

# IN THIS PLACE

THE 2017 CROSSHATCH ANNUAL REPORT



[WWW.CROSSHATCH.ORG](http://WWW.CROSSHATCH.ORG)

## Crosshatch builds strong communities through the intersections of art, farming, economy and ecology.

*Crosshatch envisions communities that are **grounded in place**: where people connect through stories, music, art, shared work, and food, and where the economy and culture are **rooted in restoration of the earth and its people**.*

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(below, from left to right)

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**Mollie Thomas**, communication and development coordinator  
**Jeannie Voller**, program coordinator  
**Brad Kik**, co-founder and -director



COVER PHOTO BY AARON BURDEN ON UNSPLASH

To each of you,

I pause for a moment, looking back at the past year with Crosshatch, in awe of all that our volunteers, staff, workshop participants, and donors of time, talent and money have made possible. From growing guilds, to workshops offered from Emmet to Benzie counties, to hosting the 18th annual Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference; from giving more than twenty artists space and time to create at the Hill House, to showcasing past years' Hill House artists on the Kirkbride and Crooked Tree stages, Crosshatch continues to deliver the high-quality programming and events that bring people together and deepen our understanding of the ways we engage with each other and with the natural world.

Here, friends, is a snapshot of what Crosshatch has been up to over the past year, but no list of events and numbers can tell the whole story. How does one quantify deepening relationships? What statistics capture the people who feel more included in their community? How to tally engagement, inspiration?

These are the "crossings" of Crosshatch. Our mission and vision—to build strong communities through intersections of art, farming, ecology and economy—grow out of an understanding that these elements are not only connected, but that they form the essential building blocks of a healthy, vibrant community.

Crosshatch works hard to set the stage and to hold the space. Once that happens, folks start bringing their gifts for each other: connections, hard-earned wisdom, warm smiles, the intimacy of their own artistic process, and the convivial welcome of their homes and farms. Together we create and share in this commons of community. These are the moments that feed me and keep me coming back for more!

Crosshatch wouldn't be where it is today if it wasn't for you—your passion, and the generosity of time, talent and funds you've shared in support of our work together. Community grantors, foundations, and individuals have been showing up in larger numbers each year and we're so grateful for your support. This is the real work of community building. Thank you.

Crosshatch is growing. With the special help of Rotary Charities, our board and staff have been stepping up to the challenge of reworking and refining our processes, financial systems, and administrative policies. We have embarked on the transformation of our organization from the inside out, to grow our capacity, reach further, and create the programs you value and love.

I'm proud to be the president of this board. For me, Crosshatch has always been about discovering deeper understandings of the webs that connect our natural world to our cultural life. If you ever want to chat with me about Crosshatch: what we're doing, why we're doing it, or how you can get involved, please don't hesitate to reach out. I want to hear from you.

Please enjoy this review of our fiscal year 2017. We're busy planning fiscal year 2018 and have some new projects and ideas up our sleeves. We keep it fresh, and we think you'll like where we're going. Thank you for getting us here and for continuing to support this continued move forward.

Warmly,

Rolf von Walthausen  
Board President, Crosshatch Center for Art and Ecology

# "IF WE CAN'T AFFORD TO TAKE GOOD CARE OF THE LAND THAT FEEDS US, WE'RE IN AN INSURMOUNTABLE MESS."

WENDELL BERRY

## FOOD, FARMS & COMMUNITY

Crosshatch commits to three intertwining principles: (1) providing the **best possible education** to growers around the state, with a focus on both ecological care and smart business practices; (2) making space for growers to meet, **building networks and relationships**; (3) supporting new endeavors in the growing community, building a diverse set of growing practices and a **highly resilient food and farm community**.

### NORTHERN MICHIGAN SMALL FARM CONFERENCE

The **Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference** serves as a vehicle to promote and build a local vibrant agricultural community, to equip the small farm community with the tools to be successful, and to be a forum for the open exchange of ideas within the small farm community. Crosshatch has been facilitating the conference since 2012.

### FOOD PROCESSING ON THE GO

The **Chicken Coupe** is a portable, MDA certified poultry processing trailer that small farmers raising pastured poultry can use to bypass expensive processing facilities and sell direct to their customers. The **Preservation Station** (aka "Blanch") is a canning kitchen on wheels.

