

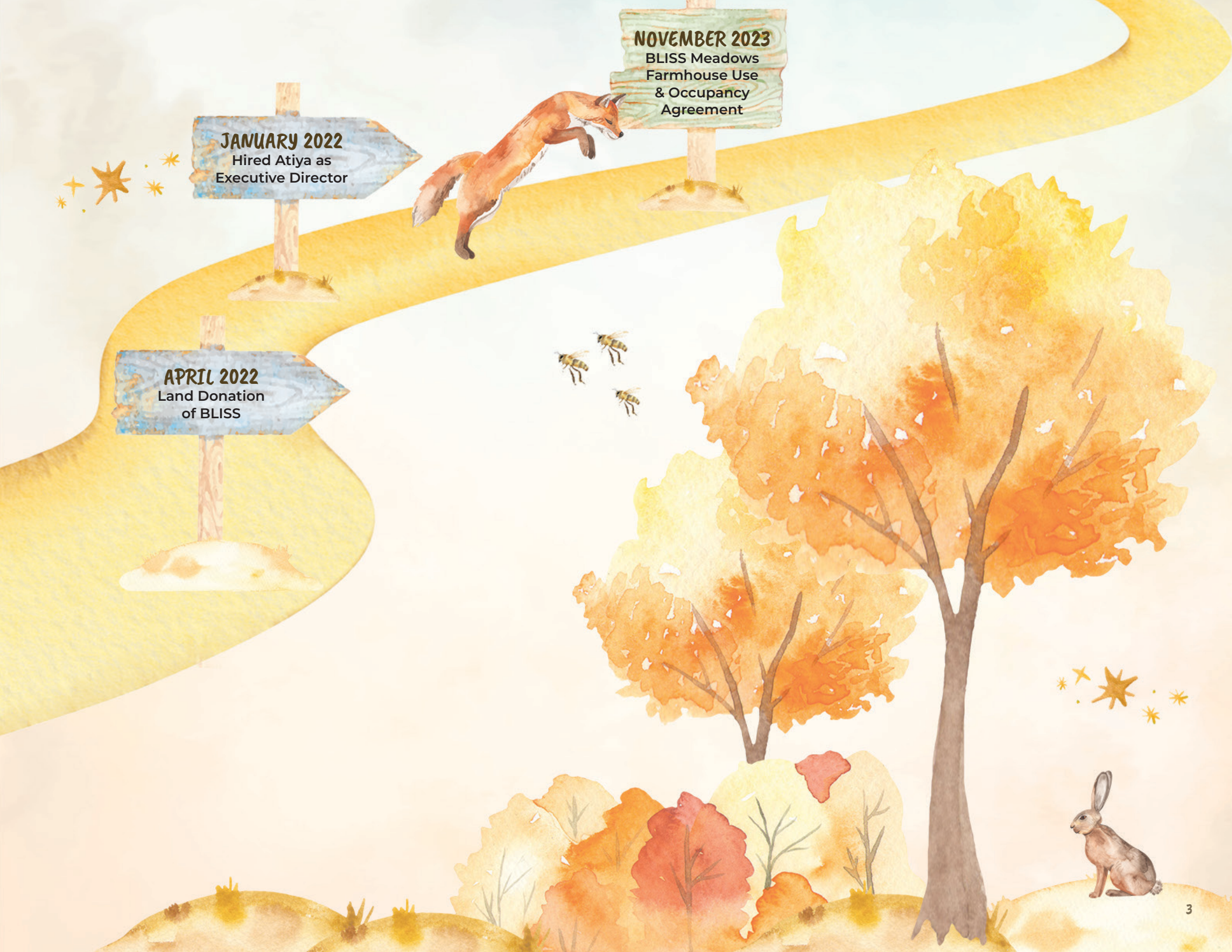
