

A Summary of the American Horticultural Therapy Association 2019 Annual Conference



Richard Eltringham CF
Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust



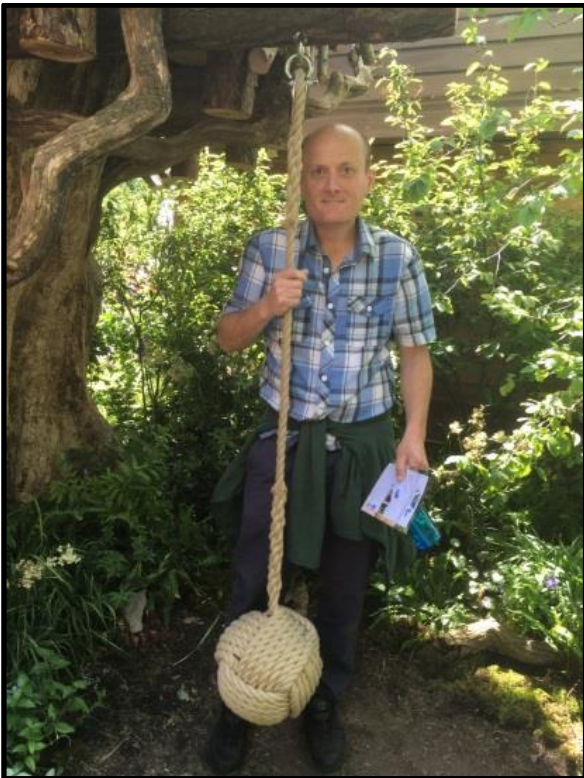
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<http://www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/newsletters>

Introduction

I am interested in exploring and developing the effective use of our landscape in the treatment and rehabilitation of a wide range of illnesses - whilst preserving, restoring and managing its natural beauty. Working under the supervision of Occupational Therapists (OTs) and alongside nursing staff, I lead therapeutic horticultural activities for and with patients at Arnold Lodge. The East Midlands Centre for Forensic Mental Health is based at Leicester and forms part of the Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. In May 2017 I was awarded the Winston Churchill Fellowship. This involved studying how horticultural community restitution work crew programmes were undertaken for offenders with mental health problems in the USA. I spent four weeks there – travelling to New York, California and Washington State. During this time, I visited eleven projects, run by four different organisations who work in partnership with the Correctional Service.



Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my hardworking colleagues from Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust for all the extra work they undertook in my absence.

Thank you to the RHS Coke Trust Bursary Fund for offering me this incredible opportunity and The American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA) for inviting me to their conference.

Photographs courtesy of Richard Eltringham and Nancy Wick, OTR/L

Overview of the project

I submitted a proposal to deliver a 90-minute workshop at the American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA) Annual Conference - "Digging in Together" - at Grand Rapids, Michigan. This workshop was delivered in the Frederik Meijer Gardens. It explored partnerships that provide horticultural restitution programmes to improve outcomes in health, wellbeing and care.

There were two main objectives:

1. To understand why horticultural partnerships an effective tool in work rehabilitation and therapy are, within hospital facilities.
2. To identify community resources that would benefit specific client groups.

Whilst working at Arnold Lodge Regional Secure Unit, England I have formed partnerships that have created effective horticultural community restitution programmes. These are designed to bring hope to mentally ill offenders and improve the long-term outcomes of health care. Drawing on my experience the workshop was designed to show how Volunteer, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) can benefit patients' recovery.

The workshop shared information on how horticultural community restitution work crew programmes are being developed and extended in the United States. These promote pro-social behaviour that includes individuals giving something back to society. I discussed my experience of developing community partnership restitution programmes in England between Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and the Canal & River Trust, Leicester City Council, Leicester & Rutland Wildlife Trust and the Dogs Trust.

Delegates learnt through an interactive workshop the reasons why these partnerships are an effective tool in work rehabilitation and therapy. They also had an opportunity to identify local communities and resources that would benefit their own client group.

This document has been put together to help others gain an understanding of the effectiveness of VCSE's involvement in patients' recovery.

