

# From seed to table, Garden View Care Center gets residents growing

Garden View Care Center has a new way to nurture and nourish its residents – a Seed to Table garden.

The project began earlier this year at its O'Fallon location with residents reaping the benefits even before the first seeds were sown.

The idea was first planted once the isolation of COVID was over, explained Erica Herman, Director of Admissions. This year, she thought it was time to move the idea forward.

Facilities Manager James Reichling began by building a wheelchair accessible raised bed. He brought in his saw, and the wood was purchased. He also had help from residents, Erica said.

"The guys were out there talking to James about the raised bed, drinking beer and watching him build it," she said. "They were so interested and happy. It was a good experience for them.

"When they were finished, they had a beautiful U-shaped raised bed. The wheelchair could get right in the middle and the sides weren't very wide so you could reach everything from there."

"The idea behind the Seed to Table program is to connect residents with the energy and growth of nature and

help them rejuvenate," said Kira Somach, Director of Marketing. "Gardening is an activity that nourishes mind, body and soul and enriches the lives of our residents inside and out."

Residents and staff took an active role in planting the vegetables and herbs, transferring the seedlings of carrots, cucumbers, peppers and tomatoes along with oregano, parsley and basil to the planter box.

"A lot of them have had gardens, and they all came out and gave advice about when to thin out the tomatoes and other things," Erica said.

They also had help from members of the Jardin du Lac Garden Club who planted flowering annuals to compliment the growing vegetables.

Residents used a seed product called Growums, which features seed kits for a salad garden, taco garden and pizza garden.

Residents had a great vantage point to watch the garden grow because it can easily be seen from the dining room.

"Everyone wants to see how the plants are doing, so they are watching it," said Erica. "They feel ownership in that the garden is not just at a place where they are staying, it's a place where they are living," said Erica. "We call it the patio or backyard. It is, literally, the residents' backyard."

Residents are also taking an active role in harvesting the vegetables, and Garden View Care Center - O'Fallon's Executive Chef Jim Valle is using the produce.

"He loves it," Erica said.

Valle used the vegetables to make a fresh cucumber and tomato salad, and adds the fresh herbs in the pots of soup that he makes on Sundays, she said.

"The chef and I are talking about keeping the herbs growing through the winter," Erica said.

As with gardeners everywhere, the project was successful with some vegetables and herbs and not with others.

"We're learning. That's what gardeners are supposed to do," she said. But overall, the garden has been a plus for residents and staff. "It's been a really wonderful experience."

Plans are to build another raised bed in the Memory Unit's backyard, so residents there can get involved.

"They have access now, but this would



*Executive Chef Jim Valle*

be their very own garden," Erica said.

The Seed to Table program has also been initiated at Garden View Care Center locations in Dougherty Ferry and Chesterfield.

## Garden View Care Center

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