

# FALL PROGRAM

**23** YOUTH SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE FALL PROJECT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Fall Project Management Program is the season where youth put all the growth they have been cultivating all year into next level positions as managers over specific FoodWhat projects. Youth step up into the following distinct management roles: Farm Managers, Harvest & CSA Managers, Culinary Managers, Flower Business Managers, Community Farm Stand Managers, or Event Planners. Each leadership role required higher levels of responsibility, communication, decision-making and accountability.

Two new changes this fall included expanding the Fall Job to a 4-day-per-week program (as youth requested) and inviting the Summer Junior Staff back to join the Fall Crew as peers, not peer-leaders. For them, it was an opportunity to practice "leading from behind" in creating space and supporting the first-year youth to step into these leadership roles.



**HARVEST FESTIVAL.** After a two-year hiatus, we were able to bring back this popular countywide school district-serving event. 250+ high school and middle school students arrived at our North County site on the UCSC Campus for a morning of farm and food exploration, inspiration, learning, and fun.

**YOUTH-POWERED PIES.** This was a banner year for our pie business with fall youth making 600 pies! These delicious treats were made with pumpkins they had been growing at the FoodWhat Farm and baked in partnership with Beckmann's Bakery. From planting the seeds to harvesting the pumpkins to making the puree and then pouring it into the pie crusts, youth participated in each step of the hefty pie-making process. These pies were then distributed to youth, sold to the community through New Leaf, and purchased by local nonprofits for their staff and Board.

## COMMUNITY FOOD ACCESS.

In the Summer and Fall, FoodWhat partnered with the PVUSD Family Engagement and Wellness Center to relaunch our community farm stand. Through the farm stand, FoodWhat was able to distribute over 1,000 lbs of local, affordable, and accessible organic produce to the surrounding neighborhoods and to under-resourced families residing in Watsonville in Summer. Over the course of the Fall, our Farm Stand Crew successfully distributed an additional 1,100 pounds of fresh produce!

**95%** of youth shared that their leadership skills increased, including their confidence to lead others, through their time in the Fall Project Management program.

**7,000 lbs** of fresh, nutritious food distributed to youth, their families, and the wider community in 2022!

"Being able to be surrounded by people who want to grow with you gives me the ability to be myself on a good or bad day. I also love just being outside. It grounds me."

"I enjoyed the Fall Job. It taught me how to manage my schedule with school, work, and other activities."

"I loved my time on the farm. Thank you."

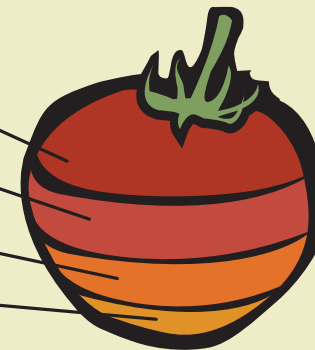
# FINANCIAL REPORT

**INCOME - \$1,095,286**



- Donor Advised Funds **29%**
- Government Grants & Contracts **27%**
- Foundation Grants **22%**
- Individual Donations **12%**
- Corporate Grants & Donations **10%**

**EXPENSES - \$999,499**



- Program - **54%**
- Youth Salaries & Stipends - **16%**
- Fundraising - **18%**
- Administration - **12%**

In 2023, we are once again undergoing a significant expansion in staffing. To support this growth, we secured additional funding beyond our annual expenses in 2022.

## OUR MISSION

"Food, What?!" is a youth empowerment and food justice organization. At FoodWhat, youth engage in relationships with land, food and each other in ways that are grounded in love and rooted in justice. We provide meaningful space where youth define and cultivate their empowerment, liberation and well-being.

