



Life Lab cultivates children's love of learning, healthy food, and nature through garden-based education.

## Welcome!

Life Lab had a great 2017 growing healthy, inspired kids in Santa Cruz County and across the nation, and we are very happy to share the highlights of that work with you.

Our local school and farm-based programs connected 5,886 children with the wonder, inspiration, and opportunity that garden-based learning offers – double the number we served just five years ago, and more than half (2,957) were Pajaro Valley students in programs we launched just three years before in 2014. Nationally, the more than 1,000 teachers we supported through training and curriculum last year told us that they serve 597,000 students across the United States. That's more than 10 times the impact our programs had in 2012.

All of us at Life Lab are grateful to be part of this work, as we continue to build on the nearly 40-year legacy of our founders at Green Acres Elementary School in 1979. If you share a passion for this work, we'd love to hear from you and offer you ways to get more involved! Please contact us any time at [LifeLab@LifeLab.org](mailto:LifeLab@LifeLab.org) or (831) 459-2001, and share in the magical moments we experience by subscribing to our *Moment of the Month* email at [www.LifeLab.org/Join](http://www.LifeLab.org/Join).

Thank you for being a part of the Life Lab community and cultivating this movement with us!

Don Burgett, Executive Director

## Local Programs in Watsonville and Santa Cruz

Our local programs grew significantly in 2017, particularly in the Pajaro Valley region of south Santa Cruz County. While Life Lab helped start some school gardens in Watsonville more than 20 years ago, our local programs had not reached south county children for more than a decade until 2014, when we launched our Pajaro Valley Initiative. In 2017 we expanded and deepened our partnership with the Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD) to provide year-round programs closely integrated with core school academic and wellness goals to five core partner schools, up from two in 2016, including Amesti, Starlight, T.S. MacQuiddy, Ann Soldo, and Hall District Elementary Schools. We added a second Americorps garden educator and hired Aisling Mitchell to lead our PVUSD school sites team following her previous year as our garden educator at Amesti and Starlight.

These schools all have over 90% free and reduced lunch eligible students, 75% of whom are English language learners, giving us tremendous opportunities to advance science, literacy, environmental understanding, and healthy eating with children who thrive in hands-on, garden-based learning programs.

In the fall we began piloting 24 new Life Lab lessons for K, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade PVUSD students. The lessons integrate Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), environmental education concepts and strategies identified in the district's new Environmental Literacy Plan, and food system and nutrition knowledge.



“Everyone is raving about the Life Lab garden classes. The lessons were accessible. The teachers were well trained. The students were engaged and knew what to do. Can’t tell you all how excited and appreciative we are to have this program at MacQuiddy this year.”

~ Kathy Mitani  
Assistant Principal  
MacQuiddy Elementary,  
Watsonville, CA

In our December post-program assessment survey, the 60 teachers we’re partnering with at these five schools gave the program very high marks for positive impacts on their students. 98% of these teachers also said they feel confident about teaching their students in their garden classrooms after having participated in the fall program.

**Post-program Assessment of the Impacts of the Fall NGSS in the Garden Program on PVUSD Students, as reported by 43 teachers in December 2017**

|   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| <i>“The NGSS in the Garden Program improved my students’...</i>       | Agree/Strongly Agree |
| ... Connection to the natural world                                   | 100%                 |
| ... Enthusiasm for learning   | 100%                 |
| ... Scientific knowledge  | 100%                 |
| ... Emotional well-being  | 98%                  |
| ... Sense of pride in their school                                    | 98%                  |
| ... Social and emotional skills such as communication and cooperation | 95%                  |
| ... Attitudes towards fresh fruits and vegetables                     | 93%                  |
| ... Motivation to attend school                                       | 93%                  |

These initial results with new school garden classroom lessons reaching 1,400 students biweekly throughout the fall are exciting, and we look forward to continued gains in our Spring NGSS in the Garden Program starting in April, as well as the impacts this winter of a new series of cooking and nutrition lessons for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders.



**Building for the Future**

Our Watsonville School Garden Crew of college and community interns continued to support seven PVUSD elementary schools to upgrade and maintain their garden classrooms in 2017.

In addition to our five core partner schools, the Crew worked with Calabasas and Radcliff Elementaries – also large, high-need schools – through weekly outings with a Life Lab staff mentor. Together they installed new garden beds, irrigation systems to make plant care easier, garden signs, and learning supports, such as chalk boards and cabinets to store all the materials teachers need for each lesson.

The UC Global Food Initiative provided new support to develop the Crew further as an experiential learning opportunity for UCSC undergraduates in particular and to support UC campus partnership with local K-12 school districts. Life Lab is receiving this support in partnership with UCSC, UC Davis and UC Berkeley, and we will create an online toolkit to help others replicate this model.





