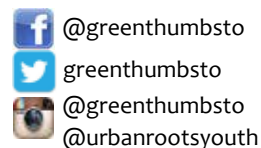


**Green Thumbs Growing Kids**  
c/o Centre for Social Innovation,  
Regent Park  
585 Dundas St. E., 3rd Floor  
Toronto, ON M5A 2B7

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## Green Thumbs Growing Kids ♦ Annual Report 2016



Cover: (from top left) Winchester parents Meaghan Worden (L) and Ilyana Martinez, managing Garden Club: Roots, Urban Roots Youth, and Trevor and Meghan Blagg enjoying winter in Winchester PS garden.

P2: Chris Cavanagh telling stories at Nuit Verte, Sept. 10.

P5: Telus corporate volunteers helping at Winchester PS garden.



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COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES CANADA



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# Our Team

## 2016 Board of Directors

Robin Buyers, *President*  
Prateeksha Singh, *Treasurer*  
Todd Irvine, *Secretary*  
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Kathleen Bradley • Alison Folosea  
Jenny Poon • Jeremy Runnalls  
Hélène St. Jacques • Alissa Vieth

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Chimu Titi • Claire Trepanier

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Andrea Martinescu • Jessica Mitchell  
Sheryl Montano • Emily Pascall  
Angela Santos • Parveen Singh  
Kasia Skeoch-Hannah • Mia Sun

## Partnerships

City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation  
George Brown College  
Community Worker Diploma  
York University Faculty of Education  
Ryerson University Early Childhood Studies  
New College at University of Toronto  
Toronto District School Board (TDSB)  
TDSB Environmental Specialist  
High Skills Major Co-op program



# From the Board President and ED



**Robin Buyers,**  
President

On a fine spring day in 1999, my daughter My Anh joyfully attended the first Green Thumbs Growing Kids after-school program. These many years later, I am stepping down after four years on the Board of Directors knowing that the community around Green Thumbs is increasingly stepping up, not only as members and volunteers, but also as donors.

New donor Alnoor (Al) Ladhani, for example, opened Step by Step Professional Family Footcare just before Sunday Harrison pulled together the program for that first season. Now that Al is well-established, he is pursuing his passion for helping people in new ways: not only did Step by Step sponsor Nuit Verte on September 10th, they also sponsored gardener's aprons for the many volunteers on whom our hands-on programs rely. Al told me that growing up in an immigrant community in a Scarborough high-rise made it easy for him to say "yes" to an organization that makes sure kids can get their hands in the soil.

Green Thumbs needs more people like Al to say "yes." While we were able to reach almost double the number of children and youth through our programs in 2016, and gave volunteers more leadership roles, we struggled to raise the unrestricted funds needed to run an organization.

Al, and others like him, have given us confidence to reach more deeply into our community. Expect to hear more from us!



**Sunday Harrison,**  
Executive Director

The 2016 year at Green Thumbs was very fruitful in terms of new programming and increasing our reach. We had more volunteer-led program support than ever before, as 18 placement students joined us from a variety of secondary and post-secondary programs. Increased funding from Canada Summer Jobs meant that we could offer 6 young people a good green job during their break. All of the secondary and post-secondary students brought their own lens to our community and educational work, enriching our programs enormously.

Warmest thanks to all of our donors, supporters, student and community volunteers, education partners, staff and board members for an amazing year of learning, growing and cultivating community.

Special thanks to Virginia Kairys and Robin Buyers, who headed up the Board and ensured continuity from one dedicated, fully engaged President to the next.





## Urban Roots Youth

Meeting every week after school gave youth many opportunities to try new skills and learn all about urban gardening. In 2016, a special project was initiated to make our largest garden wheelchair-accessible (photo below). Program participants learned about the materials needed and thanks to funding from Lush Cosmetics, the path was built.



Urban Roots Youth participants hosted the common table at our Annual General Meeting in June, a screening of *Kombit: The Cooperative* in July, and a Regent Park Good Food Market stall all summer.

