

News | Giving

Community Health Center Rooftop Garden Earns Volunteer Nod

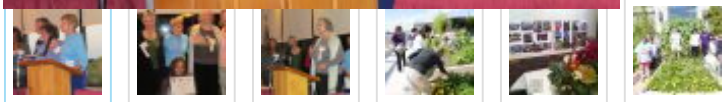
Five Middletown local members agreed to partner with MARC: Community Resources this past spring and it instantly turned into a learning and growing experience for all individuals involved.

Posted by [Cassandra Day](#) (Editor) , November 03, 2013 at 05:45 PM



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Center, Inc. leads to volunteer award



On Oct. 17 at MARC: Community Resources's 58th annual meeting at the Middletown Elks Club Middletown Garden Club members were recognized as Volunteers of the Year.

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MARC: Community Resources, is a multi-faceted organization that serves hundreds of adults and children with disabilities in employment, vocational, elderly, recreation and habilitative programs.

Last winter, an opportunity to have MARC host one of their recreation groups on the Community Health Center, Inc. rooftop was just an idea that quickly became supported by The Middletown Garden Club and brought to life in such an amazing way.

"To say that it was an enjoyable and satisfying experience is an understatement--we became friends, working our way into one another's hearts," said Melissa Roberts, one of

the project leaders from the Middletown Garden Club. "I trust this is just the beginning of a long relationship between our two organizations. We are so thankful that the Community Health Center made this rooftop garden project possible."

The Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC) of Middletown opened their comprehensive primary care facility in May of 2012. The new building on the north end of Main Street included a "green rooftop" with several garden plots added in the blueprint to be utilized by the community.

As we fast forward more than a year and a half later, the outcome of gardening with other Middlesex County organizations has surpassed our expectations immensely. The Middletown Garden Club is a large organization with members across Middlesex County that was founded in 1912. The club as a whole focuses on a variety of conservation, arranging, fundraising and civic projects.

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The MGC took on the role of planning what vegetables, herbs and flowers to add in each of the rooftop garden beds and with the financial support of the Community Health Center, Inc., the first day of "Garden Club" began in April. From then on, every Tuesday, members from The Middletown Garden Club, Staff and Consumers of MARC and various CHC AmeriCorps members spent an hour on the roof learning, sharing and gardening together.

MARC: Community Resources follows the mission statement of empowering adults and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities to realize their dreams and make choices about their lives. For one hour per week, the core group of volunteers from MGC brought their knowledge, patience and compassion with them.

From April to October, the weekly gardening continued and the benefits of the program included: newfound knowledge of horticulture, responsibility & ownership of maintaining a garden and sharing of what these beds were producing. Depending on the week, different participants were able to take vegetables and herbs home along with regularly donating to Amazing Grace Food Pantry.

The groups also came together in August to prepare a meal using freshly picked produce in the CHC kitchen.

"What a thrill it was for MARC to collaborate with the Community Health Center and Middletown Garden Club in this unique rooftop garden project," said Lisa Christensen, the Director of adult recreation for MARC.

"Words cannot describe how beneficial this program was for everyone involved. The knowledge shared, the time given and the end results of gardens and friendships that grew was just priceless. We are all looking forward to continuing this partnership next year," said Christensen.

The selection of the Middletown Garden Club members for the Volunteer Award just reiterates the fact that they're a unique group of woman who have helped fulfill one of CHC's ongoing goals, building healthier communities and we are beyond grateful for their support.

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