Interested parties may include: -

- Clinical Commissioning Groups
- Community organisations
- Customers
- Education providers
- Employees or volunteers
- Funding organisations
- Health service
- Hospital NHS Trust
- Local, regional and national government members
- Royal Horticultural Society
- VCSE organisations

Conference Schedule

Horticultural Therapy: Digging in Together
 October 4-5, 2019, Pre-tours October 3
 DoubleTree Grand Rapids Airport Hotel
 Grand Rapids, Michigan

Thursday, October 3	
9:00 am - 5:00 pm	Offsite Pre-tours: Blandford Nature Center Benjamin's Hope Lake Michigan Experience
Friday, October 4	
7:00 am - 7:00 pm	Registration Open
7:30 am - 8:15 am	Breakfast
8:15 am - 8:45 am	Announcements/Introductions
7:30 am - 6:00 pm	AHTA Silent Auction (see posted hours)
7:30 am - 6:00 pm	Exhibitors
8:45 am - 10:00 am	General Session - Keynote Steven Wells
10:00 am - 10:15 am	Break
10:15 am - 11:15 am	Cultural Connectivity through Horticultural Therapy Activities Binxia Xue; Tongyu Li; Libba Shortridge
11:15 am - 11:30 am	Break
11:30 am - 12:15 pm	Annual Business Meeting
12:15 pm - 1:15 pm	All Conference Lunch
1:00 pm - 1:15 pm	Welcome Address - David Hooker, President of Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park
1:30 pm - 2:00 pm	Shuttle to Frederik Meijer Gardens
2:00 pm - 2:30 pm	Free Time to Visit Garden
2:30 pm - 4:00 pm	Horticultural Community Restitution Programmes for Mentally Ill Offenders Richard Eltringham
4:00 pm - 4:30 pm	Free Time to Visit Garden
4:30 pm - 5:00 pm	Shuttle to Hotel
Saturday, October 5	
7:00 am - 6:00 pm	Registration Open
7:30 am - 8:15 am	Breakfast
7:30 am - 10:00 am	AHTA Silent Auction (see posted hours)
7:30 am - 5:00 pm	Exhibitors
8:15 am - 8:45 am	Introductions/Announcements
8:45 am - 9:45 am	General Session – Plenary Levi Gardener
9:45 am - 10:00 am	Break
10:00 am - 11:00 am	Boots 2 Roots PDX: Veteran Therapeutic Horticulture and Urban Agricultural Training Scott Hoffman
11:00 am - 11:15 am	Break
11:00 am - 1:00 pm	Silent Auction Pay and Pickup
11:15 am - 12:15 pm	Cultivating the Soul: Gardening on a Psychiatric Inpatient Unit Ariel Schneider; Nancy Wicks; Susan Clinton
12:15 pm - 1:15 pm	All Conference Lunch
1:30 pm - 2:00 pm	Shuttle to Frederik Meijer Gardens
2:00 pm - 2:30 pm	Free Time to Visit Garden
2:30 pm - 4:00 pm	Creating with Nature by the Michigan Horticultural Therapy Association Cathy Flinton and Mary Machon
4:15 pm - 4:30 pm	Closing Remarks
4:30 pm - 5:00 pm	Buses Back to Hotel

A summary of the conference

Pre-tour:

Blandford Nature and Wildlife Education Centre is a community that engages and empowers the lives of young people through enriching their experience of nature. It is home to many animals with injuries. Several animals participate in educational programming and reach thousands of students and families in West Michigan. The centre began life as part of the Collins family farm, where our host Dr Mary Jane Dockeray explored as a child and nurtured her love of the outdoors. Before Victor Blandford purchased the family farm and started to sell it off as small lots. Mary Jane, then working as a lecturer convinced the Blandford family to donate 17 acres to the public museum to develop the nature centre. The centre now invites visitors into their heritage village equipped with Robinson-Kuhtic Log Cabin and Homestead Barn and school. Their Programmes help young and older people get their hands dirty and discover the relationship with the natural world.

Benjamin's Hope began life when the parents of Ben, Krista and Dave Mason found themselves with the reality of their son's diagnosis of autism including nonverbal communication at the age of ten. After years of research, education and realising that there is no one-size fits all model for offering care the Krista launched the "Live, Learn, Play, Worship" model centred around the reform church where people of all abilities could come together to participate in a faith community without judgement. Today, Benjamin's Hope is a non-profit organisation offering home to 33 adult residents with developmental needs and has a 400 strong following. 70% of funding comes from state community mental health programmes with the rest made up of local fundraising and donations.



