

# 2022

## IMPACT REPORT



SHARING  

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OUR ROOTS

# REFLECTING ON 2022

## LETTER FROM ROCKY

I've been part of Sharing Our Roots for the past seven years, and in that time, we have had some pretty monumental years; without a doubt, 2022 is one of them! After ten years of serving as a poultry training organization, we completely shifted our efforts to address the largest barrier preventing immigrant farmers from growing their small businesses: land access. 2022 marked the year Sharing Our Roots opened up 100-acres of farmland to more than a dozen immigrant, BIPOC, LGBTQ and emerging farmers living in southeast Minnesota. Our farm offers a safe and welcoming space where people from all walks of life can come together to grow food, share stories, build wealth, and farm in community. Over the course of the year, we hired four new staff with the energy and expertise to lead us into this next chapter of work and to add capacity to our team. We also brought in six new board members with diverse lived experiences and ways of thinking, and invested in shared infrastructure on our farm. It's an exciting time for Sharing Our Roots and immigrant farmers in our community, because we are modeling a different way of farming in Minnesota. Our hope is that more landowners will soon join us in this new age of land sharing and land stewarding. We know that together we can build a better food system, and it all begins on the land.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rocky".

**Rocky Casillas Aguirre**  
*Executive Director*  
Sharing Our Roots

## LETTER FROM THE BOARD

Hello from the Board of Directors for Sharing Our Roots!

2022 was an eventful year for Sharing Our Roots as we welcomed several new board members to our team. They represent important segments of the Sharing Our Roots community from Extension educators to college professors and students and regenerative agriculture advocates and community members. The new board oversaw a year of growth and change for the farm and programs. We advised staff on the initiation of a new farmer cohort that put land access front and center for new and immigrant farmers in the region. We learned the importance of our Community Connectors who increase community garden access and food sovereignty for immigrant communities. As the board brought a breadth of experience to the oversight of these programs, we also advised on improvements to organization and pay structure to make the organization more equitable.

As we look ahead to 2023, we will focus on addressing the farm mortgage debt through fundraising and restructuring. We will also oversee the Master Planning process for the farm which will include showcasing our Dakota County partnership and laying plans for a Net Zero building on the farm.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan O'Hara".

**Megan O'Hara**  
*President of the Board*  
Sharing Our Roots

# VISION

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*We envision a world where food and agriculture systems are profitable for farmers, fair to workers, beneficial to consumer health, restorative for rural communities and regenerative for the environment.*

# MISSION

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*To advance a resilient agriculture system that demonstrates the power to heal our lands, nourish our communities and prepare aspiring farmers.*



# STAFF



**Rocky Casillas Aguirre**  
*Executive Director*



**Dawn Wegschied**  
*Operations Manager*



**Danielle Piarino**  
*Farm Site Manager*



**Wyatt Parks**  
*Facilities & Maintenance  
Manager*



**Antonio Alba Meraz**  
*Programs Director*



**Lina Nyaronge**  
*Community Connector*



**Noemi Carreon**  
*Community Connector*



**Wendy Romero**  
*Community Connector*



**Julie Ristau**  
*Senior Fellow*



**Lucia Possehl**  
*Communications Coordinator*

# BOARD



**Megan O'Hara**  
*Board Chair*



**Gwen Anderson**  
*Vice-Board Chair*



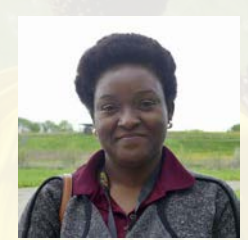
**Daniel Herdandéz**  
*Board Treasurer*



