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

In October and 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. 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). 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.

But 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 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... 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

Capital Roots’ Board of Directors kicked off their first meeting of the year with an unusual agenda. First, we had members of our TapRoots’ Honorary Board join the meeting. This Board, created in 2017, includes past Board Presidents and long-tenured Board members over the organization’s 40+ year history. It was inspiring to have their participation. Second, I presented a “State of Capital Roots” report – a look at our achievements in 2017 and what’s on tap for 2018. I think we were all staggered to learn of the breadth of the work the organization is accomplishing. And third, we shared plans for the second phase of the Urban Grow Center.

Thrilling doesn’t just do justice to the programs and expansion we are developing.

One of the top highlights from last year was the opening of the Dean Leith Memorial Garden. Not just because we were able to honor Dean in such an appropriate way, but also because this garden became our 52nd Community Garden and the 27th site owned by Capital Roots. Land ownership is another legacy of Dean’s, as he and Liz Leith created our Permanent Site Fund for new garden purchases in the early 1980’s. Capital Roots’ status as an urban Land Trust is little known, but critically important to the future of these beautifully functional and productive green spaces in our urban neighborhoods. In 2018 we are looking forward to developing three new community gardens bringing our total number to 55!

In 2017 we celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the nationally recognized Veggie Mobile®. When we hit the road ten years ago most thought it was a nutty idea to sell low cost, top quality fruits and veggies, year-round in urban neighborhoods. Not only does the popularity of the Veggie Mobile® continue to show that everyone wants to eat healthy food, but that when it is accessible and affordable, families are willing to use their disposable income and benefits to purchase it. This gives everyone the opportunity to acquire what they want with dignity and from local farms too! This year, thanks to the generosity of many donors at our Autumn Evening in the Garden event, we will be able to purchase a replacement truck for the now aging Veggie Mobile®, ensuring we can continue to provide reliable service.

Last year more new Healthy Stores were added to our program with more produce sold in those urban convenience stores. We helped cities pass Complete Streets legislation to make our roads more accessible for all. We created a cut-produce line to make it easier and less expensive for seniors and children to enjoy more fresh food. And had our food hub certified by USDA so that we can ensure that even more local farmers can sell their produce to childcare centers, schools, food pantries, and other institutions.

2018 will be an exciting year for all of our programs and for the continued development of the Urban Grow Center. I’m looking forward to telling you more. Call me, email or come in to meet. Let’s chat!
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 Apartments to construct a large garden composed of enough raised beds to support 20 families.

Gardens are growing everywhere! When development of these three 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!

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Support the Gardens Today. Visit www.capitalroots.org/donate to give.

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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 in the 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 certification, along with our NYS 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, NYS 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 officially launch our Farm-to-School program which has already begun making farm-direct deliveries to 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.

**New Pickup Location**

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 customers of all ages, 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 or resources, will be able to access fresh and affordable food!

Recipes from the
Veggie Mobile®
Produce Aisle On Wheels

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. 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.
3. Once soft, mash the apples and squash in pot. Add remaining one cup of water.
4. 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!
Those Who Do, Teach

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 shared her passion for education and healthy food with 60 Second 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 wellbeing. Students tasted broccoli, carrots, peppers, kale, spinach, and radishes during the five-week program. However, their lessons included a lot more than simply tastings; students used their five senses to express themselves both verbally and through writing about their favorite fruit or vegetable. At the end of the 5-week series, Cassie took time to survey the students about their learning experience, resulting in some one-of-a-kind responses that we couldn’t wait to share. “I learned that vegetables are really really really good for our bodies,” one student wrote. You’ll find another, and perhaps our favorite, below.

Capital Roots collaborated with our friends from St. Peter’s Health Partners to include physical activity to get the kids on their feet. Alyssa Joseph 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 programs, and we want you to be a part of it! If you are interested in hosting the Taste Good Series at your school, email educator@capitalroots.org.
This fall, Capital Roots’ Educator Cassie, along with our Produce Project 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.

The project is the newest in 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. The Sanctuary for Independent Media in Troy are 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 ways to learn skills and opportunities to develop new perspectives. 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 Capital Roots’ staff, 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 event.

Unique experiences like this simply wouldn’t exist for the Produce Project without the help from supporters. If you would like to sponsor a 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 greening 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 the addition of chefs representing more diverse cuisines. And, the connections made between chefs and farmers were stronger than ever before.

“Some 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 to facilitate every year and is the intention behind this event. Our farmers are vital to our region. We are grateful they are willing to participate and are pleased to showcase their product.”

The Neil Brown Jazz Quartet provided 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).

This year, thanks again to the talents of LeGrande Serras, we were able to raise an additional $52,000 at our auction to support the purchase of a replacement Veggie Mobile®! We were astounded by our community’s generosity, and 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 can’t thank them enough for their continued support of our mission and vision.

All of the funds raised at the event will go to support our 52, soon to be 55, 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.

Thank You to Our Autumn Evening Sponsors

Autumn Evening in the Garden
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We hope you’ll consider Capital Roots in your new year 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.

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Learn more by emailing devmanager@capitalroots.org.

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Jumper cables
iPods and iPhones 5s or newer
High capacity stapler
Wooden clementine boxes
Bags of road salt and scoops

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

I’d like to get involved by:

- Helping with the Spring Brunch
- Volunteering to cook with the Produce Project
- Joining the Operations Volunteer Team, helping with admin tasks in the office

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Name: ___________________________ E-Mail: ___________________________
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