

Coppell Sustainable Food Organization Board Annual Report

October 2019 – September 2020

Chris Hanson

2020 President, CSFO Board

October 13, 2020

Executive Summary

The beginning of FY 2020 marked the first significant contributions from the Coppell Community Garden greenhouse to the production capacity of the garden program. The second half of FY 2020 created numerous challenges to the operation of the Coppell Farmers Market and the garden program as the COVID-19 pandemic spread.

The CFM committee responded to required changes in operating protocols involving vendors and the public and has successfully navigated those challenges to continue to provide a vital source of fresh local food to the community during the pandemic. Some CFM vendors have reported revenue growth of 150 – 175% during the pandemic showing the value of the adaptability and hard work of our CFM committee.

After first exceeding an annual donation of 20,000 lbs. to the Metrocrest Services food pantry in FY 2019, the garden program broke that record in FY 2020 with a donation of 22,876 lbs. without any physical expansion in the gardens. A major contribution to the garden program came from our greenhouse which became operational in July, 2019. The greenhouse produced over 25,000 transplants in FY 2020 of which 19,000 went to the CCG gardens, 4,000 went to Coppell ISD gardens and about 2,000 were sold at two plant sale fund raisers hosted at CFM.

The pandemic has forced cancellation of the primary CFM fund raising vehicle, the Farm to Table Dinner, this year. Despite that, reductions in expenses due to reduced public activities and other adjustments have largely balanced that out. Garden donations and grants, while reduced, are still strong and the plant sale capacity provided by the greenhouse has largely offset that reduction.

The operational challenges of the pandemic this year have necessitated significantly greater coordination and support than usual through our assigned city liaison personnel. As always, we are grateful for the continued support that allows our volunteer organization to continue to provide valuable resources and support to our local community.

Coppell Community Garden Annual Report

October 2019 – September 2020

Scott Warrington

Garden Representative, CSFO Board

- Our production continues to be incredibly strong and our annual numbers continue to set new records. Due to the pandemic, we have lost several gardeners and their families and have had to limit our outside volunteer opportunities to minimize exposure risks.

Garden Production	FY 2020	FY 2019	Cumulative ('98-now)
Donated Pounds	22,876	20,412	270,135
Volunteer Hours	12,188	11,797	104,508

- The Coppell Community Garden has had a relationship with Metrocrest Services since the garden's inception in January, 1998. Since that time, the Coppell Community Garden has donated 270,135 lbs. of fresh, organic produce to Metrocrest Services (22,876 lbs. in FY20).
- Donations from the Coppell Community Garden provide fresh, organic produce to Metrocrest Services that helps to feed 150-200 families **per day** as of June, 2020.
- Metrocrest has had to adapt to servicing their customers during the pandemic which includes pre-bagging food for their customers. Because of this, volunteer gardeners have begun harvesting 3 times per week (up from 1 time per week) to help keep all of the produce as fresh as possible.
- We had a total of 111 volunteer gardeners and their families working 156 plots, plus a perennial garden, SmartScape beds, orchards, potager, blackberry patches and our new greenhouse.

Garden	Address	# Plots	# Gardeners	Manager
Ground Delivery	450 S. Denton Tap Road	77	48	Pat Daly
Helping Hands	255 Parkway Blvd	42	32	Diane Lowe
Old Town	345 W. Bethel Road	37	31	Chris Hanson
Total		156	111	

- In addition to our Spring plant sale we added an additional Fall plant sale which was a huge success. The plant sale generated a lot of good connections with potential gardeners.
- Unfortunately, Earth Fest, the annual Harvest Dinner, and the Volunteer fair were all cancelled due to the pandemic.

- Gardens continue to be productive year-round, as gardeners learn how to plant winter tolerant vegetables and more of those varieties are being produced and offered to gardeners from the greenhouse.
- A relatively new endeavor which has already shown promising results has been the development of an optional standard plot planting plan. This plan is closely integrated with production from the greenhouse to help new or existing gardeners to plant the right plant in the right place at the right time. It not only helps new gardeners plan but virtually gives them immediate success and by design has allowed us to optimize the amount of produce that is grown in each of the plots that utilize the plan and to coordinate transplant production planning with the greenhouse.
- We have 619 Facebook likes and 629 followers; our Instagram account has 356 followers. Our Facebook page and the Next Door app were used to announce the our plant sales, solicit bags of leaves and fresh green grass clippings for the compost piles, as well as notify residents of plots available for adoption.
- We encouraged and received donations from gardeners' employers who participate in employer matching programs and employee directed grants to help the local community. Celanese, IBM and TI tend to be our main contributors.
- The annual Adopt a Plot meeting was held on January 25, 2019 at the Life Safety Park. A presentation was made to reinforce the Adopt a Plot Agreement, changes to the Gardener Playbook, encourage winter gardening, and we had a guest speaker who gave an amazing presentation on making our gardens more successful. A makeup meeting was held at the Coppell Library on Sunday, February 15, 2019 for those who could not attend on January 25.
- Latte Da Dairy continues to donate and deliver goat straw that is incorporated into compost piles and used as a cover dressing on plots to maintain moisture, nourish the soil and retard weed growth. Expired produce continues to come from Market Street; coffee grounds from Liberation Coffee and George Coffee and Provisions; bags of leaves are left at the gardens by citizens for making compost piles. Gardeners also participate in the annual Rakesgiving at Mockingbird Elementary to pick up the collected leaves for composting.
- Larry Thompson, the CISD Coordinator for school gardens, has continued to partner with Community Garden Committee to strengthen the relationship between the community gardens and school gardens.
- The garden program awarded two \$1,000 scholarships to Coppell High School students this year.