**Antonia Cristofaro-Hark**  
*Board Member*



**Conor Rohwer**  
*Board Member*



**Kanko Akakpovi**  
*Board Member*



**Virginia Kearney**  
*Board Member*

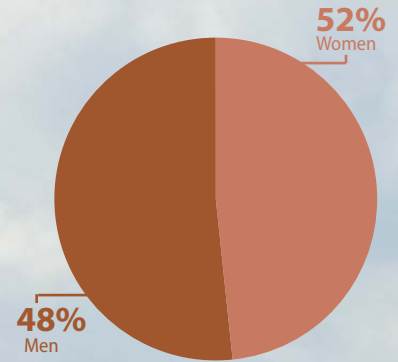
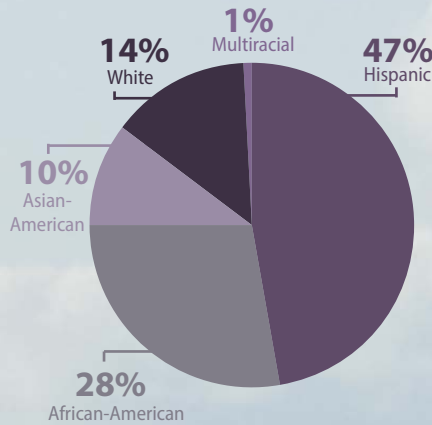
# 2022

## BY THE NUMBERS

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ACROSS PROGRAMS

BY RACIAL IDENTITY:

BY GENDER IDENTITY:



# 86%

of program participants identify as BIPOC



# 17

Farmers accessed land at the SOR Farm



# 48

Donors to our Give to the Max campaign, totalling \$11,055



# 80+

Farmers on the waiting list, showcasing the need for regional land access



# 146

Native wildlife species identified on our Farm, a sign of biodiversity returning



# 124

Neighbors grew food in 7 community gardens in Northfield & Faribault



# 300+

Visitors welcomed to the SOR Farm

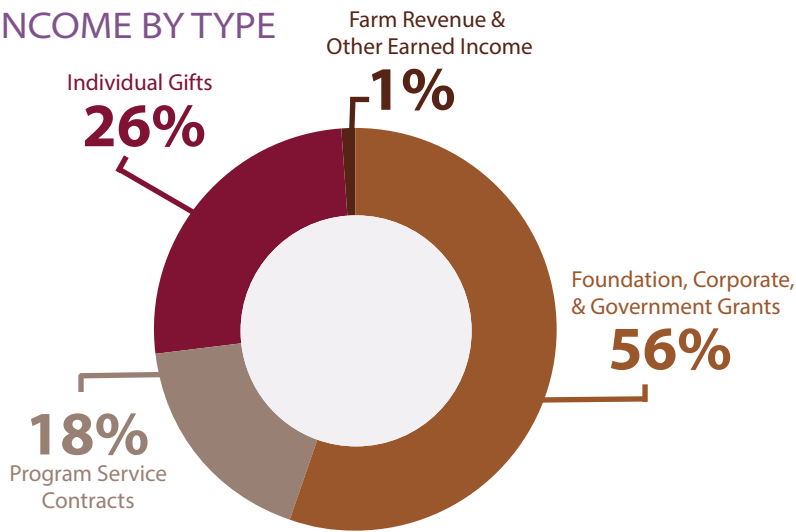


# 200+

Families reclaimed their food sovereignty through garden space & resources

# 2022 FINANCIALS

## INCOME BY TYPE



**\$763,505**  
TOTAL RAISED

## \*EXPENSES BY PROGRAM



*\*We follow Propel Nonprofits' Program Expense Model to communicate our True Program Costs. Operations, personnel, fundraising, and communications are the core infrastructure from which our programs are built and sustainably supported.*

**\$799,726**  
TOTAL EXPENSES

## GIVE TO THE MAX CAMPAIGN



At Sharing Our Roots, we envision a world where food and agriculture systems are profitable for farmers, restorative for rural communities, and regenerative for the environment. Our supporters believe in this mission and helped us to meet and exceed our 2022 Give to the Max goal, ultimately raising \$11,055 for farmland access in our community. 48 unique donors contributed to Sharing Our Roots, along with a \$5,000 matching grant.

# CHANGES ON THE LAND



2016



2022

## SIX YEARS OF LAND RESTORATION

The Sharing Our Roots Farm is located on the territory of the Wahpekute, a band of the Dakota people. This land was ceded in the 1851 Dakota Land Cession Treaties, for which little payment was ever received.

Through the years of white control, natural areas were destroyed and eventually only corn and soybeans were raised on the land.

Since 2016, Sharing Our Roots has been working to actively restore the landscape back to health using climate-friendly, regenerative farming practices.

Today, the farm is a thriving ecosystem - a home to countless native species of plants and wildlife, and a home base for farmers who have historically been excluded from land access.

