Our Mission

Common Ground Farm’s mission is to serve our community as a model for food justice and education for people of all ages and incomes. Our vision is a food system where agricultural producers can earn a fair profit while caring for the land and their workers, where fresh produce is affordable and accessible to everyone, and where children and adults are nourished by a connection to the land and to their community.

We aspire to be innovators who can create the needed changes in our food system for the benefit of farmers and communities regionally and nationally. We believe that change happens out of deep community engagement, and we work broadly and holistically to address the needs of our Hudson Valley community through interconnected programs and initiatives. We do this through collaborative partnerships with other nonprofits, businesses, public institutions, schools and individuals.

Common Ground is a 501(c)3 nonprofit located on 9 acres of historic farmland leased from the Stony Kill Foundation in Wappingers Falls, NY. By keeping farmland active in this rapidly developing region, residents continue to be connected to their food and to the health of the land that nourishes them.

Common Ground is a member of the NOFA-NY Farmers Pledge program, which reflects our commitment to growing food sustainably without chemicals, treating our workers with dignity and showing respect and care for our land. We do not use chemical fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides, and we protect our ecosystem by maintaining biodiversity in our plantings. We limit unnecessary soil disturbances and tillage in order to build a healthy soil environment for microbes. Each year we build soil health by planting a cover crop in all of our fields for at least part of our season, and about half of our acreage remains in cover crop for the full growing season to build organic matter. The results of these practices are apparent in the increasing productivity of our fields and the high quality of the vegetables we bring to our markets and food access partners.

Our Work

Common Ground’s three main branches work together to address food access and education on the farm, in schools and in cities. Our method reflects our belief in the multifaceted approach needed to address food insecurity in the 21st century.

Farm

The farm is the heart of Common Ground. We grow a diverse array of vegetables on our nine acres, offer year-round programs for children and adults, and welcome visitors and volunteers alike to work and enjoy the land.

Education

Educational programming on the farm connects children and adults to food. It creates opportunities for people to harvest vegetables with their own hands, learn basic cooking skills, and directly interact with our local food system. Education on the farm changes our relationship with the food we eat, with our own bodies, and with the land on which we live and work.

Markets

Our markets provide Common Ground with urban hubs within the cities of Beacon and Newburgh, NY. Common Ground operates popular and bustling weekend markets with food access programs, as well as two mobile markets that bring affordable produce to low-income communities.

“Part of Common Ground’s importance as a farm is simply to be here - to keep agriculture spaces in production in the Hudson Valley, and to cultivate deeper connection between people and the land that nourishes us all. Over the past few years, our food access impact in Beacon and Newburgh has expanded enormously, however, at the end of the day, there is also the less tangible but absolutely vital element of preserving a productive, healthy and beautiful place within our community.”

-Sarah Simon, Farm Director
SARAH SIMON
- Farm Director
Sarah oversees Common Ground’s vegetable production, land stewardship, farm staff, food justice programs and community partnerships. She started farming in Maine at an animal and vegetable CSA farm and was then drawn to Beacon, NY by the mission and values of Common Ground. Over her time here she has launched the Beacon Farmers’ Market as a Common Ground Farm enterprise, expanded the Greens 4 Greens food benefit matching program, and led Common Ground Farm’s expansion to the City of Newburgh in 2017. Sarah holds a B.A. from Princeton University, where she studied French and Portuguese and managed the student garden.

CORINNE MCKENNA
- Development & Administrative Director (2017)
For a high-end home furnishings textile company, before and weaving, Sara first worked as a designer and stylist of her creative endeavors. With a BFA in textile design, Sara relocated from Long Island, where she ingrained herself in a collaborative community that has fostered all manners of her creative endeavors. With a BFA in textile design and weaving, Sara first worked as a designer and stylist for a high-end home furnishings textile company, before deciding to start her own small business as an upholsterer in 2013. In addition to her work with Common Ground, she currently works as a freelance textile artist and makes some time for small sewing projects. Sara believes that farmers’ markets are for everyone—she enjoys hosting a weekly event that brings people from all corners of the community together in an engaging, inclusive social space. Sara is passionate about the beautiful Hudson Valley and supporting its small farms and vibrant businesses.

