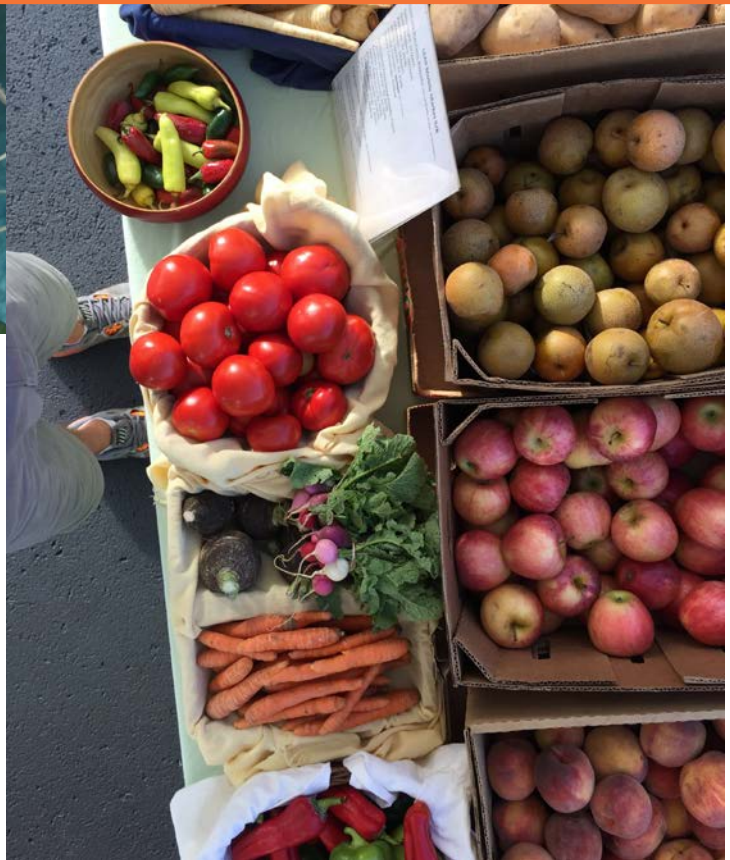




# LEAP Annual Report | 2015



LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGRICULTURE  
PROJECT, INC (LEAP)

[www.leapforlocalfood.org](http://www.leapforlocalfood.org)

## Message from Maureen McNamara Best

LEAP was in planning mode in 2014 and entered launch mode in 2015. In 2015, LEAP launched the LEAP Mobile Market, worked with Healthy Roanoke Valley to pilot the Fresh Foods Rx program, and broke ground on The Kitchen. In addition, thanks to Wholesome Wave's FINI grant, LEAP expanded our Market Program to provide support and incentive funding for other markets in the region.

LEAP and LEAP programs exist because of you. We have learned time and time again that we are stronger as a community than a collection of individual organizations or people. As I reflect on the year in review, I want to send my deepest and most heartfelt thanks to all of our partners, supporters, funders, farmers, market vendors, market shoppers and local food enthusiasts. Thanks for the love, the financial assistance, and the positive energy you send our way.

Looking forward, LEAP continues to grow. We have begun to take a more active role with local food concerns at regional and the state levels. We are fortunate to be able to work with such committed partners and to have a voice in the important conversations about local food, sustainable agriculture, health, and food access.

I cannot begin to express my gratitude for all LEAP staff, volunteers, vendors and Board Members. I became a first time mother in April 2015 and I was not able to be as involved with all the day-to-day activities. But LEAP kept trucking. A special thanks to Brittany DeKnight, our AmeriCorps VISTA, whose positive and can-do attitude kept everything going.



Thanks for reading,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maureen M. Best". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maureen McNamara Best  
LEAP Executive Director

## LEAP's Mission



TAP Head Start child checking out tomato starts at the West End Community Market

LEAP's mission is to nurture healthy communities and resilient local food systems. We work closely with our community partners, farmers, and the broader community to meet this mission. LEAP believes that by re-localizing our food system, we are creating more environmentally, economically, and culturally sustainable communities. LEAP works to support all aspects of local food systems in order to create healthy communities that can respond and adapt to meet community needs. LEAP programs include LEAP Community Markets (West End and Grandin Village), LEAP Mobile Market, SNAP Double Value Program and The Kitchen.

