

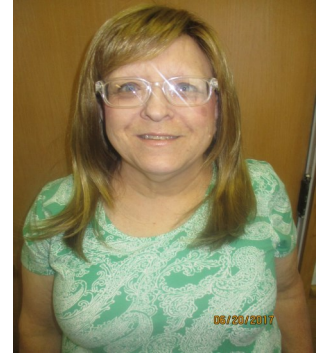


Clubhouse Connection

Racine Friendship Clubhouse
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Recovery Path, by Marsha L.



My name is Marsha L. I started attending the Clubhouse in 1995, when we opened. I used to work in this building in the 80s when it was Walker Forge Headquarters in Reception/Payroll. The building was eventually donated to become The Racine Friendship Clubhouse. Until 2006, we were known as Harbor House, but with confusion of a nursing home named Harbor Home, we decided on a new name. I was not a regularly-attending member, always either working or living my life. I did not accept my illness and was hospitalized many times. My family finally helped me realize the clubhouse is a good place for me to be. I started regularly attending in 2010. I work reception, culinary and building units. I like being part of groups and activities. I have made friends with a few members outside of the clubhouse, and my favorite activity is going to plays at Racine Theatre Guild. I also enjoy making special desserts for the clubhouse. I also pick up bakery donations for the clubhouse. I would like to say that I am amazed the clubhouse is still around, and I know the staff is the reason the members keep coming. The staff is very involved and takes time to talk to each member and holds everything together like glue. I appreciate everything about the clubhouse more now in my recovery path, and working interests have brought me full circle. I see the value of the coordinated effort between the clubhouse and myself.

Learning to have Gratitude, by Ann E.

I recently spent time recovering from eye surgery at Froedert, staying at a Kenosha care facility. I met people who were bed-ridden, with no toes or legs. Some couldn't walk, or feed themselves. Two guys across the hall passed away while I was there. Others couldn't even use the bathroom on their own. I'm so happy to be alive, because I've almost died 15 times in my life.

I was grateful, after leaving the facility, for my health. I thank God for another day, for waking me up, and that I'm able to make my own food.

It makes me happy that I have friends who do support me. I thank the Lord that I have a safe and comfortable place to live, good furniture, and that I have the clubhouse to come to.

Brain Teaser, by Mark M.

After a long day at the zoo, 3 friends decided to get a room at the hotel instead of driving home. The cost of the room was \$30, so each gave the innkeeper a \$10 bill. After a short time, the innkeeper noticed he gave the friends a \$25 room, so he gave the bus boy 5 \$1 bills to give back. The bus boy in turn, did not know how he would divide the \$5 bills between the three friends so he put \$2 in his pocket and gave back \$1 each to the friends. So the friends paid \$9 each, which adds up to \$27. With the \$2 in the bus boy's pocket, this all adds up to \$29. What happened to the other dollar?

The Grieving Process, by Ana E.



When people lose a loved one or friend, they experience: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. If you lose someone in your family, just remember you will grieve, and it hurts. My friend, Tristan, grieved about his mom. It's not that you just move on. That person lives in your heart and memories, whether looking at pictures, talking with someone who also knew them, a good friend support, attend a group, or integrating things such as their favorite cookie or something into your life. It's not that the loss goes away, but you keep living and enjoy the time with the people you still have, letting them know how much they mean to you now.

Back With Friends Again, by Lori K.



Hi, my name is Lori K. I am a receptionist at the clubhouse. I enjoy the volunteer jobs. I need the clubhouse in many ways. I learn a lot there. They teach me what I don't know. I am a returning member. I recommend it to other people. I was shy and scared when I first came. I made friends here and love the staff and members. I go for volunteering, activities, and groups. They help me with my problems by listening and helping me find my own answers. I'm getting tutoring there for school. They go on trips I enjoy, and I'm attending more groups. I want to give back at the clubhouse for all they did for me. They changed my life for the better. I'll always be grateful for that. Thank you, Racine Friendship Clubhouse members and staff.

My Recovery Journey with the Clubhouse, by Carrie W.

I had a dysfunctional family growing up but I had put all that behind me, went to college, began working for The Department of Corrections when I was 25, and within a career of 20 years, was promoted 4 times within. I have a wonderful husband and extended family, and I am a pretty decent Mom to my two children. I was financially stable, have good friends, and I enjoyed a healthy social life. My life was pretty good, I thought.

