

FREDERICK FOOD SECURITY NETWORK



Bringing fresh produce to
Frederick's low-access areas with
environmentally responsible
urban agriculture

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



PROGRAM MANAGER'S STATEMENT

What a year it has been! We expanded from two gardens growing in 2018 to five gardens and two greenhouses in 2019! We grew nearly 3,000 lbs. of produce and reached more than 800 households in Frederick.

But our program is about more than just the numbers; it's about the community. Our vast network of partnering organizations throughout Frederick is truly what drives the heart and success of our program. From Religious Coalition to Islamic Society, Boys & Girls Club to Frederick Health Hospital, the Frederick News-Post to Community Action Agency, the Housing Authority to the City and the County, the list goes on and on.

I wish you could sit with us in one of our regular roundtable meetings of partners. The excitement, passion, commitment, and collaboration are truly awe-inspiring, and it shows what a community and a college really can accomplish when we all sit down at the same table. Here's looking forward to all that's to come in 2020.

Connie Ray

Program Manager

PARTNERSHIPS



Boys and Girls Club of Frederick County

The FFSN joined forces with the Boys and Girls Club of Frederick in 2018 when they helped build two Vegetable Rain Gardens and installed a pollinator garden at their Burck St. location. Since 2019, children attending the BGC after-school and summer programs have been participating in planting and maintaining the vegetable gardens.

The Frederick News-Post

The Frederick News-post garden has been operating for a decade, growing to now 135 food plots, pollinator plots, and several beehives. This garden joined the FFSN in 2019 for help with produce distribution and plot maintenance, which has been a challenge for them over the years.



PARTNERSHIPS



The Islamic Society of Frederick County

The Islamic Society of Frederick County joined the Frederick Food Security Network in 2018. The Islamic Society assists children in gardening and distributes produce through their food pantry as well as through FFSN distribution partners. In 2019, the FFSN helped erect eight traditional raised garden beds, three Vegetable Rain Gardens, and a pollinator garden.

The Religious Coalition for Emergency Human Needs

The Religious Coalition operates emergency and family shelters and offers homelessness prevention services. In September of 2017, the FFSN helped the Religious Coalition construct two pilot Vegetable Rain Garden beds. As of 2019, the FFSN has helped install an additional 11 garden beds, an herb spiral, and beehives. They run on community open hours, so swing by to check it out in 2020!



PARTNERSHIPS



Hood College/ Frederick Health

Hood College and Frederick Health Hospital joined forces in 2017 to turn an unused lot on Hood's campus into an urban garden. In 2018, they joined the Frederick Food Security Network. The FFSN has supported the Resource Garden with student workers, produce distribution assistance, and construction of additional beds and most recently, a greenhouse.

Scott Key Center

Frederick County-owned Scott Key Center granted the FFSN use of two greenhouses in 2019 to aid in year-round growing. The Network is now able to provide produce for more months of the year than the traditional outdoor growing season. Currently, the Network utilizes its AmeriCorps interns and one hired part-time student to maintain the greenhouses. So far it has had great success in producing vegetables in winter.



PARTNERSHIPS

Distributors

The Frederick Food Security Network also partners with a number of community organizations to efficiently distribute produce grown to low-income Frederick residents. Produce from partner gardens is combined in our new cold storage room at Hood College, and distribution partners pick up produce each Wednesday to distribute through their organization's normal operations. This reduces a lot of time and effort and requires less advertising, because produce is right there where our clients are already going. In 2019, this system was very successful.

Some garden partners, such as the Religious Coalition and Boys and Girls Club, are also distributors.

