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GCCMH Uses Land Bank to Help Clients Develop Healthy Life Styles

Flint, Michigan – Genesee County Community Mental Health has purchased two lots from the Genesee Land Bank to begin a Community Garden for those who receive services at GCCMH.

Recent studies have shown that persons with mental illness also may have co-occurring health disorders consisting of high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and other physical health disorders that often go untreated. When untreated, it can shorten a person's life by an average of 25 years. GCCMH has been working on a number of initiatives to address the physical health of the individuals it serves.

To help those individuals who have both a mental health disorder and physical health issue, GCCMH has integrated healthy practices into its standard services. A self help health station was recently added to the first floor of the main building, a consumer wellness program is under development and the CMH Garden Project will kickoff this week.

The GCCMH Garden Project is starting up for its first season. The agency's vision for this garden is for organized client groups to take an ownership role. These groups will work on a schedule to keep the garden healthy, make decisions about plants, and organize the use and distribution of the harvest. Community partners



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consisting of several experienced gardeners, farmers and volunteers from the MSU Extension program, the Flint Urban Gardening Land Use Corporation, and other experienced community groups will be assisting clients in the successful planning and implementation of the garden.

This garden will offer CMH clients an exciting opportunity to reap the benefits that research has shown to come with community gardening experiences. Some of the benefits include:

- improved access to food and better nutrition
- increased physical activity
- improved mental health
- improved security and safety in the local community
- opportunities for community development through education/job skills training
- improved local ecology and sustainability, which in turn leads to improved long-term health

“We have been concerned about the physical health of our consumers for a number of years, and have in the past attempted to work with individuals on both their mental health and physical health needs,” said Danis Russell, CEO of GCCMH. With the addition of the wellness program and the garden, we will be able to impact the health of our consumers and increase the quality of their lives.”

Genesee County CMH provides services and supports to Genesee County residents who are adults and children with developmental disabilities, adults with serious mental illness, children with serious emotional disturbance and for adults and children with substance use disorders. For more information call Customer Services at (810) 257-3705.

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