



Sunday Forums—April 2026

Caring for Creation: From the Grassroots

**From Last Resort Supplier to Providing a Foothold
April 12 on Fairness: Foodlink Challenges Inequity**
Presenter: Brandy Madera, Foodlink



Once distributors of surpluses, food banks across the U.S. have become community "first responders." When individuals and families lack consistent access to nutritious food, the effects extend far beyond hunger, influencing educational outcomes, work-force participation, and overall community well-being. This presentation will explore how food insecurity is intertwined with other disparities because food is foundational to building communities that are healthier, stronger, and more resilient.

**Community-Based Gardens and Farms:
April 19 Creating Local Capacity**
Presenter: Erin Turpin, RIT Program Specialist



From building community gardens at St. John's and St. Mark's Episcopal Church to introducing RIT students to Foodlink's Community Farm, Program Specialist Erin Turpin has been putting into practice her major in Sustainability and Sociology. Erin believes in nature-based learning and helping organizations understand and advance environmental justice and will share her knowledge with us.

**Repurposing Payphones for Community Benefit:
April 26 Updating Local Resources**
Presenter: Eric Kunsman, RIT Professor



Come learn about The Good Phone Project, and meet its founder, RIT Professor Eric Kunsman. What started as his photography series depicting old payphones, has evolved into a meaningful public-service effort to repurpose old payphones into free phones accessible for all. For communities in need, the Good Phones are intended to serve as a lifeline for individuals, and to ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to connect with one another and social services.

Sundays, 9:45AM—The Shaw Room



Connecting with the Land, Building Community

Sunday Forum | April 19, 2026

Land acknowledgement

We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the “Great Hill People” and “Keepers of the Western Door” of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people on whose ancestral lands we currently reside in Rochester, New York.

To learn more about ancestral lands upon which we live and work, please visit Native-Land.ca

Growing a more Just, Verdant, and Peaceful world



Mission statement, MacArthur Foundation

Who am I?

personally

- Erin “E” Turpin (she/her/ella)
- NYC native, military brat
- urban gardener, beekeeper, artist, activist, environmentalist

professionally

- SJF Class of 2020
- B.A. Sustainability and Sociology
- Previously worked at SMSJ Episcopal Church
- Community Tree Ambassador
- Project Manager, RIT Sustainability



ST. MARKS & ST. JOHN'S

SMSJ is a mission-driven spiritual home in the Beechwood community seeking to:

- ❖ Address **food insecurity, community health** and underlying **causes of poverty**
- ❖ Build **strong partnerships** with community organizations, higher-ed institutions, faith-based groups, and the City of Rochester
- ❖ Provide **spiritual healing** and **inspiration** through worship
- ❖ Promote **healthy, beautiful, and green** spaces in the neighborhood



EMMA/Beechwood



% of families with single female head of household



% of residents living below the poverty line



1 in 5

Neighborhood households do not have access to a vehicle

59%



Of households are housing-cost burdened

Median household incomes

- Beechwood: \$28,842
- EMMA: \$22,206



Data from 2020 Comprehensive Neighborhood Plan, Connected Communities

MISSION PROGRAMS overview

E.D.E.N. Gardens

- 7 Urban Gardens in Beechwood
- Completely volunteer managed
- Produce is given to neighbors in an effort to reduce food insecurity



Food Shelf

- Foodlink partner agency
- Distribution of nutritionally-valued foods once a week
- Food delivery was born out of a need for access to food during COVID-19 pandemic (no longer active)

Farm Stand

- Fresh produce is sold at low prices at Saturday Farm Stand (July-September)



SOOP Interns

- 6 week teen-employment program
- EDEN Gardens are used as a learning tool for job and life skills
- Leadership, gardening, food justice, healthy habits, etc.

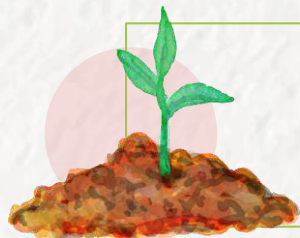
Freedom Scholars Learning Center

- "Seed Sowers and Storytellers"
- Youth program focused on Children K-6th Grade
- Focused on "green" curriculum, using the neighborhood and gardens as classrooms



EDEN Gardens

Every Day Eating Naturally - Rochester, NY



**Began in 2013 to grow produce in
a neighborhood facing food
insecurity**



**Garden captains manage their own
gardens and volunteers throughout
the harvest season**



**Harvested and distributed:
~4,500 lbs in 2020,
~32,000lbs since 2014 !**



EDEN GARDENS contd.

The gardens have expanded past their original purpose to grow produce in a neighborhood facing food apartheid: they have become green oases for....

