

With gratitude to all our funders and donors

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## Our Team

**Staff:** Naomi Benoist, Angela Beppe, Lori Burnison, Sunday Harrison, Karrin Huynh, Fiona Knight, Polina Malkin, Chimu Titi

**Bookkeeper:** Christine Hayhurst

**Contract Staff:** Charmyne Urquhart, Natalie Meyers, Lily Hu

**Board:** Natasha Arsenijevitch, Susan Blagg, Kathleen Bradley, Robin Buyers, Matt Callahan, Todd Irvine, Susan Jagger, June Komisar, Jennifer Nguyen, Jenny Poon, Melana Roberts, Jeremy Runnalls, H el ene St. Jacques, Prateeksha Singh, Alissa Vieth

## Interns:

Master of Environmental Education Program, Slippery Rock University:  
Tina Soldovieri

Community Worker Program, George Brown College:  
Naomi Benoist, Ande Beshir, Clerise Bunsee, Natalie Caracciolo, Kasia Skeoch-Hannah

York University, Teacher Candidates:  
Sera Antheunis, Selina Greco, Erin Kim, Adeela Malik, Jessica Mitchell, Angela Santos, Danielle Simonetta, Parveen Singh

Ryerson University Early Childhood Studies:  
Monica Anton

Humber College, Bachelor of Nursing Community Placement:  
Instructor: Stephanie Hamilton  
Students: Aisha Ali, Nicholas Austin, Kayla Beckford, Douglas Beecroft, Loreta Doga, Tori Meredith, Ngawang Raptan, Taylor Slaney

**Special Thanks:** Isaac Crosby, Chef Spencer Newlands, Intact Insurance, Lush Cosmetics employees, Winchester Parents: Brenda, Elizabeth, Erica, Heather, Iliana, Julia, Susan



## OUR MISSION

To empower urban children, youth, adults and families to grow and prepare fresh garden foods, learn about nature and the environment, and foster a positive educational experience.

# 2017 Annual Report

**2017** was a year of growing partnerships and building community as we launched new programs and fundraising celebrations. At Green Thumbs Growing Kids, we look back on 2017 with pride and gratitude for the skill and hard work of our trusted employees, for the dedication of our incredible volunteers, and for the generosity of our valued partners and donors. Together we have nurtured our mission and built on the interlocking programs that serve our diverse community.

## President's Message

I learned to value fresh food from my parents. My father kept a garden, while my mother made sure our meals included produce from our garden. In my professional life, I conducted an evaluation of the impact of Green Thumbs programs on students at one of our partner schools. I discovered that Green Thumbs not only shared my roots in the downtown east end, but also my respect and joy for growing and sharing fresh food.

Through the evaluation we learned that students in Green Thumbs programs had many positive outcomes. They mastered new skills, made new friends and explored eating new produce.

I have seen that parents and teachers appreciate the powerful impact of healthy habits learned within formal education. I am proud to represent Green Thumbs, working with our staff and board to spread awareness of our work.

– H el ene St. Jacques

## Message from the Executive Director

2017 was a year of new projects, building on the success of prior years. Intergenerational programs, a larger-scale fundraising event, and the special projects for children including Cook & Grow, Urban Trees from Seed and Sow & Save have taken us in new and wonderful directions, building on both nature awareness and the “prepare food” part of our mission. As the founder of Green Thumbs, I am always on the fence as to which is more critical – environmental education or food literacy – so developing both means we don't have to choose!

I could not be more proud of our amazing volunteers, staff and placement students who bring so much to our programs. Thank you to teachers, parents and especially the members of our Board of Directors who so thoughtfully engage with the important work of governance. Without all of them, we could not accomplish what you see herein.

– Sunday Harrison

## Stay connected & get involved

### Green Thumbs Growing Kids

c/o Centre for Social Innovation,  
Regent Park  
585 Dundas St. E., 3rd Floor  
Toronto, ON M5A 2B7

### Donate online via CanadaHelps:

canadahelps.org/dn/7819  
Or call our office:  
647-348-5437



Sign up for our newsletter  
via [www.greenthumbsto.org](http://www.greenthumbsto.org)



Become a member or volunteer, visit our website: [www.greenthumbsto.org](http://www.greenthumbsto.org)

## OUR PROGRAMS



### Kids Growing

Children's exploration of nature and healthy food is at the heart of this program. Gardening and food activities on school grounds and in classrooms support curriculum objectives and provide healthy summer activities for young children.