In 2019, we partnered with the following organizations to distribute produce:

- 1) The Housing Authority of Frederick (Catoctin Senior housing)**
- 2) Frederick Community Action Agency**
- 3) The Religious Coalition for Emergency Human Needs**
- 4) Centennial Community of Hope**



PROGRAM GROWTH

Program Growth: 2018-2019

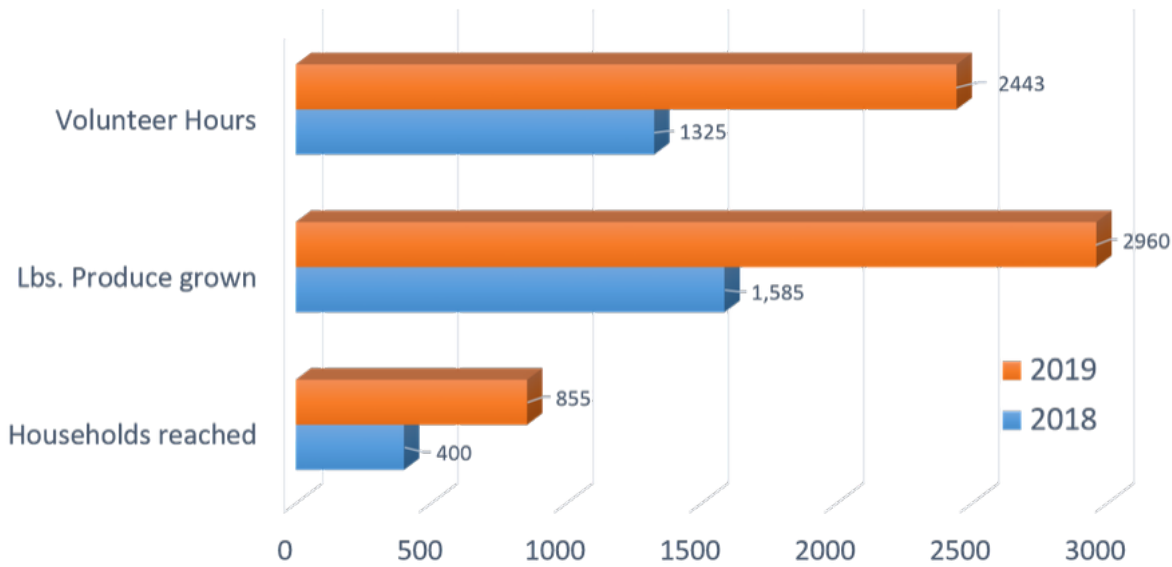


FIGURE 1.
Growth in volunteer hours, produce grown, and households reached over the last 2 years

