

2024

annual report



grace farms
foundation

annual report 2024



A place for profound transformation and change

Architecture, and the space it creates, moves us; it inspires us to reach toward possibilities that once seemed unattainable.

Grace Farms, intentionally designed to defy boundaries and limited perceptions, bridges divides by bringing people together from diverse sectors, communities, and backgrounds to address our most pressing challenges.

Nine years ago, I remarked that the possibilities we could achieve together are as open as our landscape. On the evening of October 21, the **London Philharmonic Orchestra** (LPO) performed four extraordinary pieces of music to a sold-out audience of 700. The breathtaking performance of 31 world-class musicians, led by 2023/24 Fellow Conductor, **Luis Castillo-Briceño**, was heightened by the shifting light across the Sanctuary, the meadows beyond, the fall hues, and the sound of the music reflected off the architecture itself. Grace Farms was the final stop on LPO's first U.S. tour in 10 years.

LPO's performance and our partnership demonstrates that art creates the potential for individual and social transformation, expanding our worldviews and perspectives. In January, during Human Trafficking Prevention month, we invited British author, artist, and human rights activist, **Hannah Rose Thomas**, to come to Grace Farms to launch her book, *Tears of Gold*. As part of the event, select prints of Yazidi, Rohingya, and Nigerian women from the book were on display, providing a testimony to their humanity and resilience. She also joined **Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein**, President and CEO of the International Peace Institute and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for a powerful conversation about her work.

Over the course of the year, music transformed our space. Curated by **Marcus G. Miller**, our exceptional music programming was enjoyed by over 3,000 people and included performances by musicians like **Sheléa** and the **James Carter Quartet**.

In May, we unveiled *With Every Fiber*, the first public exhibit to present Design for Freedom and inspire understanding about the provenance of the materials that go into our buildings, and whether they are made with fair labor. Designed by **Studio Cooke John Architecture + Design**, it includes contributions from 20 preeminent designers, material suppliers, artists, cultural institutions, and the construction industry. *With Every Fiber* features a curated recording by a quartet of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, poetry by U.S. Poet Laureate **Joy Harjo** recorded on-site, as well as text by our former artist-in-residence **Carrie Mae Weems**. Also on view are several photos by humanitarian photographer, **Lisa Kristine**. It also features an immersive biomaterials installation by **Yale Center for Ecosystems + Architecture** (Yale CEA) emphasizing the relationship between culture and sustainability and bringing forth the concept of ethical decarbonization.

Chelsea Thatcher, our Founding Creative Director and Chief Strategic Officer, who initialized and curated the exhibit, reminds us that the "choices we make matter." We all have agency to help eliminate forced labor in the building materials supply chain.

In 2021, we launched **Grace Farms Tea & Coffee**, a Certified B Corp giving back 100% of its profits to support Design for Freedom and to demonstrate that it's possible to make ethically and sustainably sourced

tea and coffee. This year, we introduced our Wellness Teas into 26 Whole Foods Markets, expanding the reach of Grace Farms and initializing public demand for ethical sourcing. Simultaneously, we expanded our corporate sponsorships with organizations including **JPMorganChase**, **UBS**, **Sciame Construction**, and **Bloomberg**. *Forbes* referred to the initiative as a new kind of social entrepreneurship "steeped in purpose."

We also expanded internationally with the next iteration of the *Design for Freedom Toolkit* and Design for Freedom new accelerators in India and the UK. We extended our engagement in Europe and Asia, equipping public and private sector partners to address this egregious human rights violation. As **The Right Honorable The Baroness Young of Hornsey OBE**, wrote in her introductory letter, "The creation of *The Design for Freedom International Guidance & Toolkit* is part of that forward movement responding ... to the challenge of engaging the construction sector in meaningful dialogue." Despite the challenges, she reminds us there is real momentum and desire behind the drive for change.

Since 2020, we have built our Design for Freedom Summit into a premiere industry event resulting in new partnerships and outcomes including a dozen Pilot Projects across three continents. We brought on **Elaine Mitchel-Hill**, our new Design for Freedom International Lead, who is at the forefront of the human rights movement in the United Kingdom and currently serves as Co-Chair of the ILO Child Labour Platform India Working Group.

Prior to the official release of the *Design for Freedom International Guidance & Toolkit* on Human Rights Day 2024, I was honored to address the **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK** in London. I joined over 60 parliamentarians from 17 legislatures to address strengthening legislative frameworks to combat forced labor. We engaged in high-level roundtable discussions at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK's Legislative Strengthening Seminar and provided them an exclusive preview of the *Guidance & Toolkit*.



None of this would be possible without the place of Grace Farms. It has become a profound catalyst of change, from advancing Design for Freedom globally, to welcoming tens of thousands each year to engage in hundreds of thought-provoking programs interweaving nature, arts, justice, community, and faith. Our nearly 80 acres of biodiverse landscapes serves as a classroom during our signature Earth Day and throughout the year: Visitors can experience the wonder and awe of nature with our Director of Horticulture **Kimberly Kelly** and find inspiration through year-long programming.

Building upon our LEED Silver certification for Operations and Maintenance (O+M) that we received in 2019, we achieved LEED Gold recertification for the River building, reflecting our ongoing commitment to thoughtful stewardship and sustainable practices.

Looking toward 2025 and 2026, we will head into our 10th anniversary year with exciting new outcomes and opportunities for the public to engage with Grace Farms. These programs, along with our ethically sourced teas and coffees, prompt us to consider if the story we are collectively creating is one of dignity or one of exploitation.

I believe this speaks to the potential agency within each of us.

With grace and peace,

Sharon Prince
CEO and Founder

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“Grace Farms,
intentionally
designed to defy
boundaries and
limited perceptions,
bridges divides by
bringing people
together from
diverse sectors,
communities, and
backgrounds to
address our most
pressing challenges.”

– Sharon Prince

The Commons is a community space
where visitors meet to enjoy wholesome
meals or a cup of Grace Farms’ tea or
coffee at our communal tables built
from trees harvested on-site.



ABOUT GRACE FARMS

Grace Farms is a cultural and humanitarian center located in New Canaan, CT.

