

## Common Ground Board of Directors

### WENDY BATTLES

Board Co-Chair, Yale University,  
Health and Nutrition Consultant

### ROBERT PARKER

Board Co-Chair, Retired School Principal  
& Communications Executive

### MICHAEL DOOLITTLE

Photographer/Photojournalist  
(Ended term as Vice-Chair, October, 2016)

### MONIQUE FRASIER

Faculty Representative,  
Common Ground High School

### JANE LEE

Treasurer, All Our Kin

### CLAUDIA MERSON

Secretary, School Committee Chair,  
Yale Office of New Haven & State Affairs

### W. FRANK MITCHELL

Cultural Historian  
(Ended term as Chair, October, 2016)

### JOHN JESSEN

New Haven Free Public Library

### BETH KLINGER

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CT Center for School Change

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Parent Representative, Inner City News

### MELISSA SPEAR

Executive Director, Common Ground



**COMMON GROUND**

HIGH SCHOOL, URBAN FARM, AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

## WE'RE GRATEFUL

*for your connection to Common Ground*



## What's Next?

**C**onsider protecting Common Ground by planting a seed in your will. A bequest to Common Ground could be the most powerful investment you ever make. For more information, please contact Kimball Cartwright at 203-389-4333, ext. 1210; or, at [kcartwright@commongroundct.org](mailto:kcartwright@commongroundct.org).



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358 Springside Ave • New Haven CT 06515  
[www.commongroundct.org](http://www.commongroundct.org)

*Gratitude Report 2017*  
*Growing Connections, Together*

Thank you for being part of our community

2016-2017

*Dear Friend,*

People come to Common Ground for many reasons. Our community includes families who bring their children to be immersed in outdoor adventure and environmental learning as part of our NatureYear program. Other families connect through Common Ground High School. Some people know us through farm programs, including our Farm Stand, the Mobile Market, and the New and Beginning Farmer Training programs we host. Children from New Haven and other surrounding school districts experience us through Field Trips, after school programs, and our Schoolyards program. A community of Homeschoolers use our campus for lessons in biology, ecology and the workings of the natural world. Over 600 families know us through our ecology summer camp program. And there are many people who bring their families to Open Farm Day to visit with our animals, relax in a natural setting, and use us as the jumping off point for exploring West Rock State Park. How did you connect?

Because people often come to Common Ground to experience a specific program, many may not realize all the ways we create opportunities for environmental learning and leadership, how all of these opportunities and experiences are inter-connected, and how all these interconnections help to create a strong, whole, mission driven community. Your gratitude report is about these connections – but most importantly it is about our connection to you. Your connection is of primary importance, and we want to thank you for choosing to connect with Common Ground.

*With Gratitude,  
Melissa, Bob and Wendy*

Top photo clockwise from left: Melissa Spear, Executive Director; Bob Parker, Board Co-chair; Wendy Battles, Board Co-chair

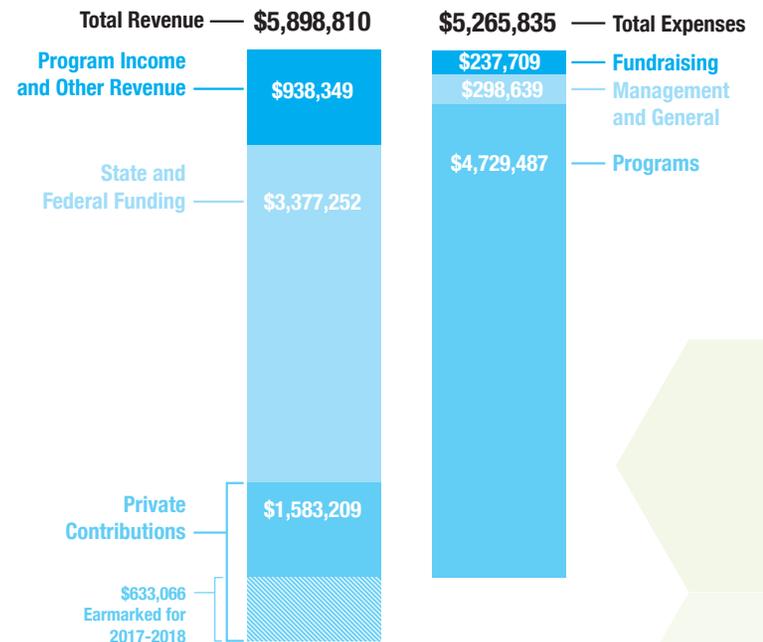
Front page photo: Jaelyn Roberts displays her first ever ceramic in the new art classroom your gift helped build.

## These are the kinds of connections you're making possible:

- NatureYear kids learn about bees up close.
- Seniors create connections in New Haven addressing a social justice challenge.
- Students and alumni are hired to work in our summer camps and after school programs.
- High school students' families participate in a Farm Share Program, paying on a sliding scale.



