



LEFT FOOT ORGANICS

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Dear Left Foot Friends and Supporters,

January 2007

Five years ago, *Left Foot Organics* was just an idea, with a promise of land but no money, no equipment, no seeds, and no staff. Today, we occupy a thriving farm of five acres, have annual produce sales of over \$40,000, a workforce of ten growers and youth partners, and a strong, active seven member board. The dream of creating a resource for our community and rewarding employment for people with disabilities is becoming a reality. This has happened only with the financial and volunteer assistance of many individuals and groups in our Thurston County community, as well as our supporters from throughout the state and across the nation.

In this report, you will read about the goals we reached in 2006, with your help. One of our continuing goals is growth in sustained annual giving. We hope you will see how important this is to us as you read about our past year and our goals for 2007.

- **Year round employment.** Since our first season in 2002, year round employment for all growers has been a primary goal of *Left Foot's* vocational program and overall mission to offer an avenue to self-sufficiency and independence for people with disabilities. In 2006, for the first time, all the growers are working two days a week through the winter. Because income from produce sales is lower during this off season, your donations are especially critical to making year round employment possible. Thank you!



- **A local farmers' market outlet for our produce and program.** *Left Foot* growers and youth partners sharpened their marketing skills and introduced customers to *Left Foot's*

wonderful produce and experience of inclusion at the new Tumwater Town Center Farmers Market that opened the first day of summer 2006. The market was made possible by the enthusiastic support of many, including the City of Tumwater, the state Department of Health, and State Employees' Union local 443. Each Wednesday a dozen plus farm and food vendors brought fresh, local produce, plants, flowers and lunch to many state office workers and south county consumers. *Left Foot* sales at Tumwater contributed to our highest-ever produce sales year—\$44,500! Look for us and other local farms on the corner of Capitol Blvd & Israel Rd every Wednesday 11am – 2pm beginning May 30th.

- **Growing Partners is growing.** We were very fortunate this summer to have three youth partners from Tenino and Rochester working with us: Stephanie, Alyssa and Ashley. For Stephanie, the positive effect of the *Growing Partners* program was immediate and compelling: As she put it, "If I weren't here, I'd be doing drugs." Ashley's experience gave her a new vision of community, and of her own ability to communicate; after initially being a bit afraid of her coworker who is deaf, Ashley took the sign language dictionary to market and helped Ron with customer service skills while he helped her with sign language! Building relationships and skills like these are what enable people like Ron to live independently in the community. Generous grants from the United Way of Thurston County and the US



Department of Agriculture will help us to continue building inclusive community and to expand work and personal growth opportunities for rural youth through the *Growing Partners* program in 2007 and beyond.



- **Diversifying our production – adding livestock.** One of our long term goals is to raise animals on the farm to provide more varied activities and opportunities for skill building, more year round employment, and more income to support our program. We now have a full grown flock of 25 laying hens of many breeds (call us if you'd like eggs, \$3/doz). Our neighbor Jesse Stacey helps care for the chickens in exchange for being able to show them at the Thurston County Fair, where our Barred Rock rooster won Reserve Grand Champion (he went on to become Blue Ribbon stew for a volunteer lunch at the farm)!

- **Bus Service = Increased Independence.** The goals of independent living, employment and greater self sufficiency for people with disabilities and youth depend critically upon access to transportation. For the past three years Left Foot has enjoyed a partnership with the Rural and Tribal Transportation Program, a project funded by the Thurston Regional Planning Council, providing door to door bus service for south county growers and partners. This year R/T linked to the IntercityTransit service area of Olympia/Lacey/Tumwater, allowing growers and volunteers to use public transportation to get to the R/T bus at Tumwater Square and then all the way to the farm. Bus service to the farm also fulfills a county

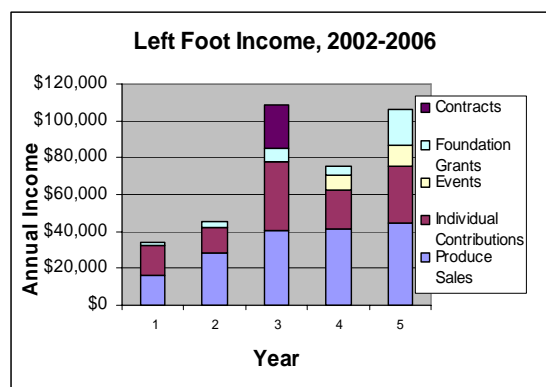
requirement for employers of people with disabilities to be accessible by public transportation. Thanks to R/T contractor Transpro and TRPC for making this possible!

