



The Virginia Thurston

# Healing Garden Cancer Support Center

Providing education and therapeutic services to those affected by cancer

## ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021





# *Letter from the* EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Healing Garden Friends,

Never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd be writing another annual report referring to the Pandemic and virtual services, but here we are. We just finished another year--both challenging and successful.

The diminishing tides of COVID in the Spring and Summer of 2021 left us feeling we could loosen our guard at the Garden, and we did enjoy a few in-person client gatherings here. Photographers visited regularly, documenting the resilience and mystery of the natural world, and sharing on social media for all to enjoy. The birds gathered in the baths, the woodchuck marched to the building, got on his hind legs, and pawed down a branch of tall phlox, carefully snacking on each delicious leaf. Regularly, a hummingbird flew to Maddie's window and just hovered there looking in at her. The world was still, and the air a bit cleaner. Hope was on the rise. Just when we thought we might be able to leave Zoom and gather at our beloved facility, the world changed, and we had to return to social isolation.

If you had asked me at the start of the Pandemic if I thought the Healing Garden would be ok, I would have told you "No". I worried that our programs and services would not translate or be effective over Zoom, a medium so unlike face-to-face interactions. I worried that our funding would be re-directed to basic human needs that arose from unemployment. I was so wrong.

The Healing Garden staff and program providers became experts in how to deliver impactful, therapeutic services over the Zoom medium. We discovered that it enhanced accessibility. If you felt too depressed to get off the couch, too fatigued to get dressed or drive to the Healing Garden, you didn't have to do so. Those barriers to participation in counseling, support groups, yoga, art therapy, and so much more were gone. We found that our clients would phone in from their treatment at the hospital or from home on hospice. Rather than a reduction in utilization, we saw that our clients **tripled** their use of our support systems.

Funding has remained strong. We have successfully brought in grants and donor support to meet our needs. While we have fewer active donors, the donors we do have are on average giving more, which is so incredibly heartwarming!

We have hired Erin Raber, our Lesley University intern, now graduated, to help us provide mental health counseling and music therapy to our expanding client base in need of



Margaret Koch, BS, Executive Director



services. We have added various consultants to work on social media and public relations to help build engagement with the communities around us. Also, the Board and Staff are currently in training to develop our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategic plan, so that we can ensure that **ALL** who are experiencing cancer feel welcomed, valued, respected, and heard, by all of us here at the Garden.

We are so very grateful for all of your support and that you are on our team.

With gratitude and wishes for a healthy 2021-2022.

*Meg Koch*

Margaret Koch

Executive Director

[margaret@healinggardensupport.org](mailto:margaret@healinggardensupport.org)

(978) 456-3532, ex. 101



# *Cancer During* **A PANDEMIC** by Linn Allen Morrill 2/5/2021

My journey began when I experienced mild symptoms (backaches and thirst) last February and March 2020 but was unable to see my primary care physician until May 1st due to the Covid-19 pandemic shut-down. On May 8th, I received the alarming news that I had metastatic urothelial cancer and was promptly referred to Emerson/MGH Hospital's NaKa Cancer Treatment Center in nearby Concord. I mourned my diagnosis for three days, and then began a profound spiritual journey, determined to maximize my quality of life, a moment-to-moment awareness.

Before I began my chemo, I began classes at the Healing Garden and was comforted by many participants after hearing their cancer journeys. Since the beginning of the pandemic

shutdown in March 2020, my husband and I embarked on frequent scenic drives to surrounding rural towns, often passing The Healing Garden. I inquired about the holistic programs during the weekend of my diagnosis and with Kelly's impeccable guidance, enrolled in Spirituality and Cancer. The rapport and sharing of members' life experiences comforted and

prepared me for what was to become, an amazing journey as a cancer survivor.

I have been attending programs that best meet my interests and availability: *Spirituality & Cancer; Nutrition & Cancer; Energy Sound Meditation for Healing; Connecting Through Creativity; Zentangle* (and, sometimes Knitting--

I am an avid knitter but not always able to chat while knitting!).



I received innovative targeted chemo infusions every other Friday beginning on June 18th with minimal side effects. CT scan results were very promising and immunotherapy/ biologic infusions began on September 11th which continue with remarkably positive results. My medical team consistently provide excellent care, communications and follow-up.