## PARTNERSHIP WITH DAKOTA COUNTY

Since our acquisition of the 100-acre parcel, now known as the Sharing Our Roots Farm, which sits on the edge of the Rice and Dakota County border near Northfield, Minn., we have worked closely with Dakota County's land conservation team. Together, we are piloting new agricultural and conservation easements that enhance habitat and compensate for ecosystem services. A partnership that has been paramount to restoring the health of the soil and water on this once degraded corn-on-corn marginal land, and welcoming the return of wildlife over the past six years.

56

acres for livestock and grazing pasture

35

acres in conservation easements

9+

tillable acres to grow annual & perennial crops



# INITIATIVES



## COMMUNITY LANDSHARE

Accessing land for beginning farmers is a huge barrier to establishing an agriculture business. Starting in 2021, we've opened up our 100-acre farm to help farmers access land with long term leases. Through this effort, immigrant, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and emerging farmers can grow cultural and nutritious foods, earn an income through the sale of their products, and actively participate in our local food system.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTORS

Our Community Connector initiative was started in 2019 in effort to address local food insecurity by supporting emerging leaders of color from low-income neighborhoods in the Northfield-Faribault area. Sharing Our Roots provides structure, support, training and networking opportunities for Community Connectors to mobilize their neighborhoods and enact positive change within their communities.



## WILDLIFE COUNTS

2022 was the launch year for our new citizen-science wildlife monitoring effort called WildlifeCounts. Through this initiative we seek to document the return of wildlife to the Sharing Our Roots Farm after decades of land degradation from conventional agriculture. WildlifeCounts educates farmers on the importance of wildlife to agroecosystems, reconnects community to the outdoors, and creates tools for landowners interested in preserving biodiversity on their lands.

### VOLUNTEER INFORMATION FOR WILDLIFE COUNTS

We're always looking for people to join our citizen science project, WildlifeCounts. Bird, insect and frog monitoring runs from April to August each year. This is great opportunity for anyone interested in learning about Minnesota's native species who has time to volunteer throughout the summer.

For more information on volunteering, check out <https://bit.ly/sor-volunteer>



# COMMUNITY LANDSHARE

## FROM THE FARMERS:



*"The goodness of growing together is learning different styles of farming and experience that each community has."*

-Elkanah, Farmer



*"It means a lot (growing vegetables at SOR Farm), because it reminds us of when we were in our homeland, in Mexico. It's something beautiful."*

-Araceli, Farmer

We provide an innovative land access solution in our region by sharing land with emerging farmers from historically under-represented groups. For farmers at Sharing Our Roots, land and livelihood are one in the same. Our 2022 Farmer Cohort is made up of 17 members with differing lived experiences who wish to farm alongside one another in ways that restore our soil and water.

We lease land to local farmers who are systematically excluded from accessing farming resources - immigrant, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and emerging farmers. We honor the knowledge and experience our farmers bring to the land and value the natural reciprocity that communal farming offers.

Together, we are demonstrating a new way of farming in our region - **one that respects the land and is rooted in community.**



## COMMUNITY PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: COMMONS LAND



Common Lands is addressing the crisis of farmland access by starting at its roots - the question of who owns and controls the use of land. They are working to identify and acquire farms in strategic locations in Minnesota and steward them in partnership with BIPOC farmers and other emerging farmers using regenerative practices to provide healthy food for local communities. Commons Land organized three farm walks this year (including one at the Sharing Our Roots farm) to share about land-based commoning efforts emerging in Minnesota.

# COMMUNITY CONNECTORS

## FROM THE GROWERS:



*"I like to grow plants, see the harvest, and eat fresh food - that is my favorite hobby. When I'm growing plants, I like to interact with people and share ideas about they know, because I like to learn more."*

José, Grower.



*"I love to see my managu, chinsaga, and corn grow. I meet other gardeners and we share about how our plants are doing and learn new skills and updates from home because we come from the same country."*

Teresa, Grower.



To further support our local community's access to growing food, our Community Connectors program helps enhance and establish local neighborhood gardens and support families growing culturally-significant food close to home. Connectors provide support to 7 local communities growing food in community and backyard gardens in Northfield and Faribault, serving 124 growers and their families.

