

2017 AT FOODCHAIN

OUR BIGGEST YEAR YET



Dear Friend,

What a year we've had! After 5 years of dreaming and 2 years raising funds and managing construction, we finally opened FoodChain's Teaching & Processing Kitchen in October! We had enormous support in getting here and owe a special debt of gratitude to the over 140 individuals, organizations, and grantors who helped make this project come together! I sincerely hope you've been able to visit this new space, but if not, we will have plenty of opportunities in the coming year! After all, the sole purpose of this labor wasn't to build a kitchen, but to create even more ways for our community to connect with fresh food!

As I hope you'll read inside, all of our staff (now 6 counting myself!) have been working hard to provide programs and activities that are educational, engaging and fun. But the need for nutritional and fresh food education and access is far greater than our team can provide alone! That means we have opportunities to actively engage hundreds of volunteers! You might just find that spending time mentoring a youth with fresh food cooking, helping to transplant lettuce, or pureeing locally grown squash could be the thing to keep your spirits high this winter! We'd love to have you!

As I reflect on this momentous year, though, it is the little moments that bubble up. The high school intern who was so dedicated that he became the main point person when our Farm Manager left on his honeymoon. Exuberant 4th graders from

Harrison Elementary scarfing down lettuce wraps they prepared with local sautéed beets, zucchini, & carrots. Or meeting a two day old baby at our community meal whose mother had been discharged just in time to make it to our gathering. These small moments are the building blocks to allow the revolutionary change to take place. Which is good, because we're thinking big as we strive to forge a new food system where all people, particularly our neighbors, can have access to, knowledge of, and even a livelihood with local food. I am so grateful to have the chance to bear witness to these daily victories and for the opportunity to help FoodChain's mission bloom.

All the Best,

Rebecca Self

Rebecca Self
Director of FoodChain



The Kitchen is Here!

Since completion of the Teaching and Processing Kitchen, FoodChain has begun the ground work for increasing access in our community to fresh, local produce. Our goal is to create a product that is both affordable and convenient, while processing labor provides job skill development to those in need. Throughout 2017, we have been receiving excess farm produce through some of our longstanding producer partners and GleanKY. With the creativity of Leandra, our Kitchen Manager, this produce has traveled many different paths! It has been distributed through our kids cooking programs, utilized at the summer farmers' market and nearby school bus stop, brought to educational events and schools, and turned into 600+ meals at our monthly community dinners! WHEW!

Thanks to a grant from the Mayor's Workforce Development team, we are using the Kitchen to host a Food Sector Job Training Program (FSJTP)! This December, in fact, we graduated our first two FSJTP participants who have gained experience in local food processing, kitchen sanitation, knife skills, and workflow in our kitchen. They received a professional knife set, chef uniforms, a stipend, an externship site placement, resume development and job placement assistance.

We are so excited for 2018, when we will expand FSJTP to increase the amount of produce we are working with, have more direct farmer impact, create more paths for distribution to include GleanKY recipients, God's Pantry Food Banks, and outreach further into our surrounding community!



Locally grown produce flows through the Kitchen to be chopped, pureed, dried, and more, before reaching families in the community.



Food from Farm to Kitchen

Having the Processing Kitchen allows us to utilize a lot of locally grown product, but that produce doesn't show up on its own! That is why we, in partnership with GleanKY, hired a Farm to Kitchen Coordinator, thanks to a generous gift from the William R. Kenan Charitable Trust! Jimmy Earley is responsible for sourcing the local produce that our Kitchen works with, as well as ensuring that the food going out arrives efficiently to partner feeding organizations and families.

Though we are just getting started, we are all very excited to work on behalf of Kentucky farmers to expand the market for second-grade and surplus produce while also serving our community. Already we've been able to test the waters with apples, processing over 200 lbs from Reed Valley Orchard. The apples went to food pantry clients as frozen, diced apples, with recipe ideas attached! With the opening of the Kitchen and the support of a brand new Local Food Promotion Program USDA grant, we'll be working with many more fruits and vegetables in the 2018 growing season!



Cooking with Youth

This marks the first full year of Cook. Eat. Grow., our youth cooking program that works with 4th and 5th graders from our community. This spring we offered 7 weeks of afterschool classes directly to Harrison, Williams Wells Brown, and Arlington Elementary schools. This summer, while kitchen construction was in limbo, we were lucky to connect with the Friends Meeting House to host our youth cooking camp in their space!

Through a grant from LFUCG Social Services, we were able to grow this program by hiring a new Coordinator, Shelby Wheeler. Under Shelby's guidance, Cook. Eat. Grow. just wrapped up its first 8 week session of classes in our new Teaching Kitchen. Here the students put the kitchen to good use, taking advantage of their new knife, stove, and oven skills to make everything from pumpkin muffins to ratatouille. They used 17 different local fruits and vegetables, some of which many students had never tried. As we go into the new year, we're excited to grow this flagship program, including a spring break session and classes for high schoolers too!



The Power of Produce

This year, the Fayette County Farm to School Coalition became an official program of FoodChain in order to provide this volunteer effort with a bit more support! Reena, our Education Director, now chairs this program, and we're so pleased by the continued support of our community partners.

