

HEALING BY GROWING FARMS

FARM NEWS BULLETIN

Sanando Our Brain, Our Spirit and Soil



DECEMBER 2023

Healing by Growing Farms



2nd

NORTHEAST DISABILITY AND AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE

SAVE THE DATE
SATURDAY, MAY 18, 2024

MY VOICE NARRATIVE



A Bountiful Year at Healing by Growing Farms.

Greetings, friends of Healing by Growing! As the year draws to a close, we're excited to share news about the abundant harvest of progress and joy we've reaped at our farm. This bi-annual newsletter is brimming with updates on our accomplishments, team expansions, and upcoming events that promise to inspire and connect. Throughout 2023, our dedicated team of volunteers and supporters have poured their hearts and hands into nurturing the farm and witnessing the flourishing of both crops and lives. Below please find just a few highlights of our amazing and blessed year:

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HBG 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS: FARM 2 HOME

Through our Farm 2 Home (F2H) doorstep program we were able to provide free farm fresh produce and eggs to Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and trauma survivors who are homebound or unemployed without access to fresh produce or eggs.

Donations were delivered to survivors' doorsteps while others selected to drive by and pick up their farm fresh goods baskets at the entrance of the farm. Since its inception on July 2023, the program donated over 800 pounds of food, over 63 dozen eggs, various flower bouquets, flower stems, fruit tree and shrub cuttings to its program members.

The Farm 2 Home (F2H) program is seasonal and dependent on available farm crops.



888 TOUCHES, ENDLESS HEALING: OUR TEAM REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

Reaching 888 touches for healing is no small feat, and our amazing team deserves a standing ovation! This year, they've gone above and beyond to engage new partners, expand our services, provide training and touch the lives of countless individuals of all abilities through outreach and consulting. Let's take a closer look at the incredible impact they've made:

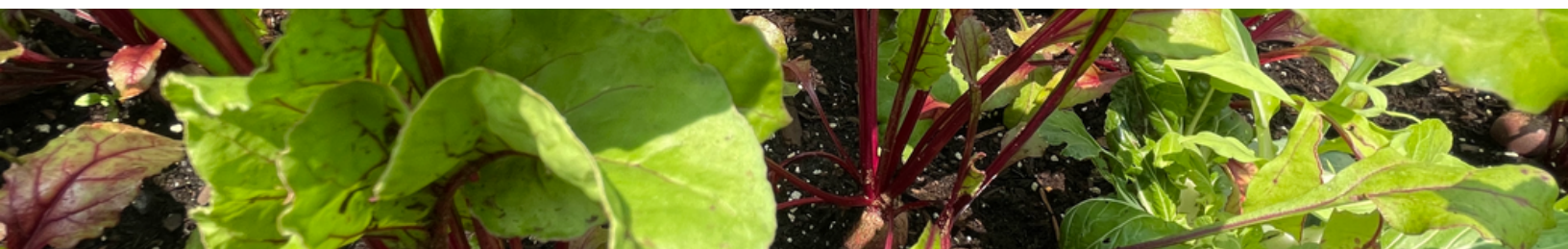
1. BUILDING BRIDGES, STRENGTHENING BONDS:

Expanding Partnerships: Our outreach team forged valuable connections with over 50 new organizations, schools, universities, and community groups. These partnerships allow us to reach a wider range of individuals and offer more education and support.

Collaboration in Action: picture a single Cancer Patient who is unable to work, receiving much-needed food assistance through our Farm 2 Home delivery program. Alternatively, imagine the senior citizen battling illness finding solace in a visit and the company from one of our team members. These are just a couple examples of how our team's partnerships are making a real difference.

2. SERVICES THAT HEAL, HOPE THAT EMPOWERS:

Growing Our Reach: This year, we expanded our service offerings to include the *Farm 2 Home program*, *planting new healing gardens across the USA*, *aspiring farmers institute*, and the *farmers with disABILITIES real talk virtual group*. This group is intended to serve as a SELF GUIDED safe space for individuals with disABILITIES to engage in “Real Talk” sharing resources, ideas, struggles and solutions in agriculture. This diversification ensures that we can meet the unique needs of each individual we encounter.



From Crisis to Calm: Whether it's providing support or coaching to organizations, guests, students, farmers or families coping with a disability, trauma, brain injury, or offering enviromental educational sessions to empower individuals seeking services, our team's diverse services are a beacon of hope in times of need.