The Greenhouse at Benjamin's Hope

The keynote speaker Steven Wells who is a Churchill Fellow, a rehabilitation nurse and horticultural Therapist, talked about his journey in convincing the management of Austin Health's Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre in Melbourne, Australia to develop unused, neglected spaces into therapeutic gardens. Steven talked about the challenges of developing gardens and using nature within the healthcare setting asking, "why do hospitals need to look like hospitals?". He explained that "any garden can be a sensory garden; it's what you grow in it for the type of client". Through his journey Steven created many inspiring gardens with his facility and won countless awards, whilst improving the lives of those who use the service. He believes that people perceive the level of care inside the hospital based on the outside/ entrance of the hospital. Steven developed an innovated role as Garden Project Officer working 3 days a week while continuing with his nursing role, to increase the garden portfolio across Austin Health. He collaborated with artists like Jessie Mary Vasey in constructing a labyrinth to provide places for meditation and solitude. Steven was also the founder of DRIP (Department of Random Ideas and Possibilities); he actively encouraged others to form these within their organisations.

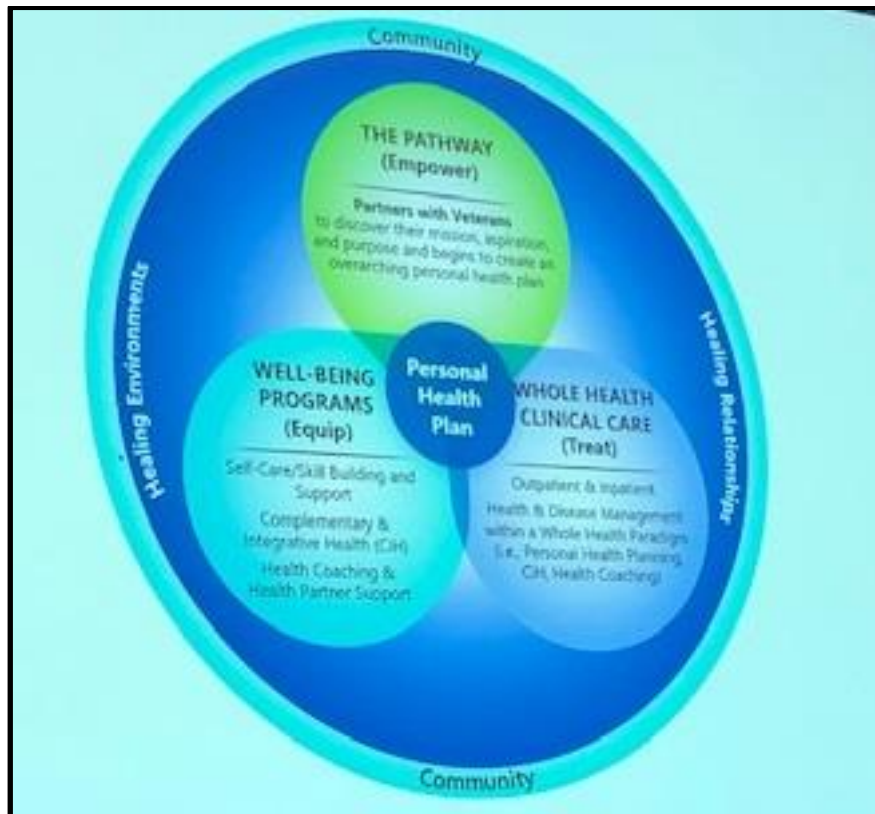
"Cultural Connectivity through Horticultural Therapy Activities"; this workshop was presented by academics from China - Binxia Xue and Tongyu Li. They worked with Libba Shortridge, the Horticultural Therapist at Skyland Trail in Atlanta, GA to explore the realization of cultural connectivity through horticultural therapy (HT) activities. They talked about the significance of natural elements, client considerations, natural-spatial and cultural context in Horticultural Therapy.

Using this application for the population of adults with mental illness at Skyland they found the signified for HT were aesthetic, philosophical, social, emotional, cognitive, sublimation and purity through activities such as labyrinth path making, petal mosaic, bird house and floating mandala.



