

☐ Summary of Activity

'Make it, Bake it, or Grow it!' As Grassroots Northland Farmers' Market approaches its 15th season of encouraging regional economic sustainability by promoting local farmers and ranchers, food processors, and crafters, over \$75,000 in proceeds have been recycled back into community environmental projects through Grassroots NW Environmental Awareness Society.

Since 1990 a small group of dedicated volunteers in northwest Calgary, Alberta has organized community recycling drives, published environmental education resources for teachers and children, and supported environmental projects for schools and nonprofit groups. Championing certified organic produce, Calgary's first mid-week farmers' market is managed by volunteers. 'Fresh Market Tuesdays' have grown from 10 to 50 vendors, and over 2000 people per week visit this seasonal market. Partnering with The City of Calgary, local businesses, community associations, Alberta Agriculture and ENGOs, Grassroots Northland Farmers' Market continues to transform parking lot space into a forum for community building and sustainable environmental practices.

☐ Project Timeline: 1990 – Present

Dates	Projects	Outcomes
1990	Grassroots Northland Group	Formed
1991	NW Calgary Community Recycling Drives	Initiated
1993	Grassroots NW Environmental Awareness Society Grassroots Northland Farmers' Market	Incorporated Established
1990s	Exploring Nose Hill – A Hands-on Field Guide, Going on a Garbage Hunt, Let's Compost	Publications
Ongoing	Weekly Farmers' Market, June-September Support for Community Environmental Education Projects	Seasonal Annual

☐ Project Location

Calgary, Alberta

☐ Detailed Project Description**Grassroots NW Environmental Awareness Society Objectives:**

to promote environmental awareness through education programs, publications, and community action.

Grassroots NW Environmental Awareness Society was formed in 1990 by a small group of committed volunteers in northwest Calgary. This group's multi-community recycling drives were the precursor to The City of Calgary's current community recycling depot service. Grassroots NW incorporated as a society in 1993 when it established Calgary's first mid-week outdoor Farmers' Market at Northland Village Mall in Brentwood in Calgary's northwest, the same site as its original recycling drives. Proceeds from the seasonal nonprofit Grassroots Northland Farmers' Market have been funnelled back into the wider community through the Society to support numerous environmental projects and programs in Calgary, thus continuously meeting the Society's mandate to promote environmental sustainability through public education, awareness, and action.

Major Initiatives

- **Community Recycling**

Prior to The City of Calgary establishing recycling depots, members of Grassroots NW organized community recycling days whereby residents took their waste to a central location for collection. Volunteers helped residents sort materials such as metal, glass, plastics, mixed paper, and newspapers, into appropriate bins which were then taken to the recycling dealers. This program was extremely successful and helped educate the public about the need to keep their recyclables organized and to help reduce the amount of waste going to landfills. This was a sorely needed service and the recycling days often saw upwards of 2000 people lining up to drop off their materials on a Sunday morning. Once The City of Calgary instituted a city-wide recycling depot system, Grassroots NW volunteers then took on other environmental projects which continue to help citizens adopt more environmentally friendly behaviors.

- **Grassroots Northland Farmers' Market**

Inspired by 2 outstanding years of successful recycling drives, and with a seed grant of \$2000 from Alberta Ecotrust, Grassroots NW established Calgary's first mid-week farmers' market in partnership with Northland Village Mall businesses. In a whirlwind of activity – workbees to make tables out of old doors, community consultations to secure a development permit, advice from very generous farmers – two Grassroots NW Directors shifted from community recycling to full Market management. Fifteen years later, having grown from 10 to 50 vendors, Grassroots Northland Farmers' Market continues to provide northwest Calgarians with locally grown food and handcrafted goods from vendors who place quality goods and customer service first.

In keeping with its environmental foundations by supporting regional growers, the Market ensures not only a local supply of food, but results in lower transportation costs and emissions. Customers are encouraged to bring their own bags to reduce packaging, and they can speak directly with producers regarding their growing practices. Certified organic growers are encouraged to join the Market, and courtesy booths are provided to nonprofit organizations to promote their own environmental education initiatives.

- **Publications**

1. Exploring Nose Hill – A Hands-on Field Guide

This popular guide book is used as an educational resource for Calgary's elementary school curriculum. It encouraged teachers to use Nose Hill Natural Area Park as an outdoor classroom to learn about the park's cultural and natural resources, specifically the endangered grassland ecosystem. A companion slide show and field trip was delivered to teachers wanting to use this park for environmental education. Over 900 copies were produced and distributed; 200 copies were gifted to elementary schools in Calgary.

2. Going On a Garbage Hunt, and

3. Let's Compost

Both 2 & 3 are beautifully illustrated, easy-to-read books for elementary aged children which promote the benefits of recycling and composting. Copies of these books were distributed for free to Calgary Board of Education and Calgary Catholic School Division schools.