We bring together people across sectors to explore nature, arts, justice, community, and faith at the SANAA-designed River building on 80 acres of publicly accessible, preserved natural landscape.

Grace Farms, with its open architecture, breaks down barriers between people and sectors and invites conversation, curiosity, and proximities. This collaborative approach to comprehensively address humanitarian issues and generate new outcomes is reflected across all of our initiatives and the place of Grace Farms.

advancing good
locally and globally



our work

nature

We facilitate the stewardship of our natural world through restoration, exploration, and preservation. Through the protection of the open meadows, woods, vital wetlands, and ponds on our site, and by providing year-round exploratory opportunities and multi-generational programming, we encourage visitors to experience the awe and wonder of nature and embrace stewardship of the natural environment.

arts

We believe that art generates new perspectives, enhances our sense of beauty, and fosters the potential for individual and social transformation. At Grace Farms, the arts are designed to deepen each person's profound connection to community, architecture, and landscape within our 80-acre site. We present and commission works with individual artists while also collaborating with the arts sector to advance humanitarian causes.

justice

Our commitment to justice is based on the inherent right of liberty and equality for all. In 2020, we launched Design for Freedom, a global movement to create market transformation to remove forced labor from the building materials supply chain and reimagine architecture as a driver of humanitarian outcomes.

community

We provide a warm, welcoming environment that fosters meaningful community and engagement among diverse groups of people. We create proximities to individuals and organizations with different perspectives to advance new ways of thinking, ignite partnerships, and catalyze new outcomes that can lead toward sustained social impact to advance good in the world.

faith

We offer the reflective space of Grace Farms and opportunities for dialogue to explore the nature of flourishing and purposeful life. In pursuit of more grace and peace in the world, we bring together leaders and educators for workshops to engage with the world's ancient and modern philosophies, beliefs, and faiths.

design for freedom

The global movement to create market transformation to remove forced labor from the building materials supply chain, Design for Freedom mobilizes the full ecosystem of the built environment to reimagine architecture as a driver of humanitarian outcomes to build a more equitable future.



OUR WORK

nature

“Their delicate beauty, incredible life cycle, and magnificent colors make them the source of much symbolism, imagery, folklore, and legend ...” – Kimberly Kelly

Our longstanding belief is that space communicates and can inspire us to act. Grace Farms was intentionally designed with nature as its center. It is a reflective, yet active space inspired by nature to achieve unprecedented outcomes.

Embedded in nearly 80 acres of natural and biodiverse landscapes, the award-winning River building, with its more than 200 curved transparent glass panels, serves as a constant reminder that the awe and wonder of nature is ever-present and constantly communicating with us. It reminds us to pause and reflect, not only about our own lives but the Earth we inhabit.

Throughout the year, we use this nature-inspired space to bring thousands together to encounter the arts, foster community, pursue justice, and explore faith. Here, our nature-based programs offer visitors an opportunity to learn and care for the land and environment in just and sustainable ways.

We have become a **Certified Monarch Waystation** for pollinators in recognition of on-going meadow restoration and biodiversity.

Nature’s Classroom

This year, we celebrated butterflies in our ongoing *Nature’s Classroom* series with Director of Horticulture **Kimberly Kelly**. The series, which enhances the hands-on learning experiences for visitors of all ages and backgrounds, explored our meadows and preserved ecosystems to learn about creating a biodiverse haven for these essential pollinators. In our Perspectives, Kelly asks us to think about “Why Are Butterflies Important?” She explained that butterflies “can detect changes in nature before we do because they are very sensitive to changes in their surroundings.”

An expert on butterflies, and President of the International Association of Butterfly and Exhibitors & Suppliers (IABES), Kelly joined about 100 delegates from around the world who converged in Penang, Malaysia, for the International Conference of Butterfly Exhibitors and Suppliers (ICBES) 2024. Delegates from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, and other countries, explored sustainable breeding programs to advancements in educational exhibits.

“Nature holds the answers, if we learn to listen.”

– Joy Harjo, 23rd U.S. Poet Laureate, a featured guest at our 8th annual benefit

Pollinators & Education

This year, we sowed 18 pounds of native grasses and pollinator plants, potentially yielding more than three million native grass species. Our year-round programs taught the importance of supporting our pollinators including butterflies, bees, and birds. Other workshops explored aspects of sustainable gardening, from cultivating soil health to extending the gardening season. Our popular birdwatching program, with our Master Birder **Frank Mantlik**, offered insights about birds and their unique habitats. Grace Farms is now home to more than 140 bird species, an increase from 40 in 2015. Birdwatching is one of the fastest-growing outdoor activities, inviting people to explore the wonders of nature through the perspective of birds.

Achieving LEED Gold

Building on our two LEED certifications for Building Design and Construction (BD+C) of the River building and Barns, and Operations and Maintenance (O+M), we were awarded LEED Gold for the O+M recertification of the River building this year. This reflects our ongoing commitment to thoughtful land stewardship, building upon our LEED Silver certification for O+M we received in 2019. These awards noted Grace Farms’ commitment to restoring native meadows to protecting the ecosystem to constructing 55 geothermal wells to heat and cool 80% of the River building. This recognition is an extension of our vision to contribute to the global movement towards environmental and ethical consciousness within the built environment.

Earth Day

Our signature Earth Day event attracted nearly 700 visitors for a full-day of events including sound mapping at our Open Arts Studio, exploring kindness through creatures with our partner Animal Embassy, and learning about sourcing food closer to home with our Director of Horticulture **Kimberly Kelly** and Founding Pastry Chef and Educator **Leah Jones**.



© Melani Lust

3 million +

various species of native grasses populated our meadow after sowing 18 pounds of native grasses and pollinator plants

2,389 +

visitors participated in nature-based programming

2,102

plants installed across the site enriching biodiversity and supporting vital ecosystems

Our team of educators help visitors of all ages and backgrounds discover the awe and wonder of nature.



OUR WORK

arts

“A space for renowned musicians and performers to transform our perspectives.” – Chelsea Thatcher

Indelible milestones, from world-class musical performances to impactful initiatives, have shaped this year at Grace Farms.

