



**PROVIDENCE**  
FARM COLLECTIVE

2023

Annual Report







Dear Providence Farm Collective Community,

On May 31, 2023, Providence Farm Collective became a farmland owner. Completing the purchase of its 37-acre home on Burton Road in Orchard Park marks the first goal of our successful joint capital campaign with the Western New York Land Conservancy. PFC's ownership and protection of this land are impactful for all of us in Western New York – not just PFC's farmers.

In Erie County, we have lost 40% of our farmland to development since 1970. Consequently, our local food production has moved farther away from our population centers. This threatens an already precarious local food system where 1 in 5 children regularly experiences food insecurity and access to healthy fresh foods is limited or nonexistent in communities of color and for many residents of our rural communities. All of us in our greater WNY community feel this impact on our neighbors.

There are many motivations for which PFC farmers grow food. Our incubator farmers are developing farm businesses. Our community farmers grow culturally important vegetables to feed their families, their community members, and others who lack access in our region. There are health benefits for you and all our PFC community members that include being in nature, connecting with the community through a shared meal under the tent, and sharing our food traditions with our kids and friends across Western New York. There is no doubt that farmland ownership has catalyzed change for PFC, its farmers, and all of us in the community. For all farmers, there is security in landownership that provides an opportunity to invest funds in needed infrastructure and improvements that can increase farmers' yields. For PFC, farmland ownership is agency to implement a holistic sustainability model that equally uplifts people, the environment, and PFC's mission, while also working toward financial sustainability. Rather than spending money to improve someone else's property, PFC funds can be invested in nurturing our soil and programs that empower farmers and eaters – benefitting all of us in Western New York. PFC farmers have a home to grow the foods they want, practice their agricultural traditions, and share both with you. There is security for all of us in owning and protecting our 37-acres on Burton Road.

As board member Rachel Tarwo so lovingly says, "PFC is our home."

Together we celebrate our food and farm traditions. Thank you for being a part of the Providence Farm Collective community!

Our heartfelt gratitude,

Zelalem Gemmeda  
Board Member

Halima Muhina  
Board Member

Rachel Tarwo  
Board Member

Kristin Heltman-Weiss  
Executive Director & President

# VISION

**Empowering Just and Equitable  
Access to Food and Farmland**

# MISSION

**Cultivating farmer-led and  
community-rooted agriculture and  
food systems to actualize the rights  
of under-resourced peoples.**



## OUR TEAM

### Board of Directors

#### Current

Kristin Heltman-Weiss, President  
Rebecca French, Secretary  
Laura Hunt, Treasurer  
Zelalem Gemmeda  
Halima Muhina  
Rachel Tarwo  
Tom Petrocelli  
Tamar Rothaus  
Eileen O'Brien-Scannell, Board Member Emeritus

#### Past

Janet Coletti  
George Haffenden  
Jen VanDewater  
Sean Maher  
Nelson Nagbe

### Staff

Kristin Heltman-Weiss, Executive Director  
Beth Leipler, Farm Director  
Mahamud Mberwa, Farm Mentor  
Isaac Frisina, Farm Facilities & Equipment  
Manager  
Bari Zeiger, Director of Finance & Grants  
Hamadi Ali, Markets Manager  
Hamadi Mganga, Marketing Coordinator  
Maria Lucero, Development Manager  
Maria Guzzo, Admin Coordinator  
Dao Kamara, Community Engagement  
Coordinator  
Abdullah Sundi, Farm Crew  
Kuban Yao, Farm Crew  
Sharif Abdi, Chef

### Committee Members

#### Farmer Advisory

Gabriel Khoon, Karenni Garden of Hope  
Rosa Meh, Karenni Garden of Hope  
Faz Niyigoba, Ak'iwacu Farm  
Dao Kamara, Liberian Community Farm  
Nelson Nagbe, Liberian Community Farm  
Rachel Tarwo, Liberian Community Farm  
Ali Macheremo, Somali Bantu Community Farm  
Halima Muhina, Somali Bantu Community Farm  
Zelalem Gemmeda, Be Emnet Ethiopian Farm  
Allison DeHoney, Buffalo Go Green  
Kandolo Makonga, Congolese Farming Project  
Sawhla Set, BMICF Plants  
Helen Rojek, BMICF Plants

#### Farm

Beth Leipler  
Mahamud Mberwa  
Isaac Frisina  
Jen VanDewater  
George Haffenden  
John Glenn

#### Governance

Kristin Heltman-Weiss  
Susan Czynny  
Janet Coletti  
Hamadi Ali  
Tamar Rothaus  
Dao Kamara  
Nancy Brock