“My students are much more curious about plants, and love to go to the garden. They are noticing much more about the world around them at home and the rest of the school.”

~ 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher,  
Amesti Elementary,  
Watsonville, CA

### The Blooming Classroom: “It’s like going to Disneyland!”

Our off-site field trip programs for PVUSD students continued at the Blooming Classroom, our educational garden on a western Watsonville farm. We welcomed students from nine PVUSD schools for Tuesday after-school field trips, with each class returning for a second visit with new activities. Classes also came from our partner schools on Fridays for three-hour programs during the school day that integrated with what they were learning about science, nature and healthy foods in their own school gardens. We’re excited to double our school day field trips in fall 2018, to serve even more children.

In tasting assessments integrated into regular garden activities, 51% of 635 students reported trying a new fruit or vegetable for the first time (beets, kale, broccoli, chard...), and 74% liked or loved them! This excitement about fresh, healthy foods goes back with them to their school meals and family food experiences, opening up opportunities for lifelong health in a region with high rates of childhood obesity.



### Another Great Season at the Garden Classroom

At our Garden Classroom on the UCSC Farm, our field trip program hosted 106 classes with 2,630 students from 42 schools for inspiring hands-on science, environmental, food systems and nutrition education experiences. Of these totals, 88 classes with 2,218 students from 31 schools came from within Santa Cruz County, and 35% of these students’ classes received fee reductions. Overall, our local school programs in Watsonville and Santa Cruz served 5,175 Santa Cruz County students, and we provided free or half price access for 3,723 (72%).

Our summer day camp programs continued to grow in 2017, too, serving 300 local children for the first time. Our OWLS program for 12-14 year olds to serve as assistant counselors for the younger Garden Sprouts (4-6 year olds) sold out in its second season, and our EAGLES program for 15-18 year olds to assist with our Wildlands & Watering Cans camp (7-11 year olds) drew many volunteers, too. Many children have formative experiences of nature here, and demand remained incredibly high, with 240 camp spaces taken within four hours of registration opening in February.



These summer day camps continue to provide inspiring learning and growth opportunities in many young lives while also helping sustain Life Lab financially, with more than \$129,000 in registration fees, 5% of which covers scholarships for lower resource camp families. We look forward to expanding camp again in 2018 to offer fun and inspiration to 324 kids!

All of this was sustained by increased investment in the Garden in 2017, including the addition of Jennifer Eckert Bernau as our new Garden Classroom Manager. Jennifer is leading our great crew of students and community volunteers on renovations to the kitchen garden, the chickens’ home, the weather station, the tunnel habitat zone, our garden shed and more, as we give our 17 year old Garden Classroom some much deserved TLC.



“It was really amazing to cross-pollinate with so many other programs. The most valuable thing for us was the inspiration and sense of camaraderie. We’ve already used many ideas gleaned from the week, and have kept in touch with several folks we met.”

~ December 2016  
SGSO Leadership  
Institute participant,  
August 2017

## National Impacts: Training and Equipping Educators

2017 was a big year for our curriculum and teacher training work. Education Director Whitney Cohen collaborated with several major garden education organizations across the U.S., including FoodCorps, the Emeril Lagasse Foundation, and Kiss the Ground, to develop new curriculum for their school garden programs. This array of contracts allowed us to increase our workshop staffing and team of contract trainers, expanding our overall service capacity. This allowed us to offer a record number of educator workshops and presentations locally and across the U.S., with a total of 48 days of trainings in 2017 – up 20% from our previous record of 40 in 2016.

The peer learning from our December 2016 national School Garden Support Organization (SGSO) Leadership Institute continued in 2017 through regular web and phone gatherings of the participants. We ended the year excited to host our second annual national SGSO Leadership Institute here in January 2018. More than 120 organizations applied to participate this time (up from 75 applications in 2016), showing huge demand for this opportunity to learn and network.

Fifty-two program leaders from 33 SGSO’s in 18 states around the U.S. – double the size of our December 2016 institute – would spend another fantastic week with each other, Whitney and veteran trainer and network facilitator John Fisher in January. They received training in core garden-based learning best practices and shared their varied program and regional support models with us and each other. As with the first Institute, we also invited many educators from across the Central Coast to network with peers from near and far on the final day, bringing extensive national knowledge to Santa Cruz County garden education leaders.



### Developing next generation garden educators

College interns are at the heart of Life Lab’s local programs. Four Life Lab staff leaders train and closely mentor more than 50 interns each year in all aspects of outdoor, garden-based experiential education with young children. Many are inspired to pursue educational careers as a result, and Life Lab offers its vast network of professional contacts to help them do that. 2017 brought another great crop of interns, including several who have continued to work in our programs and on special projects with us, as well as working alongside teachers in local school gardens.

