

*2022-  
2023*

JONES VALLEY TEACHING FARM

# IMPACT REPORT



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

04

Letter From The Executive Director

06

Mission + Vision

08

Our Teaching Farms

10

Center for Food Education

14

Experiential Education

18

Economic Mobility for Youth

22

Farming + Food Resiliency

26

Building Community

30

Outreach

32

Our Impact

34

Financials







“A leaf of grass is no less than the journey work of the stars.” — Walt Whitman

Our 2023 Impact Report is (and should be) a tangible way for you to see, measure, and understand the work Jones Valley Teaching Farm does each day. We pay careful attention to every detail—how a child feels in our spaces, the skills they develop, the standards and lessons they learn, the bonds they make, and the many pathways that open up for them. We count each and every pound of food we grow and track where it goes, and we follow the seedlings we distribute to 30+ community gardens across our community. We ask parents and teachers what is working and ways we can improve. Most importantly, we center young people in everything we do and listen to the ideas they have for Jones Valley Teaching Farm’s growth and evolution.

What is harder to explain in an Impact Report is the sense of joy, wonder, and awe young people feel when they are learning, growing, and simply being exactly who they are as they are. We are still dreaming up the evaluation tools for measuring wonder and maybe you have some ideas for that? Until that happens, let’s be sure to celebrate joy, wonder, and awe when we see it – when you feel the soil between your fingers and find a sweet potato hidden deep under the ground, when a dish you’ve never had before makes your taste buds dance, and that feeling of knowing you are in community with others. May all of our Impact Reports connect you to the joy, wonder, and awe we all deserve.

Thank you for being in community with us so that we may measure the many ways Jones Valley Teaching Farm impacts this big, wide world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amanda Storey".

Amanda Storey







# MISSION + VISION

*Food is our foundation;  
people grow here.*

## ***Jones Valley Teaching Farm***

*uses food as a foundation so that  
young people can lead, create,  
and grow a healthy future for  
themselves and their community.*

*We envision communities  
inspired by food and  
transformed by youth.*



# OUR TEACHING FARMS

*vibrant, student-centered, inspiring*



GLEN IRIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
TEACHING FARM ESTABLISHED 2013



HAYES K-8 SCHOOL  
TEACHING FARM ESTABLISHED 2015



AVONDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
TEACHING FARM ESTABLISHED 2014



W.E. PUTNAM MIDDLE SCHOOL  
TEACHING FARM ESTABLISHED 2015



HENRY J. OLIVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
TEACHING FARM ESTABLISHED 2014



WOODLAWN HIGH SCHOOL  
TEACHING FARM ESTABLISHED 2016



# CENTER FOR FOOD EDUCATION

*The 2022-2023 school year marks our first full year  
of programming at the Center for Food Education.*



DOWNTOWN FARM ESTABLISHED 2007

CENTER FOR FOOD EDUCATION + JOHN HERBERT PHILLIPS ACADEMY K8 TEACHING FARM ESTABLISHED 2021

Located on our Downtown Campus, the Center for Food Education anchors Jones Valley Teaching Farm's work and creates a dynamic community hub allowing us to make a greater impact than ever before. From camps and field trips to workshops and training opportunities, the Center serves as a statewide resource for students, educators, gardeners, and residents of all ages.

The Center includes dedicated learning spaces where JVTf Instructors deliver Good School Food lessons to K-12 students and community workshops are held. The Center's design merges indoor and outdoor spaces, mimicking the interdisciplinary approach of the Good School Food education model.

John Herbert Phillips K-8 Academy Teaching Farm beds, nestled around the original muscadine arbor, ensure that our students down the street have their own space to cultivate and explore.

The Farm Wing includes a wash station to safely process harvests before storing produce in the adjacent walk-in cooler. The greenhouse, completed in the summer of 2023, will allow us to increase our seedling production for community distribution and explore new ways of growing.

On the southwest corner of the campus sits our original Farm Stand, a public access point for free, fresh food, surrounded by our community garden beds where Good Community Food Fellows grow their own crops.

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

The Center for Food Education allows us to offer camps and field trips that extend the Good School Food immersive learning experience to students across Birmingham and beyond. During this past academic year, the Center welcomed 1,817 students, a 54% increase from the students we serve in our partner schools. Thanks to the generous support of Birmingham City Schools, all field trips and camps are free for BCS students.





