PUSHING PEDALS AND PEPPERS

By: Carmen Irving and MacKenzie Poling
What is a Community Recovery Garden?

❖ Collaborative garden focused on teaching skillsets for the recovery community as well as youth and older adults.
❖ Opportunity to increase access to healthy foods.
❖ Practice caring and nurturing living things.
❖ Reduce stigma--see recovery differently.
What does gardening have to do with recovery?

- Healthier eating habits
- Stronger sense of purpose
- Helps practice compassion
- Increases in Vitamin D
- Improves overall physical health
- Increases self-regulation and coping strategies
What does gardening have to do with mental health?

- Reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Decrease in fatigue
- Increases in mood
- Increases in self-esteem
- Increase in Vigor
- Increase in overall health
Gardening teaches skills beyond gardening...

- Sense of responsibility
- Allows us to be nurturers
- Keeps us connected to living things
- Let go! RELAX
- Releases happy hormones (decreases stress hormones)
- Mindfulness
- Vent—work out anger and aggression
- Gain sense of control
- Low stakes
COMMUNITY RECOVERY GARDEN

How does the Recovery Garden work?

❖ Collaborative Advisory Council
❖ Planning with Master Gardner's (fruit and vegetable interest survey)
❖ Planting
❖ Maintenance (weeding, fertilizing, watering, harvesting)
❖ Educational Partnership with Ohio State Extension (cooking with fresh foods, food safety, food budgeting).
❖ Harvest Log. Weigh and document pounds of produce harvested.
❖ Surplus produce donations.
COMMUNITY RECOVERY GARDEN

Collaborators:
❖ Mental Health & Recovery Board of Union County
❖ Union County Public Health Department
❖ Maryhaven
❖ Ohio State University Master Gardeners
❖ Ohio State University Extension
❖ Juvenile Probation (and other youth volunteers)
❖ Community and Seasoned Citizens
❖ Wings Support and Recovery
❖ 4-H Volunteers
COMMUNITY RECOVERY GARDEN

Where are we now?

❖ Hundreds of pounds of produce harvested, consumed and/or donated.
❖ Increased fruit and vegetable intake among residents and clients by 128%.
❖ Over 100 hours of education in food safety, preparation and budgeting (over 4 years).
❖ Participants report using the garden as a coping strategy.
❖ 75% of participants said their sense of community improved as a result of garden participation.
COMMUNITY RECOVERY GARDEN

Challenges and Barriers

❖ Attrition/graduation from program
❖ Interest in participating
❖ Availability of clients/residents
❖ Communication by site
❖ Staff time for management of programs
COMMUNITY RECOVERY GARDEN

Next Steps

✓ Serve diverse audience (older adults and youth!)
❖ Add more variety to gardens
❖ Expand to multiple sites
❖ Expand produce for Farmer’s Market Use
❖ Increase number of beds
❖ Greater donation to local pantries and meal sites
COMMUNITY RECOVERY GARDEN
PEDAL PROGRAM

Bicycle Lending Program

❖ Serves recovery community
❖ Embedded in our recovery housing (SUD/MH)
❖ Expanded to our community center
❖ Serves all ages including youth and older adults
PEDAL PROGRAM

Practical Solution!

- Many residents and clients lack driver’s license/driving privileges
- No public transportation in Union County
- FREE transportation and recreation!
PEDAL PROGRAM

How does it work?

❖ Read the Quick Start Guide
❖ Sign the waiver
❖ Grab a helmet, bike lock, and RIDE!
❖ Return the bike by the close of business unless pre-arrangement has been made.
❖ **EARN** a bike!
PEDAL PROGRAM

Research Says...

❖ Increases social wellness
❖ Increases social connectedness
❖ Increases mental health outcomes including diagnoses of depression, bipolar disorder & anxiety.
❖ Regulates the brain and builds brain cells (admit it, that is really cool).
Collaborators

❖ MHRBUC
(leadership, admin, funding, data collection)
❖ Union County Public Health
(policy, procedure, funding, evaluation)
❖ Hope Center
(lending site, admin support, champion)
❖ City of Marysville
(in-kind labor/installation)
❖ Maryhaven
(lending site, champion)
❖ Wings Support and Recovery
(lending site, champion)
PEDAL PROGRAM

Let’s Keep Pedaling….
❖ Work with police department
❖ Bike repair with recovery community and APG youth
❖ Expand to additional high-use locations
❖ Organized recovery bike ride
❖ Additional city infrastructure
REFERENCES

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