



Delivering Wholesome Food to Our Neighbors in Need

Fall 2018 News



Dear Friends,

Our work was founded on the idea that good food should never go to waste and should be accessible to everyone. When I participate in Willing Hands food deliveries, I often hear comments about the value of fresh produce. Our recipients know all too well that quality food, essential to a healthy diet, is not cheap. One of the misconceptions about our work is that the food that we “rescue” is second quality or inferior. While it is true that a portion of our food has cosmetic imperfections, that does not mean that it is not healthy, safe and nutritious. Increasingly our food comes directly from local farms and from Willing Hands own garden at Cedar Circle Farm. In 2018, we are on track for locally grown food to comprise over 60% of our total food donations. This means that 300,000 pounds of food grown in Vermont and New Hampshire will be distributed throughout the Upper Valley by Willing Hands in 2018.

This feels important to me. It is not just that we are giving our neighbors in need the very best food, but we are creating an equitable local food system. We are working so that all members of our community have access, not just to any food, but to the best food that our neighbors and farmers can grow.

Sincerely,

Gabe Zoerheide, Executive Director



Willing Hands strives for an Upper Valley where everyone has affordable access to the foods that make up a healthy diet.



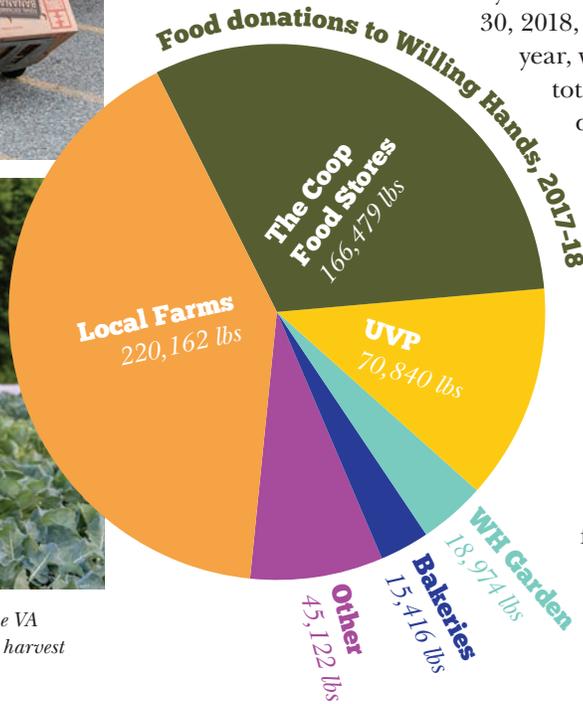
Top, delivering food to the VA Hospital. Above, broccoli harvest in the garden.

Fiscal Year Recap

Willing Hands, like many nonprofits, keeps a July to June fiscal year. This gives us a chance to tally up our food donations as well as to report on our finances to the public and the IRS.

Fiscal year 2017–2018, ending June 30, 2018, was a very successful year, with about the same total pounds of food donated to and grown by Willing Hands as the previous fiscal year. See pie chart at left for a breakdown of our food donations.

During this past fiscal year, Willing Hands distributed more than 1.8 million servings of food.



35,000 lbs

30,000 lbs

25,000 lbs

20,000 lbs

15,000 lbs

10,000 lbs

5,000 lbs

Behind the scenes

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Our volunteers in the Willing Hands garden, with support from Cedar Circle Farm, grew 39,115 pounds of food this calendar year, **more than double** what we grew in 2017! Pictured, volunteers from the Young African Leaders Initiative of the Dartmouth College Dickey Center.



Banner Year in the Garden

Featured Partner: Cornish Produce Drop

The Cornish Produce Drop has flourished over the past few years into a thriving hub of community spirit. Three years ago, two Cornish residents, Pamela Annis and Nancy Newbold, decided to invest their time to improve the produce drop. They recruited volunteers to welcome recipients, improve the food presentation, and move the location out of a dirt-floored garage to the fire station on Route 120. In May 2018, they subsequently relocated to the Cornish Town Hall, which provides a lovely sunlit space to lay out all the food donations in an organized manner and which has enough room and chairs for the average 35-45 people who stop by to wait and visit until it is time to select their food.

