



CONTRIBUTED BY DANNY WICKMAN

Students involved with Rural Studios build one \$20,000 home, such as the home shown above, per year.

From Oct. 7-13, Mental Health Awareness Week has made an impact across the nation to educate, advocate, help and increase awareness about mental illness. Aside from the several efforts that took place

on Auburn University's campus during this week, two teams of fifth-year architecture students worked alongside Auburn University Rural Studio to raise \$20,000 in service to Mental Health Awareness Week.

The two teams are assisting the community of Greensboro, Alabama, while working alongside the non-profit organization Project Horseshoe Farm.

As a part of their partnership with Project Horseshoe Farm, the teams are coordinating projects to extend the organization's mission of strengthening the community, improving the quality of life of vulnerable neighbors and preparing citizen service leaders for tomorrow's communities.



These projects will consist of extending the programs at Project Horseshoe Farm that address physical and mental health.

Lauren Barnes, who was admitted to Rural Studio as a fifth-year student, graduated in May of 2018 with a degree in architecture and has since been volunteering her time with the program.



“I think the teams will help to impact and expand the goal of Project Horseshoe Farm by broadening the understanding of what Rural Studio has been doing for 25 years within the Alabama community by helping the underserved and meshing together the world of healthcare, architecture and community,” Barnes said.

One of groups of fifth-year architecture students will be designing and building a new enhanced, independent living home for women from the community struggling with vulnerability. This project will be built on a residential site that will feature a multitude of living units. These living units are available to any women of the Greensboro community, no matter their circumstance.

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"Several women among the Greensboro area will take advantage of the homes, women ranging from ages of 18 to 25 and even 60 to 65," Barnes said.

Creating these Horseshoe Farm Homes is one way that these Auburn students aim to promote and aid in physical, mental and emotional wellness.

The other team of students will be designing and building an exterior courtyard space. This space will be located at the Project Horseshoe Farm headquarters, which was previously the Historic Old Greensboro Hotel. This courtyard space will be called "The Hub".

The Hub will promote an outside area where people can take part in activities such as gardening classes.

"Outside areas like The Hub create a really unique space that is intriguing to people," Barnes said. "Several studies have shown that providing people with an outside place can help immensely with mental health."

Barnes said that it is important to be mindful of people's mental health even past Mental Health Awareness Week, saying that one in five people have to deal with a mental-health issue in some form or fashion, and the number is even higher in Alabama.

"Knowing that you are not alone or that it is a reflection of you or your character is important," Barnes said. "I think students in their everyday lives can bring awareness and help themselves and others by erasing the stigma of what mental illness is. Just a simple step of talking about it can help a community become more aware of it."

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