### CROSSHATCH GUILDS

The **Crosshatch Guilds** aim to provide mutual support for skill-building and networking for farmers, homesteaders and hobbyists through peer-to-peer learning, mentorship, demonstrations, workshops, conferences, farm tours, potlucks, and farmer-buyer networking events. Other guild functions include swapping and bartering, sharing work and celebrating community.

### MICRO-LOAN PROGRAM

The Grain Train and Crosshatch partnered to bring **micro-financing to local farmers**, with an aim to enhance an existing local food or farming venture or to help start a new one within the counties of Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Emmet and Otsego.

### WORKSHOPS

Crosshatch hosted **food and farming workshops** to more than 150 homesteaders and farmers throughout 2017. Favorites included *Advanced Beekeeping*, *Growing Edible Mushrooms at Home*, and *Caring for Fruit Trees*.

285 NEW  
GUILD  
MEMBERS

72 HOURS  
OF FARM  
EDUCATION

126 HOURS  
OF GUILD  
MEETINGS

1000+  
FARMERS  
AT NMSFC

7 TWILIGHT  
TOURS

\$6,000  
LOANED TO  
FARMERS



ORCHARDIST MICHAEL PHILLIPS—A NATIONAL TREASURE AND REGULAR PRESENTER AT THE NMSFC

### SPOTLIGHT ON THE NMSFC

Brian Bates, of *Bear Creek Organic Farm* in Petoskey, has been attending the NMSFC since 2012. Brian loves that he can hear from nationally respected teachers without traveling far. The education Brian receives at the NMSFC directly impacts his farm business. "We've become much better beekeepers thanks to the 2016 Farm School with Meghan Milbrath. Our overwintering strategies have greatly improved and we're able to get a lot more hives through the winter than we were before."

Brian also cites the Small Farm Conference, and in particular the trade show, as a resource for improving his bottom line: "We have saved time and money thanks to finding a farm-focused accounting firm at the trade show. And we were able to learn more about FSA loans which helped fund some of our business."

As for this year, Brian is most excited about Farm School, the day-long intensive pre-conference. "It's such a deep dive into the issues I want to learn about. You get to learn a ton from the top-level teachers they bring in, but you also learn a lot from your fellow Farm School attendees that you're spending the whole day with, getting to know, and sharing stories from the field with."

"Overall, I feel much more aware of my fellow neighbors and farmers as a result of the conference," Brian said. "One of the most important things we've tried to do with our business is to understand who we are and how we fit into the local food system. Checking in with other growers helps me reassess and cement where we stand in the community and how we can best fill the gaps and avoid over-saturation."

## SPOTLIGHT ON THE MICRO-LOAN PROGRAM

In 2017, Crosshatch and Grain Train Natural Food Market awarded Pitchfork Farms a micro-loan to start a berry production operation. Matt and Ellie Evans live in Petoskey with their four kids—Bo, Remy, Tucker, and Annie—and 1,500 chickens. Pitchfork Farms has been in operation, mostly offering raw milk herd shares, for the past 6 years. Three years ago, they began raising chickens for eggs and meat. And this year, thanks to a boost from the micro-loan, they began work on their production of strawberries, blackberries, and raspberries that, as of summer 2018, will be available for u-pick at their farm in Petoskey.

Ellie is thankful for the micro-loan to start a project that, at this point, no one else is doing in Petoskey. “The loan goes beyond helping the farming community, it helps the community at large too,” says Ellie. “There’s been a demand for u-pick berries, and right now people have to drive out of Petoskey

to find it. To provide something that no one else is doing right now feels really good.”

The loan helped the Evans purchase plants, the plastic mulch layer, and an irrigation system. Pitchfork Farms had been a side project until this last year, when Matt left his job to pursue farming full time. Financially, they say they couldn’t have gotten their berry production off the ground this year without the help of the loan. This is their first farm loan and they have loved the experience. “Everybody has been so wonderful to work with,” Ellie said. “At first I was hesitant about getting a loan, but they made it so easy. It was not as stressful as I thought it would be.”

With low interest rates, long pay-back times, and facilitators that care about the food and farming community, the micro-loan is a welcome alternative to traditional methods of financing. Crosshatch, in partnership with Grain Train, is happy to be able to coordinate this program, to help small farms like Pitchfork build their business, and to show that their work is valued. “It was such a great feeling, to know that someone else believed in what we’re doing.”

