

# LITTLE ORCHARDS. BIG IMPACT.

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



# THE GIVING GROVE

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Dear Friends,

During the Giving Grove Network National Conference this year, we asked program managers and administrative staff representing our 14 affiliate locations to describe The Giving Grove in their own words. One of the top words to describe our network was **COLLABORATION**. In celebration of this year, we're reflecting on some of the beautiful ways that collaboration fed our roots and supported new branches.

This marked the first year of co-leadership for The Giving Grove as we assumed the roles of Co-Executive Directors. It was a year full of learning, growth, and achievement! Together, our staff welcomed three new affiliates, created a new three-year strategic plan, developed additional funding partnerships, won awards for video production and branding, and spoke on several national panels.

We continue to facilitate our affiliate and partner network to share lessons learned, create best practices and fundraise together. This collaboration creates access to good pricing from tree nurseries and orchard tool suppliers while opening doors for national sponsorships. As we build relationships together, we become a cohesive, powerful network, and we are excited for the possibilities it creates.

Of course, it's not only human collaboration powering our network. The synergy between the orchard trees and the environment has a meaningful impact for all of us. Feeding trees with natural compost and fertilizer encourages fungal networks underground, which allows trees to support each other while improving the soil. This not only helps our trees grow strong and productive but also allows the soil to retain more water, preventing runoff while nourishing the trees that clean our air. When we look out our office windows, we can see our "collaboration tree" – one tree with three types of apples, courtesy of grafted branches from our affiliate in New England. The grafted varieties will help increase pollination and production, providing a living reminder that we are better together.

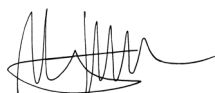
And finally, we would not be The Giving Grove without collaboration with our stewards and volunteers. They are a thriving network of over 1,000 individuals who care deeply about their communities and maintain their orchard spaces.

Thank you for being an essential partner in this mission. Collaborating with you to increase food access, grow community and support a healthy environment invigorates our network.

In gratitude,



Erica Kratofil, MSW, Co-Executive Director



Ashley Williamson, MSW, Co-Executive Director

# COMMUNITY DOES GROW ON TREES.

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Little orchards foster a sense of belonging. An orchard becomes a gathering space where neighbors share food, children play and people grow closer.

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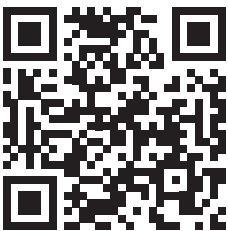
## CONNECTING LEADERS WITH COMMUNITY

Little orchards connect to the vitality of neighborhoods. Green space offers opportunities to gather. As the trees grow and begin to produce yields, so do the communities surrounding the orchards.

With the help of our national network, The Giving Grove has facilitated relationships between our affiliate partners and organizations such as:

- 1% for the Planet business members
- Professional sports teams
- Tree nurseries & orchard suppliers
- International food & beverage brands
- National corporate partners
- Locally-owned businesses

We help large and small institutions connect and learn from one another, creating a stronger bond between neighbors.



Want to see the power of community orchards in action? Follow the QR code to watch a short film!



Giving Grove orchards have the potential to bring new breath and vibrancy to spaces in local communities. Orchards can help previously ignored, avoided or unused land grow into a communal spaces where people can come together, cultivate, and acquire knowledge collectively.



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lbs (2.4 kg) 4.25 GL PL  
Manufactured by LAWRENCE FOODS, INC. EIK

# SUSTAINABILITY DOES GROW ON TREES.

Little orchards contribute to cleaner, more livable neighborhoods. Throughout its life, an orchard will improve air quality and soil health while creating a sustainable local food source.

## HORTICULTURE

Embarking on a journey towards sustainable urban ecosystems, **Giving Grove affiliate Seed St. Louis** has been a key partner in a collaborative initiative with six St. Louis institutions, including the University of Missouri- St. Louis, Webster University, and Maryville University. **Together, they are actively engaged in groundbreaking research focused on urban pollination of fruit trees using Seed St. Louis Giving Grove orchards.**

Seed St. Louis helped researchers identify suitable study locations that met specific criteria: a diverse array of tree species, distribution across the metro area, and an even representation in three density classes—urban, suburban, and peri-urban. The researchers are studying many things, including which fruit trees pollinators are visiting, whether pollinators are sticking with one type of tree or moving between different tree species in a day, and how to increase and care for the species that are important for pollination.

