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Horticulture therapy conferences blooming this fall



September and October conferences are blooming innovative approaches to the growing field of horticultural therapy, which uses plant-based activities and gardening under the guidance of a registered horticultural therapist, for mental health, vocation, occupational, rehabilitative and

substance abuse programs in various settings, including hospitals, clinics, correctional facilities and assisted and senior living centers, greenhouses, parks and arboreta.

Awareness of the viable field is growing, right alongside the fields of art, music and equine therapies.

First, the Mid-Atlantic Horticultural Therapy (MAHTN), will host its 2015 Annual Conference, "Creative Connections to Community: Innovative Approaches to Horticultural Therapy," Sept. 18 at Snug Hug Cultural Center and Botanic Garden in Staten Island, New York.

MAHTN is striving to expand the accessibility of horticulture as a therapeutic and rehabilitative practice, and it seeks to promote awareness and acceptance of the professional practice of horticultural therapy in the Mid-Atlantic Region through education, communication and networking. MAHTN provided formal letter of support to N.J. legislators for SJR12/AJR13, New Jersey designation third week of March, which was signed into law by Gov. Chris Christie on May 11.

The conference will feature keynote speaker, Patricia Schrieber, past president of the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society, author and member of the Penn State Coop Extension of Chester, Pennsylvania. For information contact Abby Jaraslow at abbyjrob@comcast.net.

Second, Carrier Clinic will host, "The Healing Science of Art," the first conference of its kind in the region, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sept. 24 on Carrier's campus in the Belle Mead section of Montgomery.

"We are honored to be the first behavioral healthcare organization in this region to create synergy between artists and therapists in an educational conference. Together, we can provide hope, change a life, and "restore human nature," said Donald Parker, CEO, Carrier Clinic.

The conference will feature keynote speaker Jeremy Nobel, MD, faculty at Harvard School of Public Health, and founder of the Foundation for Art and Healing. Nobel will speak on "Creativity, Health and Wellbeing: From Evolution to Revolution." The conference will also feature panel discussion, "How do you know it's therapeutic?" led by Parker.



"Nature Wall mural painted by Art Therapist Doreen Lorenzetti helps to calm patients in Acute Care Unit of the Carrier Clinic in Bell Mead. (Photo: Carrier Clinic)

In the afternoon participants will have their choice of attending two hands-on activity sessions including horticultural therapy, led by me, a drum circle led by Mihee Kim, an art project led by Doreen Lorenzetti, a poetry reading from Teresa Carson, CavanKerry Press, and sand therapy led by PJ Wenger. In addition, throughout the day participants will view the "Windows of the Future Project" Paint out, equine therapy demonstrations, and NAMI/patient art exhibit.

Continuing education credits are available; up to four credits for social workers and nurses. For information, contact Heather Steel, 908-281-1513, or hsteel@carrierclinic.com.

On Oct. 8, to 10th the American Horticultural Therapy Association, will conduct its 2015 Annual Conference, "Research: Shaping the Horticultural Therapy Landscape", in Portland Oregon. The conference, sponsored by Burpee Seed Co., will feature keynote speaker Dr. Roger S. Ulrich, PhD, who will reveal his latest research findings, "The Evidence Base to Support Nature and Gardens in Healthcare Settings." Ulrich is recognized as the founder of evidence-based healthcare design and has become its most cited researcher internationally.

More than 30 educational sessions over two days will be presented by an international array of professionals encompassing horticultural therapists and allied professions.

Pre-conference tours will visit five sites in the Portland area, all featuring horticultural therapists running programs at the facilities. Also on Oct. 8, an Internship Supervisor Workshop will be offered. This workshop is for horticultural therapists who are first-time supervisors or for those who wish to enhance their role as an internship supervisor. My company, Final Touch Plantscaping, is a Silver

Sponsor of this year's conference. I am also an AHTA Conference team member, and a two-time national presenter.

For information, go to ahta.org, or contact Jean D'Amore, horticultural therapist and conference chair, at jeanddamore@aol.com.



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