Relationships with my family and circle of friends were inevitably strengthened. This diagnosis forced me to prioritize daily goals and presented the flexibility to reflect, learn and build new connections with people I never expected to meet. My circle expanded to include my proactive medical team, and The Healing Garden's professional faculty and staff, and dedicated participants. This cancer care community is my second extended family!

The Healing Garden has been a life-enhancing



experience, providing unique and diverse learning opportunities. The staff are profoundly knowledgeable, compassionate, and enthusiastic - perfect qualities for any successful care community.

I am grateful for the authentic warmth (and scheduling flexibility) that equally enhances my lifestyle and attitude. I have prioritized my time with meaningful growth-focused activities that complement my ongoing practice of gentle fitness: regular nature hikes, cross-country skiing and Qigong meditation. I have re-kindled my passions for healthy eating, creative painting, playing piano, learning knitting patterns and meditating

on uplifting spiritual literature and poetry. The group gestalt is profound in nurturing me and encouraging a life with higher purpose, increased productivity and fostering a curiosity about life's meaning

#### *Epilogue:*

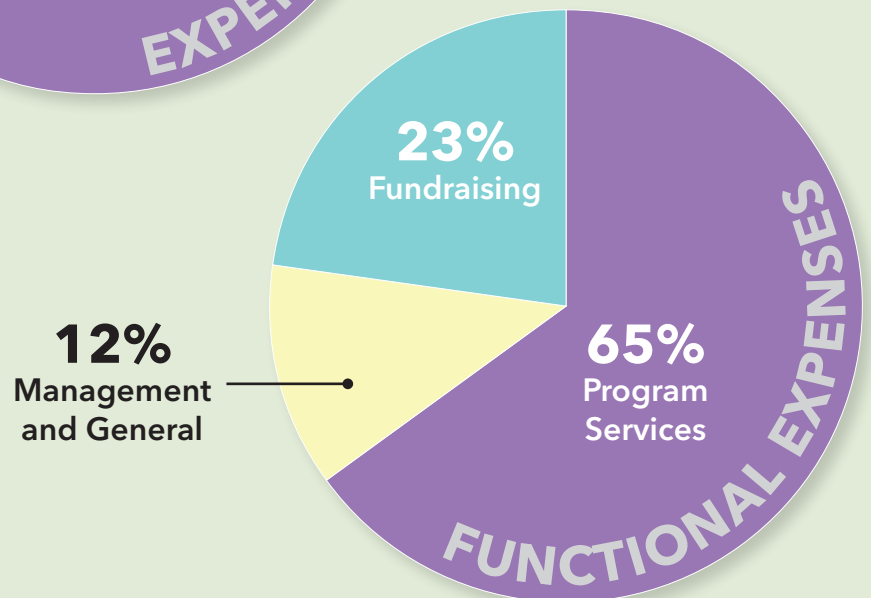
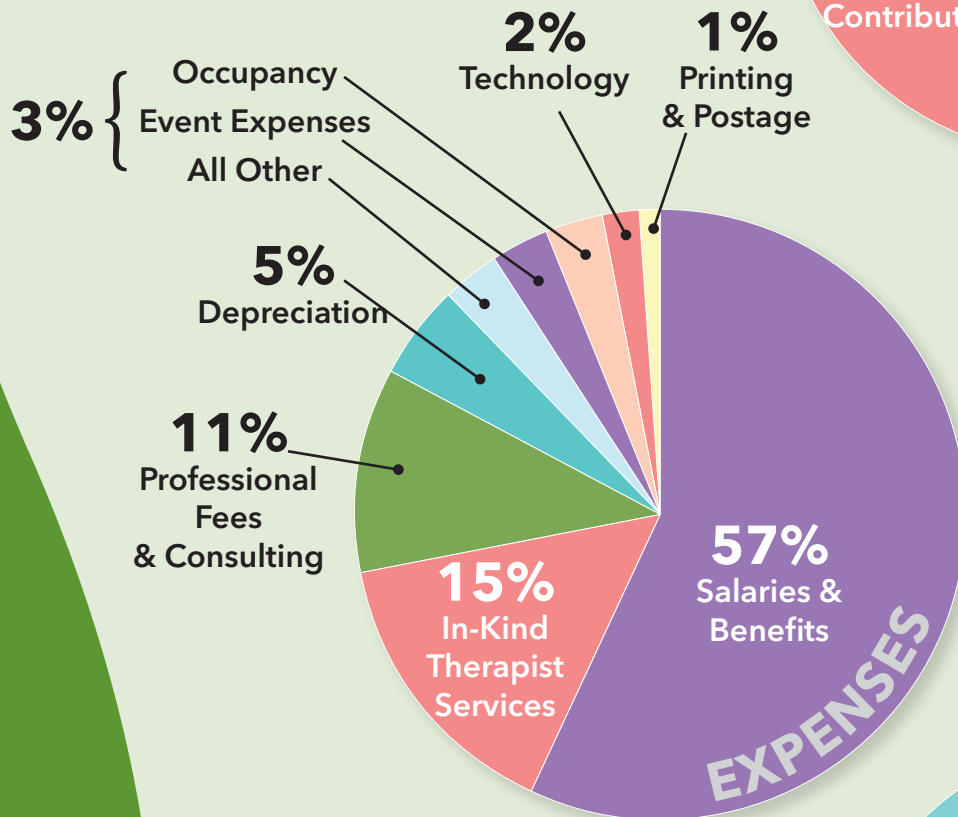
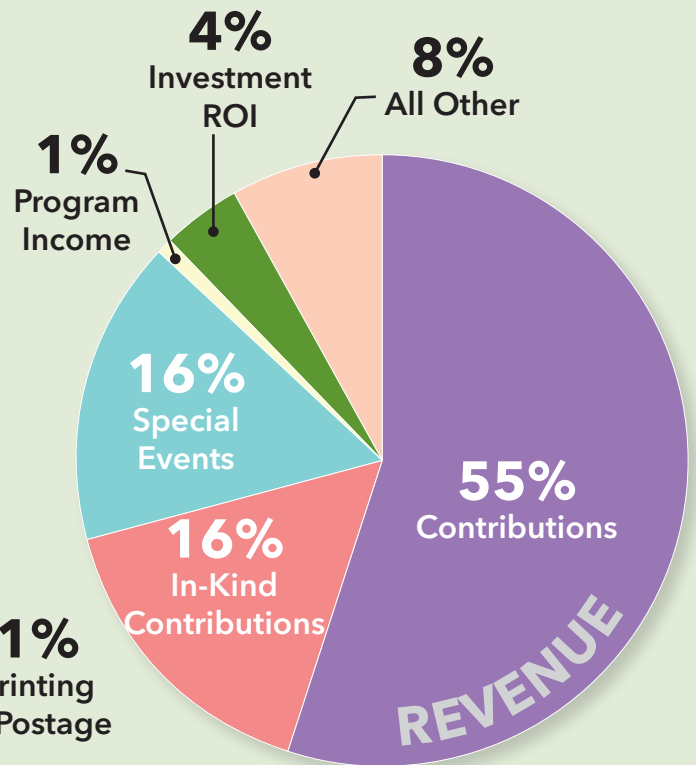