3. 888 touches, Countless Stories:

Behind the Numbers: Every number on our report represents a real person, a life touched, and a story of resilience. It's the story of the young woman overcoming suicide ideation and loneliness thanks to our accessible green healing spaces, or the elderly gentleman finding companionship through our social visits. These are the stories that fuel our team's passion and commitment.

888 touches for healing - what a powerful testament to the dedication of our HBG team! Their tireless work is a reminder that even the smallest act of kindness can have a ripple effect, spreading hope and healing throughout our community. We are incredibly proud of their achievements and excited to see what they accomplish in the year ahead.

Join us in celebrating our team's success! Share this story, volunteer your time, or donate to support their vital work and our upcoming 2024 2nd Northeast disability & agriculture conference.

Together, we can make a difference, one life at a time. Remember, even the smallest gesture of support can make a world of difference. Let's continue to work together to create a community where healing and hope are within reach for everyone.



SCAN FOR OUR REFERRAL SERVICES FORM

HEALING HARVEST: CELEBRATING GROWTH WITH A TWINE CUTTING AT HBG FARMS!

The air at HBG Farms crackled with excitement as scissors snipped a circle of twine, marking a momentous occasion: Wednesday, August 30, 2023 was a day of celebration! On this day, Healing by Growing (HBG) Farms hosted their Twine Cutting Ceremony. HBG founder, Dr. Ivette Ruiz, who is a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) survivor, welcomed volunteers, sponsors, funders, and community members who helped create the urban green space as a sanctuary for healing.

Chris Sullivan from Southwest Conservation District and HBG partner welcomed guests and provided the history of HBG. A blessing and prayer were delivered by Senior Pastor Abraham Hernandez of Grace Fellowship Church, a community supporter. Followed by remarks from two HBG volunteers who shared the positive impact HBG has had on their lives and after some inspiring remarks made by Jane Gross, MSW one of HBG's F2H program members. The program concluded with words from Dr. Ruiz followed by the official twine cutting.

Guests were then invited to tour the farm to learn about the animals, growing practices, and about all the various crops, fruits, vegetables, plants, pollinator gardens, hydroponics and aquaponics set up around the property.

The day highlighted the importance of community and how Dr. Ruiz's vision and mission have come to fruition and the passion she has to continue the work of providing hope, healing spaces, access and food security to TBI and trauma survivors.



<https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2023/11/10/trauma-healing-garden>

WE'VE BEEN BUSY

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It's been an exciting and busy year for HBG. The beginning of our year was focused on hosting our inaugural Northeast Disability and Agriculture conference. This regional event was designed to educate and empower the agricultural community. Through workshops and presentations, farmer attendees learned how to better advocate for themselves and service provider attendees learned how to identify potential distress risks within the community. Together attendees learned how to build a network, sharing skills and resources to improve accessibility and reduce industry incidents of suicide.

During the spring months and early summer, HBG founder, Dr. Ivette Ruiz, made her rounds presenting at events nationwide focused on advocacy, inclusivity and accessibility in agriculture, installations of green healing spaces and empowered healing.

Let's take a look at some of the highlights from the last 6 months!



November 7, @3pm ET
With Dr Ivette Ruiz



FACT
Food Animal Concerns Trust



Brain Injury:
Disabilities and Agriculture



JULY: FOOD2HOME PROGRAM

Nourishing Our Community, One Delivery at a Time. We're thrilled to announce the launch of a new initiative close to our hearts – Farm-to-Home: Fresh Food for a Healthy Future! This program aims to nourish both body and spirit in our local community, by delivering fresh, nutritious greens and eggs directly to the doorsteps of those who need it most.



AUGUST: NEWEST ADDITIONS

Double dose of fluff and feathered love alert! We're bursting with excitement to introduce our newest team members, Latte and Hazel! These precious girls are not just any ordinary birdies – they're joining our amazing emotional support animal assisted therapeutic team, ready to spread comfort and cuddles wherever they go.



SEPTEMBER: CHOATE ROSEMARY HALL PARTNERSHIP

In addition to the ongoing Yale University partnership, HBG has also formed a new partnership with Choate Rosemary Hall in Wallingford, CT. A team of 4-5 students visit the farm on a weekly basis. They volunteer while engaging in hands-on regenerative farm experiences, learning about protecting the environment and giving back to the community. They learn various lessons from the importance of food access, animal husbandry, composting practices, community accessibility, to practical real life experiences, social skills, and work skills.





