



20th Anniversary Impact Report



MOUNTAIN ROOTS
EDUCATION

From our Director



My favorite childhood memories involve spending time outside — making mud pies, picking mint from my neighbor’s garden, climbing a huge magnolia tree, eating figs from the tree in my backyard, and knowing that I needed to head home from my neighborhood adventures when the first lightning bugs came out. Little did I know, that connection to the natural world would shape my whole life and lead me to where I am today.

Many studies now tell us how critical time outside in nature is for our health. A meta analysis looking at gardening's health benefits found, “a wide range of health outcomes, such as reductions in depression, anxiety, and body mass index, as well as increases in life satisfaction, quality of life, and sense of community.”*

Our founder, Erika Eschholz, started our program to ensure kids have the opportunity in school to make connections to the natural world. In our garden classrooms, students grow and nurture plants, learn to enjoy healthy food and observe butterflies pollinating flowers. In the process, they tune into all of their senses and build awareness of what’s around them, ultimately fostering stewardship for their communities, both natural and human.

When I was lucky enough to join Mountain Roots Education four years ago, we were in a moment of rebuilding from the pandemic and rebranding the organization. Fortunately, the desire for our programming had not waned, but actually increased. This momentum allowed us to expand into more schools and build new gardens and greenhouses. We hope to continue to grow and serve as many students as we can.

Our aim is to cultivate healthy communities by connecting people to the land, their food and each other. Thank you for being a part of this effort! With donations making up $\frac{2}{3}$ of our budget and dedicated volunteers giving dozens of hours, we quite literally couldn’t do it without you!

