



2023

ANNUAL REPORT

FOOD TO POWER



MISSION

We work to cultivate a healthy, equitable food system in greater Colorado Springs

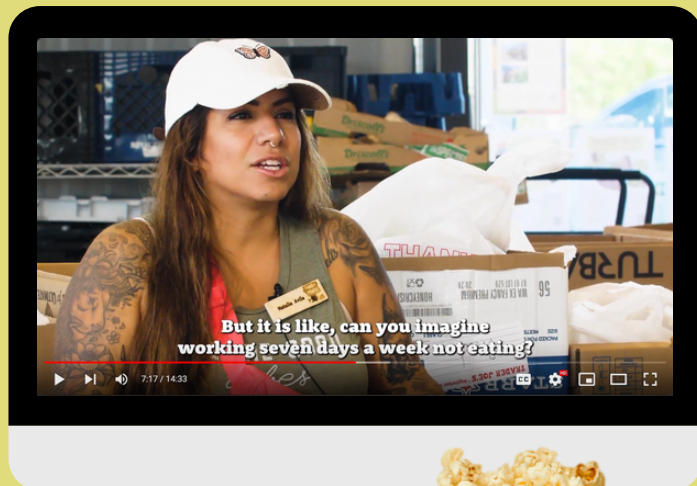
VISION

We envision a world where communities heal and thrive in relationship with food, land, and each other.

2023 10-year anniversary

Who better to bring our history to life than Juelz Ramirez? SE COS resident, advocate, entrepreneur and prolific media-maker behind @DailyDose719, Juelz produced a short documentary that tells the story of our scrappy beginnings as Colorado Springs Food Rescue and the research, growth and development behind the multi-faceted organization that we are today. It shows what's possible in 10 years and invites us all to envision the future of food justice in Colorado Springs.

In 2023, Food To Power turned ten! To celebrate this milestone, we wanted to tell our story from the start.



About

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Click here or use the code below to watch the documentary!

Dear community,

I hope this letter finds you well nourished. It is my pleasure to present to you Food to Power's 2023 Annual Report. This year was significant because we celebrated our 10-year anniversary! Over the decade we have grown from a college-based food rescue project to a full-fledged, community-run food hub. In 2023, we made significant leaps towards our mission in cultivating a more inclusive and equitable food system in Colorado Springs, and I'm excited to share that with you in the pages ahead.

But first and foremost I want to express my sincerest gratitude to our dedicated volunteers, partners, staff members, board members and our beloved community who embraces and supports our work. Without their passion and dedication, we would not have been able to reach the milestones in this report. It takes a village and this village shows up daily!

One of the highlights of this past year was the continued build-out of the Hillside Hub. We are so grateful to call The Hillside Hub home of Food to Power and it has been our honor to steward this land. In 2023, we were able to add outdoor stairs, rooftop solar panels, an all-season, temperature-controlled greenhouse, a deer fence, a bike shed, a cold room, and cold frames. And that's in

addition to all the love and organic matter that's gone into the soil that's now so much richer than when we started. A BIG thank you to our generous supporters and donors who made these projects possible. All these site improvements increase our capacity to serve more members of our community, especially those who experience additional burdens to accessing fresh and affordable food.

In 2023, we started on a year-long strategic planning process that will conclude in summer 2024 and guide our work from 2025-2027. Looking forward, we are excited about the possibilities and remain committed to our mission. We can't do it alone. We need your support, whether it be through volunteering your time, making a donation, or spreading the word about our work.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to each and everyone of you for your unwavering support. Together, we can work towards a future where everyone has access to healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant food.

In solidarity,



Patience Kabwasa
Executive Director



Letter from the Executive Director

Volunteers

Food To Power is all about people-power. Whether it's work days on the Farm, drop-in hours on the compost pad, Food Recovery shifts, or supporting No Cost Grocery, volunteers make all this impact possible. Halfway through 2023, volunteer management was centralized under one role, the Community Education Manager, and we got to see major improvements to the volunteer experience, such as monthly volunteer onboarding events, an updated values agreement, channels for volunteer feedback, volunteer appreciation events, and a centralized sign-up platform for opportunities across departments.

We've started to see more volunteers "cross-pollinating" across programs, like Farm volunteers who start volunteering at No Cost Grocery, or compost volunteers who end up involved in Community Corner. This results in broader knowledge, greater impact and more varied, meaningful experiences.



SPECIAL THANKS

- Steven E. - 291.5 hrs
- Brett K. - 97.75 hrs
- Sally N. - 72 hrs
- Kristen P. - 63 hrs
- William D. - 90.5 hrs
- Matt N. - 54.5 hrs
- Neal D. - 54.5 hrs

Special shout out to John C. for organizing the Trader Joe's collab!

