

ADC launches horticultural therapy program

Ryan Diminick, Editorial Intern 12 a.m. EDT October 25, 2014



(Photo: The Adult Day Center of Somerset County)

BRIDGEWATER – The Adult Day Center of Somerset County, a nonprofit agency committed to providing high-quality, affordable day care services to disabled and elderly residents of Somerset County, launched a horticultural therapy program last month.

The program was formed after the ADC received a grant from the Grotta Fund for Senior Care of the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater MetroWest NJ. The program is planned to last until June through the grant funding.

The ADC began the program by providing workshops to its members twice a month, building relationships with its community partners, educating staff and volunteers about the benefits of HT, and expanding and maintaining the ADC's garden into a "therapy garden."

ADC Executive Director Diann Robinson said, "Our goal is to provide activities that inspire and motivate our members. We are grateful to the Grotta Fund for their support of this pilot program that is allowing us to implement an additional professional therapy."

Robinson explained that HT provides benefits on physical, emotional and social levels.

"Members will use their fine and gross motor skills when planting seeds or assembling different arrangements," she said. "Gardening is a great way to relieve stress or feelings of anger or aggression. HT has social benefits because members have the chance to share their experiences."

Laura DePrado, President of Final Touch Landscaping, LLC in Branchburg, has been identified as ADC's therapist, and staff member Nikki Hoffman will assist.

The New Road School will provide student volunteers to assist ADC staff with preparing materials for the workshops and helping members to complete tasks.

The school, which offers three day-schools throughout New Jersey, provides special educational services for children and youth who experience learning, language and social difficulties. The New Road in Somerset partners with the ADC to provide opportunities for its students.

New Road School Career Counselor Frank Schneider spoke about the partnership.

"Our goal is to offer our students a variety of work experiences to assist them in making choices for their future," he said. "Working with HT is giving the students hands-on experience with plant materials and is adding to their job training."

The HT program has gotten off to a successful start. During the first two workshops, members, staff and students learned about Monarch Butterflies and created butterfly gardens filled with flower landing pads in various colors, shapes and textures.

DePrado has a Certificate in Horticultural Therapy from Rutgers University. She is a horticultural specialist and therapy practitioner who specializes in connecting people with plants through activities and programs for groups of various ages throughout New Jersey.

DePrado received the American Horticultural Therapy Association's (AHTA) Alice Burlingame Humanitarian Award in 2013. She is a two-time national AHTA presenter, has received local and national awards for her work and serves on the AHTA Conference Committee.

She is a columnist and co-author of the published Rutgers Fact Sheet "Enabling Gardens: The Practical Side of Horticultural Therapy." Her work was highlighted in the Rutgers Agricultural Experiment Station 2013 Annual Report.

The ADC is seeking vendors to provide plant materials for the workshops and volunteers to assist in the garden with clean up, pruning and planting.

To learn more about the ADC's new HT program, the partnership between the New Road School and the ADC, Laura DePrado and Final Touch Landscaping, or to become a volunteer or donor, please contact Hilary Kruchowy for more information at hkruchowy@adultdaycenter.org or 908-725-0068.

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