



NOTE FROM THE FOUNDER

Transformation happens

ONE SEED
TRACTOR LESSON
CARROT HARVEST at a time.



2013 marks EarthDance's fifth year as stewards, and first full year as landowners, of the historic Mueller Farm. An amazing transformation of the farm is underway, all made possible by EarthDance's supporters and volunteers. In February, EarthDance staff moved into our renovated headquarters, the **farmhouse office**; April brought us a **new tractor**, and in October a **hoop house** raising brought us exciting season extension capac-

ity. From **rain barrels** to EarthDance's **Seven Generations Garden** to the **gargantuan donations of mulch** you see around the farm these days, the site is undergoing a metamorphosis that furthers our mission.

And while transformation of the physical space means **greater biodiversity, efficiency, and spaces for learning**, the theme applies to us humans as well. When someone steps foot on the farm, whether for the very first time as a **Central Elementary** second grader smiling as she comprehends the significance of worms, or for the twentieth time as a fifty-five year old **apprentice** is finally able to distinguish redbor from lacinato kale (this being his first summer tasting and growing dark leafy green vegetables), transformation takes place in people too.

We are grateful for you, our **generous friends and donors** who help us keep the farm's legacy alive and growing! Whether you've apprenticed, volunteered, donated, or just recognize the importance of training the **next generation of farmers**, we give thanks to you from the bottom of our roots!

Help us grow our community of supporters by sharing this report with friends and family too, to share the work that we do. Together we can create a healthier food system and planet for all.

For local FARMS,

Molly Rock

Molly Rockamann
Founding Director

OUR MISSION:

EarthDance sustainably grows food, farmers and community, one small farm at a time, through hands-on education and delicious experiences.

OUR HISTORY

Established in 1883, the Mueller Farm is **considered the oldest organic farm west of the Mississippi**. When Caroline Mueller passed, there was a significant risk that this unique peri-urban farm would be forgotten and lost to urban blight and decay. EarthDance's Founding Director, Molly Rockamann, recognized the need to **preserve the land** as a productive farm and as a site for community education. In 2008, acting in partnership with **The Open Space Council**, Rockamann created EarthDance to **preserve the historic Mueller Farm** by connecting more people to the land through community food production.

In May 2012, EarthDance reached its goal of buying the farm, **ensuring it will stay farmland** into perpetuity. EarthDance has grown into a vibrant hub for agricultural education, collaboration, and celebration, unique in the bi-state region.



EarthDance operates an Organic Farm School serving the greater metropolitan St. Louis area. **EarthDance offers the region's only part-time farmer training program:** the Farm & Garden Apprenticeship provides urban dwellers the opportunity to gain practical experience in agriculture, close to home. In addition to the Apprenticeship, EarthDance offers **classes, tours, youth programs, special events, and fresh produce** to the public.

2013 was a year of transformation for the farm and for EarthDance; we can hardly wait to see what 2014 will bring. We invite you learn more about what we've been up to, and to grow the good food movement with us this year!



2013: A YEAR OF TRANSFORMATION



COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

EarthDance's 2013 Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) brought fresh, seasonal produce into the homes of over 50 families on a weekly basis. **With the CSA model, community members invest in their local farm** by paying for a full season's worth of produce before the growing season begins. This benefits growers by providing them with income when their need is greatest, before market sales commence. CSA members support their farmers by sharing the inherent rewards and risks of agriculture. In return, they receive a weekly share of the harvest throughout the growing season.

Since 2010, EarthDance has operated a unique teaching CSA for EarthDance apprentices and staff members, and in 2011, members of the public were invited to invest as well. EarthDance's 2013 CSA brought unprecedented bounty to our members. For apprentice **James Young**, "The weekly CSA became a treasure . . . my family discovered a taste for things we would not have had exposure to otherwise. Our children began to pick favorites early on from Swiss chard to sugar snap peas."



WEED DATING

This summer, EarthDance hosted our first ever Weed Dating events and they were a huge hit! A play on speed dating, "weed dating" offered agri-curious singles a chance to meet new people while cultivating a bed of crops. The attendees enjoyed the event so much that it was brought back twice by popular demand. What better way to find your potential soul mate or soul friend but by doing something you love...gardening?!



