



The UGC – A Brief Outline

What are we about?

The *mission* of the UGC is to strengthen the local food system, improve access to healthy food, and empower folks to grow their own.

Our *vision* is to develop the community leaders and institutional structures necessary to provide a sustainable and timely response based in small-scale agricultural production to the incidence of poverty, food insecurity, and diet related disease in McLennan County.

What does this look like?

As a coalition, the role of the UGC is to encourage and support partners and interested individuals to carry out identified objectives which relate to our mission. We also have several initiatives which we spearhead to help fulfill our mission:

- **Encouraging Gardening Education**

We provide ongoing support and guidance to school and community gardens every year. This includes everything from technical assistance in what to plant to managing volunteer groups and helping refine strategies to meet the goals of that specific garden. We also help connect gardeners with existing resources in the community, including workshops, and fill in the gaps in service provision where needed. In addition, we teach elementary and middle school students about science, gardening, and nutrition through after school garden clubs through a partnership with *Communities in Schools*, *AmeriCorps*, *Waco ISD*, and *World Hunger Relief, Inc.*

- **Strengthening the Local Food Economy**

The UGC operates a cooperative booth for school and community gardeners to sell their produce at the *Waco Downtown Farmers Market*. We are there every Saturday 9am-1pm, rain or shine. In our *Urban Training Farm* program, the UGC will work with high-school age youth through a paid internship program to teach them about farming/gardening as well as the financial and small business management skills they will need to succeed in the 21st century workforce.

- **Promoting Youth Service**

Every January the UGC coordinates more than 1,000 volunteers to serve in gardens across Waco for the *MLK Day of Service*. Every April we celebrate the many children across Waco who participate in school garden clubs through a festival style *Harvest Celebration*. And, we annually award an *Urban Gardening Scholarship* to youth who actively serve in school and community gardens.

By the Numbers

- Support and Guidance to 15-20 school/community gardens every year
- Garden Club Programming to benefit over 200 WISD students at 6 WISD elementary and middle schools, every week, throughout the school year (J.H. Hines Elementary, West Avenue Elementary, Brook Avenue Elementary, Provident Heights Elementary, Tennyson Middle, and Indian Spring Middle)
- \$1,000 Urban Gardening Scholarship to youth who participate in school/community garden activities and \$6,000 paid as stipends to 5 high school interns through the UGC Training Farm
- 60 active members and 1,500 unduplicated garden volunteers annually
- Estimated 7,000 pounds of healthy, local food produced through UGC affiliated activities