

**Chair's Report  
COG Ottawa  
December 4, 2011.**

**Margaret Tourond-Townson**

Welcome one and all to Fall Reflections!

Today COG Ottawa has honoured its volunteers and sponsors as you arrived the display moved through the names of our amazing volunteers and sponsors! And we thank them 'from the heart'.

**2011 has been a year of constant change!**

Our mother ship, COG National has experienced significant financial challenges which have impacted COG Ottawa and all other COG chapters across Canada. We have come to realize how important the mother ship is to us and have offered major support. Not the least of which is helping them to move from Chapel Street to 39 McArthur Avenue in the Oxfam Building where they have attractive space more related to their current needs.

**COG National has said 'au revoir' to Executive Director, Laura Telford** who has gone on to other employment in Manitoba. After an extensive search, COG National has hired Beth McMahon as **the new Executive Director. Beth hails from Atlantic Canada** having been the Executive Director of Atlantic Canada Organic Regional Network (ACORN). She welcomes the new challenges of this position and has taken the time to record a few words of greeting to COG Ottawa as she is currently still in Atlantic Canada. Please listen to her greetings!

COG National in its wisdom has decided to retain all membership fees which was initially a bit of a shock to us. However COG National is very important to us and we would encourage you to join COG and to renew your memberships! Please remember to check off the box saying you want to be part of our local chapter: COG Ottawa! Dick Coote our membership secretary will speak to you about that.

**Reporting on 2011 in COG Ottawa let me start with**

**Good news! A sponsorship for COG Ottawa!**

COG Ottawa has been the luck recipient of a 1% for the Planet Sponsorship by

**Character Creative** who greatly enhanced Feast of Fields with the design of a new and eye-catching logo as well as gorgeous program, poster and sponsorship board. Rebranding Feast of Fields was a huge part of its good success! Thank you Character Creative!

**A word of thanks!**

I would also like to thank Oxfam Canada who has invited us to hold our Steering Committee meetings in their comfortable and attractive boardroom.

**Eco Farm Day** is a one-day conference aimed at farmers, operated annually. The format includes a keynote speaker and numerous concurrent sessions on various relevant subjects, with a 'trade show'. In 2010 there were approximately 300 registered attendees. Tom Manley and his team are to be congratulated on such a successful educational event.

**The Organic Gardening Workshops 2011** both winter and spring series were offered at Sandy Hill Community Centre and were very well received by the participants. The organic educators, Pat Lucey, George Bushell and Rob Danforth were absolutely first class and we thank them.

**The Summer Organic Garden Tours: There were two organic gardening tours and one organic farm tour in 2011.** They were attended by approximately 80+ people.

**The Garden Tour in Merrickville took place on the property of Diana Beresford-Kroeger and the tour involved her presentation of the trees. This was very well received by over 50 people attending.**

**The Growing Up Organic Garden Tour at Heritage Academy** took place at Heritage Academy with Vice Principal, Derek Rhodinizer leading the tour. After lunch at the Experimental Farm, we paid a visit to COG Ottawa's own **Demonstration Garden at the Experimental Farm** enjoying a fantastic tour by Jim Davidson and his volunteers. We then proceeded to **the Fletcher Wildlife Garden** across the road and were so impressed with the tremendous work done by so many dedicated and informed volunteers. Our thanks to Lloyd Strachan for taking the lead on these tours.

The **Summer Farm Tour** took place at **Don Folley's Farm** on August 7 and was

organized by Dick Coote. It was a real eye-opener on the operation of a big organic farm. Don was very generous with his time for all our questions. In the afternoon, we visited Dave McCreary's Riverside Garden where Dave gave a most interesting and challenging guided tour of his operation.

**Feast of Fields 2011** was led by a team of energetic and talented volunteers under the leadership of Feast of Fields Coordinator, Chris Penton. Our volunteers worked tirelessly: Shaahid Daudji did the Budget Analysis and kept track of expenses, sponsorship invoicing; Indigo Holley headed up our volunteer section; Jason Gupta and Augusto Vieira carried the marketing and promotion supported by Debbie Holtzman who did the Feast of Fields website; Ian Walker coordinated the chefs and Colin Lundy coordinated the organic farmers; Sarah de Jonge did registration and the Silent Auction; Krystyn Schilling took charge of the Dessert Tent; Janet Merenica coordinated the opening ceremonies and entertainment; our trusted advisors were Lloyd Strachan, Suzanne Lavoie, Colin Lundy and David Burnford.

Feast of Fields happened on Sunday September 11 when we opened the gates under sunny skies to aboriginal drumming. A brief opening ceremony with MC Adrian Harewood, a moment of silence to remember the victims of 9/11 and a tribute to our generous sponsors completed that segment. The food was of course the highlight of the day and people really enjoyed it. Otesha Project played "A Reason to Dream" which drew many smiles and laughter and delivered an important message about organic food! There were too many activities to list them all. Suffice it to say that the feedback was very positive. COG Ottawa is currently reviewing the feedback from all sources and preparing for a decision about Feast of Fields for 2012. The Canada Agriculture Museum was deemed a great success and we have penciled in September 9 for 2012 pending the Steering Committee's final decision.

The Steering Committee has begun implementation of a **multi-year Strategic Fundraising Plan** which will be updated annually. All COG Ottawa activities will have a fundraising segment: Eco Farm Day, the Organic Gardening & Food Conference scheduled for Sunday, March 25<sup>th</sup> a new initiative for 2012 and led by a fantastic team of volunteers, Summer Tours and of course Feast of Fields. We plan to develop and implement a Planned Giving and Legacy Program. And we are open to suggestions.

