No doubt USJ Pharmacy students spend a lot of time indoors – in the lab, the library, and the classroom – as they move through the rigorous three-year Pharmacy doctorate program.

It was a welcome invitation, then, when Dr. Dayne Laskey, assistant professor of Pharmacy Practice and Administration, proposed an outdoor community service activity last spring. He and a team of 24 students and faculty designed and planted a medicine garden in Hartford’s Elizabeth Park. The group formed a partnership with Josh Stoffel of the Connecticut College Office of Sustainability to design what will be a long-lasting fixture in the park.

“It’s been a great project,” Laskey said. “A quarter of all modern medicine is derived from plants, so this gives us the opportunity to highlight the botanical origins of medicine and to engage with the community.”

Because Elizabeth Park is maintained almost entirely by volunteers, the School of Pharmacy team oversaw every aspect of the garden: they dug the 6x25’ bed, added organic soil, and planted 14 different specimens, a number expected to grow in the coming year. On June 15 — the annual Rose Day celebration — the group led guided tours of the garden, teaching about the history, active components, modern uses, and toxicity of each plant.