At the LEAP Community Markets and on the Mobile Market, local means that every product originates within 100 miles of the market. We have two exceptions for items that can't be sourced within 100 miles: coffee (roasted locally) and seafood from the coast of Virginia and North Carolina, sold by a local vendor.

## LEAP Community Markets

LEAP operates two community markets in Roanoke. The West End Community Market is open year-round (Tuesday 3pm-6pm) and the Grandin Village Community Market is open seasonally from late April through October (Saturday 8am-noon). Markets (just like farms) are open in rain, sun, and snow. LEAP markets focus on so many aspects of health. Individuals can support their physical health by shopping for fresh foods and learning new ways to prepare foods. A vibrant market full of thriving small businesses improves the health of our local economy. In 2015, LEAP Market vendors did over \$250,000 in sales. Many of our market shoppers also visit other nearby businesses--keeping more dollars local. Between The Grandin and West End Community Markets, LEAP directly supports over 20 farmers and food producers and



Markets happen rain or shine. Awesome and committed shoppers at one of the many rainy Grandin Village Community Markets this season.

supports over 80 other food producers through aggregators who sell at our markets. The markets also improve the health of our community by fostering a gathering place for neighbors to meet, share recipes, and catch up with friends.

The [West End Community Market](#) fosters a stronger community every week. LEAP continues to deepen our relationship with the West End Center for Youth and Freedom First Credit Union. We all work to serve the West End community and provide much needed services. The West End Community Market is the only source of fresh, local foods in the neighborhood. The West End Community Market is made up of vendors who are committed to quality products and equal and affordable access to good food. LEAP works hard to bring additional benefit to the market with cooking demonstrations, recipe cards, and space for community organizations. If you haven't seen our permanent home (with enclosures and heaters for the



Ferguson Farm has been growing greens in Franklin County for generations. Chris Peckman with Ferguson has been a die-hard year-round vendor at West End Community



winter months) behind Freedom First (1210 Patterson Ave), you must see for yourself the exciting and diverse market we're growing!

In 2015, [the Grandin Village Community Market](#) had fantastic new vendors. [Thornfield Farm](#) added to the variety of beautiful produce available with certified organic vegetables, [Great Day Gardens](#) provided highly sought-after duck eggs to complement their naturally leavened sourdough breads and produce, and [Tha Best Kombucha](#) created unique, oak-aged kombucha on tap using fruits and vegetables from local farms for flavor. The Grandin Market (on raised terrace parking lot behind the CoLab) thrives thanks to the high quality, hardworking vendors who consistently produce delicious foods and develop personal relationships with customers.

## SNAP Double Value Program

In order to help make healthy food more affordable, LEAP accepts and doubles SNAP-EBT benefits (food stamps) at all our markets. LEAP also works with the Virginia Cooperative Extension Family Nutrition Program to provide low-cost and simple cooking demonstrations at our markets that feature in-season ingredients! With up to \$30 doubled per market, the SNAP Double Value Program makes a huge difference in the grocery budgets of our participants.



Meredith Ledlie Johnson of VA Cooperative Extension Family Nutrition Service cooks up delicious, healthy, low cost recipes at the West End every month.

As a sub-grantee of Wholesome Wave for the Federal Food Insecurity Nutritional Incentive (FINI) program, LEAP was able to help other markets in the region (Catawba Valley Farmers Market, Lick Run Urban Farm, Salem Farmers Market) accept and double SNAP benefits. These matching funds are specifically designated to purchase fruits and vegetables-- helping families get even more fresh produce. One SNAP family noted that the SNAP

Double Value Program helped expose their children to new foods like fresh blueberries, purple potatoes, and snap peas, while another explained that the program "makes it easier to maintain healthy eating habits" for their family.

