**Purpose**

To complete a service learning project to produce a garden while completing a case study with a subject regarding his experiences with drug rehabilitation and the garden.

**Goal**

To gain an understanding of the subject’s lived experiences with drug abuse, rehabilitation, and the garden.

**Literature Review**

There have been several different studies where subjects participating in an inpatient or outpatient facility work to grow a garden. The subjects in these studies related the symbolism of nature to their lives: one’s own growth and passing of time. The research showed the improvement in the subjects’ physical and psychological well-being (Adevi & Mårtensson, 2013).

**Materials and Methods**

A phenomenological case study was conducted over five months through extensive interviews with the subject. The nursing student and faculty mentor participated in a service learning project to provide a garden to the Assisi Bridgehouse. Service learning is a method of teaching that integrates community service into education. The service learning method accentuates critical thinking and personal reflection while attempting to provide service for a community (Eymard, Breaux, & Dozar, 2012). The student and faculty mentor interviewed the subject on multiple occasions during the five month period, and asked about the subject’s lived experiences with drug abuse, rehabilitation, and the garden. After the interviews were transcribed, line by line analysis was performed. Five major themes were identified through coding.

**Abstract**

This qualitative case study utilized heuristic phenomenology to explore the potential impact of initiating a garden at a halfway house. For the service learning project, a garden was developed by nursing students in collaboration with clients at the facility. During this project, one client emerged as the primary caretaker of the garden. This male client, undergoing rehabilitation for drug abuse, became the subject of the case study. Over a period of five months, the subject was interviewed extensively during several different encounters to gain an understanding of his lived experience regarding drug abuse, rehabilitation, and the garden. The interviews were transcribed, and then line by line analysis was performed by the nursing student and faculty mentor. Coding was implemented to identify five themes: new beginning, growth, bumps in the road, hard work, and fruits of labor. Over the course of the case study, the student discovered correlations and illustrates these with a five month timeline. In conclusion, the subject and the garden grew and flourished as a result of the service learning project involving a few plants, water, and much hard work and dedication.

**Results**

After analysis of the interviews, five major themes emerged from the data.

**New Beginning**

- Subject plans to live in an independent living program once he leaves the Assisi Bridge House.
- Subject must develop a career plan and plan of independence.
- Subject is currently in a relationship, and hopes to raise a family one day. He would like to be a better father than his father was. (Anonymous, personal communication, December 1, 2015).

**Growth**

- Subject has been sober for 4 months. He had not been sober for the past 10 years.
- Subject works in the garden everyday: “I see the growth in the garden and in myself.”
- At the time of the last interview, the subject had “no desire or cravings” to use drugs or drink alcohol (Anonymous, personal communication, December 1, 2015).

**Bumps in the Road**

- “I’ve been offered drugs many times throughout this program, but I’ve always given an excuse to say no.”
- “It is hard to say no in person. I always have to come up with an excuse as to why I should not do it again instead of just saying no.”
- The subject has been to several rehabilitation centers on eight different occurrences (Anonymous, personal communication, December 1, 2015).

**Hard Work**

- Job at a local supermarket: “I’m so grateful to have a job.”
- Subject knows that being independent will require motivation and will power, but he is accepting of the challenge.
- Subject is the “house man.” The other men in the house go to him for help (Anonymous, personal communication, December 1, 2015).

**Fruits of Labor**

- The garden is coming to fruition: “The 45 day cabbage is almost in.”
- Being sober is “freeing.” “I can identify my triggers, and it makes it easier to say no” (Anonymous, personal communication, December 1, 2015).

**Conclusion**

This service learning experience has provided new data regarding addiction and growth. Through this project, a better understanding of the correlation of addiction, rehabilitation, and motivation was gained. A garden containing fresh vegetables was provided, and a sense of worth was given to the subject. The most profound impact of this project was the lasting effect it had on the nursing student and faculty mentor.

**References**