OCTOBER: SPREADING HEALING ROOTS ACROSS BORDERS: HEALING BY GROWING EXPANDS TO PUERTO RICO

Healing by Growing's mission of cultivating hope through experiential therapeutic farming is blossoming beyond our familiar fields! We're thrilled to announce a new chapter in our journey, one that extends a helping hand across the Caribbean Sea to the beautiful island of Puerto Rico. Through our Farm Ambassadors Partnership Program, we're joining forces with dedicated individuals and organizations in Puerto Rico to establish accessible healing gardens. These havens will offer a space for individuals struggling with brain injuries, trauma, and other challenges to find solace, connect with nature, and embark on their own journeys of healing.

NOVEMBER: HBG IN THE MEDIA

Dr. Ivette Ruiz joined Lisa Wexler on the WICC600 radio station and podcast to discuss her passion for working with the disabled community, and historically disadvantaged groups in the farming and agricultural space.

HBG and Dr. Ivette Ruiz were featured in the first issue of Heel and Hive, an 80-page publication that explores Ecologies of Care, featuring personal essays and articles from more than 20 artists and writers. The Heel and Hive team interviewed Dr. Ruiz to learn more about the work she is doing to help survivors heal trauma through agriculture, farming, and nature immersion experiences.



DECEMBER: TWO YEARS OF CULTIVATING HEALING: CELEBRATING HEALING BY GROWING'S JOURNEY



December marks a momentous occasion for Healing by Growing! We're thrilled to celebrate our second anniversary of providing hope and healing to the brain injury and trauma community through the power of experiential therapeutic farming. **Planting the Seeds of Change:** Our story began with a simple yet powerful belief: that connecting with nature and working the land can be a transformative experience for individuals overcoming brain injuries and trauma. We envisioned a space where individuals could rediscover purpose, rebuild confidence, and reconnect with themselves and their surroundings. And so, Healing by Growing blossomed. Our farm became a haven, offering participants a nurturing environment to heal.

WE'RE GROWING

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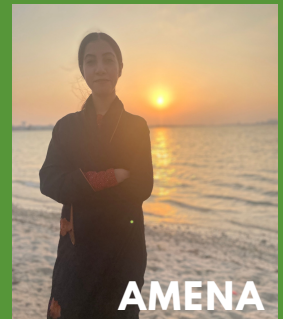
HBG GROWS BIGGER, BRIGHTER, AND MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN EVER!

This year, our farm has blossomed in more ways than one, and we're thrilled to introduce you to some of the incredible individuals who've helped make it happen. So, without further ado, let's meet some of our newest team members who are adding their spark to the HBG fire:

- **Amena:** Bringing analytical prowess and a smile as bright as a sunflower, Amena joins our team as the queen of data and analytics, ensuring our programs run smoothly and effectively.
- **Anne:** With dirt under her fingernails and joy in her eyes, Anne's the on-farm powerhouse, working tirelessly alongside her partner to coax life from the soil and nurture our crops and animals with love.
- **Carie:** Our outreach and volunteer coordinator, Carie, is a magnet for good hearts and helping hands. With her infectious enthusiasm, and positivity she connects new individuals to the magic of HBG, expanding our community of kindness and healing.
- **Julia:** As our research assistant, Julia delves into the science behind our programs, ensuring their effectiveness.
- **Kiarah:** HBG's Ambassador Partnership Program is in fantastic hands with Kiarah! Her marketing and communications magic ensure our collaborations flourish and stories of hope bloom far and wide.
- **Sean:** Last but not least, Sean, our development and major gifts guru, is a master at cultivating generosity and turning passion into resources that fuel our mission of healing through nature.

These are just a few of the incredible individuals who call HBG Farms home. Their dedication, talent, and passion inspire us everyday, and we're so grateful to have them on board. you can be a part of our journey too! Volunteer your time, share our story, or donate to fuel our mission. Together, let's keep cultivating a world where healing and hope bloom for all!

With heartfelt gratitude,
Dr. Ivette Ruiz Ella/She
Healing By Growing Farms Founder



TRAUMA RECOVERY THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL FARMING: HEALING IN NATURE

Healing in nature, often referred to as ecotherapy, nature therapy or green therapy, has been associated with various physical, mental, and emotional benefits. Healing or therapeutic activities in a farm setting such as in the case of Healing By Growing involving growing crops can be referred to as horticultural therapy or agricultural therapy or experiential farming. These terms encompass a range of activities and programs that utilize gardening and farming as a therapeutic intervention to improve physical, mental, cognitive, neuro and emotional well-being.