SEMBER WEINMAN
- Development And Administrative Director (2017)
With a background in non-profit management, real estate, sociology, literature, and marketing, Corinne loves solving problems and puzzles about people and business. She is passionate about bringing out the best in the organizations she invests herself in, and helping them have a greater impact. Previously she worked as the Director of Operations with a leading residential real estate brokerage in Manhattan, NY, as an event producer in Brooklyn, NY, and she has a long history of community organizing and volunteering.

DIANA DIMURO
- Administrative Manager (2018)
Diana joined Common Ground in 2018 as its new Administrative Manager. With a background in English Literature, Diana’s love of the outdoors led her to a career change when she became an AmeriCorps volunteer with American Conservation Experience, a conservation corps based in the Southwest and California. After living out west for several years, she returned to her native Hudson Valley, where she worked for a fine gardening design and landscape firm, and later for the nonprofit, Walkway Over the Hudson, as their Office Manager. Missing plants and looking to further her knowledge, Diana recently participated in the one year intensive Horticultural program at Stonecrop Gardens in Cold Spring, NY. Wishing to get back into nonprofit, mission-driven work, with a passion for sharing the outdoors with others, Diana has now joined the team at Common Ground, working both as Administrative Manager and on the farm crew.
There are many ways to get more involved and visit the farm regularly, including our weekly summertime U-Pick vegetable share. In 2017, we successfully grew our program to 35 members coming to the farm to harvest their own share of vegetables. Our 29 farm camp scholarship recipients also participated in U-Pick during the weeks they attended camp.

Preschool on the Farm is an opportunity for young children ages two to four years old and their adult family members to explore nature, food, and farming together through our one-hour workshops designed just for them. Each class features a different farm or nature topic each week, experiential investigation and learning, movement, stories, and arts & crafts!

A birthday party at Common Ground is a way for families to connect with the land in a fun, hands-on, interactive way. Each party is tailored to fit the birthday child’s age and interests.

In 2017, Common Ground worked in partnership with Laura Sansone and Textile Lab to create Community Indigo, a series of workshops that engaged participants in growing, dying and processing indigo in an effort to reduce waste. Workshops included fresh and fermented indigo dips, film screenings, and shibori processes.
The Fresh Food Mural Workshop is a unique program where 5th graders who have participated in Farm to School programming in their elementary years have an opportunity to share what they have learned with their school community in a cross-disciplinary workshop where they create murals for their school cafeterias. The finished work is installed in the cafeteria—helping school communities connect farms to schools in a unique and beautiful way!

In 2017, Common Ground worked together with the Beacon City School District in providing fresh food to the school cafeterias. Common Ground provided over 1,000 pounds of fresh vegetables to the Beacon City School District cafeterias, piloting a viable farm to school sales model. This included lettuce for salads, vegetables for the monthly taste tests, and fresh veggies for the free Summer Feeding Program, a partnership with Kids R Kids, a local non-profit committed to ensuring that low-income children continue to receive nutrition meals when school is not in session. We believe that every growing child has a right to healthy, fresh food, and the school cafeterias are a great way to provide fresh produce to all of the children in our community. In 2017, Common Ground became a client of the Pace University Law Food & Beverage clinic, where we are working with law students and professors to research the regulatory and administrative framework for school produce sales.

Common Ground is committed to creating avenues for food access throughout the school community. In addition to our food share and market programs, we work with the school communities to create greater access for families. Common Ground partners with Hudson Valley Seed and the Beacon Recreation Department to offer Crop Shop, an after-school farm stand, where families can buy fresh produce while students learn how to operate a market. In 2017, Common Ground worked in partnership with Kids R Kids, South Avenue School, the South Avenue PTA, Dagele and Fishkill Farms, and with financial support from the United Way and the Poughkeepsie Journal to provide Thanksgiving shares to participants in the school BackPack program. This program provided a variety of vegetables, apples, and gift certificates to the local grocery store for 30 food insecure families.