Ninth Anniversary Benefit Celebration

One of the most memorable highlights of the year was our Ninth Anniversary Benefit celebration on October 21, which featured a once-in-a-generation musical experience – the **London Philharmonic Orchestra** (LPO)’s performance at Grace Farms. The London Philharmonic Orchestra embarked on its first nationwide tour of the United States in 10 years, ending its tour-de-force with a sold-out performance at Grace Farms.

Under the leadership of LPO 2023/24 Fellow Conductor **Luis Castillo-Briceño**, a 31-musician chamber ensemble presented a moving program that incorporated respective themes of “Architecture Moves Us” and “Moments Remembered.”

LPO 2023/24 Fellow Conductor Luis Castillo-Briceño leads the 31-musician chamber ensemble at our Ninth Anniversary Benefit Celebration.

Opening of *With Every Fiber* Exhibit

On May 4, *With Every Fiber*, a first-of-its-kind exhibit opened to the public. Designed to bring insights into the issue of forced labor in the building materials supply chain, this long-term exhibit presents a series of material studies, including timber, steel, concrete, and textiles, and proposes strategies and practices to address forced labor. In the launch of *With Every Fiber*, we also committed to a neurodiversity design assessment to ensure an inclusive and accessible experience for all. It is curated by **Chelsea Thatcher**, Chief Strategic Officer and Founding Creative Director of Grace Farms, with exhibition design by **Studio Cooke John Architecture + Design** and **Pentagram**.

We collaborated with 20 preeminent designers, material suppliers, artists, cultural institutions, and construction industry leaders featured in the exhibition – all of whom remind us to consider the questions central to Design for Freedom: where do our building materials come from and are they made with fair labor?

OUR WORK

We also invited design enthusiasts to join us in a virtual conversation featuring award-winning designers **Nina Cooke John** and **Eddie Opara** from Pentagram. They explored the innovative processes behind the *With Every Fiber* exhibit. Cooke John was awarded the 2024 New Perspectives Award by AIA New York, Center for Architecture.

Tears of Gold by Hannah Rose Thomas

We welcomed British artist and human rights activist **Hannah Rose Thomas**. In her acclaimed book, *Tears of Gold*, Rose Thomas presents women who offer their visual testimony not only of war and injustice but also of humanity and resilience. As part of the event, we featured print portraits from her book that were on display in our Library.

Rose Thomas also joined in a conversation with **Prince Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein**, president and CEO of the International Peace Institute and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, about healing from the violence. Prince Zeid was the 2022 Design for Freedom Summit keynote speaker.

Preview of Grace Farms and Architecture & Design Film Festival

In a preview of our full launch of the Humanity in Architecture Film Festival with Architecture & Design Film Festival (ADFF) in 2025, we featured documentaries during the year including *Mau*, a film celebrating visionary designer **Bruce Mau**. Grace Farms Architecture Advisor **Toshihiro Oki** and Director of Architecture & Design Film Festival (ADFF) **Kyle Bergman** joined Mau and Co-Founder

and Chief Insights and Analytics Officer of Massive Change Network **Aiyemobisi “Bisi” Williams** in a conversation reminding us about the immense potential of design to create a better world.

We also featured *Modernism, Inc.* which tells the story of one of New Canaan’s most influential architects **Eliot Noyes**. The film was followed by a discussion with Kyle Bergman, director **Jason Cohn**, IBM Corporate Archivist **Jamie Martin**, and architect and son of Eliot Noyes, **Frederick Noyes**. The evening was hosted by Grace Farms Architecture Advisor **Toshihiro Oki**.

Power of Music and Diverse Cultures

We hosted a series of unforgettable concerts that explored beauty in different musical traditions. The programming, curated by Music Director **Marcus G. Miller**, an accomplished saxophonist and Harvard mathematician, featured artists including vocalist **Sheléa**, described as “one of the greatest artists of her generation” by the late Quincy Jones, and **Rishab Rikhiram Sharma**, a sitarist, music producer, and composer who has captivated audiences around the world.

Open Arts Studio

Throughout the year, children and their caregivers had an opportunity to experiment with sensory-rich materials and different modes of art making in our Open Arts Studio. Using the River building and natural landscape as inspiration, young artists responded to the architecture, the changing light and seasons.



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3,000 +
attended Grace Farms’
musical performances

1,636 +
engaged in our
Open Arts Studio

552 +
attended film and
documentary event

Nina Cooke John, who designed the *With Every Fiber* exhibit, included Harriet Tubman’s concrete cast eye from her public monument *Shadow of a Face*, while artist Carrie Mae Weems contributed text (left) and U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo’s poem *Honoring* (right), ask us to consider the makers in our lives.



OUR WORK

justice

“Every building tells a story of humanity – either of dignity or exploitation” – Sharon Prince

Design for Freedom International Guidance & Toolkit

We launched the next iteration of the *Design for Freedom Toolkit*, the *Design for Freedom International Guidance & Toolkit*, a comprehensive resource for design and construction professionals to implement ethical and forced-labor-free material sourcing strategies into their practices. With an introductory letter by **The Right Honourable The Baroness Young of Hornsey OBE**, the *International Guidance & Toolkit* features contributions from more than two dozen leading experts, including **Lindsay Baker**, International Living Future Institute; **Dr. Doreen S. Boyd**, School of Geography, University of Nottingham, and **Dr. James Cockayne**, New South Wales Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

International Expansion of Design for Freedom

As Design for Freedom continues to expand across continents, **Sharon Prince** addressed the **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK** in London. In a significant gathering at the UK Parliament, Prince addressed policymakers to advance the fight against modern slavery. This strategic convening was attended by over 60 global parliamentarians from 17 legislatures. The critical exchange of knowledge was aimed at strengthening legislative frameworks to combat forced labor.

Prince, along with **Elaine Mitchel-Hill**, our new International Lead, Design for Freedom, and the Managing Director of Strategic Initiatives, **Karen Kariuki**, attended high-level roundtable discussions at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK’s Legislative Strengthening Seminar. The group received an exclusive preview of the *Design for Freedom International Guidance & Toolkit*.