Garden Sites Growing: 2018-2019

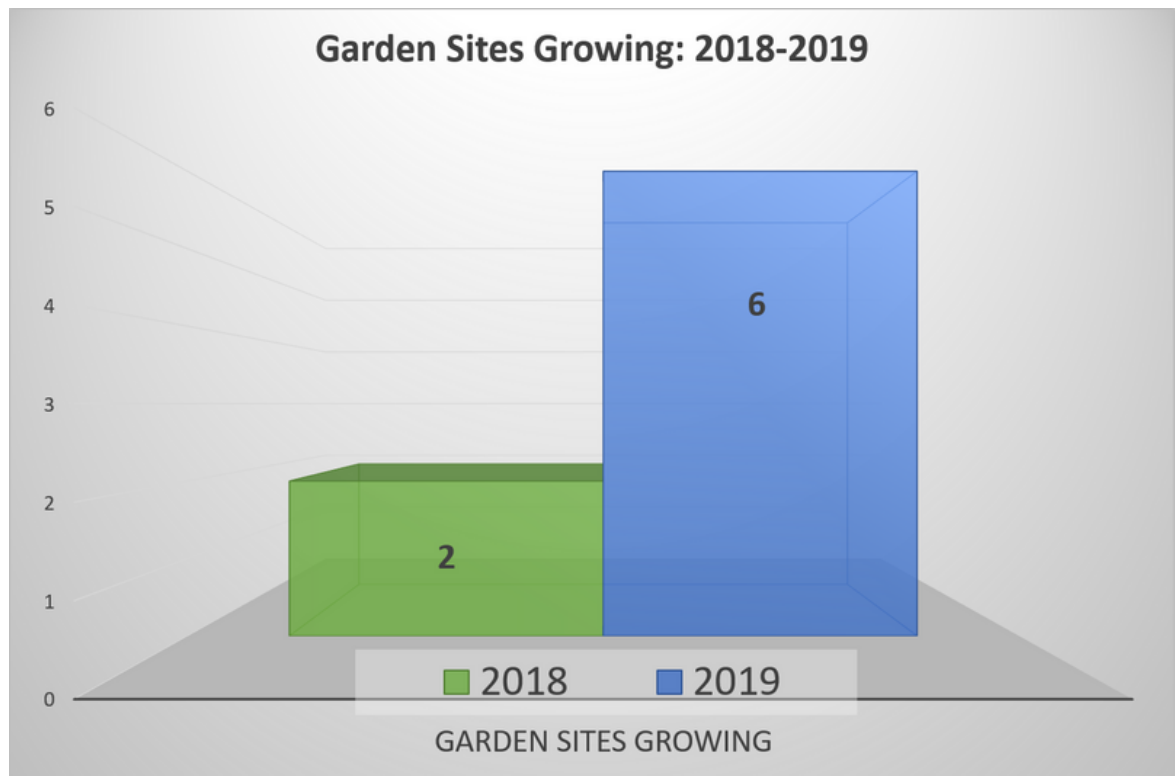


FIGURE 2.
Growth in number of garden sites producing; in 2018, only Hood/Frederick Health & Religious Coalition were producing

PRODUCTION

Top 5 Produce Varieties Grown by Pound in 2019

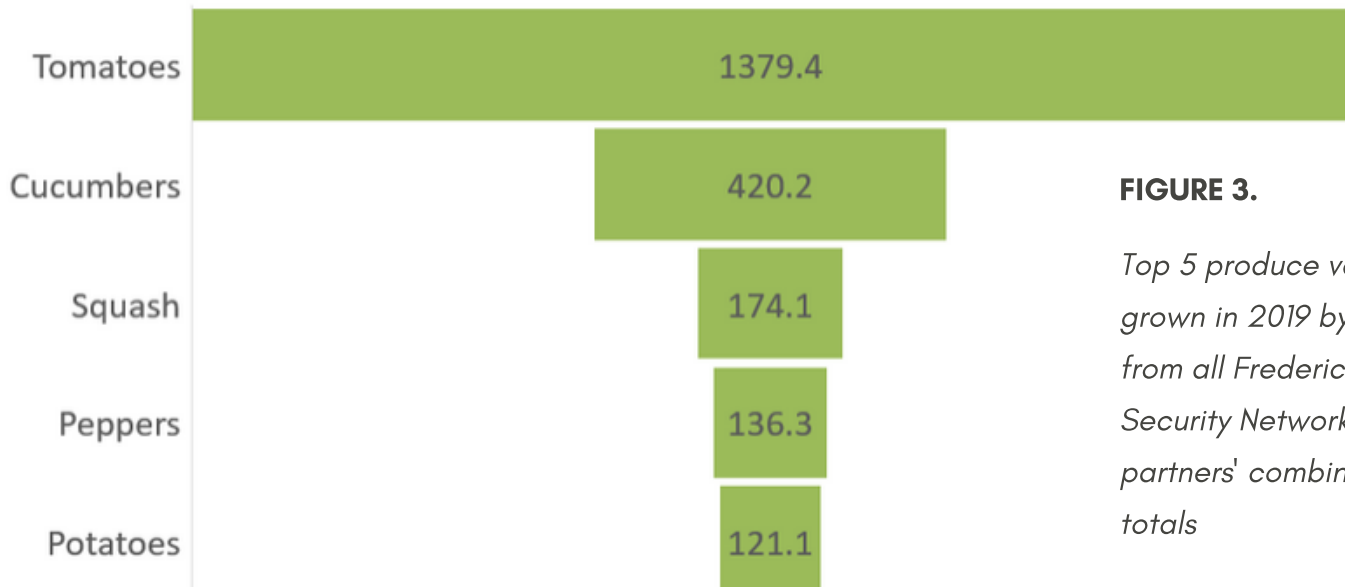


FIGURE 3.

Top 5 produce varieties grown in 2019 by pound from all Frederick Food Security Network garden partners' combined totals

2019 was a great year for us in terms of how much we produced, almost doubling the lbs. grown in 2018. Combined from all of our network's gardens, the FFSN's top five produce grown (by weight) in 2019 were tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, peppers, and potatoes.

Those might be the heaviest, but that's not all we grew! In total we grew and distributed 32 different varieties of vegetables, fruits, and herbs.

