



MOUNTAIN ROOTS
2021 ANNUAL
REPORT



OUR MISSION is to cultivate a resilient food system in the Gunnison Valley by enhancing healthy connections between food, earth, and community. We foster knowledge, teach skills, and provide opportunities that ensure access to affordable, nutritious food that is regionally based and regeneratively produced.

A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

While I have known for years—and continue to learn about—the health, economic, and social benefits of a vibrant and multi-faceted local food system, I have to admit that one of the simplest and most enduring reasons I return to local food is because I find that it is so nourishing—to my body, to the land, and to my soul.



To buy, from a farmer, a deep green bunch of kale, a wooden basket brimming with lustrous cherry tomatoes, or a paper sack of crisp fall apples is a simple but profound pleasure. To accept it from a person whose nails are rimmed with soil, to thank the person who rose at 4 a.m.

to load vegetables into a truck—these actions are tactile evidence of the ways I am connected to farmers, the land, and the history of this corner of Gunnison Valley.

At Mountain Roots we have been learning and growing as individuals and as an organization. We've been true to our goal of investing in talent and developing leadership for professional staff positions. We've established ourselves as a regional AmeriCorps hub for food systems work, and we're seeing more and more young people choose experiences with us to build bridges from college to careers in Agriculture, Environmental Education, and Food Security. The growing popularity of our community events, like the spring Open House, fall Harvest Hoedown, and the premier local food event of the summer—Feast in the Field—show us how much people want to feel more connected. A deeper connection to food, to the land, and to each other gives us all the chance to have a more personal experience with local food and the people who grow it.

We know from experience that disruptions can foster innovation and creativity, offering rare opportunities to transform systems to make them more equitable. Now is our opportunity to rebuild and strengthen the connections between local farms, restaurants, schools, food businesses, and every dining table so that we can all enjoy access to healthy, nutritious food that is regionally based and produced in a way that protects our resources and restores our land.

We are doubling down on our commitments to bringing about the sustainable, healthy, and equitable food system we seek. Though the pandemic has affected our plans and our timeline, it has also revealed that our instincts were correct: that farm-to-table, for all its strengths, continues to have great untapped potential; that deeper connections among farmers, chefs, and everyone in between will be at the center of the change we seek; and that our organization is uniquely positioned to serve as a springboard that will bring this vision to life.

This annual report is bursting with accounts of the life-giving connections made possible by local food traditions and innovations. Local Food is really for all of us. Whether we get our protein from grass-fed beef, wild elk, or lentils; whether we can afford a multi-course fine dining experience or bring food stamps and vouchers to the farmer's market; whether we're growing rows of carrots in a community garden or cheery sprigs of parsley on a windowsill, or just making messy pancakes with a child, we express our love and care with food.

And so, we continue to move forward. We continue to strengthen our connection to the land, to our food, and to each other. We couldn't do what we do without you. We thank you for believing and investing in this very important work. Our collaborative experiences are sowing the seeds for a more just and thriving world for everyone.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Holly Conn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Holly Conn
Executive Director

GETTING TO THE ROOT OF HEALTH

Jennifer Dews moved to the Gunnison Valley in the spring of 2019 to work with the Mountain Roots farm team. After seeing the emphasis on education and engagement, and knowing that those elements are foundational for lasting change, she knew she wanted to stay and contribute to the ripple effect. Jennifer now manages the three acres of growing spaces in the Regenerative Agriculture Program.

Growing up in Mississippi, Jennifer's family grew basic southern staples like tomatoes and corn in their backyard garden, but she did not grow up farming. After completing a degree in Nutrition and Food Systems with a focus in dietetics, Jennifer realized that she wanted to get in front of the diet-related health problems that were plaguing her community. Shortly after graduating college, Jennifer started her first position in farming as an AmeriCorps member on Little Hat Creek Farm in Roseland, Virginia. She attributes her path forward in regenerative farming to Ben Stowe, her first farming mentor, who demonstrated the importance of resilience and adaptability and how to lead with passion.



"It is different from any other farm I've worked on in that there is constant interaction with our other programs, which provides a constant reminder of the big picture and why we do what we do."





As Jennifer reflects on the 2021 growing season, she feels proud of the determination of her team. Watching how each member of the team develops personally and professionally through the experiential apprenticeship program inspires her. The beginner farmers who come through the program are able to gain independence and confidence in their work, and the dedication to their projects is clear. Working with the Regenerative Agriculture Team is a unique opportunity, and the skills and relationships you will take away from this experience are lifelong.