HOOPHOUSE

October brought welcomed cooler temperatures to refresh the farm crews. Also that month, staff, apprentices and volunteers erected the farm's first hoophouse, a dramatic new addition to the farmscape. A Hoophouse is a passive solar half-hoop greenhouse structure used to **extend the season** to grow crops in the ground later into the winter, and start earlier in the spring. This structure offers new opportunities to **educate beginning growers**, as well as an expanded opportunity to meet our community's food needs by selling fresh produce at the winter farmers markets.



"The experience that SLU students had at EarthDance on Make A Difference Day was fantastic! In addition to the work we did, the EarthDance team gathered our group to discuss why urban farms and organic foods are important."

*This opportunity to reflect on our experiences, and to be guided by the expertise of the EarthDance farmers, **provided another level of meaning to our volunteer service.** We will definitely be returning to participate in other volunteer opportunities at EarthDance!"*

- Bryan W. Sokol, Associate Professor

*"Volunteering at EarthDance has given me an **appreciation for the amount of time, effort, and planning that goes in to getting delicious food from the farm to the table.** It is a privilege to work alongside staff, apprentices, and other volunteers to help in this process."*

- Jane Keating, Volunteer

FARM TOURS & CULTIVATE TOGETHER

Tours at EarthDance offer you the opportunity to meet your food up close, shake hands with a farmer, and step foot on the oldest organic farm in Missouri, the Mueller Farm. More people toured the farm this year than ever before. We also were delighted to welcome an astounding number of volunteers through our **Cultivate Together** program onto the farm, helping with everything from removing invasive bush honeysuckle to harvesting veggies to getting auction items for Farmers Formal!

Through focused outreach to local schools, organizations, and businesses, we were able to host groups from **74 different institutions**. A total of **over 908 people** participated in farm tours and volunteer opportunities. **This is a 117% increase over 2012.**



*"EarthDance Farms was a **unique and rewarding team bonding experience.** We had a group of individuals from all over the St. Louis area come together & meet one another for the first time at the farm. EarthDance was **thorough and extremely organized.** They were able to manage a large, loud, and lively group adding **elements of fun and education about farming.**"*

*We all felt comfortable and closer after we experienced giving back to the community by helping the farm and **aligning our company's core values** with this opportunity at EarthDance. Thank you for hosting us and leaving a huge impact on our clients!"*

- Sydney Gilbert, TOMS Shoes Advocate Program



2013: A YEAR OF TRANSFORMATION

Reinvigorating a Historic Farm

2013 brought transformative change for EarthDance at the Mueller Farm.

FARMHOUSE OFFICE

For the first four years of the organization's history, EarthDance's office space was limited to two rooms in the founder's home. **Early in 2013, our headquarters relocated to the farm!** The move is a positive change for staff, apprentices and visitors alike, providing space for a conference room and library in addition to offices.

The farmhouse office is not only convenient, but also inspiring: the farmers now have access to a kitchen and restrooms, and office-based staff members can step outside to harvest lunch and gain inspiration from the beautiful, productive landscape. The space is even able to accommodate **visiting educators**.



Original white house where Al Mueller was born © Cryrolfe Photography LLC



Former Al & Caroline Mueller residence transformed into EarthDance HQ



NEW TRACTOR

A **brand new Kubota tractor** helped to make the season EarthDance's most productive yet, a **59% gain in yield over 2012**. The new tractor was purchased with the generous help of donors and foundation support. This equipment allows EarthDance to educate apprentices about the efficiencies gained through mechanization. Farm Manager Josh Mueller's tractor-driving lessons were a favorite activity among the 2013 farm class members (and their children, pictured right!).



WALK IN COOLER

In March, EarthDance Board member **Jason Asher**, staff, and volunteer **Kevin Lamb** built a walk-in cooler in the farmhouse basement. The cooler keeps produce fresher, enabling EarthDance to **model best-practices in postharvest handling**. In previous years, donated ice from nearby Ferguson Middle School kept the harvest chilled; however, the walk-in cooler is more effective, and saves time previously spent collecting ice twice weekly. The "coolbot" was built with the support of the **Missouri Department of Agriculture**, so that EarthDance could offer a workshop for other area farmers about DIY walk-in cooler construction. The workshop, held in May of 2013, attracted 26 participants, eager to learn about this effective and inexpensive technology.