Farm to School is a nationwide movement bringing local fresh food to school cafeterias and generating excitement among children for eating well. Since 2012, Common Ground has worked in collaboration with the Beacon City School District to provide robust Farm to School programming and to distribute fresh produce to school cafeterias. These hands-on experiences—where students pull carrots out of the earth with our farmers, learn how to chiffonade collard greens with our chef, or work as a class on a collaborative painting with a local artist to hang in their school cafeteria—are transformative in creating positive attitudes towards nutritious food, in turn creating better health outcomes for our community. Through our collaboration, we feature a Vegetable of the Month program, where students learn about seasonal vegetables through programs in school and at the farm, and can try the vegetable throughout the month in the school cafeterias. When possible, Common Ground provides the vegetables for in-school programming and at the cafeteria taste tests.

Field trips to Common Ground allow students to learn how food grows by visiting the farm and meeting our farmers. When children harvest broccoli rabe with their own hands, they are excited to try it! Students bring their harvests to our classroom where they work with a local chef to create a dish together. This experience allows students to participate in their local food system in a way that creates excitement to eat vegetables and engagement in their own nutritional needs. When students see lettuce growing in our fields and then see the same lettuce in their cafeteria, they connect those experiences and the excitement that they felt when tasting vegetables in our fields extends to their school day!

Chef in the Classroom is an opportunity for students, from Pre-K through 5th grade, to cook together with a chef working in our local food system to explore seasonal vegetables. Chef Katie teaches students basic culinary skills while they explore a featured vegetable. Through our tallies we have found that children like a vegetable 23% more after cooking together!

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At Farm Camp, children explore our relationship to food and to nature through hands-on experiments, movement, games, and art. Campers spend time in the garden, at the pond, in the field, in the barn, and along our nature trails. Kids develop new skills, make new friends, and grow an appreciation for the beauty and complexity of the natural environment within which we live.

Our camp instructors develop plans for the morning sessions based on the weekly themes, using different methods of exploration. Our campers engage in each week’s themes through direct engagement, tailored to their age level: we cook, we sing, we make art, we build experiments, we move our bodies, we play games, and so much more!

In the afternoons, children choose from several options that may include: sprinkler time, nature hikes, group games, pond time, cooking, and art projects. The last half hour of each Friday is devoted to performing, showing the art that we made, and sharing the food that we harvested and prepared together with our families.

“ I love the outdoor time and the way that art, science, and nature are incorporated into the programming.”
- Happy Parent

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“ I love the outdoor time and the way that art, science, and nature are incorporated into the programming.”
- Happy Parent
FOOD JUSTICE & FARMERS’ MARKETS

Common Ground believes wholeheartedly in the rights of people to grow, sell and eat healthy food. Our farm and programs support the well-being of our land and community, and we collaborate with regional and national partners to create a more just food system. We work towards this vision in a number of ways:

1. CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH AGRICULTURE
2. FOOD ACCESS
3. CHANGING THE FOOD SYSTEM

1. CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH AGRICULTURE
Common Ground makes the commitment to pay all of our farm staff above minimum wage, and provide them with access to farm produce. We welcome people of diverse ages, races and economic backgrounds to the organization. We also bring young people to the farm to learn about agriculture through Common Ground’s educational programs and our longtime partnership with CCEDC’s Green Teen Beacon program.

