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The Children's Place Horticultural Therapy Project

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Two years ago The Children's Place in Kansas City, Missouri added four garden beds, and in 2012 a Greenhouse was added to help support a new initiative - Horticultural Therapy Project. The project serves many purposes at the agency.

As much of what The Children's Place does is based on providing therapeutic services to young survivors of abuse, the project was adding a "green" element to therapy. Digging, planting, weeding, watering all form part of an important lesson of being grounded to their environment. In addition, many of the children are from an urban setting and have not been exposed to fresh vegetables or have an understanding of where they come from. The final element was introducing science into an early childhood program.

This spring the garden was planted with peppers, parsley, thyme, lettuce, tomatoes, and cucumbers. Due to late spring snow in March and excessive rain and record cool temperatures in April and May, the garden got off to a slow start. However, the children have harvested green peppers, parsley, thyme. The tomato plants are almost ready and lettuce has been replanted.

Nearly 100% of the children enrolled in The Children?s Place Day Treatment are in state custody and live temporarily in foster care or kinship placements. 90% of these families have incomes which fall at or below the federal poverty level. While the child is at the agency, they are provided breakfast, lunch, and healthy snacks. Ingredients from The Children?s Place garden will be used in the preparation of these meals.

In addition to supporting the therapeutic programs offered at the agency, once the vegetables and herbs have been harvested and been used for lunch in the classrooms, any additional items will be sent home with the children for their families enjoyment!

Image (optional):

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