### Curricula and learning resources

Life Lab’s award-winning activity guide, *The Growing Classroom*, is one of the most widely used garden-based teaching resources in the country. Life Lab released a fourth edition in 2014 with expanded nutrition and healthy eating chapters, and all lessons were mapped to Common Core math and language arts and Next Generation Science standards. In 2017 we updated our early childhood activity guide, *Sowing the Seeds of Wonder*, and received orders for it from hundreds of educators across California and the country within months. With Whitney and Aisling collaborating on a new array of NGSS in the Garden lessons for K, 1, and 2 students in PVUSD, we expect to publish these for a wider audience in the future, as well.



**Is Life Lab part of UC Santa Cruz?**

No, Life Lab is an independent 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organization completely separate from the University of California. While we have been tenants at the UCSC Farm since 1988, we do not receive financial or administrative support from the University. We receive valuable in-kind support, though, such as expertise, water, produce, and the opportunity to have our main office and Garden Classroom programs on the special setting of the campus and Farm.

**How are you connected with the Life Lab gardens at local schools?**

Life Lab was founded in 1979 at Green Acres Elementary School in the Live Oak area of Santa Cruz. We grew our first Life Lab garden there and went on to work with

other local schools to establish their own throughout the 1980s, equipping their teachers with Life Lab curriculum. While many of these school gardens still thrive and retain the original Life Lab name, they are not formally part of our current organization (we do not provide them with staffing, administration, or funding). We stay connected with educators at these schools, sharing information and best practices, and we are partnering more closely with PVUSD schools now.

**Are you a national organization?**

No, we are a local organization with national impacts. All of our staff work at our office on the UCSC Farm and in local schools. We serve local children in programs at our Garden Classroom at UCSC and our Blooming Classroom on a farm in western Watsonville, and we work with teachers and students at high-need schools in the Pajaro Valley. Nationally, we provide training and curriculum to educators across the country, traveling to deliver workshops and shipping The Growing Classroom, Sowing the Seeds of Wonder, Life Lab Science and other resources to educators everywhere. We host a national School Garden Support Organization Leadership Institute and train all 220 FoodCorps service members in 18 states and 55 Education Outside school garden instructors in San Francisco each year. We're a little organization with big impacts!

**How many staff do you have?**

Life Lab has 16 mostly part-time staff year-round working a total of about 8 full-time equivalents (FTE). We have been recognized by the United Way of Santa Cruz County multiple times as a Family Friendly Organization, based in part on our desire to support our team with flexible work schedules to sustain their life balance, particularly as parents of growing children. In the summer we grow to 30, as we bring on seasonal staff for our day camp programs. During the school year, though, our capacity is significantly extended through the training and mentoring of more than 50 college and community interns working in our field trip programs. A team of six contract trainers also helps us deliver a growing number of workshops across the U.S. each year.

**Is "Food, What?!" part of Life Lab?**

The wonderful "Food, What?!" youth empowerment program for local teens began as a program of Life Lab in 2007. It has grown tremendously since then, and it became its own organization in January 2015. It operated as a fiscally sponsored entity of Life Lab for two more years, then became a fully independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit on January 1st, 2017.

**How are you funded?**

We have diversified revenue streams, including individual, corporate and foundation donations and grants, occasional government grants and contracts, and more than \$350,000 in earned income from workshops, consulting, camps, field trips, curriculum sales and contracts. We look forward to adding endowment income in the future to further enhance our financial sustainability.

## LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

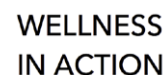
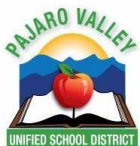
Life Lab is able to cultivate children's love of learning, healthy food, and nature thanks to the generous support of the following:

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 Patrice Boyle & Enda Brennan • Ruth Antolini • and many other generous supporters



One of Life Lab's strengths is the passion, experience and commitment of its staff, whose average tenure in the organization is six years, with 73 years total in their positions.

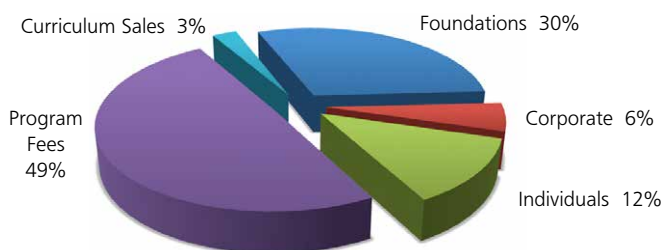
**Life Lab Staff**

- Aisling Mitchell, Pajaro Valley School Garden Programs Manager
- Amber Turpin, Senior Administrative Associate
- Amy Carlson, Garden Education Director
- Astrid Mendez, Garden Classroom Facilities Assistant
- Cara-Alexandra Sundell, Garden Programs Manager
- Don Burgett, Executive Director
- Emily Mastellone-Snyder, Associate Director for Development
- Emma Cervantes, PVUSD Garden Educator
- Jennifer Eckert Bernau, Garden Classroom Manager
- John Fisher, Director of Programs & Partnerships
- Jose Chavez, Blooming Classroom Gardener
- Liz Murphy, Development Associate
- Robin Macomber, E-Communications & Graphic Design Specialist
- Sandra Rodriguez, PVUSD Garden Educator
- Sandy Gmür, Senior Program Associate
- Whitney Cohen, Education Director