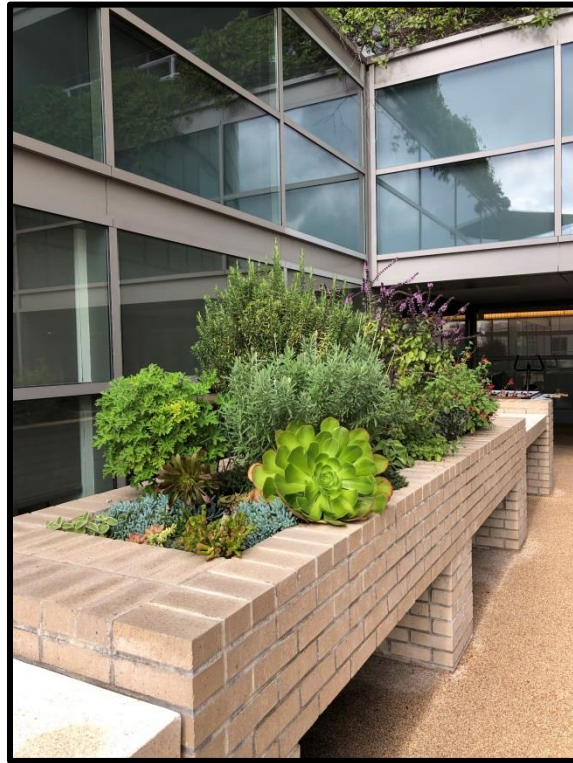
Floating Mandala

Air Force Veteran and VA Portland head gardener Scott Hoffman created and maintains the Boots 2 Roots PDX. This Veteran Therapeutic Horticulture and Urban Agricultural Training is a hands-on community programme that prepares veterans with knowledge and skills for meaningful vocational opportunities in the agricultural/horticultural industries. Veterans are provided with a personal health plan to empower them to discover their aspirations and purpose. This vocational training offers veterans jobs in horticulture and farming by getting them outside growing vegetables, herbs and flowers.



Whole Health in Action: Boots 2 Roots PDX

Ariel Schneider, Nancy Wicks and Susan Clinton from Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital of University of California, Los Angeles discussed how they brought gardening onto a Psychiatric Inpatient Unit. This 24-bed locked facility treats adults for depression, suicidality, psychosis, mania and anxiety. Their garden project development started back in autumn 2014; initially there was a lot of opposition from management. Once it was approved support grew amongst staff and the pilot project began in spring 2015. There was a weekly session for 45 minutes with a patient to therapist ratio of 8:2. This attracted 159 participants and was co-led by two Occupational Therapists. Research was conducted over a period of eight months with 25 patients participating in a personal, semi-structured post-group interview. This found that offering gardening provided a positive focus for patients and a distraction from unpleasant thoughts. It promoted pro-social behaviour, allowed space for reflection and provided increased physical activity. This, they found could lead to potential for multi-disciplinary collaboration at relevantly low risk and low cost by adding value to service.

