



ROBERT GREENE SANDS

HOW THE GARDEN GROWS: Eight scouts and parents from Boy Scout Troop 21 came to help Lucas Wood finish his Eagle Scout project of building six raised beds for the produce garden at Rose Haven, a group home for female veterans. The beds are three feet off the ground to make them accessible to disabled gardeners. The scouts stained and moved the beds to the garden walkway and completed the day by filling the beds with soil. Pictured (left to right) are Troop 21 scouts Matthew Taylor, Nathan White, Colton Elliot, Joey Laborde, Lucas Wood, Allen Crisp and Jake Woolard. Eddie King also participated but is not pictured.

When one flies, we all soar

Lucas Wood built six raised beds for the produce garden area in the Betty Sands Memorial Healing & Artful Gardens at Rose Haven. The sturdy, innovative and “artful” beds stand 32 inches high to allow access for disabled gardeners.



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When described this way, so much about Lucas’ contribution to Rose Haven and his impact on others working there can be “lost in translation.” Lucas himself and my interactions with him over three months underscore truths about how we can bring our polarized society back from the brink.

When one of us flies, we all soar.

Lucas stopped by one day while I was gardening and asked if we needed something done or built for the gardens; he was searching for an Eagle Scout project. I knew right away what I wanted Lucas to build — the raised beds for our produce garden. These will be pivotal to the operations of that area of the gardens and to the many different populations I envision utilizing them to grow vegetables: female veterans struggling with reintegration, local veterans, disabled persons in the community or volunteers wanting to come to Rose Haven to give back.

The beds symbolize wooden vessels of healing and resilience for those sitting in a wheelchair or bending over to till the soil with their fingers.

Later, Jensen Burbules, who designed and built our bridges and benches, sketched out some designs for Lucas that offered the opportunity to experiment with ease of access, irrigation, wear and other variables. The journey and Lucas were off and running.

Lucas conceptualized the project, identified materials needed, set timelines and planned a fundraiser to garner funds to build the boxes. He also became an integral part of our small team working to bring the gardens to life. Lucas also helped ferry mulch for us and lent a hand without being asked. In addition, he treated us every now and then with radically good eggs, cheese and biscuits.

What are those truths that emerged from our time together? When we build to serve others, we strengthen ourselves and the tapestry of diversity that holds us together. Lucas and I were more different than alike: two generations apart, different life experiences, methodical and organized versus scattered and in love with ideas (you guess who’s who), vegetarian and not, a faith believer and not so much. As we worked through design and construction, our differences helped to adapt a better design in real time. Within diversity there exists the commonality in all of us, knowing the value of helping those less fortunate or in need. Don’t fret the difference; look to what makes us the same and value that. Lucas’ beds would do just that for others in need.

One morning, I was processing the loss of a friend. Gardening gives the space and place to do that. I told Lucas about my friend’s passing and then we went to work, him on the beds and me in weeding, no doubt. Right before Lucas left for the morning, he asked if he could pray for my friend, their family and me. I said yes, and on the west side of Rose Haven, Lucas, with his arm draped around my shoulder, prayed for us. After he finished, I thanked him, and he started to walk away. I called after him, and he turned around.

“Lucas, you probably know you and I have pretty different views on faith.”

He said, “Yes, sir, I know” (always the polite one).

“Thank you for wanting to help us through this period of sadness,” I offered.

We may view how the cosmos was created and evolved differently, but Lucas, like he was doing in building the beds to be utilized primarily by female veterans who have experienced trauma Lucas may never know, was offering the same to me in that moment, the way he knew how — by building bridges and serving others.

Giving flight to one helps us all soar.

We will be honoring Lucas and instrumental in helping develop and bring to life the produce garden on Saturday, Aug. 10, 6:30 p.m. at Rose Haven. All are welcome.

Robert Greene Sands is an anthropologist and the CEO of the Pamlico Rose Institute for Sustainable Communities.



RACHEL WOOD