*Sadly, Linn encountered a sudden decline, and passed away on July 2nd, 2021. She will be missed by all who were fortunate enough to have experienced her wonderful beauty inside and out.*



# FY21

## *Our Financials*

**REVENUE: \$885,907**  
**EXPENSES: \$735,712**





In FY21 The Healing Garden *served over 316* clients from **6** states, **99** different towns, **93** in Massachusetts



Our overall reach:

Towns with ten or more households served

Acton	29	Sudbury	10
Harvard	14	Littleton	9
Concord	13	Lunenburg	8
Stow	13	Leominster	7
Arlington	10	Maynard	7
Bolton	10	Westford	7



**7,061** Visits by clients and caregivers, **98%** increase since Covid




**316** Individual clients and caregivers served  
**127 new clients**



**822** Individual counseling up **91%** since Covid


**42%** of clients have breast cancer,  
**39%** have other cancers,  
**19%** are caregivers and bereavement clients



**541** Therapeutic/educational classes, **77%** increase in attendance since Covid



**302** Support group sessions, **96%** increase since Covid



**88%** of clients were female  
**11%** were male  
**1%** Gender non-confirming

## Marlene's Story: Why I Give

In 2003, at the age of 54, I received a breast cancer diagnosis—a cancer that had spread to my lymph nodes. I cried and let myself grieve. Then, according to my daughter Jessica, I grabbed a handful of tissues, steeled myself so that fear was not in control, and started making calls to find the very best team for me.