## Camp Grow

Camp Grow is an educational and interactive learning opportunity for students curious about food, farming, and the culinary arts. This year, third through eighth grade campers from 44 schools explored the natural world through inquiry, experimentation, and hands-on activities. By the end of camp, over **80% of campers** said they **learned new skills that helped them feel confident in the kitchen and want to learn more about growing food.**



## Field Trips

Field trips are offered throughout the academic year and align with the Alabama Course of Study and current learning objectives for visiting classes. This year, **100% of surveyed teachers** stated they were **highly satisfied with their field trip experience and that the impact made on their students extended beyond their time at the Center.**

*“The entire experience was so engaging and our [students] loved the hands-on aspects from start to finish! We loved how the experience incorporated biology, ecology, math, cooking, character, creativity, openness to new experiences, and so many other kinds of learning!”*

— Teacher, field trip feedback

## COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Each month, we host free culinary and agricultural workshops in partnership with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System at the Center for Food Education. Workshops are open to the public and cover topics ranging from seed saving and canning to backyard chickens and beekeeping. This year, **97% of surveyed participants reported they felt more knowledgeable about the topic presented and 100% would use what they learned in their own garden or kitchen after attending.**

1,817

students attended field trips and camps

54

field trips hosted

8

free public workshops hosted



# EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

*Using food as the foundation, Jones Valley Teaching Farm's Good School Food pre-K-12 education model brings learning to life, inspiring youth through experiential and hands-on learning.*



**Tamara Burney**  
Principal  
Henry J. Oliver Elementary School

## GOOD SCHOOL FOOD

Launched in 2013, Good School Food is a food-based pre-K-12 education model. Using cross-curricular interactive lessons, students find joy in learning by using food, farming, and the culinary arts as a foundation for academic exploration and environmental stewardship. At each of our seven partner schools, JVTF Instructors collaborate with teachers at every grade level to design lessons that align with the Alabama Course of Study and reinforce what students are learning in the classroom. These hands-on lessons span across all subject areas, including science, math, social studies, English language arts, health, and art.

**Tamara Burney, principal at Henry J. Oliver Elementary School** has been an advocate for Good School Food since a Teaching Farm was first established at the school in 2014.

*“Having the [Teaching Farm] is simply the best! The students have an avenue outside the classrooms to learn about nature, learn about food, and learn about what is healthy and what is not healthy. Scholars are so eager to go into the farm and learn!”*

Teachers at our partner schools have expressed similar remarks, reporting that lessons taught by our Instructors increase students' curiosity about the natural environment and keep students engaged in learning. For those considering starting a program similar to Good School Food, Principal Burney would encourage them to move forward, declaring, “The experience is like no other.”







## FARM CLUB

Each fall and spring, students at our partner schools have the opportunity to participate in Farm Club where they grow, harvest, and cook produce from the Teaching Farm. This year, **190 students took part in Farm Club and described it as an experience that made them feel excited, included, joyful, safe, and proud.** At the end of each semester, Farm Club students received a “grow kit” containing gloves, soil, pots, and seeds to apply their newfound skills by growing their own food at home.



## CULINARY CLUB

Each winter, students have the opportunity to join Culinary Club, where they use fruits and vegetables from the Teaching Farm to practice culinary skills from measuring ingredients to following recipes. After five weeks of practice, students work in teams to develop their very own food truck menu and test their recipes. This year, **75 students participated in Culinary Club with 98% reporting that they learned skills that made them feel more confident in the kitchen.**



# 88%

of lessons taught were tied to state-wide objectives for English language arts and STEM

# 100%

of surveyed teachers reported that Good School Food lessons were engaging for their students

# 83%

of students in after-school programming reported they would like to grow fruits and vegetables at home



# ECONOMIC MOBILITY FOR YOUTH

*Jones Valley Teaching Farm is committed to creating pathways for youth to achieve economic mobility. Through on-the-job learning, we develop talent and connect youth to post-secondary education and career opportunities.*



**Sedrick Burton**  
Woodlawn High School  
Farm Manager

## APPRENTICESHIP MODEL

The JVTF Apprenticeship Model consists of the Apprenticeship and the High School Internship. Together, they continue the education of Birmingham City Schools students and young adults through on-the-job training, credentialing, mentorship, and enrichment opportunities such as workforce development and exposure higher-education and careers. Both programs seek to create various pathways to full-time employment or post-secondary education.

We are thrilled when these pathways lead back to JVTF; in fact, **33% of our staff last year were graduates of our programs.** Sedrick Burton, a Woodlawn High School graduate, completed his Internship in 2018 and returned as an Apprentice in 2020 before joining the team full-time as the Woodlawn High School Assistant Farm Manager in 2021. Although he has had an affinity for agriculture since childhood, Sedrick says that working at JVTF has made him realize the importance of connecting to our land and the food that we eat.

*“Being a part of Jones Valley greatly influenced my professional goals. I have become very passionate about providing equal food access to everyone, and I hope to expand on my role as a leader and resource in the community.”*

In 2023, Sedrick was promoted to Woodlawn High School Farm Manager, a title he is proud to have earned. He shared that throughout the years, “I have been given ample opportunities to develop and grow into a leader, which is especially important for young professionals like me.” As an organization, we are excited to witness Sedrick’s leadership and how he has made an impact on the Teaching Farm and throughout the Woodlawn neighborhood.







