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Barren County jail plans expansion of garden

By JACKSON FRENCH jfrench@bgdailynews.com Feb 26, 2018

The Barren County Detention Center in Glasgow aims to triple its crop production this spring.

The garden was started in 2016 in a collaboration between the jail and a sociology of food and agriculture class taught at the Western Kentucky University Glasgow Regional Center by assistant professor of sociology Nicole Breazeale.

Though Breazeale is no longer involved in the project, the jail's inmates still grow a variety of crops used in the cafeteria, Barren County Jailer Tracy Bellamy said.

In previous growing seasons, the garden didn't produce much, so jail staff is interested in growing more food, Bellamy said.

"It didn't offer a lot of productivity, so we're just increasing the productivity," he said. "It did produce, but we were gardening a vast amount of different items that we didn't have a whole lot of anything."

Instead of bringing in new crops, the jail will be focusing on increasing the amount of crops already in production, such as corn, potatoes, beans, tomatoes and blackberries, Bellamy said, adding that this expansion won't require anyone at the jail to build new planting beds.

Inmates will reap the rewards of the production in the cafeteria, where harvested produce will be served, Bellamy said.

"It brings fresh food to the jail so it's not always going to be canned or bagged items," he said, adding that fresh produce is healthier than what would otherwise be served.

Using fruits and vegetables produced on-site saves the jail on food costs, Bellamy said.

The garden is also useful because it gives prisoners a chance to learn a new skill, Bellamy said.

“The majority of them has never done anything of that nature, so it’s a good learning experience for them,” he said.

Deputy Jailer Matt Wilkinson, who directly oversees the garden, said working in the garden leads to personal growth for some inmates.

“It’s neat to see them grow as a person just from learning this skill,” he said.

The garden is popular at the jail because it brings fresher food into the cafeteria, Wilkinson said.



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“It’s a big change for them really because they’re not used to having fresh salads with berries,” he said.

Though Breazeale is no longer directly involved with the garden, she said she’s excited about its growth.

She said expanding the garden will be a boon for the jail’s inmates.

“It’s a very healing and relaxing thing for those incarcerated individuals who work on it,” she said.

According to Breazeale, the garden offers access to fresh produce, which “increases morale” among the jail’s population.

“I think it’s a wonderful thing and I’m excited they’re trying to re-energize the garden and expand,” she said. “I’m really excited for the facility and what this could mean.”

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