

Teens using greenhouse to grow more than just food

LOCAL NEWS

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Posted: Nov 15, 2019

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. (WOWK) – It’s a classroom in a greenhouse. That’s the idea behind a special project that has finally come to fruition.

Friday was the unveiling of a 1,200 square foot greenhouse complete with 20 hydroponic towers. It will be staffed by the young men who live at [Stepping Stones Boys Home](#) in Huntington. They’ll use the greenhouse to grow food for themselves and the tiny home village being built around it. Organizers say they hope as the vegetables grow, so will the young men’s confidence.

19-year-old Andre Smith used to be in foster care, but things have changed since living at Stepping Stones. Smith is now living on his own and working towards his degree, but he’s planting himself right here for now.

“I’m trying to be as much help as I can to the kids that are here now,” Smith said. “I’m not one to get my hands dirty, but I’m willing. Stepping Stones has been that family for me, even though I’m not a resident now.”

Working with plants will teach the teens patience, self-esteem, and skills. In turn, that will take them from the life they had to the life they can have.”

Jacob Green, superintendent for West Virginia’s [Office of Diversion and Transition Programs](#), says students need hands-on, group-learning experiences.

“Working with others, teamwork, communication,” Green said of what they will learn. “It creates an overall individual who can leave this setting and go out into the world and work, or go on and further their education.”

This method of learning ensures a positive outcome for some who’ve faced some of the toughest times.

Smith says Stepping Stones has given young men like him more than just skills for the world ahead of them.

“Just the love, the love that they give,” Smith said.

A greenhouse that’s not just about providing food to eat, it’s also providing food for the soul.

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