4. Lawns for Kids program: Grassroots NW prepared and distributed over 1000 copies of documents for teachers to use in educating children about healthy landscaping practices.

- **Annual and Regular Support**

Alberta Ecotrust	\$18,500	Annual financial support since 1993 Provided representative to the Grant Review Committee 1994-2006
Evergreen Theatre	Annual	Environmental programming for local schools
Science Fair	\$9,868	Calgary Youth Science Fair Environmental Awards since 1997
TD Canada Trust	Regular	Friends of the Environment Fund contributions

• Education**2001-2007**

- Clean Calgary Association: Waste Wise project; to empower at least 100 residents of Dalhousie to reduce their household waste by 30% or more through composting education and coaching.
- Unitarian Church of Calgary: Green Sanctuary Program; logo development; community gardens and xeriscaping; Outcome: 9 raised garden beds produced 35 pounds of organic produce which were donated to the Calgary food bank in its first year.
- Delegate Support for attendance at North American Weed Management Association, Alberta Invasive Plant Council, Alberta Native Plant Council, and Prairie Conservation conferences Outcome: Sharing success stories of Dr. Coffin School's prairie reclamation and restoration projects; education regarding invasive plant species; publishing reports to community.
- Brentwood Community Mural Projects 2004-2006: Youth Painted Anti-Graffiti Murals; enhancement of the built environment; community-building celebrations.
- Participation in Calgary's Invasive Species Group with Alderman Barry Erskine.
- University Elementary School: Environmental Mural Project.
- Bowmont Natural Environment Park Committee: brochure publication; photography contest which highlights the beauty and encourages users to reflect and appreciate this well-used urban park.
- Friends of Nose Hill Park: newsletter printing and distribution.
- Dr. E.W. Coffin Elementary School: interpretive signage for naturalized site.
- Canadian Native Plant Centre: native plantings in northwest Calgary.
- Vehicle Emission Clinics: partnered with Government of Canada, Alberta Transportation, Sierra Club, City of Calgary, and Clean Calgary to raise awareness about reducing vehicle emissions through Free Clinics in Calgary.
- Sierra Club, Chinook Group: organizational development for young organization for such things as phone line, computer, etc.
- School Recycling program; 32 schools were given \$200 each, including gift of book 'Going on a Garbage Hunt;' funding support helped schools initiate paper recycling in their schools; funds were used for purchase of containers, transportation, or signage and educational materials.
- Financial support for various conferences or activities: Dance for the Planet Fund Raising Event for Alberta Ecotrust; Breaking Ground Conference of City of Calgary Parks Department.

1990-2000

- Paid subscriptions for 5 schools for the Alberta environmental magazine, Encompass.
- Supported the cost of bussing students on environmental field trips.
- Community Environmental Education through Public Information nights: organic landscaping, environmentally friendly eating, ecological footprint, composting, school naturalizations.
- Workshops for teachers at such venues as Fish Creek Provincial Park Environmental Learning Centre and at local schools to share environmental resources.
- Guest speakers on the theme of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle for local schools in conjunction with Adopt-A-class program of Alberta Environment.
- Support for schools for their Earth Day celebrations, Environment Week activities, environmental conferences, schoolground naturalization projects, e.g. Green Garden in Brentwood.
- Support for other environmental educational programming, e.g. 'Empowering Young Environmental Leaders' program of Puffin Productions, which included production of video for Calgary Board of Education schools to utilize.
- Financial support for other ENGOS.
- Participation in Calgary's Ward 2 Environment Committee with Alderman Joanne Kerr.
- Participation on board of Recycling Council of Alberta.
- Developed responses to the City of Calgary's Integrated Pesticide Management Policy Review and the Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan, Alberta government's Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act review and the Endangered Species legislative review.

❑ Tangible Environmental Benefits and Results

Farmers' Markets and support for local farmers have positive and long-term benefits on the quality of air, water and land, preservation of biological diversity and public attitudes toward the environment.

- For 14 years, an average of 2000 people each week have visited the seasonal Grassroots Northland Farmers' Market at Northland Village Mall.
- Customers purchased local conventional and certified organic products along with processed foods and crafts.
- \$75,000 has been recycled back into the communities, schools, and parks in Calgary, including:
 - \$18 500 for Alberta Ecotrust Foundation since 1993
 - \$ 9 868 for the Calgary Youth Science Fair Environmental Awards since 1997
 - \$ 6 400 for recycling support for 32 schools in 2000
 - \$ 5 000 for Clean Calgary Waste Wise composting project in Dalhousie in 2006

❑ Intangible Environmental Benefits and Results

- Local food preserves genetic diversity – “In the modern industrial agricultural system, varieties are chosen for their ability to ripen simultaneously and withstand harvesting equipment; for a tough skin that can survive packing and shipping and for an ability to have a long shelf life in the store. Whereas, local farms grow a huge number of varieties to provide a long season of harvest, an array of eye-catching colors and the best flavours. Many varieties are heirlooms, passed down from generation to generation, because they taste good.” -Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project.
- Compare a hand harvested Nantes carrot to the Emperor variety and taste the difference.
- The average distance food travels from farm to plate is 2000 km. Buying locally grown produce saves on both transportation costs and vehicle emissions.
- Local food supports a clean environment and benefits wildlife – “A well-managed family farm is a place where the resources of fertile soil and clean water are valued. Growers are good stewards of the land.” -Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project.
- Supporting local growers preserves open space.
- Buying local food at a farmers' market builds community.