#### Finance & Development

Bari Zeiger  
Laura Hunt  
Tom Petrocelli  
Hamadi Ali  
Kristin Heltman-Weiss  
Sean Maher  
Maria Lucero  
Tamar Rothaus  
Mike Szymkowiak  
Karen Prendergast  
Emily Karol

#### Marketing & Community Engagement

Cody Switzer  
Hamadi Mganga  
Janet Coletti  
Rebecca French  
Maria Testa  
Deanna Garwol  
Maria Lucero  
Paul Maurer





COMMUNITY FARM OF THE YEAR  
The Burundian Community



INCUBATOR FARMER OF THE YEAR  
ADAMU

# OUR FARMERS

## WHO ARE OUR FARMERS?

Our strength lies in the diversity and dedication of our farmers, a vibrant tapestry of individuals and communities united by the love of the land and the passion for cultivation.

With 27 farms and 232 farmers, our collective effort is not just about growing crops — it's about nurturing communities and preserving cultural heritage.

## 8 COMMUNITY FARMS

- Somali Bantu Community Farm
- Buffalo Go Green
- Liberian Community Farm Project
- Congolese Farming Project
- Buffalo Myanmar Indigenous Christian Fellowship Plants
- Ak'iwacu Farm
- Karenni Hope Farm
- Be Emnet Ethiopian Farmer Group

## 18 INCUBATOR FARMERS

- Adam's Farm
- Mtange Family
- Kilozole Farm
- Mitemo Farm
- Ferme Asia Mpaji Ni Jehovah
- Nagbe & Family Healthy Produce
- Buliyaga Farm
- Niagara Harvest
- Grow Your Own
- Mkomeni Farm
- Boaz Farm
- Kondolo Farm
- Boolo Barwaqo Farm
- Kwachinyika Farm
- Bwedo Farm
- Jamame Farm
- Mgambo Farm
- Uamani Farm

“Personally, I joined this program because it is very hard to access land. We are grateful because it is very rare to get free access to land. I also love to come to the farm to learn about farming, get out in nature, and be in one place with my community, and share our food. We love to be with PFC and learn from the employees. We are growing together, building family, and building community through PFC. We farm, work together, harvest together. We are exchanging experiences together.”

SAM, BE EMNET ETHIOPIAN FARMER GROUP





# LETTER FROM THE FIELD

Dear Friends,

I hope this letter finds you in the best of health and spirits. In my role as Farm Mentor, I guide members of refugee and immigrant communities to bridge the gap between their farming aspirations and the realities of farming in Western New York.

In 2023, I began the journey of representing Providence Farm Collective (PFC) as a Great Lakes Regional Navigator. This American Farmland Trust program “aims to support the ecological health of the Great Lakes while sustaining a viable agricultural economy and communities.” As a navigator with PFC, I focus on land access for refugee and immigrant farmers. As a Somali Bantu farmer, I understand the deep connections refugees and immigrants have to farming and food, especially when it comes to their culture and wellbeing. That is why I am dedicated to helping my fellow farmers navigate barriers to farmland access.

Some of the largest barriers PFC farmers face are language and understanding different pathways to farmland access. Many PFC farmers speak three or more languages — still, English is not our first language. I use my multilingual skills to help communicate and bring in land access experts to discuss options with farmers like cooperative organization, lease-to-own agreements, and outright purchase. I help farmers carefully weigh these options with their unique needs and goals.

Whether it's growing African corn, okra, or collards, the joy of providing fresh, cultural produce to our communities is transformative. During a Pathways to Land Access workshop, PFC farmers heard an inspiring example from Moses, a Kenyan farmer from Minnesota. Moses' journey to buy land and make it available to other incubator farmers in his community instilled hope in our farmers.

By coming together with partners, we can create a future where determined immigrant and refugee farmers are empowered with the right support for them to care for the land, grow healthy food, preserve their culture, and contribute to the local economy.

I welcome any assistance or advice you can provide as we continue to support our diverse farmers to navigate farmland access.

Asante,



Mahamud “Mo” Mberwa  
Farm Mentor & Great Lakes Regional Navigator





# OUR IMPACT

In a year marked by resilience and collective effort, we have witnessed a remarkable transformation in the lives of many, thanks to the dedication of our farmers and the support of our community. Our vision to provide equitable access to food has taken root in the most vulnerable areas.



## Nourishing Numbers: 2023 Impact & Statistics





# CULTIVATING COMMUNITY THROUGH CULTURE & FOOD



At the heart of PFC's mission is our thriving farmers market, strategically situated on Buffalo's West Side to provide our community with culturally-important crops.

