2017-18 IMPACT REPORT
ACCESS OF WEST MICHIGAN

"HELLO,"

From our Co-Executive Directors

EMMA GARCIA

CHRISTINA SWINEY

Working together to create an environment in which everyone can thrive...harvesting a healthier community.

As we come into to the fall season, we pause to see that harvests are ready. We walk through the paths of our partner farms and we see vibrant colors. Fresh eggplant, bright sweet peppers, earthy sweet potatoes and much more wait to be harvested. We take time to savor the pleasant aroma of the blueberries and taste a the crisp sweet of an apple.

We also have a chance to savor our own growth. This past year at Access, we were able to expand our scope of work in the areas that address root causes of poverty and health disparities in our community. We were able to invest more in the local food system, and in our local food justice partners. We were able to address housing issues and train community groups about racial justice and equity.

This growth enabled us to strengthen our mission to cultivate wholistic solutions to poverty. We held true to values including community development, food justice, economic development, and equity.

Our work this year has ranged from housing assistance to food justice programs and community organizing, from facilitating workshops that dismantle misconceptions of poverty, employing individuals who experience barriers to work, to assisting congregations in developing best practices in engaging issues of poverty in their neighborhoods.

It is our goal as leaders in this community to continually work to cultivate and plant the seeds for a community in which all can thrive. With your investment, this community harvest will be individuals who overcome chronic diseases, families that stay in their homes, communities strengthened.

Thank you, and blessings,

Emma & Christina

GOOD FOOD SYSTEMS

FINDING COMMUNITY THROUGH GOOD FOOD

Born into a farming family in Guatemala, growing crops, raising animals and working together with neighbors was commonplace for Esther* and her community. When she came to the United States, she felt a profound sense of disconnection, from the land and from other people. A pregnant Esther and her partner, Manuel*, struggled to get by. "We were very close to being homeless. We were living in a closet," she said.

They were referred to one of Access' food resource partners, United Church Outreach Ministry (UCOM). Esther was able to get clothing and healthy food. She enrolled in nutrition classes. "It's not just food, it's community," Esther said. "It's so heart-warming. It's beautiful to know that if you need something, they're there." After feeling so alone for so long, Esther finally felt like she belonged.

**Names changed to protect identity.*

CSA class: Farm Tour

CSA class: Canning Peaches

"It was a group of people with nothing in common except the fact that they were receiving food from our farm and we formed this beautiful little community for the season where we basked in gratitude for God's gift of good food and the joys of sharing space with others."

-Bethany Edwardson, Plainsong Farm, Farm to Pantry partner

EQUIP&CONVENE

Facilitated food systems/food justice workshop for The United Way

Hosted and supported facilitation of 3 food justice training opportunities with Our Kitchen Table and Jeff Smith/GRIID

2 national workshops and a film showing to highlight food justice.

INVEST

73 + Families participated in Community Supported Agriculture cohorts

15 classes hosted in cooking, preserving, and meal planning with farm fresh food

$25,000 into local farm partners through 4x4, HAELFS, and donations

GROW

85% were happy with the changes in the foods available after implementation of healthy food policy

75% of participants report increased food security after using the healthy pantry or pantry farm market

91% of participants report satisfaction with healthy food policy and environment changes at their pantry site

Plainsong Farm, CSA Class Partner

CONGREGATION CONNECTIONS

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Congregation Connections team was honored this year to be able to help individuals and families navigate financial assistance options while supporting congregations in community developement. We collaborated with area non-profits on issues such as housing and eviction prevention, and racial justice and equity.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS:
Conducted trainings on Gentrification; Affordable Housing; Cultural Sensitivity. Also worked on One West Michigan Team for Luis Palau City Fest on Racial Equity and Justice.