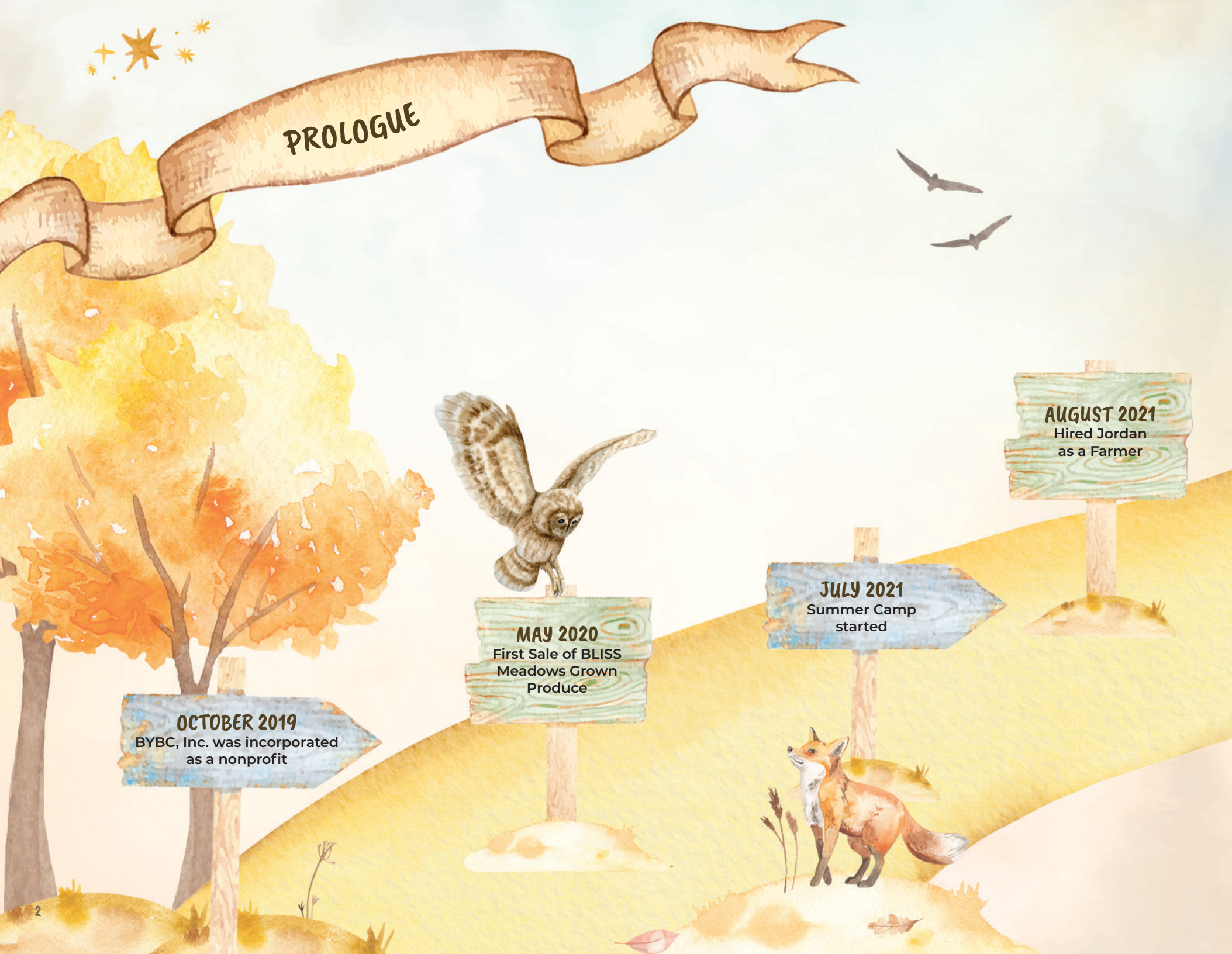
THE QUINQUENNIAL QUEST