Hayes Swinney, Executive Director

From our Founder

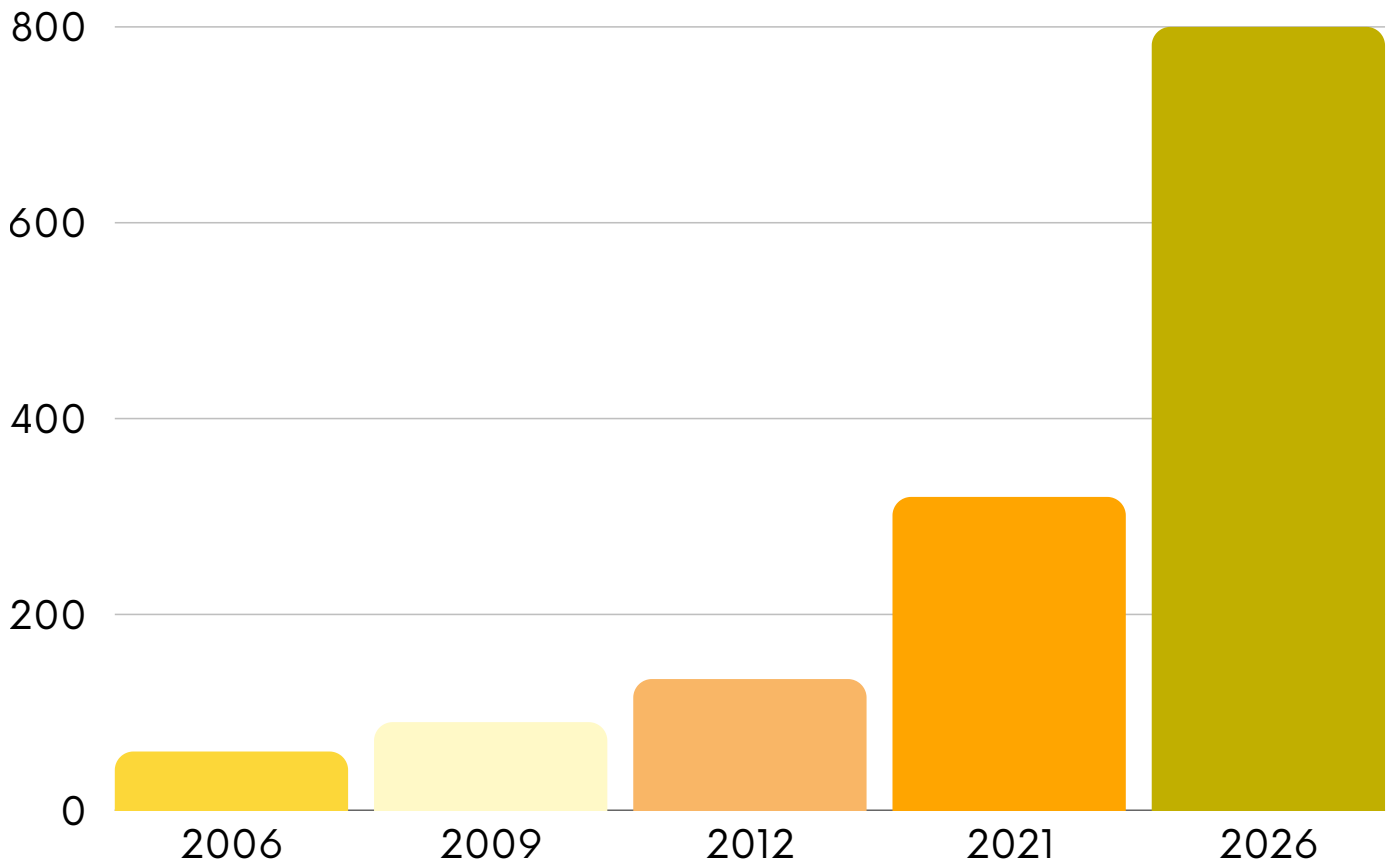


“I wanted children today to know the deep joy of discovering the wonders of the natural world, to get excited about the taste of sour rhubarb, or wild onion grass, or simply to feel the satisfaction of planting seeds, watching them grow and finally tasting the harvests! If children are not getting this enrichment at home, we need to provide these important life experiences to them.”

— Erika Eschholz

More Hands in Soil

Number of students served annually



“I loved the garden program! It let us get dirty while we were learning. Now, as I’m becoming an adult, knowing where my food comes from is something I’m concerned about. I can definitely taste the difference between produce bought from the store and produce that’s grown in a garden.”

— Luke Brinker, recalling his third-grade garden program at Tetonia Elementary School

School Cafeterias

The benefits of the farm and garden program extend beyond the classroom into school cafeterias. Any produce not used during classes gets incorporated into student meals, and Sweet Roots Farm Camp grows food specifically for the school district.

“Through this partnership, we have served **191 pounds** of fresh produce grown by our students so far this school year. This includes potatoes, carrots, green onions, onions, cucumbers, tomatoes, zucchini, squash, and even beets.”

— Jami Myers, Teton 401 School District Child Nutrition Director



Community Workshops



To share knowledge within our community, Mountain Roots Education organizes 10-12 adult workshops every year on a wide range of topics, all related to sustainable living. Topics include wild edible plants, foraged wreath-making, gardening for pollinators, herbal medicine, and growing sprouts and microgreens.