2021 brought a collaborative partnership with the Crested Butte Land Trust. Glacier Farm, on one third of an acre of the historic Niccolai Ranch in Crested Butte South, adds a second, valuable growing space to the Regenerative Agriculture Program. Navigating the learning curve that comes with a new space, as well as managing a dynamic team with revolving schedules, proved to

be the greatest challenges for Jennifer in 2021. She attributes her ability to grow and adapt as a leader to these challenges, and knows that each obstacle provides her an opportunity to improve her skills and efficiency as a farmer. Farming with Mountain Roots has afforded Jennifer the opportunity for independence, which has led her to perform in ways that have been surprising, even to her.

“Five years ago I never could have seen myself accomplishing what the Farm Team has done this year,” Jennifer says. “It is different from any other farm I’ve worked on in that there is constant interaction with our other programs, which provides a constant reminder of the big picture and why we do what we do.” Each season Jennifer is able to get a better grasp on reading the land. There is a sense of intuition with farming that only comes with time and experience. Now planning for the 2022 season, Jennifer is better able to visualize her plans, refer back

to anything that contributed to less-than-optimal results last year, and improve accuracy in predicting yields and foreseeing challenges.

Jennifer acknowledges her program’s progress and accomplishments as a direct result of partnerships with the Gunnison Valley Producers Guild. The support and knowledge that local farmers like Sue Wyman of Gunnison Gardens, Matt Ozyp of Lola Valley Farm, and Blaine Pickett of Calder Farm have to offer is such an important piece of the collaborative work that the Regenerative Agriculture program does. Mountain Roots is what keeps Jennifer in the valley. “They are like my family,” she says of her team and colleagues. “I continue to learn so much from my peers. I am experiencing the growth and development of this organization season to season. I know that I am part of that great ripple effect, and I am so excited to see how far these ripples can reach.”

FINANCIALS

INCOME

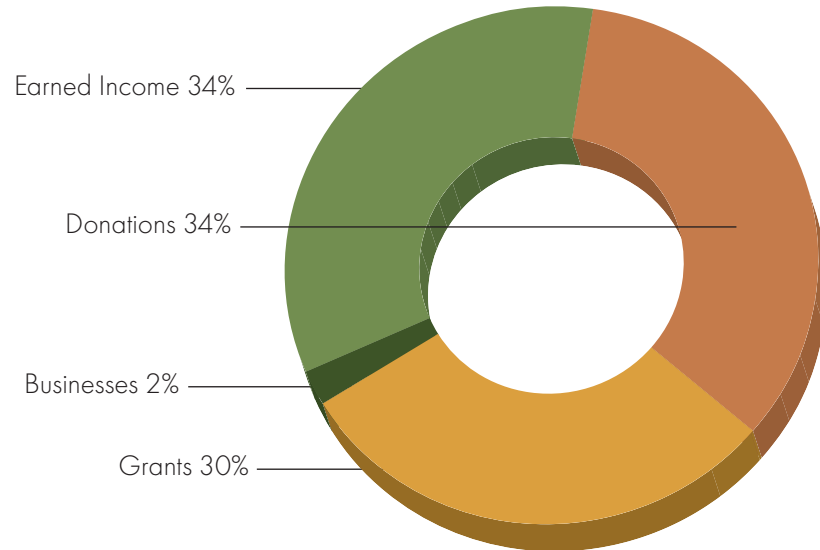
GRANTS RECEIVED

FOUNDATION GRANTS

Andrew Family Foundation
Community Foundation of the Gunnison Valley
 COVID Relief Grant
 Community Grant
Gunnison Car Club
Irwin Backcountry Guides
The Kroger Co. Foundation
Patagonia
UNFI
Upper Gunnison River Water Conservation District
Vail Resorts Epic Promise Foundation