"Well-organized, obvious compassion from all involved."

"I've enjoyed the camaraderie, helping the community, knowing that I'm helping with the food waste problem."

1,118
volunteer hours
logged in Farm and
Compost

2,745
volunteer hours
logged in Food
Recovery

Click here or use the code below to get involved!



Gratitude



FOOD RECOVERY

Food Access remains central because everyone deserves food. Period.

That's why a network of volunteers show up every week to help pickup and deliver food to grocery programs, community-based partners, and directly to the doors of community members with transportation barriers. We started to see increased demand for food assistance through all our programs and partnerships in the second half of 2023, from cuts to SNAP funding, inflated prices at grocery stores, and the closure of King Soopers (see: pg. 8). Thank you to everyone who stepped up to help meet the needs, including standout food donors Whole Foods, Trader Joe's, and Kangaroo Coffee.



"I love the sense of community. Helping neighbors and working side by side with like-minded people."

No Cost Grocery

Twice a week, folks can visit the Hillside Hub to pick up groceries at no cost. Set up like a shopping experience, people can move freely and pick out groceries. 1,895 people came to the Hillside Hub for our No Cost Grocery in 2023. 119,650 pounds of food went out through the Hillside Hub.

Our food recovery efforts also supply an additional 252,303 pounds to No Cost Grocery programs throughout the city on a weekly basis. 12,303 people got no cost groceries at partner sites in 2023! Thank you to partners Solid Rock CommUNITY Center, Highland Mobile Home Park, Sleepy Valley Mobile Home Park, Greccio Housing, Westside Community Center, Meadows Park Community Center, Atlas Preparatory, and Voces Unidas.

371,952 lbs
of perfectly good food recovered
\$ 1,290,673
value of food distributed
via no cost grocery

"It saves me \$100-200 a week in expenses and time spent shopping. I now see it as essential."



Food Access



In 2023, the Food To Power Farm underwent its second growing season at the Hillside Hub. We started seeding in February and didn't stop until August, with harvests well into November.

Based on surveyed food preferences, and considering the site and seasonality, we grew vegetables with flowers, herbs and mushrooms throughout. In-ground, no till, no pesticides, drip irrigation, under high and low tunnels.

All produce was distributed right from the Hillside Hub, via no cost grocery and a pilot farm stand.

6,247
lbs of produce harvested
73
varieties of produce grown
147
volunteers engaged

“Work days on the Farm are an awesome way to get outside, meet new people, learn something new, and work together towards a common good.”

We also continued to build out the Farm's infrastructure. Staff and contractors built a new cold storage room, a deer fence, a heated greenhouse, two sets of stairs, and revamped our tool organization.

People-power made it possible, with volunteers involved every step of the way. We hosted volunteer drop-in days, groups, school field trips, a FLY internship rotation, and many tours. Come see us in 2024!



Click here or use the code below to volunteer at the farm!



Farm

Community Corner



Community Corner engages No Cost Grocery participants in activities and resources related to shopping, cooking, and growing food. We hosted 17 Community Corners in 2023, led by staff and volunteers alike, with activities ranging from recipe samples, a fermentation demonstration and a seed giveaway.

In 2023, 365 people stopped by Community Corner to connect and share knowledge about food. We gave away 19 free cooking appliances to participants who attended often enough to enter a raffle.

Workshops

We hosted 17 workshops at the Hillside Hub in 2023, bringing education on a wide range of topics, from composting, microgreens, and mushroom growing, to cooking classes about Congolese and Okinawan food, and Mediterranean and plant-based diets.

The majority of workshops were led by guest facilitators, bringing new knowledge into Food to Power and making it accessible to anyone who needed to attend free of charge. We also hosted our first ever Workshop Facilitator Course in collaboration with Colorado College. A cohort of 23 worked through a 2-day curriculum on facilitation skills and workshop planning, to encourage sharing their knowledge and skills with the community.

339

total workshop attendees

>80%

of workshop attendees reported connecting to new people

>90%

reported learning something new



“It’s so nice to have an event that also includes dinner, so that the evening doesn’t feel rushed. I wanted to come because I love everything Stephanie [Ermel] offers/stands for. ... I loved that I could bring my kids and not feel weird about it. I loved the walk around the farm after, and the gorgeous sunset.”

“I appreciated the handout and the demos and it was nice getting to ask questions and get hands-on help.”

Sign up for our newsletters for updates by clicking here or using the code below!

Adult Education

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In 2023 we had the honor of hosting 14 young leaders in our paid F.L.Y. (Food-systems Leadership for Youth) summer internship, led by our 3 fabulous F.L.Y. Coordinators Throughout the summer they learned all about the food system — its history, function and flaws — and spent time working in food recovery, on the Farm, on the compost pad, in Communications, and with the Education department.



