

06/057

Grand Avenue **club**

A community that works

January 18, 2007

To: Alderman Joe Davis, Sr., Chair
Community and Economic Development Committee

From: Rachel Forman, Executive Director
Wayne Wasserman, Grants Manager

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President
- C. Frederick Geiffuss, II
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Treasurer

We welcome the opportunity to share information about GAC with the Community and Economic Development Committee on January 30, 2007.

The mission of GAC is to provide Milwaukee adults who have experienced mental illness with pre-vocational, employment, educational, housing, wellness, recreational, and cultural opportunities.

- Juanita Banks
- Jerold B. Brenowitz, M.D.
- Ralph Cavaiani
- Fara L. Dawson
- LeRoy Dent
- Charlene Dwyer
- Rachel Forman
- Brian Gumma
- Jay P. Harris
- Mildred Harpole
- Mary Alice Houghton, M.D.
- Kathy Housiaux
- Bonnie Jacobson
- Kristin Kellner
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- Greg McGuire
- Joy Mead-Meucci
- Mary Meehan
- Keith Pollek
- Thomas Rabenn
- Scott Reithel
- Martin Siegel
- Ann Howard Tisdale
- Neil J. Weber

Approximately 25% of all households—regardless of geography or economic status—are coping with the mental illness of a loved one.

GAC was launched with a grant from the Milwaukee County Mental Health (now Behavioral Health) Division in 1990 and has operated continuously for the past 15 years. GAC has become the lifeline for hundreds of our fellow citizens who experience mental illness. Our focus is readying people for paid work and education.

Partnering *only* with respectful, quality employers, we have provided our members with good jobs in both our Transitional Employment and Independent Employment Programs. We have sustained many of them in Independent Employment for many years. Most were launched via Transitional Employment, which provides a unique and effective strategy for easing people with no work history or a sporadic work history into the paid labor force. GAC is open 7 days a week and all holidays; it is a real community.

Working with staff as peers and partners, members run GAC themselves. Membership is for life, meaning that members are entitled to the opportunities offered by GAC interminably. We do not implement the traditional social service model, where “cases” are opened and closed, but we do work hard to create a supportive network in which people feel responsible for each other and are committed to the success of our members.

From Saturday, October 13-Thursday, October 18, 2007, Grand Avenue Club and Milwaukee will be hosting the 14th International Clubhouse Seminar, a conference of 800-1,000 clubhouse colleagues from all over the world.

We are grateful for your support and invite you to take a member-led tour of GAC. Please contact our Executive Director at (414) 276.6474 x6.

Rachel Forman, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Accreditation

International Center for
Clubhouse Development

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For more than 15 years Grand Avenue Club (GAC) has been providing Milwaukee citizens who have experienced mental illness with opportunities to ready themselves for work and to access paid employment with quality employers.

- ◆ In the past 12 months 97 members have had paid work experiences through our Transitional Employment program.
- ◆ We have 25 Transitional Employment positions.
- ◆ Members earned \$105,333 in taxable revenue through Transitional Employment last year.
- ◆ We have 36 members who have moved from Transitional Employment on to their own jobs.
- ◆ Members in competitive/independent employment earned \$369,407 in taxable revenue last year.
- ◆ This means that Grand Avenue Club members have earned \$474,740 in taxable revenue last year.

Rachel Forman, Ph.D.
Executive Director

GRAND AVENUE 
A community that works

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www.grandavenueclub.com

Grand Avenue Club is a vital community offering respect, hope, and opportunity to hundreds of people who struggle with mental illness. Grand Avenue Club helps its members secure work, find suitable housing, go to school, have a place to celebrate holidays, and experience a sense of community by connecting with others.

GRAND AVENUE CLUB...

...is a work place; it's a place where its members, Milwaukee County citizens who are recovering from a psychiatric disability, come to work on their return to a productive, fulfilling life in the community. It's a place where members and staff work side by side at the jobs that make the program run -- word processing, accounting, record keeping, cleaning, maintenance, faxing and copying, preparing meals, mail handling, answering phones.

GRAND AVENUE CLUB EMPLOYMENT SERVICES...

...brings together clubhouse members with employers in the Milwaukee community so that employers' needs for hard working, reliable employees are met.

...provides skilled Employment Counselors -- at no charge to the employer -- to assist with creating and sustaining the match between employer and employee.

...offers services such as a weekly employment diner for the employed members, and an annual celebratory Employers' Reception honoring all employers who have used Grand Avenue Club Employment Services.

TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT: A unique vocational strategy

We guarantee you...

- ◆ **Cost effectiveness:** you'll never have to advertise, interview or train for this position again and no benefits package is required.
- ◆ **No absenteeism:** you'll never have to worry about a sick call. Coverage is assured.
- ◆ **Quality of Performance:** your quality and productivity standards will be met.

You guarantee us...

- ◆ **A position,** which ideally would be 3-5 days a week, 3-4 hours per day for one member or a **group placement** whereby GAC members and staff will assist with collating, packaging, labeling, or any other work that requires a group effort.
- ◆ **Performance expectations equal to others** doing the same job.
- ◆ **Wages equal to others** doing the same job.
- ◆ **The opportunity of employing** the person selected by our program.

INDEPENDENT EMPLOYMENT

Grand Avenue Club's Independent Employment Program seeks to link our experienced, competent members - those who have proven themselves via previous employment, training, or involvement in our Transitional Employment Program-- with quality employers in the Milwaukee area.

Not only are participants in this program competitive with other job seekers; they also have access to the supports of the Grand Avenue Club community. These include a weekly employment dinner, during which all employed club members discuss work issues in an effort to maximize job performance and satisfaction.

Grand Avenue Club's Employment Services makes effective matches between area employers and job seekers at no cost to either party.

For more information please contact:

Susie Roller-Katz

or

Rick Aaron

Grand Avenue Club

414-276-6474 ext. 39

Email: gavenue@grandavenueclub.com

Web page: www.grandavenueclub.com

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Testimonials from our members

"Grand Avenue Club assisted my registration. I am now enrolled in the Special Students Program and audit classes at no personal cost under the Medicare Program. This has benefited me immensely and given me a sense of pride and self-confidence."

-Brian Gumma, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

"I was told in my early 20s that I would not be able to go to school. Now, with the help of the Education-Employment Unit at GAC, I am fulfilling my dream."

-Richard Skibba, Milwaukee Area Technical College

"I use GAC as a support system. When I'm ready to give up, someone at Grand Avenue Club gives me the encouragement I need to go on. I graduated from MATC with honors."

-Donna Thurow, Alverno College

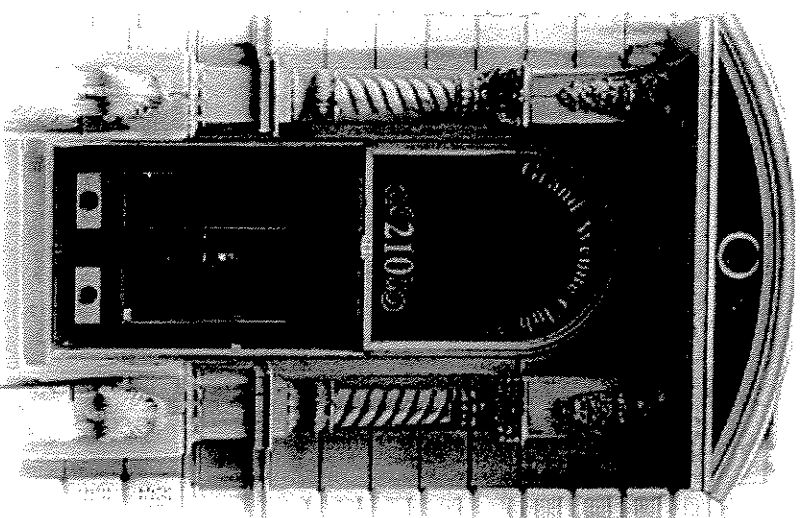


For more information about Young Adult Supported Education Program, or to arrange a visit, contact Linda Siker or Patricia Mace.

