Celebrating Five Years

In 2023, Live, Work, Eat, Grow grew the cultural programs at our community gardens, expanded business memberships at Millstone Kitchen, and served fresh meals to food insecure families across the region. Five years since our incorporation, we are celebrating an abundance of community support and strong partnerships. Thanks to these contributions, we have leveraged exciting opportunities to create positive impacts for the New River Valley.

Join us in reflecting on 2023!
2023 was our biggest year yet!
We added a new staff member, Emma Jensen, to serve as the Kitchen Coordinator for Millstone Kitchen and established an organizational headquarters in downtown Blacksburg.

We are growing!

Live, Work, Eat, Grow is a 501(c)(3) non-profit based in Virginia’s New River Valley. We strive to ‘cultivate vibrant communities’ by operating the shared-use Millstone Kitchen and robust community garden programs. We incorporated in 2018 to support the revitalization of the Old School at Prices Fork. Learn more at liveworkeatgrow.org

2023 Impact Snapshot

| 15 | Small businesses operated out of Millstone Kitchen |
| 109 | Garden plots where gardeners grew food year-round |
| 13,136 | Fresh, prepared meals provided by Millstone Meals |

Emma Jensen, new Kitchen Coordinator at right, with Future Economy Collective volunteers

New design work for the community garden program, incorporating the pavilion and several gardener-favorite varieties. By Sally Anne Morgan, Ratbee Press
Our Priorities
This report is organized into four themes that guide our programs and correspond to our name: Live, Work, Eat, Grow. For each of these themes, we crafted a vision statement to focus our work.

**LIVE**
We will improve the quality of life for those in our community by creating spaces to gather, inviting collaboration, and offering fun, educational experiences for people of all ages.

**WORK**
We will support entrepreneurs and small local businesses, by providing start-up assistance and vital food service infrastructure.

**EAT**
We stand for healthy food access for all. We will work with key partners to address food insecurity by operating a fresh meal assistance program for low income families.

**GROW**
We connect people to land, tools, and support to help them to grow their own food, including culturally significant foods that may otherwise be unavailable.
During the growing season, we hosted monthly potlucks that highlighted family recipes from gardener’s countries of origin, including our annual Nepali dinner, and engaged guest speakers like VT graduate students researching sustainable agriculture.

Culminating two weeks of kids summer camp, we dedicated the Arlean Hale Lambert Children’s Garden. Created by a generous crew of NRV Master Gardeners, this is a whimsical space for young gardeners to learn the fundamentals.

Our cultural programs bloomed this year, thanks to a Central Appalachia Living Traditions grant from MidAtlantic Arts. We hosted events highlighting foodways for each season with an outpouring of support and expertise from the garden community. The grant also allowed us to showcase regional experts, practitioners, and performers.
The business constituency at **Millstone Kitchen** grew this year. From freshly launched concepts to well seasoned mainstays, 15 entrepreneurs maximized kitchen space to serve a record number of customers. Check out our new faces below!

### Millstone Members

- Feast & Company
- Grandpa Foods
- Glade Road Growing
- HazelBea Catering
- Just Graze & Co.
- Kat the Farmer
- Not Your Mama’s Pasta
- On Site Culinary Solutions
- Southpaw Cafe
- Spoons Shaved Ice
- Thyme & Table
- Wine Lab

### Our neighbors at Moon Hollow Brewing offered opportunities for collaboration including pop ups with Millstone member businesses (Not Your Mama’s Pasta, Feast & Company, and HazelBea Catering), and a ‘pint night’ that raised $250 for Live, Work, Eat, Grow.

### Strength in Numbers

175 individuals representing 10 different organizations volunteered 2,000+ hours helping maintain our kitchen and gardens.

Ready to work? [Email us](mailto:emailus).
“Our clients look forward to receiving their Millstone Meal every week. It’s not often many of them experience new food and it’s exciting to see their anticipation. It is especially beneficial for our older neighbors who have fewer resources or abilities to prepare meals on their own.” - Andrea Chestnut, Beans and Rice Program Manager

The Millstone Meals program served 13,136 meals to 538 low income families and seniors this year. Meals are cooked in house by members HazelBea Catering, Feast & Company, On Site Culinary and Thyme & Table. After packaging, meals travel across four counties to be distributed by our grassroots partners: Plenty!, Future Economy Collective, Beans and Rice, Warm Hearth, the YMCA and Newport Community Center.

Rising demand for food across all our partners invited the opportunity to scale up to serving nearly 350 meals each week. Plenty!, for example, has seen demand for meals in Floyd double in the last year alone.

The Millstone Meals program is generously funded by the Town of Blacksburg, through the American Rescue Plan Act, as well as the Virginia State Office of Rural Health, with plans to continue over the next three years. To encourage collaboration in the food access space, we are also working to establish a Blacksburg food security network.

We welcomed the NRV Glean Team to the Hale community garden, where they grew over 2,000 pounds of winter squash for donation to local area food pantries and other food access organizations.
We broke ground on a new community garden in Heritage Park on Meadowbrook Road. The garden will be the first of two established with Town of Blacksburg’s American Rescue Plan Act funds. Preparing the 5,000 square foot garden site will also prioritize removing invasive species.

“I love the community garden because I can grow fresh organic vegetables... and interact with people from different parts of the world. I love it when I see colorful vegetables grown on different plots.”
-Santosh Rijal

At the Hale garden, the native plant propagation center took shape, with a new shed, shade structure, and raised beds installed. A diversity of in-ground species blossomed, and in the fall we collected the first seeds to save for next growing season.

In partnership with the Town of Blacksburg, our community garden program received the President’s Award and the Innovation Award in Community Health from the Virginia Municipal League!
Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the contributions of all those who worked tirelessly to create meaningful impact in our community this year. In addition to the names mentioned in the report, we would like to acknowledge those listed below.

Staff:
Laina Schneider, Executive Director
Steve Kruger, Garden Coordinator
Emma Jensen, Kitchen Coordinator

Board Members:
Kevin Byrd, April DeMotts, Deborah Edwards, Shelley Fortier, Christy Gabbard,
Emily Gibson, Lia Kelinsky-Jones, Justin Mosby, Elisabeth Willis, Jennifer Wilsie

Volunteer Organizations:
VCE Master Gardeners & Master Naturalists, Virginia Tech Civic Agriculture and Global Food Security Minors, Alpha Phi Omega, Lambda Iota Mu, G.I.V.E., In Motion, VT Engage

Donors and Partners:
Dogwood Residential, Friends of the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library, Mid-Atlantic Arts, NRV Glean Team, NRV Regional Commission, Plant SWVA Natives, Town of Blacksburg, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Our work is possible thanks to the generosity of our donors. Help us respond to the needs of our community by making a donation today!

Contact
4237 Prices Fork Rd., Suite C
Blacksburg, VA 24060
540-315-9160
www.liveworkeatgrow.org