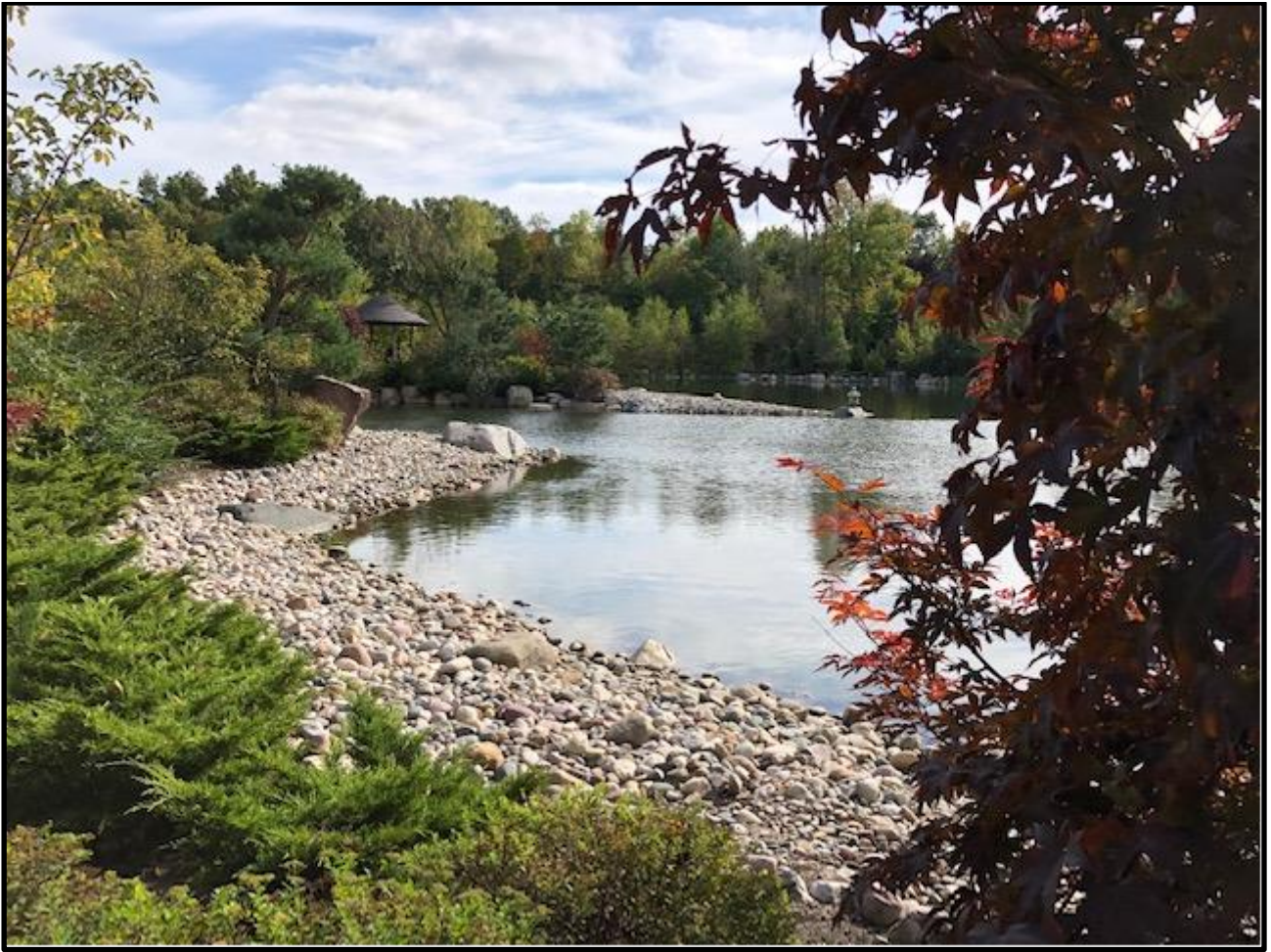


Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital

“Creating with Nature”; during this session Cathy Flinton and Mary Machon from the Michigan Horticultural Therapy Association provided participants with the ability to create a floral arrangement using a variety of plant trimmings from succulents, herbs, foliage plants, and cut flowers. This showed how a relatively easy task can be achieved by a variety of client groups.

The Founder & Co-Executive Director at Urban Roots, Grand Rapids Levi Gardener shared his story about how cultivation is both a metaphorical and literal path forward for understanding ourselves, our work, and the greater world around us. Levi is a certified Permaculture Designer and Bio-intensive Grower. He talked about how he has transformed a small plot of land in urban Grand Rapids into a thriving community farm, market and education centre. Levi’s vision is rooted in reconciling our relationships to ourselves, each other, and the world around us. Urban Roots provides groups of school children with an in-depth farm tour, community classes that include composting and in an educational, laid-back, outdoor environment.

The Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park is a top cultural destination in the Midwest region, known for the quality of the art and gardens. It is a non-profit organization, privately funded by grants, foundations and individual and corporate gifts. After walking underneath, the red sandstone Grand Rapids Arch I entered the Japanese garden that surrounds a massive lake with a nearby 24-foot monument to the American Horse. Dream big, do it bigger in America.



Frederik Meijer Gardens

Workshop Summary

The workshop attracted eighteen delegates from the conference and provided the following information using the handout in appendix 1. This work was undertaken through small group discussion in a class room overlooking the Frederik Meijer Gardens.

1. What sort of partnerships would be potentially beneficial for you?

- Private, for profit horticulture businesses
- Cemeteries
- Master Gardener
- Beekeepers
- Farmers
- Community Gardens
- Public garden clubs
- Volunteer help line
- Red Cross
- Veteran service organisation
- Council bush regeneration program
- Aboriginal plant rescue services
- Food rescue service
- Botanical gardens
- Florist
- Food banks
- Care farms
- Warren Wilson College
- Public gardens
- Housing management
- Parks
- Universities
- Litzinger Road Ecology Centre
- Great Rivers Greening
- National Trust
- English Heritage
- Armed Forces
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Defence
- Adopt a trail
- Beach clean-up
- California Native plant society