Education



Job Training



SOOP Interns 2019
and 2021

Community Gathering/Recreation



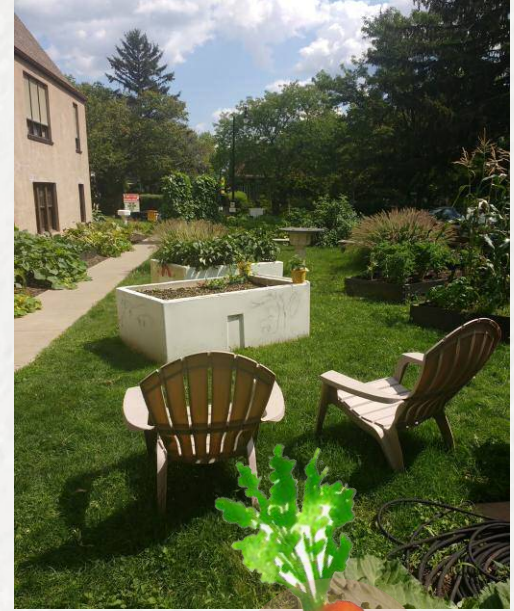
Composting



Gardens



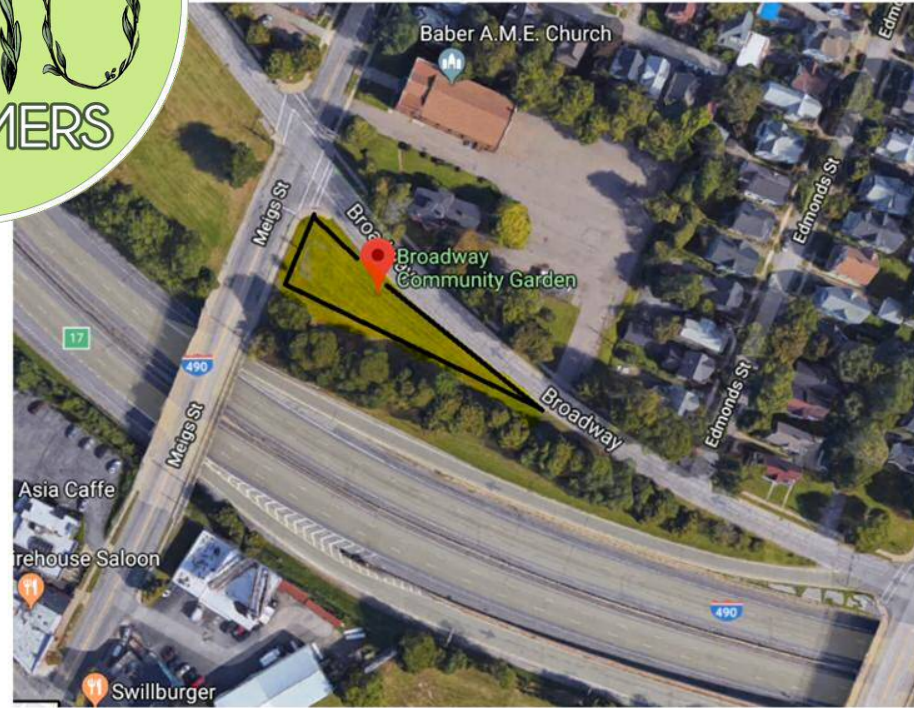
Gardens



ST. MARKS & ST. JOHN'S

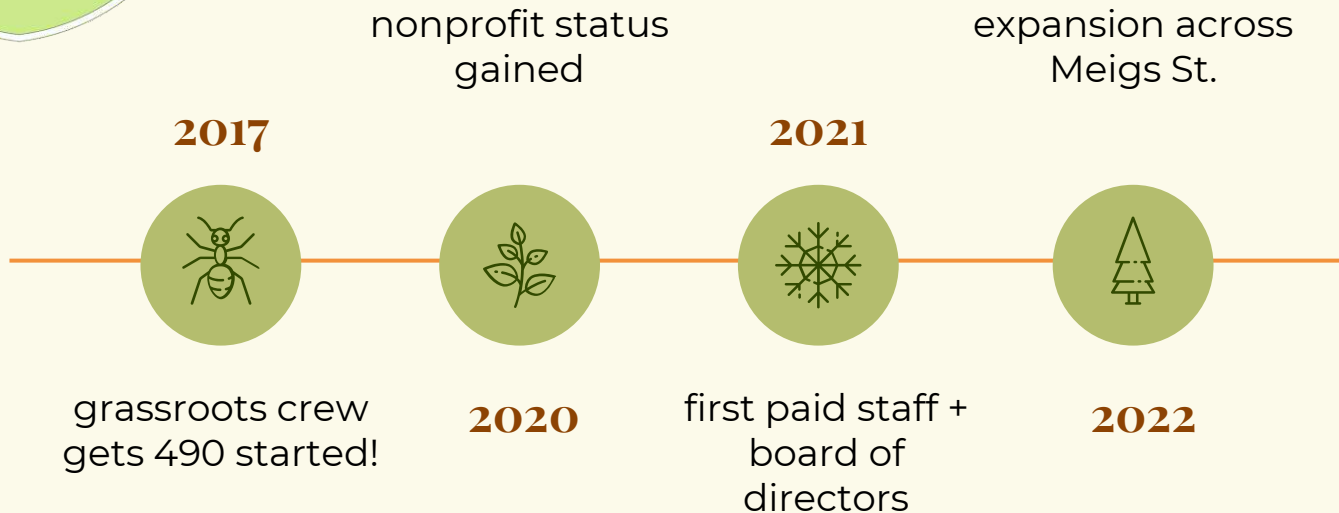
capacity building opportunity
turned into a life-changing
experience