## Doing my placement with Green Thumbs



**Richard Bills,**  
George Brown College  
Community Worker-in-Training

*The skills and garden experience I gained at Green Thumbs gave me the boost I needed to get a job as a Garden Facilitator at CRC's Regent Park Community Food Centre. I especially like teaching participants what I know and learning from what they know. It's great to see the gardens transform from seeds, to seedlings, to the full grown harvests that show all the hard work involved.*

## 2016 Celebrations & Events

Green Thumbs loves inviting people of all ages to celebrate learning gardens. In 2016, we welcomed dozens of new and old friends to *Spring Is in the Air* at Allan Gardens, *Nuit Verte* at the Winchester PS Garden, and *Harvest Celebration* at the Regent Park Centre for Social Innovation.



In October, we celebrated World Food Day with our member colleagues at Centre for Social Innovation in Regent Park (photo, left).

Why say “yes” to joining in a Green Thumbs gathering? Here’s what *Nuit Verte* storyteller Chris Cavanagh has to say:

*“I said yes because i love gardens, i love growing vegetables (it reminds me of my grandfather), i love projects that involve community and especially those that are inclusive of all members of a community, including children. Finally, i believe that transforming our world through practices like community gardens is one of the most important things to do in this era of climate crisis.”*

## By the numbers

**6,375** children, **214** youth, and **390** adults participated in our programs in 2016.

We provided **388** hours of programming, including **288** children’s workshops, working with **59** teachers and another **15** in a teacher training workshop. Our workshop supported teachers earning Advanced Qualifications in Elementary Environmental Education.

**47** adult volunteers contributed a total of **458** volunteer hours, board members and office volunteers contributed another **837** hours, while **18** secondary and post-secondary students contributed **2,632** volunteer hours.

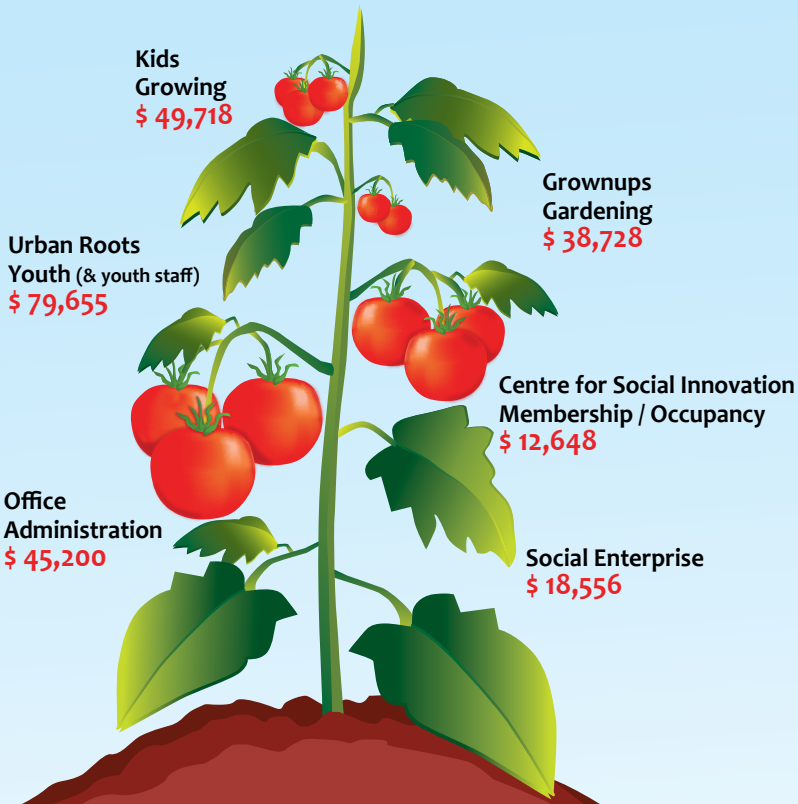
## What teachers say

*Thank you again for letting us be a part of such a worthwhile, experiential program. I think we each felt more connected to nature, learned about plants, and had a great time while doing so.*  
*Thank you, and the Program, again. :)*  
Zoë Maria Comino  
Teacher – Enseignante  
1e/2e année - Français Immersion École  
Winchester P.S.