## LEAP Mobile Market

LEAP launched the Mobile Market in June 2015 (think ice cream truck but stocked with fresh and local produce!). The Mobile Market travelled to five neighborhoods per week (June-October) in NW and SE Roanoke where residents do not have easy access to full service grocery stores. In 2015, LEAP bought produce from local farmers (within 100 miles of Roanoke) and sold the fresh and affordably priced produce via the LEAP Mobile Market to community members in their own neighborhood. About a third of the produce sold was grown by a farm in NW Roanoke, [Lick Run Urban Farm](#)- pretty cool! One of the Mobile Market stops was at Carilion Clinic Family

Practice SE where LEAP participated in the pilot Fresh Foods Prescription Program, managed by [Healthy Roanoke Valley](#). This program provided participants with a "prescription" for fresh produce which they redeemed from the Mobile Market.

The Fresh Foods Rx program was a great success and hope to expand in 2016. The LEAP Mobile Market also worked



Brittany and Sam help Fresh Foods Rx participants shop for produce at the Carilion Clinic SE Mobile Market stop. Participants improved their health and ate better food, in part because of the relationships they built with each other, LEAP staff, and service providers.

closely with the [Healthy Start Collaborative](#) which brings together various organizations to better serve the health and nutrition needs of children and families in our community. The Healthy Start Collaborative, thanks to funding from the [United Way of the Roanoke Valley](#), provides incentives for TAP Head Start families to purchase fresh produce. Incentive programs like this and LEAP's SNAP Double Value program (offered on the Mobile Market) help make fresh produce more affordable and improve the health of individuals and families in our community. During our first year of operation, the LEAP Mobile Market sold over \$10,000 in fruits, vegetables, and eggs.

The LEAP Mobile Market was well received around Roanoke. Children were excited to taste new foods, and Head Start families were happy to be able to purchase healthy snacks for their families like apples and carrots. Customers lit up when they bit into a Virginia peach at the peak of freshness, a moment that is sometimes difficult to find when access to a grocery store is limited.

## The Kitchen

LEAP has been working very hard over the past three years to get The Kitchen off the ground. A key partner and the



Square One Contractors putting up the plumbing wall in The Kitchen. The Kitchen will open April 26, 2016!

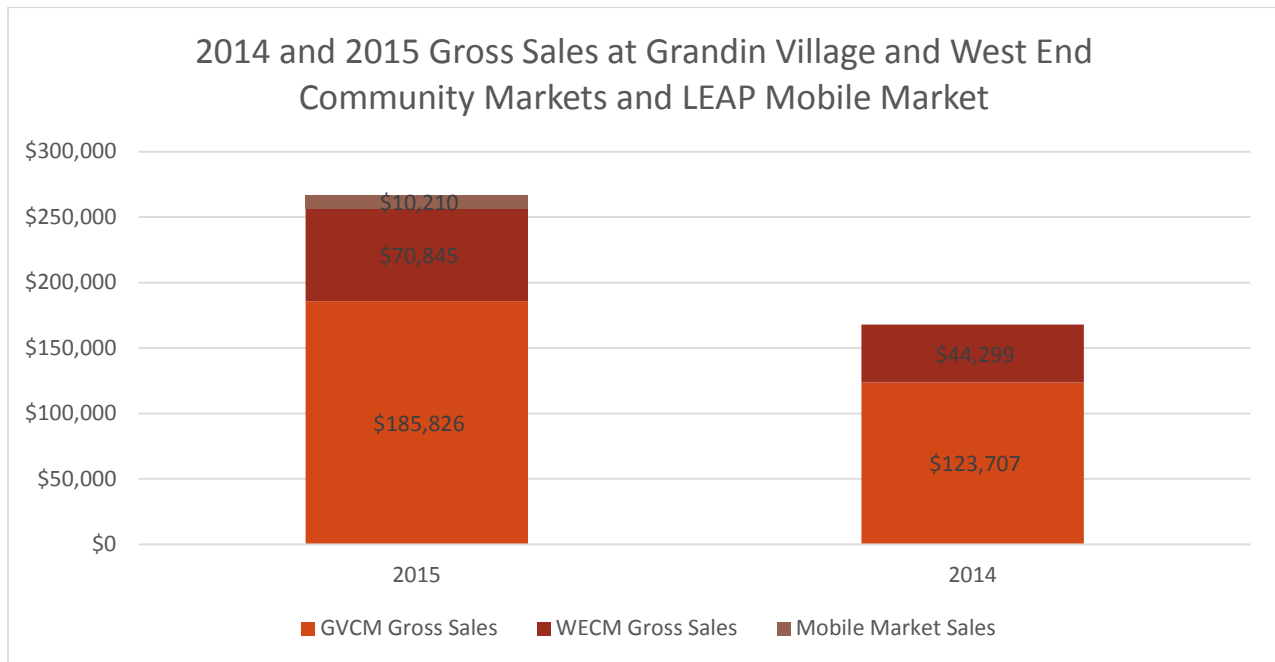
property owner, the West End Center for Youth, has been nothing but supportive of our efforts in the West End. In 2015, we received the final funding we needed to build The Kitchen thanks to a grant from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services with matching funding from the City of Roanoke Economic Development Authority. We broke ground in December 2015 and The Kitchen will open in April 2016.