❑ Demonstration of Effort, Commitment, and Innovation - “Going the extra mile”

Grassroots NW Environmental Awareness Society members have logged countless 1000s of volunteer hours over the last 17 years. The scope of projects supported directly and indirectly has been broad and demanded a skill set of an organization that goes well beyond ordinary. As the list of projects demonstrates, the group has been nimble, organized, and thinks out of the box. Consider the persistence and communication skills required to convince The City of Calgary and the communities of Brentwood, Dalhousie and Varsity that a ‘New Initiative,’ a community market, could be a positive event from each of their perspectives. From kitchen table recycling talks to high level consultation with the city on pesticide issues, the commitment to excellence is evident.

In particular, the Grassroots Northland Farmers' Market project

- Started as an experiment; the market gradually grew from 10 vendors to 50, and has raised over \$75,000 to reinvest in local environmental initiatives.
- Is in its 15th year of operation, with managers that still volunteer their time.
- Initiated the first mid-week market in Calgary.
- Attracted high calibre growers (who were at Millarville and Red Deer Markets on the weekends) to set the initial bar high and to bring fresh produce mid-week to a new market.

❑ **Other Meritorious Considerations and Testimonials**

Not only have the members of Grassroots NW collectively pioneered recycling initiatives and farmers' markets in Calgary and fostered and supported environmental education initiatives in other organizations, each of the individual members is a role model for meaningful engagement in sustainable environmental behaviors. Any one of the Society's projects, and any one of the Society's members, would be more than worthy of an Alberta Emerald Award nomination. Taken together, this small group of dedicated people and their many innovative projects have touched the lives of tens of thousands of Calgarians and Albertans, all the while implicitly promoting environmental awareness through education programs, publications, and positive, inclusive community action.



GRASSROOTS N.W.
Environmental Awareness Society

- City of Calgary Environment Award 1997 Not-for-Profit Category to Grassroots NW Environmental Awareness Society, in recognition of 'Exploring Nose Hill: A Hands-on Field Guide' and companion slide show, an educational resource for use in Calgary's elementary school curriculum.

"Dear Grassroots NW Environmental Awareness Society,

Thank you very much for giving us the money to go to the zoo. We saw a real giraffe. It was my first time at the zoo. We liked the way the Dinosaur Park was set up with trees, paths, rivers and a lake."

- Genna, Kenna, and Vinny, Belfast Elementary School students, Calgary

"The most direct route from the farmer's wheelbarrow to your dinner table is a stop at the Grassroots Northland Farmers' Market. Locally grown vegetables, plucked from the ground in the morning are yours for the buying later that same day."

- The Freshest Pick of the Market to You. *The Villager* (1995) v 1, p 1. Calgary.

"As the name suggests, this market has a social conscience. All income from table rentals supports grassroots projects, including two books on recycling and composting, the annual Calgary Science Fair, and school recycling/composting projects. In exchange for seed funds, Grassroots supports The Alberta EcoTrust (which brings together non-profit environmental agencies and corporations to find common ground). Beyond the political, there are many good reasons to go to this market:

service, community connection, and recipes."

- Dee Hobsbawn-Smith (2002). *Eating from the Markets*. *City Palate*. Calgary, July/August, p 12.

Cheri Macaulay, Brentwood Community Mural co-coordinator [a project supported by Grassroots], reflects that "a community needs gathering places to bring people together and the Northland Market provides just that. While walking through the market on any Tuesday afternoon I see families, friends and neighbours chatting as they make their way through the stalls. We are so fortunate in this community to have such a colourful and nurturing gathering place. My teenagers take turns accompanying me to the market all summer long and 'Tuesday Market supper' is a meal our family looks forward to weekly."

- Brentwood *Bugle*, September 2005

Lee Hunt, another mural co-coordinator, comments that the market "contributes so positively to the greater NW community. It gives a higher profile to the Northland Mall. Many of the market shoppers also go into the mall before or after their market visit. Thus, it must increase business. Also, as we saw last year and again this year, it is a focal spot for many in our neighbourhood. When we had our mural booths set up both years, we knew many of the folks who came to shop at the market."

- Brentwood *Bugle*, September 2005