Our firmly rooted network of vibrant, productive community gardens continues to grow. In the upcoming year, we will be opening four new gardens in the Capital Region that will create enough fertile plots for 80 additional families to grow their own produce!

In late October through early November we had soil on our minds (and on our boots, and jeans, and hands...) as we worked to develop our first community garden in Bethlehem at the Elm Avenue Park. The gardens team always has soil on our minds (and in our hair, under our fingernails, in our shoes...). Over the course of four days, we were joined by community gardeners from Normanskill, Westland Hills, and Hartman Road in Albany, and 8th Street in Troy, to name a few, who helped haul and spread a mountain of soil. Though we offered the opportunity to gardeners as an alternate way of receiving work party credit, a number of gardeners simply showed up to volunteer in support of the new garden. Our collaborative partners from the Town of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation and the Friends of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation helped us spread the word (and soil) and before we knew it the community had come together to move 180 cubic yards of rich soil evenly across the quarter acre site. How much dirt is that? Well, a single cubic yard of damp soil weighs approximately a ton. Multiply that by 180. That’s an extremely heavy load, made much less so by many helping hands. This garden will be ready to serve at least 30 gardening families in Spring of 2018.

We’re not stopping there! We have a new garden in Cohoes on the horizon. The Cayuga Street Community Garden is conveniently located downtown in the Historic Olmstead neighborhood alongside a scenic walking trail where a hydraulic canal once existed. This will be our third community garden in Cohoes. One of our exceptional strategic partners of 2017, the City of Cohoes, first brought this property to our attention in 2016, and we purchased the quarter acre site from the Albany County Land Bank in early November. We’re eager to...Continued on Page 3
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

There’s been quite a bit of grumbling about the weather this summer. Family picnics and BBQ’s have been rained out. Vacations have been less sunny than hoped for. Gardeners are not getting the yields they desire. Mother Nature has not been her kindest. But who’s really suffering?

Our farmers are the ones we need to be concerned about. Can you imagine how challenging it is to rely on weather for your livelihood? Too much or not enough rain. Early or late frosts. Swings in temperature. That’s what farmers face every day.

This growing season has brought many challenges to our region’s small farmers. The heavy rains have negatively impacted crops like strawberries and melons and delayed the planting of many others. And while the apple crops are flourishing from the precipitation, growers are struggling to get their workers into the fields quickly enough for the earlier than normal crop.

Wondering why I’m thinking about rural farmers? I eat! And, the hundreds of thousands of people Capital Roots’ serves in urban areas with our food access programs are fed by these hardworking farmers.

Thanks to Capital Roots’ Food Hub Buyer, we purchase food from more than 75 family farms that make up our Region’s 11-County food shed. Each day, our Buyer works to ensure rural farmers can sell their crops (600,000 pounds of produce last year) to Capital Roots so that urban families can access healthy, affordable food in their neighborhoods. And that delicious local food is on The Veggie Mobile®, in our Healthy Stores, and available on the Virtual Veggie Mobile® year-round!

Why does all this matter? Buying local ensures that small family farms have reliable markets for their products beyond farmers markets and their own farm stands, and Capital Roots is gratified to be one of those markets. Families living in urban spaces deserve to be able to eat the best quality food available – our local farms grow it and Capital Roots can make it accessible at an affordable price.

Celebrating our local farmers should be a year-round activity, and the best way we can honor them is by supporting our local farm economy in any way possible.

Capital Roots also highlights farm producers at our annual Autumn Evening in the Garden event each fall. This is more than a social event; it’s an opportunity for farmers and chefs to meet and connect. And most importantly, for our farmers to enjoy a break from their daily labors by sharing in the bounty they create. I hope you’ll join us on September 28th for another memorial evening.
begin development of the Cayuga Street Community Garden early in 2018 to make room for 20 families interested in growing their own fresh food. We will be importing 20 extra large truckloads of soil early in the year, and since we thrive on community participation when it comes to building community gardens, we will be looking for your support with soil movement once again.