The Kitchen is an 800 square foot shared commercial kitchen in the West End neighborhood that will help food entrepreneurs start up or expand their food-based businesses. In addition to being a food business incubator, The Kitchen will provide community groups and individuals with a space for food and nutrition educational programs.

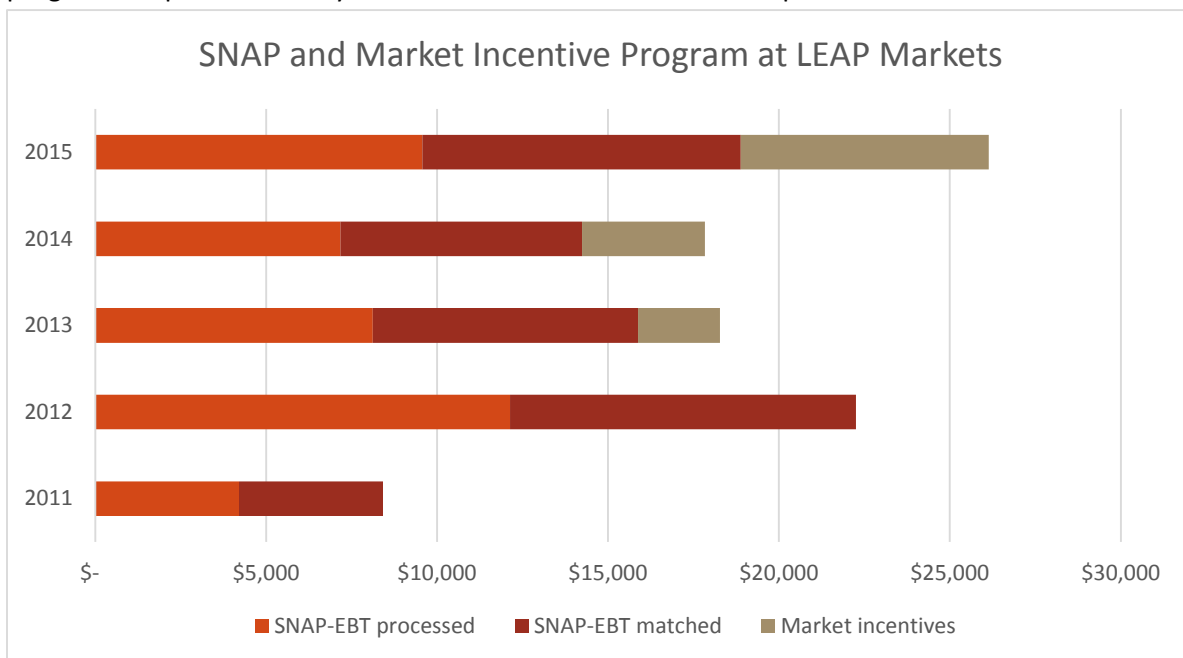
LEAP received additional funding for the Kitchen from the Roanoke Women's Foundation (awarded in 2014), Carilion Clinic Community Grant program, Golden Helping Hands Foundation, USDA Local Food Promotion Program, and Freedom First Credit Union Community Grant Program.

## Program Impacts

**LEAP Community Market Program.** LEAP Markets continue to build community and support local food. In 2015, our data shows that vendor sales increased.