2019 - 2024



Backyard
Basecamp^{INC.}

Five Fantastic
Years of BLISS,
Weaving, and
Wild Return





A Letter from the Founder of the Circle of Stewards and Lore Keeper, Atiya Wells

Dear Community,

Thank you.

Thank you for your unwavering support, your shared dreams, your hands in the soil, and your hearts in this work. Whether you've been with us since the first seed or just joined our journey, you are part of the living story that is Backyard Basecamp.

We have been on a fantastic voyage—one rooted in justice, joy, and the quiet magic of reclamation. As our team sat down to reflect on the past five years—scrolling through sun-drenched photos, swapping stories of growth and gathering—we found ourselves naming not just milestones, but crafting a saga. The story began with land that had been forgotten, and blossomed into a tale of collective triumph, where the hero is not a single person, but the land itself, and all of us who tend to it.

That's when the idea struck: this is no ordinary report. This is a five-year epic to be told as a tale, filled with side quests, building rapport, and blooming miracles. In these pages, you'll find enchanted maps, sacred circles, "good trouble," and the many hands that have helped turn a vacant plot into a vibrant ecosystem of learning, healing, and abundance.

This report is organized like a storybook. You'll meet our characters, explore the main quest of Bliss Meadows, embark on side quests that deepen our roots, and gaze ahead to the next chapters. It's a celebration, a reflection, and most of all, an invitation.

So now, gather 'round. Let me weave you a story of passion, perseverance, and possibility.

This is *The Quinquennial Quest*.

With deep gratitude and boundless hope,

Atiya Wells

Atiya Wells BSN, RN
Founder & Executive Director
Backyard Basecamp, Inc.



SPARKNOTES FROM THE SOIL

A Tale Told Swiftly

A short scroll for the curious traveler in a hurry

Not-so-long-ago, a vacant, forgotten plot of land whispered its longing to be loved again, and a circle of stewards emerged. This is the tale of Backyard Basecamp and BLISS Meadows: five years of sowing, growing, and glowing together.

The Main Quest:

BLISS Meadows was reclaimed from neglect and transformed into a thriving hub of environmental education, healing, and justice. It remains the heart of the journey, our 10-acre living, breathing protagonist.

The Side Quests:

From acquiring the farmhouse (with the help of a lightning-fast GoFundMe!) to launching a whimsical farm stand, building stormwater systems, and forming community circles of fire, food, and joy, we've followed the call of every good quest and made magic real.

Little Legends:

We planted seeds in young minds through programs like Habitat Discovery and Summer Camp, and are preparing to bloom even bigger with an Outdoor Preschool, lovingly rooted in moss and moonlight.

The Future is Fertile:

We're dreaming boldly: greenhouses filled with growing minds, a Farmland Commons to ensure land feeds people for generations, and passing the trowel from one steward to the next.

You, Dear Reader, Are the Strand:

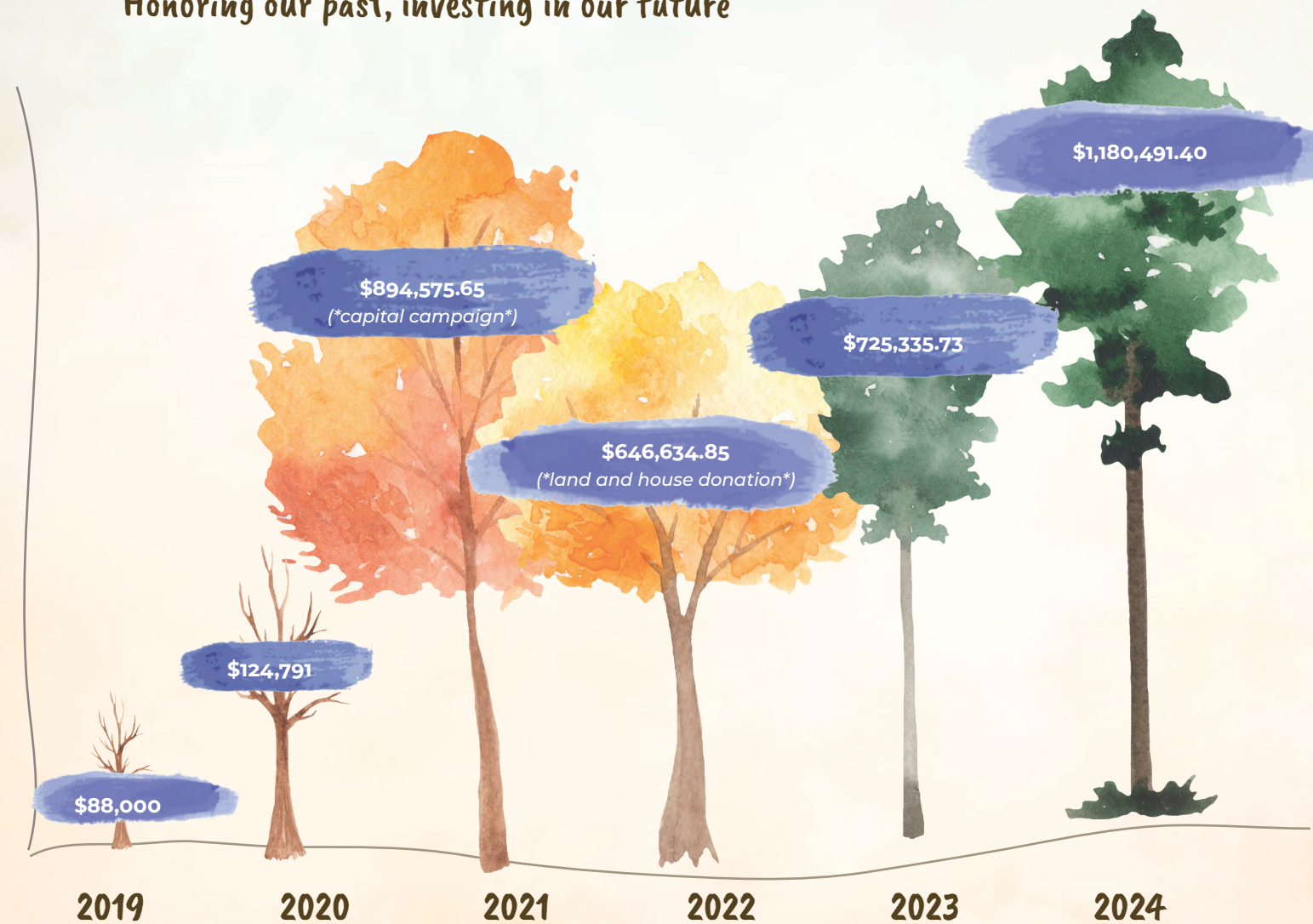
Whether you donate, volunteer, attend events, or simply share our story, you're weaving your magic into this community basket. We offer deep gratitude.

