

Garden Therapy With Brewster-Carmel Garden Club

Brewster-Carmel Garden Club Helps to Beautify PHC



Members of the Brewster-Carmel Garden Club visited PHC last Wednesday to check on their beautiful floral arrangements. Those photographed include (l-r) Barbara Nicoletti, Ada Pardini, Helen Curtis (kneeling) and Mary Quillinan. Photo by Eric Gross.

By Eric Gross

Beautifully maintained floral arrangements greet visitors to Putnam Hospital Center thanks to members of the Brewster-Carmel Garden Club.

The club's Garden Therapy Committee founded two years ago began working with an outpatient group by meeting twice each month in a courtyard visible in the main hallway of the hospital.

Committee chairwoman Barbara Nicoletti said "time was spent with patients by weeding, planting and watering the vegetation as well as discussing their own experience or lack thereof with plants in their daily lives. The main focus of our project was to introduce the calming effect of plants, gardens and nature to the patients as a tool for distressing and helping them to cope with the pressures in their lives. The program was well received by not only the patients but hospital staff, administration and the volunteers who enjoyed the interaction."

By the end of the 2019 planting season, the committee had planted 50 tulip and 50 daffodil bulbs in the cafeteria garden area.

Nicoletti recalled "as they started to emerge this spring, Covid-19 hit and volunteers were no longer permitted in the hospital. However, since entering the hospital was not necessary since our most recent garden had been planted on a patio in the rear of the facility, we were given permission to continue our volunteer work. I stopped by one morning to see how the bulbs were doing and they were flourishing. Six pots that had been placed with the patients and placed around picnic tables where staff members relax and take a break needed cleaning since they were filled with the dead plants from the previous planting season. An idea came to me: What if

cleaned the pots, purchased new plants and made it a "Thank You from the Brewster-Carmel Garden Club" to the hospital workers dealing with the crisis. It was just another version of Garden Therapy. Beautiful plants to enjoy while the staff took a break."

In May, Nicoletti joined by members Mary Quillinan and Helen Curtis purchased plantings from the club's plant sale, cleaned up the pots and planted new arrivals.

Another club member, Ada Pardini, had "thank you" signs created and the club set up a tribute to those who help our community on a daily basis.

The Brewster-Carmel Garden Club has also recently elected new officers for the year including Co-President, Donna Rejcek and Mary Bonini; Recording Secretary, Joan Newman; Corresponding Secretary, Mary Ann Iarmina and Treasurer Patricia Ciavatta.

The Brewster-Carmel Garden Club reinstated their Garden Therapy program in 2019 by working with Putnam Hospital's Partial Hospital Program on a biweekly basis. Each committee member worked closely with one or two patients helping them understand the many personal benefits of gardening such as the calming effect of working with plants, and being out in nature, as tools for reducing stress and coping with the pressures in their lives. While many enjoyed the various activities of digging holes, starting seeds in an herb garden, planting seedlings in the ground, weeding or watering others enjoyed

having conversations with the volunteers about gardening or whatever was on their mind at the time. Those who did not wish to partake enjoyed Garden Therapy by looking at the flowers while sitting on a bench and enjoying their own space. The program was well received by the patients, their staff, hospital administration and the volunteers, who really enjoyed the interaction with the patients. The PHP staff that stayed with us during these sessions often asked to participate as well. In our early 2020 planning session with the staff they requested a continuation of the outdoor program as well as adding an indoor program to accommodate inclement weather as well as having it as a permanent year round program.

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BY ERIC GROSS

Beautifully manicured floral arrangements greet visitors to Putnam Hospital Center thanks to members of the Brewster-Carmel Garden Club.

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Committee chairwoman Barbara Nicoletti said "time was spent with patients by weeding, planting and watering the vegetation as well as discussing their own experience or lack thereof with plants in their daily lives. The main focus of our project was to introduce the calming effect of plants, gardens and nature to the patients as a tool for distressing and helping them to cope with the pressures in their lives. The program was well received by not only the patients but hospital staff, adminis-

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cleaned the pots, purchased new plants and made it a 'Thank You from the Brewster-Carmel Garden Club' to the hospital workers dealing with the crisis. It was just another version of Garden Therapy. Beautiful plants to enjoy while the staff took a break."

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CORRECTIONS TO PRINTED ARTICLE: “Beautiful manicured floral arrangements greet visitors to Putnam Hospital Center thanks to members of the Brewster-Carmel Garden Club” To clarify, these are plantings, not floral arrangements and they do not greet visitors as they are located in the back of the hospital on the cafeteria patio where the staff take their break and also have lunch. That was the whole intention of the project, to thank the staff.

“The main focus of our project was to introduce the calming effect of plants gardens and nature to the patients as a tool for **distressing** and helping them to cope with the pressures in their lives”. The original email stated that we wanted to **DE-STRESS** the patients.