When Capital Roots' staff and Board finalized our five-year Strategic Plan in January 2017, it was crystal clear that strong and dynamic community partnerships were one of the most significant pillars of support to our organization. A wide range of diverse organizations, institutions and service providers around the region work alongside Capital Roots staff to enhance our programs and services in many ways while we, in turn, provide similar benefits to them. On Tuesday, March 27 at the Urban Grow Center, we hosted a gathering of partners to both celebrate existing collaborations and provide an opportunity to build new ones.

Working together with the Capital District Regional Planning Commission and Healthy Capital District Initiative to host this partnership mixer, our guests enjoyed an opportunity to meet, engage and explore potential new collaborations. Partners gathered from many different sectors including public health, social services, transportation, environmental protection, food access, community development, senior services, regional planning, education and more. The Urban Grow Center provided the perfect setting for guests to mix and mingle while enjoying some light snacks and beverages. While many who attended told us how much they enjoyed the opportunity to cultivate so many new connections, they all mentioned that the warm and welcoming atmosphere of the Grow Center really helped facilitate networking and conversation.

Capital Roots staff were eager to give tours of the Urban Grow Center to guests, highlighting the green technology, Food Hub and produce market, which was open for business. Some folks took great pleasure in being able to purchase fruits and veggies at the event to take home for dinner! It was surprising to staff that so many of our partners who attended the mixer had never visited our facility. The tours elicited many great questions about the work we’re doing in our vibrant space. It was clear that everyone who attended enjoyed the event and for some the opportunity to put names to the faces of partners who have “met” only through telephone calls and emails.

We want to thank all who attended our first Partnership Mixer and our co-hosts at Healthy Capital District Initiative and Capital District Regional Planning Commission for helping to make this event such a success. Building on the positive feedback and success, we are looking forward to making the Partnership Mixer a biannual event and are planning our next one for October!
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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Will Malcolm, Food Access Manager
Matthew Schueler, Grow Center Planner
Jessica Trowbridge, Operations Manager
Cassie Andruzzi, Educator
Audrey Bridge, Mobile Market Coordinator
Kyle Byrer, Events Coordinator
Antwone Cyrus, Mobile Market Assistant
Rebekah Desjardins, Healthy Retail Organizer
Katie Doyle, Farm to School Organizer
Brooke Fluegge, Volunteer Coordinator
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Alyssa Gallagher, Mobile Market Assistant
Patricia Hanan, Outreach Assistant
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Elaine Herron, Produce Project Seasonal Farm Assistant
Linden Horvath, Development Coordinator
Jennifer Jevons, Marketing Coordinator
Erin Johanss, Seasonal Community Garden Organizer
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Tara Quackenbush, Community Gardens Program Manager
James Rath, Healthy Communities Coordinator
Wanda Rivera, Program Assistant
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Joel Stewart, Delivery Specialist
James Surano, Healthy Stores Organizer
Monica Wells, Farm-to-School Coordinator
Rebecca Whalen, Communications and Development Manager
Cheryl Whilby, Squash Hunger/Outreach Coordinator

FROM OUR FOOD HUB

By Amy Klein, Chief Executive Officer

Do me a favor and read this newsletter in its entirety and then come back and read my column. Why? Because that’s what I did and... WOW!

While this recap only scratches the surface of our program activity, I think you’ll be astounded by what's going on at Capital Roots and proud to support an organization that’s having such a dynamic and positive impact on our Region.

Last newsletter I told you about new community gardens that we are developing for the 2018 gardening season. These gardens in North Albany and Cohoes will enable many new families to grow their own food; not just because we are building the gardens, but because our staff provides the ongoing support and education so that gardeners can be successful in their food growing. This is so important, especially as our most vulnerable families face even greater cuts to benefit programs for basic needs like nutrition!

But one of the best things about Capital Roots’ programs is that they offer many access points for families to easily obtain healthy food in their neighborhoods on a daily basis. That’s why we have our two mobile markets (the Veggie Mobile®), an online market and an increasing number of partnerships with small corner stores in urban neighborhoods through our Healthy Stores program. The Healthy Stores program now has 22 partner locations where we deliver, stock, provide the set-up and marketing for fresh fruits and veggies in small mom and pop locations. This gives low-cost, top quality produce a daily presence in neighborhoods where it is wanted and needed most.

One of those neighborhoods is North Central Troy, where the Urban Grow Center is located. When we opened the first phase of the Grow Center we included our own in-house Produce Market to serve the community. What we didn’t realize during planning was that the response to the market would be so significant as to outpace the size of the space we provided. That’s why, as we plan for Phase II of the Grow Center’s development, we are including a much larger market to even better serve the neighborhood and larger community. I’m excited to share all the plans we have for the next phase of the Grow Center’s development and welcome the opportunity to meet with many of you in the coming months.

