## Ithaca Children's Garden



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



## ITHACA CHILDREN'S GARDEN 2024 Annual Report

Published July 2025

Prepared by Sarah Marquart, Marketing & Communications Manager

As we reflect on the accomplishments of 2024, we also recognize the dedication and leadership of our current 2025 staff and board.

### **Staff**

Naomi Sukenik, Executive Director

Erin Marteal, Development Director

Kelsey Brewster, Education Director

Sarah Marquart, Marketing & Communications Manager

Jason McClevish, Facilities Manager

Trey Ramsey, Outreach & Inclusion Manager

Andrea Scalici, Operations Manager

Grace Heath, Nature Preschool Co-Lead

Kenley Belvére, Youth Program Educator

Annika Ross, Youth Program Educator

Steve Hoffman, Bookkeeper

### **Board of Directors**

Brock Gibian, President

Iris Packman, Vice President

Perry Gorgen, Treasurer

Liz Kinast, Secretary

Sarah Fiorello

Sarah Gunther

Jenna Hallas

PJ Morgan

Lauren Salzman

**Kate Travis** 

Harriet Becker, Co-Founder, Ex-Officio

## Table of Contents



## Who We Are

Ithaca Children's Garden is a 3-acre public garden where kids of all ages can climb a giant turtle, dig in the soil, wade in a pond, and discover the wonders of the natural world through play. Open year-round and free to visit, the Garden also offers hands-on programs that spark curiosity, creativity, and care for the environment.



### **MISSION**

Connecting children to nature to create a more beautiful, resilient, and just world.

### **VISION**

Every child has the basic human right to play, learn, and grow outdoors and develop a life-long relationship with the living world.

### **VALUES**

Ithaca Children's Garden is deeply rooted in these 5 values:

- Child Centered
- Innovative
- Inclusive & Safe
- Ecologically-Centered
- Collaborative



## 2024: Impact in Numbers

In 2024, Ithaca Children's Garden welcomed over 70,000 visitors and served more than 8,000 children and families through direct programming. From first-time explorers to longtime volunteers, thousands found joy, connection, and discovery at the Garden. Here's a closer look at what we grew together — by the numbers.



## January

**20** 

Years since ICG leased its spot at the southern tip of Cass Park.

## **February**

600

Marshmallows devoured at the Festival of Fire & Ice. by 741 attendees.



### March

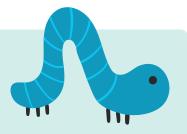


Members of The Hive, ICG's dedicated community of monthly donors.



## **April**

66



Children who joined School's Out Play Days between April & October.



611

Kids who attended 21 hands-on field trips to ICG.

## May

20

Foot length of ICG's hoop house, built with support from the APGA\* & U.S. Botanic Garden's Urban Agriculture Resilience Program, in collaboration with The Learning Farm & Children's Reading Connection.



June

304

Number of International Mud Day attendees.





103

Visitors who celebrated Dr.
George Washington Carver at ICG, hosted with The Learning Farm & Children's Reading Connection.



## July

5,000

Seed packets The Home Depot gifted to ICG - many planted in the Garden, many shared with the community.

Summer Camp participants.







August

91



Scholarships awarded to eliminate financial barriers to ICG programs. Donors contributed over \$40,000 to ICG for scholarships in 2024.



## August

270



Ithaca City School District Project Innovation students engaged at ICG.

## September

15

Participants in Playful Nature Explorers, ICG's nature-based preschool program.



43

Kindergarten through fifth-grade students who participated in the After-School @ ICG program.



### October

437

Scarecrow
Jubilee
attendees.

## November





25

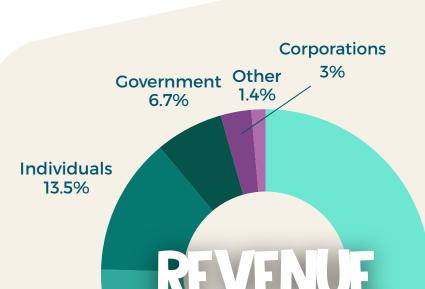
Years connecting children to nature. A non-profit since 1999, ICG inspired the community long before establishing a physical home.



Years the Yurt has been a part of ICG.
It was completed in November 2022.







Foundations

20.5%



We strengthened organizational transparency by publishing <a href="ICG's 990s">ICG's 990s</a> on our website\* and earning a Gold Seal of Transparency from Candid, and a 3-star rating from Charity Navigator.

\*Additional financial statements available upon request.

Program Fees 54.9%





Salaries and Benefits 79.8%

### A NOTE ON EXPENSES

At ICG, we are committed to investing in our team, allocating 79.82% of total expenditures — \$527,152.86 annually — to salaries and benefits. With just 7.5 full-time equivalent employees, this level of investment demonstrates how even small organizations contribute meaningfully to the local economy by supporting household income, local spending, and tax revenues.

