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A path to healing

People with mental illness develop important life skills at a therapeutic farming community

Hopewell, Mesopotamia, Ohio

Involving your board in fund-raising

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FACILITY DESIGN SHOWCASE
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VENDOME GROUP

Planting

A therapeutic farm offers residents a tranquil place



Recovery

to learn the value of work and community

BY DOUGLAS J. EDWARDS, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Just about everyone agrees that there is something peaceful about the countryside. Being surrounded by long, verdant expanses away from the constant din of modern life offers a refreshing change of pace for folks used to cities, suburbs, and exurbs, and for some such tranquility perhaps even can be therapeutic.

The campus of Hopewell in Mesopotamia, Ohio. Photo by Molly Nook



Gordon, a Hopewell resident, participates in the work of the garden. Photo by Molly Nook

That's the concept behind Hopewell, a therapeutic farming community in Northeast Ohio for adults with major mental illnesses. Located on more than 300 acres, Hopewell is in the heart of the area's Amish community, yet is only an hour's drive from downtown Cleveland. In addition to enjoying the calming surroundings, residents can have daily interactions with pigs, sheep, horses, cattle, and other animals, as well as work in flower and vegetable gardens. The ultimate goal is to give residents, many of whom have schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression, an opportunity to heal in a restful environment while learning the importance of work and community.

"Work is considered a key element to the

recovery process for our model. People feel reward and return on their efforts in seeing a job well done," says Richard R. Karges, LISW, ACSW, Hopewell's executive director since October 2007. "We see people really growing through the work experience."

The seed

Therapeutic farming communities have roots in the 18th century.

In 1792, Quaker merchant William Tuke founded a "retreat asylum" in Liverpool, England. The retreat was modeled after a simple family farm and focused on emotional and spiritual recovery instead of restraints and punishment. Tuke combined this "moral" treatment with the Quakers' emphasis on

a homelike setting, garden walks, reading, sewing, and good food.

After spending more than a year at the retreat, American Dororothea Dix was inspired to advocate for more humane conditions for people with mental illness. Although similar retreats did open in the United States at Dix's urging, by the late 19th century medically oriented state institutions were replacing them.¹

Yet the concept didn't disappear. In 1913, William J. Gould founded Gould Farm in Monterey, Massachusetts, now the oldest therapeutic farm community in the country. According to Cory Loder, Gould Farm's program director, Gould was influenced by



Photo by Molly Nook

Richard R. Karges, LISW, ACSW

Karges has been Hopewell's executive director since October 2007. He has more than 20 years of behavioral healthcare experience. Karges previously was the executive director of Crisis & Counseling Centers, a community behavioral health center in Augusta, Maine. The National Alliance on Mental Illness's Maine chapter named him the 2007 Professional of the Year. He and his family live on Hopewell's campus. Karges wrote about the quality of behavioral healthcare in the December 2007 issue of *Behavioral Healthcare* (see behavioral.net/karges1207).



HOPEWELL

- Location: Mesopotamia, Ohio
- Since 1996, has had 235+ residents
- 36 FTEs
- \$3 M operating budget; 30% comes from charitable donations
- The first U.S. mental health provider to be CARF accredited as a therapeutic community

the moral treatment movement, his interest in creating an "intentional" community, and his religious convictions. Decades after its founding, one man's stay at Gould Farm planted the seed for Hopewell's development.

In the 1980s, a mentally ill family member of Cleveland-area philanthropist Clara T. Rankin stayed at Gould Farm. She was so impressed by how the experience changed him that she decided Northeast Ohio needed a therapeutic farming community. Rankin assembled a board of directors and purchased a farm that also had been a bed-and-breakfast, and in 1996 Hopewell admitted its first resident. Most of Hopewell's residents have come from six counties in Northeast Ohio.

A place to learn and recover

Hopewell is quite different from traditional behavioral healthcare organizations, even residential treatment providers. One of the most dramatic examples is how long residents stay at Hopewell, which can accommodate 38 adult residents (there is a short waiting list). The recommended minimal stay is 3 to 12 months, and some residents have stayed several years. If someone is interested in Hopewell but can't make a site visit, Hopewell's admissions manager will visit him/her at home to make an assessment (Potential residents cannot have an active addiction, violent or suicidal behavior, or a history of sexual misconduct).

Hopewell has a sliding fee scale of between \$150 and 250 per day based on a family's financial status, although more than 90% of residents receive financial assistance (totaling \$899,000 in 2007). Hopewell does have government payers, including the VA; Illinois State Board of Education; Ohio county boards of mental health, county boards of mental retardation/developmental disabilities, and child/family service agencies; and the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation. Hopewell notes that its fees are less than half of state hospitals' and as little as 15% of private hospitals' charges.

During their stay, residents participate in daily kitchen, grounds, cleaning, garden, and farm crews. The farmland actually is cultivated by Amish farmers who share the bounty with Hopewell, and about 75% of the food served to residents, including meat, comes from the property.

Residents receive psychiatric services and individual, group, and family therapy. In addition, they participate in:

- exercise (a basketball court is available for pickup games);
- expressive arts programming such as drama, song, poetry, and arts and crafts (including weaving, pottery, and jewelry making);
- equine programs with Tom and Jerry, the two resident draft horses;
- spiritual and wellness programs; and
- educational programs (residents can earn a high school diploma).