MATT EVANS INSTALLS A PLASTICULTURE STRAWBERRY SYSTEM - MADE POSSIBLE WITH A CROSSHATCH/GRAIN TRAIN MICRO-LOAN



## SPOTLIGHT ON TWILIGHT TOURS—TOOLS IN ACTION

What’s your favorite farm tool?

Start with the classic American iconography: the Farmall Model H, the “American Gothic” pitchfork, maybe an antique milk jug or apple bin. Contrast that with the shiny new stuff: the 18 row (and larger) “smart” combines, aerial sensors on drones for modern precision agriculture, or bluetooth-connected hand-built arduino systems for tracking temperature, humidity and scores of other on-farm variables. Of course, don’t forget the well-worn and much-beloved: from hand tools and muck boots to the wood-handled knife sharpened down to a slim line of steel.

But wait, there’s more! Plastic is now essential to many farm operations: hoophouse film, 1020 trays, irrigation lines and weed barriers. Our local fields and forests help too, with straw bales, split rail fencing, and timbers for our beautiful old (and new) barns.

For every farm practice, there is a tool.

Most of our tools are things, but there are also tools that are not: policies to ensure food safety, or to support organic growers; economic structures like food hubs or farm insurance; social structures like grower cooperatives and granges—there is no end

to the notion of tools in use. Crosshatch Center for Art and Ecology explored and expanded this idea of “tools in action” through its 2017 season of Twilight Tours.

Mike and Phyllis Wells of Wells Family Farm, one of the very first CSAs in Michigan, have been attending farm tours for years. “In 28 years of farming,” says Phyllis, “we’ve never learned as much as when we have visited other sustainable farms. You can read books, magazines and watch videos, but from our experience there is something very special about meeting the farmer on her or his land and seeing their creative ways of doing things.”


Each of the featured farms focused on unique and interesting ways they’ve innovated on the farm, from using livestock as free labor, to installing solar drip irrigation. Farmers learned about tools used to create rotational grazing systems, using cover crops as a tool, and other tools (both “things” and processes) for building soil fertility.

Most importantly, the Twilight Tour series is, itself, an essential kind of tool. Crosshatch believes that when people gather, we realize our best solutions come from each other. The community itself is among our most powerful tools.

## SPOTLIGHT ON THE GUILDS

“Since joining the Crosshatch guilds, we have established our farm as a small business where we sell chicken eggs and produce at the farmer’s market. We know we would not be where we are today, with a strong community presence and an abundance of friends in the farming community, without Crosshatch and the support of Brad and Amanda and the other staff. Through Crosshatch, we have learned about our local area and the positive impact the guild meetings have on growing a community with strong roots and a passion for a better world where we all work together to achieve common goals. We look forward to what the future holds for us, for Crosshatch, and for the community.” —Libby Hiser, Wild Blue Yonder Farm

## MORE BEEKEEPERS = MORE BEES



Last Spring, Crosshatch teamed up with **Cherry Republic** to bring more bees to Northern Michigan. For every 9 ounce jar of Cherry Crème Honey that customers purchased, Cherry Republic donated \$1 to Crosshatch's support of our beekeeping guilds. More beekeepers means more bees, and Crosshatch training and networking is a key component of getting folks comfortable with taking on the challenge. Thank you to Cherry Republic for investing in us!

# “INSTRUCTIONS FOR LIVING A LIFE: PAY ATTENTION. BE ASTONISHED. TELL ABOUT IT.”

MARY OLIVER

## ART STARTS WITH ARTISTS

### SPOTLIGHT ON THE HILL HOUSE ARTIST RESIDENCY

Crosshatch programs in art reflect, foremost, a commitment to supporting the moments of incubation and creation that happen when an artist is at their best. At the heart of Crosshatch's work in the arts is our artist residency program, which for the last seven years has been hosted at the Hill House, a log cabin near the Jordan River and Mackinac State Forest. The Hill House serves as a home, studio, retreat and laboratory for artists—a place where ideas have time to ferment, where risk-taking is encouraged, and where time and space to focus is given top priority.

By hiking the woods, paddling the Jordan River, creating art materials on-site, or heading into Bellaire to meet the locals, over 100 world-class artists have discovered a place to connect their art to the natural world and the life of the community.

### BIG CHANGES TO THE ARTIST RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Starting in November of 2017, the artist residency program will no longer take place at the Hill House. The lease on the Hill House is coming to a close, as the owners plan to put the house on the market.