history of 490 Farmers



plot member benefits

- sliding scale payment
- shared toolshed
- water catchment system
- compost and soil
- learning from peer gardeners
- bartering produce





local food consumption

sustainability through urban ag



upcycling materials



rainwater catchment



composting



beekeeping



building
community
through
our
connection
to land



Rochester Ecology Partners

REP is a non-profit that serves members of the Greater Rochester community who need opportunities to **learn about nature** and **connect with their community**. Our nature based programs lead to improved **individual, community, and environmental health**.

- ❖ Nature-based Education
- ❖ Community Cultivation
- ❖ Environmental Health

rocecology.org



What does it mean to have a right to nature?



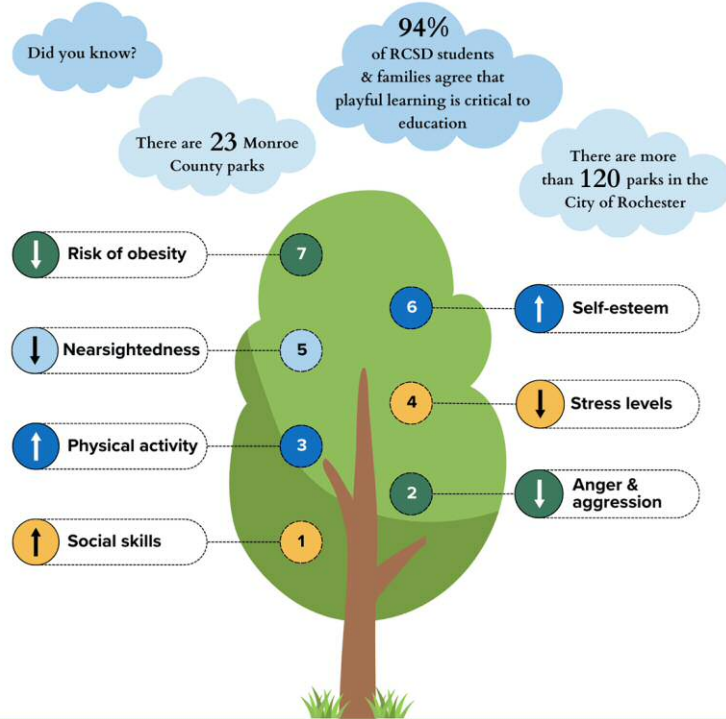
In northwest Rochester, a farm grows and children learn

WROC News | By Jeremy Shaulie
Published August 7, 2025 at 2:20 PM EST

▶ LISTEN • 1:48



BEING IN NATURE MAKES KIDS HEALTHIER



SOURCES

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5. Christian et al. (2015). The influence of the neighborhood physical environment on early child health and development: A review and call for research. *Health Place*, 33, 25-36.
6. Walk et al. (2011). Childhood obesity and proximity to urban parks and recreational resources: A longitudinal cohort study. *Health Place*, 17(1), 207-214.

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10. Roe & Aspinall (2011). The restorative outcomes of forest school and conventional school in young people with good and poor behavior. *Urban For Urban Green*, 10, 205-212.
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Created with support from the
Browncroft Pediatric Research Foundation

- 88% of children under 18 are getting less than 1 hour of daily physical activity
- 32% of students in Monroe County reported depression symptoms
- 72% of students in Monroe County spent 3+ hours on an average school day using a computer or smartphone for something that is not school work
- **The average American child spends only 4-7 minutes a day in unstructured outdoor play, while logging 7.5 hours in front of electronic screens.**

"Passion is lifted from the earth itself by the muddy hands of the young; it travels along grass-stained sleeves to the heart. If we are going to save environmentalism and the environment, we must also save an endangered indicator species: the child in nature."

— Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*





"My child is more adventurous and inquisitive as a result of participating in the nature-based learning program"

- Parent



November 4, 2025 By Nathaniel Smith

Students take the lead in growing sustainability program



Carlen O'Brien



Goodbye,
Goodbuy!



Ways to Get Involved

- **Continue educating yourself!**
 - ROC 2034 Plan, inc. the section on Urban Agriculture
 - ACT Rochester, Food and Health Connection in the Finger Lakes Region
- **Volunteer** with SMSJ, or other urban gardens in Rochester, examples include:
 - 490 Farmers
 - Flower City NOIRE
 - Foodlink Community Farm
 - ...and many more!
- **Volunteer** with Rochester Ecology Partners
- **Join** the Urban Agriculture Working Group
- **Rochester Youth Year // AmeriCorps**