## HIGH SCHOOL INTERNSHIP

The High School Internship provides high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to participate in a paid internship while receiving course credit. Interns manage a two-acre urban farm adjacent to Woodlawn High School (WHS), operate the WHS Farm Stand, and receive personalized career and college counseling. These experiences build deep agricultural skills and workforce preparedness. Interns also receive personalized career and post-secondary counseling including FAFSA completion, scholarships, and college applications.



## JVTF APPRENTICESHIP

The Apprenticeship is designed to help Birmingham City Schools graduates realize their passions and gain traction in meaningful careers. This full-time, year-long apprenticeship pairs on-the-job training with tutoring, credentialing, career and higher-education exposure, career coaching, and workforce development training.



Upon program completion, JVTF aims for 50% or more of Apprentices to transition to post-secondary education or careers related to STEM, nature, or the food system. In 2022-2023, **four Apprentices graduated** from the program, three having found full-time employment and one continuing their education. One additional Apprentice will complete the program in the coming year.



6

part-time High School Interns

522

hours of enrichment

5

full-time JVTF Apprentices



# FARMING + FOOD RESILIENCY

*Jones Valley Teaching Farm believes that when communities know how to grow, cook, and share their food for themselves and others, we collectively build food-resilient, healthy, and connected communities.*

## SOIL HEALTH

On the Teaching Farm, all decisions lead back to one thing: soil. Soil health is one of the most important factors influencing today's harvest and tomorrow's climate.

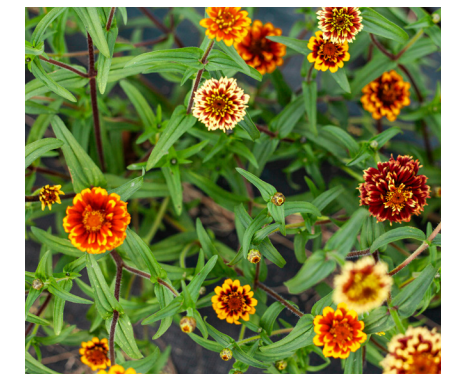
JVTF has worked the land on the downtown campus since 2007 but when we paused production during the construction of the Center for Food Education, farm managers Jessica and Sarah saw the opportunity to rethink how we care for our soil. Since September 2021, we have been committed to "low-till" practices.



***As we continue to steward the land and prioritize the soil, we are working towards not just being a sustainable but a regenerative farm.***

At the end of each crop's life, instead of completely turning over the soil to make way for new plants, we disturb only the topmost layer, resulting in a robust microbiome at the deepest layers for the roots to access. This, combined with crop rotation, cover cropping, diversity of plants, native perennials, and organic compost has resulted in softer, less compacted soil with lots of worms and greater nutrient density.

The benefits of these practices extend beyond record-breaking harvests—healthy soil holds carbon and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. As we continue to steward the land and prioritize the soil, we are working towards not just being a sustainable but a regenerative farm.







## HONEY BEES

Bees are back on the Downtown Farm! During our construction break, we gifted our honey bee hives to local beekeeping friends and this year we introduced three new hives. They are now thriving under the care of our four staff members who completed Alabama Master Beekeepers' beginner training and mentor Wayne Boshell. Rather than focusing on honey production, we use our hives as learning experiences in demonstrations for beginner beekeepers and students learning about pollinators and their role on the Teaching Farm.



## CROP PLANS

With year-round programming in mind, our farm staff creates crop plans with a focus on seasonal diversity, cultural relevance, innovation, and soil health. This year, we grew **185 annual and 98 perennial vegetable, fruit, herb, and flower varieties** across our Teaching Farms, providing a rich habitat for urban wildlife and honeybee colonies. In between growing seasons, no bed is left empty—cover crops, a carefully selected mix of plants that are not intended to be harvested, are planted to replenish the soil's nutrients and prevent erosion.



## HARVEST HANDS

With over 10 acres of growing space to cultivate and harvest, volunteers are essential to our work. In addition to the groups and individuals who help us maintain beautiful and safe Teaching Farms, a special crew of "Harvest Hands" joins us each week to make sure the Farm Stands are stocked, produce bags for seniors are packed, and that fresh produce is readily available for culinary lessons and clubs. These volunteers are trained in food safety and harvest techniques and gain valuable experience harvesting on a small-scale diversified farm. This year, Harvest Hands volunteers contributed **547 hours of their time, energy, and expertise** to directly support JVTF's vision for a food-resilient community.