## PFC's Farmers Market

- 17 farm vendors
- 2,600 customers

## Other Markets Served by PFC Farmers

Delavan Grider Community Center Farmers Markets

- 3 PFC farm vendors
- 1,342 customers

D'Youville Farmers Market

- 4 PFC farm vendors

## Wholesale Partners

- Massachusetts Avenue Project
- East Aurora Coop Market
- Lexington Cooperative Market
- Buffalo Public Schools
- Tops Friendly Markets
- FeedMore WNY
- West Side Community Services



## Food Pantry Partners

- Community Action Organization
- Buffalo House of Hope
- Hearts Harvest
- Salvation Army Grant Street
- Provisions 139
- Friends of Night People
- St. Vincent DePaul Society
- FeedMore WNY
- Bread of Life Outreach Center
- Buffalo Temple of God Food Pantry

# AWARDS & RECOGNITION

Reflecting on the previous year fills us with profound pride as we share the recognition PFC has received for its efforts and model of holistic sustainability. Our journey is characterized by noteworthy accomplishments and engaging stories that foster deep connection for us all.



**2023 Edible Communities Sustainability Award**



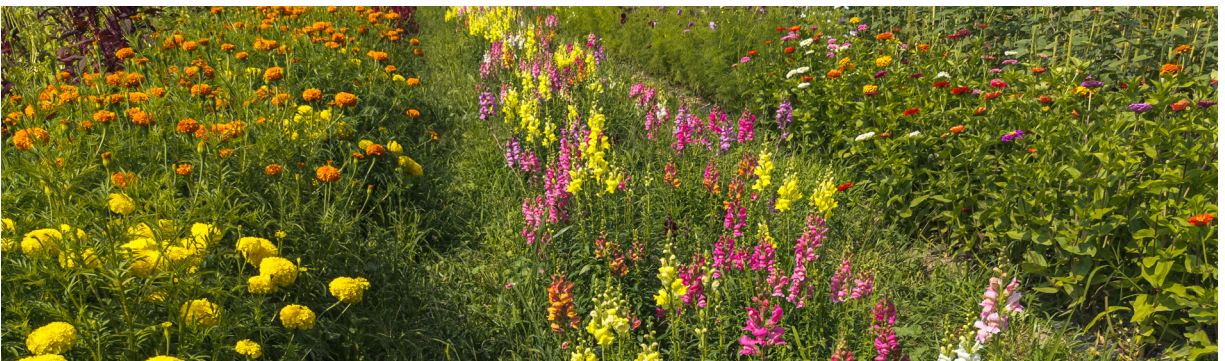
**WNY Sustainable Business Roundtable 2023 Community Impact Award**



**Buffalo Spree Best New Farmers Market Award**



**Buffalo Business First IDEA Award**



**Erie County's 2023 Environmental Excellence Award**



# PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

## Celebrating Agricultural Heritage Through Cyanotypes

The Cyanotypes Project reflects the strength, culture, and farming traditions of our families at Providence Farm Collective. As art bloomed in the fields, the panels we created reflect our shared bond to the soil through imagery and poetry. The project is ultimately a celebration of our community, our families, and our heritage as farmers.

Cyanotype photography, known for its characteristic blue hue, was used to capture more than just the physical likeness of our families and their crops. Photojournalist and artist Brendan Bannon created and led this project, intertwining the art of photography with the rich cultural narratives of PFC farm families. The project's power lay in its ability to merge the traditional with the contemporary, bearing witness to the essence of our farmers, their deep-rooted connection to the earth, and the plants they grow as they share their personal stories of nurturing the land in each fabric panel.



### Acknowledgment

Our heartfelt gratitude to Brendan Bannon for leading this project with passion and sensitivity. Brendan's artistry, vision, and understanding of the importance of inclusive storytelling through art provide a bridge for connecting us all. We are also deeply thankful to the Cullen Foundation for funding this endeavor. Cullen's support of the arts in WNY and at PFC brings the vibrant stories of our families to life!

# PROGRAMS: HIGHLIGHTS & PARTNERS



## Incubator Farm Program

- Graduated first cohort of new farmer businesses.
- Supported in partnership with the USDA Beginner Farmers & Ranchers Programs.



## Community Farm Program

- 9 community organizations accessed land and resources to provide fresh food security and culturally significant produce.
- Produce Aggregation for Food Pantries Program supported in partnership with New York Food for New York Families Grant.



## Compost Program

- Launched a new composting initiative aimed at improving soil health and sustainability.
- Supported in partnership with AGCO Agriculture Foundation.



