



# Annual Report 2018

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## Letter from the Director:

### Dear Friends,

We have come a long way since September 2, 2016, the day we planted our first crop. Just like our plants, we are planting seeds, “seeds of opportunity.” We also see the nourishment that the community receives through our operations. When we embrace inclusion – everyone grows. We are starting to see the fruits of the harvest, from the first intern we began with in 2016, to Lettuce Dream’s recognition as a site for Employment Services by the Department of Mental Health. We continue to achieve tremendous progress.

One in five Americans have a disability. Only 35 percent of those who are disabled, ages 18 to 64, are included in our workforce, and compared to 76 percent of those non-disabled. Seven out of 10 people who are disabled are seeking out a work environment and Lettuce Dream is helping to improve these statistics. The exhilaration we experience when seeing the transformation in these young adults with disabilities and watching them exhibit their capabilities is indescribable.

In the past year we attained accreditations by the Missouri Department of Mental Health. We are working hand in hand with experts across the state and country to make the prevocational experience Lettuce Dream provides a “bridge” that is needed for young lives that want the opportunity to be included and to let their strengths shine.

We met our greenhouse production goals in 2018 with improvements when adding nursery channels, increasing production to double in the same square footage. The grants we were awarded this year allowed for our operation to work more efficiently, keep cost of energy lower, improve safety, provide a better means to transport our produce, and to assist with the coordination of our volunteers.

Our focus in 2019 is to expose our community to the untapped resources we find in the young adults we are seeing in our program, and the talents they have as potential employees in the workplace as well as being active citizens in our community.

Sincerely,

*Charlie Clodfelter*

# Lettuce Dream: Katie's Perspective

When I first heard about Lettuce Dream I, truth be told, was not expecting the outcome I would experience. Being someone who has social anxiety everything around me seems intimidating, and this was no exception for me. However, I can say as someone who has worked here for about two years, it is worth it.



For me, this experience has been more than I could dream of, in terms of getting the help I need as someone who has a mental disorder, and it all started when my mom asked me about working here. I was intimidated at first, mainly because I had not known much about the program to just dive in and work there. However, once I started, it became easier to come in and work with those around me. Everything was taught to me in a gradual and slow-paced way so I could get comfortable with everything that was happening. Everyone who works here is really encouraging and understanding of anyone who walks in the door.

Everything I have learned here at Lettuce Dream is stuff I would have never done outside of here. As of now, I help make sales call, fill out logs, and generally help keep things organized here at the office. Anything to do with a phone call was not going to happen; however, I was able to overcome that largely. I even gained confidence when helping Charlie at the local farmers' market when selling our lettuce and basil. When working there, I gave out information that helped our customers gain knowledge on what they can put our product in and we even offered recipes to include our products in as an added aid to those who were not quite sure what they could do with it.

Overall, this experience at Lettuce Dream has given me more confidence and taught me new skills to help me better interact with those around me. To those who are wondering whether it is worth it or are worried about it, I can say that it is definitely worth it. It can give those who come here a good experience and give them an opportunity to shine in their own ways.

*Note: Katie is now involved in a paid work experience with the career center. This new role will give her more mentoring, leadership, and other expanded skill sets that will assist her future career path.*

## Thoughts from the Interns

**"I enjoy transplanting, planting seeds and also harvest. I have become more talkative with being here. Also less shy around other people, and being use to other people."** – Intern #1

**"I like the people at Lettuce Dream. I like working with college kids."** – Intern #2

**"I like cleaning the lettuce and delivering it, I like working."** – Intern #3



Design created by Katie, Intern



# Creating a Culture of Inclusion

Inclusion is the roots of what we are really growing at Lettuce Dream. Inclusion is the empowerment and involvement of a diverse group of individuals working and growing alongside one another. Our culture of inclusion cultivates and displays everyone's worth and strengths.