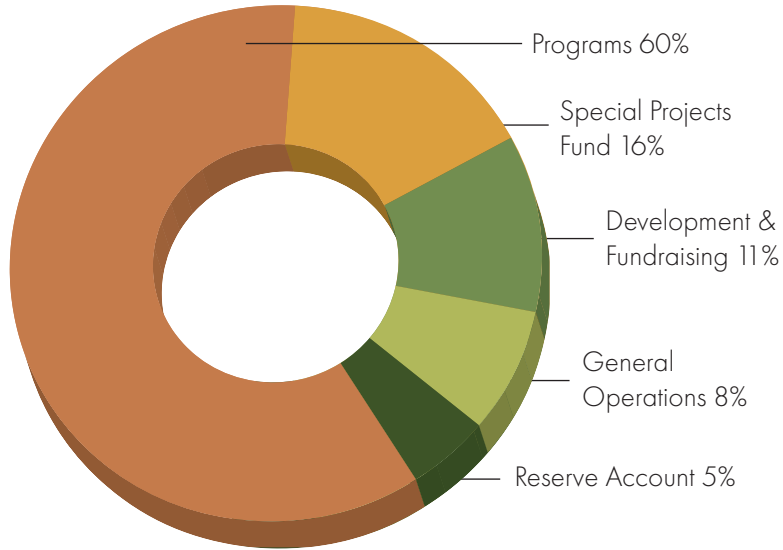
GOVERNMENT GRANTS

USDA Local Food Promotion Program
SBA EIDL (CovidRelief)
Town of Crested Butte
CNCS (AmeriCorps)
USDA NRCS



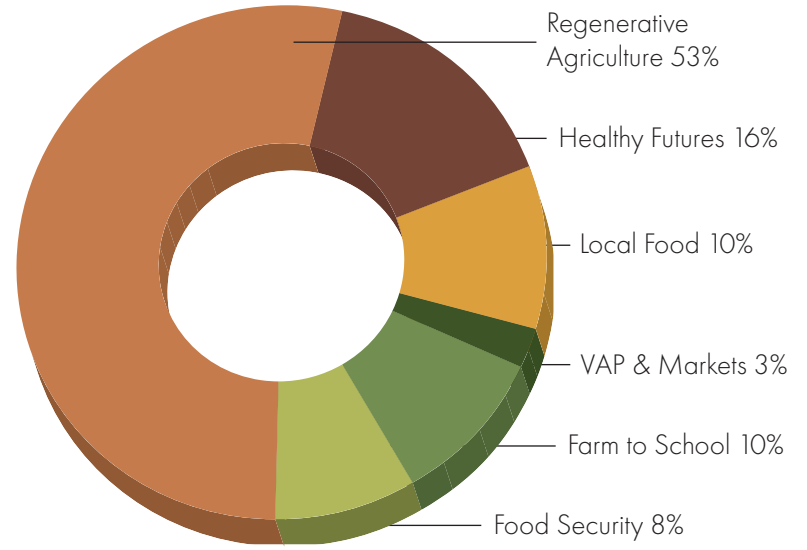
Earned Income	\$334,290
Donations	\$334,660
Grants	\$294,961
Businesses	\$21,353
Total Income	\$983,206

EXPENSES



Programs*	\$595,350
Special Projects Fund	\$155,000
Development & Fundraising	\$106,642
General Operations	\$80,999
Reserve Account	\$45,000
Total Expenses	\$982,991

PROGRAM COSTS*



Regenerative Agriculture	\$316,636
Healthy Futures	\$92,952
Local Food	\$60,777
Farm to School	\$58,936
Food Security	\$51,181
VAP & Markets	\$14,868
Total Program Costs	\$595,350

Mountain Roots invests in programming that serves our community's needs. Programs are funded by grants, individual donations, business sponsorships, and fees for service. To learn more about our programs, please visit mountainrootsfoodproject.org

ANNUAL IMPACT STATISTICS

FOOD SECURITY

\$72,665
KEPT IN THE
LOCAL
ECONOMY



AGRICULTURE

7 GROWING SPACES



9 FARMERS IN TRAINING



11,500
POUNDS OF ORGANIC
PRODUCE GROWN

FARM TO SCHOOL



5,398

hours of hands-on gardening
education for **1,115 STUDENTS**

1,554

hours of nutrition & environmental
science education



1,875

boxes distributed to households in need



16 VICTORY GARDENERS

growing food for the community from their own homes & yards

500+
VOLUNTEER HOURS

We measure our impact in people served, dollars saved, and soil regenerated. The support of our generous community means that our programs provide more holistic education for kids, more fresh food for families, and more money in our local economy. Take a look at the impact Mountain Roots made in 2021.

12 SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED



A FRESH TAKE ON FOOD SECURITY

Logan Gerlock and her husband Luke met while attending Western in the early 2000's. They live in Gunnison, where they are raising four children between the ages of eight months and seven years. Luke works as an IT specialist for Gunnison Watershed School District. Logan volunteers as the coordinator of the Gunnison chapter of MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) and homeschools her children. Logan took some time out of her busy day to answer a few questions about her experiences with the Mountain Roots Food Security Program.

