

# Left Foot Organics

*A Vocational Horticultural Therapy Program for people of all abilities*

<http://www.leftfootorganics.org>

Left Foot Organics  
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**Left Foot Organics** promotes self-sufficiency, inclusion and independence for people with developmental disabilities through meaningful employment and training in the business of growing and selling high quality organic food and farm products.

Our objectives are two-fold:

1. To provide meaningful, paid employment and training opportunities in an inclusive workplace where everyone's contribution is valued and all receive the support they need to participate.
2. To produce high quality, fresh organic food that contributes to the health and sustainability of our community.

You can help by volunteering at the farm, buying our produce at local markets, joining our CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program, donating, volunteering, and in many other ways. Click here to find out more about helping Left Foot Organics.

***Our Mission*** is to promote the self-sufficiency, inclusion and independence of people with developmental disabilities through involvement in environmentally sustainable agriculture.

## **What We Do**

*Left Foot Organics* operates an organic market garden of about two acres, producing a variety of certified organic seasonal vegetables and flowers for sale in local markets. We grow over 50 varieties of vegetables, from arugula to zucchini. We also have eggs from our free range flock! As we expand, we plan to add more crops, plants, and small livestock with the objective of working up to ten to twenty acres over time. We offer CSA subscriptions for supporters who are willing to help us "earn while we learn" and keep *Left Foot* growing.

*Left Foot* provides part time, paid employment year round for 8-10 growers. We support individuals at varying developmental levels with a variety of relevant abilities and interests, modeling on the farm the inclusive community we advocate everywhere. Our *Growing Partners* program, which offers an inclusive workplace experience for rural youth, is expanding to include year round paid employment and enrichment activities. Volunteer, internship and other training opportunities are also available throughout the year. Our long-term goal is to become a model horticultural therapy program and community resource, providing year round employment, volunteer and training opportunities for all who share our vision.

## **Sources of Farm Staff**

- Local school transition program students and graduates
- Referrals from local employment service providers
- Individuals in the community
- Developmental disability advocacy and support groups

## Community Connections

- Direct marketing - establishing a community presence
- Training for jobs in the community
- Schools - transition programs, vocational ag programs
- 4-H clubs, county fair
- Donating produce to local food banks, feeding programs
- Demonstration site for environmentally sustainable agriculture, accessible production techniques

## Support

Sales are a critical component of revenue for *Left Foot*. Direct sales are also an essential learning tool, making the connection for employees between their work on the farm and its value to the community, while at the same time increasing the public's awareness of the need for, and benefits of inclusion.

However, because of our multiple objectives—growing food and people, nurturing plants and community—sales are not our sole source of program support. Additional funding comes from grants and tax deductible individual contributions. *Left Foot Organics* is a registered non-profit corporation with Federal 501(c)3 tax exempt status (EIN#91-2167831). We gratefully accept your donations in dollars and in kind, including your surplus garden tools and volunteer time. [Click here to find out more about how you can help.](#)

## Why agriculture?

Like all of us, people with developmental disabilities need opportunities to become involved in their communities and to provide for their own financial support. Yet the supports and services that make it possible for them to participate fully in work and community life are limited.

Agriculture offers a productive and healthy alternative to the common service sector jobs many people with developmental disabilities find available. Real social and environmental benefits also result from preserving agricultural land surrounding urban areas, producing food close to markets, and using production techniques that protect environmental quality and workers' health and safety.

At *Left Foot Organics*, growing and selling fresh produce directly to the consumer are the vehicle we use to teach independent living and basic job skills, improve physical health and coordination, develop appropriate social behavior, and build self confidence and a sense of accomplishment. Marketing their produce also gives people with developmental disabilities an opportunity to build the meaningful community and personal relationships that are so important to quality of life.