**THANK YOU** for all of the ways you have, and continue to support the young people at the heart of FoodWhat.

## CONTACT US

831.459.5476 | 1156 High Street Santa Cruz, CA 95064 | foodwhat.org

PRINTED BY: community printers



**"FoodWhat is an unforgettable, bond making, growth inspiring program. Here you will learn, love, and laugh."**

# A NOTE FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS



Dear Friends,

2022 was another big year! We were able to bring the program back to full capacity, serving 75 youth in core programs and a few hundred through our major on-farm event last fall. We continued to meet the very real need for significant mental health support for the youth in our community. We invested considerably in our organizational structure and staffing. And we listened deeply again to what youth were asking for – to what they said was most needed in this time.

If you're new to FoodWhat, we are a Santa Cruz County nonprofit organization serving high school-aged youth using food and farming as the vehicle for empowerment, wellness, healing, community building, job training, resilience, and so many other impacts depending on what youth are choosing to get out of their time on the farm.

## HERE'S A SNAPSHOT OF THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE YOUTH WE SERVED IN 2022:

- 30%** identified as LGBTQ (vs 13% countywide)
- 25%** food insecure (vs 12.6% countywide)
- 44%** of youth have been farmworkers and 50% of all youth come from farmworker families
- 37%** have been suspended or expelled
- 16%** involved in the juvenile justice system
- 19%** housing insecure
- 63%** are caretakers in their families
- 73%** share the money they made at FoodWhat (and in other jobs) to support their household/families

For years we have heard from youth how FoodWhat is a safe space, especially for youth with historically marginalized identities. Last year we heard from many youth about the difference between fitting in and belonging. You can think about *fitting in* as molding your way of being to be accepted by those around you. It's you meeting them where they're at. *Belonging*, on the other hand, is showing up fully as your true authentic self and being accepted just as you are.

I'm sure you can think of spaces where you fit in, and places where you are at peace, where you feel yourself shine, where you feel your strength, where you can be vulnerable, and where your heart is open. Those are places of belonging.

Youth are telling us, especially in this time of intense mental health suffering, how critical it is to have a place where they can be fully themselves.

At FoodWhat, youth know that all parts of themselves are welcome. And in knowing that, it creates a strong invitation for them to push into the parts that no longer serve them or may be creating friction with others. These spaces of belonging allow youth to move beyond and dream past the world that already exists and into a healthier and more just world.

We often speak about FoodWhat's long game with youth. The generational work we're doing. Last fall many youth spoke about their growth, about breaking generational chains, and breaking generational trauma, in one-on-one interviews.

Even one of the youngest youth on the crew, only 15, was able to come to this language and this understanding of themselves and to define their own journey in these terms. This is the impact of spaces of belonging and are part of the medicine that youth are asking for.

We know there is a major need for more supportive youth spaces that nurture mental health and overall well-being. We are aware of how critical it is for youth to have access to safe and outdoor spaces, and places where they can contribute to the creation of a space of belonging where they are invited to show up as their authentic self and know they will be accepted for who they are. For youth, especially the historically marginalized in our county, FoodWhat is that space.

Each young person who stepped onto the farm this year brought with them, or discovered, a willingness to show up fully. As youth showed up for themselves in all kinds of ways at FoodWhat, so did our community. We felt the love come in from all of you—friends, partners, educators, chefs, farmers, donors and cheerleaders— for this work. On behalf of all of us at FoodWhat, we thank you greatly!

With love,

Irene, Paco, Doron  
Co-Executive Directors



# 69 SPRING PROGRAM

YOUTH COMPLETED THE SPRING JOB TRAINING PROGRAM

This Spring, we returned to full capacity on the farm for the first time since the arrival of the pandemic and offered 70 spots to youth across Santa Cruz County to join the FoodWhat Crew. They breathed fresh air, cooked nourishing meals in our outdoor kitchen, cultivated a safe outdoor space and engaged their minds, bodies and spirits in ways that resonated most with them while on the farm.

**HEALING AND MENTAL HEALTH.** FoodWhat continued our increased efforts to support youth mental health, especially through workshops like “DeStress Your Mind” where youth were able to begin to unpack their wounds and heal.