Over the years



Over the years

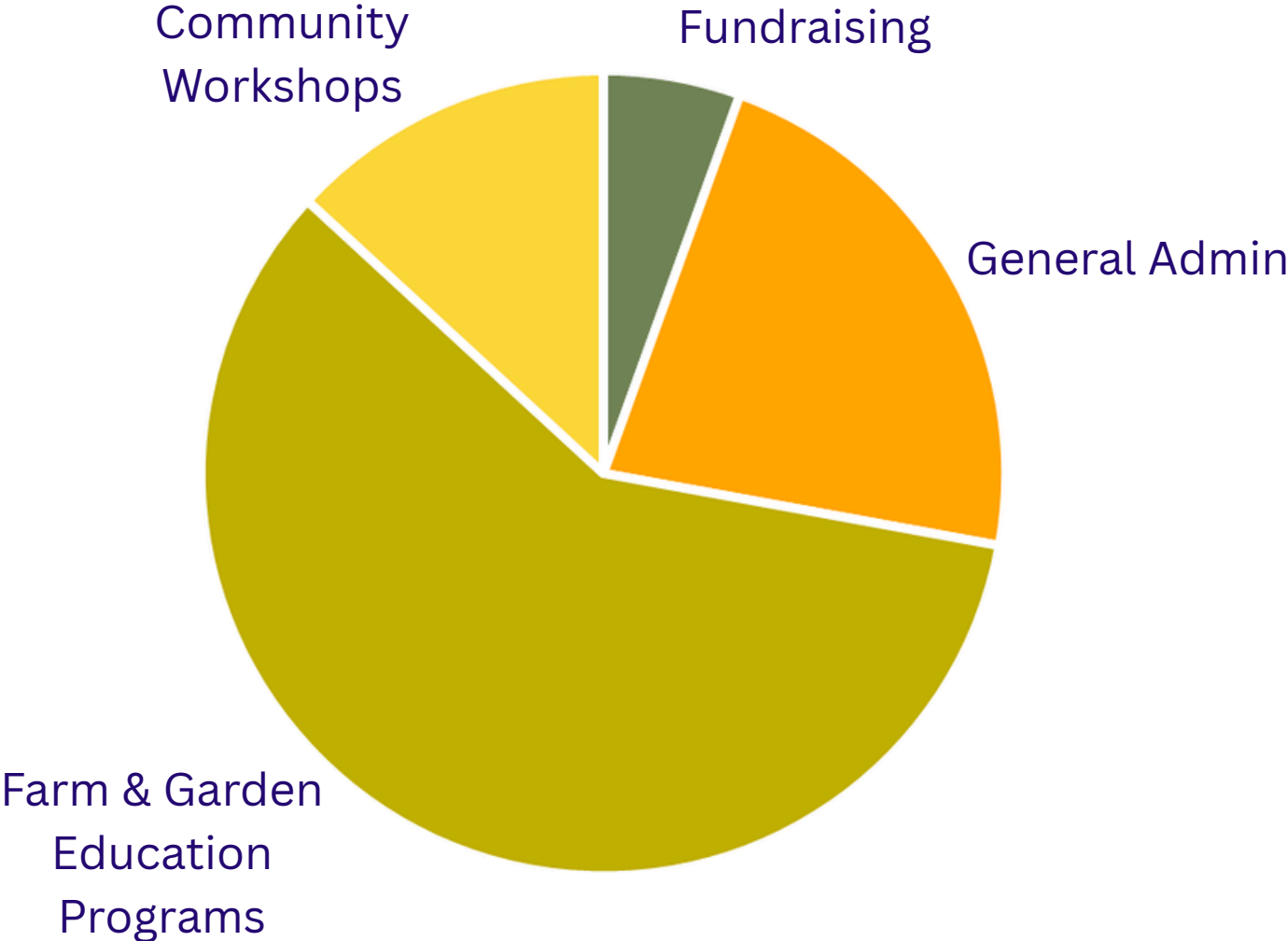


Over the years



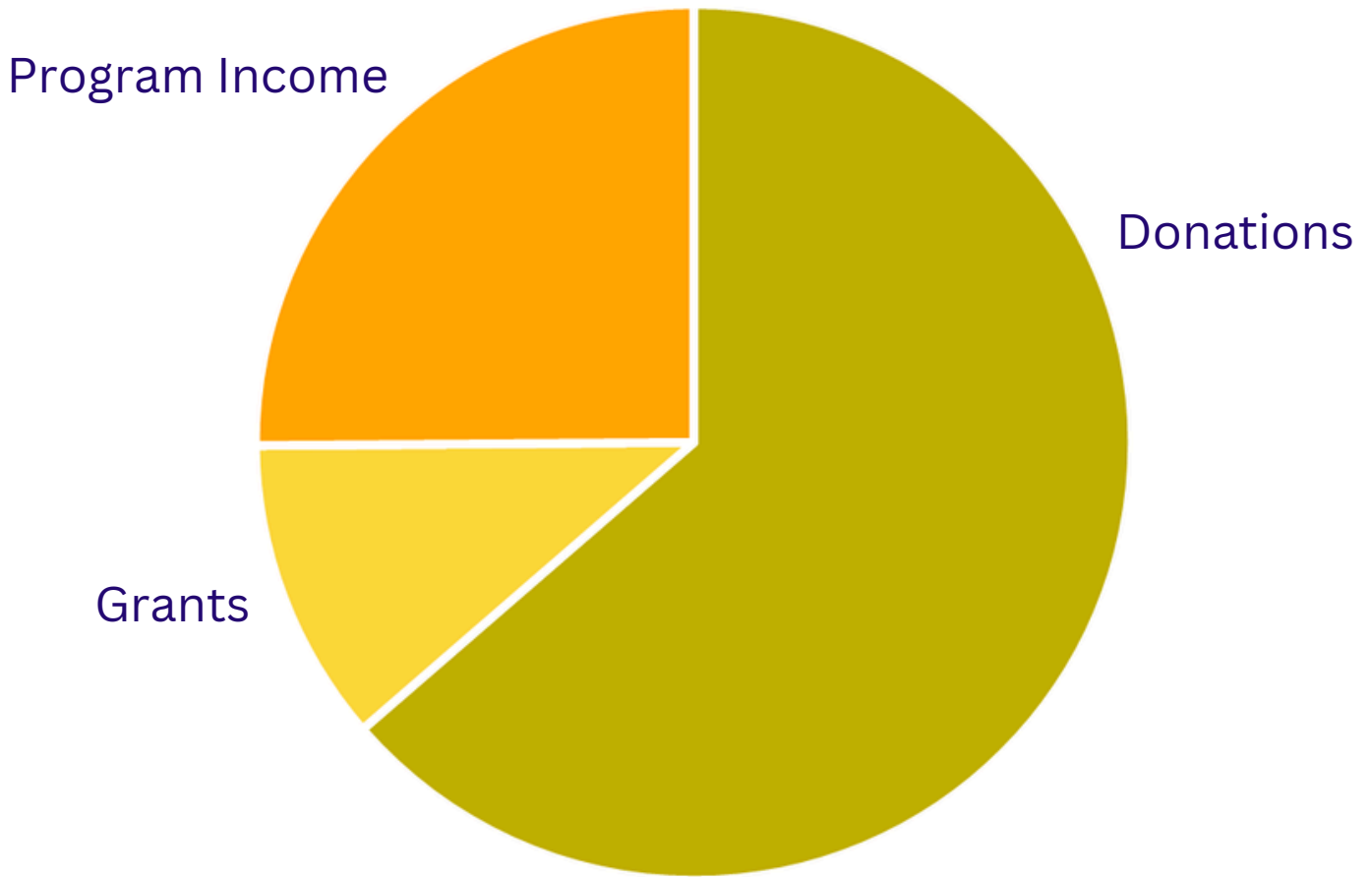
Financial Transparency

Expenses 2025



Total Expenses: \$132,987

Revenue 2025



Total Revenue: \$153,882

Milestones

2006 Erika Eschholz launches Full Circle Education in partnership with Teton Valley Community School

2008 Parents help build Tetonia Elementary School greenhouse and second graders use it to grow greens

Adult sustainable living workshops are launched, including cheese & yogurt making and backyard chickens

2011 Shop class at Teton High School builds a greenhouse at Teton Middle School; Full Circle Education raises funds for the project



2012 Farm and garden programming begins at Alta Elementary School — with a greenhouse soon to follow

Full Circle Education files 501c3 paperwork and officially becomes a nonprofit organization