### Cook & Grow

In the fall, we offered a new after-school program for students in two schools. Students took pride in preparing dishes from food they had grown and developed an insatiable interest in new tastes. They experienced their personal role in the food cycle as growers and consumers.



### Urban Trees from Seed

Participants harvested seeds from native trees on or near their school grounds and planted them in school tree nurseries where they can be overseen by students. In time, the trees will be given back to the community for re-planting. This project teaches about biodiversity, adaptation and importance of trees in Indigenous cultures.



### Sow & Save

Elementary students learned about the conservation of locally adapted seed and its role in biodiversity and healthy agriculture systems. Teachers were empowered to share this information with their classes and schools.



## OUR EVENTS



### Imagine a Garden in Every School

School Garden Week reached many school gardeners across Ontario. The week highlighted the vital role of school food gardens in educating children about their own contribution to health and the environment.



### Spring is in the Air

Our annual celebration of spring at the Allan Gardens Children's Conservatory brought families together for the spring plant sale and to enjoy a reading from the author of the award-winning children's book, *Tokyo Digs a Garden*.

#### Teachers say:

"Green Thumbs offers a great hands-on experience in learning about healthy food, food sources, life-cycles, social skills and team building. These experiences easily can be brought into the classroom and used in curriculum learning in all strands of the curriculum."

"It should be mandatory that all teachers bring their students to the garden at least once a season to learn and grow together. The garden also helps to foster empathy for our environment."



### emergence

The night market themed evening celebrated Green Thumbs along with emerging chefs, artists, and performers, bringing together old friends and new faces. To honour his work in advocating for children's gardens, Mark Cullen was presented with the Green Future Award of Distinction. This event surpassed the scale of all our former fundraising efforts. It helped us to grow as an organization with new partnerships, volunteers and ways to celebrate the community of which we are a part.



### Nuit Verte and Pizza Walk

Fall celebrations helped cultivate community. Nuit Verte was held during the Cabbagetown Festival and invited neighbours into the Winchester school garden for storytelling around a campfire and other activities.

The Pizza Walk led a group on a tour of the school gardens and ended at the Regent Park Bake Oven to make pizzas with the fresh herbs gathered from the gardens.

"Winchester Jr. & Sr. School in downtown Toronto has a wonderful outdoor garden thanks to the hard work of Green Thumbs. As a parent who volunteers in the garden it's clear how significant the garden experience is to our students as a break from inside class work, where they get to experience hands-on learning with the gardener and volunteers and where they can watch their work take shape into a magnificent garden each year. It's a precious green space in our urban school yard that gives our students an opportunity to explore, learn and play, get dirty, practice teamwork and see and taste the results of their hard work."

Elizabeth Buchanan

### Indigenous Teachings

This program focused on helping students to make a meaningful link between the Land Acknowledgment they hear at their schools and their own daily interactions with their environment. Students explored the interconnection of all living things and planted the seeds of environmental stewardship and respect.



### Urban Roots Youth

Our youth centered after-school program engaged students with interests in food, environment and urban agriculture in school-community gardens and greenhouses. A new community partnership was formed as the youth teamed up with a group of garden enthusiasts from a local seniors' residence to grow produce in a community garden plot. Both generations shared knowledge about gardens, food and their cultures.



## 2017 IN NUMBERS

- \* **4,462** Children attended Green Thumbs programs
- \* Children's programs served **48** teachers in **8** schools
- \* **32** Sessions at Allan Gardens Children's Conservatory
- \* **272** Children attended **13** Indigenous Land-based learning sessions
- \* **9** Garden drop-in sessions for families in summer
- \* **1** Climate Change teach-in for families
- \* Youth program attended by **618** youth in **76** sessions
- \* **5** Seniors/Youth intergenerational sessions, attended by Seniors **22** and youth **10**
- \* **17** Youth attended **2** Commercial Kitchen sessions
- \* **7** Good Food Market days
- \* **1** Field trip to a farm for youth
- \* **381** Adult participants (not volunteering or teaching)
- \* **33** Community volunteers gave **310** hours
- \* **2,800** Volunteer hours by **23** placement students
- \* **386** Program hours spread over **206** sessions