

Sensory Garden

Lake Hospital System, Mentor Medical Campus

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The change in Lake Hospital's mission from a strict hospital focus to ambulatory care resulted in a commitment to inspire the health status of our community. This change in healthcare philosophy led to a concentration on health and wellness and provide an appropriate environment for healing. We challenged ourselves not to create a mini-hospital. We had to think beyond the scope of a hospital environment.

In order to provide a suitable healing environment, we turned to the leaders in the Lake County nursery industry. In their own right, they are committed to the "health" of lakes, area parks and preservation of the land. By working with them, we combined health care and rich tradition to create a healing, wellness environment at Lake Hospital System.

Scheduled to be built on former nursery grounds, the plans for the Mentor Medical Campus incorporated a large three-sided enclosed courtyard off of the patient lobby and a glassed-in corridor from the surgery pavilion to the lobby. The area was a perfect setting for a garden. The leadership of Lake Hospital Foundation with the encouragement of Hospital System executives met with well over forty Lake County nursery owners, large and small, to determine their level of interest in providing plant materials and expertise in developing the courtyard area. The long-term objective was to establish an ongoing partnership with the green industry in Lake County. The garden was conceived as a calming and diversionary place for patients and families. What ultimately developed was a "sensory" garden, interesting plants to touch, see and smell and water to hear. It was important that the garden be accessible to wheelchairs and people using walkers and crutches.

A landscape architecture firm was approached to design the garden. It became very clear that the magnitude of the garden would require not only donations of plant materials from the nursery owners association members but also cash gifts and gifts-in-kind from a number of contractors – land grading, plumbing and electrical. With lead gifts from the George P. Storer Foundation and from a Trustee of Lake Hospital Foundation, with firm commitments from the nursery industry in Lake County, and with commitments from a variety of contractors, the sensory garden project came to fruition.

Not only was a wonderful garden created but also a partnership has been developed between Lake Hospital System and the green industry with ramifications far exceeding the specific project.

Today, the garden is utilized as a temporary escape for the family members of our patients. While their loved ones are undergoing surgery or special procedures, the families quite often spend time in the peaceful setting of the garden, or simply stand in the glass hallway, mesmerized by the largest of three waterfalls. The moving water combined with shapes and colors seems to have a very calming effect on most people. Children of all ages are attracted to the moving water like a giant magnet.

The Sensory Garden at the Mentor Medical Campus is a gift that will continue giving well into the future.