

Union Station Clubhouse, Written by Clubhouse Members

# Newsletter

## Dual Diagnosis - Mental Illness & Substance Abuse

My name is Kara. I'm a current member at the Union Station Clubhouse and I have been here a year. I am here today to talk about an issue that frequently goes undetected or misdiagnosed. My father was an alcoholic with mental illness and my mother was diagnosed with schizophrenia and did not take medication. I grew up in chaos and unmanageability. My mom abused us kids both physically and mentally. I grew up thinking that was normal behavior and really it wasn't. As I grew older, my mother's taunts grew louder and louder. Each time I failed at something I'd hear my mother's voice booming in my head: "You're an idiot. You're stupid. Why can't you be like your sister?", until finally one day it got to me and I couldn't take hearing my mother's voice.



I sought out solutions to quiet the madness. I started drinking and abusing drugs. In 2009, I moved to Pennsylvania. Later that year, I had a beautiful daughter. From that day on, I was in and out of the psychiatric ward for mood behaviors and other issues. I was in a psychiatrist's office more than a normal human being should be. I was on and off many medications from 2009 to 2014. As the years went by, I lost many people; my dad and grandfather, who were both influential in my life.

When my dad, left I was alone, unprotected, and vulnerable. I became someone I didn't recognize. I turned to finding a solution in a bottle or in whatever drug possible. In 2015, I found my way into the rooms of NA and AA. On December 19 2015, I picked up a 24-hour coin. I came to find out I had a dual diagnosis that I never knew about. I dealt with mental illness and trauma from my past. They said I was going to be OK. While sitting here writing this article, I currently am working on another 24-hours and I have kept doing that every day by God's grace. 2 years and 1 month of one day at a time.

## Transitional Employment *By Rebeka*

At a young age, my mom suggested to me that working would be a good start to being more of an independent person. So, at the age of 16, I started my first job working at my mother's store. I moved to various work locations due to the battle I faced with my mental health diagnosis. Eventually, I moved to Westmoreland County. It was there that I learned about the Clubhouse program and joined the West Place Clubhouse. While there, I discovered the Transitional Employment Program.

T.E.P. is a program designed to introduce mental health consumers to work or to reintroduce such individuals to the workforce if they have an extended period of unemployment. Members of the program transition into part-time employment positions working typically anywhere from 15-20 hours per week for six to nine months. I began working a TE position at the case management office in Westmoreland County. After moving, I started attending the Union Station Clubhouse in October of 2017. I expressed interest to the Program Director and staff that I was interested in finding work. At Union Station Clubhouse, I learned that you can get a T.E.P position at Goodwill as a clerical worker. Since I was already learning clerical skills at Clubhouse like answering phones, typing announcements, inputting important data, learning how to file, and using the copier, I figured why not give this position a try. Adopting such skills will benefit me by learning to be ok and working with my mental illness. I am happy to say that I got a position at Goodwill as a clerical worker. I start on February 12, 2018.

## Member Spotlight: Kara D.

Kara D. has been a member of Union Station Clubhouse since January 23, 2017. She enjoys the fact that some of the members have the same goals and you can work with other members and staff to achieve said goals. Kara has learned to be more social and to be more independent.

Completing kitchen and maintenance tasks have helped Kara build her independence, which would in turn help her to obtain a job in the community. Kara credits her success to the members and staff of the Clubhouse who provide her with support when necessary.

## Linking Mental Illness and Obesity *By Dustin M.*

As evidenced by the literature on the nation's obesity crisis-including news reports and releases by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), academia, foundations and voluntary health organizations-the public health burden imposed by obesity is both multifaceted and far-reaching. However, there is a critical population that is too often missing from the national dialogue surrounding the obesity epidemic: individuals with serious mental health disorders.

The Mental Health Community, along with the Clubhouse community in general has been working on attaining wellness for the current

decade. Clubhouse International, our accreditation entity has been at the forefront within the past decade on improving wellness as a result of this trend. Some examples include our training base, Gateway House in Greenville S.C. having a total healthy outfitting of their Snack Bar and Kitchen Units and having "Fat Fridays" where "not-so-good-for-you" foods are only on the menu once a week. Another example is the Flagship Clubhouse, Fountain House in New York hosting a wellness center within their clubhouse.

Here at Union Station, we have a wellness center that members, once oriented, can use in the afternoon hours. We do presently have some healthy options out of our snack bar. We have seasonal weight loss challenges. These are so well-liked that we increased the challenge since there are exactly 12 weeks between the New Year's Holiday and our Easter Dinner (since Easter is early this year). Participating in the challenge is easy! The "biggest loser" or the person who loses the most weight at the end of the challenge receives a non-food prize at the end for all their hard work.

On a personal note, I attend a weekly non-profit weight loss support group in my community called TOPS, short for Take Off Pounds Sensibly ([www.tops.org](http://www.tops.org)) where I receive continuous support from weekly weigh-ins at their scale to be accountable. If I gain weight or do not have a menu, I am required to pay a fine to the chapter. Furthermore what entices me is if I gain weight, the weight recorder has to use a RED ink pen. I have made it a goal in my group to NOT get any red pen marks on my chart, I know it will be hard, but I can do it.

In closing, anything is possible if you want to do it, you just have to make wise choices in your eating habits, become more active and be there for others that need support. No matter what food setting you are in, just remember, you are in control!



## Upcoming Events:

March 10<sup>th</sup>  
Saturday Outing  
(TBD)

March 16<sup>th</sup>  
St. Patrick's Day  
party

March 23<sup>rd</sup>  
In-house event

March 28<sup>th</sup>  
Easter luncheon