283

plant varieties grown

74,796

seedlings grown

805

volunteers



# BUILDING COMMUNITY

*Jones Valley Teaching Farm will position Birmingham as a national leader and model for food-based education, sustainable urban farming, youth talent development, and creating healthy, food-resilient communities.*



**Lisa Balazs**  
Math Teacher  
Magic City Acceptance Academy

## GOOD COMMUNITY FOOD

When Lisa Balazs applied to join the first cohort of Good Community Food Fellows in February 2022, she was already dreaming up a school garden at the newly opened Magic City Acceptance Academy—an LGBTQ-affirming charter school in Homewood focused on empowering students facing barriers in their educational journeys. As a mathematics and environmental science educator, she knew a garden could be a powerful tool for her 7th and 8th-grade students to explore the natural world and engage in larger conversations around food systems.

The Good Community Food Fellowship, a ten-month program designed to support urban growers in the Birmingham area in partnership the USDA, gave her the opportunity to learn alongside 32 other gardeners and to gain the necessary skills to manage a community garden. Each Saturday, the cohort met at the Center for Food Education for specialized workshops and training sessions on culinary and agricultural skills as well as food justice advocacy. Upon completing the program, Lisa and other interested fellows applied to receive a stipend and a year of consulting to kickstart or reinvigorate their own community gardens.

**“Gardening builds community and a sense of belonging to something powerful.”**

As one of three selected projects, Magic City Acceptance Academy’s garden is now in operation for the ’23-’24 school year. While the garden is just getting started, Lisa shared she has already seen students take ownership of the space and that they’ve enjoyed working together to plant crops for the fall season.

Throughout the past year, Lisa has experienced first-hand how “gardening can be so community-oriented—I had never gardened as part of a community before. . . it has been so great to see how much students want to help build something at our school.”







## FOOD ACCESS

We believe no matter your income or circumstances, everyone deserves good food. This year, **82% of our fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers were offered for free to members of our community.**

JVTF's Farm Stands provide direct access points to the produce grown on our Teaching Farms. In addition to Farm Stands, we pack and deliver Harvest Share bags along with recipes to residents of Veranda at Park Place, an independent-living community for seniors, right down the street from our Downtown Campus. The remaining excess is then delivered to our Pantry Partners, local organizations addressing food insecurity.

While the majority of produce recipients live in the surrounding Woodlawn and Downtown neighborhoods, **JVTF produce was distributed to thousands of families in 86 zip codes throughout Alabama.**

## SEEDLING SHARE

Starting seedlings in a controlled environment extends our growing season, giving us a jump start on early spring and summer crops and ensures a robust harvest. Each year, we grow over 40,000 seedlings to plant across all seven of our Teaching Farms.

Since 2020, we have utilized our greenhouse and staff expertise to expand seedling production and distribute them to community gardens throughout central Alabama. By providing free seedlings, we help gardeners reduce costs on store-bought seedlings or the infrastructure required to operate a greenhouse, in turn boosting their crop yield and the ability to share produce with their neighbors, families, and beyond. This year, we **increased seedling production by 77%, growing more than 70,000 total seedlings and allowing us to distribute to 41 gardens**—a 62% increase in recipients!



# 206

participants in free  
community workshops

# 26,572

seedlings distributed for  
free to community partners  
and GCF Fellows

# 3

community garden  
buildouts completed for GCF  
Fellowship graduates



# OUTREACH





This map of Alabama represents our increased reach over the last year. The smaller map of Jefferson County and surrounding areas shows zip codes related to participation in our programming.