2017 FINANCIALS\* 

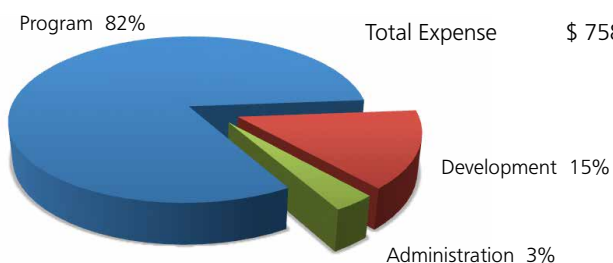
**INCOME**

|                     |                   |     |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----|
| Unrestricted Income | \$ 579,025        | 65% |
| Restricted Income   | \$ 316,000        | 35% |
| <b>Total Income</b> | <b>\$ 895,025</b> |     |



**EXPENSE**

|                      |                   |     |
|----------------------|-------------------|-----|
| Personnel Expense    | \$ 545,633        | 72% |
| Other Expense        | \$ 466,448        | 28% |
| <b>Total Expense</b> | <b>\$ 758,732</b> |     |



**Assets**

|                             |                   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Cash and Cash Equivalents   | \$ 49,024         |
| Accounts Receivable         | \$ 152,062        |
| Other Current Assets        | \$ 20,080         |
| <b>Total Current Assets</b> | <b>\$ 221,166</b> |
| Fixed Assets                | \$ 9,921          |
| <b>Total Assets</b>         | <b>\$ 231,087</b> |

**Liabilities**

|                           |                  |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Accounts Payable          | \$ 30            |
| Credit Cards / Lines      | \$ 8,762         |
| Other Current Liabilities | \$ 31,897        |
| <b>Total Liabilities</b>  | <b>\$ 40,689</b> |

**Net Assets**

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Unrestricted Net Assets                   | \$ -90,659        |
| Temporarily Restricted Net Assets         | \$ 281,057        |
| Permanently Restricted Net Assets         | \$ 0              |
| <b>Total Net Assets</b>                   | <b>\$ 190,398</b> |
| <b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b> | <b>\$ 231,087</b> |

\*12/31/2017 figures, unaudited

Your support and partnership helps Life Lab continue to serve more than 5,000 children locally and impact over 500,000 students nationally each year.

WAYS OF GIVING 

A gift to Life Lab brings learning to life in the garden for children, creating opportunities for academic success and lifelong health, and connection with nature.

There are many ways to give.

**Current gifts**

*Cash:* Gifts of cash to Life Lab may be made online at [www.LifeLab.org](http://www.LifeLab.org) using a credit card, or by mailing a check payable to Life Lab, 1156 High St., Santa Cruz, CA 95064.

*Gifts other than cash:* Gifts of appreciated stock held longer than one year often provide greater tax advantages than cash gifts. Donors may avoid capital gains tax and enjoy a tax deduction, as well. Contact executive director Don Burgett at [don@lifelab.org](mailto:don@lifelab.org) or 831/854-8131 to arrange a gift of securities through Life Lab’s brokerage account (full details at [www.LifeLab.org/Donate](http://www.LifeLab.org/Donate)).

**Matching gifts**

Double your impact! Many companies offer matching gift programs to encourage employees to contribute to charitable organizations. Please ask your Human Resources department for more information about your employer’s matching gift policies and procedures to make the most of your donation.

**Pledged gifts**

Many donors wish to make automatic recurring gifts on a monthly, quarterly, or yearly basis by credit card or by debit from a checking account. To make an automatic recurring gift, check the appropriate box on the online donation form or signed pledge card.

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Name ..... Address .....

City ..... State ..... Zip ..... Phone ( ..... ) ..... Email .....

My company will match my gift. Company name .....

Check enclosed, payable to **Life Lab**     Credit card     Bank debit / Bill pay    \$ ..... Now, one time

Name on card ..... \$ ..... Monthly, for ..... months

Credit card # ..... \$ ..... Quarterly, for ..... quarters

Expiration date ..... Security code ..... \$ ..... Annually, for ..... years

Signature .....

Please list my gift publicly as given by: .....  Anonymous, please

**Thank you for your generous support!**

*Please send this form, along with your credit card information or check made payable to Life Lab, to the address below, or*

**DONATE ONLINE AT [www.LifeLab.org/Donate](http://www.LifeLab.org/Donate)**

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