2. What challenges do you think you may foresee?

- Public perception of people with mental illness in the community
- Discomfort of other volunteers working side-by-side with people with mental illness
- Liability issues
- Concerns about whether clients could properly do the tasks involved
- Research
- Funding
- Creating well defined roles within collaborative partnerships
- Discrimination

- Willing to do horticultural work
- Government long term support
- Client's interest
- Meeting expectations
- Mutual benefits
- Logistical with prison
- Cultural assumptions
- Ability to participate
- Ability to carry out assigned work
- Ability to understand training requirements
- Approval from partner program
- Approval from board/ management team
- Transportation/ accessibility
- Sobriety, NIMBY's
- Staffing
- Feel of negative publicity
- Security – in terms of detain personnel
- Confidentiality

3. How would these help in their recovery?

- Creating a meaningful horticultural space
- Provide funds
- Making a contribution to society
- Vocational opportunities
- Reduction in stress
- Improve mood/ behaviour
- Decrease blood pressure
- Improve well-being
- Confidence building
- Improve physical health
- Social development
- Community engagement
- Job opportunity
- Purposeful
- Learning new skills
- Connecting with the natural world
- Exposure to community
- Self-efficacy
- Social including
- Enhanced communication skills
- Self-worth

Presentation/ Speaker Evaluation

The delegates were asked to evaluate the presentation/speaker using a scale from 0 – 5 within four categories.

This measured their opinions on aspects of the presentation/ speaker; with 0 = poor and 5 = excellent.

There was also opportunity to describe their experience and give feedback via free text.

	Scale					
	0	1	2	3	4	5
Speaker Knowledge and Experience				1	2	15
Topic Relevant to Conference Theme				3	3	12
Presentation Format	1	2	5	5	4	1
Presentation Provided Useful/ New Information		2	2	4	2	2

Table 1: Delegates evaluation

Comments

“Very good discussion about how partnerships occurred, and valuable interactions were fostered.”

“Wonderful stories, excellent presentation”

“Very inspiring - Great success story.”

“Appreciated the collaboration and working in groups”

“Perhaps a few more visuals but well done and challenges you; great workshop”

“Speaker shared good information about program but left a lot of time for questions and group activity that perhaps could have been filled with more info about program design, implementation”

“Great insight to a different penal system but instructions for brainstorming session a bit unclear.”

“Interesting work – Hard to relate to work in non-offenders’ location”

“This was clearly an experienced person with much to share. However, for me the format was hard to follow, and the activity was confusing in terms of its goals”

“Slide presentation and sound system would assist in sharing Mr Eltringham’s wealth of knowledge”

“The format of the presentation was challenging to follow. I would have preferred a presentation with more structure. The content was very interesting, and I would have loved to hear even more about how Richard established his program”

“Presenter was difficult to hear and too softly spoken. Thoughts/ ideas were scattered – no eye contact.”

“It would be good to have some guidelines and the voice is too low!”

“In future please consider asking each work table to repeat out their results”

“Presenter clearly knew and understood his subject, but was challenging to understand and I didn’t feel imparted the information effectively”

“Microphone would be useful – more details in presentation would have been great”



The Workshop

This workshop generated good discussion and a comprehensive list of a wide range of potential partnerships, challenges and benefits. The facilitator provided opportunity to ask questions throughout. The classroom inside the Frederik Meijer Gardens did not have facilities for PowerPoint. The delegates were provided with large pictures showing the different types of partnerships that I have developed at Arnold Lodge.

Discussion

My workshop showed the depth of opportunities there are for partnerships in health care, with the non-profit organisation seeming the most popular choice. Although private businesses were an option too, there were some concerns about this being a conflict of interest. Overall this workshop fitted well into the theme “Digging in Together” and related to other presentations such as Boots to Roots PDX – where veterans are empowered to discover their aspirations and purpose through meaningful vocational opportunities.

The keynote speaker Steven Wells, of Austin Health’s and the team at Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital had to convince their managers of the benefits of horticultural and nature-based projects. This is a familiar journey for me and I had similar obstacles to overcome. These included challenging the public perception of people with mental illness working in the community as well as liability and funding.

There were positive responses from delegates regarding the benefits of partnership for patient’s recovery. Specifically, they can create a meaningful horticultural space that allows patients to make a valuable contribution to society. Spending time in such spaces also has therapeutic benefits for patients such as reducing stress, improving mood and behaviour in addition to physical health gains such as decreased blood pressure. As with the Boots 2 Roots PDX project, partnership working can provide vocational opportunities and future job prospect in the community.