Healing By Growing therapy often involves engaging individuals in activities such as planting, cultivating, and harvesting crops, as well as other gardening tasks. This hands-on involvement with nature and the growing process can have positive effects on individual's health and can be used in various therapeutic settings, including rehabilitation centers, schools, hospitals, community programs and even residential spaces. We would like to showcase some of the potential benefits of spending time in nature healing brain injury and trauma survivors:

1. **Stress Reduction:** Nature has a calming effect on the mind and body. Exposure to natural environments has been linked to a reduction in stress levels, leading to lower cortisol (a stress hormone) levels.
2. **Improved Mental Health:** Spending time in nature has been associated with a reduction in symptoms of anxiety and depression. Nature therapy can provide a respite from the demands of daily life, offering a positive impact on mental well-being.

3. **Enhanced Mood:** Being in natural surroundings has been shown to elevate mood and increase feelings of happiness. The beauty and tranquility of nature can have a positive impact on one's emotional state.
4. **Increased Creativity:** Nature has been found to stimulate creativity and problem-solving skills. Time spent in natural settings may enhance cognitive function and encourage innovative thinking.
5. **Improved Concentration:** Exposure to nature has been linked to improved focus and attention. This is particularly relevant in today's fast-paced, technology-driven world where constant distractions can lead to cognitive fatigue.
6. **Boosted Immune System:** Some studies suggest that spending time in nature may have a positive impact on the immune system. Fresh air, sunlight, and the natural environment can contribute to overall health and well-being.
7. **Physical Health Benefits:** Engaging in outdoor activities promotes physical well-being. Whether it's farming, gardening, hiking, walking, or other forms of exercise in nature, these activities can contribute to improved cardiovascular health and overall fitness.
8. **Connection to the Present Moment:** Nature has a grounding effect, helping individuals connect with the present moment. Mindfulness practices in natural settings can foster a sense of awareness and spiritual presence.

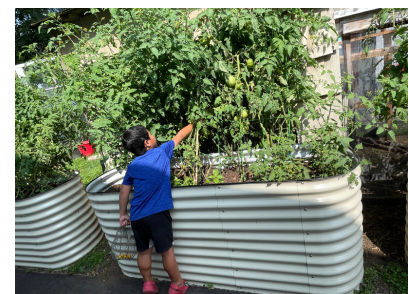


9. Social Connection: Healing in nature often involves social interactions, whether it's walking with a friend, planting as a community, joining a nature group, or participating in outdoor activities or events. Social connections contribute significantly to overall well-being.

10. Restoration and Renewal: Nature provides an opportunity for individuals to disconnect from the demands of daily life, recharge their energy, and experience a sense of renewal. The natural environment offers a space for reflection and introspection.

According to a study published on May 2021 by the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, it's important to note that the benefits of healing in nature can vary from person to person, and the extent of the positive effects may depend on individual environments, activities, preferences and experiences as well as exposure frequency and length of time in greenspaces. Incorporating time in nature as part of a holistic approach to well-being can contribute to healing trauma and a healthier and more balanced lifestyle.

We at Healing By Growing Farms are passionate about helping communities create these transformative spaces. If you're interested in learning more about how to create an HBG farm, healing greenspace or a living memorial garden in your own home, organization or community, we invite you to schedule a complimentary 15-minute informational consult meeting. Simply click here: <https://calendly.com/healingbygrowing/60min>



UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUPS

1. Farmers with disABILITIES real talk in virtual group.
2. HBG Farms Healing and Memorial Gardens Partner Alliance: Planting Healing Spaces Across Our Nation and Beyond.

2ND NORTHEAST DISABILITY AND AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE

Plant a Seed of Hope: Become a Sponsor for Our 2nd Conference! Join us for our 2nd Northeast Disability & Agriculture Conference, an exciting event packed with insights, supportive peer connections, and opportunities for personal transformation. Your sponsorship will play a crucial role in ensuring its success, allowing us to reach even more farmers in need. Let's keep growing, healing, and blooming, one seed at a time. **Become a sponsor today by scanning the 1st QR Code below and help us cultivate a brighter tomorrow for the Ag community impacted by brain injuries and trauma.** Let's sow seeds of hope - together, we can bloom a brighter future and break the cycle of despair in farming.

Stay informed by emailing us and having your name added to our mailing list _
healingbygrowingconferenceteam@gmail.com.



STAY CONNECTED

LEARN MORE ABOUT US

www.healingbygrowing.com

CONTACT US AT

healingbygrowingoutreach@gmail.com

JOIN OUR TEAM

Join our community of over a dozen volunteers and interns. Donate your time and talents in person or remotely from home. Help us improve the lives of brain injury and trauma survivors and their loved ones. Please scan to complete our [application](#) Or email us at volunteers4hbgf@gmail.com