



## At Work

### Partnerships and Food Gardening for Recovery and Rehabilitation



The number of Wake County residents receiving treatment in drug and alcohol treatment centers has more than quadrupled in the last 10 years as our population almost doubled (UNC Vital Statistics database). The mission of the Healing Place of Raleigh is to offer innovative recovery and rehabilitation to homeless, alcoholic, and chemically dependent men and women. The Realtor Foundation of the Triangle wanted to partner with a community that needed resources and volunteers to build a food garden. Extension services were able to pair these groups and provide the horticultural expertise for its success.

Our Extension team worked with the Realtor Foundation of the Triangle to identify an organization with shared goals. The Healing Place of Raleigh needed a garden to provide hands-on activities for its clients as part of its rehabilitation process, but lack of funds and assistance to begin the project held back on its progress. The Realtors wanted to donate funds for a three year period and provide volunteers on a regular basis to help establish and maintain the garden. Neither group had horticultural experience, so the Extension Master Gardener Volunteers (EMGV) formed a team that worked on helping to establish the garden and then came weekly to provide technical expertise.

Six months after beginning this partnership, a stunning courtyard garden had been built, complete with neat pathways, wooden-framed beds, and a vine-covered gazebo! Pounds of produce from the garden, in the first year, exceeded 1,200 lbs. The Extension nutritionist met with the Healing Place chef to integrate the fresh produce into the menu of the food for the residents. Perhaps most important, the garden was impeccably maintained by the residents of the facility. Several men spoke of their pride in the production and beauty that grew at the heart of their center.

Approximately 70% of the Healing Place clients are sober and productive members of society one year after graduating from the facility. Development of this productive and inspiring garden has added to their sense of well-being according to client and administrative feedback. The partnership with the

Realtor Foundation of the Triangle will continue for another two years and possibly beyond. The Master Gardeners have formed a permanent team that visits the garden on a weekly basis during the growing season to educate the constantly changing group of residents. Fresh and nutritious foods have been added to the daily diets of the residents.

**For more information about this project, please contact:**



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