

FRIENDS OF DONEGAL

WE HARNESS THE COLLECTIVE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF OURS NEIGHBORS.

2023 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

A YEAR IN REVIEW

GETTING AHEAD

Getting Ahead conducted 3 classes in 2023. By the end of 2023 a total of 41 individuals graduated from the program. Of those who graduated from the 14-week class, 25% stayed connected by participating in the Staying Ahead classes.

POWER PACKS

In May of 2023 FOD assumed responsibility for the school weekend feeding program, Power Packs. Power Packs started a successful summer program providing meals to 40 families/week in the Donegal community. In September the school program began. There are now about 115 families (500 people-adults and kids) who participate each week.

DONEGAL COMMUNITY GARDENS

Another innovative initiative was the Donegal Community Gardens. In the summer of 2023, there were 2 gardens. One garden housed individual space where people came and planted their vegetables. Six people were involved in that program. The second garden produced potatoes, green beans, okra, tomatoes, and kale in bulk. These products supplied the Power Packs for several weeks over the summer with fresh produce.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

FOD hosted a community expo in April. We participated in the Taste of Mount Joy Car Show in July and the Mount Joy Winterfest in December.

It takes a community...Special Thanks To:

- **Dave Astuto:** For donating a tractor for use in the community gardens.
- **LCBC:** For financial and volunteer support through their "Get Rich" campaign.
- **Chris Silvestri and Members First:** For answering all of our banking and budgeting questions.
- **Don Forry/Michael Spangler:** For helping us get our program participant's cars in working order.
- **John Wolgemuth:** For getting our fields ready for the gardens
- **Pastor Tom Weber and Florin COB:** For hosting Getting Ahead.
- **Rose Madar:** For her video and promotion skills.

And so many more!

Coming in 2024:

- **Food Insecurity Meetings:** Participation in a monthly collaborative for other nonprofits talk about best practices in feeding the community.
- **Garden Space:** A third garden has been added that will donate produce to Power Packs, local food banks, and seniors (see Jarod's story for more).
- **Expand Getting Ahead and Staying Ahead programs.**
- **Increase our volunteer and funding opportunities.**
- **We'll be back for the Taste of Mount Car Show, Winterfest, and the Community Expo.**
- **Increase our capacity to provide microloans to program participants.**



Jarod's Story

Friends of Donegal met Jarod in our first Getting Ahead class. Jarod faced many setbacks in his young life. He was isolated from family and friends and was unable to engage in school or the community.

At the start of the Getting Ahead class Jarod was incredibly quiet and kept to himself. One of his goals that surfaced through conversations in the class was to start a community garden. As an empowerment team, Friends of Donegal wondered: how could we support him in making this goal a reality?

By leveraging Jarod's newfound source of social capital in Friends of Donegal, in the spring of 2022, Jarod developed Donegal Community Gardens with his first garden at Florin Church of the Brethren. Jarod worked with a local grower and five individuals agreed to have personal plots in the garden. Jarod helped them grow and harvest their own vegetables.

By summer of 2023, another garden was added to Jarod's enterprise at Mount Joy Mennonite Church. This site produces bulk vegetables such as potatoes and green beans for the Donegal Power Packs program. Jarod, who was so shy and reserved at that first Getting Ahead class, was now participating in community speaking engagements. In 2023, he hosted a garden open house to introduce the community to the garden.

Jarod was not only making strides in the community, but personally as well. He passed his driver's test and began his first job with Dave's Collectibles. Gone are the days of isolation. Now days are filled with being an engaged member of the community.

Jarod sees 2024 as a big year. Donegal Presbyterian Church donated 3.6 acres to grow vegetables. He continues to create new goals: to live independently and to purchase a vehicle to transport vegetables from the garden. To stay on track, he continues to attend the monthly Staying Ahead classes.

Jarod is flourishing! He is testament of how a little community can go a long way. Friends of Donegal is so proud of all Jarod has accomplished, and we cannot wait to see what the years ahead bring.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED? HERE'S HOW...

- Donations: PayPal through the Friends of Donegal website.
- Volunteer: for the gardens, Power Packs, or Getting Ahead.
- Commit to a garden space.

Find out more about FOD using the following:

Website: friendsofdonegal.org Facebook: [FOD-friendsofdonegal.org](https://www.facebook.com/FOD-friendsofdonegal.org)

Questions or other inquiries: info@friendsofdonegal.org