Coppell Famers Market Annual Report

October 2019 – September 2020

Amanda Austin

Manager, Coppell Farmers Market

Market Details

- The first Market Manager, Amanda Austin, was hired in December 2015. As a farmer, speaker and natural teacher, she continues to bring a new dimension to our market and consistently receives positive reviews from committee staff, vendors, customers and city staff.
- Sixteen active volunteers on the CFM committee provide oversight to the market and have provided over 1500 volunteer hours annually. (The number of hours has decreased since March as we have discontinued most events that required volunteers due to covid-19.)
- Peggy Rosson ended her three year term as committee chair and Amanda Novak began her three year term. Amanda has been an active committee member and will bring new energy and inspired leadership to the work of the committee.
- Since March, the market has provided a safe destination for families to get out of the house and place to shop for their basic grocery needs. To best facilitate physical distancing, the market is temporarily located on the lawn and parking areas surrounding the pavilion.
- We continue to increase the diversity of our offerings and customer base by providing a wider range of products and produce.
- 54 area food producers sell their goods at the market. The breakdown is about 50/50 farmers/food producers. We average 35-40 vendors present each Saturday as some vendors only attend seasonally or on a part-time basis. Shoppers can find nearly all grocery store items at the CFM.
- Visits to production sites and vendor reviews continue as a means of maintaining the integrity of the market, and we continue to work with vendors for disclosure & transparency on the origin of all products sold at the market. Products are grown or produced by the vendor within 150 miles of the market with few exceptions.
- The market started accepting the Lone Star Card via SNAP program at the market in August 2011. This enables customers of all income levels to enjoy the benefits of fresh, local food. The market has a SNAP token program where SNAP customers receive \$10 in free tokens on each return visit to the market.

Market Activities/Events

- We were unable to host usual events (Food Day for Kids, Cooking Demonstrations, Garden Time for Kids, and National Farmers Market Week Celebration) this year as any events and activities that would promote gathering were canceled.
- In place of in-person events, we have begun to experiment with hosting virtual community building and learning opportunities. Many of our vendors are experienced food and nutrition educators and for our first attempts at online learning, we harnessed their expertise to host live-streaming cooking demonstrations. For these, the vendors have taught viewers how to cook, shared nutrition information, sourced ingredients from the market and emphasized the significance of the Coppell Farmers Market in our community. The demonstrations are recorded and can be viewed time and time again into the future.
- We hosted our annual fundraiser, a Farm to Table Dinner, on October 12, 2019. The event celebrates the food community created by the Coppell Farmers Market. Traditionally the dinner has been a semi formal sit-down event, organized and prepared by two main chefs and their assistants. For this event a new format was tried where farmers market stakeholders (vendors, cooking enthusiasts, and trained chefs) prepared exquisite foods, made from farmers market ingredients, and guests visited various stations to be served courses of their selection. This new format was hugely successful and the committee hopes to continue as soon as in-person gatherings are again appropriate. Proceeds go towards sustaining the Lone Star card \$10 free token program at the market as well as promotion of the market.
- Although we committee members were unable to home bake breakfast foods for vendors this year on Vendor Appreciation Day, we did provide biodegradable plastic bags to our vendors as a way of appreciating their contributions to the market.
- Old Town Coppell meetings and promotional events have been suspended since March. However, we've partnered with George Coffee and Provisions, who sets up a pop-up coffee shop at the market every Saturday since late August.
- Our Market Manager and Committee Chair attended the fourth annual InTents Farmers Market conference in February, 2020. Topics included branding and marketing, regulations, programming, communication between farmers, market managers and food vendors.
- We continue working on our strategic action plan to ensure the sustainability of the market. Customer surveys will resume when possible to provide additional information to the planning process. This year the committee completed work on the policies and procedures document that provides documentation for the roles and responsibilities of the committee and its members. Sub committees will work on their written guidelines in the next few months.

Market in the Community

- The market manager began recruiting teen interns in January and received many applications from interested youth in the community. The program was suspended in March, however plans exist to resume the program when we can again welcome volunteers to the weekly market.
- Free booth space is provided to local non-profit organizations and city departments. While limited this year, we have hosted the community garden plant sale and the Knit Wit group from the Senior Center who sold masks as a fund raising project.
- Member of the Coppell Chamber of Commerce.

Market Publicity

- Every month in the past six months, Google Ads has directed more than 65,000 consumers to our regularly updated website, when they search “farmers market near me”, “farmers market”, and “DFW farmers markets”.
- Based on recommendations from an advertising consulting firm, we’ve implemented a social media marketing strategy that continues to reach a wide audience and recruit shoppers. More than 9,500 people have liked the Coppell Farmers Market Facebook page, and more than 2,000 follow our market on Instagram.
- We receive ongoing recognition from the Dallas Morning News, as they consistently acknowledge our market as one of the best in north Texas.
- Weekly email updates are sent to over 5,000 people.
- Member of Go Texan, Texas Organic Farmers and Growers, Slow Food DFW, Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, and the Farmers Market Coalition.