SEVEN GENERATIONS GARDEN

In 2013, EarthDance established the first phases of its new Seven Generations Garden, a space to **demonstrate home-scale food production techniques**, such as an herb spiral, straw-bale gardens, and companion planting, using permaculture principles.

The garden's name refers to the **Iroquois Indian belief that people should consider the effect their actions will have on their descendants seven generations into the future**. With this goal in mind, we hope to grow the garden into a site that inspires all to plant and design for the benefit of future generations. In addition, the garden will be a living classroom, where visitors of all ages can learn the many techniques of organic gardening.





EarthDance
Organic Farm School



EarthDance sustainably grows food, farmers and community, one small farm at a time, through hands-on education and delicious experiences. We envision productive local farms where creative endeavors can bloom alongside flourishing produce. We envision former strangers cultivating the land together and growing relationships in addition to sugar snap peas. We envision an Artist-in-Residence gaining in-

spiration from the beauty of a community farm and in return sharing their talents with farm-workers and farm-goers. We envision individuals from all walks of life coming to EarthDance to learn skills in organic farming and gardening, to taste a fresh-picked carrot, and to see where their food comes from. We are dedicated to seeing this vision through to reality.

CHERRY
TOMATOES
\$3.00
PINT

APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

2013 marked the fifth season that EarthDance's flagship program, the Organic Farming Apprenticeship, provided hands-on training in organic agriculture for aspiring growers.

During the course of the season, March through November, apprentices learned about **soil health, propagation, tending crops, organic pest and disease control, season extension, water conservation, CSA management, marketing, and more.** Apprentices learn from experienced farmers on the farm, in classroom sessions, and during visits to diverse local farms.

Second-year apprentices carry out a focus project of their choice related to sustainable agriculture. This year's Sophomore projects included **flower production, weed management, small fruit propagation, and greenhouse management.**



2013 CLASS OF FRESHMAN FARMIES:

Chris Allen - David Blum - Steven Brown - Christopher Cohen - Maria Deshields - Audrey Hollis
Jacey Joern - Victoria Jones - Sarah Kelly - Cheryl Lawler - Zach Loewenstein - Andrea Moore
Courtney Peetz - Beth Schwan - Reggae Singleton - Melissa Sizemore - Jake Smith - Geene Taylor
Don Taylor - Stephanie Theiss - Jesus Torres - Melissa Urspruch - Kelsey Vollmer - James Young

2013 CLASS OF SOPHOMORE FARMIES:

Ann Owens - Stephanie Morgan - Yianna Karathanos - Dana Maltagliati

BEGINNING FARMERS:

- 24 Apprentices

SECOND-YEAR:

- 4 Apprentices

SKILLS TAUGHT:

Organic Farming &
Operating a Small Farm

- 134 Varieties of Vegetables & Herbs Grown
- 24-Weeks of CSA Shares
- 26 Farmers Markets Experiences
- 11 Field Trips to other farms
- 28 Classes Attended

"After completing the EarthDance Apprenticeship, I know that growing food is the work I really want to do. And now, a small CSA farm in Washington State has hired me on for a full-time position for their next season. I am so excited for all that I'll get to learn next year and I am so grateful to Earth Dance for helping me realize how important this is to me!"

- COURTNEY PEETZ, 2013 APPRENTICE

"You have helped me to bridge the knowledge gap from gardening to farming and have fueled my passion for growing, one that I nurture by sharing with others...I have grown much closer to my personal goal of becoming an organically producing farmer."

- REGGAE SINGLETON, 2013 APPRENTICE

"The apprenticeship was my first real effort in agriculture. Never before had I quite the understanding of where my food comes from and the hard-work and magic that it takes to nurture it."

- JAKE SMITH, 2013 APPRENTICE



CARLA FLETCHER
Ferguson Eco Team

"Our community benefits from EarthDance, partly because it interacts so well with the farmers market. It's also terrific because it's brought a lot of positive information about our town to the larger community. It's nice to have a place in Ferguson that we can be so extremely proud of."