## Farmer & Youth Lunch Program

- Over 10,000 meals served to farmers, youth employees, and farm visitors.
- Supported in partnership with the Blue Fund, the Buffalo Bills Foundation (commercial kitchen food trailer), and St. James United Church of Christ/ Churches in Action (new freezer).



## PFC's Monday Market Stand/CSA Program

- Provided fresh, locally grown produce to 70 customers.
- 53 CSA members picked up vegetable shares at the farm every Monday for 18 weeks.
- Sponsored in partnership with Rich Products.



## Summer Vibe Youth Employment Program

- 34 summer youth employees earned a combined total of \$110,000.00.
- Sponsored in partnership with Erie County Department of Social Services SYEP and Jewish Family Services, with additional workshops supported by Second Generation Theatre.

"I would like to move forward farming as a farm business. My vision and my goal is to have my own land after this program with PFC. I would like someone to lead me to help me find my own land so I can continue with my farm business."

ZAINABU





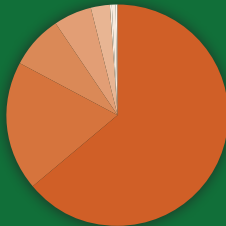
# THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS

## Grantors

Aceso Foundation  
 AGCO Agriculture Foundation  
 American Farmland Trust/Farmland for a New Generation NY  
 Buffalo Bills Foundation  
 Buffalo Council Member David Rivera  
 Catie Marron - Blue Skies Farm Foundation  
 Cliff Family Foundation  
 Cullen Foundation  
 Dedrick Family Foundation  
 Erie County Department of Social Services  
 First Niagara Foundation in Partnership with KeyBank Foundation  
 Hodgson Russ LLP Charitable Foundation, Inc.  
 John R. Oishei Foundation  
 King Family Foundation  
 M&T Charitable Foundation  
 Moog, Inc.  
 Mr. and Mrs. Daniel C. Jackson Charitable Fund  
 New York State/Department of Agriculture & Markets  
 Orchard Park Presbyterian Church: Ruth Huppuch Bequest  
 Providence Fund  
 Rich Family Foundation  
 Robert J. & Martha B. Fierle Foundation  
 St. James United Church of Christ/Churches in Action  
 Stenclik Family Charitable Fund  
 United Way of Buffalo & Erie County  
 USDA  
 Wegmans Food Market, Inc.  
 Western New York Foundation

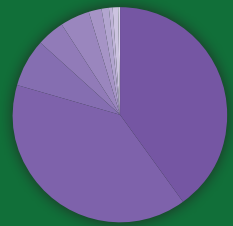
## A special thanks to our Collective Partners, PFC's recurring donors who invest monthly.

Anonymous  
 Sheila Balke  
 Barbara Carr  
 Abigail Cooke  
 The Deck Vukelic Family  
 Maryann & Patrick Didas  
 Kristin Heltman-Weiss & Paul Weiss  
 Jean Hughes  
 Bethany Kloc  
 Jack Lemkuil  
 Mary Lou Lemkuil  
 Jeffrey Mahon  
 Joan Parks  
 Leonardo Sette-Camara  
 Steve & Sarah Tasker  
 Charlotte Tay Tahk  
 Maria Testa  
 Paige Thompson  
 Jenine Trzewieczynski



## Operating Revenue

- Foundation and Trust Grants: \$1,049,131.96
- Government Grants: \$310,482.88
- Individual Contributions: \$128,340.53
- Farm Sales: \$91,481.19
- Corporate and Business Contributions: \$42,441.21
- Presentations, Farm Tours & Events: \$7,447.67
- High Tunnel Rental & Supplies Resale: \$6,742.33
- Miscellaneous Revenue: \$2,228.67
- Public Support Other: \$1,104.44



## Operating Expenses

- Capital Purchases and Improvements: \$610,827.20
- Staff: \$601,625.90
- Farm Programs, Supplies and Equipment: \$109,278.60
- Contract Services: \$64,348.18
- Farmer Leadership Stipends and Produce Purchases: \$64,184.92
- Facilities and Insurance: \$30,261.34
- Operations: \$16,391.55
- Conferences, Meetings and Staff Development: \$11,231.27
- Mileage and Transportation: \$10,644.12
- Summer Youth Programs: \$2,183.91
- Miscellaneous Expenses: \$969.60

**PROVIDENCE FARM COLLECTIVE**  
5701 BURTON ROAD  
ORCHARD PARK, NY 14127



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FARM COLLECTIVE

For more information, visit: [providencefarmcollective.org](http://providencefarmcollective.org)

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