I landed at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute enrolled in a clinical trial that offered aggressive, frequent chemotherapy treatments to combat my disease. It was also a course of treatment that resulted in harsh and debilitating side effects.

I knew I could not walk the cancer journey alone and called Betsy Tyson-Smith, then Executive Director and co-founder of a small non-profit starting up in Harvard, The Virginia Thurston Healing Garden. I made the Healing Garden a core member of

my team, because while the oncologists were killing off cancer cells, the Healing Garden was helping to keep the rest of me alive. The Healing Garden changed how I was able to deal with cancer treatment. Dana-Farber was doing the heavy-duty medical stuff, but, at the time, they did not



have the means to support the whole person. The Healing Garden introduced me to integrative therapies and gave me the level of support I needed. During the most challenging year of my life, the Garden helped me find ways to heal.

As a result, I became a strong supporter of the Healing Garden. Shortly after reading the Garden's 2019 Annual Report, which documented the organization's financial growth and expanding client base, I was moved to make a significant and impactful gift. Not only would

this gift benefit the Garden, it was also a way for me to continue my father's legacy.

My father Martin Ackerman grew up in South Philly, the son of a poor struggling family. A family so poor that at 16 my dad dropped out of high school to keep the family afloat. During World War II, he met my mother, a native of Portsmouth, Virginia. After the War, my parents returned to Southeastern

Virginia to help my grandparents. Dad made numerous efforts to earn a living: a grocery store that flooded and eventually failed and a job at a grocery store chain that was pure misery. Each time he would pick himself up, dust himself off, and try something new.

By the time I was a teenager, Dad had established a small discount drug store, a new idea that had been successful "up North." To fund this venture, my parents used their house as collateral – the only thing they had – so everything was on the line. I remember my father and I drew handmade signs for the store windows, featuring prices of the discounted items.



Dad was quiet, gentle, and generous. He was my rock. He slipped money to customers who would otherwise not be able to afford their prescriptions. He told cashiers not to ring up struggling clients' charges. He gave to small, local charities, but he always donated anonymously.

Before he passed away at age 79, he said, "Everything you need to know is in a drawer beside my bed." We never spoke of what was in that drawer, but after he passed away, I discovered legal pads full of his self-driven education and a few private notes. Tucked inside books and notepads, I found wise words of advice: "When in doubt, do the right thing. You will always know what the right thing is."

At the bottom of the drawer, Dad left a note expressing his wish that I continue his legacy of charitable giving. To make

that possible, he established a Charitable Remainder Trust. This may be one of my dad's greatest gifts—the privilege to select beneficiaries of that Trust during my lifetime. Once I survived cancer, I knew the Healing Garden would be one of the beneficiaries.

The Healing Garden gave me my initial gift, and I feel it is really important for people to step up so that the programs and services so beneficial to me are available to those who come after me. As leaders, we need to secure the future for small non-profits who otherwise may not be able to make it. My biggest challenge was whether to leave the gift anonymously, as my father would have, or come forward, state my intentions, and use my name. I decided to come forward because I hope to influence others to consider doing the same.

I realized the greatest legacy I can leave is to establish a Donor-Advised Fund and appoint my daughter as successor advisor, and then my grandchildren after that. I want them to have the pleasure of philanthropy my



Betsy Ackerman, Marlene Nusbaum,  
Martin Ackerman

father bestowed upon me. In this way Martin Ackerman and his gentle heart-felt generosity live on.



### **There are many rewarding ways to meet your personal philanthropic goals.**

You can use your Will or Living Trust to perpetuate your annual gift and leave a legacy.

Let's say your annual gift to the Healing Garden is \$2,000. A bequest to us of \$50,000 can be endowed so that it distributes four percent of the principal each year to support our work, every year, at the same level as your gifting occurred while you were alive.