**Total Revenue:**  
**\$ 214,508**  
**2015: \$ 228,771**

**Total Expenses:**  
**\$ 244,505**  
**2015: \$ 205,593**

**Excess of Revenue over Expenses:**  
**(\$ 29,997)**  
**2015: \$ 23,178**



Grants \$ 141,090	Donations \$ 45,884	Events \$ 2,066	Social Enterprise \$ 20,704	Memberships, Service Fees, Misc. \$ 4,764
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# Our programs

## Kids Growing

Children's exploration of nature and healthy food is at the heart of this program. Gardening and food activities on school grounds and in classrooms support curriculum objectives and provide healthy summer activities for young children.

## Urban Roots Youth

Our after-school and summer programs for youth teach the techniques of growing food in small spaces. Youth help compost, maintain the gardens and run a farmers market stall. In summer, youth staff provide recreational opportunities for young children in the gardens.

## Grownups Gardening

Adult volunteers are key to the success of our Kids Growing programs, as they increase the adult-child ratio and allow each child to get hands-on experience. Development of this program increases community engagement.

## Imagine a Garden in Every School

This networking campaign connects school gardeners across Ontario. On May 20, 2016, 45 schools representing over 15,000 students celebrated a variety of school gardens and were profiled on our website, [agardenineveryschool.ca](http://agardenineveryschool.ca).

## Garden Buddies

Garden Buddies, rolled out in Spring and Fall 2016, brought 8 Kindergarten classes together with an older class to explore and learn in the garden together. Each Kindergarten had a buddy in the older grade, which varied from Grade 3 to Grade 7.



The project was funded by a Seed Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Three schools participated in the program, Sprucecourt PS, Rose Ave PS and Winchester PS. Teachers noted that the program was important to students who otherwise do not have experiences with nature outdoors, outside of school hours. Elizabeth Bristoll and Patrizia Dinoi, teachers paired up for the program at Sprucecourt PS, said, *"Chimu and the volunteers did an amazing job planning, preparing, and engaging the students. They were very flexible and adaptable, always punctual, and very accommodating to the students' needs and challenges. As well they were able to use the strengths of the children to make the session go as smoothly as possible."*

## Kids Growing special projects in 2016



collecting seed at Rose Ave. PS garden

**Garden Program Participants said:**  
"I'll help make the food, but I won't eat it because I don't like vegetables". However, after he helped his peers make the kale pesto and he tasted it, he asked, "Can I have more pesto, please?" - Grade 1 student, Blake St. PS

## Sow and Save

This project, funded by USC Canada, brought garden educators into classrooms and gardens to save seed for future use. The project taught students about why and how to harvest and save seed, and a lovely resource binder full of lesson plans, and a weatherproof, classroom-friendly Seed Bank were provided to participating classes. 34 in-class sessions were completed and 823 students participated. 15 of the sessions were completed with partnering schools, while 19 sessions were completed at schools outside Green Thumbs Growing Kids' service area.

*"A wealth of knowledge was shared today both in the classroom and in the garden. Fantastic experiential learning that students literally could not get enough of."* Elissa Gavigan, Grade 1 teacher, Sprucecourt PS



## Grownups Gardening

*Matt Callahan volunteered extensively with Green Thumbs in 2016. Interviewed by Polina Malkin.*



## Tell us a bit about your background, and why did you decide to volunteer for Green Thumbs?

I've got a degree in Biology, and an interest in tree planting.

I used to work for the Ministry of Natural Resources as well as in the field of finance. I chose to volunteer with Green Thumbs because it allowed me to spend time outside, exercise and reunite with my long time hobby – gardening.

## What did you learn from the programs?

I learned about kids and I learned a lot from the garden educators on how they manage the class. I like to keep kids engaged and share silly information about plants in hopes they will absorb the material better. Kids are smart.

## What do you like about the program?

I like the program because it has room for discovery and that's what the kids are all about. They are engaged. They understand, it's important especially living in the city.

## What keeps you coming back to volunteer for Green Thumbs?

I find that I'm not wasting my time! I find the leaders have a game plan ready. I know what I'm going to do when I come. They are organized. The program is promoting leadership... Some of the kids remember you from last year and that's engaging as well. There's continuity and nice community-building. When I come, kids know they're here to learn. And if a kid says "my favorite thing is to plant plants" and that's what I did with them... that keeps me going and keeps me coming back.