



2017

END-OF-YEAR REPORT



Way to Grow! Your gift now will be matched!

Dear friends,

A generous person in our community believes that the mission of Gathering Ground is worth investing in. For this reason, they have offered to match all donations that Gathering Ground receives between Giving Tuesday Nov 28, and Dec. 31, up to \$15K. This means if you give a gift of \$50 it will turn into \$100! A gift of \$100, will turn into \$200. If you've been considering giving to Gathering Ground, now is the time to do it.

We believe that when people partner with the land, the whole community benefits. Therefore our mission is to educate youth and adults about how to partner with their environment through sustainable agriculture. Our educational programs will promote opportunities for economic development and will strengthen the health of our community.

A gift to Gathering Ground is a gift to support educational programs in sustainable agriculture, including the creation of a garden for use by the Island School students, teachers, & community members.

In 2018, we will also begin pioneering a low-impact vineyard management program for Northern Hybrid vineyards in the Midwest. With the help of experts from around the region, we believe our pilot program for sustainable grape management will prove to be a resource for grape growers across the midwest who wish to to grow grapes, but don't want to use so many environmentally harmful fungicides and pesticides.

We are excited by what this end of the year giving will mean for Gathering Ground. If we receive \$15,000 in gifts from individuals, and \$15,000 from our matching donor, we will be able to jump start our programs in meaningful ways in the next year.

Thank you for your support for Gathering Ground. Please continue reading this report to learn about what we accomplished in 2017 and what 2018 has in store!

Sincerely,
Russell Rolffs, Board President



With the funds we raise this year, we will work toward:

- building a community garden for use by Island School students, teachers, and community members at Gathering Ground
- starting a summer internship program for college students from around the region
- beginning our low-impact vineyard management trial
- starting a research-oriented orchard for Chinese chestnuts, a delicious grain-like, gluten-free tree-nut!
- beginning groundwork for community orchard

How to Give:

1402 Mountain Road
Washington Island, WI
54246

Make checks out to
Gathering Ground

**[Click here to check out our
wishlist >>](#)**



People often ask me what one thing I would recommend to restore the relationship between land and people. My answer is almost always, "Plant a garden." It's good for the health of the earth and it's good for the health of the people. A garden is a nursery for nurturing connection, the soil for cultivation of practical reverence. And its power goes far beyond the garden gate--once you develop a relationship with a little patch of earth, it becomes a seed itself.

Something essential happens in a vegetable garden. It's a place where if you can't say, 'I love you' out loud, you can say it in seeds. And the land will reciprocate in beans.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, from Braiding Sweetgrass





Our first year

*Cultivate & inspire
ecologically-minded
agriculture & partnership
with land & people.*





○—April // Pruning

Lead by Gathering Ground hero, Tim Lyons, the vineyard gets its yearly haircut. Pruning is the time for the vines to be renewed. Every bud left on the plant will grow a shoot. Every shoot leads to two clusters of grapes!



○—June // Learning from Judy Reith

Judy Reith, Grape Growing & Organic Transition Consultant & former manager of the UW Madison Research Station, visits to consult on transitioning the vineyard into a low-impact management system. Makes plan to return for pruning 2018.



○—July-August // Tending

Volunteers Tim Lyons and Russell Rolffs, and our only paid staff Peter Rafosala tend the vines. This includes tie ups, additional pruning, spraying, mending, protecting, and the occasional deer chasing.

Gathering Ground also hosts a farmers market with four Island-growers!

September // Potluck in the Vineyard

Our first event was a potluck, which produced the Island's largest salad bar and a lot of other yummy food! Attended by more than 60 people with the musical accompaniment of Al and Sue Schubert, the potluck was a hit! Plans are made for more potlucks in the vineyard!



October // Harvest!

With more than 60 volunteers from the Island, Milwaukee, Chicago, Green Bay and elsewhere, we were able to harvest 8,000 pounds of grapes. It was so much fun to chat and pick in the vineyard. Special thanks to Daniel Nerenhausen, Bob Atwell Hoyt Purinton for lending equipment we needed to deliver the grapes.