A Hopewell volunteer harvests the community garden. Photo by Molly Nook



Hopewell residents can swim and fish on the property. Photo by Molly Nook



Walnut Lane leads Hopewell residents to more than 300 acres of woodland paths. Photo by Molly Nook

Research support

Research suggests that psychiatric patients benefit from working with farm animals. In the first randomized controlled follow-up study of its kind, Norwegian researchers found that patients working with farm animals for 12 weeks reported significant increases in self-efficacy and coping ability. The authors state, "[W]e suggest that the combined effect of both contact and work with the animals can affect the patients positively; by providing a source of physical contact with a living 'other', and increased coping ability and self-esteem through routines that include feeding, milking, and caring for other living creatures."

The study, "Animal-assisted therapy with farm animals for persons with psychiatric disorders: effects on self-efficacy, coping ability and quality of life, a randomized controlled trial," was published in April 2008 in *Clinical Practice and Epidemiology in Mental Health*, and is available at www.cpementalhealth.com/content/4/1/9.

Residents can explore hiking trails, fish for largemouth bass or bluegill, or enjoy a refreshing swim. Karges, who lives on campus with his family, takes residents on trips to a local Amish store, restaurants, and sporting events.

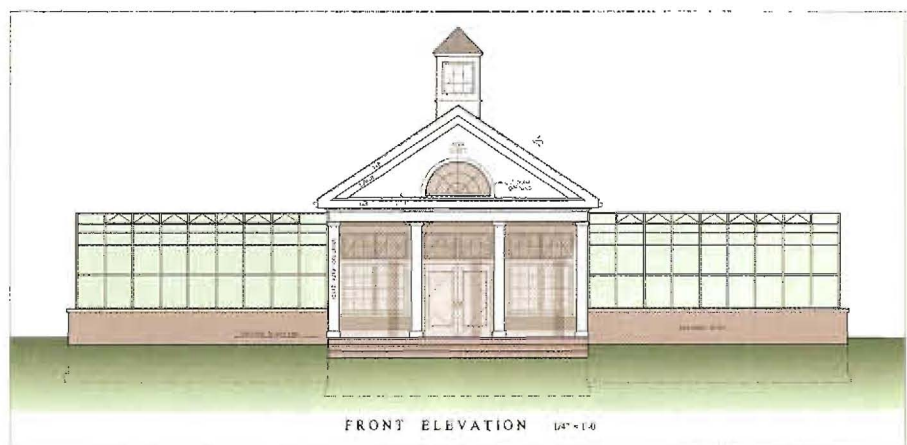
"From an exec's standpoint, that's where some of the real payoffs are...versus struggling with a budget or dealing with a policy or procedure," he says.

And Karges emphasizes that residents make their own decisions.

"Individuals have their own plan that they put together when they come here, and we want to help them reach those goals as effectively as we can," he notes.

In the evenings most residents retire to one of two cottages (housing is also available in a more independent setting on-site as well as in a mixed-use building). Most have a private room equipped with a dresser, bed (each resident receives a new mattress), nightstand, desk, and mini-fridge, as well as share a bathroom with another resident. In keeping with Hopewell's emphasis on nature, its buildings use geothermal heating.

Hopewell has been actively monitoring residents' outcomes to measure its success. Staff collect data every 3 months, at discharge, and at 3, 6, and 12 months after leaving Hopewell. Data are collected using the Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale, Camberwell



Hopewell's David Cutler Conservatory, designed by architect Richard C. Kawalek, is scheduled to be completed this spring.



One of Hopewell's two cottages. Photo by Hyatt Bolden

Assessment of Need, Global Assessment of Functioning Scale, and an internal outcome worksheet and resident satisfaction survey. Hopewell reports:

- 92% of residents said they were very or moderately satisfied with their stay;
- 85% of discharged residents live in unrestricted settings (e.g., group homes, their own apartments, or with family members); and
- no residents discharged since June 2006 have been rehospitalized.

Residents aren't the only guests on-site. Hopewell also houses volunteers who work with the community for 6 to 12 months. Volunteers, who receive a modest stipend with room and board, help with programming, building and grounds work, administrative duties, and more. In addition, residents' families may visit free-of-charge in a two-bedroom apartment on campus.

Still growing

Hopewell is building the David Cutler Conservatory (scheduled to open this spring). The 2,000-square-foot building will include meeting/training space and a greenhouse with a meditation garden. A day program also is in development. The organization would like to build a third cottage (They don't anticipate having more than 50 total beds), and some residents and families have asked if permanent homes in a condo-like arrangement could be built on the property for those who do not wish to leave the community. Karges understands why: "Hopewell

is a very amazing place.... My sense is that it's a model that really works." ■

For more information, visit www.hopewell.cc.

Reference

1. Fricks L. A plan for a national consumer memorial. *Behav Healthc* 2007;27(10):12-14. www.behavioral.net/fricks1007.

Some other therapeutic farm communities for people with mental illness

CooperRlis www.cooperilis.org

Crossing Creeks www.crossingcreeks.org

Gould Farm www.gouldfarm.org

Green Chimneys www.greenchimneys.org

High Point Farm www.highpointalpacas.com

Hundred Acre Homestead
www.hundredacrehomestead.com

Merry Meadow Farm www.merrymeadowfarm.com

Peace Ranch www.peaceranch.com

Penrith Farms www.penrithfarms.com

Plowshare Farm www.plowsharefarm.org

Providence Farm www.providence.bc.ca

Rose Hill Center www.rosehillcenter.com

Spring Lake Ranch www.springlakeranch.org

Wellspring Living Arts www.wellspringlivingarts.org

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