In the meantime, I hope to see you at one of our upcoming events. And with all the activity we have going on – building new gardens, working with students at our urban farm, helping in the food hub or on the Veggie Mobile®, doing research, helping at the office or on a committee – please consider spending some time volunteering with Capital Roots this spring and summer. I guarantee you’ll be glad... and so will we!
Volunteer Appreciation 2018

In January, the Urban Grow Center was buzzing with activity as our Volunteer Committee, staff and members of the Board welcomed volunteers to our Annual Appreciation event.

Amidst the mixing and mingling, we honored two devoted volunteers who have gone above and beyond in their efforts to support our work. This year’s honorees were Ralph F. Passonno Jr and Art Kilmer who received our Many Hands award for their generous gifts of time, skill and commitment to Capital Roots’ mission.

Art has shown us what it truly means to be a jack of all trades, finishing up many leftover projects (and new ones) that have come up in our headquarters. From fixing lights to painting walls, he’s left his mark just about everywhere.

Ralph is a long-time volunteer and a driving force on our Fund Development Committee. He’s been a key player in many behind the scenes efforts and has been a strong pillar of support throughout the years. Ralph helps lay a great foundation for our work.

Each received a one-of-a-kind “Many Hands” art piece painted by Peter Bowden along with our deepest appreciation for their dedication to the work of Capital Roots. Volunteers are the backbone of Capital Roots and we thank each and every one of you from the bottom of our hearts.

Volunteers Art Kilmer (left) and Ralph F. Passonno Jr (right) with Chief Executive Officer Amy Klein.

Lieutenant Governor Visits the UGC

One of the many joys of working at the Urban Grow Center is welcoming visitors to our space. In February, Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul was touring locations in Troy that were supported by the Capital Region Economic Development Council and we were glad that Capital Roots was one of her stops.

Representatives from the City of Troy, Board members, media and staff (mainly in their signature flannel shirts), welcomed the Lt. Governor upon her arrival. Capital Roots’ Chief Executive Officer Amy Klein then took her and many others on a tour of our facility. Hochul was highly impressed as Amy took her on stops at the Produce Market to highlight local products and affordable options, in our Food Hub to call out the efficiency of our work, and to our upper office spaces which provide a vibrant environment in which to work.

Amy also shared with the Lt. Governor Capital Roots’ plans for Phase II of the Urban Grow Center, to which Lt. Governor Hochul replied, “It’s going to be transformative.” Indeed it will!

Thank you again, Lt. Governor Hochul, for your visit and for supporting our work.
Spring is in the air which means that our Healthy Streets program is in full swing. Healthy Streets, which helps municipalities and citizen groups across the region create more walkable, bikeable and accessible communities, has more projects lined up in 2018 than ever before.

Our new projects will tackle some of the most dangerous intersections in our region. Thanks to a grant from the Capital District Transportation Committee and our partners at the Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley, we’re able to make safer pathways for all users. Capital Roots will redesign intersections in Schenectady, Albany and Troy focusing on adaptations for our neighbors with differing abilities. These new projects are designed to last so that residents can enjoy the benefits of safe transportation design.

Be on the lookout for three new bicycle fix-it stations that will be popping up in Schenectady along the Hudson Mohawk Bikeway near SUNY Schenectady County Community College, the Main Library branch Downtown and on Craig Street in Hamilton Hill. In Troy, we will be finishing our work on an accessibility and navigation improvement project for the Uncle Sam Trail, as well as supporting the City’s construction of a completed urban trail connecting the North Central neighborhood (where the Grow Center is situated) with the Menands Bridge at the southern tip of the city.

In addition to this infrastructure work, Capital Roots is also strengthening working relationships in area communities including Cohoes, where we will be working on a Safe Route to School and wayfinding campaign in conjunction with the City and Abram Lansing Elementary School. Looking to the future, we will be advocating for Healthy Streets’ work in the towns of Colonie and Niskayuna, where increasing bicycle and pedestrian access are becoming more of a focus.

There is a great deal to be excited about when it comes to making our communities safer and more livable. Thanks to our new plans and partnerships, we are eager to help the region get moving!

Send an email to James Rath, Healthy Communities Coordinator at healthycommunities@capitalroots.org.