Education/Employment Unit
GRAND AVENUE CLUB
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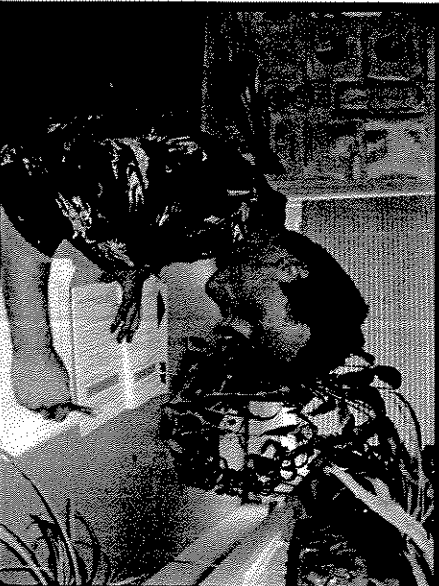
Young Adult Supported Education Program



GRAND AVENUE CLUB
A community that works

What is Grand Avenue Club?

Founded in 1991, the mission of Grand Avenue Club is to provide people who have experienced mental illness with opportunities for work, housing, education, recreation, and friendship. Program participants are not clients, customers, or patients; they are members. When they join the clubhouse, they are offered immediate membership in a community that needs and values their talents, interests, and abilities. Members and staff run the program together. GAC is committed to assisting members with their educational goals. Working with local employers, GAC develops paid positions for members and assists them to be self-sufficient. Our goal is to help people recovering from mental illness become integrated into the community and have the same opportunities as other Milwaukee citizens.



What is the Young Adult Program?

The Young Adult Program at Grand Avenue Club is designed to serve the aspirations of young men and women between the ages of 18-25. The first symptoms of the mental illnesses often appear in late adolescence and early adulthood. The program is designed to show that ambition and life goals need not be abandoned.

Though the focus of the Young Adult Program is Supported Education, Grand Avenue Club also offers individualized employment strategies, as well as transitional and independent employment opportunities and age-appropriate recreational activities. To meet the needs of every individual, the clubhouse is open on evenings, weekends, and all holidays.



The focus of the Young Adult Program is Supported Education. Grand Avenue Club is committed to help participants reach their educational and vocational goals.

Services of Supported Education include:

- * Individualized planning
- * Financial aid planning, liaison with DVR, SSI, SSDI
- * Application assistance
- * Academic tutoring and mentoring
- * Support of other students through SWAP (Students With A Purpose) meetings
- * New, fully equipped Library/Learning Center and computer lab

As with all programs at Grand Avenue Club, the Young Adult Program is run collaboratively by staff and members as peers and partners.

Schools Attended by Our Members:

- Alverno College
- Lakeland College
- Literacy Center
- Marquette University
- Milwaukee Area Technical College
- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

The Phoenix



Grand Avenue Club- Milwaukee Wisconsin, USA

January, 2007

Employers Breakfast '06

By Doug Zander

The weather on Thursday, November 9th was nice and the mood was good for all of those in attendance at the 12th annual Grand Avenue Club Employers' Breakfast. Held at 7:30 am at the Woman's Club of Wisconsin in downtown Milwaukee, the Employers' Breakfast takes place annually by GAC to show our community's appreciation for the opportunities provided by our employers.

We began the morning by talking and sipping coffee and fruit juices. As we ate our breakfast, a number of speakers came up to the podium and gave speeches and thanked the employers. Ed Rapee III, the President of GAC's Board of Directors, led off by thanking all of the employers for their continued support of Grand Avenue Club. All of the members who spoke after him gave exciting personal stories about how the opportunity to work has changed their lives. The stories were emotional, powerful and inspirational. Lastly, a door prize was given away and then it was time to say goodbye and get back to work for the day.



Pictured above l-r are Tammy Rhodes, Derrick Crawford, Rachel Forman and Rhonda Gatlin-Hayes

Special Thanks to GAC's 2006 Transitional Employment Employers:

Bay View Baptist Church
Bilt-Rite Furniture
Children's Family and Community Partnerships
The Chocolate Factory
Derco Aerospace, Inc.
First Baptist Church of West Allis
Foley & Lardner, LLP
Hillel Foundation
Jewel
Milwaukee County Zoo
Outpost Natural Foods Cooperative
United Way of Greater Milwaukee
Wisconsin Athletic Club

Are you an employer who would like to learn more about our Transitional Employment Program? Please give us a call at 414-276-6474.

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The Phoenix

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Employment

Jan Hembree Completes Her TE at Bilt-Rite Furniture

By Katie Ball

Jan Hembree recently completed her first TE at Bilt-Rite Furniture, where she was responsible for cleaning and maintenance. Her commitment to this job is apparent not only because she successfully completed it, but because she had a long commute to Greenfield for the job each day. We all know what a hassle long bus rides can be, but she persevered. When talking about her first TE, she says: "This was a good experience for me to get back in the habit of working on a regular schedule and the people were really nice."

She says the support she received from GAC during this experience helped her with some of the job's challenges, which included overcoming aches and pains caused by the physical nature of the job. By attending WISH and regularly communicating with her placement managers she was able to overcome these challenges. The best piece of advice she would have for another member starting a TE and worrying about how to manage symptoms on the job would be stay focused on the job, leave any other issues from that day at the door, and try not to differentiate yourself from any other employees you may be working with. If you need help, communicate right away with your placement manager.

In the past Jan has worked as a librarian in a variety of settings, including law firms and the San Francisco Public Library. She really appreciated this TE, and has recently submitted applications to Borders and Schwartz bookstores. She would love to eventually become a librarian or bookseller again.

In addition to spending time at GAC Jan enjoys listening to music, especially bluegrass, and reading fiction and historical novels. She grew up in Appleton Wisconsin, and has a very



unique and funny childhood memory. When she was a child, her Dad was making potato salad for a picnic and he was jokingly cracking the hard boiled eggs on her head. By accident he confused some of the uncooked ones for the boiled ones... needless to say it made a mess!

Pictured left is Jan Hembree receiving her TE completion certificate from one of her placement managers, Nikki Lelinski.

"This was a good experience for me to get back in the habit of working on a regular schedule and the people at Bilt-Rite Furniture are really nice."

Education

Meet Moy Lathan

By Linda Siker

If you spent 5 minutes speaking to Moy Lathan, you'd realize that she is a friendly, intelligent young woman. Moy, short for Wymoyia, has been a member of Grand Avenue Club for about two years. She said that it is comforting for her to come to a place where there are people just like her. She said, "Coming to Grand Avenue Club helped me through stressful situations in my life. It has given me the opportunity to do other work and not obsess over my problems."

Until recently, Moy was attending Bryant and Stratton College and studying Criminal Justice. After a while, Moy decided that this course of study was not a good fit for her. Her ultimate goal is to attend MIAD (Milwaukee School of Art and Design) and study Graphic Design.

Moy was first diagnosed with a mental illness when she was 13 years old, but it was not until 2002 that she got help. She said, "I knew I needed to do something to help myself. It took 4 years of extensive therapy and medication management to get where I am today. I am proud of myself. I used to be afraid to get to know people because I thought they'd let me down. I was afraid of getting hurt. Now I have more realistic expectations of people."