Recommendations

The potentially negative public perception of people with mental illness in the community has been a massive hurdle for me when setting up our Canal & River Trust project. When hearing this from other practitioners from around the world; it is evident that publicising the great work that patients/ offenders/ clients do during these community projects is vital to help overcome this stigma.

Through writing, presenting and disseminating this report - I hope to inspire other organisations to work alongside health care provider’s in developing new partnerships in the UK.

I aim to advance my horticulture career into managing therapeutic communities for health care. This will be achieved through building innovative partnerships and promoting professional recognition for the social prescribing of horticulture and outdoor therapy. I want to create further opportunities for community participation with VCSE. Therefore, my knowledge needs to be current, progressive and in line with guidelines, policy and procedures.

My main goal is to conduct research in collaboration with other interested parties. I have two key areas of interest, both of which relate to the health and well-being of people. Firstly, to consider the impact of engaging in gardening but also how we can seek out nature and create green spaces, in an ever-increasing urban landscape.

Final budget breakdown and other funding received.

	Cost (£)
RHS Coke Bursary	+984.00
Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	+250.00
Early Bird Registration for Speakers	-191.39
Pre-Conference Tour	-58.61
Travel Insurance	-33.56
Heathrow T3 to Chicago T3 Return	-330.51
Chicago T2 to Grand Rapids	-78.40
Accommodation	-201.67
Sim Card	-46.47
Leicester Train Station to Heathrow T3 Return	-209.00
Grand Rapids Train Station to Chicago Grand Union	-51.00
Food	-45.00
Sub-Total	-11.61

Signature Richard Eltringham

What sort of partnerships would benefit them?	What challenges do you think you may foresee?	How would this help in their recovery?
	1	1
	2	2
	3	3
	4	4

Richard Eltringham
Arnold Lodge
Cordelia Close
Leicester
LE5 0LE
England

October 2019

Dear Fellow,

Thank you for participating in my workshop, I hope that you have found it inspiring.

Creating horticultural community restitution programmes has been hard work but very rewarding. They have been a great way of building therapeutic relationships whilst bringing hope to vulnerable adults.

Please find below my top tips for building successful partnerships: -

- Be flexible
- Be prepared to deal with issues amongst partners
- Be sociable
- Bureaucracy doesn't have to be an obstacle, see it as a process
- Find charities or non-profit organisations and start building relationships.
- Give something back – i.e. present at the partners AGM
- Have a regular way of communicating with partners
- Help them to get what they want
- Practice community involvement as you are urging other organisations to do this
- Attend a volunteer group
- Visit sites and spend time getting to know potential partners

If you would like any follow up material from this workshop or want to send updates from your programmes, contact me: richard.eltringham@nottshc.nhs.uk

Yours sincerely,

Richard Eltringham

Get Social with us



'Digging in Together' *in the USA*

Richard Eltringham, Assistant Practitioner for Horticulture, recently attended the American Horticultural Therapy Association's (AHTA) annual conference, Digging in Together, in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

He had been invited and supported by the RHS Coke Fund Bursary to lead a 90 minute workshop in the Frederik Meijer Garden, together with a group of therapeutic horticultural practitioners from around the world. The aim of the workshop was to share ideas on horticultural partnerships and identify community resources that would benefit patients. The group came up with many state and charitable organisations with similar challenges from public perception of people with mental health to liability issues that Richard has faced when setting up new projects for Arnold Lodge. The group agreed that, despite the many challenges, there were many potential benefits to patients' recovery such as creating a meaningful experience.

During the conference Richard participated in other workshops and presentations, including making a floating mandala using a collection of plant materials.

Richard said: "During my visit I went along to Blandford Nature and Wildlife Education Centre, who are using their natural environment to empower the lives of young people through enriching their experience of nature. I also visited Benjamin's Hope, a non-profit community of 33 adult residents with developmental needs, and saw how they have created a model of 'live, learn, play and worship' including the use of horticulture."

Richard added that he is hugely grateful for this opportunity and thanks both the RHS for supporting him financially and his hardworking colleagues from Therapy Services for the extra work they undertook in his absence. His bursary report will be available soon in the RHS Library in London.



Workshop participants in the Frederik Meijer Gardens.



Richard's floating mandala from the AHTA Annual Conference.



Get Social with us