The Hill House has always been what we've called our “beta test” and was never a long-term plan. We are excited for this opportunity to dig deep into some non-traditional models for artist residency programs, and to try a few experiments. Our long-term plans have not changed, and include developing a 50-acre parcel of farmland in Bellaire into a residency program supporting multiple artists at a time. In the interim, Crosshatch will be hosting pop-up residencies at various locations in Michigan. Keep an eye on our website for updates on new models and experiments with the artist residency program.

### THANK YOU, FERRARESES!

And we'd be remiss if we didn't take this opportunity to shout out to the Ferrarese family for hosting our artist residency program in their home for the last 5 years. Thank you, thank you, thank you for giving more than 100 artists a place to call home for a couple weeks. We are also so grateful for all the singers, dancers, writers, music makers, dreamers, composers, poets, and so on and on and on and on and on who visited, loved, were inspired by the wonder of the Hill House. We'll surely miss it, but we're looking forward to what's next.

Finally, this work could not happen without the support of our donors. Artists do not pay for this experience—this is a gift of time and space, in the service of creating great art, and in the service of connecting world-class artists with this small town. Thank you!



## A RESIDENT REFLECTS

### JEAN ROHE, SONGWRITER, 2014 (WITH LIAM ROBINSON)

“We were drawn to the Hill House, Crosshatch's artist residency program, because it seemed **well-organized, supportive of high-quality artists, located in a peaceful place, and rooted in its community.** It was also important to us that the residency was funded—Crosshatch provides living space, workspace, and food to all accepted residents. As full-time musicians living on a full-time musician's budget, we had to be sure that we'd be able to take time away from the work that sustains us.

The Hill House offered all these things and more. It was the precious space where we wrote several of the songs on our record, *Hunger*, out this year. As I prepared for the record release and the months of national and international touring, I could see clearly how it all started at the Hill House residency in summer 2014. **We simply could not have launched this project without the time and space it afforded.**

And the Hill House would not be the magical place it is without the people who make it happen. It was a true delight to meet the Crosshatch crew, not just the tireless founders and staff of the organization, but the constellation of volunteers and supporters in the community who attended our work-in-progress house concert, took us on canoe trips, brought us our food, introduced us to farmers, and shared their thoughts on everything from our song lyrics to the indigenous flora.

[cont]

Interested in learning more about the artists who come to the Hill House? Check out [About45Degrees.com](http://About45Degrees.com) where freelance journalist Sean Twomey has begun chronicling interviews with Hill House alumni on his *Artists of Hill House* podcast.

One of the unexpected effects of our time at the Hill House has been a lasting and deep connection I feel with the people and land in Northern Michigan. I have attended artist residencies all over the country, including some of the stalwart, long-established residencies like the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire. Crosshatch is different from any other residency I've attended in the way that it lives out its intention to foster arts and environmental stewardship in the geographic place where it exists, as well as the larger community it has built beyond Northern Michigan.

Many arts organizations, especially those located in rural places, emphasize the ways they are able to bring arts from the big cities and cultural hubs to the people living in their communities. And through the Hill House, Crosshatch has brought fascinating people from all over the world to Mancelona. **But Crosshatch also provides a nexus for the artistic resources the community possesses, the historical and cultural knowledge that is alive there, the lessons that the land itself has to share.** As a city kid, I was so moved to see this. I know Liam and I were able to touch people in the Crosshatch community through our music, but we were also changed by our experience there, in our work and in our hearts. **Some of the songs on *Hunger* were not only made possible by the dedicated writing time at the Hill House, but were directly inspired by the place.** Crosshatch advisor and celebrated writer Stephanie Mills wrote liner notes for the new record. 2017 was our second year performing at the *Earthwork Harvest Gathering* in Missaukee County, Michigan, a region I had never even visited before our residency in 2014. Since that time we have returned again and again to share music and community with our Crosshatch people, as we hope to do for a long time."

*[edited and condensed from a letter of support written by Hill House 2014 alumna Jean Rohe]*

THE HILL HOUSE SHOWCASE FEATURED ACTS FROM LOS ANGELES, NEW YORK, AND TRAVERSE CITY, HERE PERFORMING JEAN ROHE'S *ARISE! ARISE!* TOGETHER ON STAGE

## SPOTLIGHT ON THE HILL HOUSE ARTIST SHOWCASE

One thing we hear pretty often from artists about their time at the Hill House Artist Residency is how grateful they are that there are no requirements attached to the program. No lessons need to be taught, no exhibits at the end, no requirement for community engagement. They're truly free to just work. Their time is truly *theirs*.

