

# Green Thumbs, Healthy Joints

**Accessible Gardening: “Any project can start small and grow....”**

Gardening is one of the most popular leisure activities in the United States<sup>1</sup>. People with arthritis, osteoarthritis and other impairments may experience functional limitations that can make it hard to begin or sustain activities they enjoy<sup>2</sup>. West Virginia has one of the highest reported rates of arthritis in the country (33.9% WV vs. 25.9% US)<sup>3</sup>.

In 2007, the seed of an idea was planted about how to nurture accessible gardening in West Virginia. Green Thumbs, Healthy Joints (GTHJs) was initiated by the West Virginia Assistive Technology System, in partnership with West Virginia AgrAbility, with funding from the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health.

Since its inception, GTHJs has funded over 125 projects in West Virginia communities. Groups have created accessible gardens at senior centers, homeless shelters, low-income housing complexes, public parks and community centers.

 **GreenThumbs**  
**Healthy Joints**  
800-841-8436

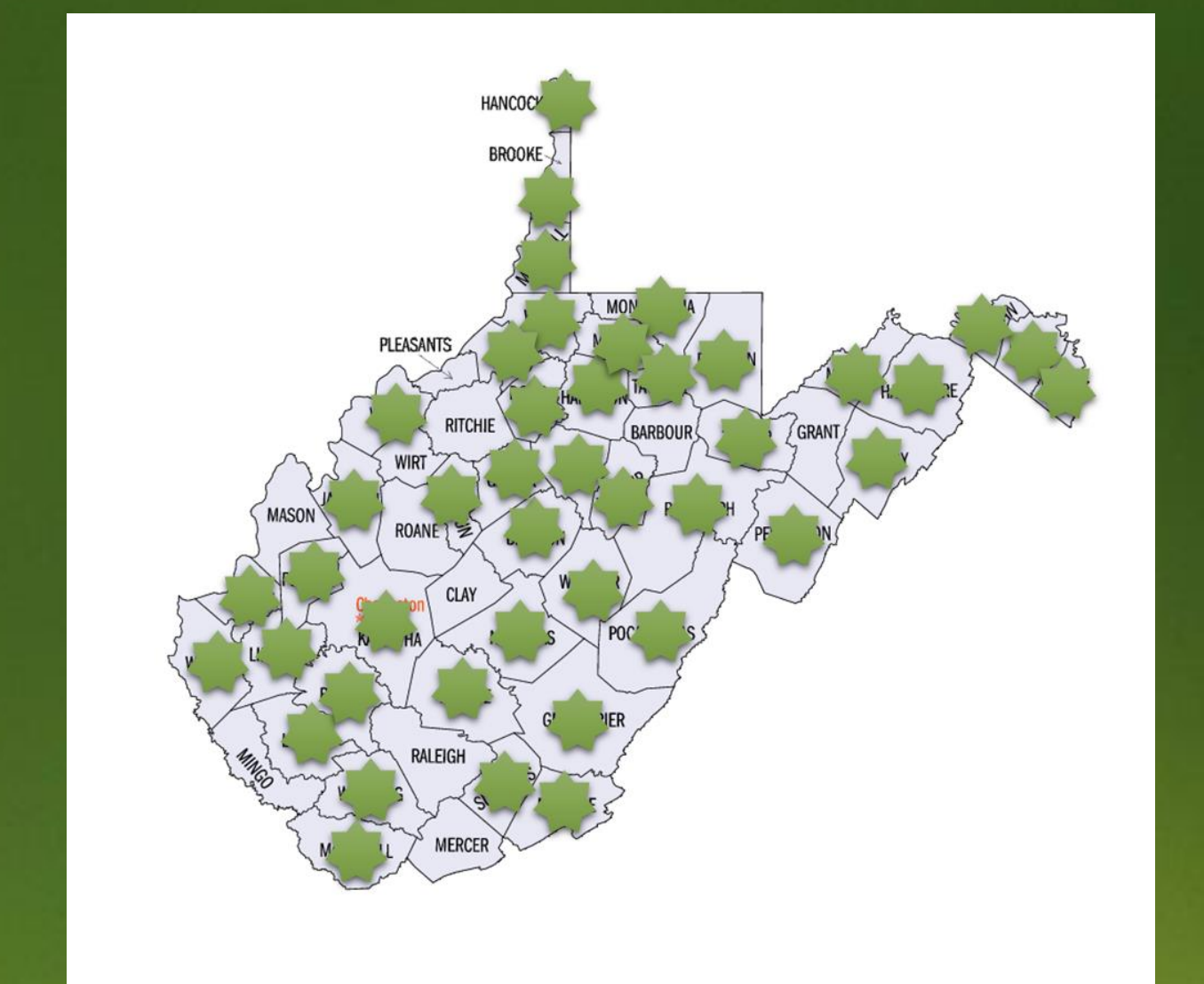
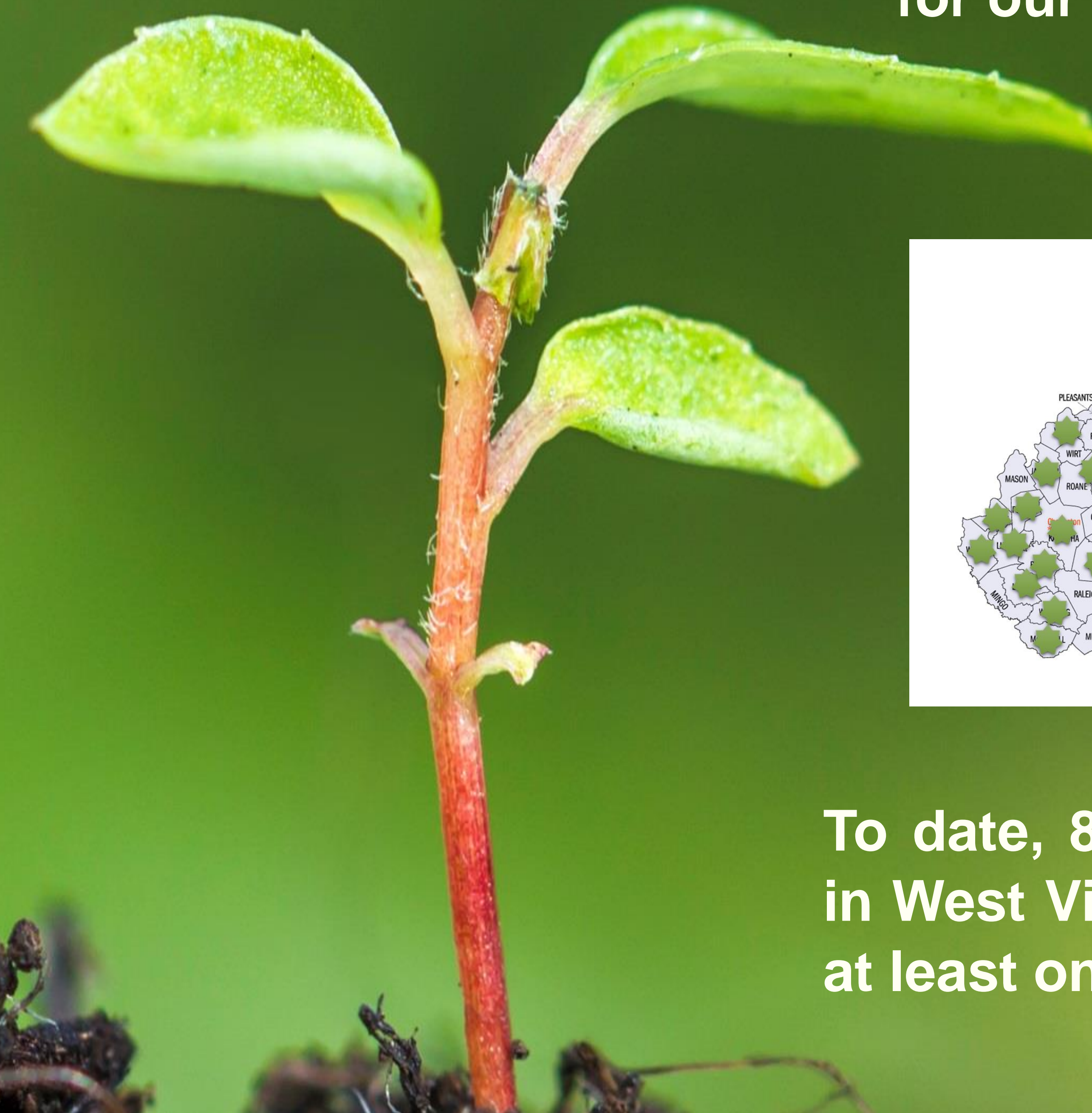
“The seniors are excited about the new vegetable garden....”