## Who We Are

- Executive Director - [Ann Vandeman](#)
- Farm Production Manager - [Lydia Beth Leimbach](#)
- Job Coach - Adrian Prevost
- Growing Partners Youth Program Coordinator – Kelly O'Neil
- Volunteer Coordinator – Kelly O'Neil

## **Ann Vandeman**

Ann Vandeman, an Olympia native, PhD agricultural economist and mother of Geraldine who has Down Syndrome, is the founder and Executive Director of LFO. She modeled LFO on vocational horticultural therapy programs in the Washington D.C. area, where she worked for 10 years as a research economist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Following the birth of her daughter, Ann began searching for ways of bringing her career in agriculture together with her new community of family, friends and supporters of individuals with developmental disabilities. Her search led her to the Melwood Horticultural Training Institute and the Red Wiggler Foundation. Red Wiggler, a vocational horticultural therapy program employing people with developmental disabilities on a 5-acre organic farm in Montgomery County, Maryland, became her inspiration and model for LFO. After volunteering with both programs and studying horticultural therapy at the Northern Virginia Community College, Ann returned with her family to Washington State to bring her vision to life.

*Contact Information:*

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## **Growing Partners Program**

Growing Partners Program is rural high school employment program employing youth from south Thurston County. Youth who are employed in the program learn job skills and training in addition to learning about inclusion. Youth work with growers lending support to each other while helping to grow vegetables on our 5 acre farm. They are involved in learning about Developmental Disabilities and learning how to best support and be advocates for people with disabilities. We hope the youth who are involved in our program to become advocates in their community to make inclusion a part of everyday life in our culture.

Youth Participate in workshops which focus on Development Disabilities, Horticultural Therapy, Communication, Marketing, Customer Service, Composting, Propagation, Animal Management, American Sign Language, and many more...

While on the farm youth work in fields helping us grow organic vegetables. They are responsible for field preparation, transplanting, irrigation, weeding, and harvesting of veggies for market. They also are in charge of the management of our on site market stand. They learn how to market, provide excellent customer service and help manage a successful vegetable market stand.

For more information on the Growing Partner Program contact our [volunteer coordinator](#).

## **Community Supported Agriculture at Left Foot Organics**

***Our 2008 CSA season is SOLD OUT! Check back in August for winter share sign-up information, and in the meantime see the [MARKETS](#) page to learn where you can find our produce. Thanks much for your support!***

**Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is about sharing—sharing the food we produce, sharing the abundance and the risks inherent in our relationship with the earth, and sharing the community we all create by working together.** CSA is a unique option for people seeking fresh, local and seasonal produce for their table. It works like this: you buy a share of the farm's produce, a subscription, for the season. In return, each week you receive a box of freshly harvested produce all grown on our farm. The contents of the box each week are a selection of the crops ready for harvest that week. You also receive a weekly newsletter including notes on farm activities, volunteer opportunities, Left Foot events, and recipes. Food for the soul is important too, so we offer flower shares for those who prefer a feast for the eyes and nose each week

By investing in a CSA you are not only investing in local farms and local food security. You are also investing in the people and program here at Left Foot. **Our CSA program is essential to the financial sustainability of Left Foot, and to the fulfillment of our mission.** We promote self-sufficiency, inclusion and independence for people with developmental disabilities through meaningful, paid employment and training in the business of growing and selling high quality organic produce. Our relationships with our customers, you, are at the core of our mission. Your participation as a customer helps us to create the supportive, integrated environment at Left Foot that challenges people to do their best, values their contributions and celebrates their accomplishments.

If you enjoy surprises and being creative in the kitchen a CSA share is for you. We encourage members to view their CSA as a continuing education experience. You will encounter vegetables you haven't eaten and learn how to prepare them. You'll also have many opportunities to get up close and personal with your vegetables. Come out to farm, see how the foods in your share box are grown, select your own herbs from our perennial garden, and get to know the people who are growing your food.

Our 2008 summer CSA season will begin the first week of June, 2008 and run through October. Winter shares begin November 6, 2008 and run through January 2009. Check out past issues of the [CSA News](#) here. For details on pick up and prices, see the [2008 CSA Application Form](#) To sign up for a share, print out the [form](#) and send it in with your first payment. You can also use [PayPal](#).

Thanks for your support!

- [2008 CSA Application Form](#)
- [2008 CSA Guide](#)
- [CSA News](#)
- [Recipe Collection](#)