

Hydroponic Gardening Continues Maryhaven's History of Innovation

2015 marks the 85th anniversary of Maryhaven Center of Hope, founded by the Daughters of Wisdom in 1930 to serve individuals with special needs. One of the largest and most innovative multiservice agencies on Long Island, Maryhaven continues to develop new programs to better focus on the potential of its clients, building confidence, improving self-esteem and encouraging community integration.

A new venture taking place at the agency's Yaphank location exemplifies Maryhaven's creative approach to achieving its aims. Under the guidance of Program Director John Mahoney, staff and clients are collaborating on hydroponic gardening as part of an array of projects providing work opportunities for those with disabilities. The goal of this transitional business model initiative is to eventually offer community employment to individuals at a competitive wage.

At the most recent annual Catholic Health Services leadership conference, attendees enjoyed delicious salad made with lettuce grown by Maryhaven. Mr. Mahoney designed hydroponic garden towers, which allow program participants to grow crops indoors under lights, without soil. This process includes 11 towers planted on a rotational basis to allow a weekly harvest. Seedlings are started, and in five weeks the lettuce is ready to be harvested. All crops are 100% organic, free of harmful pesticides.

More than 2,100 individuals throughout Nassau and Suffolk participate in the agency's diverse programs. To learn more about Maryhaven's vocational programs, call **(631) 474-4120**.



Photo caption: Marilyn Rocco (foreground) works with Maryhaven staff member Candice Seymour to grow lettuce in hydroponic towers.