Conversely, one of the things we hear from our community about the Hill House Artist Residency is that they wish they could experience all the amazing art that's being created at the Hill House. We don't blame them for wanting that. The Hill House brings in about twenty artists each year from all over the world. They come to this sweet cabin in the East Jordan woods and make their art and then they go. Poof!

Thankfully, we've found a way to remedy this tension between keeping the time at the residency sacred and giving our community a peek into what's happening in there. **The Hill House Showcase** had its first run last spring, with two identical concerts - once in Traverse City at Kirkbride Hall and once in Petoskey at Crooked Tree Arts Center. More than 350 individuals came out and heard songs from three bands who all spent time at the Hill House.

**Three Thirds** hailing from Los Angeles, **Robinson & Rohe** from Brooklyn, and home-sweet-home's **Joshua Davis** and his trio all played for nearly sold-out crowds. Each of the artists that graced the stage had at one time or another spent time in the Hill House, working on their craft. We were delighted to present this showcase, illuminating our community on the caliber of art being made at the residency program. Our hope is to offer the showcase every year and build in time for other types of art too. After all, the Hill House doesn't just host musicians—**painters, composers, poets, novelists, designers, playwrights and more** come to Northwest Lower Michigan to slow down and get inspired. We're excited to keep finding ways to share that inspiration with you.



## SPOTLIGHT ON THE SKILL SWAP

The first Skill Swap took place in June 2016. Well, hold on. The *first* Skill Swap took place in 2007. Back then it wasn't called the Crosshatch Skill Swap, it was called the *ISLAND Relocalizing Skill Swap* and it included classes like Turning a Heel: Secret to Hand-knit Socks, Vermicomposting, Roast Your Own Coffee, and more. We hosted a few more after that, including one focused entirely on sheep and wool! After a hiatus, co-director Brad Kik—along with Crosshatch supporter, friend, and all around community superhero Seth Bernard—got to talking about bringing the Skill Swap back. In June 2016, the 1st (again) Annual Skill Swap took place at Earthwork Farm in Lake City, Michigan.

Folks, it was small. Intimate, if you will. We sold twelve tickets. A few extra folks showed up that morning, but we had more speakers and volunteers than participants. Nonetheless, it was amazing.

Skill-swappers learned how to fell a tree, and then watched Earthwork Farm owner Bob Bernard demonstrate how to turn that tree into lumber on his sawmill. Folks took workshops in beekeeping, pickling and fermentation, songwriting and more. After the day of swapping skills, attendees enjoyed a group waltz session and concerts by Seth Bernard and Brooklyn rocker Gregory Stovetop. So, despite the traditional method of success—ticket sales—being less than mind-blowing, the event was indeed a success. There was a feeling of warmth, friends new and old coming together, learning new skills, enjoying live music and dancing - the Skill Swap was back.

This past year, word spread fast. We sold eighty tickets, a six-fold increase from 2016. The energy was notably stronger, but the intimacy, warmth, and community feel remained. In a follow-up survey, one attendee noted "I especially love the open,

heart-centered, generous feel that the whole event had. As it grows I would really love to see that stay the same." We agree.

Why does the Skill Swap matter? Why is this day of mini workshops any different than any one of the many workshops Crosshatch provides throughout the year? Here's our co-director Brad's words from social media the next day:

Then, oh man. All these new faces, they gathered in the barn, and they waltzed (note: social dancing is now a must at every Skill Swap). There, in the sacred holy barn, there was this single moment: Keith Kintigh's hugely ambitious attempt at a record-breaking Bellaire Waltz, fraught with awkward collisions and widdershin spinning, patiently attended to by Keith as caller and Sam Cooper and Samuel Seth Bernard and Bob Bernard and Dede Alderman and all the other waltz musicians; in this single moment this amorphous thing suddenly crystallized, and as every right foot stepped rightly in the right place at the right moment, a deep laugh (oh man) went up so perfect and right into the cloud-cleared sky that it could be heard from the campground up the hill, and in that single right moment, like dough becoming bread, honey becoming mead, milk becoming cheese, like air becoming breath, all through this amazing invisible miracle of culturing, this group of 132 people became, in and for that moment, something bound together and singular, and as that singular thing, alive, woven by fragile and imperfect threads into this single great and perfect tapestry, and it was good.