The next chapter for Moy is to be reunited with her children: her 9 year old son, Kam, and her 7 year old daughter, Mommi, who will move back in with her soon. "They are like a comedy act. They make me laugh" she said.

If you visit Grand Avenue Club and see Moy—do yourself a favor and stop to talk to her. You will be rewarded for your effort because she is a very serious young woman with big plans.

GAC's Young Adult Program

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Moy Lathan working in the library.

New Member Profile

Introducing Paul Rose

By: Diana Remington

Paul has been a member of the Grand Avenue Club (GAC) for approximately 2 months. He enjoys helping in several areas of the clubhouse: being a receptionist, cashiering, greeting people, and working with other colleagues. For the time being, he has decided to concentrate his efforts in the Colleague and Communication Services (CCS) unit.

Paul got information about Grand Avenue Club from a newsletter (of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill or NAMI). He says, "Grand Avenue Club has given me the incentive to rise and shine, a better upbeat mood, and increased self-esteem." He was initially impressed with the size and beauty of the building and the number of people involved in the operation of GAC. At first, he had concerns about fitting into this group. However, the "camaraderie" of people enjoying each other's company has given him the sense of a warm, friendly, environment.

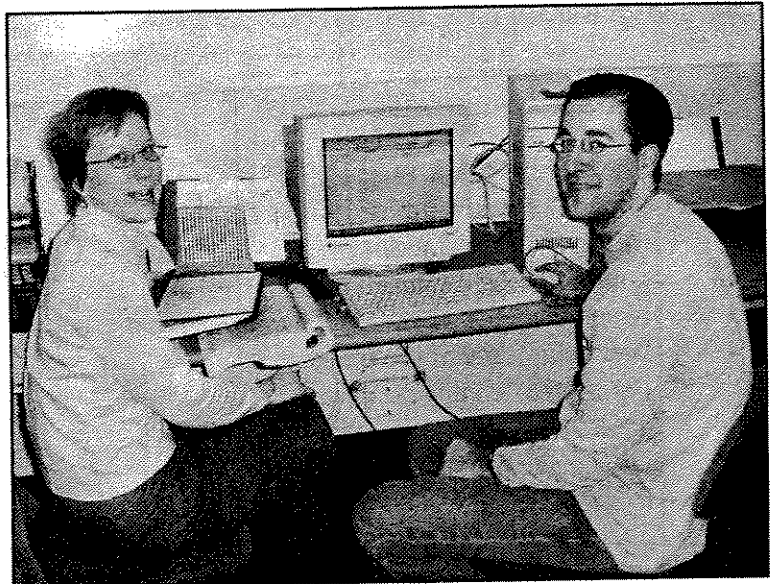
Paul has a very impressive education and work resume. He has earned a Bachelor of Science from Marquette University in mechanical engineering with a minor in business administration. Also, he attended Washington University in St. Louis, where he received a Masters degree in mechanical engineering. Paul is looking forward to part-time employment, and eventually, a 40-hour workweek in his field of work. He was previously employed as a test engineer, working with aircraft hardware in simulated flight conditions. Recently, Paul began a Transitional Employment position doing data entry at Derco Aerospace, Inc.

During his spare time, Paul enjoys playing golf, tennis, reading, board games (his favorite is Scrabble), and watching movies. He is an intelligent young man with a humble personality and an eagerness to help where needed. Paul became part of our team right away. We all welcome him to Grand Avenue Club and look forward to helping him reach his goals.

Pictured right are Carol Meverden and Paul Rose working on a membership database.

"Grand Avenue Club has given me the incentive to rise and shine, a better upbeat mood, and increased self-esteem."

Paul Rose



Staff Profile

Meet Jason Evraets

By Christine Honkavaara

Honest and straightforward, Jason Evraets, is one cool cat. He is a staff member at Grand Avenue Club who is always working hard and helping others. Jason was interviewed in June, 2003 by eighteen members and staff before being hired to work in the Colleague and Building Services Unit which eventually merged with Clerical to form the CCS Unit. He now works in the Culinary Unit where he helps to prepare breakfast and lunch for the many members and staff who daily partake. Jason credits his colleagues with their skill in the kitchen, as cooking is new to him. With a smile, Jason is proud to admit he now cooks at home as well as at the work place.

Jason grew up in Plymouth, Wisconsin, a small town, where he spent many happy youthful days playing sports with the neighborhood kids. Sports continue to play a role in Jason's life as he is a Brewer's "fanatic." Jason brings his love of sport to Grand Avenue Club as he is a co-founding member of the ping pong club which meets on Friday at the end of the work week. With a Bachelor's degree in psychology and a minor in business administration from UW La Crosse, Jason believes that fun is an important element of recovery. Through his work in the unit, ping pong club, his smile, and his knack at socializing, Jason improves the spirits of GAC members.

Of his work with people with mental illness, Jason says that "people are people." Clearly Jason does not discriminate. Further, Jason says that "one learns as much from others as one teaches." This acceptance and interest in others is what brought Jason to Grand Avenue Club as he wanted a job where he could be more useful and involved in the community.

Jason's interest and acceptance of people encompasses more than just the local community. He would love to travel and, with the culinary unit, he has instituted a culinary campaign called "158 countries in 158 days" which brings international meals to Grand Avenue Club every Friday. The initiative has been a great success. He is also working hard on organizing the International Café for the 14th International Clubhouse Seminar in October 2007.

A distant goal Jason holds is to attend law school because he enjoys solving problems and debating. For fun, Jason takes walks and reads. He particularly enjoys reading satirical works.



Doris Stringer is someone Jason counts on to assist him with getting lunch ready everyday. Jason, center, shares his interest in the Brewers with (from L to R) Sam Balcom, Bruce Bjorum, Greg McGuire and Vince Berreth.

Unit Report

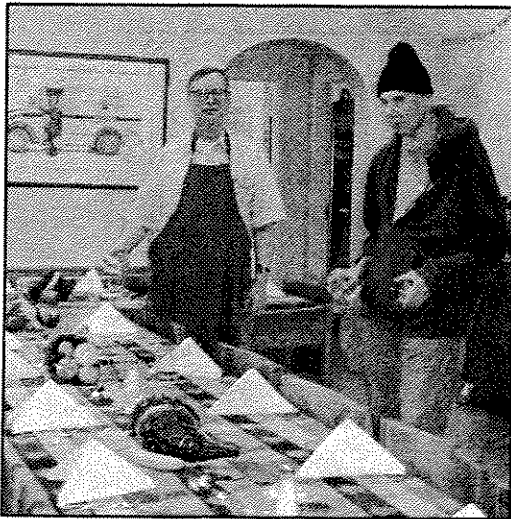
Culinary Unit Report

By Rory McKeown, Jason Evraets, Kevin Rhodes, Susie Katz, Joann Lucas, Rhonda Gatlin-Hayes, Doris Stringer, Louis Poore, Mike Anderson, Shanda Clark, and Marilyn Smyczek

The Culinary Unit has been very busy in the past month. We prepared a delicious feast for the Thanksgiving Day celebration at GAC. We made turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, green bean casserole, cranberry sauce and two kinds of pies for dessert – apple and pumpkin. We've been busy with other things too:

- * We've been working hard on our Culinary Unit newsletter "The Dish", and colleagues have been pitching in with some great ideas on how to improve it.
- * We've done a lot of cleaning and organizing.
- * We welcomed guests from St. Dominic's Church in Brookfield. We had several members talk about their experiences and their roles at GAC. Afterwards, we took our guests on a tour of GAC and then served up a delicious meal.
- * We've done a lot of shopping, and are now serving new, healthier snacks in our kitchen.
- * During the holiday season, we are doing outreach to members we haven't seen in a while, just to let them know that we're thinking of them always and that we're open on all the holidays.