SERVED
100 CONGREGATIONS
17 DENOMINATIONS

$309,356
DISTRIBUTED TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS

1,983 FAMILIES SERVED

230
COMMUNITY REFERRALS AND RESOURCES PROVIDED

15
TRAININGS & WORKSHOPS

POVERTY EDUCATION

DEVELOPING SKILLS AND UNDERSTANDING

The Access Poverty Education Initiative faciliates workshops that help participants recognize the root causes of poverty and the systemic barriers to breaking out of the cycle. It highlights the dignity and humanity of people in poverty.

The workshops create economic and employment development opportunities for staffers who currently live in poverty or who have had firsthand experience of it.

97%
Remarked their understanding of poverty was increased after the workshop

79%
Reported the Workshop was a useful tool that accurately educates others about low income families

The poor don't want some small life. They don't want to game the system. They want to contribute, and they want to **thrive**.

Matthew Desmond, "Evicted"

1349 ATTENDEES

19
WORKSHOPS

36
STAFFERS EMPLOYED

FINANCIAL REPORT AND HIGHLIGHTS

TOTAL INCOME FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017: $987,393

- BUSINESS/ ORGS: **$36,305**
- INDIVIDUALS: **$40,120**
- EARNED INCOME: **$44,230**
- CONGREGATIONS: **$83,688**
- GRANT/ FOUNDATIONS **$145,687**
- CASEWORK REIMBURSEMENT **$226,335**
- COLLABORATIVE GRANT PASS THROUGH **$411,028**

EXPENSE TOTAL: $1,066,356

BENEFITS OUTREACH: **$15,898**
POVERTY EDUCATION: **$29,884**
COMMUNICATIONS: **$30,723**
GOOD FOOD SYSTEMS: **$45,935**
CONGREGATION CONNECTIONS: **$66,712**
ADMIN/ SUPPORT: **$157,580**
NOW PROGRAM: **$177,460**
FARM TO PANTRY PROGRAM: **$234,535**

THANK YOU!

Thank you to all of our donors, supporters and partners. We are so grateful for the commitment from our community to cultivate sustainable, equitable solutions to core issues of poverty.

OUR BOARD: 2017

Jacqueline Scherer: Chair, Patty Elzinga: Vice Chair, Jordan Painter: Treasurer, Marsha DeHollander: Secretary, Shawn Beene, Toran Scott, Amy VanFossen, Joan Downs, Michael Albert, Brad Rowe, Susan McPherson

OUR PARTNERS

Davenport University, Feeding America, The United Way, Community Food Centres Canada, Amway, Michigan 4x4, Kent County Health Department, Cherry Capitol Foods, Farmlink West Michigan, New City Urban Farm, Blackbird Farm, Green Wagon Farm, Peach Ridge Farm, Plainsong Farm, Full Hollow Farm, Spectrum Healthier Communities Culinary Medicine Program, Core Health, Fifth Third Bank Micah Center

GET INVOLVED/CONNECT

Join us as we continue the work to cultivate just and equitable systems for all in the west Michigan area! Learn more about the programs and initiatives we support online at accessofwestmichigan.org and follow us on social media to stay up to date!

40TH ANNUAL HUNGER WALK

INVESTING IN COMMUNITY
INVESTING IN HEALTH
$102,000 raised and distributed to 18 organizations:

-Urban Roots
-Church World Service
-Asian Community Outreach
-Baxter Community Center
-World Renew
-Heartside Gleaning Initiative
-Hope Farms
-Meals on Wheels WM
-North End Community Ministry
-Our Kitchen Table
-United Methodist Community House
-Plainsong Farm
-SECOM Resource Center
-The Pantry
-Community Ministries Program
-Westminster Food Pantry
-Kent County Food Policy Council
-Access of West Michigan

PARTNER WITH US

Access of West Michigan works to ensure a just and equitable system for all in the West Michigan area. Your donations fund the programs needed to accomplish this goal. Check out accessofwestmichigan.org to place a donation online. Thank you in advance for your generous contributions.

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Access OF WEST MICHIGAN
Cultivating Solutions to Poverty

1700 28TH STREET SE
GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49508
accessofwestmichigan.org