

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Green Thumb Pilot Study: Facilitating Activity Through Outdoor Access and Garden Program Initiatives

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BACKGROUND

Outdoor environments and activities such as gardening are found to encourage a range of movement, social connection, sensory awareness, and meaning making. Recreation teams responsible for the delivery of activity and leisure programming influence overall rates of physical activity and social opportunities for residents living in continuing care settings.

The current study was conducted on the *Green Thumbs* gardening program at the BSF's Cambridge Manor. This program offers a meaningful outdoor destination for residents and their caregivers to engage in physical activity, offers social connection, and offers a unique reversal in role dynamics, where the residents can demonstrate their knowledge and mastery in horticultural practices.



PURPOSE

This pilot project was designed to help identify barriers and facilitators for the Green Thumbs program, and to inform practitioners about key elements of successful program delivery.



METHODS

- **Data collection:**
 - Ethnographic field observations
 - Nine semi-structured interviews with residents, staff, and a volunteer.
- **Data analysis:**
 - Themes were elicited from the transcribed interviews using thematic analysis
 - Findings presented back to program participants for confirmation and discussion.

RESULTS



Seed



- Value of outdoor gardens
- Inspiration
- Personal history and background with gardening

Green Thumbs Process



- Adapting tasks to fit abilities
- Motivation to keep busy and social by using the garden space

Green Thumbs Purpose



- Viewing the garden and elements of visual appeal
- Creating a destination that is rooted in nature

Green Thumbs Power



- Change in role and dynamics through shared knowledge
- Sense of accomplishment
- Experiencing hospitality



PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assess resident interests in the program based on factors such as: history, preferences, values, and support needs.
- Involve the residents in decision-making processes to plan the garden (e.g., picking flowers plants, layout considerations).
- Plan each session with flexibility to suit residents' needs and abilities to participate in the tasks that are being done.
- Seek opportunities for residents to be socially engaged, entertained, actively engaged, and remain adaptable to conditions.

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