We also have some great news to share. Two of our members, David Williams and Jerome Coltrane, have started independent jobs. David started his independent job at Wisconsin Athletic Club, and Jerome Coltrane started at Outpost Natural Foods Cooperative. Finally, we cannot forget Diane Adams who completed a group placement at First Baptist Church of West Allis. We want to wish everyone at Grand Avenue Club and all of you a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year!!



Pictured left are Louis Poore and David Stelske setting up the dining room for Thanksgiving Dinner. Pictured above are colleagues enjoying turkey and all the fixings that the Culinary Unit had prepared.

CCS Unit Report

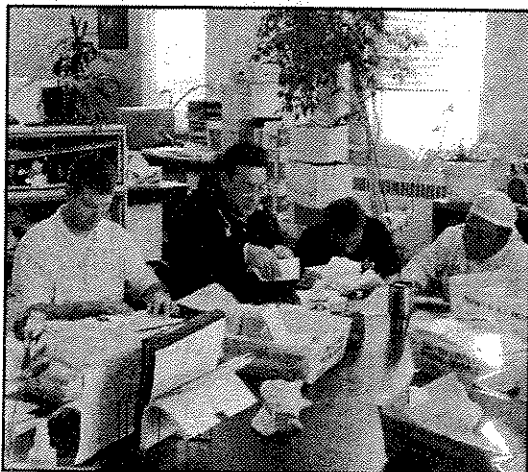
By Mary Hare and Joe Schultz

Unit Report

Pam Weisser, the club's Program Director, was talking about what makes a good unit. She said a unit should be place where when a person walks into it, he/she is welcomed and acknowledged by name. There should be work going on in the unit that the person will find appealing and be drawn into. The CCS Unit is proud that we were able to accomplish this when we worked on the Grand Avenue Club Annual Appeal. There were people matching envelopes with letters, folding the letters, adding inserts and sealing the envelopes. Whenever a person walked into the unit, he/she was immediately asked to help with the project. People were focused, but they also were singing along to the music that was playing in the background, laughing and talking. Colleagues from all of the units assisted with the project and everyone experienced a sense of satisfaction when the last envelope was sealed. It was a great clubhouse experience.

Other highlights include:

- * 16 computers have been rehabilitated and are being sold to members for \$10 (Thanks Philo!).
- * The annual CCS Unit strategic planning meeting was held at the Milwaukee Public Museum. 23 colleagues attended this meeting. Some of the topics covered at the meeting included how the merger between Clerical and Colleague and Building Services went, policies of the CCS Unit, outreach and setting goals for 2007.
- * Membership is developing a database to help keep track of the status of potential members.
- * A special Christmas decoration sale took place in early December. There were trees, ornaments and much more that had been donated to "Ain't It Grand!"



Working on the Annual Appeal are l-r, Jason Evraets, Larry Skorton, Kenneth Gumb, and Venus Dalton.



CCS colleagues pose for a picture after having a THREE hour meeting. Fortunately there was a coffee bar nearby for a ten minute coffee break half way through the meeting.

Grand Avenue Club News

Scottish Connection

GAC colleagues and ICCD (International Center for Clubhouse Development) Faculty Members Pam Weisser and Greg McGuire took a business trip to Scotland recently. The purpose of this trip was to certify the Scotia Clubhouse in Glasgow, Scotland. They left on the afternoon of Friday, September 29, and they didn't land in Scotland until Saturday morning. They fought jet lag for most of the day Saturday, and on Sunday they were treated to a walking tour and a double-decker bus tour of Glasgow. Pam said, "The hospitality in Glasgow was outstanding!"

On Monday and Tuesday it was down to business for the pair as they spent both days at the clubhouse, taking notes and writing down suggestions for the clubhouse. On Wednesday, they visited one of their TE sites and attended their community meeting; and then they went to the hotel and prepared a long preliminary findings report. On Thursday they presented their report to the Scotia Clubhouse community, and spent a lot of time discussing their recommendations afterwards.

After the work was done, Pam and Greg spent their own money on a four-day vacation in Scotland. On Friday Greg went to a local rugby match, and Pam met her mom who flew in from Zimbabwe to tour Glasgow. They took a train to Edinburgh on Saturday, and saw the sites, which included a famous castle. On Sunday they went back to Glasgow to attend a social outing of the Scotia Clubhouse. They went to Loch Lomond where they took a boat tour and enjoyed a fish fry. When they got off the train in Glasgow, they saw a huge throng of people and heard a tremendous commotion. They thought it was a demonstration or something, but it turned out that Scotland had just beaten France in football (soccer to us), and everyone was celebrating. Both Pam and Greg enjoyed their trip, and hope to see their Scottish colleagues in Milwaukee in October 2007.



Greg McGuire and Pam Weisser were treated like royalty in Scotland. Here they actually look like royalty!

Art Collective News

The GAC Art Collective has been busy with fund-raising. The Art Collective is a network of Grand Avenue Club colleagues who are artists, writers, and musicians. They are offering beautiful coffee mugs which feature the artwork of GAC colleagues, along with candy and tea for \$12. The Art Collective also is offering a box of thirteen notecards which feature the artwork of GAC colleagues for \$12. The proceeds from these sales will benefit the collective and help create our new art gallery, Galleria Grand. If you are interested in purchasing either of these products, please call the clubhouse at 414-276-6474 and ask for Colleen Shoop, Rhonda Gatlin-Hayes, or Rachel Forman. You can also e-mail your order to grandculinary@grandavenueclub.com.

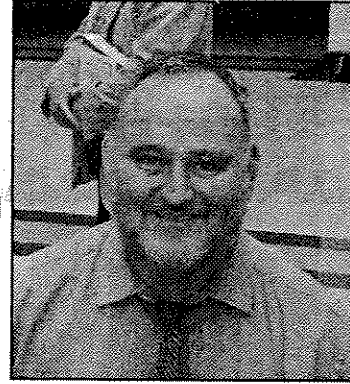
In Loving Memory

Remembering Bruce Sauter

(1951-2006)

By Cheryl Banks

With Bruce the first thing you think of is his humor, then his intelligence, and finally his perseverance. He was well educated and had two master's degrees. He taught for a while in the Milwaukee Public Schools system. His love of music and knowledge and skill with various instruments was phenomenal. When he was young he was seeded the number one high school tennis player in the state. Later Bruce lost to Jimmy Connors who became the number one player in the world. He also earned varsity letters playing football and basketball. He was active in many organizations that focused on better understanding of people who live with mental illness. He was a loving and compassionate man, and he led an inspirational and impressive life. We lost a good friend and willing mentor who tutored at Grand Avenue Club for many years.



