Barren Jail Garden

VFTH

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Jail gardens are nothing new but what if you add in a sociology and psychology component?

It makes for a great outdoor classroom as Amy Bingham explains in this week’s View from the Hill.

Five female inmates are working alongside seventeen undergraduate students from WKU’s Glasgow Campus to construct a jail garden that will produce so much more than vegetables.

Brandi Snodgrass \ Inmate

Dr. Nicole Breazeale \ Assoc. Prof. of Sociology

Samantha Johnson \Senior, WKU Glasgow

Matt Mutter \ Jailer

 “This project is ultimately all about education and all about community.”

A true team effort is underway outside the Barren County Detention Center where inmates are working and learning with college students in the jail garden project.

 “It’s a very surreal experience for me. It gives me an opportunity to learn some things that I didn’t know before, a different way of thinking.”

The class is called Sociology of Food and Agriculture with a focus on sustainable techniques and food justice.

 “This is a process for all of us for rethinking our relationship to food and thinking about what we can do to take more control over our food.”

 “The inside students are gaining a lot of knowledge about food and justice. Something they have lived. A couple are here for that reason. Healing process for them already.”

Jailer Matt Mutter says they have wanted to have a garden for a long time but not just any garden.

 “This is more of an education on how you can do it organically and you don’t have to have chemicals and fertilizers, more of an education WKU Glasgow campus.”

That education is already spilling over to some of the student’s families.

 “They see the aspect with chemicals and things in soil so now they are starting to compost and integrate in with what they are doing so they’ll have healthy food.”

In addition to learning a new skill set, the inmates will also get a taste of all that hard work.

 “The whole entire population of the jail is very excited about what we are doing, excited about the foods brought in. Some mail inmates have been out to help.”

 “Just being able to get out and be hands on and do things and do something for the community in a positive way.

Other faculty at WKU Glasgow are incorporating this project into their courses as well. Jailer Matt Mutter says the garden is funded by the commissary account and no taxpayer dollars are being used.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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