- **Expanding volunteer opportunities and participation.** Our volunteer program has grown steadily, bringing more benefits to the farm and the community. We hosted our largest volunteer event ever in July—100 volunteers from *Univera!* Veteran volunteer Connor Monson built a beautiful grape arbor for the farm as his Eagle Scout project. As the grapes grow, the arbor will provide a bit of welcome shade in front of the greenhouse where we wash and pack our produce. The cooler building project was finished in June thanks to volunteer Pete Sanders who has done everything from plumbing to pulling weeds. Now he is our newest board member. In September we hosted a group of about 25 volunteers from the *Olympian*, including publisher John Winn Miller, who had fun digging potatoes! We gain so much from our volunteers. We were pleased to be able to give back this year by providing information to one volunteer whose neighbors were adjusting to the arrival of a new baby with *Down Syndrome*.



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- **Meeting our annual budget.** For the first time in 2006, *Left Foot* raised funds sufficient to meet our projected budget. Thanks for this goes to all who contribute their labor, ideas, time, creativity and money to the growing resource that is *Left Foot*. One important contribution was the \$11,193 raised at our first annual benefit dinner and silent auction, the "*Left Foot Farm Formal*." SPSCC Culinary Arts program students made a great meal using fresh produce from the farm. There was lively bidding in the silent auction and some not-so-silent bidding over the decorated pumpkin centerpieces! All the growers and growing partners participated in the program. We showed a video about *Left Foot* produced by Joan Hitchens (& videotaped by Evergreen intern Kat Batchert). Alejandro Rugarcia closed the evening with a salsa dance workshop. We made new friends, ate good food, had a great time... planning already is underway for next October!



Looking forward. Our first five years created a solid base for *Left Foot*. Over the next five years we hope to grow into a stable program with predictable funding that serves the goal of inclusion for all who participate in our efforts. We have set ambitious goals for 2007. We will be working with you to secure the funds to fulfill them.

1. Self-sufficiency and independence for growers and youth partners:

- Increase growers' average weekly paid hours March—October by 4 hrs (an additional \$1,120 per grower)
- Create year-round work and learning opportunities for Growing Partners (\$1,000 for each youth)

2. More opportunities for grower and youth interaction with the community:

- Increase community involvement by adding Saturday workdays and farm stand hours
- Publish a year round calendar of volunteer days and workshops on our website
- Build the Tumwater Town Center Farmers Market

3. Build staffing appropriate to our program goals:

- Develop stable funding to retain the qualified staff needed to support a sustainable program

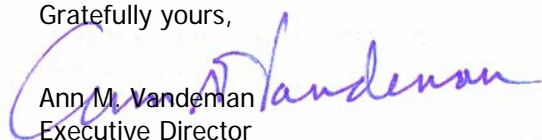
Here are some of the other things your dollars can accomplish at *Left Foot*:

- \$750 will pay the rent on our 5 acres of land for a season.
- \$2,500 will pay for the potato equipment we need to improve production of our most inclusive crop.
- \$185 will pay our rent and provide electricity for heat, light and the irrigation well pump for one month.
- \$30 will pay our fees at farmers market for a day.

We still have thank you gifts available too—a copy of the book *Renewing the Countryside: Washington* for \$150 or more, and tote bags for \$25 or more.

We are privileged to do this work. We believe strongly that bringing a personal experience of inclusion to all people, especially youth, can and will affect change. We cannot do it without your support. Please dig deep and consider increasing your contribution if possible this year. Sustained annual giving is essential to programs like ours, relying primarily on the support of people like you and on our own productive activity to fund our program. *All* your contributions are valued and appreciated.

Gratefully yours,


Ann M. Vandeman
Executive Director


Peter Herzog
Board President

Left Foot Board of Directors, 2006

Gary Altman Pauline Barlow Deb Creveling/Don Whiting Pat Delaney Robert Elliott Peter Herzog Pete Sanders