If you are interested in making a planned gift and would like to learn more, please contact:

**Maddie Phadke**

*Director of Development*

[Maddie@HealingGardenSupport.org](mailto:Maddie@HealingGardenSupport.org)  
or

**Meg Koch**

*Executive Director*

[Margaret@HealingGardenSupport.org](mailto:Margaret@HealingGardenSupport.org)

### **The Hindle Legacy Giving Society honors those who have included the Healing Garden in their estate plan:**

**Mr. Win Hindle**

**Ms. Carol Ehrlich**

**Mr. & Mrs. Dana Koch**

**Ms. Renee Nadler**

**Ms. Marlene Nusbaum**



# Healing Garden providers speak to the value of their work in the era of Zoom



At the end of the Summer, affiliated Healing Garden Providers (*individual counselors, acupuncturists, massage therapists, support group leaders, program facilitators, and clinical staff*) gathered on Zoom to talk about just how remarkable this past year has been in terms of our community successfully mobilizing, adapting, and expanding to continue to serve our client's needs.

We reflected on the **68% increase** in total number of client

"visits" since last

year and the **145% increase** in program participation!

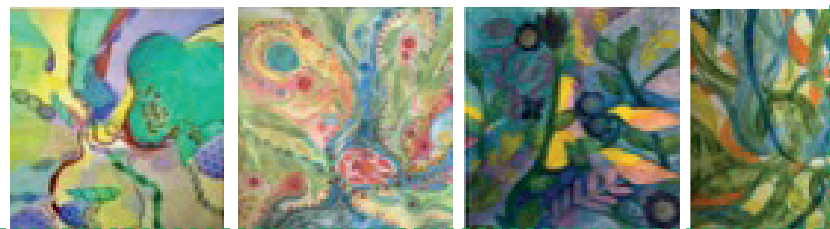
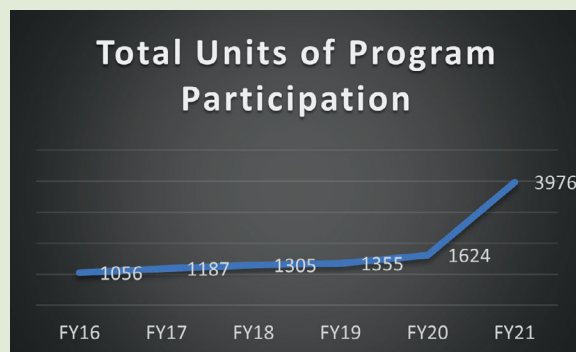
This is an enormous expansion of our work! We wanted to know how to help sustain each other, collect feedback about the continuation of Zoom, and help develop a vision about our work for the upcoming year. What emerged were surprising statements about how the Garden's leadership in responding to the pandemic by immediately transitioning to a virtual medium afforded them the confidence to be creative and

place new energy into their work. Amazingly, they arrived at discovering the unique benefits of Zoom particular to the Healing Garden. Below are statements from a support group leader, an expressive arts instructor, and an acupuncturist—all

of whom were astonished with the ability of their work to translate so effectively to Garden clients through Zoom.

*"For me, the value of being a support group leader for men living with cancer is many-fold and manifold. First, I think*

*we have created a space where men can use their own language to speak about the indignities and sufferings associated with their cancers, without worrying about offending somebody. Second, the participants have really been able to support each other in some very heartfelt ways, just listening, offering their words of kindness, their humor, their curiosity. The recognition that each is going through some variation of what the others are going through I think reduces loneliness and provides some encouragement. Third, each shows up in their own way, some seem to be there mainly to*





offer support to others, whereas others are there to receive it, and somehow the exchange seems to work. The value of zoom for me is that it makes it easier for people to show up—there are no logistics associated with getting into a car or getting to the Center. The other thing is that you can really see everyone's faces—the computer makes people sit closer to the camera than they otherwise would be sitting in a room together, and as a result, it doesn't feel like we are quite as far away."

William Lenderking, PhD,  
Men's Support Group Leader

"Doing remote acupuncture seemed impossible until Lauren Corduck, a Healing Garden client, suggested I show her how to place the acupressure stickers I often left on her at the end of treatments during a FaceTime call. On March 23, 2020 we had our first remote appointment. It worked so well for her that I offered remote acupuncture using FaceTime or Zoom to all my Healing Garden clients. I helped people with nausea, insomnia, pain, constipation, fatigue, and hot flashes. Between March 2020 and February 2021, when I stopped remote



Healing Garden Provider Meeting, 2019

appointments due to my schedule limitations, I treated 10 Healing Garden patients for a total of 74 appointments and helped people improve their quality of life during a difficult time."