And the Quest Continues...

Look to the horizon for Book II: The Bloom Beyond the Borderlands. The tale is still being crafted, and we're saving a seat by the fire for you.

THE SANKOFA SCROLL

Honoring our past, investing in our future



CIRCLE ONE

The Year of the Seeding

2019

The Sowers of the Sacred Soil

The first year was guided by ancestral fire and community faith, the stewards broke the cursed silence of the land. They carried no gold, but they brought riches: compost, curiosity, and courage.

They scattered the seeds of transformation, not just in the ground, but in hearts. Chickens were summoned to roost. Bees were invited to sing. Children wandered the reborn paths, asking questions no textbook could answer.

Ledger of Necessary Noise

- ◆ Turned forgotten land into a community asset—stirring the soil of good trouble.
- ◆ Raised the funds in 26 days to reclaim the farmhouse next door—one joyful act of collective empowerment.
- ◆ Founded Backyard Basecamp as an official nonprofit—born of vision, rooted in justice.
- ◆ Welcomed our first major gift of \$25,000—fuel for the fire, and proof that magic follows movement.

That Fateful Encounter

On the 28th day of the Warming Moon in 2019—when spring arrived early and the breeze whispered possibility—a ragtag circle of dreamers, growers, and good-troublemakers gathered upon a forgotten patch of land. It was wild then, overgrown and overlooked, yet pulsing with quiet promise.

They brought no swords nor spells, only notebooks, visions, and the unshakable belief that something sacred could rise here. Under the gaze of a wide sky, they

mapped their mission: to transform these unkempt acres into a sanctuary of soil and soul—a place where young minds would root in nature, where food would grow freely, and where joy would be cultivated alongside collards.

They made plans not for profit, but for purpose. Because the land was waiting. Because the community deserved wonder. And because, as every ancestor knows, the greatest revolutions begin in the garden.

Reviving the Hearth

In the harvest moonlight of October 2019, we launched a humble GoFundMe seeking to reclaim the quiet, long-abandoned house beside BLISS Meadows. Our vision? To enchant it into a hearth of learning: a cozy headquarters where young minds and elder hands could gather, cook, and conjure meals from the very land outside the window. Recipes would root where yams and okra grew.

CIRCLE TWO

The Year of Sprouting

2020

The People Persevere

As the Great Illness cast shadows across the land, the meadows stood defiant. BLISS became both balm and bastion. People came masked and mighty, bearing gifts of presence and purpose.

Hope was grown with the help of many hands. Chickens clucked beneath sunflowers. Elders shared folklore and fables. Youth learned to wield shovels like staffs.