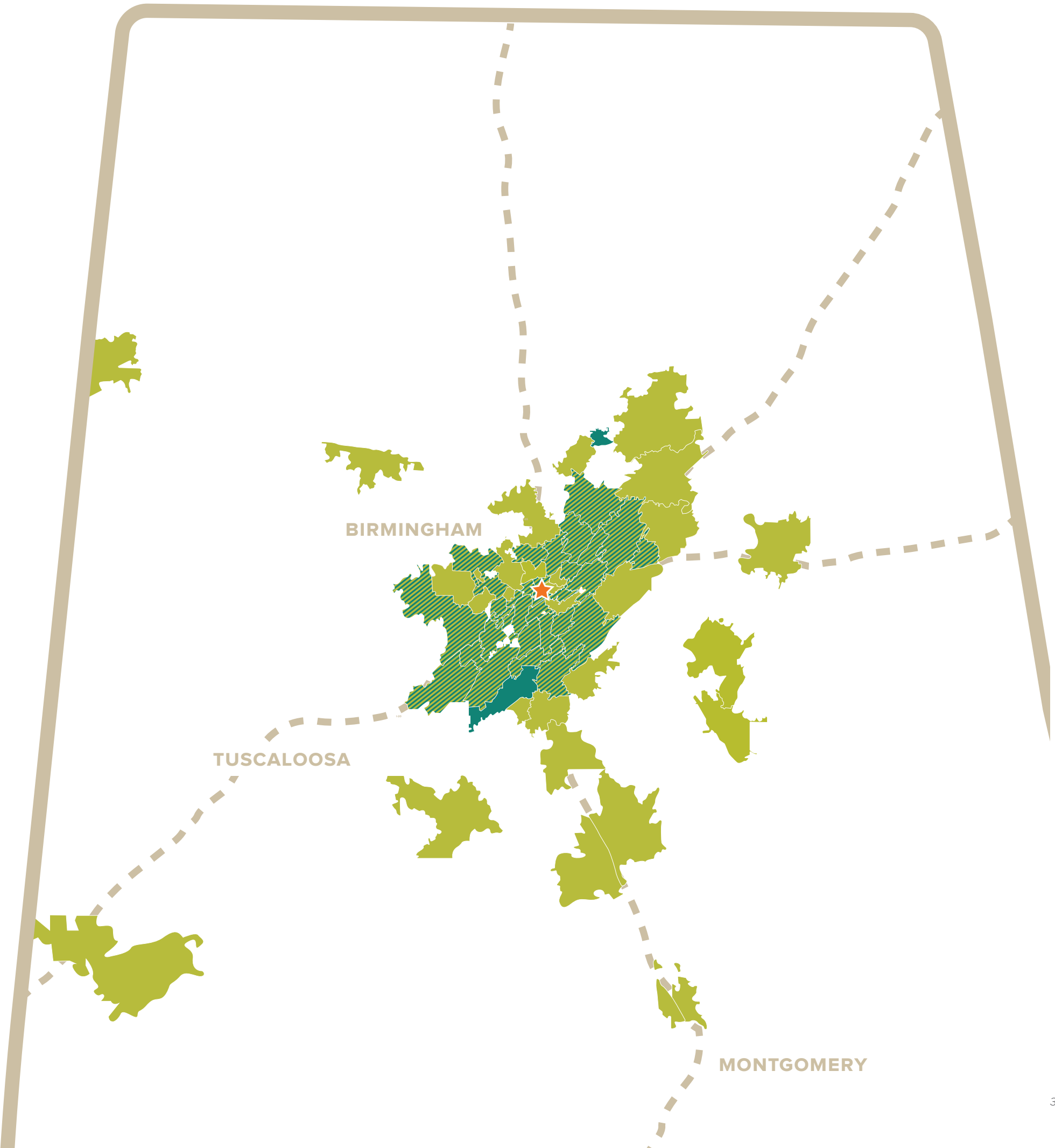
All participating zip codes are represented on the following maps except for three students who traveled from California to attend Camp Grow this year.

## CONSULTATIONS

We partner with several organizations and school districts that are interested in creating programs like Good School Food for their own students. This year, we consulted with groups from:

- Dartmouth, MA
- Detroit, MI
- Fairhope, AL
- Gulf Shores, AL
- Mountain Brook, AL
- Roseburg, OR