2021 Full Circle Education changes its name to Mountain Roots Education

Garden education starts at Victor Elementary School

2022 Volunteers construct a greenhouse at Victor Elementary School

2023 Farm and garden education starts at Driggs Elementary School and Wilson Elementary School


2024 Outdoor garden beds built at Driggs Elementary School, Victor Elementary School and Teton Middle School

2025 Sweet Roots Farm camp — a summer camp located at Sweet Hollow Farm in Victor — marks its inaugural year

Greenhouse built by volunteers at Wilson Elementary School

2026 Mountain Roots Education celebrates 20 years — now serving 800 students and continuing to offer community workshops



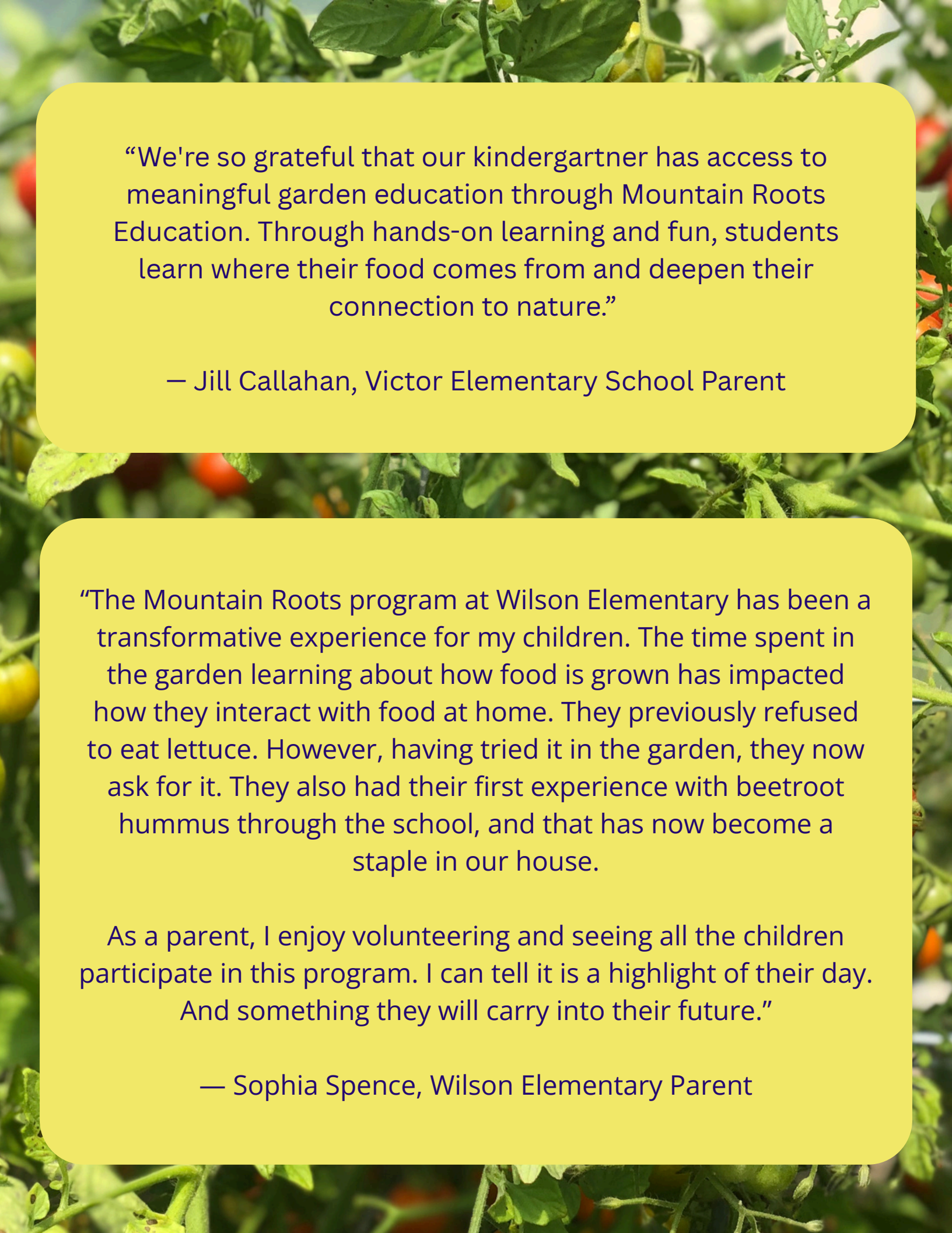


"So much of today's childhood is spent in front of a screen, the garden program offers an opportunity for kids to step outside and get their hands in the dirt. The garden program allows them to learn about the world and connect to it. They learn to see the rhythms of nature, understand where food comes from, and begin to recognize their role and part of the bigger picture. There's something powerful about that kind of learning—you can't replicate it on a screen."

— Sarah Benson, Tetonia Elementary School Principal

"I have fond memories of the early years of the Tetonia Elementary school garden, helping connect the kids to the food they eat. I loved seeing the students' excitement when they tasted new flavors and prepared the food they grew for school lunches. We also brought in artisanal chefs and local farmers to talk to and cook with the kids. It truly was a community endeavor that I hope made an impact on these now 20-year-olds' relationship with food."

— Christina Shepherd McGuire
Tetonia Elementary School Garden Manager 2011-2017



“We're so grateful that our kindergartner has access to meaningful garden education through Mountain Roots Education. Through hands-on learning and fun, students learn where their food comes from and deepen their connection to nature.”

— Jill Callahan, Victor Elementary School Parent

“The Mountain Roots program at Wilson Elementary has been a transformative experience for my children. The time spent in the garden learning about how food is grown has impacted how they interact with food at home. They previously refused to eat lettuce. However, having tried it in the garden, they now ask for it. They also had their first experience with beetroot hummus through the school, and that has now become a staple in our house.

As a parent, I enjoy volunteering and seeing all the children participate in this program. I can tell it is a highlight of their day. And something they will carry into their future.”

— Sophia Spence, Wilson Elementary Parent

We changed our name, but we didn't change our mission...

OUR HISTORY

What started as Full Circle Education in 2006 transitioned into Mountain Roots Education in 2021. This means two decades of growing curiosity, confidence, and connection through hands-on garden education in local schools.

OUR GOAL

To cultivate healthy communities by connecting people to the land, their food and each other.

OUR MISSION

To enrich lives and build sustainable communities by offering hands-on experiences in gardens, farms, and wild places.



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EDUCATION**

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