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Summer 7-27-2020

### Breaking Down Barriers: Utilizing Virtual Resources to Promote Occupational Balance Among Vulnerable Populations In the Midst of a Global Pandemic

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#### Recommended Citation

Rezadoost, Roya, "Breaking Down Barriers: Utilizing Virtual Resources to Promote Occupational Balance Among Vulnerable Populations In the Midst of a Global Pandemic" (2020). *OTD Capstone Projects*. 47.  
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## ROOM IN THE INN

- Room in the Inn is a 501 (3) (c) non-profit organization in Nashville, TN that provides a wide variety of resources, solutions, and opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness in the Nashville community.
- Originally established in 1986, Room in the Inn (RITI) merged with two other organizations in 1995 to become what it is now, a hub that provides comprehensive services to surrounding community members in need.
- The vast array of services RITI offers to Nashville's homeless community remains dynamic and based on the needs of the population; offering crisis support, short term, and long-term solutions. Some of their programs include day shelter, veterans transitional housing, alternative to jail for the publicly intoxicated, addiction recovery community, adult education, recuperative care, and permanent supportive housing. Room in the Inn is most well known for their winter shelter program, which is each November- March. Room in the Inn established pivotal community partnerships with 180+ area congregations who come together each winter to provide shelter for more than 4,000 individuals in need during the coldest times of the year.

## MISSION & VALUES

### Mission:

"To provide programs that emphasize human development and recovery through education, self-help and work, centered in community and long-term support for those who call the streets of Nashville home."

### Core Values:

"Through the power of spirituality and the practice of love, we provide hospitality with a respect that offers hope in a community of non-violence."

## POPULATION

- Marginalized, vulnerable, and underserved populations
- Adults (18+ years old) experiencing homelessness in Nashville/ Middle Tennessee, who are currently utilizing services at Room in the Inn.

## AGENCY NEEDS

- Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, statewide restrictions including the stay at home order, subsequent phasing, wearing of a mask, and social distancing have been in effect since March 2020.
- The pandemic has directly impacted the day to day operations of Room in the Inn, the staff members, and the participants that Room in the Inn serves.

## AGENCY NEEDS

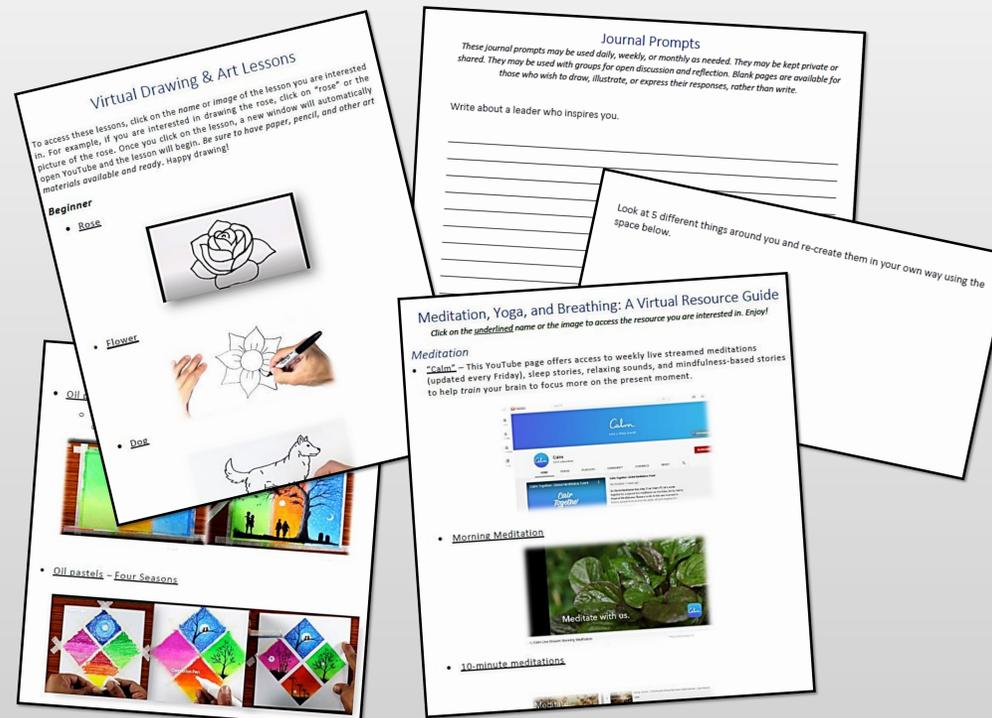
- RITI heavily relies on volunteer and intern community support, however, due to COVID-19 restrictions and essential staff measures, outside support such as these have been restricted.
- Based on the agency and population's current needs, essential staff members rated "access to online classes similar to those offered in the education center" as very useful.
- Outlines for running socially distant groups, exercises, stretches, meditations, journal prompts, and online-recovery based programs were also rated as very useful.

## GOALS

- Explore the needs of the target population through virtual collaboration
- Research virtual services to overcome limitations in meeting population needs
- Increase access to activities and classes based on needs of population
  - Increase overall participation in meaningful activities
  - Increase occupational balance
- Create and utilize virtual resources to promote occupational balance among target population
- Train faculty and staff on use of telehealth-related services for future sustainability
- Develop virtual educational resources for onsite staff members to effectively sustain the implementation of my program

## OUTCOMES

- Wide-ranged virtual resource guides on various topic areas
  - Reusable virtual materials from the internet
  - Resource guides formatted in PDF for future
- Sparked imagination and creativity for future ingenuity of various utilization of virtual resources and technology
- Alleviated overall stress by providing resources and assistance during a time when staff was shorthanded
- After completing a virtual tour, 100% of participants self-reported they would participate in an activity similar to that again. The majority of participants also reported they were interested in the topic and enjoyed the activity.
- Staff reported the resource guides were extremely helpful to have, very simple to use, and they were extremely likely to utilize them in the future.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my Expert Mentor, Dr. Pat Jones, for embracing this project and seeing the potential in the middle of a pandemic. Thank you to my Faculty Mentor, Dr. Tamara Lemmonds for your consistent guidance, insight, and support throughout this journey. Thank you to the amazing staff at Room in the Inn for allowing me to work with you in completing my project. Thank you, Dr. Sue Iliff, for your words of encouragement throughout.

This project would not have been possible without the support and flexibility of all parties involved. I am beyond grateful for you all.

## REFERENCES

Available upon request.