## Common Ground Financial Report July 2016 - June 2017



# YOU HAVE *Made Connections*



Dayanara Chacón, farthest left, demonstrates with friends that trying new foods is fun.

## You Have Planted Seeds...

Your support went to work right away providing academic supports to Common Ground students facing barriers to success. Last year, the average 9th grader entered high school reading at a 6.8 grade level.

**Yet your support helped these amazing, determined young people grow 3.5 times as much as their 9th grade peers nationally – putting them in the 99th percentile for reading growth. In math, they grew twice as much as their peers nationally.**

Raising test scores is one thing. Your support also helped Common Ground students become their unique, powerful selves.

This fall, our 9th graders dove into a 10-week exploration called Feeding Ourselves, bringing together English, Social Studies, Science, and Math classes. They conducted soil tests, researched the history of crops, explored

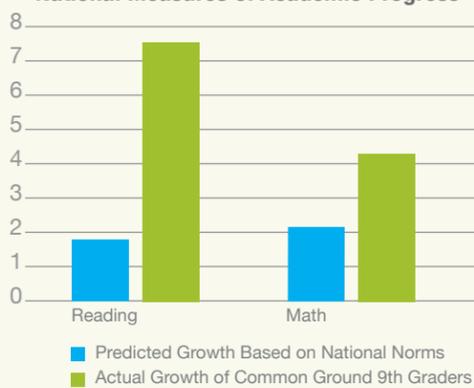
how mathematical ratios influence flavors, gathered family food stories. And in November, they shared their learning through a family food night and publications that were part cookbook and part food magazine.

Dayanara is one of the many 9th graders who got a taste of Common Ground's farm, and kept coming back for more. She volunteered on the farm each Wednesday this fall. She dove into Animal Ventures, learning about and taking on responsibility for our farm animals. When her French class went out to the farm, she

stepped up to lead older students. Your support eased the way for Dayanara to explore her own leadership.

**Between 9th grade and senior year, the percentage of our students who say their experiences at Common Ground helped them grow into leaders and agents of change, doubles.**

9th Grade Growth: National Measures of Academic Progress



Jalyne Johnson, Common Ground Class of 2017

## You Have Grown Leaders...

First semester of 9th grade started bittersweet; Jalyne walked to the front of her Environmental Science class to give her final presentation, and anxiety caused tears to pour out.

Yet Jalyne's presentation achieved some fame at Common Ground, because despite those tears, her presentation and research earned her an A+ in the class. Meeting this prolific public speaker when she graduated last June, you'd see her as someone with nerves of steel. She spoke in front of many classes, fundraiser banquets, school assemblies, and community events, and defended a senior portfolio of learning and leadership in front of a panel of Common Ground staff.

Jalyne's senior project involved crafting a cookbook featuring healthy Soul Food. Jalyne emphasized the importance of taste, culture, and reducing unhealthy ingredients that can lead to chronic health problems. After seeing a presentation at the Yale Sustainable Food Project on "Soul Food," she told the Director about discomfort she felt watching a white person giving a lecture about food from her culture. She was invited back to give a lecture of her own, sharing her own research, and her recipes, at the Yale Farm.

You supported Jalyne's evolution as a leader – from her involvement with the Green Jobs Corps, to a water boot camp at the Regional Water Authority, to after school programs that sparked her curiosity and excitement for learning – helping us help Jalyne find her unique strengths and build them up.

**Now, Jalyne is a student at University of Connecticut. In fact, 100% of Jalyne's graduating class was accepted to college.**



Jalyne Johnson (front seated) celebrates with friends at graduation.

## You Have Cultivated Community ...



NatureYear, begun in 2016, brings young people outdoors for one whole day a week, for a whole school year. Many NatureYear kids developed a passion for beekeeping. Eugenio Garcia, a high school senior, stepped in with a creative idea. He worked alongside NatureYear kids to build pollinator gardens for our farm's bees. Eugenio's skills at teaching and leading were cultivated through another connection you make possible, Green Jobs Corps, providing many students with their first ever paid work.

**Last year, 80 students completed 142 green jobs. Nearly half of our graduating seniors identified Green Jobs Corps as one of their two most significant leadership experiences.**

Since sophomore year, Eugenio built school gardens across New Haven as part of Common Ground's Schoolyard Resource Center. In 2016-2017 you helped Common Ground tailor partnerships with 19 New Haven Public Schools to support school gardens and schoolyard habitats as educational laboratories. On top of that:

- Common Ground staff provided direct professional development and support to 126 public school teachers on school gardens and schoolyard habitats as classrooms.
- Those 126 New Haven teachers engaged more than 1,650 public school students in their gardens and schoolyard habitats.

**Your support made all these community connections possible. Thank you!**

Success! Eugenio Garcia celebrates garden bed completion with three NatureYear students.