



November 27, 2017

Dear Friends,

In fifteen years, Growing Hope has grown from a seed of an idea to a core food access and food system organization in Washtenaw County. We have positively impacted tens of thousands of kids and adults in Ypsilanti through programs, policies, and partnerships that help low-income families grow, access, sell, and celebrate healthy food. Our Growing Hope Center demonstration gardens and urban farm, and our soon-to-be-completed Ypsilanti Farmers MarketPlace / year-round market facility and kitchen incubator inside the Robert C. Barnes Sr. MarketPlace Hall, are two anchors of healthy food and sustainable community here in Ypsilanti. Here in Ypsi, and through work across our county and state, we are striving towards a healthy, sustainable food system that is accessible to all. I am proud to serve as the President of the board of such an impactful organization.

On December 31, 2017, our visionary leader, Amanda Maria Edmonds, is retiring as our founding Executive Director. The board, staff—and I'm sure you, too—are incredibly grateful for her leadership and long-time service in growing this organization from the ground up. In coming weeks Amanda will share with you her reflections on where we've come from, and highlight her perspective on how this work continues to be critical going forward.

Amanda is passing the torch to an incredibly strong team of over twenty staff who are ready to carry forward our mission. An Interim Executive Team will be in place through the first half of 2018 as we undergo a search for our next leader. We have a strong senior staff leadership team whose capacity Amanda has been building over the last few years, and who will provide great continuity during this transition, both internally and externally. Amanda will work to support the Interim Executive Team and our board through the transition during the first part of 2018, ensuring the organization she has built is set up for success going forward. In addition, we have built a team of program managers who are each deep experts in their fields, and will continue to provide both continuity and leadership in their respective areas of work -- Farmers Markets & Nutrition, Youth & Schools, Farm & Garden, and Economic Development programming.

In honor of the past fifteen years of community impact by Growing Hope, to formally recognize Amanda's legacy as founder, and to set up the organization to thrive going forward, we are announcing the creation of a [Founder's Fund](#). Amanda and I have each made leadership gifts to seed this fund, with pledges to sustain those gifts for multiple years. Your year-end contribution to the Founder's Fund will still go towards programming that works towards a broader Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, and Michigan where healthy food is accessible to all. We hope that at this major milestone for the organization you will consider contributing to our Founder's Fund.

Your gift matters more than ever at this critical point of transition for Growing Hope, and we appreciate your investment. Thank you for your support in the past, today, and in the future.

Jeffrey McKelvey, Board President

P.S. Board and staff will look forward to celebrating Edmonds' dedication and service on January 20, 2018 in the Robert C. Barnes Sr. MarketPlace Hall, during the grand opening of the Ypsilanti Farmers MarketPlace. Look for ticket information and invitations in December.

P.P.S. You can also give by mailing a check to Growing Hope, PO Box 980129, Ypsilanti, MI 48198, or contact us at giving@growinghope.net to talk about planned giving, donations of stock, and other forms of support.

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