Wait, that’s not all. Just more than a mile from our popular Livingston Avenue Community Garden and a half mile from the now fully-occupied Third Street Community Garden, we’re working with the Albany Housing Authority at Ida Yarbrough to construct a large garden composed of enough raised beds to support 20 families.

And soon we will be turning a rooftop parking garage into gardening space! We’re working on a pilot project with support from the Albany Parking Authority to install an area of planters atop the Quackenbush Parking Garage on Orange Street between Broadway and Water Street.

Gardens are growing everywhere! When development of these four new gardens is complete, our 55 community gardens together will equal 14 acres of land where we will have enough plots available for a total of 1,000 community gardening families to grow!

Visit www.capitalroots.org/donate to give.

This past year, we welcomed a hardworking group of new staff members to the Capital Roots team who bring innovative ideas, enthusiasm and passion for the work we do. We hope you will get to know them as you volunteer, attend events and engage with our programs.

1 Linden Horvath, Development Coordinator
2 Nell Roberts, Produce Project Farm Manager
3 Monica Wells, Farm-to-School Coordinator
4 Brooke Fluegge, Volunteer Coordinator
5 Kyle Byrer, Events Coordinator
6 Josh Stephani, Produce Project Educator
7 Alyssa Gallagher, Mobile Market Assistant
8 James Rath, Healthy Communities Coordinator
9 Cassie Andrusz, Educator

*Learn more about Cassie’s work on Page 6.
Capital Roots reached a major milestone this fall as we achieved a Good Handling Practice (GHP) Certification from the United States Department of Agriculture! Achieving this certification was one of the largest projects we have undertaken since opening our Food Hub at the Urban Grow Center in 2014. This accreditation, along with our current New York State Agriculture and Markets Food Hub and Processing License, will enable Capital Roots to maintain the higher levels of food safety protocols, engage with new local farmers to provide new products, and expand our network of customers to larger institutions, such as local public schools.

To achieve the endorsement, Capital Roots had to audit, adjust, and expand our internal processes and spaces. Some staff received ServSafe Certifications regarding food safety and processing, while others attended trainings from Cornell University, New York State and the USDA. We used this opportunity to audit our current practices, codify our strategies and best-practices, provide trainings to staff and re-organize the physical layout of the Hub. This led to the creation of a Food Hub Operations Manual which outlines all of our program processes and how they work together to support our mission and provide the framework for future growth.

This six-month process has already demonstrated its value to the organization in a number of ways. Most importantly, it has enabled us to launch our Farm-to-School program which has already begun making farm-direct deliveries to a handful of schools in the Capital Region. The GHP certification enables food service staff in schools to use certain funding streams to purchase local produce from our network of producers, through our Virtual Veggie Mobile® and Food Hub. This ensures that students are getting healthy foods during the school day and encourages investment (and ensures spending stays) in our region.

The certification has also created new efficiencies in our workflow, opened opportunities for us to streamline our pick-up and delivery logistics, and allowed us to train and educate our staff about best-practices related to food safety and food access. It prepares us for future growth. Not only can we begin working with more school districts, but we can now begin connecting larger institutions—such as health care providers, restaurants, private schools, and any other customers that are audited by New York State or the USDA—with local food.

Capital Roots is proud to announce the newest pickup location for our Virtual Veggie Mobile® Individual Buyer Program: Sheridan Preparatory Academy in Albany. Sheridan Prep – or SPA – is a neighborhood school located just a block from our oldest program partner, the Albany Community Action Program, or ACAP. By bringing this program to Sheridan Prep, we will be better able to provide food access to residents in this neighborhood.

After seeking customer feedback regarding our online marketplace program, we found we needed a simple option for our school-community families that would increase their participation and access to healthy foods; with that a new partnership was born.

We launched this new pickup location on November 30, that day conducting our first delivery and beginning one-on-one outreach with families, neighbors and students.