Ledger of Necessary Noise

- ◆ Launched mutual aid food shares—nourishment passed hand to hand, heart to heart.
- ◆ Plotted the first seeds of summer camp beneath the leafy cover of the Teaching Grove.
- ◆ Held safe circles of healing and light—where community gathered, even at a distance, to mend.
- ◆ Volunteer numbers bloomed like wildflowers—hands in the soil, joy in the work.

Our Familiars Enter

Amid the harvest season of BLISS Meadows' second year, three young goats were summoned to the land as our farm familiars. We dubbed the trio thusly: Loki "The Midnight Mage," Lego "The Amber-Eyed Archdruid," and Bagel "The Windborn Rouge." Joined by a gathering of chickens and bees, the herd established strong ties to our space over time, and worked alongside farmers to nurture both land and community.

The Forge & Flame of Community

The Year of Sprouting brought allies from all corners of Baltimore together in the spirit of care. Called to action, our Sacred Sowers joined the Green School of Baltimore to offer youth the gift of nature's knowledge across three Lunar cycles. In concert, we harvested bounties of hand-tended kale, collards, apples, asparagus, and more in efforts to feed our neighbors. As the chill of winter swept over Backyard Basecamp, our Weed Warriors emerged victorious in the ongoing battle against The Sacred Grove's invasive plants.

CIRCLE THREE

The Year of Tending

2021



Rise of the Circle-Keepers

This was the year of calloused hands and joyful sweat. Infrastructure rose: paths laid, barns raised, systems birthed. The council and village grew in members. Youth became knowledge keepers. Elders returned to teach. The land no longer whispered—it sang.

Ledger of Necessary Noise

- ◆ Expanded the farm with a mosaic of crops—each row a story of sustenance and sovereignty.
- ◆ Forged new alliances in education — programmatic pacts with kindred hearts.
- ◆ Carved trails through the wilds—footpaths for wandering minds and grounded spirits.
- ◆ Cast our story across the realm on national airwaves—yes, even the Kelly Clarkson Show!
- ◆ Planted the orchard—where trees now whisper of sweet offerings to come.
- ◆ Summer Camp took root—laughter echoing amidst the Green Wilds.
- ◆ Peace Pond was reborn—restored with care, and now reflecting joy.
- ◆ Our annual ceremonies returned—Seasons marked by the first blossoms and the last harvest.
- ◆ Stormwater side quest initiated—an epic in the making, with many scrolls to come.



Beginning Our Annual Events

Metamorphosis was evident in each corner of Backyard Basecamp at the onset of our third year. Doubly inspired by the budding Peace Pond, our team embarked on its next side quest aimed towards establishing an intentional gathering space for community. Our first Mother's Day Tea rose from that well of thought, in celebration of the myriad mothers, aunts, cousins, sisters, and neighbors who have helped shape us. Soon after, the time-honored Harvest Festival would join our roster of programs, along with plenty more to be enjoyed for seasons to come.

Our Orchard Emerges



The Small, Yet Mighty Scholars of Summer Camp

As the summer solstice approached in Backyard Basecamp's third year, we welcomed our first young adepts seeking knowledge and natural attunement outside of the academy. Magic rose from them in droves and, quite quickly, they acclimated to lessons in the sacred trades of animal husbandry, natural dyes, plant cultivation, and double-dutch (to name a few). Combining equal parts play and druidic pursuits, a symphony of laughter rang throughout the Teaching Knoll all season. Legend has it that you can still hear their joyful noise across the Green Wilds.



CIRCLE FOUR

The Year of Blooming

2022

Of Petals and Prophecy

Visitors arrived from distant cities to witness the enchanted growth. But the true magic was community-led transformation. The land now pulsed with beauty, purpose, and prophecy.



A Resplendent Harvest Joins the Market

As the land bloomed with bounty, an objective materialized: The Stand of Sweet Exchange, a farm stand, simple in form but rich in magic. Built from radiant intention, it became a portal where jars of honey and bundles of greens—grown with care and kissed by bees—could journey from soil to neighbor. Here, collards were traded for conversations, okra for laughter, and each coin dropped into the jar with a song: *This is what community tastes like.*



Ledger of Necessary Noise

- ◆ Over 300 young minds sparked through earth-bound lessons and wonder-woven learning.
- ◆ Partnerships blossomed beyond the meadow—our name now carried on national winds.
- ◆ Seasonal celebrations began—rituals of rhythm, joy, and ancestral remembering.
- ◆ Our stories flew farther—spun into features, films, and folktales for the masses.
- ◆ Programs were honed like enchanted tools—sharper, deeper, truer to the mission.
- ◆ The first honey harvest arrived—golden nectar drawn from blissful buzzing alchemy.
- ◆ Opened our farm stand—a marketplace of abundance, grown with care and shared with pride.