The annual Design for Freedom Summit was sold out with over 550 attendees that included industry leaders and students from 30 leading universities.

Design for Freedom Summit

On March 26, more than 550 industry leaders, experts, as well as 75 students from 30 leading universities, came together at the Design for Freedom Summit to continue to advance the elimination of forced labor in our building materials supply chain. The sold-out event invited notable industry leaders and humanitarian activists including humanitarian photographer **Lisa Kristine**, who documents human rights abuses across the world. Kristine’s work, which is also included in the *With Every Fiber* exhibit, provided a “sobering address” while **Nasreen Sheikh**, artist, entrepreneur, and human rights advocate, closed the Summit with her poignant story of surviving modern slavery.

During the Summit, we also announced a new slate of Pilot Projects that now span across three continents. These projects demonstrate that designing without forced labor is possible. They include the Karsh Institute of Democracy at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA and the Bigfork Library, located in the rural community of Bigfork, Montana.

Educating Future Leaders

Since our launch of Design for Freedom and its annual Summit, more students and universities have gotten involved in the global movement. Through partnerships with colleges and universities, we can develop a pipeline of future leaders that will use Design for Freedom principles in their work. Grace Farms established a partnership with the **Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture** (ACSA) to launch a student design competition for the 2024-2025 academic year. The competition will explore how the research of architectural materials and supply chains, as well as ethical and circular design, can eliminate forced labor in the building materials supply chain.

grace farms tea & coffee

Bringing people together over a delicious meal and cup of coffee or tea has been central to Grace Farms from the beginning. Through our tea and coffee, we can share our vision for a world free of forced labor. We can also educate consumers and corporations about ethical and sustainable supply chains through Grace Farms Tea & Coffee, a Certified B Corp 100% of profits support the Design for Freedom movement.

This year, we achieved a milestone with the placement of our ethically sourced Wellness Teas in 26 Whole Foods Markets, further extending our reach in our advocacy for forced labor-free products. Moreover, we continue to expand our corporate sponsorship program. We are working with over 20 corporations and nonprofits including **JPMorganChase**, **UBS**, **Sciame Construction**, and **Bloomberg**. Led by Co-Founders **Adam Thatcher** and **Sharon Prince**, Grace Farms Tea & Coffee is a new kind of social entrepreneurship “steeped in purpose,” according to *Forbes*.

Grace Farms Tea & Coffee has expanded its corporate sponsorship program, and its Wellness Teas are now in 26 Whole Foods Markets.



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OUR WORK

community

“These trailblazers in their respective industries will reflect on the moment where they couldn’t look away and knew they had to do something to make change.” – Karen Kariuki

Women Trailblazers Pushing Boundaries

In February, **Karen Kariuki**, Managing Director, Strategic Initiatives, hosted a discussion, *Threads of Change*, with women trailblazers pushing the boundaries in the food, clothing, and shelter sectors. The panel, held at California’s Laguna Art Museum, included **Shilpa Shah**, Co-Founder and CXO of Cuyana, a fashion brand that supports craftsmen and artisans around the world, **Sharon Johnston**, FAIA, Founding Partner of Los Angeles-based firm Johnston Marklee, Professor in Practice at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, and **Camilla Marcus**, Chef and Founder of west-bourne, known for its socially-conscious and employee-first initiatives.

Innovating to Advance Good

During Women’s History Month, we delved into how AI and machine learning can accelerate change to advance good. We invited **Liz Grennan**, Global Co-Lead for McKinsey’s Digital Trust service line, **Mia Shah-Dand**,

Our Commons is often used for events such as Dinner with a Purpose where we invite trailblazers to discuss their work over locally sourced and sustainable meals.

Founder of Women in AI Ethics and Lighthouse3, a consultancy focusing on responsible AI and data governance, and **Stephanie Dinkins**, Kusama Endowed Chair in Art at Stony Brook University and advocate for inclusive AI. Moderated by **Karen Kariuki**, they explored the vast field of AI as a tool for fostering positive outcomes and advancing equity.

Engaging Conversations

Grace Farms hosted a vibrant discussion and book signing event featuring *The Profiteers: How Business Privatizes Profits and Socializes Costs* by **Christopher Marquis**, the Sinyi Professor at the University of Cambridge Judge Business School and an acclaimed author specializing in ethical business practices and the B Corp movement. Marquis shared insights from his latest book and led a conversation with **Joe Kenner**, CEO of Greyston Bakery, **Aidaly Sosa Walker**, Head of Marketing USA at Tony’s Chocolonely, and **Sharon Prince** of Grace Farms. Prince highlighted the significance of “asking” in the pursuit of ethical and transparent supply chains, noting how Grace Farms Tea & Coffee demonstrates this ethos and supports Design for Freedom.

Dinner with a Purpose featured **Lauren Bush Lauren**, FEED Founder & Chief Brand Officer, in a conversation with **Karen Kariuki**, Grace Farms’ Managing Director, Strategic Initiatives. The discussion revolved around female leadership, social entrepreneurship, and innovative ways to address food insecurity. FEED, an impact-driven brand, partnered with Grace Farms to create an ethically and sustainably sourced bag as a part of the evening.

Space to Gather and Support

Through our Space Grant program, we awarded 96 Space Grants to 37 nonprofit organizations, offering those at the front lines of service with an opportunity to reflect on their mission, and connect with other mission-aligned organizations. For instance, the New Canaan Office of Emergency Management led a two-day emergency preparedness training for town leaders, as well as emergency leaders from neighboring towns, public and private schools, and nonprofits such as the New Canaan Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Voices Center for Resilience. The training was coordinated through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Texas A&M.

Experiencing Grace Farms

Our Garden-to-Table Dinners, Chef’s Palate series with Pastry Chef and Educator **Leah Jones**, and our Afternoon Tea and Journey Into the World of Tea, invite visitors to explore Grace Farms through their senses. Surrounded by the beauty of our nearly 80 acres, visitors can explore the nuances of Grace Farms’ ethically and sustainably made tea with Tea Expert and Educator **Frank Kwei**. These events highlight the deep connection between food, culture, and sustainability. It also showcases our commitment to ethical sourcing through Grace Farms Tea & Coffee, a Certified B Corp, a global movement challenging business to meet high standards of verified performance, accountability, and transparency.