What is your first memory of food security or insecurity?

I grew up on a farm, I remember helping in the greenhouse. We always had enough to eat when I was growing up. I may have taken that for granted. Now, my family has WIC (Women, Infants, and Children). We work with a pretty strict budget—\$525 each month

to feed my family of six. We could get enough milk and cereal to survive, but that is not what I want to feed my family. The struggle is to afford fresh veggies and quality meat. I would love to feed my kids all organic and great free range meat, but I'm often just left waiting until chicken is on sale so that we can have chicken at all.

How often do you cook at home? What are some of your go-to meals?

Five times a day! We eat out very rarely, maybe once every few months, so I cook everything we eat. For breakfast I make a lot of eggs, and everyone seems to like baked oats. For lunch I make a lot of quesadillas, leftovers if we have any, PB&J, or tomato soup and grilled cheese. For dinner we do a lot of pasta or mac-n-cheese, bean and cheese tostadas, things like that. The way that the WIC benefits work, you only get so many dollars to spend on fresh fruits and veggies. We have





stockpiles of cereal and peanut butter, and I can make big pots of beans that we eat for several meals, but it's really just a day or two each week of fresh food. Being involved with the food security program has been awesome because it brings a lot more veggies into the mix! I feed my family as many veggies as I can, and I prefer fresh vegetables like carrots, cucumbers, and red bell peppers. I remember after one of our backyard harvest deliveries, the kids just grabbed the bunch of kale and ate most of it raw!

What has been the driving force in your food purchases this past month or so?

I shop sales to stick to my budget. I'm always looking at seasonal produce because it's typically the least expensive. In January we celebrated two birthdays, so we splurged on strawberries and flour tortillas for breakfast burritos.

When and how did you first learn about Mountain Roots? And our Food Security Programming?

I took the Cooking Matters course back in 2014. I loved that there was free childcare and groceries along

with each lesson. It was an opportunity to get out of the house for a social interaction, and it was such valuable info! I remember feeling like it was totally impossible to shop on a budget of \$10 a week, but we did it! I still use that cookbook regularly. Then in the spring of 2020 I was in the WIC office and Kim, the coordinator, told me about the Backyard Harvest program. I was so excited to be able to sign up to receive fresh, organic produce! That fall, we also picked up groceries and holiday meals at the free markets.

What was your first impression of Mountain Roots?

It's been awesome all along. It feels humbling to be in a position to need to receive, and I've never felt judged by anyone. Everyone is always so generous and respectful. I usually have fun conversations about recipes and cooking techniques when I receive my box. The home delivery is so helpful with my four kids in tow!

What has surprised you most about being involved with Mountain Roots?

How easily my family eats it all! I love that it's organic!! And I love the variety.

What do you hope for tomorrow?

I hope for self-sustainability through education. I'm trying to plan our garden so that we can grow more edible produce. The last couple of years we've enjoyed a few small tomatoes right from the vine, but I want more than just a bunch of green tomatoes in September! And personally I hope for a freezer full of meat!

What do you wish other people knew about food insecurity?

I wish people knew that even hard working families can suffer from food insecurity. This is not isolated to unemployed or lazy people. My husband has a professional career, and we work hard to care for our family and our community. We're just so grateful for programs like Mountain Roots and the generosity of this community.





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Scott D. Anderson, DDS



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Amazing Glamping Adventures
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Crested Butte Farmers' Market
Elevation Hotel and Spa
Gunnison Valley Cattlewomen
High Alpine Brewing Co.
Larimer Associates
Mountain Oven Organic Bakery
Paige Stewart Studio
Precision Automotive
Qutori Wines
The Chocolate Enthusiast
Vail Resorts
XIT Ranch
Secret Creek Spirits
MargMorg Design
Pinnacle Bookkeeping
Gunnison County Farm Bureau
Tomcak Wine
Buckel Family Wine