The Warmth of Glowing Coals Ignites Community

In the words of our elders, nothing brings people together like food, fire, and libation—and so Community Programs and Sunset Circles were born, not with grand proclamations, but with warm plates, flickering flames, and full hearts. Beneath the open sky, we gathered in sacred rhythm: to learn, share stories, break bread, and sip something soul-soothing. Laughter danced with smoke, truths were spoken in the safety of the circle, and every voice became a thread in the tapestry. These were ceremonies of connection, where healing took root and the village remembered itself.

CIRCLE FIVE

The Year of Deepening

2023

Beneath the Soil, Beyond the Stars

Now, the gates open once more. Armed with memory, community magic, and radiant vision, Backyard Basecamp steps into the next arc. Not just a farm—a portal. Not just a garden—a spell in motion. The programs extended beyond BLISS and into the community. Introducing Baltimore's residents to other accessible green spaces.



Ledger of Necessary Noise

- ◆ Educational enchantments expanded—new lessons blooming across the field and forest.
- ◆ Began climate resilience circles—preparing the land and kin for what storms may come.
- ◆ Intergenerational stories woven—elders and youth trading wisdom by word and flame.
- ◆ The farmhouse, once weary, now restored—a hearth rekindled for future magic.
- ◆ Secured the gold to build our stormwater saga—a great undertaking now set to unfold.

Expanding Our Mycelial Network

The Circle Keepers of our lands are also expert weavers, bringing new stories, land, and people together everyday. Among the most treasured allies to heed our call is the Green School of Baltimore, generously offering their own space to host our expanded summer camp. The National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) joins this volume as well—teaching the arts of Wilderness First Aid and CPR to our educators and community year after year. CyberTracker

associates have journeyed from distant lands to impart their knowledge on our village of the wildlings that inhabit our Sacred Grove. Last, though certainly not least, the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) closes this scroll. Their partnership throughout the Pollinators and Produce Program has alchemized these lands, making the Nourishing Gardens, Sacred Grove, and Green Wilds hum with life of winged beings.



GSB

Summer camp flourished and expanded to a new site

NOLS

Wilderness First Aid & CPR

NWF

Pollinators and Produce Program

Cybertracker
Animal Tracking

CIRCLE SIX

The Threshold Year

2024

The Threshold Year

As the canopy cast off its autumn cloaks, purpose remained. The dreamweavers of Backyard Basecamp turned inward. They strengthened governance, grounded intentions, and pruned to make space for healthy growth.

Now, years later, after seeding and cultivating ideas, we continue to steward that vision and harvest the fruits of our labors. While our party engages in the continuous process of growth & learning in the field and Hearthland, there is

equal time to celebrate how far we have come since the soil first whispered to us five years prior.

Our Sacred Sowers have worked tirelessly to fortify our foundation, sharpening each goal through guild roundtables and uniting under one vision, led by the land. Past, present, and future, no labor is wasted, and in each step forward we take, our wildest dreams move closer within reach.

Mission: To (re)connect Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to local food, land, and nature.

Vision: To cultivate socially just communities deeply connected to the natural world.

Values (BERRY PI):



- Belief in the Future
- Empowerment
- Reciprocity
- Relationship-building
- Youth Development



Goals: Increase financial freedom. Fortify our foundation. Deepen community impact. Inspire others to invest in the places they call home.

Ledger of Necessary Noise

- ◆ The strategic scroll was updated—charted with clearer stars to guide our next steps.
- ◆ Held sacred retreats for the team—deep breaths, deep roots, and deeper alignment.
- ◆ Wove equity into our evaluative framework—measuring what matters, with justice at the core.
- ◆ Planted seeds for volunteer leaders—tenders of the mission rising from within.