Helping to inform a broader base of community members about our services helps empower them to make healthy, affordable choices. And thanks in part to the Aetna Foundation; we are celebrating the launch of the SPA collaboration by offering some “loyalty incentives” to new customers who begin ordering regularly. Filling up a simple punch card will lead them to a bonus credit on a future order and later to a free Capital Roots Cookbook, providing even more education on simple ways to prepare the foods they are buying.

**Sheridan Prep Joins Virtual Veggie Mobile® **

Sheridan Preparatory Academy
Thursdays, 1:45 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
*Pickup Site Active During the School Year only*
Order today at market.capitalroots.org.
From our customers at Cohoes Senior Center to the Van Rensselaer Heights apartments, patrons of the Veggie Mobile were impressed by our Butternut Squash and Apple Soup. A treasured recipe on the truck, every year we hear folks express their enjoyment and appreciation of the seasonal soup. This year’s soup featured apples from Scrodin Farms and precut local butternut squash! In order to ensure that this soup would be easy to make for our customers aged 7 to 97, we began to sell precut butternut squash. Throughout the year we have featured a myriad of precut fruits and veggies from pineapple to carrots and celery sticks to a festive fruit blend. In providing these precut packages, we are helping ensure that customers, regardless of ability, will be able to access fresh and affordable food!

Recipes from the

**Butternut Squash and Apple Soup**

**Ingredients:**
- 2 butternut squash, chopped
- 3 apples, chopped
- 2 onions, diced
- 2 tbsp of olive oil
- 3 cups of water
- Salt & pepper to taste

**Directions:**
1. Dice onions and place in a large pot over low heat. Add olive oil and heat for 10 to 15 minutes or until tender.
2. Peel, de-seed, and chop butternut squash into chunks. Wash, peel, and chop apples into chunks.
3. Add squash, apples, 2 cups of water, salt and pepper to the pot. Bring it to a boil and then cook over low heat for 30-40 minutes or until the squash and apples are soft.
4. Once soft, mash the apples and squash in pot. Add remaining one cup of water.
5. Serve warm.

**Who knew?**
Apple trees take 4 to 5 years to produce their first fruit. There are around 4 grams of fiber in each apple!

Sponsored by

518-274-8685
594 River Street, Troy
vegan@capitalroots.org
www.capitalroots.org
Over the years, Capital Roots has had quite a bit of good fortune with the education staff who have joined our ranks. And our current educator, Cassie Andrusz, is no exception.

This fall, Cassie brought her talents to 60 2nd grade students at the Thomas O’Brien Academy of Science and Technology in Albany by way of Capital Roots’ Taste Good Series. The students engaged in activities related to how fruits and vegetables grow and the importance of fresh food to their health and well being. Students tasted broccoli, carrots, peppers, kale, spinach, and radishes over the five-week program. However, their lessons included more than simply tastings; students took time in each class to use their senses and both talk and write about their favorite aspects of their favorite produce. Post-series, Cassie even took time to survey the students on the program, resulting in some one-of-a-kind responses that we couldn’t wait to share. “I want to be in a pool of broccoli,” one student wrote. OTHER QUOTE HERE, another shared.

What made the series even more exciting was the involvement of St. Peter’s Health Partners, one of our dynamic community partners. NAME OF REP joined us in the classroom leading mindful moments, fun exercises and stretching techniques to pair with healthy eating practices for the students.

We are looking forward to what 2018 will bring to Capital Roots’ education front, and we want you to be a part of it! If you are interested in having Cassie and the Taste Good Series at your school, email educator@capitalroots.org.
This fall, Cassie, along with our Produce Project staff and a few others from the Capital Roots staff, began a project called Story Corps. While you may have heard of the popular podcast where everyday people interview other everyday people and share those stories through the podcast and public radio, our version involves our Produce Project students interviewing and helping to tell the stories of our long-time community gardeners. It is the newest of the long line-up of unique opportunities that our students are able to participate in to develop their life skills in the program. While the Story Corps project is not yet complete, we look forward to sharing the fruits of this labor with you this coming spring. Our friends at the Sanctuary from Independent Media in Troy are joining us on this adventure and lending their talents so that you will not only get to read about it here, but hear it first hand on our website. Stay tuned!