Charlie Murray-Rest In Peace

(1969-2006)

By Bruce Bjorn, Joan Vesperman & Bonnie Bruch

Charlie Murray's funeral was held at St. John's Cathedral on Veteran's Day, November 11th, 2006, Charlie was 37 years old when he died. The circumstances of his death left the GAC colleagues not just saddened, but heartbroken. Charlie worked as a receptionist on the first floor at GAC. He had been a member of the GAC since 1994. He also had been a long-time volunteer at St. John's Cathedral where he answered phones, served meals, and ushered in the evening. Joan Vesperman recalls "Charlie's smile and friendliness. He was never angry and we never saw him upset." Susie Katz recalls "Charlie always brought a smile to my face. He really gave the best hugs in the whole world." Bruce Bjorum remembers "Charlie was the sweetest and friendliest man I ever met at GAC." Serge Blasberg recalls "a man who was a beautiful person." Dano Peterson remembers that "Charlie was a person who was warm and outgoing and always talked to everyone as they signed in and out." Bonnie Bruch will always remember "Charlie as my best dance partner. At the 4th Midwest Conference, Charlie and I danced every dance all evening long." Charlie's sister Brenda stated at the funeral that Charlie's death was due to a change of medication.. .that his death should not have happened.. .that his death was completely unnecessary. We miss him!

Acknowledgments

Thank you to everyone who has made contributions to GAC's 2006 Annual Appeal. The list of contributors from November and December 2006 will be printed in an upcoming Phoenix.

GAC VISITS THE MSO!

By Kristin Potrykus

On October 19 2006, GAC colleagues went to a Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra (MSO) concert. Many of us who attended would not otherwise get the opportunity to go to such a cultural event, but GAC had free tickets! Milwaukee can proudly boast of its phenomenal orchestra, filled with talented professionals. On the evening we attended Vasily Petrenko was the guest conductor. Petrenko is something of a *wunderkind* in that he is only thirty years old and has been a professional conductor in his native Russia since 1994 and is currently Principal Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic in England. We were very fortunate to see his U.S. debut! His direction during Edvard Grieg's Suite No. 1 from Peer Gynt, Opus 46 was superbly rendered. I myself felt mesmerized by the hauntingly beautiful music.

Violin virtuoso Hilary Hahn was the guest soloist. She accompanied the MSO during the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 15 by Benjamin Britten, which was the second selection on the symphony program. She concluded her performance with a spectacularly difficult solo piece by Franz Schubert, which drew a standing ovation from the audience.

Vasily Petrenko then returned to lead the orchestra to a glorious finale with a sampling from fellow Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in filial major, Opus 70. I have to confess that I have a personal affinity for Russian and Slavic composers, so my heart raced and pounded with the emotional intensity of the music. I felt myself on the verge of tears as the melody connected me to a world that is outside the dreary realities of daily existence. I was rather sorry that the magic ended when the enthusiastic applause erupted from the concert attendees, but I hope to find additional opportunities to escape to that lovely world of classical music once again. Compact discs do not even remotely compare to a live performance!

We are deeply indebted to Grand Avenue Club's Bonnie Bruch for obtaining the tickets for the free MSO concert and to our generous benefactor at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts. I pray that all friends of GAC will see the enormous benefits our members can derive from these life-enriching activities. Music can bridge barriers that other forms of communication at times cannot. GAC members should be very pleased that our clubhouse truly addresses all facets of our lives!

*Kristin Potrykus is a member of the Grand Avenue Club Art Collective, whose paintings can be seen in Galleria Grand, our new art gallery at 210 E. Michigan St.

Acknowledgments

We thank our supporters for these donations
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We aim for accuracy but do occasionally make errors.
Please contact us at 276-6474 x35 with corrections,
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Grand Avenue Club is a vital community offering respect, hope, and opportunity to hundreds of people who struggle with mental illness. Grand Avenue Club helps its members secure work, find suitable housing, go to school, have a place to celebrate holidays, and experience a sense of community by connecting with others. Working with quality employers, the club develops jobs for members in the Transitional and Independent Employment Programs.

More than 70,000 people in southeastern Wisconsin have experienced mental illness. They are our fellow citizens, co-workers, neighbors, friends, and family members.

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Grand Avenue Club is a uniquely successful community for people who have experienced mental illness. Grand Avenue Club assists people to get ready to go to work, and provides them with opportunities for paid employment, education, housing, recreation, and celebration, as well as support for life in the community.



Grand Avenue Club colleagues in front of 210 East Michigan

THE CLUBHOUSE

At Grand Avenue Club, which is located in the heart of Milwaukee's commercial district, members and staff work together to do all that is necessary to keep the program going. **Grand Avenue Club** focuses on the principle of the "work-ordered day" and the interest, talents and capabilities of its membership. There are no clients at **Grand Avenue Club**, only colleagues—members and staff who publish newsletters, do data-entry and word processing, handle correspondence, prepare and serve food, maintain a lending library, manage our finances, and maintain the building.

EMPLOYMENT

Grand Avenue Club focuses on encouraging our members to be productive and to pursue paid employment. We implement the most successful vocational strategy to integrate adults with mental illness into the paid labor force: Transitional Employment. Working with local private sector employers, **Grand Avenue Club** develops paid, part-time positions with them. The jobs last six to nine months. The clubhouse offers on-site training and support. In case a member is unavoidably absent from work, a staff member or another member who knows the job well provides coverage. Transitional Employment is thus a "win/win" situation for clubhouse members, employers, and a society in need of productive citizens and taxable revenues. The employers with whom we work include Foley & Lardner, Pick'n Save, Jewel Osco, Outpost Natural Foods, The Chocolate Factory, First Baptist Church, Wisconsin Athletic Club, Hillel Foundation, The Milwaukee County Zoo, Derco Aerospace, Inc., and Bilt-Rite Furniture. Forty members have moved on to Independent (or competitive) Employment in the community. These people are working in an array of occupations such as teachers, prep cooks, nurses, library assistants, phone operators and clerical support staff.

EDUCATION

The focus of education at **Grand Avenue Club** is Supported Education, which helps participants reach their educational and vocational goals. Services include: individualized planning, financial aid planning, application assistance, academic tutoring, and mentoring. We also give support through SWAP (Students With A Purpose) meetings, and have created a fully equipped Library/Learning Center for current and aspiring students.

Recently **Grand Avenue Club** launched its Young Adult Program, designed to serve the aspirations of young men and women between the ages of 18 and 25. The first symptoms of mental illness often appear in late adolescence and early adulthood. This program helps students realize that ambition and life goals need not be abandoned. Our students are at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, MATC, Marquette University, Alverno College, and the Badger Institute of the Blind.

Recreation/Culture/Life Assistance

Grand Avenue Club is open one evening a week, and every Saturday, Sunday and holiday for recreational and cultural activities. The clubhouse sponsors a Writers' Group, a Chess Club, and a Women's Group, a Day By Day Group for people who struggle with alcohol and substance abuse issues, and a baseball team. We have established a Wellness Center with exercise equipment and services such as blood pressure screening and weight loss counseling. The clubhouse's Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day celebrations are highlights of the year, drawing at least 70 diners each day. **Grand Avenue Club** also provides members with free tickets to cultural and sports events. For many members, **Grand Avenue Club** functions as extended family. After years of isolation, many members have found community, friends, and a place to be.