November // A special donor

Inspired by Giving Tuesday, an anonymous donor pledges to match up all donation Gathering Ground receives between 11/28 and 12/31 up to \$15,000.



A CLOSER LOOK AT HARVEST

8 DAYS 60 PEOPLE

ONE AMAZING COMMUNITY



 **8
DAYS**

250 HOURS

In a mere 8 days, we had harvested the entire 5 acre vineyard, both the red St. Croix and the white La Crescent,

 **3.5
TONS**

SOLD

We delivered 3.5 tons (that is 7,500 pounds) to Parallel 44 for 90 cents a pound

 **\$
6307**

EARNED

We will reinvest this money in Gathering Ground to build a garden for use by Island students and community members





From The Board

from Margaret Foss

Wisconsin's own esteemed conservationist, Aldo Leopold, most succinctly states my feelings about Gathering Ground's vision to "cultivate and inspire ecologically-minded agriculture and partnership with land and people." As one who is quickly joining the ranks of "older folks" on the island, and as a schoolteacher here nearing the end of my tenure, I feel a burgeoning sense of urgency to see our beautiful lands preserved, while at the same time exploring sustainable efforts to maintain and grow our economy for the benefit of coming generations. It is thrilling to be a part of Gathering Ground's founding and to foster the partnership between the island school and Gathering Ground.

A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.

-- Aldo Leopold





From The Board

from Laurel Hauser

It's been an honor to have been a part, even in a very humble way, of Gathering Ground's first year and to watch it -- like one watches a child -- take its first steps, make its presence known, and, also like a child, be embraced by the community. Who would have guessed that an idea -- to bring people and place and nourishing food together -- would so quickly take root, elicit the gift of a home (a beautiful, abundant home), and a following. CONTINUE READING>>

from Alessandra Rolffs

As Russell and I set up the tables for the potluck, we didn't know who, if anyone, would show up. Our expectations were exceeded as 60 people arrived. The generous group brought and shared their gifts -- food, music, tables, table clothes, bowls. In return for the generosity, all were rewarded with a delicious meal, good conversation, amazing music, and a great deal of leftovers to enjoy the next day.