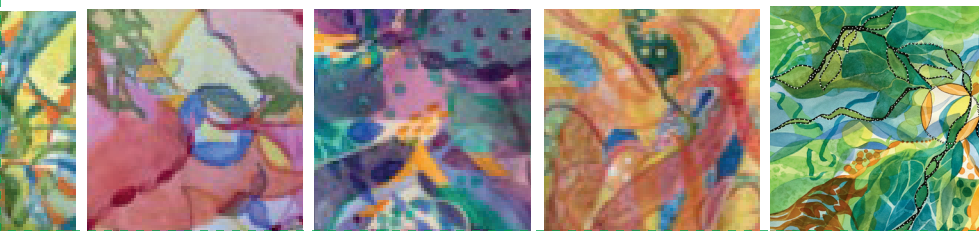
Dorene Bowe-Shulman,  
Acupuncturist

"Transferring my Prepare for Surgery/Heal Faster workshops and Life Centered Therapy counseling sessions onto zoom seemed to work in everyone's favor. Clients appreciated receiving care from the comfort of their homes and zoom provided a safe haven for us to work. Supporting Garden clients these last 20 years has been an honor and a privilege. It's been my pleasure to assist clients in opening to deeper resources, meaning and light."

Lisa MacDonnell, LMT,  
Certified in LCT and Prepare  
for Surgery/Heal Faster.

"The benefits of using Zoom for these workshops have far outweighed any initial concerns! My workshop objective is to help participants discover ways to make Creative Mindfulness a regular self-care habit. We gather for a Zoom session once per week to learn about a new weekly activity and share work from the previous week. Because participants are working in their own homes, often in a creative space they've set up for themselves, they are more at ease with the creative process and less judgmental of their work. In addition, many have shared how they feel more creative at certain times of the day and that's when they work on their activities. These things are key to realizing the benefits of Creative Mindfulness!"

Karen Arsenault, Expressive  
Arts Facilitator, Healing Garden  
Client since 2007



SHARED WORK/PIECES

*Creative Mindfulness  
in Times of Stress*

# OUR DONORS

On behalf of the clients we serve, we thank you all for helping to provide a unique community of compassionate understanding and support.

## *Floral Leadership Giving Society*



*The Healing Garden's Floral Leadership Giving Society recognizes those individuals and corporations who demonstrated extraordinary commitment to the Healing Garden through their accumulated gifts of \$1,000 and above.*

### **Nasturtium Giving Society**

#### **\$10,000 and above**

Altimeter Capital  
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and Mr. Frederick Findlay  
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Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan and Carrie Rankin  
Pamela and William Sawyer  
Jon Way, MD

### **Jasmine Giving Society**

#### **\$7,500 to \$9,999**

Marcia and Jim Croyle  
Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan and Jessie Panek

### **Passionflower Giving Society**

#### **\$5,000 to \$7,499**

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### **Lavender Giving Society**

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### **Hawthorne Giving Society**

#### **\$1,000-\$2,499**

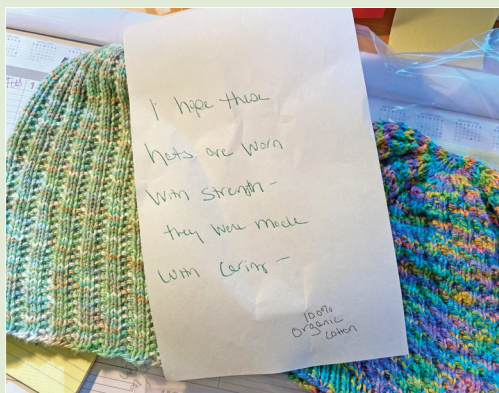
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We feel so very fortunate to have a strong group of dedicated volunteers. They are young and old, clients and caregivers and dedicated community members. This year, in spite of COVID, we had 41 individuals who provided 504 hours of support. This included garden and grounds care, office support, bee keeping, facilities fixes and improvements and so much more.