coming from and who is involved in the growing process. That’s exactly what tonight is about,” said Capital Roots’ Chief Executive Officer Amy Klein. “Autumn Evening exists to help bridge that gap between provider and consumer and show our appreciation for all that local farms bring to our community.”

Dishes ranged from a hearty rabbit stew made by Plumb Oyster Bar’s head chef, Rachel Bartlett, with ingredients sourced from Mack Brin Farms and Saratoga Apple, to delicate vegan treats made by Bri the Caker, the owner of a one-woman vegan bakery in Rensselaer, who used ingredients from the Wild Hive Community Grain Project and Scrodin Farm to create delicious mini apple cakes, complete with vegan cream cheese frosting. Attendees were also invited to sample local beers, wines, and spirits from businesses like Schenectady’s Frog Alley Brewing Co., Glens Falls’ Adirondack Winery, and Valatie’s Harvest Spirits as they enjoyed the wide variety of foods offered by our chefs and farmers.

But Autumn Evening would not be the impactful event it has been for more than a decade if it were not for our community’s continued commitment to supporting Capital Roots’ programs. This year, a portion of the funds raised at this event will support the Produce Project, Capital Roots’ year-round job-readiness and skills-building program for students at Troy High School.

After the excitement from the delicious food and drink calmed down, attendees were invited to participate in an auction, led by Dr. Mark Fruiterman, to fund the purchase and construction of a permanent pavilion on the farm our Produce Project students work on and operate year round. Not only will this structure provide cover for our students during inclement weather, but it will give them a new place to continue their afterschool education with cooking classes, group discussions, and more in a comfortable, permanent space on their farm.

Every year, we are inspired by our community’s continued investment in our friends and neighbors through Autumn Evening in the Garden, and this year was no different. The support of local chefs, farmers, and community members is special, and we are so grateful we are able to live, work, and play in the Capital Region year after year.
Head to our Facebook Album “Autumn Evening in the Garden 2019” for more!

Photos by Liz Lajeunesse
Contributions From Our Friends

The following donations were received between July 2019 – November 2019

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SUPPORT CAPITAL ROOTS WITH A DONATION TODAY!

NAME: ________________________ E-MAIL: ________________________

PHONE: ________________________ ADDRESS: ________________________

☐ I’d like to support Capital Roots’ fresh food access programming with a donation of $ __________

☐ $35 Friend ☐ $600 Cultivator ☐ In honor of
☐ $60 Sponsor ☐ $1200 Gardening Angel ☐ In memory of
☐ $120 Supporter ☐ Make me a Harvest Helper for $ __________ a month.
☐ $300 Benefactor

WISH LIST

Cutlery Set 4ft or larger metal stakes
Baskets Broadfork and hard rakes
Non-digital kitchen (or hanging) scales Watering cans with nozzles
Working vehicles Large whiteboards
Hoes (stirrup preferably or regular) Light coats and sweatshirts
Garden carts and water barrels Light raincoats and coveralls
Good working all-terrain mower Large plastic storage totes with lids
Set of metal ramps for Push mower
loading equipment Gardening gloves for cold weather
Laptop computers Battery powered weedwacker
Long handled and round point shovels Spray nozzles and watering wands
Cake platters and pie servers Soaker hoses in good condition
Clean 5 gallon buckets Pick axes and pitch forks
3-4ft tall pointed wooden stakes Iphone 5 & up

To make a donation, call: 518-274-8685

I’D LIKE TO GET INVOLVED

☐ Help deliver produce for Squash Hunger
☐ Assist in cutting and packing produce at our Food Hub
☐ Are you a mechanic? We need help repairing small engines!

CAPITAL ROOTS WINTER NEWSLETTER, PAGE 11
Spring Brunch
Save the Date
SUNDAY
MAY 3, 2020
EMPIRE STATE PLAZA