After 8 weeks, youth interns completed projects ranging from home aquaponics to musical performances to artistic creations to recipe demonstrations and more. They reported improved confidence in cooking and gardening skills. It was a joy!

“I’m more social and connected to people much faster, I love doing stuff for the community and so helping with the no cost grocery really helped me talk to strangers or take charge when needed.”



“I’ve been able to identify edible weeds, learn how to compost, and tend for multiple garden beds at the same time and keeping them healthy and harvesting.”

“I learned how to compost. I learned how to communicate during team work. I learned how to help others out. I learned how to talk to people confidently. And present well. OH GOLLY I LEARNED A LOT JUST WITHIN 8 WEEKS Wowza.”

PARTY

The Participatory Action Research Team for Youth (PARTY) was our first ever youth-led research project. We teamed up with Colorado College sociologist Dr. Florencia Rojo to recruit, train, and employ 7 young people to practice participatory action research. The youth research team conducted interviews that included over 50 individuals from January to May, and decided to present their research as a cookbook highlighting the importance of recipes as an inter-generational connector. More than a hundred PARTY cookbooks were distributed at the PARTY party in May 2023.

“I learned ways to gather information using your community. I learned more ways to research and create a personalized research question.”



Click here or use the code below for future youth opportunities!



Youth Education

Street Team

Community organizing creates change. That’s why in 2023, we launched the Street Team — a group of staff, contractors, volunteers, and interns who learned organizing skills such as canvassing and phone banking, and practiced them by doing outreach, interviews, and presentation of a Vendor List highlighting Hillside-based businesses to celebrate and encourage community wealth building.

\$4,000
paid to
community organizers

Coalitions

Because we’re stronger together, we work alongside peers and allies to advocate for policies that address health disparities in our communities. Food To Power participated in at least 5 local and statewide coalitions in 2023 — the Southeast Food Coalition, Hunger Free HSMA (Healthy School Meals for All) Implementation, Community Resource Center, Bell Policy Institute, and El Paso County Public Health Healthy Community Collaborative — as well as national coalitions like the Community Composters’ Coalition and Food Rescue Alliance.

Legislative



Policymakers have the power to greatly affect people’s ability to access good, fresh, affordable food, so, as advocates, we try to educate and persuade them about specific issues. In 2023, Food To Power staff attended the Hunger Free Lobby Day with state representatives and the National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference (NAHPC) in Washington D.C. and lobby day with national representatives. Patience also spoke virtually before congress in defense of the Food Pantry Assistance Grant (FPAG) Program.

King Soopers



In June 2023, the King Soopers on South Academy Blvd. shuttered without notice due to asbestos. Residents of Deerfield Hills and Pikes Peak Park in southeast Colorado Springs, where historic disinvestment has already lowered food access, suddenly had to travel much farther to get groceries, visit food pantries, or stick to fast food. Food To Power was among the array of affected residents, workers, and community-based organizations that stepped up to not only bridge the emergent gaps in food access, but also to ensure that the store would re-open with full consideration to the needs of the community. Looming large was the fact that Kroger, parent company of King Soopers, was in talks to buy Albertson’s, parent company of Safeway, another grocery chain with stores locally, putting into question the company’s commitment to the Academy location. On this issue Food To Power hosted town halls, conducted surveys, educated representatives, published an op-ed, and circulated a petition to stop the mega-merger. King Soopers on Academy reopened in November 2023 and the FTC sued to block the Kroger-Albertson’s merger in February 2024.



Food Advocacy

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Food To Power Compost is our social enterprise making it convenient to compost. We provide food scrap collection services for households, businesses and events, partnering with two regional composting facilities in addition to making compost on-site at the Hillside Hub and educating the public about composting and soil health. Community composting is a win-win-win: it prevents landfill emissions, improves local soil health, and facilitates deeper connections to food and place.



102,364

lbs diverted in 2023

99,386

lbs CO₂E
(Carbon Equivalency)

With Brown's Greens,

567

households composting

18

businesses composting
weekly

**FOOD^{TO}
POWER
COMPOST**

At the end of 2023, we sealed the deal to join forces with friendly competitor and collaborator Brown's Greens, a local landscaping and composting company. We worked with the Calm Foundation and Legacy Institute to finance the acquisition of Brown's Greens' two trucks, hundreds of buckets, bins, and client list. Starting 2024, Food To Power Compost more than doubled in scale, now servicing nearly the whole city with a more efficient and consistent service for the growing population that's committed to compost.

11

yards of compost made on-site

85

buckets of compost back
to members for free

THANK YOU!