ADVOCACY

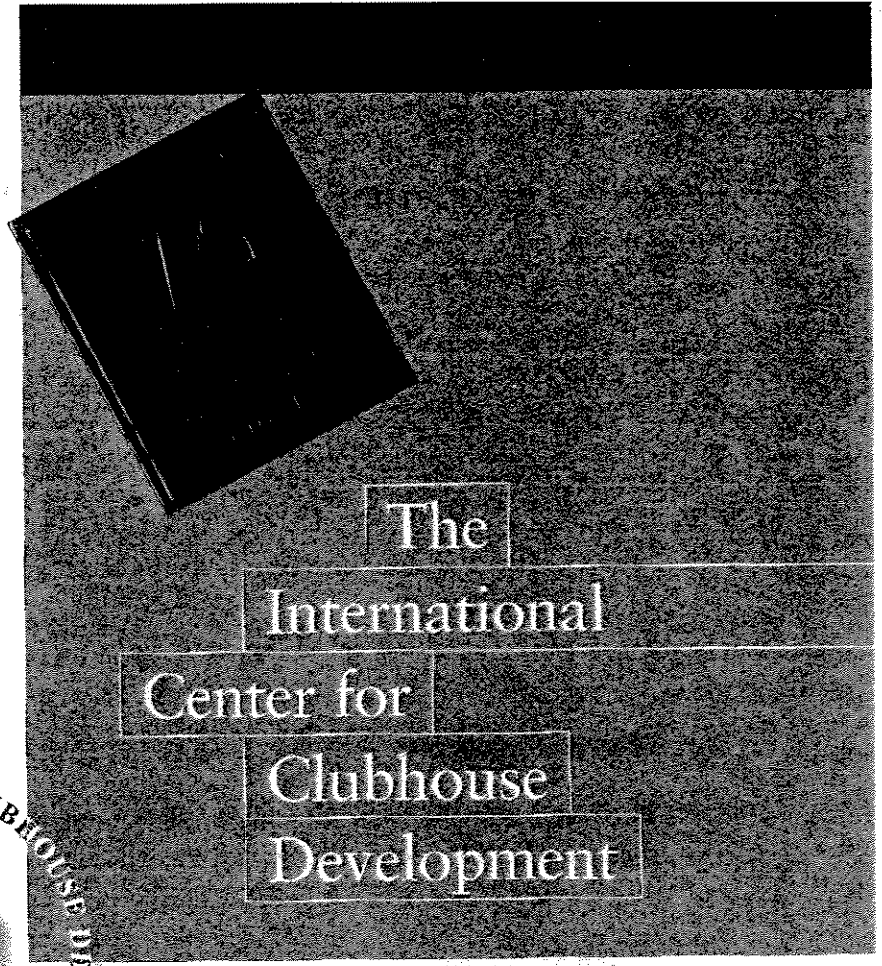
Grand Avenue Club advocates for its members in securing housing, furniture, clothing, decent health care, and other supportive services. The clubhouse assists members to acquire the skills that are needed to live independently in the community and to sustain a dignified lifestyle. **Grand Avenue Club** runs two on site re-sale shops, "Ain't It Grand!" and "A Buck N' Up." Colleagues collect work worthy clothing, gently used household items, and furniture for members who are going to work or establishing households, many for the first time.

Grand Avenue Club is a Charter Member of the International Center for Clubhouse Development (ICCD), the training and certification body for all clubhouses. Members and staff from Grand Avenue Club serve on the Faculty and Advisory Council of the ICCD and have provided consultation to similarly organized clubhouses throughout the United States and Canada, Sweden, and Australia. **Grand Avenue Club** has organized the Wisconsin Clubhouse Coalition, a group of four clubhouses that are committed to on-going quality assurance and to assisting other Wisconsin communities to establish clubhouses.

We welcome inquiries about membership, contributions, volunteering, or employment opportunities. Please contact us at 414-276-6474. You may also email us at gacclerical@grandavenueclub.com.

Last updated April 2006

Employment Manual



Communities
creating
opportunities
for
people
with
mental
illness

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Joel Corcoran is the Executive Director of the ICCD

Mission Statement:

The International Center for Clubhouse Development is a global network creating opportunities for people living with mental illness to be respected members of society.

Vision Statement:

The vision of the ICCD is to lead a strong worldwide alliance of clubhouse community programs. We are dedicated to the conviction that recovery from mental illness is possible when it involves the individual in a community that offers hope, respect, and opportunities for work, a good home, education and friendship.



This manual is a compilation of previously written articles, papers, and speeches, as well as materials prepared specifically for inclusion here. The manual has been edited by Robby Vorspan, ICCD Editor of Publications, and includes contributions by many people who are involved in clubhouse employment programs.



CLUBHOUSE EMPLOYMENT MANUAL

Prepared by the International Center for Clubhouse Development

with funding from the New York Work Exchange,
a project of the Coalition of Voluntary Mental Health Agencies

June 2004

“If I have a job, I have a chance.”

***Genesis Club member,
Worcester, Massachusetts***

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INTRODUCTION

Employment continues to be an often expressed priority for people living with serious mental illness. The unemployment rate among this group of people is generally over 80%. Although past and current research indicates that with the right services and supports people with serious mental illness can be successfully employed, society continues to isolate, marginalize and often discriminate against them.

Clubhouse employment programs are some of the most successful vocational rehabilitation programs in today's community mental health systems. Because of the unique nature of the many integrated services provided by a clubhouse, it is able always to meet the members where they are in their life's journey.

This manual is designed to provide assistance in understanding and implementing a clubhouse based employment system.

Clubhouses: Communities Creating Opportunities for People with Mental Illness

What is a Clubhouse?

A clubhouse is first and foremost a community of people. Much more than simply a program, or a social service, a clubhouse is most importantly a community of people who are working together toward a common goal.

A clubhouse is a community intentionally organized to support individuals living with the effects of mental illness. Through participation in a clubhouse people are given the opportunities to rejoin the worlds of friendships, family, important work, employment, education, and to access the services and supports they may individually need. A clubhouse is a restorative environment for people who have had their lives drastically disrupted, and need the support of others who believe that recovery from mental illness is possible for all.

“Clubhouse”

The descriptive name of “clubhouse” was taken from the original language that was used to communicate the work and vision of the first clubhouse, Fountain House in New York City, started in 1948. As the first community of its kind, Fountain House has served as the model for all subsequent clubhouses that have developed around the world. Fountain House began when former patients of a New York psychiatric hospital began to meet together informally, as a kind of “club.” It was organized to be a support system for people living with mental illness, rather than as a service or a treatment program. Communities around the world that have modeled themselves after Fountain House have embraced the term “clubhouse,” because it clearly communicates the message of membership and belonging. This message is at the very heart of the clubhouse way of working.

Membership

A clubhouse is a membership organization, and therefore the people who come and participate are its members. Membership in a clubhouse is open to anyone who has a history of mental illness. This idea of membership is fundamental to the clubhouse concept, as having membership in an organization means that an individual has both shared ownership and shared responsibility for the success of that organization. To have membership in an organization means to belong, to fit in somewhere, and to have a place where you are always welcome. For a person living with the effects of mental illness, these simple things cannot be taken for granted. In fact, the reality for most people with mental illness is that they have a constant sense of not fitting in, of isolation, and rejection. Mental illness has the devastating effect of separating people from others in society.

“Mental patient”, “client” “disabled”, “consumer,” “user” -- these are the terms with which people living with mental illness are accustomed to being defined. The rest of society, then, segregates them according to these labels, and wholly defines them by these images. The

person with mental illness, then, is seen as someone who needs something, who is primarily a burden that needs to be managed.

The clubhouse turns this all around. Here, a person who has struggled with mental illness is seen first as a valued participant, a colleague, and someone who has something to contribute to the rest of the group. Each person is a critical part of a community engaged in important work. A clubhouse is designed to be a place where a person with mental health problems is not a patient and is not defined by a disability label.

In a clubhouse program each member is given the message that he or she is welcome, wanted, needed and expected each day. The message that each member's involvement is an important contribution to the community is a message that is communicated throughout the clubhouse day. Staff and other members greet each person at the door of the clubhouse each morning, with a smile and words of welcome.