**Already their research has uncovered that there are approximately 200 different species of pollinators in St. Louis (compared to the 45 known prior to the study).** At the end of the study, researchers hope to use the knowledge gained to improve production in urban orchards and to be better advocates for all our important pollinators. The results of this work will benefit the entire network of Giving Grove orchards!

As The Giving Grove network promotes sustainable urban environments, affiliate Seed St. Louis is honored to be at the forefront of a project that not only expands our understanding of pollination dynamics but also exemplifies the power of collaborative efforts in building more sustainable and resilient communities.

**“It’s really exciting to be able to take all these different sites, to be able to pull data together, and then hopefully to be able to take that data to then improve and reinforce the education that we’re doing.”**  
-Dean Gunderson,  
Director of Education  
at Seed St. Louis

# SPOTLIGHT ON GROWTH

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Our growth as a network is rooted in collaboration and in celebrating the unique attributes of each affiliate. By partnering with existing community garden, food access, and urban tree canopy organizations across the county, we are creating an aligned-action network of orcharding programs coast-to-coast. Each city we partner with brings unique skill sets, which contribute to our overall network.

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## FOOD WELL ALLIANCE, ATLANTA

Food Well Alliance is a collaborative network of local leaders working together to build thriving community gardens and urban farms across metro Atlanta. Their mission is to provide resources and support to local growers to connect and build healthier communities.

Launched 2022 | 46 sites | 351 trees | 437,099 annual servings



## RETREEUS, AUBURN, ME (SERVING NEW ENGLAND)

ReTreeUS promotes an environmentally sustainable, socially-just food system through education and mentorship. They provide educational programs that empower people to grow their own food and be healthy environmental stewards.

Launched 2023 | 14 sites | 351 trees | 219,792 annual servings



## THE COMMON ORCHARD PROJECT, CINCINNATI

The Common Orchard Project is providing increased food access, tree canopy and community building by installing and maintaining urban orchards in neighborhoods that have experienced disinvestment.

Launched 2021 | 32 sites | 453 trees | 293,178 annual servings



## GROW NORTH TEXAS, DALLAS

GROW North Texas is creating a sustainable and secure regional food system that enriches the land through programs that encourage economic opportunity for farmers, support equitable access to healthy food, and strengthen sustainable agriculture.

Launched 2022 | 31 sites | 455 trees | 264,632 annual servings





### DENVER URBAN GARDENS, DENVER

DUG currently operates 266 community gardens throughout Metro Denver, including 66 school-based community gardens. They provide the access, skills, and resources for people to grow healthy food in community and regenerate urban green spaces.

Launched 2022 | 20 sites | 449 trees | 207,623 annual servings



### KANSAS CITY COMMUNITY GARDENS, KANSAS CITY

Kansas City Community Gardens (KCCG), established over 35 years ago and home of the original Giving Grove program, empowers households, community groups, and schools to establish and sustain food-producing gardens and orchards.

Launched in 2013 | 256 sites | 4,385 trees | 3,094,404 annual servings



### LOUISVILLE GROWS, LOUISVILLE

Louisville Grows seeks to be a leader in advocating for health equity through the environmental platforms of urban forestry and urban agriculture. They are participants in the Green Heart Project, planting 8,000 trees to decrease health risks by reducing air pollution.

Launched 2021 | 2 sites | 24 trees | 25,560 annual servings



### THE BIG GARDEN, OMAHA

The Big Garden began in 2005 with the goal to create five community gardens. Today, it is reducing hunger by increasing access to fresh, healthy produce and teaching people to grow, cook and preserve their harvests through 170+ community gardens.

Launched 2018 | 44 sites | 422 trees | 313,230 annual servings



### TREE PITTSBURGH, PITTSBURGH

Tree Pittsburgh is an environmental non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening and building community vitality by restoring and protecting the urban forest through tree planting and care, education, advocacy, and land conservation

Launched 2023 | 8 sites | 30 trees | 11,559 annual servings



### SEED ST. LOUIS, ST. LOUIS

Seed St. Louis has been serving the St. Louis region for 35+ years by supporting community driven agricultural projects, including gardens and orchards, to create a city where people are connected to the land, to their food and to each other.