In Tompkins County, where education and nonprofit institutions are major employers, small organizations like ICG play a vital role in sustaining economic vitality. Our commitment to compensating staff reflects our belief in valuing people as our greatest asset.

Yet despite these efforts, aligning compensation with the rising cost of living remains a challenge. In 2025, the living wage for a single adult without children in Tompkins County has climbed to \$24.82/hour—a 34.5% increase since 2023—driven largely by surging housing and transportation costs. For small nonprofits, keeping pace with these economic shifts is a growing concern as we strive to offer fair and competitive wages.

The generous support of our individual, corporate, and foundation donors, and our monthly giving community — The Hive — all help pay our staff who keep the Garden and children growing. Thank you for making our work possible.



ICG's small but mighty team at the December 2024 Staff Retreat.

## Our **2024** Team



**Erin Marteal**Development Director &
Interim Executive Director



Kelsey Brewster
Educator Director



**Trey Ramsey**Outreach & Inclusion
Manager



Jason McClevish
Facilities Manager



Robin Cochell
Operations Manager



Steve Hoffman
Bookkeeper



Sarah Marquart
Communications Coordinator



Grace Heath



Kenley Belvére
Youth Program Educator



Annika Ross
Youth Program Educator



**Caro Ryan**Assistant Educator & Playworker, PNE

With special thanks to former staff members for their important service, who exited employment with ICG in 2024: Candice Meade (Executive Director), Jae Darling (Communications Coordinator), and Kate Nelson (Educator). Thanks also to contract workers Leigh MacDonald-Rizzo and Tori Chamberlin.

And a warm welcome to those who joined us in 2025: **Naomi Sukenik**, Executive Director; **Andrea Scalici**, Operations Manager; **Noa Shapiro-Tamir**, After School Program Educator, **Aurora Allen**, After School Educator.

## 2024 Board of Directors

Brock Gibian, President
Iris Packman, Vice President
Perry Gorgen, Treasurer
Liz Kinast, Secretary
Sarah Fiorello
Sarah Gunther
Jenna Hallas
PJ Morgan
Lauren Salzman
Kate Travis
Harriet Becker, Co-Founder,
Ex-Officio

Welcome new board members in 2024!







Perry Gorgen





### 2024 ICG Brand Partners

| Partner          | Sponsoring                          |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| BorgWarner       | Story Tree                          |
| Cayuga Landscape | Scarecrow Jubilee                   |
| CFCU             | Gaia & The Wetlands                 |
| The Home Depot.  | The Bird Garden                     |
| Iron Design      | The Troll House                     |
| Lane Family Fund | The Hands-on-Nature<br>Anarchy Zone |

ICG's brand partners make it possible to keep Ithaca Children's Garden open and free for all, 365 days a year, by sponsoring an area or event.

Join us in thanking our brand partners for helping make this essential community resource accessible to all.



In addition to those listed below, ICG relies on many generous individuals and families, including volunteers, donors, and additional supporters, whose generosity helps ICG impact 70,000+ visitors and 8,000+ program participants each year.

### **Foundation & Government Support**

#### \$20,000

American Public Gardens Association & U.S. Botanic Gardens New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Park Foundation Tompkins Charitable Gift Fund -Anonymous Family Fund Triad Foundation

#### \$10,000+

Anonymous Fund at Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies Community Foundation of Tompkins Tompkins County Tourism Program

#### \$5.000+

City Federation of Women's Organizations John Ben Snow Memorial Trust Legacy Foundation of Tompkins County

Betty Lewis University Environmental Charitable Trust **Human Services Coalition of Tompkins** County Liquid State Brewing Company, Inc. Miller Mayer, LLP. Tompkins County Tourism Program United Way of Tompkins County Visions Federal Credit Union

#### \$500+

Dandy Mini Mart Ithaca Agway Robert G. and Jane V. Engel Foundation, Inc.