CONTINUE READING>>



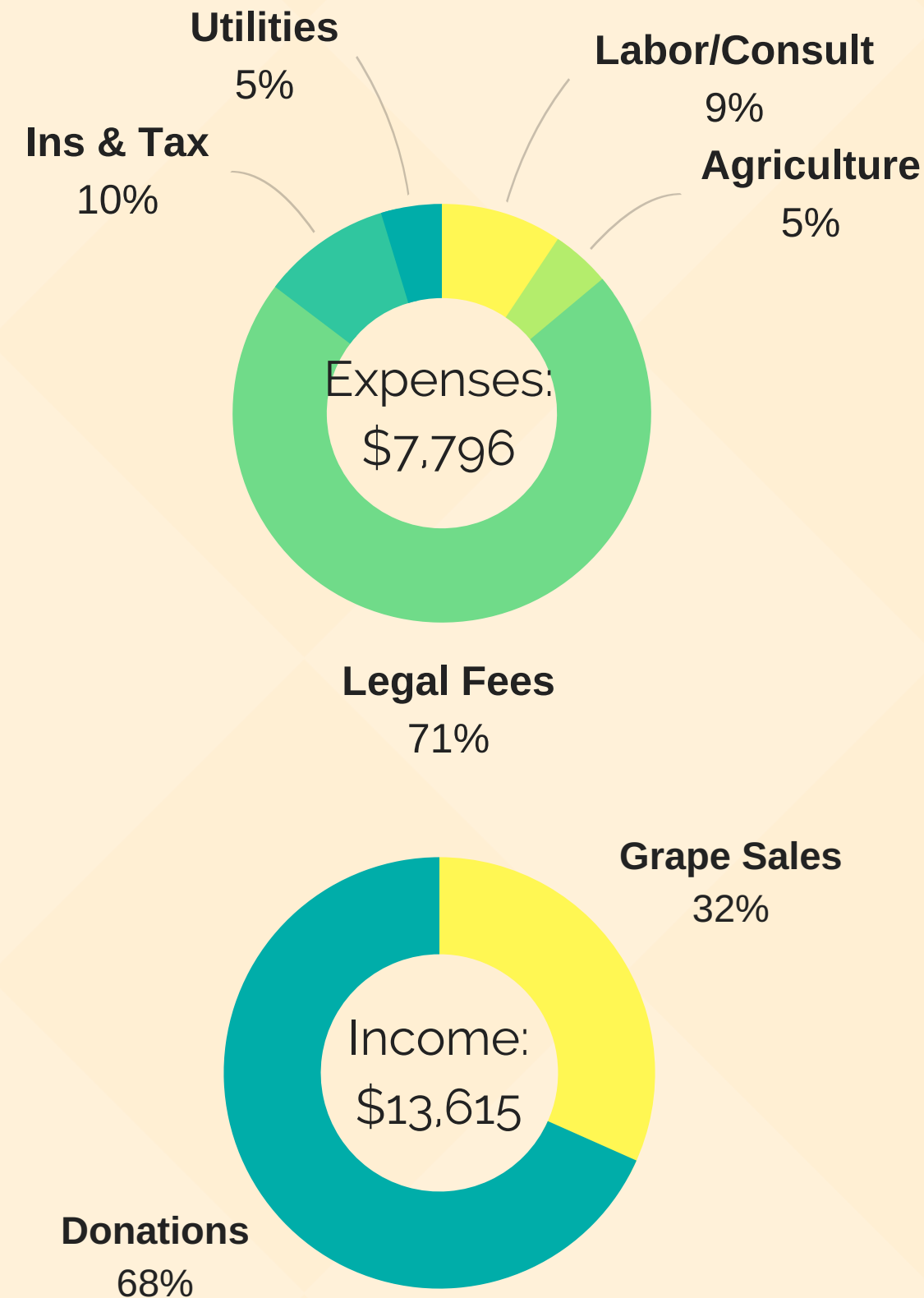
Our Financial Review & Outlook

Our first year financials reflect an organization establishing a firm foundation. The vast majority of our expenses in 2017 were one-time, startup costs associated with establishment of Gathering Ground as a 501(c)3. This amount was \$5,474, and was covered by an anonymous donation. The cost to produce the grapes (\$732) was kept low due to the donation of people's time and equipment. Our fixed annual costs included utilities (\$367) and insurance (\$778). Finally, \$353 in consulting fees went to covering the travel expenses of organic fruit-growing expert Judy Reith, who donated her consultation.

With \$13,273 of retained donations and earnings as of December 1, 2017, our financial outlook for 2018 is promising and will permit us to continue to work toward pioneering a path in Wisconsin for environmentally friendly vineyard management. We are also excited about the programs we can begin in 2018—from the community and school garden to the establishment of community fruit and nut orchards. With the matching donation of up \$15,000 that is on offer through to the end of December, 2017, the possibilities for Gathering Ground are extremely exciting.

Our focus is on community. Gathering Ground exists to bring people together around sustainable agriculture, to facilitate educational opportunities for youth and the community, and to work toward economic development in agriculture on Washington Island. Join us in our mission!

—Russell Rolffs, Board President



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

We look forward to seeing you in 2018!

Stay connected!

**Sign up for our newsletter. Follow us
on Facebook & Instagram**



Vision Statement: Cultivate and inspire ecologically-minded agriculture and partnership with land and people.

Mission Statement: Gathering Ground educates youth and adults in sustainable agriculture and promotes economic development through agriculture, to strengthen the health of individuals, the Washington Island community, and the environment.

**Gifts can be sent to 1402 Mountain Road
Washington Island, WI 54246**

Gathering Ground is a 501(c)3

