



# Growing a Better Future

Nutrient-dense organic hydroponic produce for  
our community, food deserts, and food pantries!

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## Watch Us Farm

### Building a Future for Adults with Special Needs

# Watch Us Farm

- **Who we are**
  - We train and provide jobs for adults with special needs
- **Our produce**
  - What we grow now - lettuce and microgreens
  - What we will grow in the future - even more nutritional food
- **Next steps**
  - Our model pilot program on our new campus
  - Move this pilot program to other neighborhoods
  - Supply food deserts
  - This circles back to providing more jobs for adults with special needs AND for others in our communities

# Watch Us Farm

- Watch Us Farm was founded in 2016
  - Our Mission: Train/employ adults with intellectual disabilities (ID) in community integrated settings
- Our Vision:
  - Create a replicable model for inclusive workforce development
- Our Values:
  - Employment, Local, Inclusion, Innovation, Sustainability



# Watch Us Farm

Watch Us Farm began with a simple idea: that everyone deserves the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to their community.

We saw a gap in employment opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities and decided to bridge it through innovative farming techniques.

# Watch Us Farm TEDx Talk - 2023



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Watch Us Farm

# Our Produce

- Hydroponic lettuce

- Butterhead
- Oakleaf
- Romaine
- Arugula
- Spring Mix
- Fun Mix

- Herbs & Edible Flowers



- Microgreens

- Arugula
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Confetti Radish
- Red Amaranth
- Kale
- Scallions
- Sunflower
- Sweet Pea
- Basil - several varieties



# Embracing Food as Medicine

- Nutrition is a key component of health and wellness
- Lack of access to healthy food contributes to socioeconomic disparities in health care
- By providing local access to locally grown healthy produce, communities can address this disparity



# Nutritional food

- Prevents illness
- Is ideal for recovery during and after illness
- Insurance may cover a physician prescribed "food plan" as part of medical treatment



# Hydroponic Nutrient Density

- Up to 40% more vitamins and minerals than regular produce
- Consistent nutritional content year round
- Water efficient - uses up to 90% less water than traditional farming
- No pesticides or herbicides!!

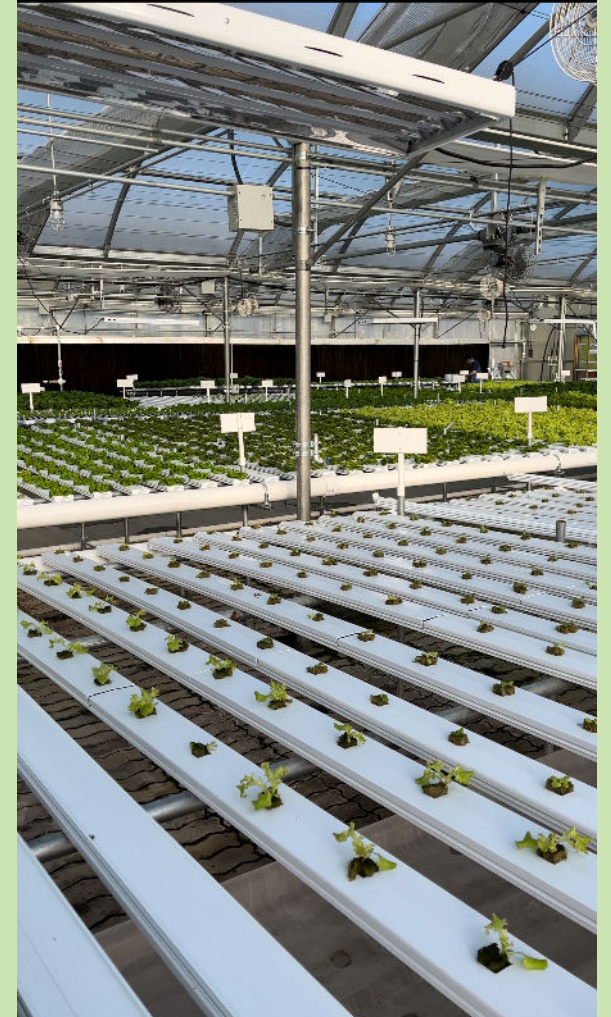
## ALSO:

- Reduced risk of foodborne illnesses
- Reduced carbon footprint - local production, less transportation



# Hydroponic Growing Process

- Seed germination in a nutrient-rich growing medium
- Transfer seedlings to hydroponic channels





# Hydroponic Growing Process

- Constant monitoring and adjustment of nutrient solution
- Harvesting at peak nutritional value



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# Hydroponic Growing Process

- Same day distribution to local community restaurants, farmers markets, and food pantries
- Always fresh, longer shelf life



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# Food Pantries

- Used to getting donations of dry and canned goods
- With donations of our lettuce, now using refrigerators to provide access to healthy produce



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# Current Programs and Services

- Greenhouse Operations: Job training in hydroponic produce growing, retail sales at local Farmers Markets
- Weaving Shop: Skill-building on restored floor and tapestry looms
- Card Making: creating, printing on Cricut, gluing buttons on cards and packaging for local shops around town



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# Next Step Programs and Services

- Our next campus
- 25 acres
- ½ mile away
- Local access
- Community partnerships



# Our Next Campus

- Watch Us Farm will transform this donation 25 acres into a green-space pilot program that can be replicated in other communities
  - Multipurpose hub building for training and production
  - Expanded vocational programs: Culinary arts, light manufacturing, digital skills
  - Community space for events and workshops
  - Will create ~100 jobs for adults with intellectual disabilities

# Our Next Campus

- Watch Us Farm will transform this donated 25 acres into a green-space pilot program that can be replicated in other communities
  - Expansive Greenhouses
  - Workforce Development and Event Barn
  - Pumpkin Patch
  - Apple Orchard
  - Petting Zoo
  - Athletic Fields
  - Housing



# Expansive Greenhouses

- Increased capacity: more nutrient-rich produce, varied temperature zones for other vegetables
- Impact:
  - More fresh locally-grown produce for our community
  - More opportunities for jobs in agricultural skill development



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# Workforce Development and Event Barn



helping out at the farm



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# Pumpkin Patch and Apple Orchard

- Continuing our tradition of an annual "safe" low-sensory Fall Festival for Families with Children with Special Needs
- Nutritional fruit
- Green-space with walking trails for families to enjoy nature and participate in activities





# Petting Zoo and Athletic Fields

- Mental Health
- Special Olympics



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# Housing

- Safe and supportive housing for employees with intellectual disabilities
- Providing stability and independence for individuals who are often forgotten



# Community and Family Engagement

- Programs: Workshops, family days, inclusive events, Fall Festivals
- Walking trails
- Event barn
- Strengthening community ties and fostering a supportive environment

# Expanding to Other Communities

- Programs on our Farm and in our Shop are successful.
- This campus will be our pilot program, a template we can use to replicate this model in other communities
  - Partnering with communities and developers
  - More locally sourced nutritionally dense food
  - More jobs for adults with ID and the community

## Expanding to Food Deserts

- Identify communities/neighborhoods with need
- Smaller footprint vertical hydroponic systems
- Near high schools for community integration
- Benefits:
  - Increased local access to nutritious food
  - Fresher produce with higher nutritional value
  - Reduced transportation costs and emissions
  - Community engagement and education opportunities

# Community Integration and Distribution

- Partnering with local food pantries and high schools for local distribution
- Job opportunities for everyone in a community
- Impact:
  - Strengthened community ties and support networks
  - Local employees working locally for their neighbors
  - Reduced transportation costs and emissions
  - Reduced food waste through local distribution
  - Fresher produce with higher nutritional value
  - Skills development and meaningful employment

# Expanding Watch Us Farm

## Creating New Opportunities

- Will create ~100 jobs for adults with intellectual disabilities
- Expanded vocational training: Culinary arts, light manufacturing, digital skills, partnering with local businesses
- Community space for events and workshops
- Local access to fresh high-quality and nutritional hydroponic produce



# Join Our Health Revolution

Watch Us Farm:

Cultivating a healthier future, one  
harvest at a time