Experiences such as the Story Corps project are what make the Produce Project so unique for the students. The program’s foundation rests in the agricultural work they participate in and learn from at our bountiful 2.5-acre farm on 8th Street in Troy, but throughout the year, we look to provide the students with many other ways for them to develop new skills and see perspectives outside of their own. Each year, students participate in culinary classes with Capital Roots volunteers, but this year the students took their culinary program one step further and decided to integrate that into their trimester project.

For this trimester’s project, the students chose to do a Taco Cook-Off. After a trimester’s worth of planning, the students split into teams and with the help of both food access and operations staff at Capital Roots, cooked their favorite taco recipes on a cool afternoon in December at the Urban Grow Center. Students chose Produce Project staff as judges and had quite a bit of fun preparing their dishes. Cheers roared through the building when the winning team was announced and students then invited the rest of the Capital Roots team up for some afternoon tacos in the break room. It was a great way to connect on all fronts.

Unique experiences like this simply wouldn’t exist for the Produce Project without the help from supporters like you. If you would like support another student’s entry into this important community program, contact Amy at amy@capitalroots.org.
Our 11th Annual Autumn Evening in the Garden was an enormous success. We were able to raise a record breaking $101,000, all of which will benefit our food access and green space programs throughout Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer, and southern Saratoga counties.

This year, 22 of the region’s most talented chefs and 44 local farmers came together to create outstanding cuisine highlighting some of the area’s freshest ingredients. Perhaps most unique about our chef line-up this year was bringing in cuisines from cultures never before represented at the event. What’s more is that we were blown away by the connections made between chefs and farmers this year.

“Our chefs visited their farm partners in preparation for the event. Many incorporated the farm materials and product into their table displays. We’ve even heard that some of the event partnerships have now turned into businesses partnerships,” said Amy Klein, Capital Roots CEO. “These are the type of connections we hope every year to facilitate with this event. Our farmers are vital to our region. We are grateful they are willing to participate and are pleased to showcase their product to our neighbors.”

The Neil Brown Jazz Quartet provided yet another year of beautiful and melodic sounds as a backdrop for the evening, and our photographer, Liz Lajeunesse, made it a night we truly couldn’t forget, (see the next page for a glimpse into the evening).

Of course, Autumn Evening in the Garden, wouldn’t be complete without our annual auction. This year, thanks again to the talents of LeGrande Serras, we were able to raise $52,000 in support of purchasing a replacement Veggie Mobile®! As an organization, we were astounded by our community’s generosity, but we are incredibly thankful for our partner, CDPHP’s surprise gift of $10,000! This will allow us to continue our vital work in the Capital Region, and we truly can’t thank them enough for their continued support of our mission and vision.

All of the funds raised will go to support our 52, soon to be 56, Community Gardens, the Veggie Mobile® and Veggie Mobile® Sprout, the Produce Project, Healthy Stores, Squash Hunger, and all of our other programs – allowing us to continue to work towards reducing the impact of poor nutrition on public health in New York’s Capital Region.

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As you begin the New Year, we hope you’ll consider Capital Roots in your new years resolutions. Pledge to volunteer more in 2018. Engage even deeper in your connection to our work by joining a committee. Join our Harvest Helper monthly giving circle. And know that any way you give, you are making an impact on your community.

Did You Know?

You can double the impact of your donation to Capital Roots by asking your employer to match your gift!

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

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☐ Volunteer doing cooking classes with the Produce Project
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☐ Volunteer Team and help with admin tasks in the office
Register online at bit.ly/CRGardenBowl. Questions? Contact Kyle at events@capitalroots.org or 518-274-8685.

January 27, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Uncle Sam Lanes, Troy

Proceeds benefit