



Green Care Farms: Connecting Elders with Community

Judith L. Poey, Ph.D.¹, Maarten Fischer, M.S.² & Eilon Caspi, Ph.D.³

1. Center on Aging, Kansas State University 2. A Plus Health Care and Flathead Care Farming 3. Dementia Behavior Consulting, LLC

Introduction

Green care farming is a **combination of agricultural production with health and aging services**. They connect clients with community, nature and a sense of purpose and meaning. They also provide much needed **respite for caregivers**. Historically, green care farms (GCFs) connected marginalized groups with the broader community. GCFs are being revitalized in several countries throughout Europe and in Montana in the USA.



Program Characteristics

GCFs tend to be **small-scale** and occur in a **natural setting**. They are often set up as **intergenerational programs** and are an innovative model of long-term services and supports (**LTSS**).

Populations Served:

- Elders
- Dementia
- Developmental/ intellectual disabilities
- Juvenile courts
- Serious mental illness
- Veterans

Types:

- Day programs
- Rehabilitative programs
- Residential care

Main References

Elings, M. (2011). *Effects of care farms: Scientific research on the benefits of care farms for clients*. M. Koffijberg (Ed.) (D. Rutter, D. O Connor, R. Hine, & J. Sempik, Trans.), Wageningen UR, The Netherlands.

Hassink, J. (2015, October). *Development, qualities, and effects of care farms in the Netherlands*. Paper presented at the Nature Heals Symposium at the University of Minnesota, Chaska, MN. Presentation retrieved from

<http://www.arboretum.umn.edu/naturehealspresentations.aspx>.

Hassink, J., Elings, M., Zweekhorst, M., Nieuwenhuizen, N., & Smit, A. (2010). *Care farms in the Netherlands: Attractive empowerment-oriented and strengths-based practices in the community*. *Health & Place*, 16, 423-430.

Hassink, J., Hulsink, & Grin. (2014). *Farming with care: The evolution of care farming in the Netherlands*. *NJAS-Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences*, 68, 1-11.

Integrated into Health and Aging Services



Summary

- GCFs are an innovative, often **intergenerational, model of LTSS**.
- GCFs are **integrated into health and aging services** to allow for a **broad spectrum of clients** to participate, including those from a lower socioeconomic status.
- Benefits reported by clients include a strong sense of **community**, the ability to engage in **meaningful work, well-being** and **connecting with nature**.

Evidence Base

Community

Relationships are formed naturally through engaging in everyday activities and are not based on care provision. Clients form peer relationships and are integrated into the lives of farmers and their families.



Strengths-Based

GCFs focus on what participants can contribute to the farm. It empowers them to see what they are able to do and gives them the opportunity to contribute in a personally meaningful way.



Meaning & Purpose

Often relegated to passively receiving care in more traditional settings, GCF clients enjoy engaging in personally meaningful activities and contributing to the farm through a broad array of available activities.



Green Environment

Studies have shown being in nature can promote health and well-being. Clients report connecting with nature and animals to be a strong benefit of GCFs.



Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Center on Aging at Kansas State University.