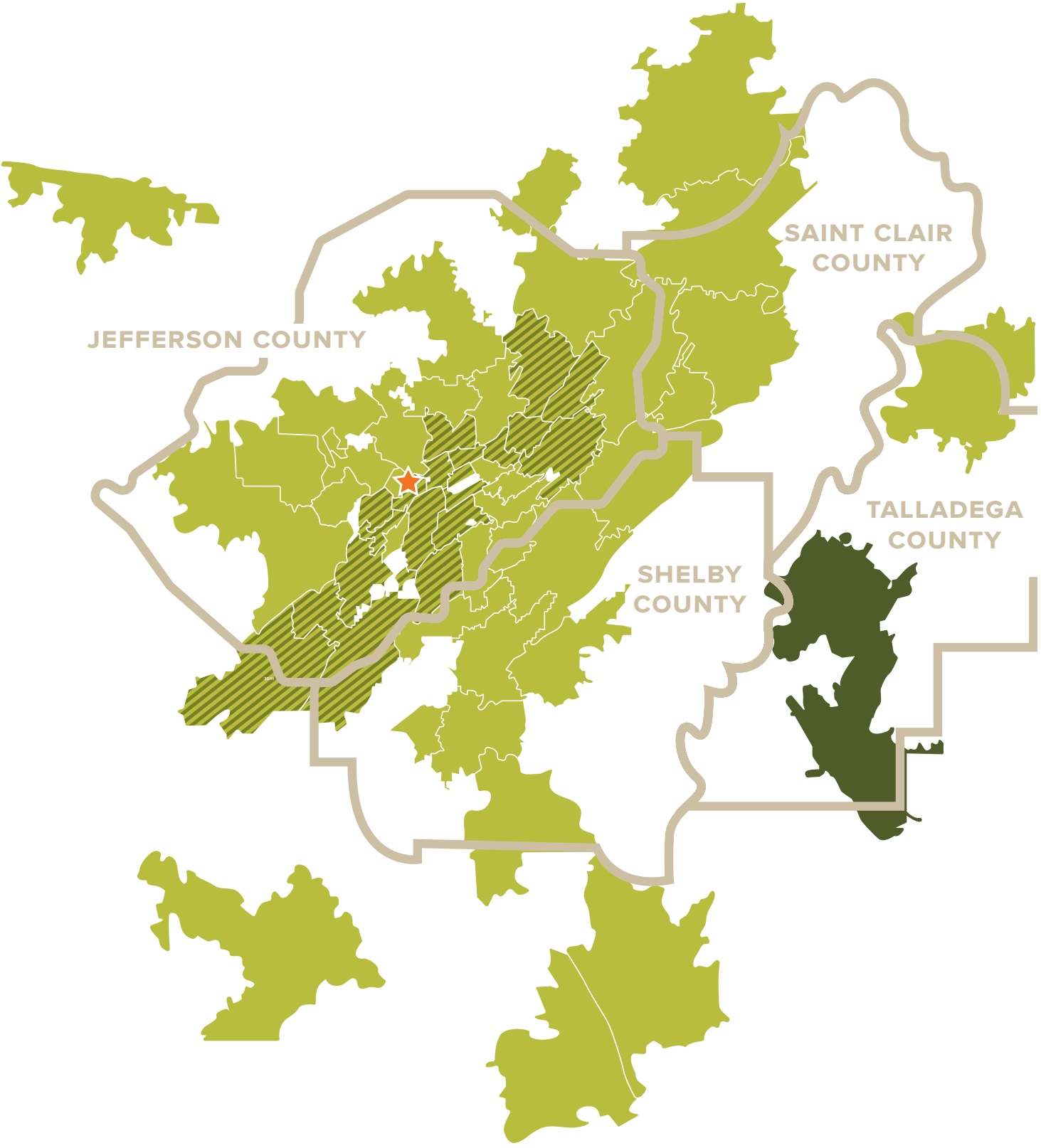
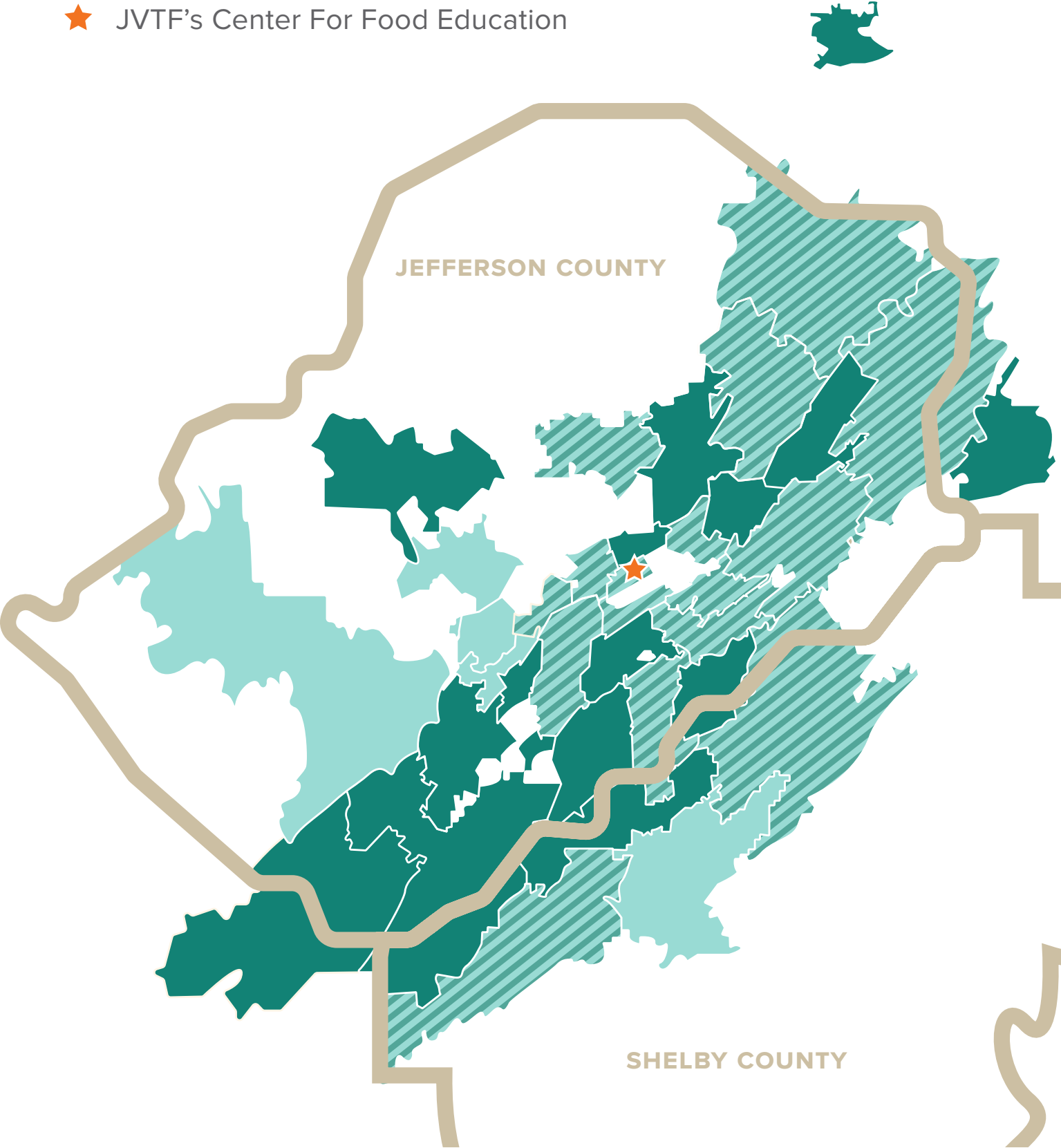
-  Good School Food Outreach
-  Farm Outreach
-  Good School Food + Farm Outreach
-  JVTF's Center For Food Education





