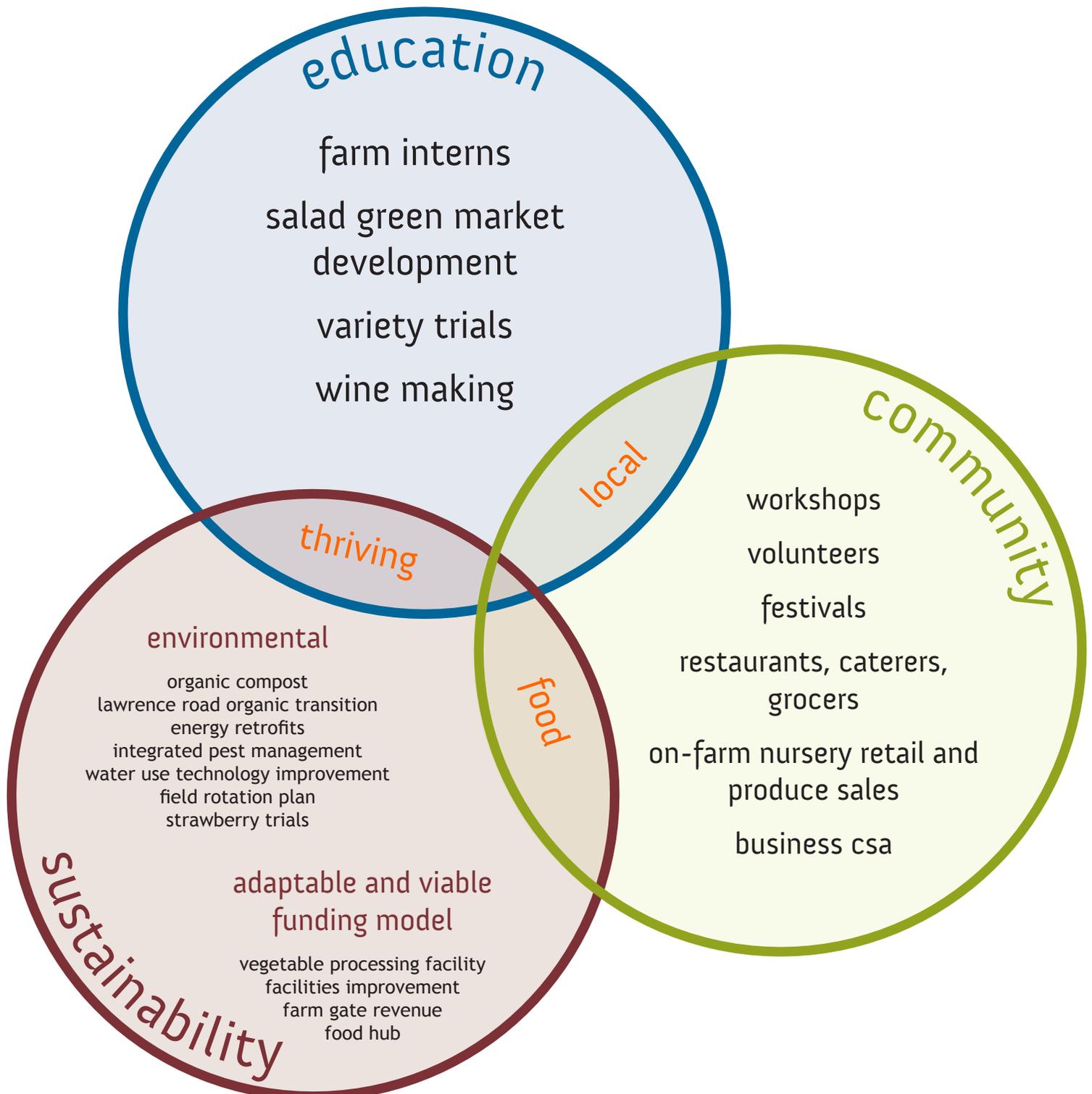




# CLOUD MOUNTAIN FARM CENTER

community | education | sustainability

## 2013 annual report



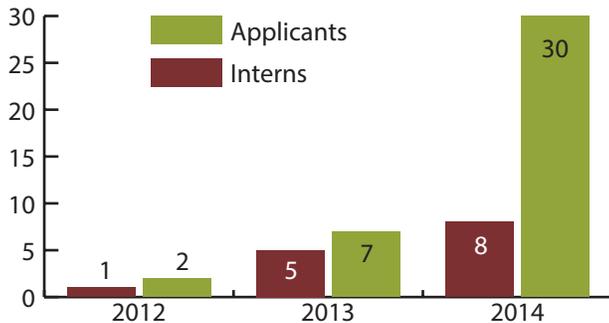
# education



## farm intern education program

a curriculum-based hands-on education

2013 interns had offsite learning experiences at over 15 different farms and research facilities, ranging from maritime wheat breeding to animal husbandry and alternate economic and market models.