Al and Caroline Mueller cultivated community in addition to their crops:

they welcomed many Ferguson teens to the farm for summer jobs, and their customers shopped for tomatoes and sweet corn right at the farmstand. Al bid his customers good-bye with a sign that thanked each of them for being "A Connoisseur of Fine Foods." EarthDance is so proud to honor the Muellers' legacy by telling their story, welcoming farm visitors, and connecting new farmers to the land.

EarthDance staff members attend many community events each year in order to share our mission (and veggies!) widely. In 2013, just a few of the places this outreach took place included the **St. Louis Earth Day Festival, Career Day at Maplewood Richmond Heights Elementary, and a taste-test of our produce by Ferguson-Florissant School District's third graders.**

In addition this year, EarthDance welcomed a wide variety of visitors to the farm for special events, including a contingent of Latin-American exchange students studying agricultural policy in the US; nearby **Central Elementary School's** entire first grade; and managers from Chipotle Mexican Grills from across the state, to name just a few.

Connections like these enable EarthDance to educate 5,000+ people each year about the need for agriculture that nourishes our bodies, creates jobs, and heals the planet. Together, we are growing a community that can transform our food system for the good of all.



WAYNE PRICHARD
Chipotle Mexican Grill

"EarthDance offers a unique opportunity by growing food organically in an urban environment. It gives a different perspective for people to explore. Now you have a group that loves doing this kind of work, loves investing their time and you're growing not only a farm, but a stronger, healthier community."



STEVE LAWLER
St. Stephen's Church

"EarthDance is leading the way in this community, in this area to show people how to make great food for themselves and those they love, and that's why it's a good thing to have around."

IMPACT

57

THE **AVERAGE AGE** OF A **FARMER**
(AND **RAPIDLY RISING**)

EarthDance seeks to address this by educating the next generation of farmers.

116

ORGANIC FARMING
APPRENTICES GRADUATED

The numbers of graduates since the inception of EarthDance in 2008.

505

TOTAL YOUTH VISITING
THE FARM IN 2013
THROUGH FIELD TRIPS,
VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES,
EDUCATIONAL PARTY,
& COMMUNITY OUTREACH

We surpassed our goal of educating 300 youth by 224% over the previous year.

Growth in 2013:

- **57** CSA members
- **750+** pounds of produce donated to **Operation Food Search**, for use in cooking classes and food pantries.
- **5,000+** people impacted through community outreach & Farmers Markets
- **Doubled** the number of acres farmed
- EarthDance served as an **incubator farm** to **3 farms**
- **908** individuals toured the farm
- **3,741** hours of service by **504** volunteers



PARTNERS

Partnerships with area organizations enable us to save time and money and help provide vital programs to the community.

The Open Space Council is a longtime supporter of EarthDance and is helping to ensure the historic **Mueller Farm** will remain agricultural land into perpetuity. **St. Stephen's Episcopal Church** and **North County Tech High School** are generous with their space so that we can host enrichment classes and workshops to educate the public.

Through our partnerships with **Adventure Tree**, tree climbing programs are offered on the farm. We donated over 750 lbs. of produce to **Operation Food Search**, so that their cooking classes were using our fresh, in-season produce. **St. Louis Composting** provided us with assistance via a **forestry mower operator** who cleared out a lot of invasive species that had overgrown on the property, and an excavator that brought the **old white house** on the property safely to the ground.

Adventure Tree



Ferguson Eco-Team



*"As a nonprofit providing free culinary-based nutrition classes to low-income individuals in the greater St. Louis area, **Cooking Matters at Operation Food Search** spends a lot of money purchasing fresh produce for our classes. The partnership with EarthDance to provide **weekly donations of extra produce** to our program has been amazing. Not only allowing us to reduce our program overhead, but also **expose our participants varieties of crops that they have often not experience**, and we would not normally be able to purchase."*

- Mariella Funk, Operation Food Search

"St. Louis Composting was pleased to assist with EarthDance's property transformation this past year. Molly and her team are doing great things and we are truly excited for what the future holds for EarthDance."

- Patrick Geraty, St. Louis Composting

2013



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