Hospital earns Eden Alternative renewal

(Sept. 2007) Lincoln Hospital believes it's better to live in a garden than an institution. That's why it has recently renewed its registration as an official Eden Alternative facility.

"The Eden Alternative is a powerful tool for improving quality of life for seniors in Long Term Care facilities," says Molly Carlson, LTC Activities Coordinator and Eden proponent.

"Traditionally, nursing homes are set up to run efficiently and productively without much thought to the holistic needs of the seniors who live there. With Eden, the quality of the resident's lives directs how we operate making this more of a home environment where people are valued as contributing members of our community and can make decisions about their daily life and medical care."

The Eden Alternative was founded in 1991 by a Harvard-educated physician frustrated with the despondency he saw in nursing home residents. Lincoln Hospital joined the movement in 1999 and has just renewed its commitment to the philosophy – which creates a positive human habitat by eliminating the plagues of loneliness, helplessness and boredom.

"Just because someone is in Long Term Care, that does not make them unable to contribute to their community, care for others or have a say in their daily life," says Carlson. "Just the opposite is true with Eden. The cornerstone of the philosophy is to give some control over daily care to the residents themselves and the care staff they deal most directly with."

Helping folks retain their decision making capabilities, she says, results in a sense of purpose.

"We have neighborhoods of residents and staff that act as small communities which direct their own living environment. Letting them be the guide is instrumental in making such a positive, friendly environment."

Eden has also introduced a plethora of plants and animals into the halls of Lincoln Long Term Care, which has created a spontaneous, enjoyable place to be.

"We try to provide an environment that is full of life and diversity -- that reflects a regular home instead of an institution. This means we have children, animals, birds and plants," says Carlson. "We encourage resident to be involved in taking care of and directing the environment in which they live. The Eden Alternative really is different than the status quo of long term care facilities."

To renew registration to the Eden Alternative, Lincoln Hospital staff was challenged with demonstrating it had been meeting the ideals of the philosophy. "We had to do copious amounts of paperwork including committee reports, progress reports, training reports, staff testimonials and pass a peer review with folks from other Eden facilities. The entire process took over a month and we passed."