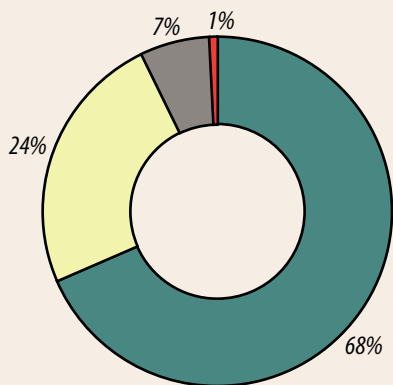
People often tell us that Crosshatch is really good at bringing people together. That's a simple way of saying that we physically get people out of their homes and a in a room (or a barn) together with their neighbors and friends. Yes, we do that. But we also bring them *together*. At events like the Skill Swap, we can actually see folks bonding, creating deeper connections, weaving a stronger fabric which has a ripple effect in our neighborhoods, towns, and cities. And just like that, we're fulfilling our mission of building stronger communities through art and agriculture.

Why does it matter? Because *you* matter, because creating the communities that we want matters, because filling barns with kind people and taking that kindness and turning it into good work matters. The Skill Swap is back, folks, and we couldn't be happier about it.



# INCOME BY CATEGORY

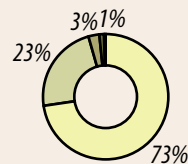
NUMBERS ARE IN THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS



contributions	254.2
earned income	90.2
fiduciary	24.2
miscellaneous	2.7

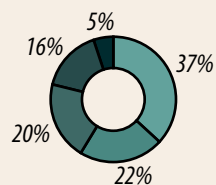
## EARNED INCOME

NMSFC/farm school tickets	66
other ticket sales	21
fee for services	3
product sales	1
misc program income	<1



## CONTRIBUTIONS

public grants	94
individual giving	56
private grants	51
sponsorships	41
fundraising events	13



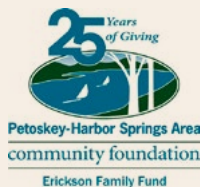
**THANK YOU** to our summer matching gift campaign donors!

Your generous support blew through our \$10,000 goal and raised more than \$18,000 for the artist residency and a host of food and farming programs, including supporting the guilds.

## PUBLIC GRANTS INCLUDE:



## PRIVATE GRANTS INCLUDE:

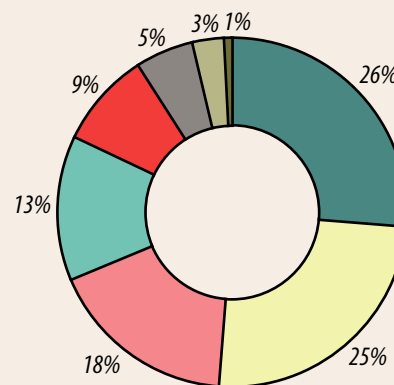


**Crosshatch donors are among the smartest and best looking people in the history of humanity. Here's how to become one!**

Visit our website at [www.crosshatch.org/donate](http://www.crosshatch.org/donate) and follow the prompts. Or, call us at (231) 622-5252, or email [donate@crosshatch.org](mailto:donate@crosshatch.org) and we'll gladly help. It's easy!

# EXPENSE BY PROGRAM

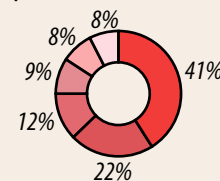
NUMBERS ARE IN THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS



overhead/general	131.8
NMSFC (small farm conf)	125.3
workshops/events	87.6
artist residency/programs	66.9
food and farm programs	44.8
pass-through	27.0
fundraising events	14.3
hatchquarters	3.9

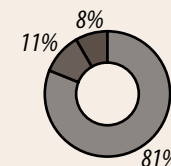
## FOOD AND FARM

guilds	18
on-farm grants	10
preservation station	5
chicken coupe	4
farmer residency	4
compost	3



## PASS THROUGH

on stage for kids	22
edible trails project	3
tara's meadow	2



In 2015, with the support of **Rotary Charities—Traverse City**, Crosshatch undertook a comprehensive strategic planning process and capacity building initiative. We knew it was time to build a solid, highly professional foundation for our efforts (not unlike a promising young athlete or scholar needing to invest in high level coaching and training to take their skills to the highest tier).