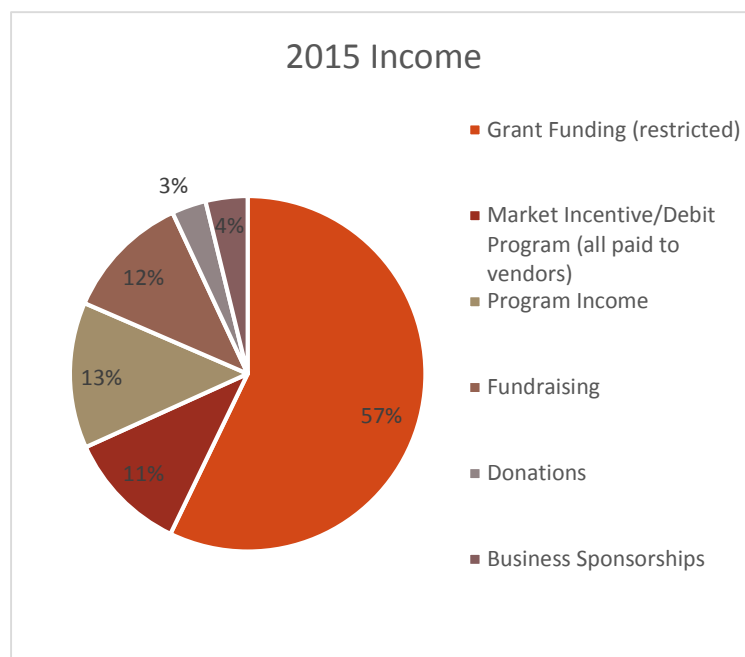
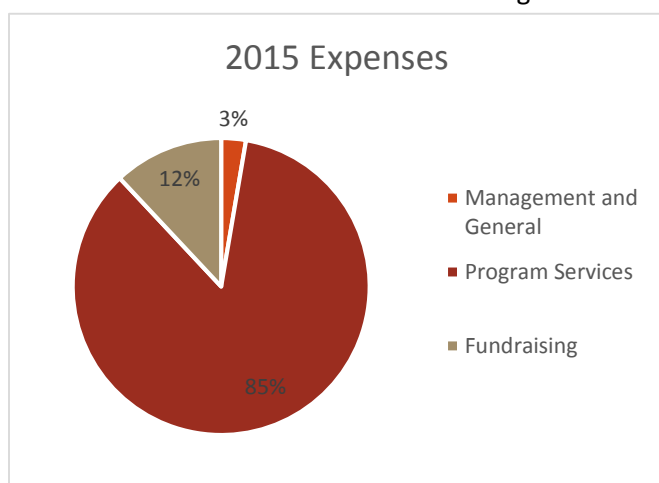
**SNAP Double Value Program.** The SNAP Double Value Program and other market incentives for low-income customers continue to grow. Since 2011, LEAP has matched SNAP-EBT benefits at the markets. In addition to the SNAP Double Value Program, as part of Healthy Start, LEAP runs an incentive program for TAP Head Start families. These incentive programs help make healthy and local food more affordable and provide market vendors with additional sales/income.



## Resources and Financial Management

As you can see, 2015 was a big year for LEAP. We launched new programs, expanded our incentives, and hired a full time Market Coordinator. LEAP also hosted our first big event with Big Lick Entertainment, the Big Lick Cocktail Classic. Unfortunately the February 2015 event happened the same weekend as a major snowstorm, which explains the high fundraising expenses.

In the coming year, we will continue to focus on grant funding to support programs; however, we anticipate that total grant income will be lower in 2016 (high level of construction funding in 2014 and 2015). A major focus in 2016 will be to increase fundraising and



unrestricted funds that will allow LEAP more flexibility to meet community needs and provide funding for sustainable staff salaries.