We are pleased at the growth in interested intern applicants. It is key to have strong interest in order to ensure a high-quality group of participants. In our third year, the 2014 farm intern program will have seven new interns and one second-year intern working as Farm Lead. The program also has a full-time Intern Education Coordinator developing the curriculum and managing the program and interns throughout the year.

We are focused on building a quality program, giving interns true farm experience that shares in the intensity, stress levels and full farm cycle. We incorporate each year's learnings into the next year's curriculum and program development. We will continue to expand this program as we further develop an understanding of how interns work within the farm center, and as we develop a plan for sustained funding and access to housing for interns.

### curriculum categories

- vegetables
- fruits
- ornamentals
- vines
- soils
- tools
- business
- why farm



### what are 2013 interns doing now:

- Working a five-acre plot purchased in Whatcom County.
- Establishing a 15-member CSA - Community Supported Agriculture.
- Working at CMFC as 2014 Intern Education Coordinator, further improving the curriculum based on 2013 experience.
- Second-year intern working at CMFC as Farm Lead, reporting to Farm Manager. She will manage food for the farmers' markets and food packing logistics and participate in intern education.
- Replicating a forced-air static-compost project via SARE grant.
- Studying fair trade agriculture in South America.
- Renting land in Whatcom County to experiment with pasture raised pork.

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*"Cloud Mountain was a great introduction to farming on a small production scale. My time there exposed me to many of the concepts and tools used on a production farm, and will undoubtedly serve me well as I start my own farm."* Chris Henderson, 2013 Farm Intern



# education



ongoing variety trials: wine grapes, strawberries, vegetables and leafy greens

testing varieties and sharing information with other farms

grow and evaluate wine grape varieties for successful wine making in the region

- Now have 7-8 varieties that show tremendous amount of promise for creating wines ready for market.
- Have working relationships with as many as 50 growers since became a non-profit.
- Ongoing collaboration with NW Wine Academy.
- Over 200 hours of donated time from experienced trained wine makers.
- This project is valuable as it generates revenue from custom grape grafting, provides education and market development for other farmers considering wine grapes, has the potential for marketing and branding visibility for CMFC and further demonstrates CMFC's breadth of expertise in agriculture.

## salad green market development project

- Conducting early and late season leafy green variety trials to extend growing season.
- Trialing 10 varieties.
- Partnering with five other local farms.
- Hosted farm walks to share what we've learned; more than 30 regional farms participated.
- WSU published 2013 results on WSU website and in Whatcom Ag Monthly, December 2013, Focus on Farming.
- Presentations on preliminary findings given at two regional organic ag conferences in 2013.
- Purchased new equipment through grants to use for salad green project. New equipment allows for trialing new growing and harvesting techniques: bed shaper, planter and harvester.
- Purchased a trailer; purchased a truck with support from Farm Fund loan to haul new equipment between participating farms.
- Vegetable processing facility completed; equipment is in place and will be up and running spring 2014.



# community



## connecting with the community

### 2013 community workshops

- 25 workshops
- 500 attendees
- \$1470 in revenue
- \$820 in donations

### events

#### fruit festival, october 5&6

An annual event for 24 years. Guests tasted over 200 varieties of fruit and nuts, enjoyed live music and tasty food and purchased produce, plants, pumpkins and decorative gourds.

- 1700 attendees
- \$19,400 in gross revenue

#### harvest day, august 18

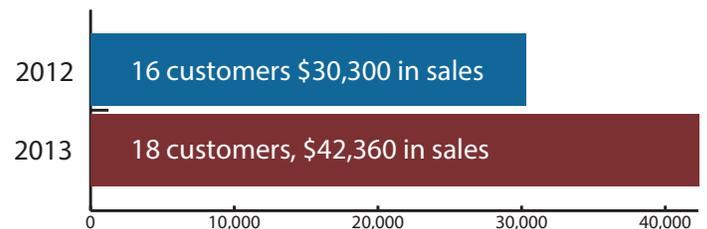
Our first harvest day, celebrating the bounty of the summer.