2. FOOD ACCESS
Common Ground distributed a total of 10,600 pounds of produce in 2017 for food access initiatives: our highest amount to date! CGF supports emergency food services in the Mid-Hudson region through weekly produce deliveries to seven different food pantries and soup kitchens. In 2017, we donated 4,960 pounds of produce to these outlets. We host gleaning events to donate larger quantities of produce for processing or regional distribution. We also operate and sell produce at two mobile markets in Beacon and Newburgh, bringing fresh, affordable produce to areas where residents have limited access to fresh produce. In 2017, Common Ground donated 2,100 pounds of fresh produce to the Common Greens Mobile Market program. We accept EBT/SNAP, FMNP and WIC-FMNP at ALL of our markets, and in 2017 we additionally matched all food benefits in Beacon, NY with our Greens 4 Greens program to double their value in purchasing fruits and vegetables, benefiting consumers and producers. In 2017, the NYS Governor’s FreshConnect Checks Program provided incentive checks for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) consumers at participating farmers’ markets. Common Ground distributed 4,840 pounds of produce at discounted prices at our mobile markets and at the Healthy Orange FreshConnect Farmers’ Market in Newburgh, NY.

3. CHANGING THE FOOD SYSTEM
Common Ground is actively working to develop a local economy that works for everyone in the Hudson Valley. Our Farm to School program supports local produce procurement and provides links between farmers and our school systems. In 2017 we partnered with healthcare providers and insurers to provide preventative healthcare via healthy eating through our mobile markets at Hudson River Healthcare, and offered joint outreach with our partner, Affinity Healthcare, at the Newburgh Fresh Market. We managed the Beacon and Downing Park Farmers’ Markets to create profitable, viable sales channels for local agricultural businesses through effective outreach and events.
FOOD JUSTICE & FARMERS’ MARKETS

Beacon Farmers’ Market

Under the stewardship of Common Ground, the Beacon Farmers’ Market has adopted Common Ground’s mission to feed and engage the Beacon community, support local farms and businesses, and create a more just food system since 2016. The market connects Common Ground directly to the community by hosting a vibrant, welcoming and inclusive gathering space that contributes to the vitality of the city of Beacon. The market frequently partners with local businesses, complementary non-profit organizations, artists and musicians to host enrichment programming, showcasing healthy eating, farming, cooking, gardening, sustainable living and Beacon’s vibrant arts and music scene.

The Beacon Farmers’ Market also serves as a vital connection between local consumers and the farmers and food producers of the Mid-Hudson Valley. The market encourages and supports sustainable agricultural and business practices, ensuring high quality products for its customers. The Beacon Farmers’ Market provides a community rich in cultural and socio-economic diversity, with direct access to affordable, locally grown, fresh fruits and vegetables. Common Ground works to provide a vibrant market where local farmers and business owners can support their livelihood and receive fair compensation for their efforts. The market also partners with a local network of food justice organizations to support and develop efforts to address hunger in and around the Beacon community.

Since 2016, our indoor winter farmers’ market has been located at the American Legion’s VFW Hall at 413 Main Street, Beacon. Common Ground averaged around 14 vendors per week at the 2017 winter market, with about 20 total vendors in rotation. In 2017, the Beacon Farmers’ Market changed its outdoor location, moving up from the riverfront into the heart of the city; a natural progression for our outdoor market to find a new home just a block away on Veterans Place alongside the Beacon Post Office. Increased accessibility, as well as bringing market vendors and farms closer to customers doing their weekly shopping on Main Street were the primary reasons for the decision.

The market’s new location has helped increase the number of vendor tents from 25 at the riverfront to as many as 33 tents on Veterans Place. In 2017, the market had a total of 40 weekly or biweekly vendors, and hosted 20 various Beacon businesses and local nonprofits as guest vendors throughout its outdoor season. The location change has proved successful, with a noticeable increase in weekly resident foot traffic, and an increase in sales, estimated at about 30% more for our vendors. Common Ground also saw triple the food benefit sales at the Beacon Farmers’ Market at its new location. In 2017, produce farms each reported regularly reaching $1,500 in sales per week, with a few weeks even reaching successful sales of over $2,000 for some farms. Neighboring businesses also noted an increase in resident foot traffic on Sundays, and many chefs and business owners are now able to visit the market to meet with vendors and build new supplier relationships.

Starting in 2017, Common Ground also began stewarding the historic Downing Park Farmers’ Market.