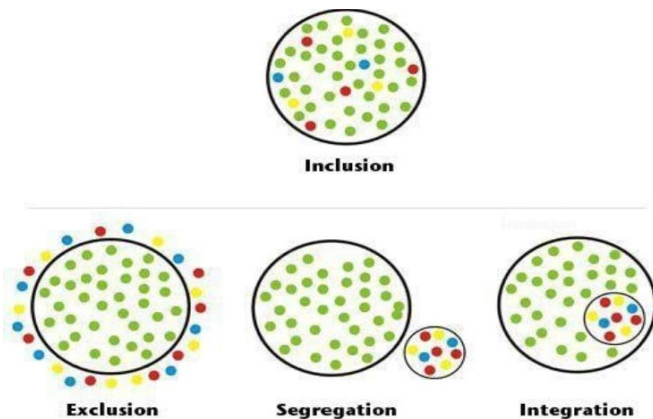
For many of our interns, the Lettuce Dream training program is just a stepping-stone to employment. Our hope is that we can support each intern with their goals and recognizing their abilities. We want everyone to feel valued and know they are an important part of our community. Interns and community members work side by side doing the same tasks while learning and applying skills that will aid their future career goals. We all have personal barriers and the greenhouse is a place we overcome those barriers. The greenhouse is a working environment filled with different personalities, backgrounds, abilities, and passions.

Since becoming a provider for the Department of Mental Health, we have gained access to more tools and opportunities that have allowed us to provide a broader range of Employment Services to individuals with developmental or intellectual disabilities. This include prevocational services, job discovery, job development and supported employment. This contract with DMH ensures our program is held to the highest standards regarding safety and programming. Each intern has an individualized path for the program based on his or her goals, career aspirations, talents, and skills. We have also formed a partnership with top notch Employment First Specialists in Missouri who are assisting us with ensuring our program is the best it can be.

To achieve inclusion, we need everyone's support. Networking not only tells our story, but it is how we build a strong team of volunteers and community supporters. It is how we help individuals with disabilities find hope and self worth. If you know of a person, business or group organization that could benefit from our program, please reach out.



*“Making Missouri a model employer is vital to ensuring we are offering individuals in the workforce. My administration’s vision for developing our workforce includes each and every Missourian,” – Missouri Governor Mike Parsons*



## From Our Volunteers:

**“My life has been enriched by the atmosphere of working with special people who are always happy to see you when you enter and enjoyable to work with.”** - Liz Mandrick – Community Volunteer

**“When I started working at Lettuce Dream, I still felt the interns and some volunteers didn’t realize how many things the interns were capable of doing. I found relationships were formed through interns working alongside volunteers of the greenhouse. The interns were soon performing tasks independently to a much more proficient level than anyone expected!”** - Carol Tjeerdsma - retired professor of special education, NWMSU

**“I realize its way more than just about the plants—how we are helping interns get prepared for future jobs and seeing their progress is amazing.”** - Janet Gladstone retired teacher / community volunteer

**“Interns are showing they know what needs to be done without being told the next step. When given a task they will complete it and go to the next step without anyone telling them the next step. It fills my heart with happiness as I watch the interns grow, feel success, and develop life skills, that provides opportunity to find employment in the workforce.”** - Roanne Solheim, retired teacher

## Volunteers: Enriching Lives

In 2018, Lettuce Dream had more than 200 volunteers who contributed more than 3,000 hours.

Volunteers serve in many capacities at Lettuce Dream; from board members to delivery drivers and mentors to building maintenance, we couldn’t do it without them.

Our Volunteer Coordinator, Kim Cohen, is a familiar face to anyone who enters the greenhouse. She ensures we are fully equipped with volunteers in all aspects of the training program and greenhouse. She also maintains volunteer paperwork, scheduling, and training.

Specifically, volunteer mentors provide support and help with skill development of the young adults with disabilities who are enrolled as interns in the program. A mentor’s role is crucial as they bring a sense of community, purpose and personal growth for all involved.

We take pride in the diverse group of volunteers the program attracts. College students, professionals, retirees, as well as groups and community organizations have recognized the value of inclusion and want to make a difference. We truly believe the volunteers not only enhance the lives of the people they support, but also experience enrichment themselves which promotes inclusion and understanding.

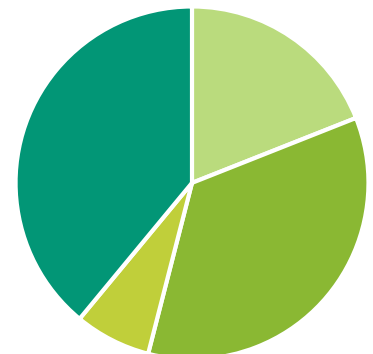
**238**

**volunteers in 2018**

**3,041**

**volunteer hours in 2018**

Where Our Funding Came From



■ Donations ■ Grants  
■ Fundraisers ■ Sales

### SOURCES OF GRANTS

TransCanada

Gary G Taylor Charitable Trust  
Harold P Dugdale Charitable Trust  
Harry and Helena Messick Charitable Trust  
Gladys Rickard Charitable Trust