**Click here or use the code below to
learn more about membership!**



Compost

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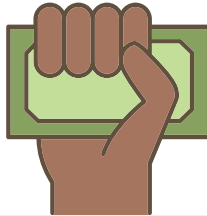
Community wealth building is an approach to economic development that puts people over profit through democratic decision-making, community ownership, and spending that circulates dollars locally, in-line with our values.

\$456,763.82

paid to individuals and organizations in southeast Springs in 2023

\$52,165.25

paid to youth ages 15-21 in 2023

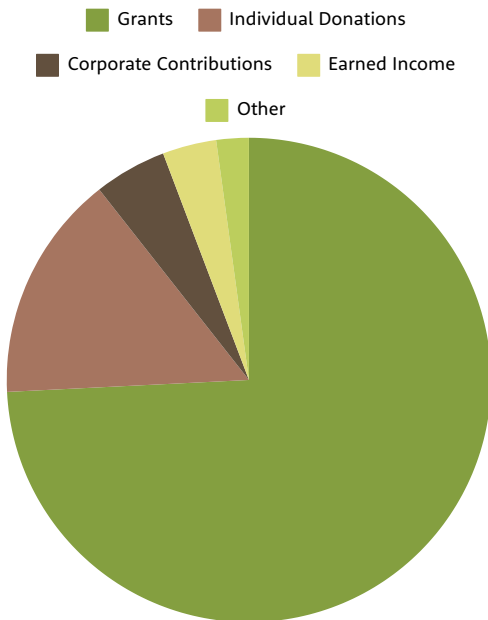


\$377,656.89

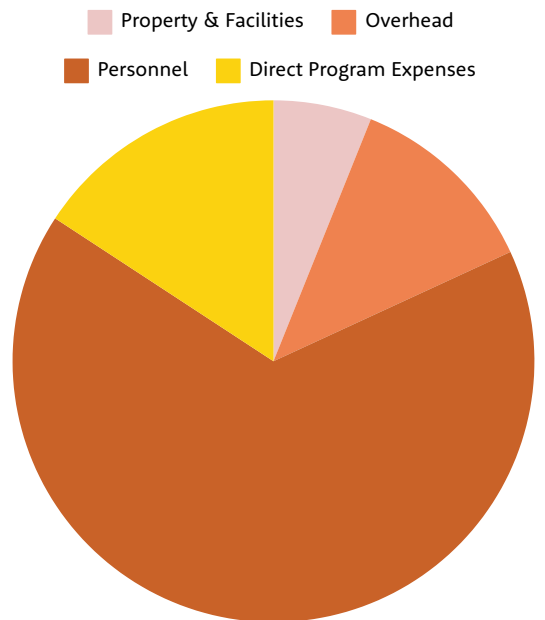
invested in the land since constructing the Hillside Hub

Food To Power uses community feedback, consensus decision-making, and working committees to democratize decision-making about our programs, policies and practices.

2022-2023 FINANCIALS



Revenue
\$ 3,246,630.37



Expenses
(\$ 2,610,497.19)

Community Wealth Building

Donors

The impact of our work is thanks to a constellation of charitable giving from individuals, corporate partners, and grant-making organizations.

Whether you give a lot or a little, it all adds up to real progress toward a healthy, equitable food system.



SPECIAL THANKS

Andie A., David C., Grace B., Joyce S., Karen B., Karen Z., Kimbra S., Alfredo V., Molly O., Peter S., Phung C., Sarah C., Julie F., Nard C., John F., Heather C., Randy L., Melanie L.

RSF Social Finance, Ent Credit Union, Colorado Springs Health Foundation, Leopold Foundation, Windy Pines Foundation, CO Blueprint to End Hunger, Colorado Health Foundation, Colorado Trust, RNR Foundation, Gates Family Foundation, Yardi Systems, Western Digital Foundation, EPC Community Investment Fund, State of Colorado - Dept. of Public Health & Environment, Pische Foundation., T. Rowe Price., Anschutz Foundation., Racial Equity Fund, First Congregational Church, Bank of America, Price Family Foundation, Pikes Peak Community Foundation, Colorado Springs Utilities, El Pomar Foundation, Connie M Schmidt Fund, JP & JP Fund, Big Lots Foundation

Click here or use the code below to donate and support our work cultivating a healthy, equitable food system!



Gratitude

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Staff and Board

Food To Power is a super-organism made up of staff, contractors, volunteers, funders, partners, and board members.

The 20-person staff uses collaborative, transparent planning and budgeting processes, consensus-based decision-making, and participates in working committees focused on organization-wide initiatives like policy development, employee wellness and professional development.

The board is a working and strategic board, meaning board members not only hold fiduciary responsibilities, they also participate in ongoing work like fundraising, events, and strategic planning. Thanks, everyone!



Click here to see staff and board bios and roles/responsibilities



Gratitude