Launched 2017 | 65 sites | 684 trees | 358,036 annual servings



### TILTH ALLIANCE, SEATTLE

Tilth Alliance was created when three urban agriculture and local growing organizations combined under one name. By uniting farmers, eaters, gardeners, cooks and environmental advocates, Tilth Alliance champions a sustainable food culture in Seattle.

Launched 2021 | 19 sites | 86 trees | 51,960 annual servings



### UNITY GARDENS, SOUTH BEND, IN

The Unity Gardens Inc. is a collaborative network of community gardens originated to increase the availability, awareness, and accessibility of healthy, locally grown food. Each Unity Garden has two criteria; diverse people coming together to grow food and a sharing component.

Launched 2023 | 3 sites | 125 trees | 118,028 annual servings

## ADDITIONAL GIVING GROVE PARTNERS

### KEEP GROWING DETROIT, DETROIT

Keep Growing Detroit's mission is to cultivate a food sovereign city. Through The Giving Grove's partnership, Keep Growing Detroit will expand fruit tree access for local urban growers.

### MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, DETROIT

MSU Extension's Detroit Partnership for Food, Learning, and Innovation is collaborating with The Giving Grove to develop a large demonstration orchard and create a certificate program for urban orchardists.

### VARIOUS PARTNERS, MEMPHIS

Plantings began in 2020 and include 13 little orchards installed at schools, existing community gardens, neighborhoods, communities of faith, medical facilities and youth services.

# FRUITFUL PARTNERSHIPS

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We are very grateful for all of our supporters, including these corporate partners, foundations and programs that provided significant support to our national network this year:

- **Geraldine & RA Barrows Foundation, UMB, n.a., Trustee**
- **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas City**
- **Campfire Analytics**
- **Corvin Family Fund**
- **DeBruce Foundation**
- **Evergy**
- **Gattermeir Family Foundation**
- **GEHA**
- **GEHA Solutions**
- **Hydro Flask Parks for All**
- **Kansas City Current**
- **Kubota Hometown Proud**
- **Mariner Foundation**
- **McDonnell Foundation**
- **OXO**
- **PCNA**
- **Sands Family Foundation**
- **Tortoise Foundation**
- **U.S. Department of Agriculture**
- **Jack & Glenna Wylie Donor Advised Fund**



# KNOWLEDGE DOES GROW ON TREES.

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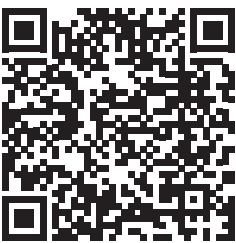
Little orchards help children reach their full potential. More than a quarter of Giving Grove orchards are at schools. With access to an orchard outdoor classroom, children not only get to connect with nature and its healing qualities, but also have access to healthy calories they are proud to harvest, eat and share.

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## SCHOOL GARDENS

School orchards offer a unique and engaging outdoor learning environment that is transformative for students. Students who otherwise struggle in the classroom thrive in an orchard setting. School orchards open doorways to fruitful career paths for students. Young people get hands-on experiences that may inspire them to become an arborist, a farmer, a biologist, a gardener, an environmental hero, or an entrepreneur.

Giving Grove affiliate ReTreeUS has been planting school orchards for over a decade. **They believe that school orchards instill a sense of true stewardship and connectivity in students.** “Our guiding principle is encapsulated in the phrase, ‘we plant trees of fruit and seeds of thought,’” says Richard Hodges, ReTreeUS Program Manager. The thousands of pounds of fruit that the trees generate over time will help create equitable access to healthy food, while the lessons create a multiplying effect of positive change as young people are inspired by environmental stewardship and local food production. **The seeds of thought that grow from these experiences have the power to generate enormous positive change.**



Schoolyard orchards often have surprising lessons for the stewards. Click the QR to read about one steward's experience.