At the beginning of the season, we work with garden partners to plan their gardens based on a number of factors, including preferences indicated on recipient surveys, popularity at pick-up sites, and suitability for each garden space.



WHO RECEIVES PRODUCE?

In 2019, we distributed produce to approximately 855 low-income Frederick households. Here is some information about who is receiving produce based on recipient surveys (n=84). This information reflects the survey respondent only and not the entire household.

70%

report not being able to afford both food & other expenses at least half of the time or more in the last 6 months

56%

have children in their household.



Age

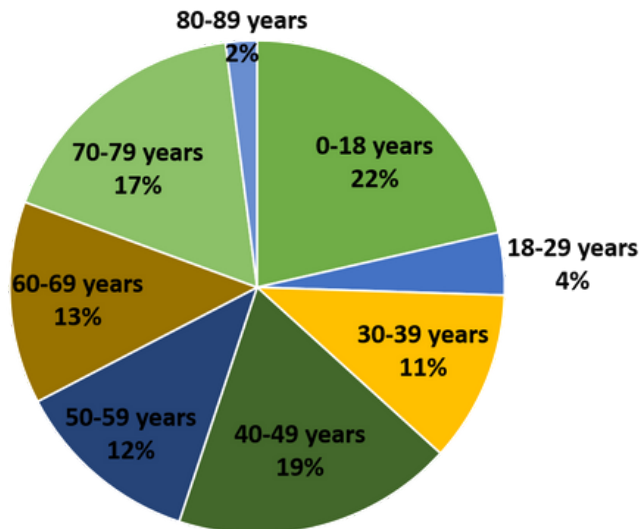


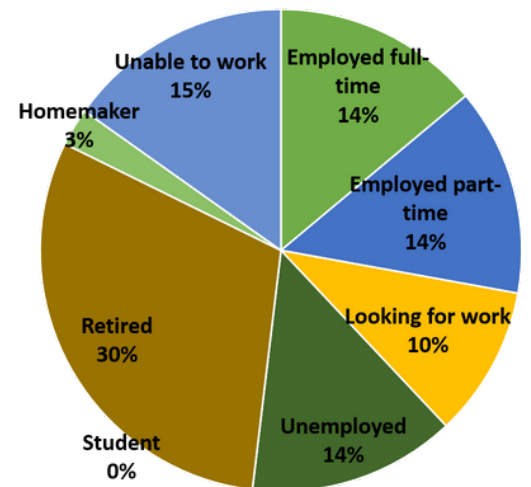
FIGURE 4.

Distribution of ages of survey respondents, so not reflective of other household members; we are reaching a wide variety of ages

FIGURE 5.

Self-reported employment status of survey respondents, not reflective of entire household; clearly a variety of circumstances for those reached by FFSN

Self-reported employment status



Self-reported race/ethnicity

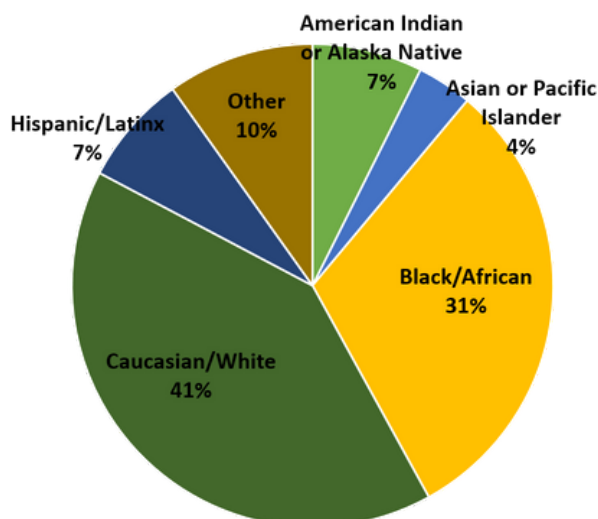


FIGURE 6.

Self-reported race/ethnicity of survey respondent, not entire household; primarily Black and Caucasian recipients but multiple races/ethnicities reached

SURVEY RESULTS

As in years previous, we surveyed our produce recipients to get an understanding of our impact and input for future changes and improvements. Here are some highlights from the 2019 surveys (n=84).