Capital Roots is proud to announce a grant of $50,000 from the Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region through the Hortense and Louis Rubin Community Health fund. This award will expand Capital Roots’ VeggieRx program with our long-time partner, the Whitney M. Young Jr. Health Center. Operating since 2011, the VeggieRx program connects patients with chronic health issues such as diabetes, hypertension and obesity with Whitney M. Young nutritionists. Patients receive coupon booklets that are redeemable for fresh produce offered on Capital Roots’ Veggie Mobile® and Veggie Mobile® Sprout, both of which are sponsored by our friends at CDPHP. In 2017, we saw an increase in coupon redemption rates of more than 90% and aided in providing the participating patients with nearly 60,000 pounds of fresh produce.

The expansion of VeggieRx will allow us to focus more on patients with prediabetes, allowing us to assist in the prevention of chronic illness while at the same time continuing our work with patients already diagnosed. This prevention work extends to capturing information that will help understand the impacts of innovative tactics such as VeggieRx. At the end of the day, our mission is to provide access to fresh, healthy food to those who need it most. We’re excited to see the positive ways this program increases the quality of life for those participating.

Congratulations Will!

Capital Roots’ Food Access Manager, Will Malcolm was recognized for his commitment to professional development by graduating from the Rensselaer County Chamber of Commerce Leadership Institute. Will was one of just 26 professionals in the region to undertake this seven month intensive program to develop leadership, entrepreneurial and team building skills.
The Capital Roots staff and Board of Directors send a special congratulations and thank you to long-time Capital Roots champion, Sharon Bedford, on being selected as one of five local finalists for the Jefferson Award.

At the local level, the award recognizes individuals who are committed to improving their communities through volunteer and community services; the volunteers who go above and beyond in their service — which precisely describes Sharon. She has spent all of her adult life caring for the health of our planet and its inhabitants – as a doctor treating patients with kindness and care and as a good steward of our environment.

A 20+ year member of Capital Roots’ Board of Directors, she has helped grow and develop Capital Roots’ programs, chairing our Volunteer Committee and spearheading the fundraising and volunteer efforts of two of our annual events. She is even a weekly volunteer on our Veggie Mobile®. So thank you, Sharon, for having such a deep and enduring impact on our organization through your willingness to dig in and do what’s needed to advance Capital Roots’ mission.

Recognizing True Grit

The Capital Roots staff and Board of Directors send a special congratulations and thank you to long-time Capital Roots champion, Sharon Bedford, on being selected as one of five local finalists for the Jefferson Award. At the local level, the award recognizes individuals who are committed to improving their communities through volunteer and community services; the volunteers who go above and beyond in their service — which precisely describes Sharon. She has spent all of her adult life caring for the health of our planet and its inhabitants – as a doctor treating patients with kindness and care and as a good steward of our environment.

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A Fond Farewell to our First Bonner

In 2015, Capital Roots and Siena College began an important new partnership through the college’s Bonner Service Leader program. Bonner Service Leaders are undergraduate students who utilize their academic talents to lead community change through service across their four years of college. This spring, Capital Roots will say farewell to one of our first Bonners, Heather Ryan.

Heather joined our team in 2015, putting in 8 to 10 hours a week throughout the length of her academic career. That’s quite a commitment of time! She became one of the first Freshman to serve as a Bonner site leader, guiding new Bonners as they entered our doors. She helped a myriad of Capital Roots teams along the way, from Food Access to Operations. Heather played a leading role during our 40th anniversary year, developing our first cookbook in nearly a decade. From recipe research to design development, she led the charge, helping to produce a beautiful product. Over the last year, Heather has worked closely with our development team, navigating complicated donor management systems with ease as she built prospect profiles and began planning for small community-based fundraising events. Heather brought her keen eye for detail and strong analytical skills to many projects.

We are so grateful to Heather for all of her time and work with Capital Roots and wish her all the best on her next chapter!
One of the most unique aspects of our work is the fact that we partner with more than 75 regional producers on an annual basis. We purchase their products to sell at affordable prices on our mobile markets. We offer a different type of market for them through our Virtual Veggie Mobile®. And in turn, many of our farms donate products to support our food recovery-based Squash Hunger program. It seems to always come full circle.

This year, we are happy to welcome Markristo Farm back to our partner farm roster. Owned by Martin and Christa Stosiek in Hillsdale, NY, Markristo helped us create one of our most unique recipes to date: Dill-icious Edamame Salad. Our first time purchasing this locally grown product, our Food Hub team decided to pair the Stosiek’s edamame, a type of green soybean, with organic dried dill weed from another one of our farm partners: Wellington’s Herbs and Spices.

