

LeadingAge Florida Eldergrow GARDEN Project
(Garden Access Responds to Diagnosis & Environmental Needs)
Quality of Long-Term Care Improvement Trust Fund
AHCA Grant Final Report

June 1, 2021 – August 31, 2024



Eldergrow's Impact Summary

Eldergrow's Therapeutic Horticulture Program is a full-service program that combines Sensory Gardens with onsite Educators who teach evidence-based, therapeutic horticulture classes that improve life for our growing community of older adults living in skilled nursing and memory care. Our gardens and activities are designed to enrich the environment and provide soothing, positive activities for residents, thereby engaging them at many functional levels, both individually and as part of a social group.

Between June 1, 2021 and August 31, 2024, Eldergrow and LeadingAge Florida engaged 19,712 class participants in therapeutic horticulture sessions at 25* skilled nursing homes hosting 44 Eldergrow gardens.

This report will provide:

- Project Progress, goal attainment and resident outcomes
- List of nursing homes who participated in the project throughout the entire grant period
- Information on successes and barriers encountered during the grant period, including any steps taken to resolve barriers
- An overview of all trainings provided for all 13 quarters

Goal Attainment & Resident Outcomes

Eldergrow Educators, in collaboration with community staff, completed a class review form after each session noting the residents in attendance, engagement in the day’s lesson and their presented emotional state.

A component to Eldergrow’s design and programming is the selective use of 6 therapeutic wellness goals established by the American Horticulture Therapy Association. Eldergrow’s objective is an 80% attainment rate of the participating residents meeting or partially meeting the identified lesson’s wellness goals. Each lesson focused on 3 of the following 6 goals:

- Sensory Stimulation
- Cognitive Stimulation
- Creative Expression
- Socializing
- Motor Skills
- Spatial Awareness

Over the course of 39 months, data collected by Educators and class review forms showed 96.8% of the 19,712 class participants met (85.5%) or partially met (11.3%) the wellness goals during their Eldergrow Therapeutic Horticulture sessions.

Wellness Goals/Engagement	
Total % residents who either met or partially met goals	96.8%
Total % residents who met goals	85.5%
% residents who partially met goals	11.3%
% residents with other outcomes	3.2%

Residents’ emotional states are also measured during each Eldergrow session, Eldergrow’s objective is to have 80% of the participating residents present a positive emotional impact after participating in Eldergrow’s therapeutic programming.

Over the course of 39 months, data collected by Educators and class review forms showed 93.6% of the 19,712 class participants’ emotional state remained positive (80.8%) or improved (12.8%) during their Eldergrow Therapeutic Horticulture sessions.

Emotional State Impact	
Total % residents whose emotional state remained positive or improved	93.6%
Total % residents whose emotional state remained positive	80.8%
Total % residents whose emotional state improved	12.8%
% residents with other emotional state outcomes	6.4%

GARDEN Project Progress and Resident Outcomes Per Community

The data collected in the table below represents resident outcomes per community for the entire life of the grant from June 1, 2021 – August 31, 2024.

Community Name and Location	# gardens	Total # of Class Participants	% who met wellness goals	% who met and partially met wellness goals
Bay Village, Sarasota	2	760	92.0%	96%
Bon Secours Maria Manor, St. Petersburg	4 *	569	77.0%	100%
Cypress Cove at Health Park, Ft Myers	1	639	78.1%	95%
Edgewater at Boca Pointe, Boca Raton	3	911	73.2%	100%
FL Presbyterian Homes, Lakeland	1	372	92.0%	99%
Glenridge on Palmer Ranch, Sarasota	1 *	272	97.3%	100%
Good Samaritan Center at Advent Christian Village, Dowling Park	3	947	96.0%	98%
Harbour Health Center at South Port Square, Port Charlotte	2	1025	85.0%	91%
John Knox Village, Pompano Beach	3	926	94.4%	99%
Lourdes Noreen McKeen, West Palm Beach	2	801	98.5%	100%
Manor at the Estates at Carpenters, Lakeland	1	657	88.3%	96%
Mease Life, Dunedin	2 *	445	76.9%	91%
Morse Life Health Systems, West Palm Beach	4	1127	95.2%	100%
Plymouth Harbor on Sarasota Bay	1 *	371	89.2%	100%
River Garden, Jacksonville	3	940	87.5%	97%
Sunnyside Village, Sarasota	1	620	93.8%	97%
Tri-County Nursing Home, Trenton	2	885	83.2%	95%
Vicars Landing, Ponte Vedra	1	581	86.5%	92%
Water's Edge at Sandhill Cove, Palm City	1	666	82.1%	98%
Westminster Suncoast, St. Petersburg	2	1703	79.0%	92%
Westminster Towers at Lake Lucerne, Winter Park	2	1293	93.1%	97%
Westminster Woods Julington Creek, Jacksonville	1	655	88.1%	98%
WillowBrooke Ct at Azalea Trace, Pensacola	2	638	68.2%	95%
WillowBrooke Ct at Indian River Estates, Vero Beach	2	1217	75.0%	99%
Willowbrooke Ct at St Andrews Estates, Boca Raton	2	692	74.4%	100%

*Bon Secours Maria Manor in St. Petersburg changed ownership in the summer of 2022 and ended its membership with LeadingAge Florida. As a result, their four (4) Eldergrow gardens were moved in September 2022 to three (3) new Leading Age Florida members including Plymouth Harbor on Sarasota Bay (received 1 garden), Mease Life (received 2 gardens), and Glenridge on Palmer Ranch (received 1 garden).