| 2015 Grant Awards   | Restricted use of grant funds   | Amount                     |
|---|---|----------------------------|
| FINI (Federal grant), subgrantee of Wholesome Wave                          | Fruit and Vegetable incentive funds (SNAP matching) for LEAP and Partner Markets (Catawba Valley Farmers Market, Lick Run Urban Farm and Market, City of Salem Market). Funds to be used SNAP Double incentives, SNAP Double marketing and some staffing. | \$13,812                   |
| United Way of Roanoke Valley (Healthy Start Collaborative)                  | Collective impact based collaboration with other organizations in Roanoke to provide a healthy start to families and individuals. LEAP receives funding for LEAP Mobile Market, Head Start incentive programs and outreach to improve food access.        | \$36,850                   |
| Fridays at Five   | General funds to support LEAP. LEAP provided volunteers for Fridays at Five events  | \$3,000                    |
| Carilion Clinic Community Grant Program (Spring cycle)                      | To support Community Markets and SNAP Double Program at LEAP Markets  | \$10,000                   |
| USDA Agricultural Market Service Local Food Promotion Program               | For Kitchen staffing, operating costs (rent/utilities) and equipment/supplies (outdoor walk-in, keycode entry system, disposable and cleaning supplies).  | \$100,000 (over two years) |
| Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer services AFID Grant Program | City of Roanoke Economic Development Authority matching \$20K and VDACS \$20K. For Kitchen construction.  | \$40,000                   |

|  |   |          |
|--|---|----------|
| CSX Conservation Fund                                | To purchase outdoor cooler for hub/mobile market    | \$10,000 |
| Freedom First Credit Union Community Grant Program   | To pilot Food Start Up Program in The Kitchen.      | \$2,600  |
| Carilion Clinic Community Grant Program (Fall cycle) | To purchase equipment for The Kitchen               | \$20,000 |
| Sam and Marion Golden Helping Hands Foundation       | To support The Kitchen (construction and equipment) | \$10,000 |

## LEAP as an Organization

LEAP is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization. We have a small but very dedicated staff: Tee Reynolds (Market Manager), Brittany DeKnight (AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer, completed service in August 2015), Sam Lev (Market Coordinator, started in March 2015), and Maureen McNamara Best (Executive Director). All pictured to the right, photograph courtesy of The Roanoke Times.

As a non-profit, LEAP is governed by a Board of Directors made of community members who volunteer their time and talents to support local food. The current Board of Directors includes: Brent Cochran (Board President, pictured), Susan Clark (Board Vice President), Dave Prosser (Board Treasurer), Pat Young (Board Secretary), Betty Bailey, Jim Crawford, Diane Elliot and Connie Kenny. For more information about LEAP's Board and staff, visit <http://leapforlocalfood.org/about-leap/leap-staff-and-board-members/>.



## LEAPing Forward

2016 will be another big year for LEAP and we can't wait to get our new programs off the ground.

**Finance:** We expect to increase individual donations and business sponsorships. To diversify our funding stream and to increase awareness of LEAP and local food, we are focusing on outreach and marketing.

**Programs:** We will open The Kitchen in April 2016. We will expand the LEAP Mobile Market, the Fresh Foods Rx Program, and our incentive programs (pilot a Senior Incentive Program with the Mobile Market). We will also work with other markets in our region and the state to improve access to affordable, local, and fresh food.

## Your Donation is More Important than Ever Before

As LEAP builds new programs and grows our organization, we need your support. Your gifts, no matter the amount, are what make LEAP possible. We are a very lean organization, but like any non-profit or business we have to have some program and overhead costs that aren't covered by grants. We need your support to help make up the difference. All donations are tax-deductible. You can donate online at <http://leapforlocalfood.org/donate/>.



## LEAP Community Partners and Sponsors (provided financial or in-kind support in 2015)

|  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| Accounting Techniques                          | PCD Engineering              |
| Big Lick Entertainment                         | Project Real Talk            |
| Carilion Clinic                                | Roanoke Natural Foods Co-op  |
| City of Roanoke Economic Development Authority | Roanoke Spanish              |
| CoLab  | Sir Speedy                   |
| Glenn, Feldman, Darby and Goodlatte            | United Way of Roanoke Valley |
| Good Food Good People                          | Valley Bank (now BNC Bank)   |
| Goodwill Industries of the Valleys             | Virginia Truck Center        |
| Grandin Village Business Association           | West End Center for Youth    |
| Foundation for Roanoke Valley                  | Wholesome Wave               |
| Freedom First Credit Union                     | William Alexander            |
| Local Roots Restaurant                         |                              |

## LEAP Individual Donors and Volunteers

A big thank you to all the people who have donated their time, talent, and resources to support LEAP and improve food access, individual and community health, and the economic viability of local food businesses.