## Outdoor Play

Studies have found that children who spent more time in nature exploration had improved learning outcomes. Research shows that **when children spent time in natural settings they had less anger and aggression.**<sup>1</sup>

# Schoolyard Orchards

## Soil Play

Emerging research suggests that the soil microbiome might have an even **more direct effect on our health by communicating directly with our own cells and by boosting the nutrient content of our food.**<sup>2</sup>

## Play by Learning

Studies have found that students who participated in outdoor science lessons **scored higher on tests and exhibited better classroom behavior** compared to those who received traditional indoor instruction.<sup>3</sup>



# HEALTH DOES GROW ON TREES.

Little orchards offer a sustainable, perennial food source. Fruits, berries and nuts add healthy calories and variety to our diets.

## TACKLING FOOD INSECURITY: A NATIONAL IMPERATIVE

Food insecurity remains a pervasive issue in the U.S., affecting millions, including a staggering number of children. Feeding America reports that 44 million Americans experienced food insecurity in the past year, with profound implications for health outcomes (4). Obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes are just a few of the health issues linked to a lack of access to nutrient-rich food. For children, early exposure to food insecurity can lead to lifelong consequences. Anemia, asthma, oral health problems, lower academic performance, hyperactivity, aggression, and anxiety are among the numerous challenges that can persist into adulthood.

## STRESS, HEALTH AND THE HEALING POWER OF TREES

Recognizing the significant impact of stress on both mental and physical health, it becomes imperative to explore holistic solutions. Stress not only affects our minds but triggers physical responses that can be life-threatening (5). Considering this, the importance of connecting with nature emerges as a compelling and accessible solution. Research consistently demonstrates that exposure to nature, specifically the canopy of trees, significantly aids stress recovery (6). Every tree matters in this regard. The growing field of horticulture therapy further highlights the therapeutic potential of plants for human healing and rehabilitation.

## SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

We address food insecurity and stress-related health issues by fostering little orchards and promoting nature-centric solutions. With each tree planted is the promise of a healthier, more resilient future for communities.

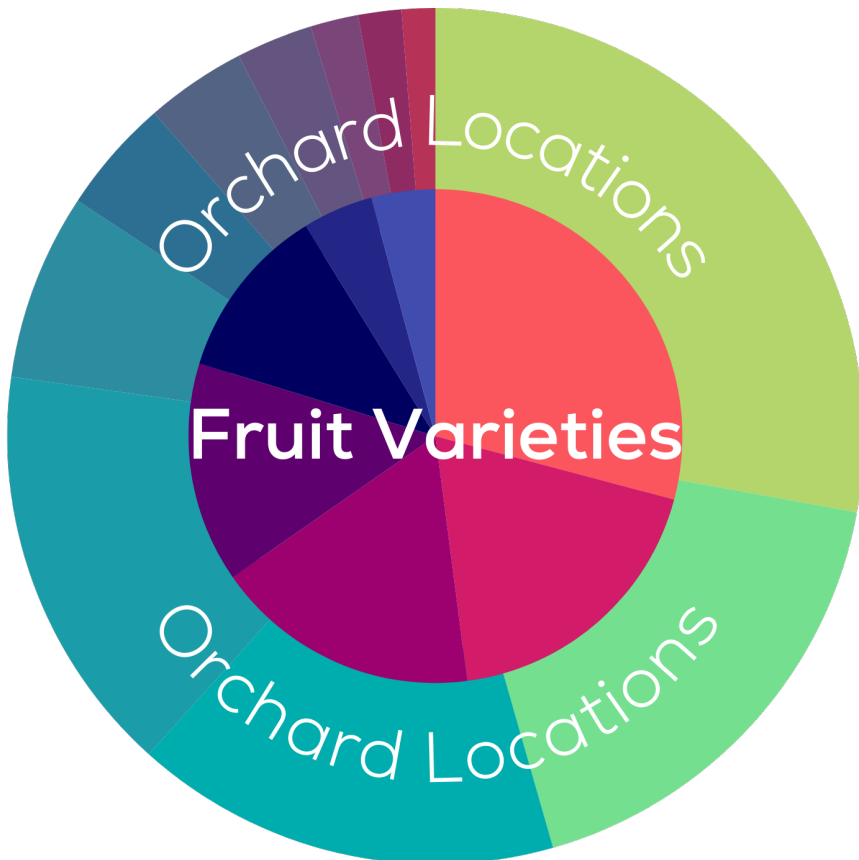
**“Distilling what I learned, I came up with a kind of ultra simple coda: Go outside, often, sometimes in wild places. Bring friends or not. Breathe.”**