Of the produce you received, about how much of it did you and your family eat?

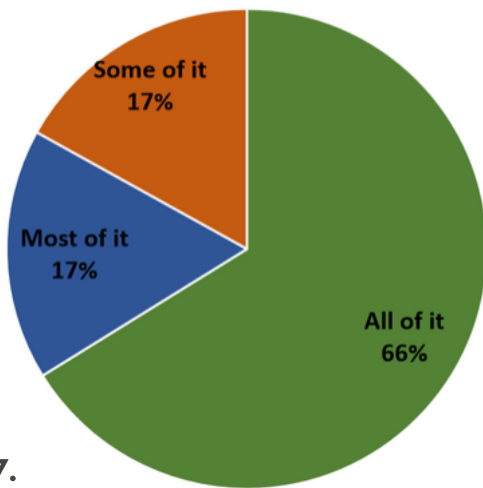


FIGURE 7.

Given that nationally, 40% of food is thrown away, we are encouraged to see that 83% of respondents reported consuming all or most of their produce

Self-reported benefits of receiving produce

36% reported eating more vegetables than they otherwise would have

31% reported trying new vegetables or fruits

30% reported a reduced financial strain of food shopping

16% reported buying more produce when they shop after receiving our produce

Other reported benefits included improved mood, trying new recipes, increased sense of community, and more nights spent cooking at home.

Most Popular Suggestions for Next Year

We asked recipients what we can do better in 2020. Here's what they said and what we plan to do about it.

1

More variety of produce

Shared with our garden partners to consider when planning 2020 gardens

2

Produce given out year-round and not just seasonally

We are already working on this with our new greenhouses!

3

More communication about where/when produce is available

Start posting on social media & working with partners to better advertise

4

More recipe suggestions

Continue to distribute our current recipe sheets & expand the library to include more!

"It has allowed us to not only eat when we could not afford grocery but eat healthy."

"Has been a life saver"

"It has provided much needed nutrition for my family and myself."

"[FFSN] benefitted me by not going into hunger."

"I love the fresh veggies when it comes in."

SURVEY RESULTS: BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

Due to the younger ages of the clients at Boys and Girls Club compared to our other partners, they completed a separate, shorter survey about their experiences helping in their gardens and eating the produce. The results were very positive, with most children having enjoyed themselves, tried new veggies, and learned something from their experience.

Additionally, 71% said they want to help in the gardens again next year (24% said maybe; 5% said no; n=21).



On average, Boys and Girls Club Kids rated their experience in the garden a 4.2/5, with a 5 indicating they really enjoyed it and 1 indicating they did not enjoy it at all.

Did you learn anything from helping in the garden?

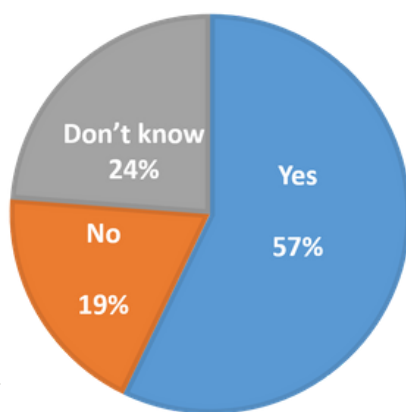


FIGURE 8.

Children's responses to the question "Did you learn anything from helping in the garden this year?"

Did you try any new veggies?

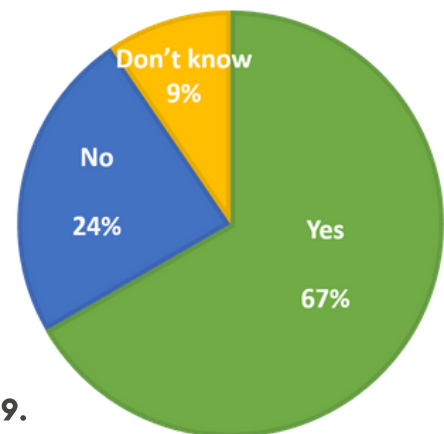


FIGURE 9.

Children's responses to the question "Did you try any new veggies from the garden that you've never tried before?"

"I really like how we get to go help the plants like watering them. I also like how we get to eat them at the end!"

"I hope we do the garden next year too! It was really fun."

