



## Testimonials

“Growing Roots is one of those places that calls a person to be a better version of themselves.

We've seen our daughter learn, engage, explore, and enjoy her time at Growing Roots exponentially more than we expected. She has surprised us again and again at how she participates and meets her goals. Jessica and her staff are creative and energetic at helping our girl cope with her challenges of transition, communication, and sensory integration. We are amazed at the commitment, love, and expertise that they practice every session.

During this difficult time of the pandemic, Growing Roots is the only community setting that is available to our daughter. We are forever grateful for the opportunity!”

-Parent of a Growing Roots participant after 6 months of participation



“Everything about it is so therapeutic. For her, more opportunities to communicate - and in the real world, is huge. And already growing to many new bounds! She feels important. She feels purpose. And it makes her HAPPY! I just can't find the words to fully express to you what this means. We didn't know if she'd EVER have that. And as a parent, it's heart-wrenching. We finally have hope for her future where there was none.”

-Parent of a Growing Roots participant after 1 month of participation



“I felt so discouraged about his future and his dependency on caregivers. And now I feel hope for a future for him! His level of independence has increased exponentially. Now he gets himself ready and rides the bus alone and completes daily chores...all independently...with the motivation of this program.” -Parent of a Growing Roots participant



Bradley started attending Growing Roots in 2016. Since that time, Brad has gained independence, improved social skills and has even started his own small business! At the beginning of his involvement with Growing Roots, Brad was only comfortable participating passively. He preferred to sit out, to the side, and draw on his own. Now, Brad is not only fully engaged, but also in charge of tours and orientation for new participants. He uses the confidence built at Growing Roots and the skills he's gained to successfully run his business, selling his artwork. He is a valued member of the organization and we are so fortunate to have his continuous presence at Growing Roots.

Lindy began participating in Growing Roots in the summer of 2019. Lindy's caregivers were searching for an activity to decrease boredom. "What we found was so much more. We found a community. We found something that challenged him, engaged him and gave him something to be proud of." Prior to attending Growing Roots, Lindy had a tendency to isolate himself. He preferred to be alone and rarely initiated interaction with his peers. After three months of participating in Growing Roots, Lindy's caregivers report that he has "really come out of his shell", not just at the farm, but at home and in the community, as well. He now enjoys working with others on the farm and at home. He has become highly adept at caring for the animals at Growing Roots and eagerly shares his knowledge and expertise with his peers. Lindy volunteers as an animal caretaker when Growing Roots is not running programming. He has learned to drive the tractor and loves to use it to complete the farm chores! Through Growing Roots, Lindy has gained the social skills, life skills and pre-vocational skills necessary to make him eligible for volunteer opportunities and, before long, employment. More importantly, Lindy has found meaning and purpose. Lindy is an important and irreplaceable part of Growing Roots!





## **Why Does Growing Roots Utilize an Agricultural Setting and Nature-Based Therapeutic Activity?**

The agricultural setting is ideal for many individuals with developmental and/or cognitive differences. This is because it provides a calm and innately therapeutic environment in which to organically gain insight and build skills. Amongst the stress and demands of an ever-changing and overwhelming world, skill-building can be incredibly difficult for those with unique needs.

Nature provides endless opportunity for sensory and motor experiences in a safe, supportive environment. This offers welcome relief from the bombardment of aversive sensory input experienced in most other real-world settings. Work and recreation in a natural setting – such as a farm – is so incredibly varied and growth-oriented that programming is easily individualized to match the interests and abilities of each participant. The progressive results of a participant’s work are readily evident, enhancing their sense of accomplishment and fostering the confidence needed to take on other tasks. Self-esteem is then developed, and constant growth is facilitated.

On the farm, participants are “challenged by choice,” meaning that they are the ones ultimately determining what they want to work on and at what pace. At Growing Roots, the responsibility of caring for living beings that fully depend upon the participant provides myriad experiences for the participant and allows for immense physical, neurological and psychological growth.