**MIS3535 Fall 2020: Project Description**

Collie Turner is the founder of the non-profit organization [Heroic Gardens](http://www.heroicgardens.org/) that has the following mission:

To connect US Veterans and their families with plants and nature.

We do this in a number of ways:

1. Healing the Landscape:
	1. Work one on one with Veterans that have individual properties and limited income to transform their yards/spaces
	2. Work with Veteran housing organizations that have land to modify for sustainable use (vegetables, herbs and flowers, plants)
2. In Person Horticultural Activities – Provide in person activities for Veteran groups in order to learn how to utilize plants and plant-based materials as part of their healing process.
3. COVID Horticultural Activities – Mission Windowsill brings the horticultural activities to the Veterans right in their homes

100% volunteer based, Heroic Gardens has been working with US Veterans since 2019. Based upon the local and continued response from this Veteran audience (We provided services to 14 Veterans in 2019), we believe that Veterans an ideal group to engage in programming that features Horticultural activity as a means to help them with their individual healing process to address needs as identified below:

**Mental Needs:**

Commonly referred to as ‘War’s Invisible Wounds’ (1), there are complex mental challenges for veterans that can lead to suicide or suicidal thoughts, accompanied by a co-morbidity or dependency (i.e., alcohol or drug addiction). Depression is also listed as one of the top diagnostic categories for men treated by the VA. This mental condition increases risk and may require additional special needs such as:

**Physical Needs:**

In some instances, a male veteran who is not only suffering from PTSD, has also been involved with enemy combat and, as a result, has sustained an injury that may require a prosthetic, wheelchair/walker or even cognitive rehabilitation due to severe brain trauma.

**Emotional/Social Needs:**

Because there can be a feeling of isolation once veterans disband from their unit and, given the increase in technology in the civilian world, it is important to keep veterans motivated to improve their overall personal morale, but feel that they belong and have a connection to their peers as well as to those outside of their branch.

**Behavioral Needs:**

It is important to build trust with each client. This will enable the veteran to feel more comfortable within the surrounding environment and more comfortable in sharing about themselves and their experiences while serving. Military training has prepared them for task-oriented teamwork.

**Can a Horticultural Program Help?**

When we think about the various needs that this population may have, there are opportunities to utilize Social Horticultural strategies to address traumatic experiences by understanding the symptoms and triggers that may be associated with PTSD.

Some of the symptoms and triggers that can be identified include: (2,3,4)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Symptoms** | **Triggers** |
| Isolation, Depression | Social media, lack of community connections, poor relationships |
| Self-care | Food and drink choices, exercise choices, asking for help |
| Anger and impulsiveness | Experiencing or witnessing violence of any kind |
| Panic attacks | Loud noises (fireworks, car horns) |
| Low self-esteem, hopelessness | Distant relationships with immediate family, difficulty re-entering civilian life, guilt around leaving family to serve |

It should also be noted that gender, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, culture, and access to health care can potentially complicate the early diagnosis and effective management of posttraumatic stress disorder*. (5)*

As the organization continues to expand, based on demand for this work, the organization’s website must also evolve as an integral tool that compliments and integrates with all of the marketing assets.

Bibliography

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3. Haller, Rebecca L and Capra, Christine L. “*Horticultural Therapy Methods*,” Second Edition, Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2017 (163 – 164)
4. “*Emotion dysregulation as an underlying mechanism of impulsive aggression: Reviewing empirical data to inform treatments for veterans who perpetrate violence*,” [Shannon R.Milesab1CarlaSharpcAndra TetenTharpbMatthew S.StanforddMelindaStanleyabKarin E.ThompsonabThomas A.Kentae](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1359178917300332#!), Elsevier Abstract, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2017.01.017>
5. “*Health Disparities in Military Veterans with PTSD: Influential Sociocultural Factors*,” Ann Marie Nayback, MSN, FNP-C, Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services. 2008;46(6):42-51,https://doi.org/10.3928/02793695-20080601-08

The main objective of this project is **to identify needed functionality that will enable volunteers, Veterans and supporters a seamless user experience. You will propose and build website enhancements (see list below plus addition opportunities discussed during the interviews).** You will have the opportunity to interview Collie and 2 other stakeholders (Volunteers and Board members) in two occasions in order to collect the requirements.

Each team will **select two** of the following opportunities **(or one from below and one from the additional opportunities discussed during the interviews):**

1. Collect (Veteran) client information through the website
2. Build out a CRM database that can integrate with NetSuite and other digital tools currently used and can provide segmentation over time
3. Determine if a platform change is needed and recommendations as to why and how
4. Build a donation/fundraising system
5. Build an online application process for Veterans seeking assistance
6. Create a registration and calendar system for Volunteers to participate, send automatic reminders and maintain accountability

If you **complete a total of 3 opportunities**, then you will earn extra credit for your team project.