“We take great pride in having a location which welcomes people whose goal is to stretch their budgets and maintain their independence,” describes Pam Annis “We value all who come as human beings.” She reports that the produce drop serves about 350-450 people each month, nearly one third are seniors. Volunteers bring homemade muffins for anyone to enjoy while others carry food in from the Willing Hands truck and set out the vegetables in baskets on cloth-draped tables. During the growing season, some residents stop by just to bring surplus vegetables from their own gardens or fresh eggs from backyard coops. Chris, the Wednesday Willing Hands truck driver, chats amiably with volunteers and customers alike, and he is never permitted to leave without taking a muffin for the road!

It is clear there are caring community volunteers overseeing the Cornish Produce Drop and keeping it organized so that it benefits the maximum people each week. Pam describes a system of fairness whereby people draw a number that represents their turn to go select their food. The number holder itself was designed by one of the oldest customers using an old rain gauge. “Anyone with [mobility] assistive devices goes through the line first, followed by all others in the order of the number they drew.” Once everyone has made their selections, anyone who would like extra of certain items is invited to return, and volunteers put together bags that will be delivered to others in need in their community. If any quality surplus remains, it is then delivered to the Claremont Soup Kitchen. Volunteer organizers meet quarterly and receive and respond to feedback from recipients and other volunteers to continually make improvements. Pam says that volunteers who fill in temporarily for someone often return to help on a regular basis. “Volunteers find Wednesday’s Willing Hands food distribution the highlight of their week.”

We are grateful for the community in Cornish that has made a point to honor the dignity and humanity of their neighbors who, together, all help make this delivery site such a success!

The Cornish Willing Hands Produce Drop is located at the Town Hall at 294 Town House Road and food is available on Wednesdays, 11 am–12 pm. To find out about this Willing Hands delivery site or any of our other recipient organizations, please visit willinghands.org/about/list-of-recipients.



Top, recipients choosing fresh produce at the Cornish Produce Drop. Above, Cornish Produce Drop volunteers.



Volunteer Spotlight: Deborah Martin

Deborah Martin found out about gleaning with Willing Hands through her good friend and fellow volunteer, Marianne Lillard. Deb was intrigued by the “job” description and the flexible hours, as well as the important cause. She has since become a big fan of gleaning, describing the experience as “lovely mornings, picking veggies, and spending relaxed time with like-minded people.” She says she does not mind if the weather is wet or hot, “I really enjoy the work and the people; the 1.5-hour picking sessions end too soon!”

Deb said she has been pleased with the easy way in which volunteers can sign up for gleanings. The new online system launched this year, called Glean Web, has made it significantly easier for Willing Hands staff and volunteer leaders to communicate with gleaners and gardeners and to know how

many people are able to attend a gleaning. You can find the full schedule and learn how to register as a volunteer on our website at willinghands.org/gleaning.

This season Deb has helped us glean lettuce, blueberries, corn, beans, shallots, and broccoli! Her favorite veggie to eat? Vine-ripened tomatoes.

When not out in the fields helping to pick food for our neighbors in need, you can find this retired nurse-midwife creating copper and stone jewelry. Deb is married, a mother of two children, and lives in Norwich. We are grateful to Deb, her friend Marianne, and the many gleaning volunteers who have spent hours in the fields with us this year, gathering the freshest produce the Upper Valley has to offer, all for those in need. Thank you, Deb!



Top, Deb Martin in the field. Above, Deb, center back row, with fellow gleaners and greens.

Thank you to Deb and all of our volunteers!

PHOTOS ON COVER AND PAGES 2-3 BY FRANK EASTON • DESIGN BY DANA DWINELL-YARDLEY

Visit us online at willinghands.org



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Willing Hands is a registered 501(c)3, and a network partner of Vermont Food Bank.

Yes, I want to help Willing Hands. Please contact me!

I want to:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer in the Willing Hands garden | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer on a local farm as a gleaner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer for _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Donate food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make a charitable gift of \$ _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Please contact me at:

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____