- 200 at first harvest day
- \$810 in gross revenue, represents three times a typical August nursery sales day.
- As this was our first harvest day, we didn't charge an entry fee.



### relationship building, increasing sales

Restaurant, caterer and grocery customers increase a little in number, but a lot in revenue—sales increased by 40%. Customers receive weekly emails listing available produce. Deliveries are made twice a week, and the in-person time has proven valuable in continuing to build this part of the business.



### volunteer help

- 41 people donated 190 hours
- Volunteers helped at Harvest Day and Fruit Festival, day-long work parties and tending the display gardens.



# sustainability

## environmental sustainability

### lawrence road transition to organic project

- Tilled four acres, planted cover crops, built a fence and installed a new high-efficiency furnace in the house.

### energy retrofits to facilities

- LED lights throughout the barn and new facility
- New efficient heat pump for the offices
- More efficient radiant-heat mats in propagation greenhouse

### water use improvement

- Installed new technology for improved management and reduction on water use for irrigation.

### organic compost project

- A farm intern project to set up an organic compost to stay ahead of federal food safety rules.
- We now have a pile of 100 yards of finished organic compost that will be used on certified organic food crops in 2014.

### field management - crop rotation

- We developed a crop rotation plan for the main farm site, which provides long-term benefits of improved soil fertility, reduction in erosion on the hillsides and significantly reduces the spread of soil-borne diseases.

### integrated pest management

- Working on developing integrated pest management models for organic production.
- Current projects are the peach and cherry orchards.

### certified organic strawberry nursery plants

- Strawberry fall planting plugs and fruit received organic certification-fall 2013, the first certified-organic strawberry plants available in Washington.
- For the first time organic farmers in Northwest Washington can purchase organic plants for organic production.



# sustainability



## financial sustainability

building an adaptable and viable funding model



### helping to expand markets

CSA for Business, third year aggregating and distributing produce from CMFC and three other farms. 2013 CSA members included Peace Health, Bellingham Police and Family Care Network.

### expanded vegetable production

- Crop diversity increased with 13 new crops in 2013 for a total of 31 vegetable crops.
- Increased vegetable sales revenue from 2012 by 17%.
- Trials on new production management systems. 2013 learnings now integrated as part of the 2014 intern curriculum.



### recognizing an opportunity, expanding markets..

The Center's custom propagation of kiwis, fruit trees and wine and table grapes all generate nursery revenue, build relationships and customer loyalty and expand our market. Our propagation program demonstrates the commitment and expertise to be responsible to specific grower requests.

#### kiwi propagation in second year

- A result of continuing requests for custom propagation, which has led to recognizing a general market opportunity.
- One custom kiwi request came from a grape customer...building on relationships, expanding markets.

### food hub - facilities improvements completed, or nearly completed

- Office expansion
- Customer and staff restrooms
- Vegetable processing facility-up and running spring 2014
- New equipment barn and inventory storage
- New commercial drain field



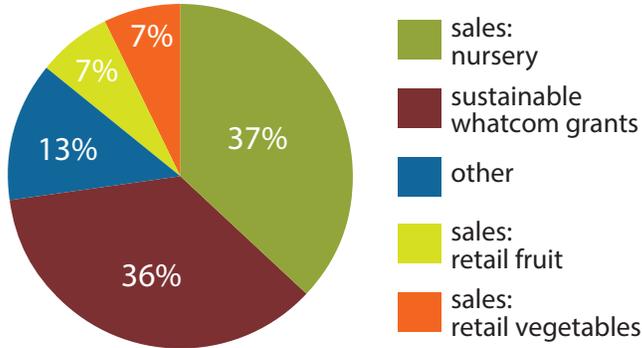


# sustainability

## financial sustainability

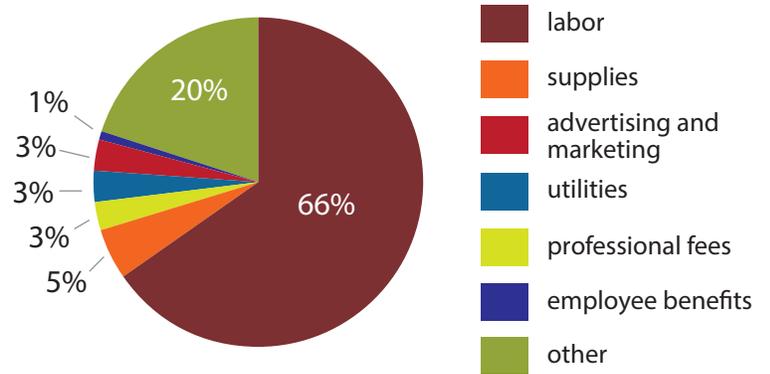
building an adaptable and viable funding model

2013 Income



\* represents programs and operations only, excludes capital budget.