Three dynamic women (originally from Mexico and Kenya) serve as our Community Connectors. They are trusted neighbors working on the frontlines of food insecurity across Rice County. Connectors liaise with their local communities to connect farmers seeking land with the Sharing Our Roots Farm or to our established neighborhood gardens near where they live.

We support community and backyard gardens in:

## NORTHFIELD

- 🌱 Viking Terrace Mobile Home Park
- 🌱 Greenvale Neighborhood Garden
- 🌱 Greenvale Community Garden
- 🌱 St. Dominic's Community Garden

## FARIBAULT

- 🌱 Cannon River Mobile Home Park
- 🌱 Health Finders Clinic Garden
- 🌱 Faribault High School Garden

## COMMUNITY PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: HEALTHFINDERS CLINIC



The HealthFinder's Clinic in Faribault hosts one of the Community Connector-supported community gardens. Serving thirteen local residents, this garden produces a large amount of organic produce, much of which is distributed at local food pantries and the clinic's own waiting room. Sharing Our Roots provides support to individual growers through educational resources, infrastructure updates, and soil preparation assistance.

# WILDLIFE COUNTS



TO DATE, WE'VE IDENTIFIED **146** DIFFERENT SPECIES ON THE FARM:



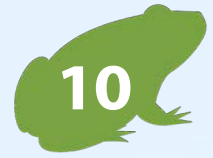
**MAMMAL SPECIES**



**BIRD SPECIES**



**INSECT SPECIES**



**REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS**

## JOURNAL ENTRIES

May 4 at 9:20am: 3 killdeer spotted running around the gravel road. As we got closer, they all took flight!

July 26 at 10:02am: A pair of indigo buntings are sitting inside the RIM (Reinvest in MN) forest.

Aug 16 at 9:40am: 6 sandhill cranes (4 males and 2 females) are hanging out in the hayfield!

Conventional, large-scale agriculture has been known to have significant negative impacts on biodiversity, globally. From the massive clearings of Brazil's tropical forests for palm oil to the destruction of prairies making way for corn and soybean production here in Minnesota; we repeatedly sacrifice our wildlife heritage. But farming can also be part of the solution. At the Sharing Our Roots Farm, we are demonstrating how, through regenerative agriculture practices and conscious conservation efforts, we can produce nutritious food, while creating habitat for wildlife. Birds, amphibians and insects, in particular, play an important role on farms through the ecosystem services they provide: pollination, seed dispersal, disease control, and pest management.

Because we value biodiversity, and know there is much we can learn about a landscape from the perspective of its non-human inhabitants, our team has been monitoring wildlife on our farm since 2020. This year, we formalized our efforts and launched WildlifeCounts to engage citizen scientists in documenting the species that call our farm home, and our findings have been wild!

## COMMUNITY PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: CARLETON COLLEGE



In partnership with Dan Hernández, Biology Professor at Carleton College, students set up 10 motion-sensing cameras alongside a stretch of Mud Creek that abuts the SOR Farm. For two months, the cameras captured wildlife activity for 24 hours. Raccoons, deer, opossums, coyotes, and a Great Blue Heron swallowing a fish were among those caught on camera! We hope to continue working with student researchers who can help us grow not just our wildlife database, but our understanding of how regenerative agriculture impacts biodiversity.

# EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



## **First Friends of the Farm Gathering**

2022 was the launch year of our Friends of the Farm group – a collective of people from our community who believe in a more just food system, and who wish to support our work at the SOR Farm. Over 40 friends from Northfield, Faribault, and Minneapolis joined us at the farm for an evening land walk and a special dinner.



## **Community Connectors & Gardeners Visit UMN Research Farm**

More than 32 growers from Northfield and Faribault community gardens took a bus up to the University of MN for a special field day at their St. Paul campus. Together, they learned about the University's agricultural research, toured the facilities (including the campus farm), and participated in a series of field demonstrations.



## **Land Stewardship Project 2023 Farm Bill Platform Launch Event**

LSP's Farm Bill platform launch event drew in more than 60 folks from around the region to discuss key policy changes that farmers want to see in the 2023 Farm Bill. Sharing Our Roots Executive Director, Rocky, spoke about the need for more land access in our region for immigrant farmers and how our farm is modeling the way.