–Florence Williams, *The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative*

# LITTLE ORCHARDS

- 14** CITIES
- 553** ORCHARDS
- 8,221** FRUIT & NUT TREES
- 4.17M** NUTRITIOUS SERVINGS PER YEAR

# BIG IMPACT



## Orchard Locations

• Schools	154
• Community Gardens	98
• Communities of Faith	89
• Neighborhoods	86
• Municipalities & Parks	39
• Youth Services	24
• Individual Home Owners	21
• Food Pantry/Kitchen	16
• Transitional Living	10
• Health or Medical Facilities	9
• Senior Housing	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>553</b>

## Most Common Varieties Planted

• Apple	2056
• Asian Pear	1338
• Pear	1208
• Cherry	1042
• Peach	777
• Jujube	333
• Paw Paw	302
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,056</b>

\* Only most common fruit varieties listed.



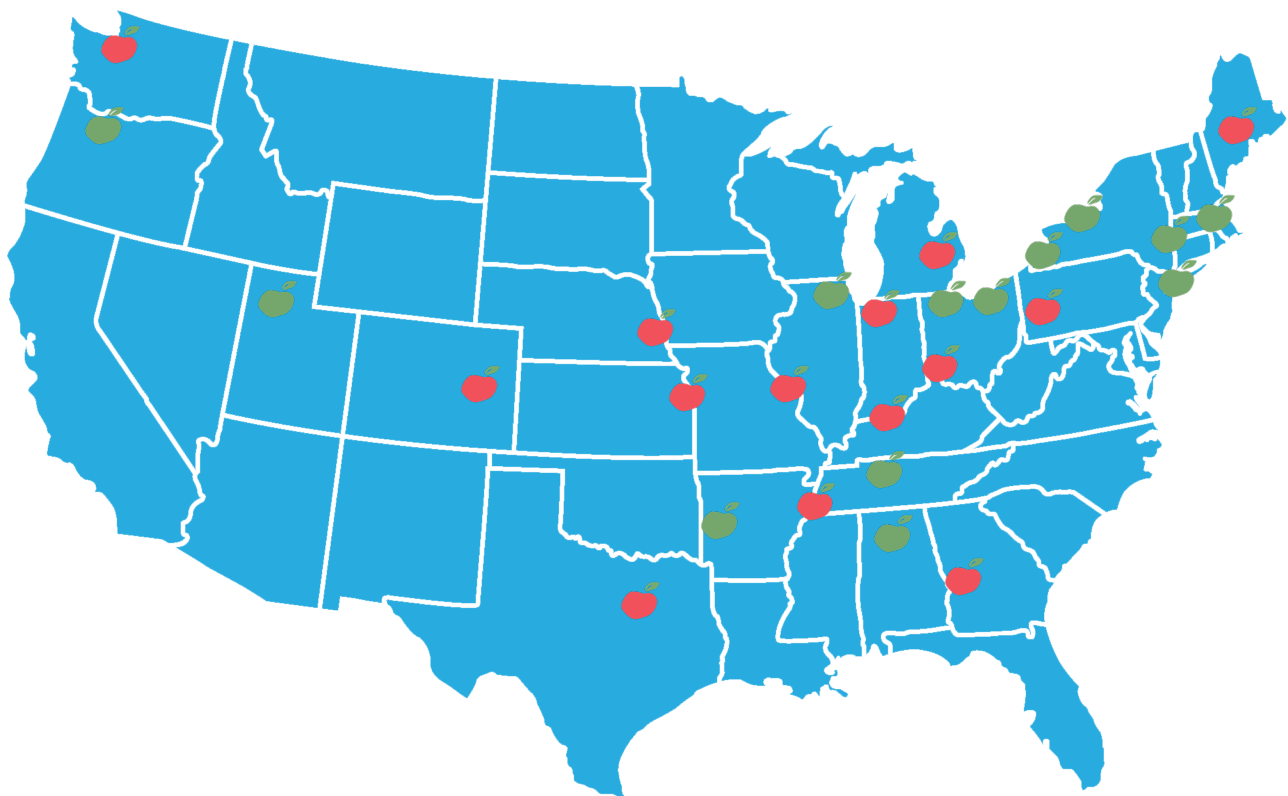
# JOIN THE NATIONAL NETWORK

The Giving Grove continues to grow a strong network of orchard programs across the United States. Together, we will:

- **Support organizations in starting or enhancing a community orchard program.**
- **Help local steward leaders grow healthy produce, easing access and availability.**
- **Work with program leaders to strengthen the vitality of communities that are vulnerable to social and environmental injustice.**
- **Share best practices and expert advice to improve local programs.**

We focus on cities that have residents who face food insecurity and greenspace inequity, and partner with organizations that are capable of adding or enhancing an orchard program, have local support, and are passionate about enhancing local food systems.

