

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION



EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE
Changing Lives

When you support Extension, women trying to overcome drug addiction build self-worth and learn stress management through gardening and change nutrition practices.



After touring The Healing Place garden, the Kentucky Agriculture Commissioner shared, "As Kentucky is on the frontline of the opioid crisis, our state must think in new and inventive ways about how we can combat addiction and get Kentuckians the help they need. I'm glad to see the Healing Place is doing just that."

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Extension Partners in Healing Women Undergoing Drug Rehabilitation

The Jefferson County Extension conducts programs at The Healing Place, a residential drug rehabilitation facility.



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“For the women to see their efforts materialize in the garden, it builds their confidence, teaches responsibility and accountability. I want every woman here to experience that.”

Amanda Hall Program Director of Healing Place

Therapeutic gardening contributes to improving the emotional health, cognitive skills, and physical activity among participants. In 2016, the Jefferson County Horticulture agent began collaborating with the staff at The Healing Place, a drug rehabilitation facility for women in Louisville. There is a flower garden, a vegetable garden, and high tunnel. Over 250 residents have participated in a weekly hands-on class completing seasonal activities or worked in the garden while at the facility. As a result, residents can identify plants, manage weeds and pests, and describe the health benefits of the vegetables grown. The residents are more open to try new foods and use the harvest in the facility’s kitchen.

In a survey of staff at The Healing Place, 57% indicate that participation in the garden “significantly improves the emotional and psychological wellbeing” of clients. Other staff see the garden as an important portion of The Healing Place program. One staff member elaborated, “[The garden is] an essential part of job responsibilities at The Healing Place. Some of [the] clients are from rural areas where gardening is a part of their life. Being able to work in the garden provides a sense of comfort. Other clients are from urban areas and have no idea what it means to tend a garden so it provides a valuable lesson in laying a good foundation, planting the seed, and nurturing it’s growth. Either way, the garden is a true metaphor for our clients’ recovery.”

The women also have an opportunity to develop leadership skills. Every four weeks, the residents elect a garden supervisor. That woman organizes and leads the garden maintenance between the horticulture agent’s visits. One of the residents shared, “the garden gives you a sense of purpose and prepares you to get out there.”

To enhance the ongoing programming,



Residents are introduced to new foods, high in antioxidants, to restore their bodies as part of the healing process.



Jefferson County Horticulture Agent demonstrates how to harvest beets from the garden. The food harvested from the garden is prepared and served to the 250 residents.

the Extension Nutrition Education Assistant presents Healthy Choices for Every Body, an evidence based curriculum that addresses diet quality, food safety and food resource management. Nutrition is an important aspect of recovery from addiction. Foods and beverages high in caffeine and sugar can trigger cravings for alcohol and drugs. Due to damage to their body from drugs, it is important to consume a diet high in antioxidants and high in fiber. As a result, women who complete the program will be able to prepare vegetables and fruit that they have grown themselves.