Succession: Woven into the Work

In the garden of our becoming, it is not only seeds that grow, but stewards. Many first arrived with wide eyes and wondering hearts, drawn to the singing wilds of BLISS Meadows. At Backyard Basecamp, roles may shift like the seasons, yet the spirit remains: We tend to people as we tend to plants—with patience, purpose, and deep belief in what is becoming.

The Sacred Sowers knew: Those who return again and again—hands muddy, hearts open—will follow the path from helpers to holders of the vision. From planting seedlings and painting signs to telling stories and teaching kin, the journey spirals upward. With time, care, and community, our once-young wayfinders grow into mentors, guardians, and the future stewards of this living legacy.

STELLA

2021

JOSH

2021

2024

2025

2022

2023

2024

CIRCLE SEVEN

The Living Chronicle

EPILOGUE

The Living Chronicle

"This land holds memory. This story holds power. And you—reader, traveler, kin—are part of the next verse. Come walk with us."

The Quest Continues

And so, the Quinquennial Quest marches on—not to an end, but to a turning of the page. For at Backyard Basecamp and across the enchanted acres of BLISS Meadows, the story is still unfolding. Ahead lie new adventures: cultivating the farmhouse into a living library of land and lore, expanding the grove where children learn by

leaf and light, and deepening the circles where healing and harvest walk hand in hand. We dream of more pollinator havens, more stewards rising from within our village, and more pathways where curiosity meets purpose. The roots grow deeper, the branches stretch wider—and with each sunrise, the magic continues.

At the heart of this story lies BLISS Meadows, the land where dreams are seeded, grown, and harvested. It is the main quest—the sacred ground where every endeavor takes root and every story takes flight. But the journey doesn't end here. Along the way, we've embarked on thrilling side quests, each one blooming its own

magic, from the creation of our farm stand to the blossoming of community circles. Below, you'll discover even more adventures currently sprouting from the soil of BLISS, each a vital part of our ever-expanding journey.

Scroll of Current Side Quests

☐ Greenhouse of Growing Minds

In the seasons ahead, a greenhouse will rise—not just for growing greens, but for growing minds. A living classroom where students, teachers, chaperones, and our educators will gather to learn in the language of soil and sunlight.

☐ Quests of Tiny Naturalists

What began as a tiny spark in a Pre-K classroom now flutters across two schools, inviting little ones to explore the wild wonders of nature, one leaf, one bug, one muddy boot at a time.

☐ Winding Up the Wild School

With the Outdoor Preschool Licensing Bill passed and pilot programs on the horizon, we step boldly into a future where early learning lives outside, guided by trees, storytelling stones, and the rhythm of the seasons. We will lean into nature as our first teacher.

☐ Guardians of the Commons

"400 million acres of farmland will change hands by 2030..."
—The Farmer's Land Trust

As elder farmers pass the torch, we are planting new models of stewardship—where land stays in the hands of those who will feed the people, not just profit from them. The future of farming is collective, and it begins now.

To protect the promise of Maryland farmland for generations to come, we are charting a new path—a commons where farmland is held not by the few but in trust for the many, rooted in care, community, and continuity.

☐ The Storm Sanctuary

With storm clouds come opportunities: a coalition of local and national dreamers and doers—NFWF, DNR, DPW, DOT, BCRP, and NRCs*—joined forces to underscore sacred water as a resource. Together, we're weaving resilience into the very flow of the land, ensuring BLISS Meadows can thrive with the might of Great Rains.

* National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Transportation, Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, and National Resources Conservation Service.

Transformation takes

time and tending.

The quest continues...

Every story needs its weavers. Every basket, its base. We've woven seedlings and saplings into the initial five years of wonder. And it is still unfinished, there is so much more to weave.

You, dear friend, are part of our guild of weavers.

Whether you give what you can to fuel the dream, lend your hands to the soil, share our tale with your village, or simply show up, your presence strengthens the weave.

We invite you to continue to join us by donating, volunteering, attending events, or amplifying our story like wind through the trees.

Each act, no matter how small, adds strength to our willow fedge, created by community care, forming the portal into BLISS.

Together, we are weaving a future lush with justice, joy, and good trouble.

Every offering strengthens

the journey.

DONATE

Contribute
Your Coin

VOLUNTEER

Tend the
Land

CONNECT

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*Design and printing provided by the Children & Nature Network in
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