If your city or community gardening organization is interested in joining this robust network, let's start a conversation today!



## Giving Grove Cities

Atlanta	Louisville
Auburn, ME	Memphis
Cincinnati	Omaha
Dallas	Pittsburgh
Denver	St. Louis
Detroit	Seattle
Kansas City	South Bend, IN



## Potential Sites

Birmingham	Nashville
Boston	New York City
Buffalo	Portland
Chicago	Rochester
Cleveland	Salt Lake City
Hartford	Toledo
Little Rock	

# FINANCIALS

Just as we emphasize the importance of strong stewardship for each little orchard, we believe in good stewardship of the financial resources that make this possible. We are deeply grateful for each of our donors and supporters.

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## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES\*

Year Ended September 30, 2023

### INCOME

Foundations	\$ 483,082
Federal Grant Funding	\$ 193,085
Corporate Donors	\$ 185,861
In-Kind Contributions	\$ 143,531
Individual Donors	\$ 121,094
Carry Over from Giving Grove Expansion Funds	\$ 78,836
Other Income	\$ 22,914
Plants and Other Sales	\$ 15,087

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TOTAL INCOME	\$ 1,243,490
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### EXPENSES

Affiliate Grants & Awards	\$ 597,950
Salaries, Wages & Benefits	\$ 389,316
Marketing/Outreach, Including In-Kind Advertising	\$ 147,246
Office, General & Administrative	\$ 58,130
Professional Services	\$ 45,838
Other Fees & Expenses	\$ 5,010

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TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 1,234,490
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# BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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The Giving Grove Board offers the expertise needed to develop a strong business plan, the passion to address food access and environmental inequities and the commitment to support a growing national organization.

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**Greg Finkle – President, Giving Grove Co-founder**

President, Finkle+Williams Architecture

**Kevin Birzer – Treasurer, Giving Grove Co-founder**

Chief Executive, TortoiseEcofin

**Gordon Braun – Secretary**

Managing Director, Protiviti

**Oscar Tshibanda – Trustee at Large**

Managing Partner, Tshibanda Associates LLC

**Kate Conner – Affiliate Representative**

Executive Director, Food Well Alliance

**Jill Quigley – Trustee**

Retired clinical nurse specialist and former member of the Kansas House of Representatives

**Todd Moore – Trustee**

Founder of Heartland Regional Health Equity Conference

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**Ray Makalous – Emeritus, Co-founder, Retired**

# THE GIVING GROVE

## References

<sup>1</sup> Danette Glassy, MD, FAAP & Pooja Tandon, MD, FAAP <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/power-of-play/Pages/playinout-side-why-its-important-for-kids.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Daphne Miller, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/uncovering-how-microbes-in-the-soil-influence-our-health-and-our-food/2019/09/27/81634f54-a4ba-11e9-bd56-eac6bb02d01d\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/uncovering-how-microbes-in-the-soil-influence-our-health-and-our-food/2019/09/27/81634f54-a4ba-11e9-bd56-eac6bb02d01d_story.html)

<sup>3</sup> American Institutes for Research. (2005). "Effects of Outdoor Education Programs for Children in California." Retrieved from <https://www.air.org/resource/effects-outdoor-education-programs-children-california>

<sup>4</sup> USDA's annual Household Food Insecurity in the United States report

<sup>5</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Severe Weather Awareness- Heat Waves. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Retrieved February 7, 2022. [www.weather.gov/mkx/heatwa](http://www.weather.gov/mkx/heatwa)

<sup>6</sup> Jiang, B., Chang, C., Sullivan, W. (2014). *A dose of nature: Tree cover, stress reduction, and gender differences*. *Landscaping and Urban Planning*, 132 (2014) 26-36