

Hopewell Inn

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Hopewell Inn is one of four therapeutic work farms in the United States created and operated to meet the rehabilitative needs of adults with serious mental illness. Hopewell is located in Mesopotamia, Ohio, a rural Amish community. Three characteristics define and distinguish therapeutic work farms. First, they are working farms. Second, they are intentional communities, whose sole purpose is the rehabilitation of mentally ill adults. Third, most of the core staff and their families live and work on the grounds and live in community with those who come to them for therapeutic support.

Hopewell occupies 333 acres of beautiful Ohio farmland and woods. Our home was chosen because of the promise of the land, the promise that serenity, natural beauty, and the rhythms of the farm would be therapeutic for the residents who come to us for care. That promise is kept at Hopewell every day.

Hopewell serves adults who have the most severe forms of mental illness: schizophrenia, bipolar mood disorder, or clinical depression. The recovery needs of our residents include structure, safety, and a low-stress environment. These needs are met at our farm. The pace of our rehabilitative activities is slow and steady. Days and weeks are structured. The work demands are predictable and geared to the capabilities of our residents. There are few distractions, few intrusions to our routine. Work and socialization and recreation blend together.

Residents at Hopewell work in teams led by work leaders. Major activities focus on caring for our crops, animals, and our gardens and grounds. Much of our work is labor-intensive. We try hard to be good to the earth that sustains us. We practice rotational grazing, organic growing and sustainable agriculture.

We receive great dividends from our land. From the wood that fuels our woodburners to the maple syrup that covers our hotcakes, the land sustains us. We grow many of our own vegetables and raise beef cows, pigs, chickens, and sheep. We also have recreational animals, horses, a pony, several goats and three llamas. Several dogs and numerous cats people our world. Two large Percheron horses pull our sugar wagon and take us on hayrides and sled rides.

The farm and our woodlands are a wonderful rehabilitative tool. They serve as the working environment in which mental health professionals provide psychiatric care for the adults we serve. Living in immediate proximity to our Main House and two cottages are our staff and their families. Numbered among our ranks are a professional agronomist, a horticultural therapist, a farmer, and several mental health professionals from nursing, social work, and psychology. Work team leaders work closely with the clinical staff. Our programming is holistic and comprehensive.

A typical day at Hopewell begins with a morning staff review where the activities and behavior of residents is reviewed. At about 9am a community meeting is held to discuss work team assignments, make announcements, and prepare for the day ahead. We finish with three or four songs, and then go to work. Usual work teams go to the barn, the garden, and the hoop house. At lunch we return to the Main House. Work teams go out again at two and come in for supper. After dinner, we may play basketball, go for a swim, or go for walks. Hopewell has a wellness program that rewards residents who participate in a wide variety of physical activities.

On Wednesdays, we go into the Commons in Mesopotamia for ice cream or snacks. On Friday, residents go to the Middlefield Library for books and videotapes. Saturday is shopping day and usually there are two trips in, one in the morning and one later in the day. Interspersed with all this activity are AA trips, outings to Eastwood Mall, movies, and participation in the local fairs. Friday morning is clean-up time, but we reward ourselves, weather permitting, by having a barbecue in the Grove.

Psychiatric care undergirds all that we do. Each resident develops a Personal Development Plan and works with his or her primary worker to implement it. The plan identifies the goals each resident is seeking to achieve while at Hopewell. Health care is a prominent need for many of our residents. Identifying the best medication regimen and maintaining compliance is a key component. Clinical staff monitor progress for each resident and work closely with our consultant psychiatrist. The myriad details of legal, governmental, justice system, and healthcare requirements are carefully addressed.