"I tried carrots, cucumbers, and tomatoes."

"I learned that plants do not only grow from water."

CONSTRUCTION



1,950
SQ. FT POLLINATOR
GARDENS INSTALLED



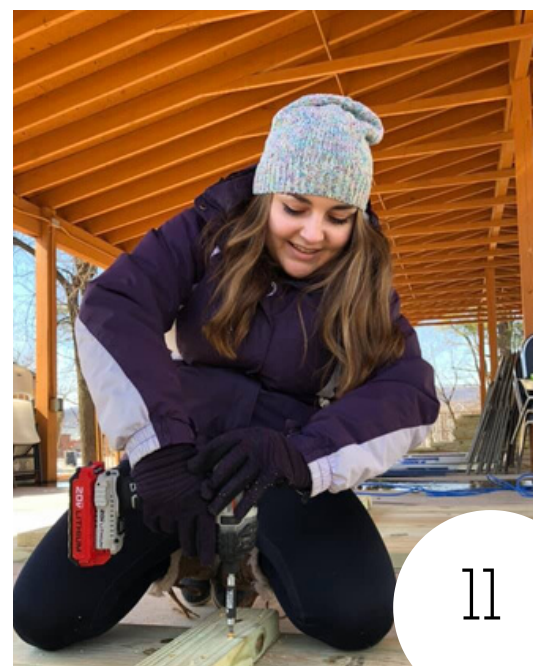
1,510
SQ. FT FOOD GARDENS
INSTALLED



2
GREENHOUSES
ADOPTED



1
COLD STORAGE
ROOM BUILT



EVENTS

Garden Kick-Off Party

We had wonderful weather for our garden season kick-off at the Boys & Girls Club on April 13. Along with all of our partners and many community members, we shared a delicious vegan meal and had games, a photo booth, free popcorn and snowcones, and kids' yoga. We also invited local activists Watu Mwariama and Akilah Mwariama to speak about growing and eating as forms of racial empowerment. Mayor Michael O'Connor and Alderwoman Kelly Russell were in attendance as well.



2019 End-Of-Year Celebration

On November 22, over 50 FFSN volunteers and partners had an exciting celebration to end the 2019 year. The celebration highlighted the Network's most outstanding accomplishments and recognized four volunteers who truly embodied our Network's mission: Milisa Rollins, Tanith Fowler, Janet Capra, and Mukarram Shah. They each received a Volunteer of the Year certificate and goodie bag of products donated by local businesses. The celebration kicked off with a speech from Dr. Drew Ferrier, Director of the Coastal and Watershed Studies at Hood college. Attendees shared a delicious vegetarian meal, and Program Manager Connie Ray highlighted the year's successes. Each garden coordinator also shared a few words about their growing year.



EVENTS



Boys & Girls Club Field Trip

In October, the Frederick News-Post garden hosted kids from the Boys & Girls Club to visit their garden space. Kids identified plants and vegetables that were growing, learned about composting, and visited the beehives. A young entomologist also brought bug samples to show and talk about with the kids.

Round Table Meetings

The Frederick Food Security Network hosted numerous roundtables throughout 2019. These engaging roundtables allow all members of the network to get together to share what's happening in their gardens, plan future events, and discuss common problems. We also usually include training on a topic requested by the garden coordinators. One guest trainer was Shana Knight of the United Way of Frederick County. Our final roundtable of the year included special guest Dr. Hiram Larew, a former director at the National Institute for Food and Agriculture.



STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

One of our secrets to our great success this year was lots of student involvement. In 2019, we hired 4 summer students and brought on 4 AmeriCorps 300-hour interns through a partnership with Frostburg State. These students got involved by helping maintain partner garden sites, establishing our new greenhouse operations, helping host community events, preparing produce for distribution, translating educational materials into Spanish, and assisting with social media, flyers, and more.

In the fall, we recruited a new cohort of 4 AmeriCorps interns who will help throughout 2020.

Most students are current Hood College undergraduate and graduate students from a wide variety of majors, including computer science, chemistry, communications, and environmental science. Some are recent alums or students at other schools.

In addition these interns, we have also had innumerable students participate in less formal capacities: signing up for volunteer build or planting days or participating through Alternative Breaks in conjunction with the Career Center.