**The Organic Gardening & Food Conference scheduled for Sunday, March 25<sup>th</sup>** a new initiative for 2012 is being led by a fantastic team of volunteers led by our Fundraising Coordinator, Jennie Videto. Please watch the COG O website for more information including a dedicated website. [www.cog.ca/ottawa](http://www.cog.ca/ottawa)

**Organic Week was a new event in 2010 which has been** promoted as an opportunity for awareness-raising through a wide range of activities. In 2011 COG-OC was involved in organizing promotional material in 8 health food stores, organic items on the menu in four restaurants, plus promotion of Organic Week in three farmers' markets, BBQ on an organic farm, a promo on television and the COG Booth at a film festival. Lloyd Strachan and Telsing Andrews did an excellent job of coordinating Organic Week in Ottawa Gatineau.

**Growing Up Organic** is one of our biggest successes again this year. Susan Preston Steering Committee member heads up this team. She has been doing strategic planning with our Growing Up Organic team: Torry Reid-Program Coordinator, Colin Lundy-our Farm Outreach Coordinator and Kim Fetter our representative in Vankleek Hill. Kim is taking a break from GUO for the next year but we will welcome her back anytime!

Growing Up Organic's **Youth Food and Farm Apprenticeship Camp** underwent a few changes in 2011. The Glebe Community Centre partnering with Alpenblick Farm provided 2 days of camp preparation at the Community Centre and then 3 days out at the Farm. They began by watching the film Food Inc, scavenging through a nearby supermarket to locate certain ingredients, and doing organic cooking with Organic Chef Stephanie Stewart. We gave the youth a basic understanding of the food system and conventional vs organic farming practices as we got them involved with the animals and growing and harvesting! This year we ran two camps- one in July and one in August. Jasen Brousseau and his team were proud of the success achieved with the youth in such a short time.

**Growing Up Organic's** work in School Gardens has increased to 22 school gardens in total in 2011 with 6 new gardens on stream! Torry Reid the Organic Educator has offered numerous organic gardening workshops and has worked hard on planning a forum on children's gardens and food access .. The plan is to create high school organic gardening positions where students would then be able to offer organic gardening workshops in the neighbouring community!

**The Farmgate Café Program** offers schools the opportunity to visit an organic farm, to harvest some produce and to return to school and offer ‘organic events’. Torry Reid has been an effective and energetic Organic Educator with Growing Up Organic however she will be on leave in 2012 and we already have new Organic Educators lined up to forge ahead with these programs.

**The Farmer Outreach Program** with Colin Lundy has been devoted to the development of an Organic Coop and to assisting with coordination of Organic Farmers for Feast of Fields. He has been involved in the organization of an Organic Strawberry Growing Workshop and in other organic related projects. He and COG Ottawa are looking at asking organic farmers in our area how we can more effectively serve them?

**Growing Older ‘Organic’** is a new program this year which is still in the planning stages. We have a volunteer Organic Educator working on preparations for next spring and actively looking for funding so we can afford to build raised organic beds behind two or three Retirement Homes as a pilot project. If you can suggest places we might contact for funding for Growing Older ‘Organic’, we would really appreciate that. Sara Holzman is currently working as a volunteer on the GOO initiative.

COG Ottawa continues its public outreach with the **COG Booth** coordinated by Lloyd Strachan and supported by Connie Mooney and a number of volunteers. In 2011, 25 different volunteers took this conventional 3-panel booth with free handouts and books for sale to regional events to raise awareness about COG-O and organics in general. In 2011 it was set up at 31 events and reached approximately 10,000 people.

**The Demonstration Garden** is ably guided by Gillian Boyd and her volunteers. Jim and Rita Davidson hosted the Garden Tour this past summer and it was brilliant!

Other initiatives that are currently in the works are:

1. Petra Stephenson has become the Project Manager for our **Organic Food Directory** which is on our web site. She contacts organic growers and producers to renew annually and campaigns for new advertisers in the Directory.
2. **Down to Earth is now a digital newsletter** in full colour with only 16

people still receiving it by snail-mail! Rachel Hargreaves is a new volunteer who sends out **COG O E-News** and **Down to Earth**. And we have another new volunteer, **Yimbo Santacruz to solicit ads for Down to Earth and to integrate with ads in the Organic Food Directory**. Please note we have a special package deal for organic producers who advertise in both Down to Earth and the Organic Food Directory. See the next issue of Down to Earth for details.

**3. Volunteer Management:** We have recently been lucky enough to find a volunteer manager in the person of Heidi Monk. She is already hard at work and doing a great job!

**As we look ahead to 2012, I have one or two thoughts to share briefly:**

1. COG Ottawa has streamlined some of its operations this year and we are doing a lot with a little. Volunteers are our greatest strength in many ways: They do so much work for us, they encourage us when we get down. We are vastly proud of them and thankful to them.
2. We are also actively working on fundraising to keep and to expand our important programs: Growing Up and Growing Older. This is a key initiative to the survival and success of COG Ottawa.

We would appreciate any advice you might have for us in fundraising!

**3. Finally, I would like to thank all of you for attending Fall Reflections today and invite your participation and input into our organization which carries out important work!**

In conclusion, I would like to thank all of you for attending Fall Reflections today and invite your participation and input into our organization which carries out important work!