Barriers and Resolutions

Community Closures Due to Viral Outbreaks: Viral outbreaks due to illnesses such as RSV, the Flu and COVID, impacted Eldergrow Educators ability to lead therapeutic sessions and work with residents throughout the entire grant period. During these service interruptions, Eldergrow provided communities with alternative programming options so residents' therapeutic horticulture engagement was not interrupted.

The alternative programming included therapeutic horticulture lessons provided directly to the community to lead lessons with residents as they are able. Garden maintenance was performed by Eldergrow Educators whenever possible, with virtual garden coaching offered if in-person maintenance was refused by the community during a closure.

Adapting Eldergrow's Therapeutic Horticulture curriculum to meet the needs of residents in Skilled Care: Prior to the opportunities presented under CMP grant partnerships the majority of Eldergrow's Teepa Snow-endorsed programming was offered to Memory Care communities. Upon expanding into Skilled Nursing Facilities, Eldergrow expanded our curriculum to include creative adaptations and session modifications to best meet the needs of residents in skilled care.

Supporting community staff to care for gardens in between Educator visits: Eldergrow's model of garden care traditionally leaned on residents to water the gardens in between Educator visits as a one-on-one activity with staff, or independently as able. While some residents adopted the gardens and enjoyed caring for the garden in this grant cohort, in some communities Activity staff were the primary waterers of many gardens. This was due to several factors such as resident isolation requirements during COVID surges and the high physical acuity needs of residents in Skilled Care communities. In response Eldergrow developed a list of approved plants that would better tolerate drier conditions, and expanded staff trainings to include OT/PT personnel in hopes they would incorporate the Eldergrow garden, and watering, into their OT/PT goals.

Educator Network with Regional Substitutes, Ongoing Communication and Training: Securing skilled and talented Educators to lead in person classes was a challenge as a result of the pressures caused by the pandemic and then later, the economy. Eldergrow worked hard to meet staffing challenges through creative and dynamic recruiting strategies, additional Educator training, increased compensation and consistent communication with the network of Florida Educators.

Quarterly Staff Training

Eldergrow provided quarterly trainings for communities either in person or via Zoom where Activity Directors, Executive Directors/Administrators, Marketing Directors, Care Staff, Occupational/Physical Therapy staff and residents were invited to attend. Over the course of the grant, staff from participating communities attended these training courses as they were able. For staff who were unable to attend during the course due to scheduling conflicts, the trainings were recorded and emailed to all invited staff for reference.

Quarter	Dates	Training Offered
1	Multiple: Each Kickoff Event	Eldergrow - Introduction of program, resident engagement, garden health and safety.
2	11/09/21 (2 sessions offered)	5 Ways to Use your Eldergrow Garden
3	01/18/22 (2 sessions offered)	Your Eldergrow Program's Wellness Benefits
4	05/06/22 & 05/12/22	Your Eldergrow Garden as a Gathering Spot
5	08/19/22 & 08/24/22	Celebrating a Year of Success, Therapeutic Horticulture strategies and best practices.
6	11/30/22 (2 sessions offered)	An Overview of our Eldergrow Garden Classes, Marketing & Portal Tour
7	02/22/23 (2 sessions offered)	Resident Engagement and Garden Care
8	05/24/23 & 05/25/23	Enhancing Your Marketing Package with Eldergrow
9	8/23/23 & 8/24/23	Interactive Eldergrow Portal Tour
10	11/29/23 & 11/30/23	Eldergrow Daily Programming
11	2/28/24 & 2/29/24	Garden Care and Resident Safety
12	3/27/24 & 3/28/24	Multi-Generational Engagement w/ Eldergrow
13	06/18/24 & 06/20/24	Safety at the Garden

In Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to bring therapeutic horticulture and nature wellness programming to the residents of skilled nursing homes across the state of Florida. Eldergrow was honored to be the chosen vendor to provide this service and grateful for the collaboration between Leading Age Florida, the State of Florida and the Center of Medicare and Medicaid. Through the funding of the Civil Monies Penalty fund, Eldergrow was able to install 44 indoor sensory gardens into 24 skilled nursing homes, provide 3+ years of programming and touch the lives of more than 19,700 class participants through a powerful continued connection to nature.