**NUTRITIOUS FOOD ACCESS.** Every day of programming, youth grew, harvested, cooked, and shared meals together. They challenged assumptions about who gets to eat healthy food and created nutritious, culturally-relevant meals.

**JOB AND WAGES.** Youth gained meaningful job skills that helped them improve their employability while building the belief in themselves that they can pursue a career path that is meaningful, dignified, and values their financial worth.

Upon completion, youth earned 2.5 school credits, their hourly wage, and the opportunity to apply to our Summer Job Program.



## NEW POSITION – PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Abigail “Abi” Camarillo became the first FoodWhat youth alum to join the organization as a salaried staff member.

Abi has an incredibly big and loving heart for each and every young person who walks onto the farm. Her contributions, and unique alum-turned-staff perspective, have been invaluable in so many ways from curriculum development to organizational growth to direct service with youth. Abi's addition to our team is a solid success in hiring passionate, capable, and relevant staff as our organization continues to grow!

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU ON YOUR FIRST DAY HERE AND YOU TODAY ON YOUR LAST WEEK OF YOUR FOODWHAT SPRING INTERNSHIP?

“I think I feel less worried or judged. I know now how to better treat my body, and be in the community in a changing way.”

“The difference is I found myself and feel happier than I was in the beginning.”

## HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN FOODWHAT TO ONE OF YOUR FRIENDS?

“An amazing experience that helped me see how important food is to our bodies. Helped us learn how to nourish our bodies, see how important farm workers are to our community and that happiness is so much more important than money and letting others affect you.”

“A space where you can have time off your phone and spend time with nature and spend time with others.”

# SUMMER PROGRAM

32 YOUTH + 5 JUNIOR STAFF SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE SUMMER JOB PROGRAM

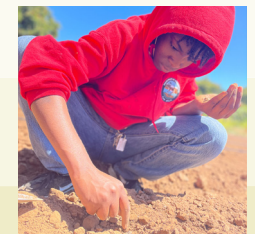
Summer is the most robust season at FoodWhat. It's the time of year when youth get to spend the most time together and on the land. Youth continued the farming, cooking, and empowerment activities from Spring while beginning an important series of new projects. They engaged in purposeful work, built health, and cultivated their power. The days were thick and their transformation profound.

As they continued stewarding the farm, youth harvested produce for the daily meals they would cook together or with guest chefs, as well as to bring home to their families in the form of weekly produce boxes and meal kits. By the end of their summer job, youth harvested over 2,000 lbs of produce to take home in their Family CSA.

**JUNIOR STAFF.** 5 alumni from the previous year were hired into second-year positions supporting their development continuum by stepping into these advanced leadership roles during the Summer Job program and in which they mentored and galvanized the first-year crew.

## JUNIOR STAFF QUOTE

“Before finding FoodWhat 2 years ago I felt kind of lost. In a sense that I truly didn't know who I was as a person as well as what I aimed for in life. FoodWhat and the people around it definitely changed how I look at life and it gave me motivation to want better, to be better. My goal in life is to live happily and peacefully.”



## AS A RESULT OF PARTICIPATING IN THE SUMMER JOB PROGRAM:

**89%** of youth shared that they felt more financially secure

**92%** shared they were more confident in their ability to cook

**92%** shared they were eating more fruits and vegetables

**92%** shared that their family was cooking with more healthy food since receiving a weekly CSA throughout the Summer Job program

**92%** shared their mental health improved

**96%** shared feeling more confident in themselves

**96%** shared having the power and ability to make positive changes in their lives

**100%** shared now knowing how to work hard and finish strong in a job

“This was the first summer my depression didn't turn into chronic depression. I feel good and happy and it makes me so proud.”

“My goals are to continue to grow, thrive, and push myself. Also to never give up even in difficult situations. I really wish to continue to work with FoodWhat and help any way that I can.”