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Bureau of Land Management
Calder Farm
Cloud City Conservation Center
Coldharbour Institute
Colorado Farm to Table Inc.
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Community Alliance for Education and Hunger Relief
Community Food Bank of Grand Junction
Crested Butte Land Trust
Delta County School District
Equitable Solar Solutions
Eureka! Science Center
Farm Runners
GCSAPP
Good Food Collective
Guidestone Colorado
Gunnison Country Food Pantry
Gunnison County Health and Human Services
 WIC (Women, Infants and Children)
 SRO (Senior Resource Office)
 ECC (Early Childhood Council)
Gunnison Fruit Stand
Gunnison Gardens
Gunnison Library District
Gunnison Rec Center/Senior Center
Gunnison Valley Mentors
Gunnison Valley Producers' Guild
Gunnison Watershed School District RE1-J
Highwater Farm
Hispanic Affairs Project
Immigrantes Unidos
Iola Valley Farm
Living Journeys
Martens Family
Niccoli Ranch
OVPP Basic Needs Working Group
Parker Pastures
Project Hope
Red Dog Ranch
Region 10
San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition
Serve Colorado
South Main Gunnison
Trailhead Institute
US Forest Service GMUG District
Valley Food Partnership
Valley Roots Food Hub



LENDING A HAND: PHILANTHROPY MEANS MORE THAN MONEY

Blake Hawk is no stranger to the nonprofits of the Gunnison Valley. His generosity reaches far and wide. Whether he is lifting up a neighbor who needs a helping hand, or making a major contribution to keep doors open and services operating through a pandemic, Blake's spirit of giving seems to know no bounds. He shared a bit of his story and what motivates him to give.



What is your first memory of philanthropy or generosity?

Generosity is ingrained in my roots. I was always volunteering, like coaching youth basketball, t-ball, and soccer at the YMCA. My grandfather on my dad's side was the dean of Southern Methodist school of theology, and that really contributed to our family values. I do consider myself a philanthropist, I want to give most of my estate to charity. When I'm deciding where to give, I listen to the people involved, the folks doing the work. I want to get a sense of what they're feeling, how they're dealing with the problem, and what the greatest needs are at this moment in history. You just get a good feeling, you know? I want to give back. I've had a lot of luck in the world of business, I lost my son, and now I just want to help people do better than they might be able to without a little help.

What experiences in your life have made you into the philanthropist you are today?

The death of my son in 2009. We

were really close, he was going through a lot. Everyone goes through hard times. When I told the story of what had happened, so many people shared their own experiences with mental illness and suicide. It meant so much to me. I had my own recovery ahead of me, and I woke up in the hospital and just felt so lucky to be alive. There was meaning in my survival. I knew I had to do more with my life. I wanted to share what I had.

What do you hope to accomplish with your generosity?

I want to increase opportunities for other people. When folks are down, sometimes they need a little help getting up, even if that's just some positivity to get it done. The Gunnison Valley is such a community of folks who just want to help each other out. I want to be a part of that. I don't need to leave any kind of legacy; I just want to help. My gifts are all in the name of my family foundation, because we all give back. My ex-wife, DK, started my interest in local food when

she used to volunteer at the farmers market in Charlotte. We all do our part. I'm not the only one who gives.

How did you first learn about Mountain Roots? What drew you to our mission?

DK introduced me to your work. She got us on your CSA, and really the first time I got that box I just knew that whatever was behind all of this was something great. I've developed friendships with a lot of folks who work with Mountain Roots. I just really appreciate great people, people who work to pull folks up when they're down and just need a hand.

What do you appreciate most about the work that Mountain Roots does? In your opinion, what is the most important work that Mountain Roots does in our community?

The support for folks during and after the pandemic lands at number 1, 2, and 3. I also really appreciate your work in education from

the standpoint of self-sufficiency. We need to be looking at the efficiency with which we grow food. I love what y'all are doing with hydroponics, that is going to make a big difference. I think one of the biggest problems our country faces is obesity, and Mountain Roots is tackling that head on, with a real holistic perspective.

What motivates you to stay involved with Mountain Roots?

It's a great cause and you guys are growing with the needs of the community. I think that Mountain Roots is a great example of solutions that could be implemented throughout the country.

What would you tell someone who is considering donating to Mountain Roots?

I would share your mission and how holistic your programming is. Between infusing the community with fresh food, educating folks on the importance of eating it - I just really see the far-reaching impact of your work.

What do you hope the organization will achieve in the near future?

I am so excited about the distribution center going on in Gunnison. The Food Hub. It's really exciting to see Mountain Roots become the key player that it is in local food.

What might someone be surprised to learn about you?

I have an identical twin brother who lives in Dallas and often comes to CB to visit.



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

\$10,000 - \$50,000+

Blake Hawk
Jeff Hermanson
Jesse Ebner
Paul Chartrand & Daniel Gagen
The Inman Family

\$5,000 - \$9,999

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