Each year, GTHJs awards grants to nonprofits for accessible gardening projects, covering the cost of materials and adaptive features, e.g., raised beds, accessible walkways and benches. Recipients are required to spend a portion of the award on assistive technology — e.g., ergonomic tools, garden stools, carts, knee pads and gloves — that can make gardening tasks easier to perform.

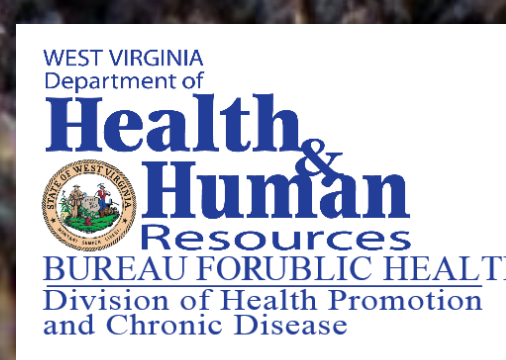
Volunteers are the heart of the program. In 2015, projects reported that 323 volunteers donated 2,882 hours of community service. Benefits include socialization, exercise and fresh produce.

“DO IT! It has been great for our community!”



To date, 80% of counties in West Virginia have had at least one project.

<http://greenthumbs.cedwvu.org>



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1) We Work Before We Play. Harris Poll. 2013. 2) Physical Activity for Arthritis. Center for Disease Control. 2016. 3) WV State Health Profile. WV Department of Health and Human Resources. 2012.