Still, a mental health disorder took us all by surprise. When I was 45 years old, because of some stressors at work, I became so depressed I couldn't stop crying. I couldn't get out of bed and I didn't want to associate with anyone, including my family. I was hospitalized for clinical depression for the first time in my life. I never knew what depression felt like before this. I don't remember ever having it - or anxiety. After three months of holing myself up in a back bedroom from horrid depression, I had what my doctor called a manic episode. I had heard of mania, but until you experience it, you really can't possibly understand. I could not sit down or have a conversation. I often acted out in a fit of rage for unjust reasons, I was agitated and talked incessantly, drank a lot of alcohol to self medicate, shopped and acted impulsively in ways that did not fit my core values. One day, On my way to my nephew's graduation party, I began hallucinating. I had bugs living on my tongue and reproducing faster than I could spit them out. It seemed so real, nobody could convince me otherwise. The first hallucination lasted 8 days and I experienced others too. I was living a nightmare. It was not a fun time for me or anyone who knew me. During one of my hospital stays, I was told I needed to receive Electro Shock Therapy treatments. ECT treatments settled me down for a time, but the most common side effect is damage to the memory part of the brain. Huge chunks of my memory were just gone. Many things I had learned were just gone. I did not know how to use the computer and even had difficulty making an outside call on the office telephone. I had to relearn everything as if I were a child. Once I learned them, I had to learn them again, over and over and over. My home and finances were a mess. I was in and out of mental hospitals, and I didn't know what to do! I felt I had no control. My destiny was sealed. I started to think about suicide even though it's against my faith, & I began to self harm. The harm I did to myself was not superficial scratches as you see on TV or perhaps hear about. On several occasions, I cut very deep into my stomach. Once, I was a centimeter away from the lining. It was heinous & frightening. Again, a long hospitalization ensued. I was having panic attacks out in public and disassociating. Often times, when I drove, I got lost on very familiar streets. I drove around for hours in tears before I found my way to my destination. My anxiety was through the roof even though I received the ECT treatments, though not as bad as before them. I was angry and intimidating often. I was also sleepwalking so dangerously that my family and friends had to take night shifts to protect me. Even the smallest task felt like a mountain climb. The first three years I was hospitalized 25 times for 2-3 weeks each time. I lost my job. We became financially in debt to medical bills. I felt hopeless and I had no will to live & I made a suicide attempt.

At some point, my therapist recommended the Racine friendship clubhouse. I am really surprised I had the will to go, but I will be eternally grateful. When I first became a member, I was shy and timid and frightened. Fear ruled my life. I was afraid I could not accomplish anything at all. I hadn't even done artwork for over 2 years, which I had previously enjoyed almost daily. I had no self value or confidence.

My first job at the clubhouse was painting the wine glasses for this benefit. Despite my lack of confidence, I sat in the quiet room by myself and began painting glasses. The members came in slowly (almost one by one) and talked to me. They made me feel very welcome and not at all ashamed of my mental illness, as we all had that one thing in common. There was no judgement, no expectations, none of the superficial talk. They were genuinely happy to meet me and allow me to be who I was and liked me for who I was. The members are very special people - some of the nicest you will ever meet. I learned a lot from them. They are humble, loving, caring people who are willing to help in any way they can. I learned the clubhouse Executive Director has bi-polar too. I witnessed how she learned to manage her illness. She overcame and is successful. She inspired me. All of the staff did. got better. If I didn't have the clubhouse, I would've never realized I still had some potential. Everyone was very patient with me. They helped me learn to be more patient with myself. Among other things, The clubhouse helps members to get their education, find jobs they can do despite their mental illness, offers friendship, helps members realize their full potential, and most of all, gives people with mental illness HOPE!!

My Recovery Journey with the Clubhouse, by Carrie W. cont.

I started going daily. It felt good to have a place to go with a routine and friends and responsibilities!! The clubhouse gave me something to live for. I could see all the good it was doing for the other members and I believe in the clubhouse with all my heart. I believe it saves lots of lives; not just mine! As a member of the clubhouse, we all work to help run it. We use our individual sets of skills and work at our best pace. The staff gently guided me to assert myself in other areas. I helped with office duties & I re-learned Word and XL, helped in the kitchen, helped with fundraisers, facilitated a painting class, and I even helped write a grant! I spoke of the clubhouse publicly (which was my first public speaking experience & nerve racking, but I still did it) including to the United Way which is the organization I helped write the grant for. When we received notice we were getting the grant, I was ecstatic!

I was starting to feel a bit worthy, hopeful, and even somewhat accomplished. I'm not saying it was easy. It was very frustrating at times. It was hard work. But, the clubhouse helps teach tools to help manage difficult times with mental illness, and I got better. If I didn't have the clubhouse, I would've never realized I still had some potential. Everyone was very patient with me. They helped me learn to be more patient with myself. Among other things, The clubhouse helps members to get their education, find jobs they can do despite their mental illness, offers friendship, helps members realize their full potential, and most of all, gives people with mental illness HOPE!!

After I joined the clubhouse I was only hospitalized twice that year! They were short stays that were pretty minor in comparison to the first 3 years of my diagnosis. Now, it has been a full year that I have not needed hospitalization. I have not experienced any of the symptoms listed above with the exception of some anxiety. In large, I credit the Racine Friendship Clubhouse for helping me learn to manage this difficult disorder.

We need you to understand just how vital The Racine Friendship Clubhouse of Racine is to people with mental illnesses. As you are probably aware, mental illness does not discriminate! I never thought I would be mentally ill. Not me!! If one of you, God forbid, ended up with a mental illness, you would wish for this place. You would NEED IT, in my opinion. I did! There are no other places like this that does what I have described and so much more. I have barely scratched the surface.

Because of the clubhouse, support from my family and friends, the right medications, & a good therapist, I've learned to manage my mental illness! My house and finances are back in order. I have learned that I can contribute to society and be an asset despite the bipolar card I was dealt in life, as undeserving as it was. I can not repeat it enough; The Racine Friendship Clubhouse literally saved my life!

I am disabled because of my mental illness and unable to work a paying job. But, I am able to volunteer the skills I have and I do so with an eternal grateful heart. I wouldn't be the person I have become without the clubhouse! The difference between me 3 & 4 years ago and now is nothing short of miraculous!

The Racine Friendship Clubhouse works miracles!

Mission:

Racine Friendship Clubhouse inspires hope and opportunity for persons with a mental illness .

Vision:

working together to rebuild lives affected by mental illness.