IN THE NEWS

Read all about it! No, seriously, we've been in the news many times throughout 2019. The FFSN made its TV news debut, being featured twice on WDVM. The first time was to announce our new self-irrigating gardening program, and the second time was for a grant we received from the Rotary Club of Carroll Creek to build a cold storage unit to preserve harvested produce.

The FFSN was also featured on the Chesapeake Bay Trust website for earning the 2019 Melanie Teems Award for our network's exemplary residential and community engagement programs. Representatives of the FFSN attended an award ceremony in Annapolis in front of the MD delegates.

We were featured on an episode of "Frederick Uncut" where Program Manager Connie Ray and student worker Heidi Gonzalez Ramirez talked about network accomplishments and future plans for 2019. And finally, the Network was featured on the front page of the Frederick News-Post for providing fresh produce to the Frederick County area with the help of our newly established cold storage room. Links to all of these (and more) can be found at our website under "In the News."



Trust Celebrates 2019 Scholarship & Award winners at Annual Legislative Reception
By Cindy Edson | January 18, 2019 | News



PHOTOS



PHOTOS



PHOTOS



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Grants awarded in 2019:

- Helen J. Serini foundation operational support
- Helen J. Serini professional development
- Rotary Club of Carroll Creek
- HEAL Cities (in partnership with City of Frederick)
- Ausherman Foundation
- Capital Group

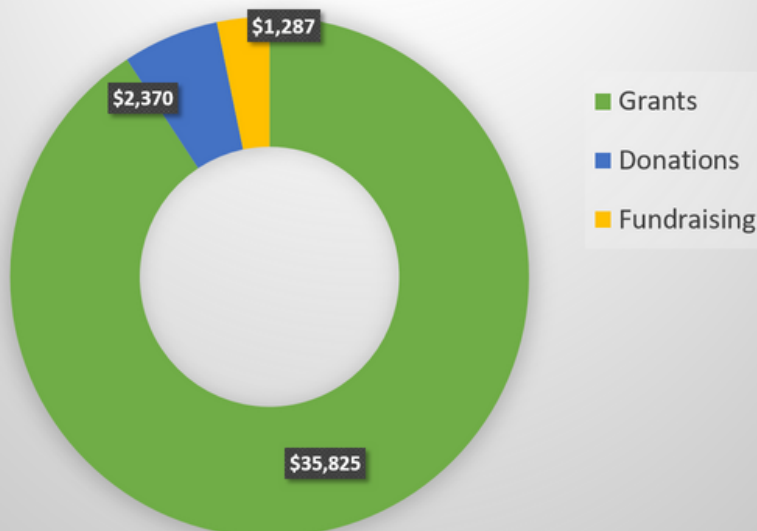
Continuing grants:

- Green Streets, Green Jobs, Green Towns grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, EPA Region III, Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources

Funds were spent on:

- Construction of garden beds at four locations (including 7 vegetable rain gardens) and signage
- Greenhouse construction at Hood Campus
- Greenhouse outfitting at Scott Key Center
- Pollinator garden installation at two locations
- Soil, seeds, fertilizer, gardening tools, etc.
- Community events
- Conference attendance and presentations
- Student worker stipends
- Program manager salary & benefits

Funds raised in 2019



WHAT OUR BENEFICIARIES SAY ABOUT US

"The produce has been very helpful when food gets low towards the middle or end of the month."



"Good stuff, sometimes right when I need it most."



"The produce is needed, and I truly need the help—as do many others."



"It saves me money."



"It saved my life."



FREDERICK FOOD SECURITY NETWORK

The Frederick Food Security Network (FFSN) is a community gardening program based out of the Hood College Center for Coastal and Watershed Studies. We are establishing a network of community gardens in Frederick, MD in order to improve food security for low-income residents of low-access areas, reduce local water pollution by diverting rooftop runoff for use as irrigation, and promote better eating habits in the Frederick community.

You can learn more and follow along with our efforts at the following sites:



hood.edu/ffsn



[@FrederickFood](https://www.instagram.com/FrederickFood)



[@FFSNhood](https://www.facebook.com/FFSNhood)