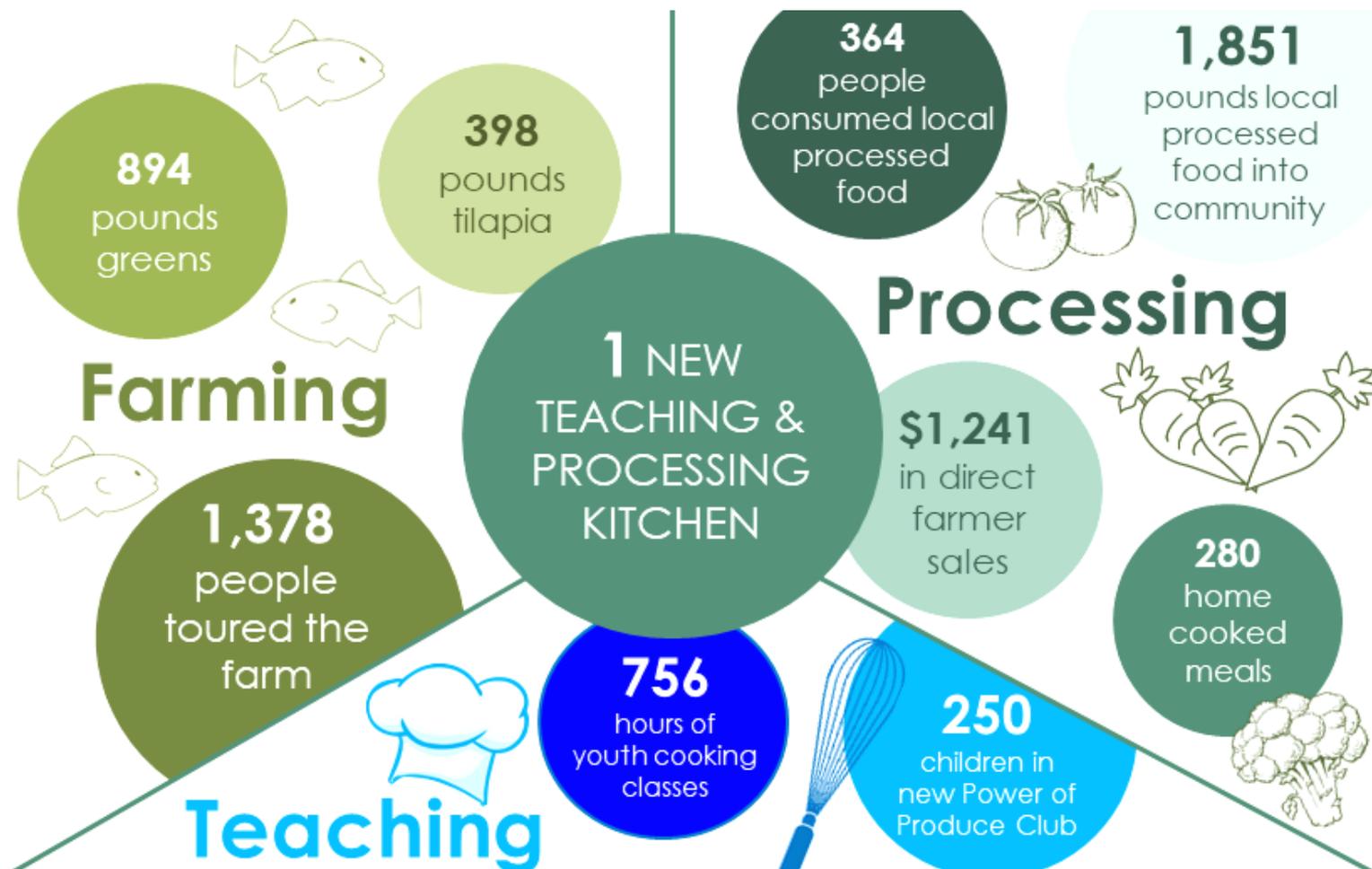
With this collective momentum, we promptly launched a brand new summer children's program at the Lexington Farmer's Market! The Power of Produce (POP) Club allowed more than 250 children to learn about healthy foods and Kentucky agriculture as well, as purchase their own local produce. In addition to educational games and demonstrations, each child received a \$2 voucher every week to purchase any fruit or vegetable at the market. Even more impressive, in only 8 weeks, there was a 91% redemption rate of the more than 450 vouchers distributed, resulting in an additional \$830 in farmer revenue! While incredibly successful in its pilot year, FoodChain plans to expand the POP Club further in 2018 with additional weeks, vouchers, and participants, thus enabling a greater impact on Lexington youth and Kentucky farmers!



Down on the Farm

We haven't forgotten about the farm! This spring we experimented with a roof-top operation that would allow us to grow a wider variety of sun-loving plants (like tomatoes and peppers) that were still nourished by fish waste from below. Meanwhile, we hired Jerry Edmonds, who has family roots to the Smithtown neighborhood, as our new Farm Manager. Under him, the farm continues to grow. This fall he's been experimenting with a wider variety of lettuces and has opened up areas for standing orders! In January of 2018, Jerry's excited to restart our Microgreen CSA so we can get more fresh nutritious greens out to you! And don't forget, we love giving tours of our farm! You can come see it for yourself every Saturday at 1pm or book a private tour!

2017 BY THE NUMBERS



Getting Involved in FoodChain!

VOLUNTEER

We've got cooking classes, produce processing, farm work, and more in need of your help. Both individuals and groups welcome!

STAY IN TOUCH

Sign up for our mailing list and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, & Instagram!

WISHLIST

Help us stock our kitchen by donating items off of the wishlist on our website!

CLEAN OUT YOUR KITCHEN

Donate your gently used kitchen items to help fill up Neighborhood Kitchen Lending Library where neighbors can take items to stock their own kitchens.

CONNECT US WITH BUSINESSES

Recommend us to employers or corporations that want to grow access and education to fresh food in our community through sponsorships!

SHARE WITH FRIENDS

We all need more good news! Spread the word by telling your friends and family! In fact, now that you're done reading, pass along this paper to someone new!

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