The daily work of the clubhouse community, too, is organized and carried out in a way that repeatedly delivers this message. This is not difficult, because in fact the work of the clubhouse *does* require the participation of the members. The design of a clubhouse engages members in every aspect of its operation, and there is always much more work than can be accomplished by the few employed staff. The skills, talents, and creative ideas and efforts of each member are needed and encouraged each day. Participation is voluntary but each member is always invited to participate in work which includes clerical duties, reception, food service, transportation management, outreach, maintenance, research, managing the employment and education programs, financial services, and much more.

Membership in a clubhouse community gives a person living with mental illness the opportunity to share in creating successes for the community. At the same time, he or she is getting the necessary help and support to achieve individual success and satisfaction.

Values

Clubhouse communities are built upon the belief that every member can sufficiently recover from the effects of mental illness to lead a personally satisfying life. Clubhouses are communities of people who are dedicated to one another's success -- no matter how long it takes or how difficult it is. The clubhouse concept is organized around a belief in the potential for productive contributions from everyone, even the member struggling with the most severe effects of mental illness. Clubhouse communities hold the conviction that work, and work-mediated relationships, are restorative and provide a firm foundation for growth and important individual achievement (Beard, Propst, Malamud, 1982). In the clubhouse world it is also a strongly held belief that normalized social and recreational opportunities are an important part of a person's path to recovery.

Meaningful Relationships (the core ingredient)

The clubhouse environment and structures are developed in a way to ensure that there is ample opportunity for human interaction and that there is more than enough work to do.

Clubhouse staffing levels are purposefully kept low to create a perpetual circumstance where the staff will genuinely need the members in order to accomplish their jobs. Members also need the staff and other members in order to complete the work, but even more importantly, the relationships that evolve through this work together are the key ingredient in clubhouse rehabilitation. (Vorspan, 1986). The clubhouse members and staff as a community are charged with prioritizing, organizing and accomplishing the tasks that are important to make the clubhouse a successful place for members to move forward in their lives.

Relationships between members and staff develop naturally as they work together side-by-side carrying out the daily duties of the clubhouse. All of the staff have generalists roles in the clubhouse and are involved in all of the clubhouse activities including the daily work duties, the evening social and recreational programs, the employment programs, reachout, supported education and community support responsibilities. Members and staff share the responsibility for the successful operation of the clubhouse. Working closely together each day members and staff learn of each other's strengths, talents and abilities. They also develop real and lasting friendships. Because the design of a clubhouse is much like a typical work or business environment, relationships develop in much the same way.

In a clubhouse the staff role is not to educate or treat the members. The staff are there to engage with members as colleagues in important work and to be encouraging and engaging with people who might not yet believe in themselves. Clubhouse staff are charged with being colleagues, workers, talent scouts and cheerleaders.

The Basic Components of a Clubhouse

1. A Work Day

The daily activity of a clubhouse is organized around a structured system known as the work-ordered day. The work-ordered day is an eight-hour period, typically Monday through Friday, which parallels the business hours of the working community where the clubhouse is located. Members and staff work side by side, as colleagues, to carry the work that is important to their community. All of the work in the clubhouse is for the clubhouse and not for any outside agency or business. There are no clinical therapies or treatment-oriented programs in the clubhouse. Members volunteer to participate as they feel ready and according to their individual interests.

2. The Employment Programs

As a right of membership clubhouses provide members with opportunities to return to paid employment in integrated work settings through Transitional Employment and Supported and Independent Employment programs.

Transitional Employment is a highly structured program for members returning to work in community-based business and industry. Transitional Employment placements are at the employer's place of business, are part time (15-20 hours per week), and include a lot of on the job and off site support from clubhouse staff and other members.

Supported Employment is a program of the clubhouse through which members, when they say they are ready, are given help from the clubhouse to apply for and acquire a job of their own. The clubhouse then provides on-going support and encouragement for the members as long as they remain employed and request assistance. As a regular part of the program on-site support, at the place of business, is available if the member or employer requests it.

Independent Employment is a program of the clubhouse through which members, when they say they are ready, are given help from the clubhouse to apply for and acquire a job of their own. The clubhouse then provides on-going support and encouragement for the members as long as they remain employed and request assistance. There is no on-site support at the place of business for members in independent employment. All of the support is at the clubhouse.

3. **The Evening, Weekend and Holiday Programs**

In addition to the work opportunities, clubhouses provide evening, weekend, and holiday social and recreational programming. Members and staff together organize structured and non-structured social activities. These activities are always scheduled outside of the work-ordered day. Holidays are celebrated on the day on which they fall. Activities are scheduled at the clubhouse and in the community.

4. **Community Support**

People living with mental illness often require a variety of social and medical services. Through the work day at the clubhouse members are given help accessing the best quality services in their community. Help is given to members in acquiring and keeping affordable and dignified housing, good mental health and general medical services, government disability benefits and any other services they may need. Members and staff from the clubhouse provide all of this support and assistance.

5. **Reach-out**

Part of the daily work of the clubhouse involves keeping track of all of the active members. When a member does not attend the clubhouse or is in the hospital a "reachout" telephone call or visit is made to the absent member. Each member is reminded that he or she is missed, and welcome and needed at the clubhouse. This process not only encourages members to participate but it is an early warning system for members who are experiencing difficulties and may need extra help.

6. **Education**

Many clubhouse members have had their education plans interrupted by mental illness. Some have not finished secondary school and others had their university experience disrupted. The clubhouse offers educational opportunities for members to complete or start certificate and degree programs at academic institutions and adult education programs. The clubhouse also utilizes the talents and skills of members and staff to provide in-house educational opportunities.

7. **Housing**

Safe, decent dignified housing is a right of all members. The clubhouse helps members to access quality housing. If there is none available for members the clubhouse seeks funding and creates its own housing program.

8. **Decision-making and Governance**

Decision-making and governance are an important part of the clubhouse work. Members and staff meet in open forums to discuss policy issues and future planning for the clubhouse.

Clubhouses also have an independent board of directors or advisory board that is charged with oversight management, fundraising, public relations and helping to develop employment opportunities for members.

Summary

Although Fountain House started more than fifty years ago and has been replicated more than four hundred times around the world, the clubhouse concept is still a radically different way of working in the field of community mental health. Most program models still focus on assessing a person's level of disability and limiting the expectations based on that assessment. Most use teaching or treatment as the vehicle for providing rehabilitation. In a clubhouse the expectations are high and mutual work, mutual relationships, and meaningful opportunities in the community are the vehicles of choice.

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Clubhouse Employment Programs: Brief Definitions

Transitional Employment (TE)

A TE job is a time-limited opportunity, usually 6-9 months in duration. TE positions belong to the clubhouse. In TE the clubhouse develops and maintains a relationship with the employer and provides onsite training and support with back-up coverage.

Supported Employment (SE)

An SE job is an employment opportunity that is not time-limited. The position belongs to the member. There is a competitive element to the interview process. In SE the clubhouse develops and maintains a relationship with the employer and assists with job site development and training. SE jobs may be full or part-time. The clubhouse does not provide absence coverage.

Independent Employment (IE)

Independent employment positions may be full or part-time, and belong to the member, who has participated in a fully competitive interview process. The clubhouse does not commit to a formal relationship with the employer or provide absence coverage. The clubhouse assists with career development, job search and job choice should the member wish it.

Group Placement

The clubhouse has a relationship with the employer, and the work and/or jobs are facilitated through the clubhouse. Group placements are distinguished from 'special projects' in that members make the commitment to keep the group schedule. Members get support from the clubhouse both on and off-site. As a defining characteristic the clubhouse provides on-site staffing, allowing for the group's productivity to be judged instead of the individual's.

TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT

Transitional Employment Development Best Practices

Executive Summary

- Transitional Employment development at a clubhouse is everyone's concern.
- Transitional Employment development needs to be a daily priority.
- The best employers in town are the best employers for clubhouse members.
- When approaching an employer it is best to start at the top of the organization.
- At first contact ask for "permission to send a letter" rather than trying to describe the entire clubhouse and employment program to a busy person.
- With permission, send the letter describing the program right away. (See the sample letter in this manual.)
- Follow up quickly again to secure a meeting. This may take multiple calls.
- When a meeting is arranged it is best to send two people (never more than three).
- In the meeting briefly describe the clubhouse and address common issues about mental illness.
- Quickly overview the employment program and the supports in TE for both employers and members.
- Repeatedly let the potential employer know that you are looking for only one position.
- If the employer wants to discuss the possibility of interviewing the member prior to employment, it is a good idea to re-direct this idea towards a get to know you meeting or a trial workday.
- Don't expect a "yes" at the end of the first meeting. Instead suggest a next step in helping them to get to know the program better. At minimum ask for permission to send a thank you note. This creates a natural next contact.
- After the meeting quickly follow up with the thank you note. Use the note to both show your appreciation for the meeting and to re-state your goal of a single placement, which would be tremendously important for the members as well as the whole clubhouse.
- Be creative about ways to stay in "light contact" with the potential employer. Be persistent as it often takes a long time to develop the best TE's.

The clubhouse Transitional Employment Program is one of the most challenging vocational rehabilitation programs to develop and operate. It engages the staff, the members, the board and the friends of the clubhouse in multiple roles and requires constant energy and attention. However, years of clubhouse experience indicate that all of this work is well worth the investment.

Transitional Employment development at a clubhouse is everyone's concern.

Transitional Employment (TE) development is much like finding one's own job. As in a personal job search, the development of TE jobs is always facilitated by having personal contacts and references. While the clubhouse will often have made 'cold calls' to employers, if the targeted employer has been introduced to the clubhouse from a friend or business associate, the chance of getting the opportunity to present the program and secure a placement are greatly increased.

Therefore it is important that all of the people involved with the clubhouse and working for its success must be involved in TE development. Everyone - member, staff, board member, parent agency staff, and friends of the clubhouse - most likely knows someone who is a potential employer for the clubhouse. When the whole clubhouse community is part of the TE development process, there are many opportunities to access personal introductions and references. TE development should be discussed regularly and openly with the whole clubhouse community, so that everyone will experience it as their responsibility.

Board members can be particularly helpful. They are often in a position to know and interact with more potential employers than the clubhouse staff or members. It is very important that board members know and understand how the TE program works and that helping with TE development is seen as a fundamental part of board membership.

A common mistake made by clubhouses is to assign TE development as the exclusive responsibility of one staff person or to hire an employment "specialist" or job developer to acquire placements. This is rarely successful. It is much more likely that the clubhouse will build a strong employment program if people at all levels of the organization see TE development as a priority.

Transitional Employment development needs to be a daily priority.

The single greatest barrier to developing a strong Transitional Employment program at the clubhouse is procrastination. Developing TE is difficult work and doing it is often pushed down or off the daily priority list at a clubhouse in favor of other important work.

If a TE program is to be successful, developing TE for the clubhouse should have the same priority as making sure the rent is paid or that there is enough money in the bank to make payroll that week. TE is a fundamental part of the Clubhouse Model. If there is not a TE program then there is not a clubhouse. Therefore it is necessary to schedule, plan and implement employment development activity every day at the clubhouse.

One effective strategy is to create an employment development committee. This committee has the work of securing employment placements for the clubhouse as its only purpose. At minimum the committee should include;

- staff who are heavily involved in employment
- the Clubhouse Director

- member leaders
- interested parent agency administrators
- well-connected members of the Board (both the clubhouse and parent agency)
- representatives of the community who may not have a formal connection with the clubhouse but who want to help with the employment mission.

The committee should meet regularly (at least once a month), and identify the employers with whom the clubhouse would most like to work. There should be action steps, agreed upon and written down, in the meeting notes. Members of the committee should be assigned to the action steps and report on progress at each meeting.

The best employers in town are the best employers for clubhouse members.

When considering which employers to approach about working with the clubhouse in the Transitional Employment Program a common mistake is to start with the question “Who is likely to want to work with us?” Transitional Employment is basically a business deal between the clubhouse and the employer. Transitional Employment is not charity for the disabled. It is a “pay for work done” relationship. It is also a good deal for employers. (See Wall Street Journal article later in this manual) TE offers important and valuable benefits to an employer, including the following.

- No hiring process is needed.
- New employee training is done by someone else (the clubhouse) at no cost to the employer.
- Guaranteed full attendance (staff or members cover absences).
- Quick response and resolution from the clubhouse to any problems with the employee up to and including termination from the job.
- The job is done to the employer’s satisfaction.
- There is no vacancy in the position between employees.
- Giving people with mental illness an opportunity is a valuable community service and can provide positive recognition for the employer.

When beginning a development process the most useful question to ask is “Who does the *clubhouse* most want to work with?” The most successful and attractive companies and organizations in town are likely to be the best employers. They are also most likely to provide the best quality jobs, a good rate of pay, the best references for a member’s resume and the best working environment to develop confidence and good work habits and skills.

A good way to select and prioritize potential employers is to have formal and informal discussions at the clubhouse about the best places to work. This can be done at house meetings, unit meetings, board meetings, employment dinners and casually during regular activities at the clubhouse. These discussions can also help identify who in the clubhouse community may have contacts and connections at the best companies.

Some of the types of companies that have been good employers for clubhouses over the years include law firms, advertising agencies, banks, newspapers, large retail chains, government offices and hotels.

The International Standards for Clubhouse Programs call for clubhouse TE systems to have a "... wide variety of job opportunities" (Standard 22e). When thinking about potential employers it is important to plan for a number of different types of jobs. For example a good system might have clerical, food service, manual labor, and retail store positions available for clubhouse members.

When approaching an employer it is often best to start at the top of the organization.

The best development approach is often to start at the top of the organization by calling the office of the president, CEO, or managing partner. Although it is rare to actually get this person on the telephone, it is usually possible to speak directly with an assistant or secretary. This is generally a much better method than trying to sell the idea in a voice mail message to the Human Resources Department.

Another reason for starting at the top is that a lower level staff person would probably need to bring the idea of working with the clubhouse to the senior staff person for approval anyway. It is much better for the clubhouse to present the program than to rely on someone else to give his or her interpretation of how TE works.

At first contact ask for "permission to send a letter" rather than trying to describe the entire clubhouse and employment program to a busy person.

When talking to the secretary or assistant to the CEO, it is helpful to state that the clubhouse is a local program for people with mental illness and that the program helps people return to work with an exceptionally well supported employment placement program. In this first conversation, the clubhouse should let the assistant know that it is looking for only one job placement with the company and would like the opportunity for someone from the clubhouse to discuss it with the appropriate person. However, it facilitates the process to simply begin by getting permission to send a letter describing the program. Experience has proven that companies almost always agree to this request. Instead of trying to describe the program to a busy person who will probably forget or confuse the details anyway, the clubhouse should send a letter that succinctly but accurately overviews the clubhouse, the Transitional Employment program and includes national and international references from other TE employers who have highly recognizable names (e.g. Marriott Corporation, Shearman and Sterling, Morgan Stanley, etc.).

During this first conversation, it is important to remember to get and use the last name of the secretary or assistant, as this will then become the lead contact person at the company.

With permission, this letter should be sent right away. Using the sample letter included in this manual, clubhouses can develop letters that fit the specifics of their clubhouse.