We introduced our partnership with Carolyn and Frederick Wellington, the purveyors of a beautiful 45 acre farm nestled in Schoharie, NY, earlier this year, and since then have been purchasing their products to provide local and affordable herbs and spices to our customers. These spices dress up any dish from turnips to salad greens…even edamame.

So we hope you enjoy the tasty recipe below, a snapshot of the amazing producers Capital Roots is able to partner with and the products we’re able to provide to our constituents.

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**Dill-icious Edamame Salad**

**Ingredients:**

- 1 lb of Edamame
- 1 Red Onion, diced
- 2 Tbsp of Dill Weed
- 3 Tbsp of Olive Oil
- Salt and Pepper, optional

**Directions:**

1. Wash edamame and dice red onion.
2. Heat a pan over medium heat on a stove. Add olive oil and let it warm.
3. Place red onion into the pan and let it cook until it softens, 7-10 minutes.
4. Add the edamame and let everything cook for another 10 minutes.
5. Let edamame and onions cool for 30 minutes and then add dill weed.
6. Season with salt and pepper.

Enjoy!

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**Who knew?**

Edamame which means “beans on a branch” in Japanese are green soybeans! Dill is native to southern Europe and Russia.

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518-274-8685
594 River Street, Troy
vegan@capitalroots.org
www.capitalroots.org

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The Value of Roundtables

In February, the Greater Capital Region Food System Assessment team hosted a series of Regional Food Production Roundtable discussions for local farmers, producers and processors to talk about their business challenges and identify opportunities to strengthen the local food economy. The roundtables were held at SUNY Cobleskill, Columbia-Greene Community College, the Capital District Regional Farmers Market in Menands and the Washington County Fairgrounds. More than 160 farmers, producers and agricultural support organizations participated across the four sessions. What a success!

These roundtables were the first in a series of events to collect primary data from food system stakeholders throughout the 11-county foodshed. By bringing people to the table, the assessment team had an opportunity to conduct regional research by capturing input from Upper Hudson Valley producers and food-based businesses.

Since the launch of the Assessment in 2016, we have worked to create a space for people to connect outside of their usual circles, and the roundtables have helped make that happen.

Outcomes from this series will be published this winter along with policy, economic development, and practical recommendations for changing growth. Special thanks to our event sponsors, including Capital District Regional Farmers Market, Columbia-Green Community College, Farm Credit East, Honest Weight Food Co-Op, Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Corporation, SUNY Cobleskill and Washington County Fairgrounds.

Introducing Capital Roots’ Squash Hunger Toolkit

More than six months in the making, we are excited to finally offer our supporters a new way to get involved with Capital Roots: Squash Hunger produce drives! Over the last handful of years, we’ve been contacted by many organizations, Scout troops, churches, schools and businesses wondering how their teams can support our work. And while we do have many opportunities for volunteer groups, all along we knew there was one place that could most benefit from these extra hands, and that place was in food recovery. Now, thanks to a new Produce Drive Toolkit, your groups, regardless of age, time of year, or availability, can help us support the many emergency feeding programs doing vital work in the region with fresh produce donations.

The toolkit offers a step-by-step guide on how to successfully organize a produce drive, whether a door-to-door collection or a drop-off collection, complete with “Top 5 Tips,” editable marketing materials, and so much more.

Looking to Get Involved?

Head to www.capitalroots.org/squashhunger/toolkit to start planning your produce drive today! Contact Cheryl at squashhunger@capitalroots.org.
Capital Roots would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to the sponsors, bowlers and donors of our 21st Annual Garden Bowl. This year bowlers raised a record breaking $20,000, all of which allows us to continue providing our innovative programming to individuals and families throughout the Capital Region.

More than 100 bowlers from across the region raised funds for the January 27th event. With creative team names such as “Hunger Strike” and “First United Follies”, it was hard not to get into the spirit of the game. We also had a tremendous turn out from local businesses including, Bouchey and Clarke Benefits’ “Bouchey Bowling Stones”, Overit’s “Knock ‘Em Overit”, and SEFCU’S “Healthy Eating”. The generosity of more than 40 local businesses made it possible for our bowlers to take home amazing prizes, such as ski lift passes, dining and shopping gift certificates, sporting event tickets and passes to local attractions.

We would like to give a special thank you to our in-kind sponsors: Uncle Sam Lanes, Proforma Lee’s Trophies, Troy Cloth and Paper and One Day Signs. Keep an eye out for the announcement of next year’s date. This is an event you don’t want to miss!
Contributions From Our Friends

The following donations were received between December 2017 – February 2018

### INDIVIDUALS ($20+ total)

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