Newburgh Farmers’ Market at Downing Park

Situated in the heart of Newburgh, NY, the Downing Park Farmers’ Market plays a critical role in food access for its surrounding neighborhoods, while also providing a welcoming, inclusive community space for gathering in one of the Hudson Valley’s most beautiful parks. By running a well-managed market, local farms and businesses are able to connect directly with Newburgh’s consumers and cater to their unique and diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

The Downing Park Farmers’ Market and its vendors all accept SNAP/EBT, WIC/FMNP and FreshConnect Checks. Accepting food benefits at the market makes fresh produce and high quality local food available to food insecure individuals. All of that money then goes directly to our farmers and food producers. Common Ground Farm is working to bring its popular Greens 4 Greens double up program, piloted at the Beacon Farmers’ Market, to the Downing Park market in 2018. Common Ground Farm partners with the City of Newburgh, the Downing Park Planning Committee, the Newburgh Land Bank and other urban development and agricultural nonprofits in Newburgh and Orange County to make the Downing Park Farmers’ Market possible.
GREENS 4 GREENS PROGRAM

Greens 4 Greens is a food benefit incentive program, unique to the Beacon Farmers’ Market that began in 2016. Eligible NYS funded food benefits are matched dollar for dollar through Greens 4 Greens, making the farmers’ market more accessible to a wider base of consumers. Since its inception in 2016, $6,000 worth of produce has been purchased using Greens 4 Greens. The program has been completely community funded, made possible by Common Ground fundraising through our “Soup 4 Greens” and “Greens 4 Greens Potluck” events, as well as contributions from donors and local businesses. In 2017, $4,000 was raised for the Greens 4 Greens program through these two fundraisers. Several volunteers, donors and local businesses contributed to make them a success, including: Quinn’s Rest ‘N’ Rant, Key Food Beacon, Homespun, Utensil, Max’s on Main, Beacon Natural Market, Ziatun, Dogwood, Beacon Pantry, All You Knead, Stock Up and Mole Mole from Poughkeepsie. This increase in community funding, allowed the Greens 4 Greens program to run throughout the 2017 winter farmers’ market season, providing $4 Greens 4 Greens checks to those that demonstrated need all year long. Food insecure customers feel good knowing that their farmers’ markets encourage the use of their food benefits, and that their weekly produce shopping benefits local farmers.
MOBILE MARKETS

NEWBURGH FRESH POP-UP MARKET

In 2017, Common Ground Farm’s green bus crossed the bridge in the inaugural year of the Newburgh Fresh Pop-up Market, a partnership between the farm and Affinity Health Plan at the Lake Street Apartments in the City of Newburgh. Every other Thursday, Common Ground offered fresh, affordable and local produce from the farm, along with fruit from other local farms. Affinity Health Plan coordinated healthcare and social service organizations to offer free health information and to distribute Senior FMNP checks to the seniors living at these apartments, which could then be used at the Common Ground stand to purchase fresh produce. Working in partnership with healthcare organizations enables even greater impact by acknowledging the connection and shared goals of farms, food and preventative healthcare.

COMMON GREENS MOBILE MARKET
Green Teens & Next Step Interns

Common Greens is our mobile farmers’ market located in Beacon, created through our longtime partnership with the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County’s (CCEDC) Green Teen Community Gardening and Next Step intern programs. During the growing season, Green Teens and Next Step interns visit the farm weekly to learn about agriculture and join us at the farmers’ market for job training, allowing them to set up and run the mobile markets themselves, every Wednesday from July to September.

The Common Greens mobile market brings affordable produce from the farm and the Green Teen’s urban gardens to low-income communities in the City of Beacon, including senior housing and the community health center. In 2017, a combined total of over 2,000 pounds of produce from Common Ground and the Green Teen gardens was sold at the Common Greens mobile market, and 61% of market sales were made using some form of food benefits, including Common Ground’s own Greens 4 Greens program vouchers, which is an indication that the market is reaching our target population.
2017 HIGHLIGHTS

• Common Ground became regional as we expanded to Newburgh, our sister city across the river, which is twice the size and twice the poverty rate of Beacon; low income customers accessed our steeply discounted, organically grown produce at two markets, including one mobile market at a senior housing complex. We also took over management of Newburgh’s historic Downing Park Farmers’ Market to transform it into a viable marketplace for local agricultural producers and to bring good food into the heart of the city.