A CLOSER LOOK

- Field Trip Participants
- Camp Grow Participants
- Field Trip + Camp Grow Participants
- JVTF's Center For Food Education



- Seedling Share Participants
- Farm Stand Visitors
- Seedling Share Participants + Farm Stand Visitors
- JVTF's Center for Food Education



# OUR IMPACT



5,141

students reached in person



39%

increase from previous year



19,435

pounds of produce distributed for free



70%

increase from previous year



207

days Farm Stands were open



88%

increase from previous year



3,528

volunteer hours

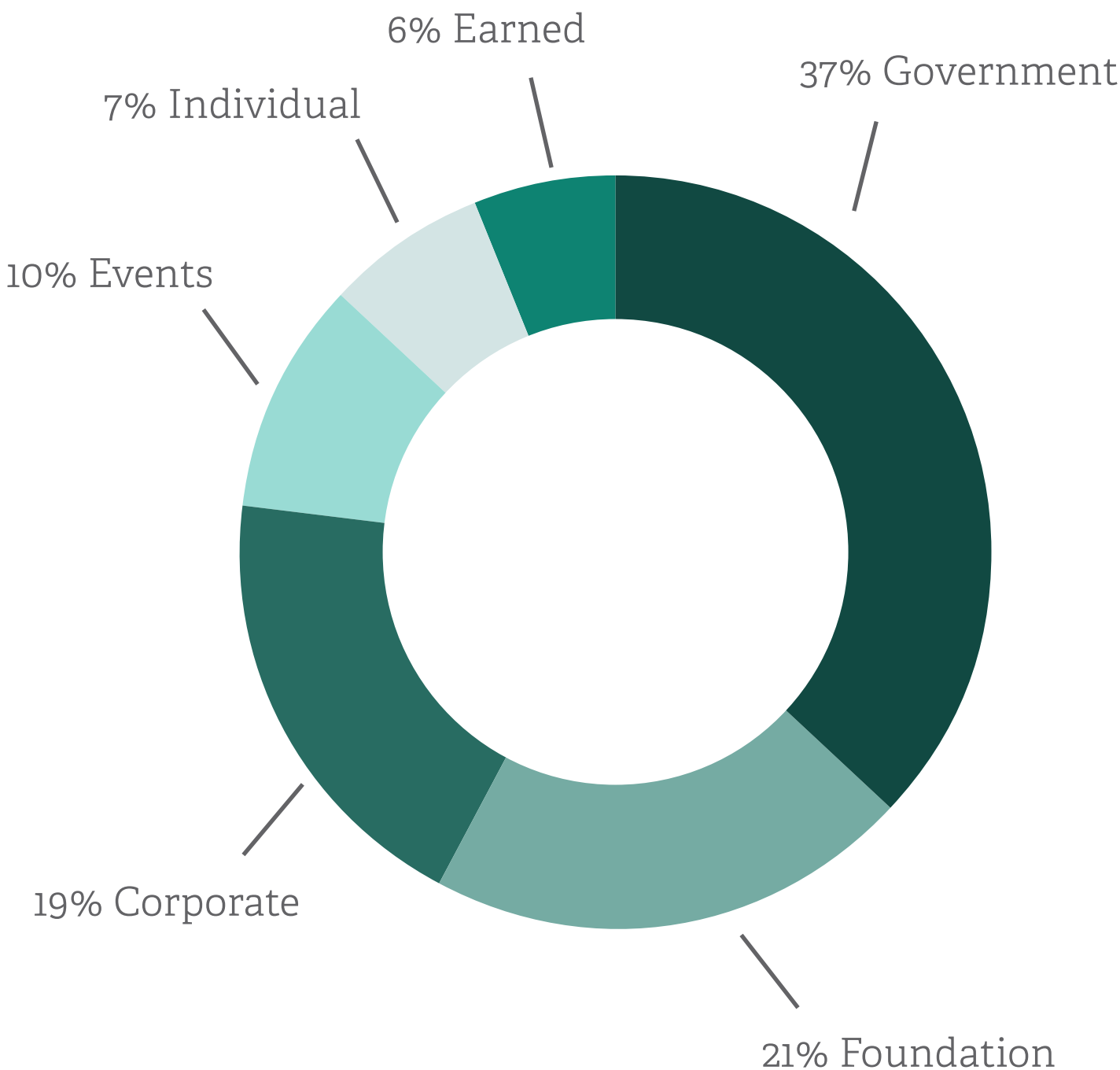


118%

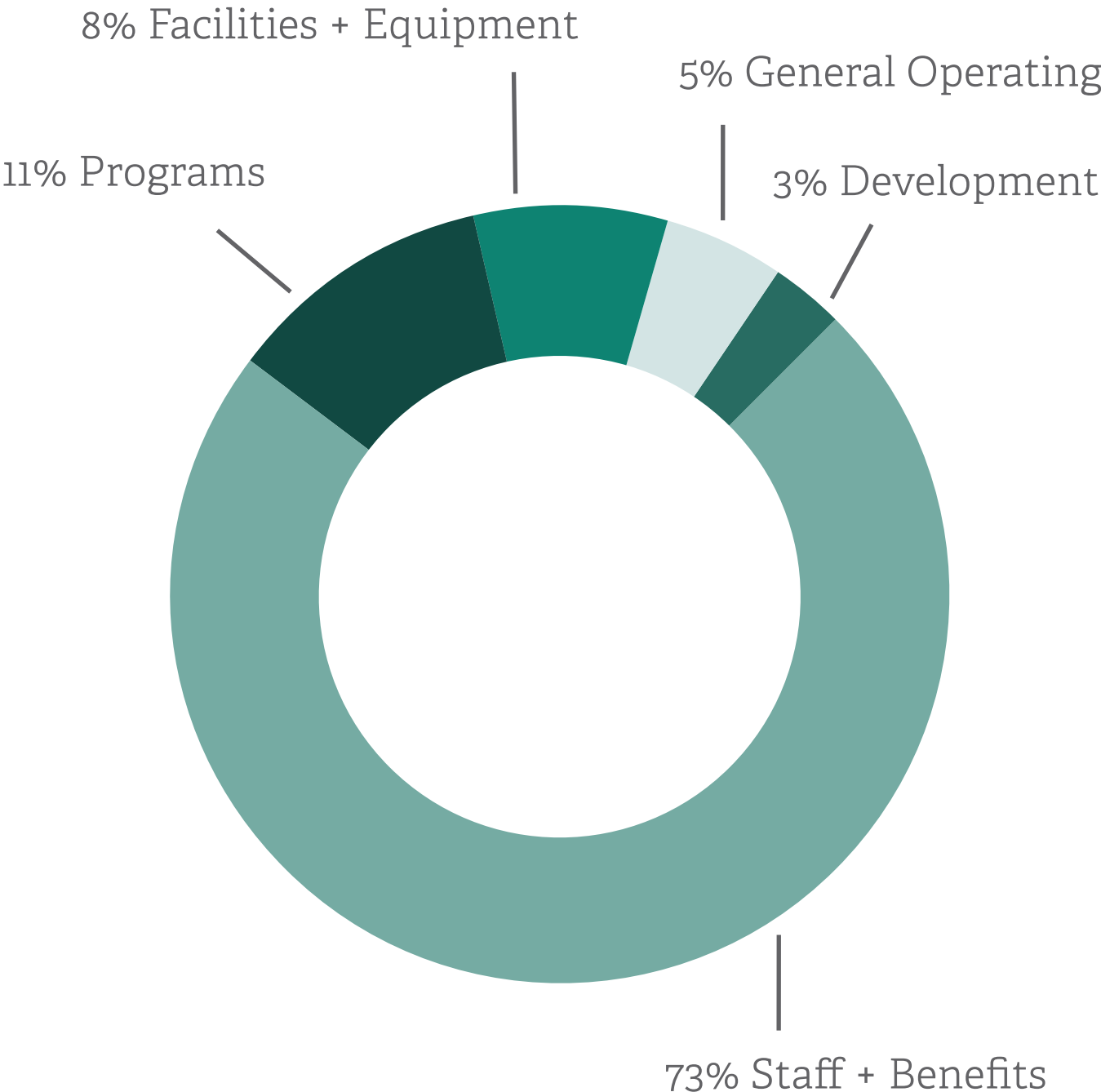
increase from previous year



# INCOME



# EXPENSES



**84%**

84% of our expenses go directly to the people and resources that develop and deliver our Good School Food Education and Apprenticeship model and Good Community Food programs.