Additional programming allows families and friends to enjoy seasonal picnics overlooking our expansive meadows or visitors can attend our yoga and movement classes for all levels led by **Pilin Anice**, a renowned yoga, dance, and meditation instructor. Each class also pairs movement with a tea from Grace Farms Tea & Coffee.

Continuous Learning & Exploration

We invite K-12 students to Grace Farms to learn about our work in nature, architecture, sustainability, and more. These School Field Trip programs are led by Grace Farms Educators and align with the Next Generation Science Standards, Common Core, Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Frameworks, and Social and Emotional Learning practices.



1,500 +
members enjoyed a
diverse range of programs
to support our mission

1,143 +
participated in
Grace Farms tours

37
non-profit Space Grants
offered in 2025

The Court, a multi-purpose
subterranean space for recreation
and arts performances, brings
together children of all ages and
backgrounds to play sports and
games together.



OUR WORK

faith

“I think that is the role of a space like this. I think you can become present with yourself when you spend time in this magnificent bucolic landscape and the design of this space that is so porous and allows you to let your mind empty and imagine what could be possible.” – Reverend Lisa Lynne Kirkpatrick

The Role of Faith and Reconciliation in a Time of Division

In December, we invited the public to an insightful and timely conversation with **Reverend Lisa Lynne Kirkpatrick** and **Dr. Matthew Croasmun**, Associate Research Scholar and the Director of the Life Worth Living program at the Yale Center for Faith & Culture at Yale Divinity School, to explore how faith can play a pivotal role in mending divides in our communities. Reverend Kirkpatrick currently serves as Minister of Word and Sacrament/Head of Staff at Linn Presbyterian Church in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, and was Grace Farms’ Founding Community Initiative Director from 2015 to 2019.

Matthew Croasmun is the author of five books including *The New York Times* bestseller, *Life Worth Living: A Guide to What Matters Most* (with Miroslav Volf and Ryan McAnnally-Linz). Six years ago, he hosted the first-ever Life Worth Living course outside of Yale University, inviting a broader audience into the curriculum at Grace Farms.

Season of Light Celebration

Each year, during our Season of Light, we offer a peaceful respite for visitors of all ages and backgrounds. It’s a celebration of community and giving, where Grace Farms offers opportunities to experience moments of joy, festivity, and community.

We invite the community to gather to assemble hundreds of care packages and write cards in support of Filling in the Blanks during our annual Gifting for Good. Filling in the Blanks provides weekend meals to children in need across Fairfield and Westchester Counties. Founded by mothers and community activists, the Norwalk-based organization has since delivered over two million weekend meals to children in low-income households. This joyous night offers festive music, warm tea, and engaging winter crafts for all ages to enjoy.

Reverend Lisa Lynne Kirkpatrick and Dr. Matthew Croasmun, Associate Research Scholar and the Director of the Life Worth Living program at the Yale Center for Faith & Culture at Yale Divinity School, explore how faith can mend divides.

The Giving Tree

During November and December, we invite visitors to stop by select volumes of the River building to pick an ornamental donation card from the Grace Farms Giving Tree. We collect donations to purchase gifts for children and families in partnership with the Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants (CIRI), which provides a compassionate array of high-quality legal, social, and educational programming for refugees, immigrants, and survivors of human trafficking in Connecticut.

Songs of the Season

Songs of the Season, our free, popular yearly music series, invites visitors to experience moments of peace and reflection through season-inspired musical selections performed by various artists. This series is curated by Music Director **Marcus G. Miller**, an accomplished saxophonist and mathematician. This year, R&B and pop singer-songwriter **Amanda Barise** was part of our programming. Barise has performed on stages across the world, including the Apollo Theater, Place Vendôme, and the Cotton Club where she became the venue’s youngest performer.

Year-Round Self Reflection

We developed *The River Retreat* to offer a self-directed way for visitors to pause, reflect, and encounter the Faith Initiative and its core question: what is the shape of flourishing life? The Retreat helps frame individual reflection around the flowing shape of the River building. Surrounded by acres of natural landscape, the River building was intentionally designed to create a pause in our busy lives. *The River Retreat* can be completed at one’s own pace, alone or with a partner. The booklet includes a map of the site along with a series of questions – alongside quotes from a variety of religious and philosophical traditions. The *River Retreat* was developed by **Dr. Matthew Croasmun**.



1,727
engaged with faith-based
programing

300 +
attended annual
Gifting for Good

12 +
faith-based organizations
given Space Grants since
2019

We invite visitors to pick an ornamental donation card from the Giving Tree, where donations purchase gifts for children and families who are clients of the Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants (CIRI).



program partners, collaborators and sponsors

nature

Connecticut Science Center
Frank Mantlik | master birder
Lauren Elliott | Master Gardner
Mystic Seaport Museum -
Treworgy Planetarium
The Nature Conservancy
Wave Hill

arts

Architecture & Design Film
Festival
Hannah Rose Thomas
James Florio
Laguna Art Museum
Lisa Kristine
London Philharmonic Orchestra
Marcus Miller and the IWM band
Pentagram
Sonora Collective
Storm King
Studio Cooke John
Suzie Collier

Conversations in Architecture series and specialty tours

Gabe Williams | Buro Happold
Michael Ra | Front Inc.
Toshihiro Oki | Toshihiro Oki
architect

Songs of the Season

James Carter Quartet
Rishab Rikhiram Sharma
Shel a

justice

Grace Farms Tea & Coffee
International Labour Organization
Nasreen Sheikh
United Nations University

Design for Freedom Summit Sponsors

Assa Abloy
Carlton Fields
CPG Architects
Extravega New York LLC
HKS Inc.
mafi
Nucor
Tarkett