In 2017, Rotary Charities stepped up again, helping us hire a consultant to refine our internal operations. We've made some key upgrades that are under the hood and invisible: (1) top of line accounting and budgeting systems, (2) intensive training in development and communications, (3) a substantive review of programming to ensure fiscal stability and alignment with mission.

Crosshatch has come a long way since our early days as ISLAND. This great work is not short-term, and the changes we've been making will ensure vibrant, meaningful programming in our communities for a long time to come.

**Thank you to our many donors and volunteers who keep this work vital!**

# INTRODUCING BOARD MEMBER BRIAN BOURDAGES

Brian Bourdages, Traverse City nonprofit veteran and farmland-protector-extraordinaire, joined the Crosshatch Board of Directors in November of 2016. We caught up with him about why he joined the board, what he's super excited about, and what he wants you to know about Crosshatch Center for Art and Ecology.



## WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE BOARD AT CROSSHATCH?

I had been watching the development of Crosshatch basically since it was first established. And I saw how five years ago, they took over the lofty job of coordinating the Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference, and how they were maturing as a nonprofit, including their success in garnering an Organizational Capacity Building Grant from Rotary Charities, which I always think is a great

sign of an organization's seriousness. I saw this phase of Crosshatch going from more of a grassroots organization to a full-fledge, critical piece of the community. I've always held the notion that real sustainability comes when the communities that you serve determine that the role that you play and the services you provide are critical enough that they should be financially and otherwise supported, just as other critical support services are supported by various means. And I saw Crosshatch heading toward that kind of a place. I was excited to jump in and be a part of it.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST EXCITING THING HAPPENING WITH CROSSHATCH RIGHT NOW?

I think the most exciting thing is the concerted effort to refine our programming, focusing on those programs that have the most impact and are most sustainable from a financial standpoint. While I think that might result in some modest changes to the organization, I believe it'll result in a healthier organization and a stronger Northern Michigan because of it. Personally, I'm ready to do the hard work that comes along with these refining processes because I believe in the mission of the organization and the value Crosshatch provides to the community.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK CROSSHATCH OFFERS THE COMMUNITY?

The work of Crosshatch is focused around advancing the expertise and opportunities for people in our community, particularly in rural areas. Through workshops, the Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference, twilight tours, artist programming, the guilds—the list goes on—Crosshatch brings people together that might not have otherwise engaged

with each other. I think that's a really powerful thing that sometimes, because it's fairly simple, can be underestimated—the simple act of being a community convener. There is so much good work that can be done when people come together, share experiences, and learn from one another. Crosshatch is the premier organization in our area getting folks in a room together, and we can't overlook the importance of that.

## WHAT DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO KNOW ABOUT CROSSHATCH?

I think there are a lot of people in our community who perhaps don't have any connection to the world of agriculture and have no perception of the sheer magnitude of the Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference. The number of attendees, the breadth of vendors that come and the cutting edge technology and services they're offering, the skills being shared there, the kinds of interactions that happen at the Conference that are followed-up with changes in the field, in our food systems—it has tremendous and far-reaching impact. I would encourage anyone to come to the Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference, as they would likely be inspired and surprised by the vast diversity in participants and the amount of knowledge shared there.

# WRAPPING UP

**Thank you.** This work has grown so much in the last twelve years, in ways that the board and staff could never have imagined. Most importantly, this work feels embedded in the community—you all have supported it, embraced it, challenged it, and made it your own. All of us here are excited for what the future holds, both in the next twelve months and in the next twelve years.

Here is a quick look at what's coming: (1) a whole series of short thematic artist residencies, hosted at new sites around the region. (2) more artist and farmer after-hours, bringing folks together to solve problems, build relationships, and learn. (3) more of the same great work you've come to love, including the Skill Swap, the Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference, Guilds, Preservation Station, and the Hill House Showcase. (4) A new series of Crosshatch Field Schools, bringing a skill-swap-style model to food and farm education, hosted at regional farms and homesteads.

So much of this work is what happens in the spaces in-between—the essential work of building trust and connection among people, and reweaving our bond the place we call home. Your support—as a volunteer, a donor, a sponsor or an attendee—is the secret sauce that makes this work shine.

Thank you.

**For more information on how to support this work, visit [www.crosshatch.org](http://www.crosshatch.org) or contact Mollie Thomas at 231-622-5252 or [mollie@crosshatch.org](mailto:mollie@crosshatch.org)**

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