2013 Operating Expenses



## farm gate revenue helps pay for farm operations

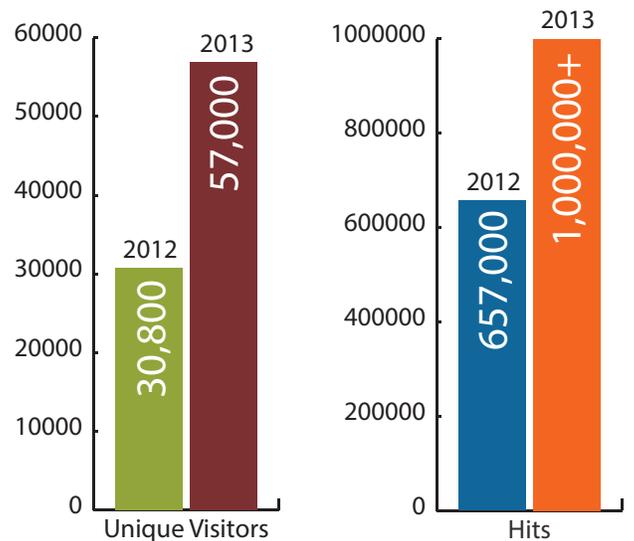
- 2013 farm gate revenue covered 59% of operating expenses.
- 2012 farm gate revenue covered 68% of operating expenses.

Note: Although farm gate revenue increased by 25%, operating expenses increased by 45% from 2012 to 2013 due to increased staffing, larger intern program and related expenses.



## website statistics:

Website activity sees big jump from 2012 to 2013:



Most popular web pages are nursery and catalog-related pages, and the blog is becoming more popular as well.

# the teams that make it all possible...



## 2013 staff and interns

Left to right: Miranda Bowman, Intern; Hilary Graham, Intern; Sean D'Agnolo, Intern; Chris Henderson, Intern; Sierra Watson, Nursery Team; Brendan Burkhart, Operations & Facilities Manager; Cheryl Thornton, Program & Finance Director; Georgia Mitchell, Nursery Team & Production Manager; Trent Eliot, Food Production Team; Chris Testa, Farm Manager; Barb Pitman, Nursery Team; Tom Thornton, Executive Director; Terry Maczuga, Nursery Team & Administrative Assistant; Lily Morgan, Intern

## board of directors

- **Sue Webber**, Biology Faculty, Whatcom Community College, retired
- **Max Morange**, Agricultural Programs Director, Bellingham Food Bank
- **Fred Berman**, Program Director for Client Services, Rural Cooperative Development and Agricultural Processing Initiatives, Northwest Ag. Business Center
- **Derek Long**, Executive Director, Sustainable Connections
- **Cheryl Thornton**, Program and Finance Director, Cloud Mountain Farm Center
- **Steve Hollenhorst**, Dean of Students Huxley College of the Environment, Western Washington University
- **Aaron Westgate**, Lead Design Tech, Haven Design Workshop and Principal, Free Flow Designs
- **Mariah Ross**, Sales & Marketing, Raptor Group

## grants received in 2013

The farm center continues to receive substantial multi-year support from Whatcom Community Foundation's Sustainable Whatcom Fund. Some of our additional 2013 grants are due to collaborations with other entities, with some of the funds received at the partner organizations for projects happening on-site at Cloud Mountain Farm Center.

- Sustainable Whatcom Fund - \$170,000 capital grant
- Sustainable Whatcom Fund - \$22,331 Food Hub pilot program in support of Farm-to-School
- Community Food Co-op - \$1,000 for strawberry research
- WSDA - \$25,430 for salad green trials; \$20,737 of this was paid out to WSU for their participation costs in this grant.
- Department of Commerce - RBEG grant through NABC partnership:
  - \$49,649 for vegetable processing equipment.
  - \$18,668 used as matching funds from NABC as labor and technical support to help get the project up and running
  - \$7,776 for processing supplies