The Sherwin Williams Paint
Company
Turner Construction

community

B Local CT
Christopher Marquis | University
of Cambridge
CIRI
FEED
Filling in the Blanks
Greyston Bakery
Japanese American Cultural and
Community Center
Liz Grennan | McKinsey and
Company
lululemon
Mia Shawh-Dand | AI Ethics
New Canaan Nature Center
Pilin Anice | meditation and
wellness expert
Stephanie Dinkins | Stony Brook
University

Food Relief Partners

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Open Doors

PROGRAM PARTNERS, COLLABORATORS, AND SPONSORS

Education Program Participants

Brien McMahon High School
CUNY Middle School Program
Ethical Culture Fieldston School
Fox Run Elementary School
Greens Farms Academy
Horizons at Norwalk Community College
King School
Marie Murr: Homeschool Group
Nightingale-Bamford School
North Mianus School
Platt Technical High School
Pound Ridge Montessori School
School of the Holy Child
Seven Acres Montessori
The Ethical Community Charter School
The Pingry School
Westport 7th Grade TAG Program
2 Local Homeschool Groups

Space Grant Grantees

Abilis Inc.
Ann’s Place
Atlantic Council
Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation
Blossom Hill Foundation
Brooklyn Children’s Museum
Country Children’s Center
CT Arts Council Foundation
CT Master Gardener Association
CT Sustainable Business Council
Darien Community Bible Study
Elevate Bridgeport
Experience Camps
Fairchester Consortium of Independent Schools
Fairfield County’s Community Foundation
Fairfield County Detective Conference
Grace Community Church
Justice Collaboratory at Yale Law School
Latino U College Access

Maritime Aquarium
New Canaan Community Foundation
New Canaan Police Department
Office of the Connecticut State Comptroller
Realist Lab
SeriousFun Children’s Network
Silver Hill Hospital
Stamford Jewish Community Center
Staying Put in New Canaan
Temple Shalom
The Justice Collaboratory at Yale Law School
The Lower Eastside Girls Club
The Nature Conservancy
The Town of New Canaan Emergency Operations Center
Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York
VOICES Center for Resilience
Wesleyan University
YWCA Darien/Norwalk
YWCA Greenwich

Grace Farms Members play an important role in our community, and help to support the mission, programs, and preservation of Grace Farms. Thank you to our Members for their support in 2024.

faith

Rev. Lisa Lynne Kirkpatrick & Matthew Croasmun
Yale Center for Faith & Culture

9th Annual Benefit Architecture Moves Us

Abby & Matt Bangser
Alice Bartlett Mahoney
Angela Mwanza & Todd Blanke
Architectural Record
Connecticut Public
David Barber
Eleanor Banco Lasko & Rand Niederhoffer
Fiona Cousins & Hayes Slade
Heather & Kyle Delaney
J.P. Morgan Private Bank
Jane & Peter Hunsinger
Jane Musky & Tony Goldwyn
Jeanette & Michael Chen
Kay & Joseph Cioffi
Marcum LLP
Paratus Group

Rae & David Gordon
Rockefeller Global Family Office
Sara & Bret Wiener
Sciame Construction
Sharon & Bob Prince
SHoP Architects
Vani & Seth Birnbaum
303 Gallery



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our values

As we aim to advance good in the world, we believe that our culture and the manner in which we work carries the same significance as the outcomes we are trying to achieve.

grace

we seek to understand and engage with one another with humility, forgiveness, and respect.

peace

we pursue a just, diverse society through our initiatives and place, starting with ourselves.

excellence

grounded in grace and peace, we continually aspire to elevate our collective work and place through an inner drive to go beyond what has been done before.

openness

we communicate often and honestly, championing the resolution of issues promptly and directly.

meaning

we cultivate meaningful community rooted in joy, integrity, and our common sense of purpose.

new outcomes

we learn and collaborate broadly, generating new perspectives and outcomes to advance human flourishing.

board of directors

- Sharon Prince**
Chair

Michael Chen
Vice Chair

Roy Medile
Treasurer

Abby Bangser
Founder and Creative Director,
Object & Thing

Anna Dyson
Professor of Architecture at
the Yale School of Architecture
and Environment

Peter Hunsinger
Partner and CMO,
Everyone's Earth
- Angela Mwanza**
Managing Director,
Private Advisor,
Rockefeller Global Family Office

Robert Prince
Co-CIO, Bridgewater Associates

Hayes Slade
Co-Founder and Principal,
Slade Architecture

Chelsea Thatcher
Chief Strategic Officer and
Founding Creative Director
Grace Farms Foundation

Dr. Miroslav Volf
Director, The Yale Center
for Faith & Culture



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leadership

- Sharon Prince**
CEO and Founder

Chelsea Thatcher
Chief Strategic Officer and
Founding Creative Director

A.J. Conley
Chief Financial Officer

Emma Gallo
Chief of Staff

Elizabeth Rapuano
Chief Communciations Officer

Cherie Sweeney
Chief Operating Officer

Meg Hely Walsh
Chief Partnerships Officer and
Board Secretary
- Emily Altman**
Director of Arts Operations,
Publications and Exhibits

Yesenia Cuevas
Director of Human Resources

Anna Marie Greco
Director of Education

LaWanza Holder
Controller

Karen Kariuki
Managing Director
Strategic Initiatives

Kimberly Kelly
Director of Horticulture

Kathleen Kiley
Director of Communications

Elaine Mitchel-Hill
International Lead,
Design for Freedom

Fred Pickering
Director of Safety
- Zoe Reinman**
Advancement Officer

Nora Rizzo
Ethical Materials Director

Sarah Scandiffio
Director of Strategic Events
and Partner Relations

Ashley Sikora
Director of Marketing

William Stonebridge
Director of Facilities

Matt Szwed
Technical Director

Bill Tom
Director of Information
Technology and Cybersecurity

Ray Urbano
Chef de Cuisine and
Commons Manager

as of December 31, 2024

select recognition 2024

Grace Farms has been internationally recognized for its outstanding design, architectural significance, and work to advance good locally and globally.

building and landscape

Mies Crown Hall Americas Prize

The second annual Mies Crown Hall Americas Prize recognized the best built works of architecture in the Americas realized from January 2014 through December 2015. **Kazuyo Sejima** and **Ryue Nishizawa**, founders of the Pritzker-winning architecture firm SANAA, were presented with the Award, the MCHAP Chair at IIT Architecture Chicago for the following academic year, and \$50,000 in funding toward research and publication. Individuals and firms who worked as a part of the Grace Farms design team have also been acknowledged for accomplishment in engineering, construction, acoustic systems, and lighting design. The full architectural team can be found at gracefarms.org/project-team.

