



**Vision:** *“A community where everyone belongs and participates”*

**Mission:** *“Together with our community, KW Habilitation inspires abilities to enrich the lives of children, youth, adults and families.”*

**Our Farm Mission: Connecting People to the land, food, and each other through sustainable agriculture.**



1. Farm Crew helping at Ice Cream Social 2. Our Beautiful New Veggie Cooler, 3. YMCA Group volunteering at 115 University & 4. Market Pickup with Stephanie & Sarah from Inclusive Living

### **Our Farm Annual Report – 2024**

Our Farm finished the season with a bang in 2024. This was our 11<sup>th</sup> season, and we wondered where the time had gone. So many wonderful things happened at the farm this year and they will be highlighted in this report.

This year Our Farm saw the increase in vegetables picked up each week. We had a record year for our Inclusive Living pickups and a sizable increase in Supported Independent Living pickups. Many good comments came from homes as to the freshness and variety we offered each week. Several homes only used Our Farm produce during the season and other homes commented on the cost savings to their grocery budgets. Exactly what we want to hear! 😊

As always Mother Nature rules here at Our Farm. This year proved to be no different, with some extremely hot dry weather and lots of rain. In May we had the warmest weather since 2018. We received approximately 25 inches of rain from May to the end of November. That is a lot of rain. Weather really impacts germination, growth and of course pests. We had our fair share of pests, but they were managed with organic practices.

Our Farm hosted many groups, hired 4 Canada Summer Job Interns, grew more food than ever, and made some great donations to our community. The hard working Our Farm Crew was fantastic in making it all work. From spreading 100 yards of compost, building a tunnel, putting up trellising,

harvesting, washing, and packing, mowing lawns, orchard care and so much more they helped in making the season a tremendous success. Our Farm hosted a neighboring farm for a lunch and learn. It was good to hear their perspective about what we are doing and learn from their farming practices.

Our Farm Coordinator and Agricultural Farmer had some good learning opportunities this year. Both attended the EAFO conference in December in Kingston. In mid-January Laura will head to the Organic Conference in Guelph and Jenny will attend the OFVC in Niagara. Knowledge is key to learn so many new things and to apply to Our Farm. We are grateful for the opportunity to do so.

### **115 University Avenue Garden**

In 2024 production at 115 was increased with 2-week succession plantings of lettuce, green onions, and radishes. Approximately 35 yards of compost was applied to the beds and irrigation was installed in the garden. Big game changer for the site and this contributed to our increased production. Tomatoes, potatoes, some zucchini, flowers & herbs were also grown at 115. To give you some perspective of how much is grown, we grew over 850 heads of lettuce, 365 bunches of green onions and 377 bunches of radishes. Lots of herbs were picked fresh and dehydrated to maintain freshness. Our Farm dehydrated 166 packages of herbs and 16 jars of mint for tea.

Most of the crops at 115 did well, however we battled leek moth and root maggot in our green onions, extremely hard to manage and we did have some crop failure. We still have the concern of too much shade here and hopefully this can be addressed in 2025. At this site we welcomed Cooper (3<sup>rd</sup> year returning) as our Canada Summer Intern.

### **DFR Site**

Production at DFR was stellar in 2024. Onions, kohlrabi, turnips, salad greens, napa, squash and so much more did just super. The application of approx. 65 yards of compost was attributed to this. Our soil health really improved with the compost. Also, a new tunnel was installed, and our tomatoes, peppers and basil did wonderful inside of this. Consistent watering also played a factor in good growing.

Of course, it would not be fair to say that we did not have some issue. Voles & Moles did a lot of damage to our carrots, beets, sweet potatoes, and potatoes. They tunnel so far below the crops that sometimes you do not know the damage they caused until you harvest. Very frustrating! Lots of other good things happened out at this site. New apples trees were installed along with Pears, Plum and Cherry trees. This will certainly add diversity to what we can offer in years to come. Other good things that happened at DFR were 15 new beds were tilled, tarped and cover cropped getting them ready for the 2025 season.