• Over 4,500 pounds of healthy, organically grown produce was distributed to our partners at twelve local food pantries and soup kitchens.

• Nearly 1,000 pounds of Common Ground produce was used in Beacon City School District lunches, Vegetable-of-the-Month programs and free summer meals.

• We offered a bustling summer camp for seven weeks of the summer, robust Farm to School programming at the farm and in the schools, a popular toddler series, and adult dye and fiber workshops, making for nearly 6,000 visits. We were able to offer 29 full scholarships to summer campers who would not otherwise have been able to attend, including meals and access to a weekly U-Pick share.

• Under Common Ground management, the Beacon Farmers’ Market moved to Main Street. The market has grown from 10 to 25 weekly vendors, who are seeing on average 30% increases in sales.

• Access to the market has increased: food stamp purchases have doubled and our Greens 4 Greens program has doubled the purchasing power of food insecure families year round.
OPERATING BUDGET AND GRANT FUNDING FOR 2017

January - December 2017

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the generous community members who make our work possible

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Anne Carbone
Blake T. Newton, III
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David Mark Schwartz
Dennis Meyer
Jean So
John Bruno
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Kathleen Finlay
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Nancy Berner
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Nina Meehan
Nita Sutton
Nora & Eugene Hamond-Gallardo
Robin & Sergio Young
Timothy Howell
Victoria Levechchio

$1-99
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Alexis Mills
Allison Weiss
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Anne Persico
Ashley Baker
Atticus Lanigan
Bekah Starr
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Green Teen Beacon, NY
Haldane Central Schools
Harry’s Hot Sandwiches
Healthy Orange
Homespun Foods
Hudson Hills Montessori
Hudson River Healthcare
Hudson Valley Brewery
Hudson Valley Farmhouse Cider
Hudson Valley Harvest
Hudson Valley Seed
Kids R Kids Feeding Program
L’Express
LNJ Tech
Luminary Media
Marbled Meatshop
Metal Winters - Station Built
Mill House Brewing Company
Mtn. Tops
National Young Farmers’ Coalition
New Vision Church Food Pantry
Newburgh Brewing Company
North River Hops & Brewing
Obercreek Farm
Omega Institute
One Nature
Open Space
Peekskill Brewery
Pergamena
Poughkeepsie Journal
Rabe&Co
Rethink Local
Roundhouse at Beacon Falls
Salvation Army Beacon Food Pantry
St Andrews Church Food Pantry
Stock Up
Stony Kill Foundation
TEC Land Surveying
Textile Lab
Thundercut
Tito Santana’s Taqueria
Two Way Brewing Co
Utensil Kitchenware
Valley Table
Virginia Piazza Pottery
Zero to Go
Zion Episcopal Church Food Pantry

COMMUNITY PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS
All Sport Health & Fitness
All You Knead Bakery
American Legion/VFW
Arabesque
Bank Square Coffee House
Barb’s Butchery
BCSD Wellness Committee
Beacon Bread Company
Beacon City School District
Beacon Community Kitchen
Beacon Music Factory
Beacon Nutrition Advisory Council
Beacon Pantry
Beetle & Fred
Blue Sky Balloons
Buttermilk Falls Inn & Spa
Chatham Brewing Co.
City of Beacon
City of Newburgh
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County
Crabtree’s Kittlehouse
Dan Weise - Thundercut
Diane Mae Flowers
Glynwood
Hudson Valley Brewery
Hudson Valley Health Care
Hudson Valley Farmhouse Cider
Hudson Valley Harvest
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COMMON GROUND FARM