## **East African Crop Adaptation to MN Climate & Soils Talk**

SOR and the UMN Extension held a community engagement and education event to share about East African crop adaptations to Minnesota's climate and soils. Presenters included Natalie Hoidal (Extension Educator), Jessica Oliveira (UMN Student), and Naima Dhore (Farmer). SOR farmer, Elkanah Abobo served as an interpreter.



## **Commons Land - Sharing Our Roots Land Walk**

The Commons Land group hosted a series of farm walks at three commons-based farms in our region during the fall, including the SOR Farm. The event had over 50 community members join to learn about the concept of "land commons," and to hear from SOR farmers about their experience and farming practices. The tour was led by Josie Trople (Cannon Valley Graziers), Lindsay Rebhan (Ecological Design), and Valentine Cadieux (Hamline University).



## **Emerging Farmers Conference**

Each year, our friends at Big River Farms/Food Group, host an Emerging Farmers Conference that focuses on the needs and interests of farmers who have traditionally faced barriers to building profitable agricultural businesses. Community Connectors and a small group of SOR program participants attended the conference workshops and connected with other Minnesota emerging and immigrant farmers.

# 2022 MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



**Faribault Daily News**  
*"Sharing Our Roots welcomes new leaders"*  
April 20, 2022

The Faribault Daily News writes on Sharing Our Root's new staff members' commitment to expanding the organization's outreach and engagement efforts. They highlight the new leaders' dedication to creating positive change in the local community.



**Ag Week**  
*"New leader of Sharing Our Roots looks to take organization to the next level"*  
April 27, 2022

Rocky Casillas Aguirre is profiled as the new Executive Director of Sharing Our Roots. His background in wildlife management & conservation is highlighted, as is Sharing Our Root's work of providing land access and infrastructure for emerging farmers.



**Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) News**  
*"Northfield farm expands land access for immigrant, newly emerging farmers"*  
June 17, 2022

MPR News spent a summer day at the SOR farm, interviewing farmers and staff members. They emphasize the significance of supporting marginalized farmers and promoting community empowerment through equitable land access.



**KARE 11**  
*"Nonprofit Sharing Our Roots helps BIPOC and emerging farmers access farmland"*  
July 5, 2022

KARE11 showcases Sharing Our Roots' efforts to support BIPOC and emerging farmers in Minnesota by providing access to land and infrastructure. They feature personal stories from farmers who have benefited and highlight the positive impact that Sharing Our Roots has had on the local community.

# A LOOK FORWARD: 2023

Sharing Our Roots is an organization that embraces change by continually evolving in response to the needs of our local immigrant farming communities. Across the country, we are witnessing the beginnings of the largest land transition in modern history. As the current generation of white farmers retires, more than 700 million acres are expected to switch hands in the next 20 years. Immigrants have long been exploited and oppressed by America's food and agriculture system as farm workers, with no opportunity to build something of their own.

We are committed to ensuring immigrant farmers have equitable access to land in our region during this transition and beyond. Opening up Sharing Our Roots' 100-acre farm to a cohort of 17 immigrant, BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and emerging farmers was the first step towards demonstrating what farming in community could look like in southeast Minnesota – a replicable model with the potential to change the future of farming in the U.S.

We will continue building upon this work in 2023 by listening to and learning from Sharing Our Roots farmers. Together we will co-create shared agreements and governance structures on the farm, and deepen our understanding of commons and commons values cross-culturally. We will also invest in needed infrastructure at the 100-acres and help farmers secure access to regional markets for their products.

Community Connectors expect to make significant advancements to local food security and land access off the farm, as well. Their 2023 goals include doubling the size of two neighborhood gardens and increasing participation from immigrant families by 20%. A partnership with the Northfield School District to install a new irrigation system at Greenvale Community Garden will also be underway in 2023.

Despite setbacks from the Covid-19 pandemic and the current state of our economy, we are hopeful about the changes to come. We have a highly dedicated and skilled team leading our efforts, ongoing support from individuals and foundations who believe in our mission, and an ecosystem of partners guided by a shared and unified vision. It will take all of us.



# PARTNERS



# SHARING --- OUR ROOTS

**FARM**  
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Northfield, MN 55057  
(507) 301-6411

**OFFICE**  
205 South Water Street  
Northfield, MN 55057  
(507) 301-6411

[sharing-our-roots.org](http://sharing-our-roots.org)