### **Community Partners**

The Learning Farm Mazourek Farms

**Primitive Pursuits** 

Visit Ithaca

Weamans YMCA of Ithaca

Southside Community Center

Taughannock Garden Club US Fish & Wildlife Service

Advocacy Center Children's Reading Connection City of Ithaca Cornell Botanic Gardens Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins Cornell Department of Entomology Cornell Garden-Based Learning Cornell Lab of Ornithology Diversity Consortium of Tompkins County Downtown Ithaca Alliance Dyce Lab for Honey Bee Studies of Cornell Einhorn Center for Community Engagement Executive Exchange of Tompkins County Family Reading Partnership Finger Lakes ReUse Friendship Donations Network Greater Ithaca Activities Center GreenStar Food Co-Op **Human Services Coalition of Tompkins** County Ithaca Breastfeeding Coalition Ithaca City School District Ithaca Coldstone Creamery Ithaca College Occupational Therapy Program Ithaca College Office of Student Engagement Ithaca Garden Club Ithaca Welcomes Refugees Ithaca Youth Bureau / Youth Employment Services

## 2024 Volunteer Spotlight

### **Individual Volunteers**

- Katie Bagnall-Newman Event volunteer
- Jada Cannon Picnic table refurbishment
- Tom Cole Finance committee member
- Joshua Coicou World Clean Up Day organizer
- Todd Edmonds Interpretation Committee
- Sivan Gordon-Buxbaum After School @ ICG volunteer ('23-'24)
- Phyllis Joyce Garden volunteer
- Diane and Jim Orcutt Garden volunteers
- Marvin Pritts Beekeeper
- Ted Schiele Garden volunteer

### **Volunteer Groups**

- Lehman Alternative Community School Students
- Park Scholars of Ithaca College
- Wegmans Employees, Earth Day Cleanup
- Yang Center of Cornell Lab of Ornithology



Ithaca Wegmans Employees at the 2024 Earth Day Garden cleanup.



The Hive is ICG's community of dedicated monthly donors making a sweet impact through every season.

### Thank you 2024 Hive bees!

Jessica Cait & Ben Tori Bellinder & Beth Darfler **Chamberlin** Brian Anderson Meg & Harriet & Arthur Susan Tom Cole Franklin Caruso Kent & Becker Ritza Tessa Francesca Katie Sage Francois Garrison **Engelhart** Flores Ash Tal Sarah **Foxwell Fuson** Fiorello Stefan Nancy Jenna Brock **Hoffmann** Jirka Hallas Gibian Ireland Kathleen **Emily Groff** Household Halton Phyllis < Erin Bridget Liz & Matt & Lanny **Marteal** Meeds Kinast Joyce Mariah Allegra Anna & Jake Lambert Kimble **McNamara** Lauren Tess Salzman **Nelson &** Dianne Amanda & Drew Orcutt Perry Piechota **Hoffmann** Iris Gorgen Bethany Scott **Packman Ojalehto** Reynolds & Alex Mays Kate & Rakow Ted Sonja Frost Schiele Skelly **Travis** Roger & Erin lan MaryAnn Wissink **Tompkins** Simpson

# Living our Values: Inclusive & Safe



ICG's scholarship program made it possible for our kid to go to Playful Nature, and it made us feel like we could afford something that was really special that otherwise would feel like it was exclusively for people who have money. If you're a parent, no matter how much money you have, you always want the best for your kid. Knowing you can get something that is so quality and you can afford to do it feels so great.

~ Laurie, ICG program parent

### 2024 Scholarship Impact Report

By Erin Marteal, Development Director & Interim Executive Director

ICG's scholarship program is in place to remove the financial barriers so every child can participate in ICG's world-class programs, regardless of a family's financial circumstances. Take a look at this Scholarship Impact Report to learn more about the 2024 campaign and the impact of ICG's Scholarship Program. <u>Keep Reading</u>



## 2024 Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Report

By Trey Ramsey, Outreach and Inclusion Manager

In 2024, ICG made significant strides in advancing our efforts around IDEA work. Key milestones include: the creation of the Outreach and Inclusion Manager position and co-hosting the George Washington Carver Community Gardens Project.

This inaugural IDEA Report is intended to document and communicate the progress we've made on our IDEA journey, while acknowledging the work that remains. *Keep Reading* 



### 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- We clarified our absolute commitment to safety, inclusion, and belonging for all at ICG including our LGBTQ+ community;
- Presented at the American Public Gardens Association conference in Boston on IDEA work;
- And expanded staff benefits by adopting a bereavement policy that offers generous time off during times of loss.



## Thank YOU.

To all who make Ithaca Children's Garden possible — thank you.

Your generosity, time, energy, and belief in the power of nature and play have sustained and inspired us throughout 2024. Whether you gave, volunteered, visited, partnered, or simply shared a kind word, you are part of a growing community that believes every child deserves access to joy, wonder, and the natural world.

Together, we are nurturing the next generation of environmental stewards — and making a lasting impact.

With deepest appreciation, All of us at Ithaca Children's Garden

Erin Marteal

Development Director, 2024 Interim Executive Director

## **Stay Connected**

- Phone (607) 319-4203
- Email info@ithacachildrensgarden.org
- Social @ithacachildrensgarden
- Garden
  121 Turtle Lane, Ithaca, NY 14850
- Office & Mailing
  1013 W. State St., Ithaca, NY,
  14850