A large section was also prepared for community gardeners. We are opening 6 garden sites and will offer them to community gardeners. This along side the apple tree installation was made possible through a Community Environmental Grant from the Region of Waterloo. In 2024 Laura continued

as agricultural farmer and we welcomed three Canada Summer Job Interns – Evie (3 year returning), Aidan (2<sup>nd</sup> year returning) and new to the site was Dani.

### **Market Days and Pickups**

Markets held at 115 University – 26 Wednesdays

Inclusive Living Pickups – 371 (increase by 100 from 2023)

Supported Independent Living Pickups – 188 (increase by 60 from 2023)

### **Completed Projects/ New Infrastructure at Our Farm**

Irrigation at 115

Outdoor Vegetable Cooler at DFR

Roof over Cooler at DFR

Growing Tunnel at DFR

Trailer for Riding Mower

Trailer for Van

Annual Jam and Salsa Sale

### **Corporate Groups at Our Farm in 2024**

Ann Bilodeau Group

Ricoh

YMCA youth group

Equitable Life

Waterloo Warrior Hockey Team

Ontario Teachers Insurance Program

University of Waterloo Alumni group

**Total Hours Pledged – 205.5**

### **Individual Volunteers**

Jeff – DFR

Cooper – 115

Pike Family – 115

Don Hergott – DFR

Bernie Bredschneider – DFR

**Total Volunteer Hours Pledged – 342**

### **Donations to Our Farm**

Relish Cooking Studio

Anonymous

Barb and Jenny Lehman

Sinco Restaurant Equipment

Steed and Evans – Compost Trucking and Concrete Cooler Pad Installation

Don Hergott – labour on Cooler Roof

Region of Waterloo – 100 yards of Compost

Seeds of Diversity – new seeder  
Irrigation Plus – ongoing discount  
House of Friendship  
Valley Menno Singers  
Seed Garlic for 2025 season  
Bernie Bredschneider – caulking of new cooler seams  
Mark Frey – 17 lbs Honey from hives at DFR to sell at Jam/Salsa Sale  
**Total Donations Value - \$20,812.00**

#### **Donation from Our Farm to Community**

Soup Sisters  
House of Friendship  
Humane Society – weekly deliveries of lettuce trimming, carrot tops, kale, and mint

#### **Community Users of DFR garden space**

Seeds of Diversity - Our Farm is passionate about community and providing Seeds of Diversity space to grow is important to them. They keep strains of garlic viable and provide them to other growers across Canada. Our Farm will continue to do so to help this important work to continue.  
Bee Blessed Bee Keeping – Mark Frey continues to use the space for his bees. They are important to our gardens and pollinating our crops. Over the past couple of years there has been some issues with bee health, but this year improved, and Our Farm received a nice donation of honey.

#### **Bird Habitat at DFR Site:**

This year we had our bird expert Fraser Gilbert out to the DFR site to teach and help us learn more about the birds we want to house in the bird houses. Fraser is a truly knowledgeable bird person and helped us to look in the boxes every few weeks, how to identify the eggs we want to see, and learn about nuisance birds. This was a terrific opportunity for the Farm Crew.

#### **Our Farm Trail**

The Our Farm Trail remains a beautiful trail to walk, however it is rarely used causing more work for the Our Farm Crew. If our trail were walked on more a lot of the weeds growing in the middle of the walking part would be non-existent, but due to lack of use Our Farm spend a considerable effort keeping it groomed. We want to promote the walking trail a lot more in 2025 to hopefully get some walkers out using it.

#### **What New Things happened at Our Farm this year.**

- 15 new beds at DFR
- Irrigation at 115
- CSA membership -18 share were sold to community.
- Region of Waterloo Environmental Grant for fruit tree plantings and 6 Community Garden Space to be opened in May 2025
- Grass removal at 115 site

## **Wrap Up**

Our Farm really had a super year. Seeing the growth in production, standardizing our beds, focusing on soil health and fertility has proven to be beneficial. Succession planting in 2024 was another key factor in growing more food. We love sharing local, organic, and seasonal not only with the KW Habilitation community but others in Waterloo Region. In 2025 Our Farm will continue with soil health, growing lots of delicious food with lots of succession plantings and welcoming community.

We are proud to be the farmers for KW Habilitation and our Community.

Respectfully submitted.

Jenny Weickert

Our Farm Coordinator

