



SUMMER 2019

Matters

The Healing Power of Gardening, Growing and Community Taking Care of Yourself and Others

Interacting with nature — just viewing trees, taking a walk or visiting garden-like settings such as a park or forest— can have dramatic therapeutic results in improving your state of mind, your blood pressure, your heart rate and your stress hormone levels. Over time, interacting with nature can lead to a longer life.

Studies show the great benefits nature offers for people facing challenging personal circumstances beyond their control that negatively affect physical and emotional health, including those suffering post-traumatic stress.

But taking care of a plant or a garden with guidance from a Horticultural Therapist goes a step further.

The process of watching something grow and thrive builds confidence, and instills a sense of personal

success. Working together, tending gardens and growing food, in particular, yield remarkable benefits. These include improvements in self-esteem, teamwork, social interaction, planning, problem solving and coping skills. Benefits also include a reduction in mental stress, fear and anger as well as a passion for gardening and community that may continue throughout life.

So be sure to include plenty of nature in your life! We want you to feel great!

Thanks to some very special people, the healing power of gardening, growing and community has come to Abbott House to help fulfill our mission of building lasting foundations for those we support.

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Nathan Tovar, a senior from Dobbs Ferry High School wanted to do something for Abbott House for his Eagle Scout project. As we walked around the Irvington campus, he noticed two planter boxes that a group of Morgan Stanley Volunteers built for us last year, and he asked if we wanted more. His timing could not have been more perfect.

All year the children in our TRC program have been taking part in Something Good in the World's Earth School-to-Farm program, learning about the origins of food, health and nutrition, and sustainable living practices.

Thanks to Something Good in the World, the children have been going on educational field trips to local farms like Kitchawan, Hemlock Hill, Faraway Farm Alpacas and Glynwood to get hands-on experience about how plants and food grow, and to learn about the relationship between farm animals and sustainable agriculture. The children made maple syrup and butter from scratch, gathered fresh eggs, watched baby animals being born, learned about composting and even planted and cared for seeds in small pots that they took back to their rooms and placed on their window sills. The children were so excited to see their seeds begin to mature into baby plants! It wasn't long before conversations turned toward planting a garden right here at Abbott House for the children that would serve as an extension of the classroom curriculum.

When Nathan asked us if we wanted more planter boxes, Barbara Sarbin, the Director of Education at Something Good in the World, agreed to come up with a plan to use them.

At the end of May, Nathan and his team of volunteers installed the boxes and filled them with organic soil. Barbara worked with the children to plant their seedlings and other plants and herbs, which led to a lot of happy, proud smiles! Nathan also created signs to

identify what was growing in each box (corn, squash, climbing beans, tomatoes, peppers, jalapenos, cucumbers, onions and cilantro). Yum! It was important to Nathan that the kids were able to grow and care for food that was familiar to them from their native countries in South America.

Mission accomplished!

Artist Robyn Ellenbogen, worked with the children to paint handprints, hearts and other whimsical shapes on the plant beds. This tiny garden is slowly evolving into a magical space that continues to foster creativity and instill a sense of peace.

Thanks to the many helping hands who have played a role in bringing the healing power of gardening to the children!



Top: Artist and Volunteer Robyn Ellenbogen. Bottom: Nathan and fellow Eagle Scouts installing plant beds



100 North Broadway, Irvington NY 10533
abbotthouse.net | 914.591.7300