American Institute of Architects (AIA) National Architecture Honor Award

This AIA award is given annually and honors the best-built works in American architecture.

American Institute of Architects New York Chapter NYC Visionary Award

Sharon Prince and Grace Farms Foundation were awarded the NYC Visionary Award for the vision for Grace Farms as a new kind of public space that seamlessly blends architecture, art, and nature into a platform

for people across sectors to convene and activate the Foundation's initiatives to advance good in the world.

American Institute of Architects (AIA) Connecticut Design Honor Award

The Honor Awards from the statewide chapter of the AIA celebrate the excellence of Connecticut projects. In its citation, the jury described Grace Farms as "a graceful project with an ephemeral quality, a quality of apparent simplicity that belies complexity in sectional and structural planning."

PA-DE ASLA Award

The Pennsylvania-Delaware Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects recognized Grace Farms and OLIN with an Honor Award in General Design.

Lumen Award of Merit

Buro Happold was recognized with a Lumen Award of Merit for its lighting design of Grace Farms.

Second Prestigious LEED Certification, Gold

The River building holds LEED Gold certification for Building Design and Construction (BD+C). In recognition of our continuing efforts to be as sustainable as possible, Grace Farms was awarded Gold certification for Building Operations and Maintenance (O+M), expanding upon our LEED Silver certification awarded in 2019.

community and leadership

The CEO Forum Group's Transformative CEO Award in Leading Through Crisis

Sharon Prince received the Transformative CEO Award in Leading Through Crisis in the category of Community. This award was for "unprecedented heroic efforts" in delivering personal protective equipment (PPE) during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as for creating a "unique, scalable model" for comprehensive responses for current and future crises.

Public Service Award For Extraordinary Benevolence & Contributions to Public Health & Safety

Grace Farms Foundation received the Public Service Award For Extraordinary Benevolence & Contributions to Public Health & Safety during the COVID-19 pandemic from New Canaan Fire Company #1. The fire company, helped us make hundreds of personal protective equipment (PPE), deliveries throughout the state to frontline healthcare workers to close the PPE gap.

MCHAP Symposium and Gala Awards

Our CEO and Founder, **Sharon Prince**, was honored for her outstanding achievements in architecture and Design for Freedom at the 2023 MCHAP Symposium and Gala Awards Benefit Dinner.

Fast Company Innovation by Design Awards, Social Good Finalist

Fast Company acknowledged Grace Farms Foundation and its mission in its design category that includes great architecture in the service of social good.

design for freedom

Fast Company's Most Creative People in Business

Sharon Prince, CEO and Founder of Grace Farms Foundation, was recognized as one of the year's most creative people in business for "cleaning up construction" and leading the Design for Freedom to remove forced labor from the built environment. She was among 56 leaders who are moving their entire industries forward with ingenuity and purpose.

Design for Freedom Face Mask – Longlist for the Dezeen Awards

An ethically manufactured face mask, inspired by the award-winning SANAA-designed River building at Grace Farms, was long-listed by the Dezeen awards. The mask was designed by **Shohei Yoshida**, Principal of shohei yoshida + associates/sy+a/ formerly of SANAA, and **Peter Miller**, Founding Partner of Palette Architecture/formerly of Handel Architects. The mask's artisanal weave created a gradient pattern and soft luminescence that shifted according to light and the fabric's texture. The mask raised awareness of Design for Freedom. Proceeds from the Design for Freedom face mask funded the movement's research and programs.

CT Green Building Council awards Design for Freedom the Trailblazer Award

This award, which recognizes excellence in design, also considers construction practices that support a broader vision of creating an equitable, healthy, resilient, and sustainable built environment locally and globally.



financial overview

Whether on the occasion of a musical performance, curated architecture tour, or large community-serving event – or just on any day – Grace Farms brings together people of all ages and from all walks of life to visit our site and explore nature, arts, justice, community, and faith – our five initiatives. Amid the seamless and symphonic interconnection of buildings and land, there’s something of interest and meaning for everyone. These visitors – some from around the corner in Connecticut and New York, some stopping in on a journey from faraway homes – encounter and embrace the Foundation’s collaborative approach to addressing pressing humanitarian issues. During their time here, they become willing partners in the Foundation’s mission, walking with us on the path to new outcomes, almost always bringing that message of hope and purpose back to their own communities.

In 2024, our all-season programming and outreach further accelerated our mission, locally and around the world. Highlights included a third Design for Freedom Summit (with record attendance and fundraising); additional Design for Freedom Pilot Projects, now numbering 11 across three countries; Shared Meals Tuesdays, where Grace Farms visitors can enjoy the same nutritious meals as those provided for free to our local food-relief partners; and the continuation of our commitment to providing free program space for mission-aligned, nonprofit organizations (see section on Space Grants, page 34).

In 2024, we also embarked on well-placed capital improvements, new installations to the site and its buildings, and strategic investments, ensuring that our humanitarian center will remain a vibrant destination and mission-aligned platform for years to come.

All of these commitments have made an impact in Connecticut and in neighboring New York State, as well as far beyond their borders. This work is made possible – and, more important, made impactful – through the generosity of our founders, board members, leadership advisors, Foundation team, supporters, partners, Grace Farms Members and event patrons, and benefactors both big and small, new and returning.

We are grateful.

Grace Farms is free and open to the public six days a week. Our nearly 80 acres of diverse landscapes provide visitors an opportunity to enjoy nature and learn more through our year-long programming.

