GROWING HOME

ANNUAL REPORT

2011
1993
Les Brown, Director of Policy at the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, applies to use Federal Surplus Land for urban farming and job training, and founds Seeds of Change.

1996
Seeds of Change transitions into Growing Home and gains nonprofit status.

1998
Growing Home establishes a 10 acre farm in LaSalle County, Illinois, which is now called the Les Brown Memorial Farm. This land was the first farm to be acquired through the McKinney-Vento Act, which is the first and only major federal legislative response to homelessness.
Dear Friends,

In 1992, Les Brown had the idea to develop an urban farming social enterprise that would serve as a vehicle to provide homeless people with hands-on job experience, with the aim to transform their lives. Though Les is no longer with us, twenty years later his vision lives on, not only through the nearly 300 people who have been trained directly by Growing Home, but also the many families and communities that have been impacted by our organization’s outreach and advocacy.

Imagine it: in 2001, Les (then the Policy Director at the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless) hired Harry Rhodes as Growing Home’s Executive Director, the only staff member. Harry worked at a desk in the hallway of the Coalition’s offices. He had no guaranteed salary; his livelihood was contingent on raising the funds needed to turn Les’ concept into a reality. He needed (and wanted!) to start a program, and to start it quickly. That first year, Harry raised $50,000. In 2002, Growing Home began its programming as we now know it—that first year, we trained nine individuals in farming who travelled daily to the site in Marseilles, IL, that is now known as the Les Brown Memorial Farm. Our programming was transformative, but we needed to grow; our programs and produce were in high demand. When we were invited into the Englewood community to start the the Wood Street Urban Farm—and most recently the Honore Street Farm—we had the resources to grow, and we know we will grow even more in years to come.

Today Growing Home has become a recognized leader in workforce development, urban agriculture, and social enterprise. Harry Rhodes remains Growing Home’s Executive Director, but he stands at the helm of a hard-working staff of more than 20 individuals. Similarly, Growing Home’s impact has affected more communities and lives than we could have imagined. In 2011, we trained 35 individuals with major barriers to employment in our job training program. We also served over 300 people through workshops ranging from cooking and container gardening, and gained substantial media attention because of our programming and staff. In recent years, Growing Home has expanded in order to provide extensive outreach programming to thousands of Chicago residents, with a focus on the Englewood community.

What we have accomplished these first 10 years, or 20 years, (depending on how you count!) has astonished even ourselves. We can’t wait to see what we’ll accomplish in the future.

Sincerely,

Harry Rhodes
Executive Director

Valerie Denney
President, Board of Directors

2002

The first year of Growing Home’s job training program. Nine individuals join the program and work primarily at the Les Brown Memorial Farm.

2003

Growing Home begins a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program which provides organic produce to individuals who share in our harvest.

2003

Growing Home partners with Su Casa Catholic Worker, a shelter for battered women and their families on the South Side of Chicago, to start the Su Casa Market Garden. The produce grown at this site is now primarily donated to Su Casa’s soup kitchen and other charities.
Growing Home is invited into Englewood through the Englewood Quality of Life Plan, funded through LISC’s New Communities Program. The land for the Wood Street Urban Farm was sold to Growing Home for $1 by the City of Chicago, and the redevelopment agreement for the land set the precedent for other urban farms in Chicago.

First 100 program interns complete training program.
2006
Growing Home begins developing the Wood Street Urban Farm.

2007
Growing Home begins production at the Wood Street Urban Farm, and the job training program finds a permanent home in Englewood.
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- Chicago Community Trust
- City of Chicago Dept. of Environment
- City of Chicago Dept. of Family and Support Services
- J. R. Albert Foundation
- IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

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- CEE@Chicago
- The Field Foundation of Illinois
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- Robert Kaplan and Dar Altschuler
- Joav Kohn
- Ronald and Mary Ann Lachman
- Ann Polson
- Scared Panda
- Carolyn Ulrich

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- Joav Kohn
- Ronald and Mary Ann Lachman
- Ann Polson
- Scared Panda
- Carolyn Ulrich
The Englewood Farmers Market is established with the help of Growing Home.

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Rebecca Schoenecker
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Jessica Taylor
TEDx
Treasure Island
Uncommon Ground
Barbara Wallace
93XRT

2008
The Englewood Farmers Market is established with the help of Growing Home.

2009
The Farm and Training Center building at the Wood Street Farm opens providing improved classrooms and office space for the job training program.
Volunteers

Cortney Ahern
Jess Audey
Diane Bask
Carlo Ballerine
Kristin Barbour
Sarah Batka
Zac Bleicher
Brianna Brehm
Carolyn Broderick
Simone Bullen
Julie Burch
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Dawn Parisot
Mark Parisot
Harmony Picciuca
Sarah Radov
Mike Reichen
Mike Richards
Elisa Revello
Avigal Rhodes
Tzippy Rhodes
Jean Robinson
Teri Rosendale
Jessica Sanchez
Hakierm Shakir
Anna Smith
Jackie Smith
Brian Steiling
Rebecca Stoner
Arden Tatum
Kim Werst
Malissa Winkowski
Lynn Vidal
Patrick Vogel
Nikki Zaleski
Emily Zielke
Justin Zucker
Rachael Zuppke
Cecilia Zvosec

2010

Over 10,000 lbs produced in one year on 2/5 of acre at the Wood Street Urban Farm.
On July 26th, the City of Chicago and Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced the submission of an ordinance providing zoning for urban farms to City Council. Growing Home’s staff and Executive Director, Harry Rhodes, were instrumental in building the cooperative process that brought this zoning ordinance into being. In October, Growing Home’s Honore Street Farm is the first farm to open under the urban farming City ordinance.
Growing Home, Inc.

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www.growinghomeinc.org

Growing Home’s mission is to operate, promote, and demonstrate the use of organic agriculture as a vehicle for job training, employment, and community development.

Graphic design by Mary Clare Butler.
Photography by Andrew Collings Photography and Kevin Horan