2024 financial performance

revenue

As an IRS-recognized 501(c)(3) charitable organization, Grace Farms Foundation ensures its donations and revenues are used to directly support the mission of the Foundation, including providing Grace Farms as an inspiring public space that is free and open to all, with hundreds of performances, programs, projects – events of all types and related to all five initiatives – each year that engage diverse audiences in partnership and action. **Some meaningful financial achievements in 2024 follow (rounded to the nearest \$100).**

income

- \$17,821,100
restricted and unrestricted donations
- \$661,500
on-site sales (net of direct cost) from programs, books, retail, and food
- \$94,000
interest earned and other gains

expenses

- Summary description of key costs:**
\$4,871,000
To deliver **programs and outreach** related to the five Foundation initiatives: nature, arts, justice, community, and faith. This amount includes expenses related to personnel, in-house and outsourced; hired talent and visiting contributors; and programming and event support services.
\$4,042,300
To **operate and improve the 80-acre property of Grace Farms and its attractions**, which includes expenses related to personnel (visitor engagement, education, and culinary), property upkeep and beautification, and safety.
\$3,898,000
To support the **management, general administrative, and promotional** expenses related to running and growing the Foundation, including personnel costs (executive team, finance and HR, IT, and marketing), communications and media fees, systems support, insurances, and other essential functions.

The *With Every Fiber* exhibit features an immersive biomaterials installation by Yale Center for Ecosystems + Architecture.

detailed breakdown of revenue and expenses*

Revenue	
Contributions and Gifts Received	\$ 17,821,067
Interest Earned	\$ 93,991
Gross Sales	\$ 933,125
Less Cost of Goods Sold	\$ (271,640)
Gross Profit	\$ 661,485
Total Revenue	\$ 18,576,543
Expenses	
Programming Services	
By Initiative	
Nature	\$ 818,220
Arts	\$ 1,229,568
Justice / Design for Freedom	\$ 1,241,099
Community	\$ 1,047,527
Faith	\$ 534,555
Place	\$ 4,042,322
Support and Advancement Services	
Management and General	\$ 3,897,957
Development and Membership	\$ 559,316
Professional/Non-Professional Fees	\$ 555,885
Travel and Presentations	\$ 156,510
Advertising and Publications	\$ 151,781
Other Expenses	\$ 257,065
Depreciation	\$ 2,272,115
Total Expenses	\$ 16,763,920
Excess of Revenue over Expenses	\$ 1,812,623

*Subject to audit.

a look ahead

As we embark on our second decade, we invite you to visit us, join with us, become a member, or contribute to the Grace Farms Fund and our work to advance good in the world.

A.J. Conley
Chief Financial Officer



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membership program

The Grace Farms Membership Program began in September 2021, offering a new way for visitors from around the world and local community members to engage with Grace Farms and support our mission. Our membership includes many in the local community, with over 70% of members residing within Connecticut and in cities and towns across the New York Metropolitan Area and beyond. These members’ annual contributions provide meaningful support for our mission to create more grace and peace in the world and the ongoing preservation of the River building and its surrounding 80 acres.

In response to our growing membership community and resounding interest in the opportunity to develop a deeper commitment and understanding of the programmatic work of the Foundation, Grace Farms launched a new “Patron” level membership in the spring of 2024. Since the membership program’s official beginning in September of 2021, we have welcomed member households at four membership levels: Individual, Family, Friend, and Patron.

In 2024, Grace Farms hosted its 3rd Annual Member Day on September 14th with more than 200 members on-site for a vibrant day of community-building crafts and activities. Throughout the year, we offered a series of member only experiences to connect and explore, including complimentary Member Receptions and reciprocal visits with three of our institutional partners: The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum (Ridgefield, CT), Storm King Art Center (New Windsor, NY), and Wave Hill (Bronx, NY).

To learn more about current membership levels and upcoming member events, please visit gracefarms.org/membership or contact membership@gracefarms.org.

grace farms

Grace Farms recognizes the Lenape and other tribes who once nurtured and lived in harmony with this land. We honor their past, present, and future generations. We share in their respect for this Earth and every creature who inhabits it.

As an organization committed to critical inquiry and collaboration, we have begun the process of listening and learning from indigenous communities to understand the stewardship of the land on which Grace Farms stands.

Grace Farms Foundation's interdisciplinary humanitarian mission is to pursue peace through five initiatives – nature, arts, justice, community, and faith – and Grace Farms, a SANAA-designed site for convening people across sectors. Our stake in the ground is to end modern slavery and gender-based violence, and create more grace and peace in our local and global communities.

Grace Farms was established as an essential platform for the Foundation, serving as a welcoming place where individuals, nonprofit organizations, and government entities come together to collaborate for the common good.

To learn more visit gracefarms.org

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Printed on 100% recycled paper

In keeping with our commitment to the environment, this annual report was created in an ISO 14001 facility certified for environmental management using 100% alternative energy. The paper is sustainably manufactured using recycled water and renewable energy, and it is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council®. The inks used are soy based or 99.5% VOC-free.

CONTRIBUTORS

Chelsea Thatcher, Chief Strategic Officer
and Founding Creative Director

Elizabeth Rapuano, Chief Communications Officer

A.J. Conley, Chief Financial Officer

Kathleen Kiley, Director of Communications

Cindy Delaney, Senior Art Director

Katie Piascyk, Senior Graphic Designer

get involved

Created as a peaceful respite with an active and engaged community, Grace Farms inspires people to connect with one another, engage with nature in all seasons, and advance good in the world.

membership

Grace Farms Members enjoy special access to our site, experiential activities and thought-provoking programs – and the opportunity to be a part of our mission to pursue a more peaceful world. Learn more at gracefarms.org/membership.

donate

One hundred percent of charitable donations directly fund the Grace Farms Fund unless directed otherwise. Visit gracefarms.org to support our initiatives and publicly available space for all.

follow us @gracefarmsct

f @in ▶

Grace Farms Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, contributions to which are tax deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law. A copy of our latest annual financial report may be obtained from Grace Farms Foundation Inc., 365 Lukes Wood Road, New Canaan, CT 06840 or the New York State Charities Bureau, 28 Liberty Street, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10005. For any donation of \$5,000 or more, the name and address of the donor and the total amount of the donation(s) will be included in the Foundation's required annual Form 990-PF filed with the IRS.



