

alliance house

Clubhouse Chronicle

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A long-standing partner with Valley Mental Health and United Way, a non-profit agency

Clubhouse Supported Education

Rob Peden & Carla Marjerison
(Excerpt from workshop
presentation at the 13th
International Seminar, 2005)

At Alliance House, we are proud of our education program. Our students' and tutors' hard work and successes are celebrated often and publicly. We see having an in-house program as a necessity for a variety of reasons, many directly related to Alliance House's mission statement of "provid[ing] a supportive place in which adults who suffer from serious and persistent mental illness can rediscover their self-respect, dignity, and abilities through the opportunity to perform productive work, to belong and to create meaningful relationships."

Mental illness often strikes when a person is in his teens, junior



Carla Marjerison and Martin Martinez discuss his education goals.

high or high school age. Coping with the normal stress of school, the terrors of the dawning of sexuality, and the onset of mental illness can be overwhelming, and it's not surprising that this person, whatever his upbringing or heredity, fails, sometimes badly. Teachers who knew this person as a healthy, bright student the year before are alarmed at the change and can't help suspecting a moral cause – laziness, rebelliousness, drug use. Friends can't understand his erratic behavior and begin to shy away. Every nine weeks, if not more frequently, the school board notifies his parents of his failures. School has become a

threatening, intimidating place; the classroom has become hell.

Rather than placing a student in an environment he associates

with failure, the clubhouse provides a place of safety and

success. He is among friends, those who best share his concerns and issues. The staff understands his problems, probably in some detail, and treats him empathetically. By having an in-house program, we believe we make it possible for many members, who otherwise would not have, to enter back into their own personal educational path.

The primary focus of our particular in-house program is our high school diploma program, which allows members to do all of their credit coursework with one-on-one tutors. We operate as a satellite school for Horizonte, Salt Lake City School District's alternative school. Instead of constant pressure to move forward, keep up with the others, progress, (the final exam will be Thursday at two; be sure to bring two sharpened number two pencils), the student experiences an atmosphere that allows him to work at a pace that is comfortable for him. If the test falls on a bad day, there is some flexibility; if he can't deal with it today, he may take it next week, next month, next semester. Classrooms are designed for negative feedback; if you succeed you move on unnoticed. Clubhouses deal in the celebration of success.

We have found that an in-house high school program allows us to customize the curriculum so that the students find inherent interest in their schoolwork. I [Rob] remember trying to read *Pride and Prejudice*, which I consider unquestionably a great book – now – for school when I was seventeen. I thought it unbearable and resisted it every way I could, but had to muddle through it – because that's what we were all reading. By contrast, a young woman who graduated with Alliance House's Class of 2004 had an unexpected taste for and interest in Neolithic art. Our Education Coordinator and our liaison with the School

District parlayed that interest into credits for both art and history. A little later, one of our member-tutors, aware of her interests, gave her a copy of William Golding's *The Inheritors*, which she studied rapaciously and in depth to earn her final English credits. Obviously, tailoring curriculum to the student's taste can only go so far. There are district and state requirements for a high school diploma. But a little creativity, a little flexibility, and very little extra work can make high school fun.

There is another young lady, Class of 2003, who graduated just a month before I [Rob] joined Alliance House. She swears that she cried everyday



for a year because she couldn't learn fractions, but the staff, member-tutors, and volunteers worked with her gently and persistently until she grasped it. She's now enrolled in college and doing very well. But every term, it seems, she comes into the clubhouse in tears: "Rob," she wails, "I don't know what to do. My [your least favorite subject goes here] professor says I have to write a paper with an introduction, supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion. I

don't know how." I calm her as much as possible and say, "Why don't you write an introduction, some supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion?" She looks at me a minute, slaps her forehead, and says, "That's just crazy enough it might work!" Then the next week she comes back to Alliance House and tells me *I'm* a genius because *she* got an A. To help a woman like this toward the realization of her potential, after her parents, her teachers, her parole officers, almost everyone else, has given up on her is a true sense of accomplishment. This sort of people, this sort of success, is the magnet that drew me into the education program in the first place, and, frankly, I find it sort of addictive.

In our community we have made great attempts to integrate our education program as completely as possible into our Career Development Unit and into the functions of the house as a whole. Education is seen as a natural component of our clubhouse because one of primary goals concerns employment, and many view it as a prerequisite to the meaningful work they hope to pursue in their future career. I can tell you the United States Census Bureau released findings a month or two ago that show that the average high school graduate earns \$9,000 per year more than a non-graduate. This means that a high school diploma to a young person of thirty or so can earn an additional \$300,000 over the course of his career. Since 1992,

Clubhouse Chronicle

Alliance House is a member of the International Center for Clubhouse Development...

...a global network creating opportunities for people living with mental illness to be respected members of society.

Alliance House provides...

...A guaranteed right to a place to come. A guaranteed right to meaningful relationships. A guaranteed right to meaningful work. A guaranteed right to a place to return.

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seventy-six members have graduated through our program

Our in-house program is an easy fit into the environment and collegial relationships we strive to promote. The staff is forced to discover the talent of more member tutors by necessity, since they are the primary

resource for the in-house program. Being the “teacher” or tutor can be seen as a hierarchical position, as compared to the role of student. At Alliance House, since we rely on our members to do the teaching, rather than staff or outside resources, we acknowledge the talent we believe is available within the house and the trust we have in that talent to take responsibility for a task as important as an individual’s education.

Occasionally, a member disappears upon receiving his diploma, presumably because he feels he’s gotten all he can from clubhouse. If he’s right, I say, congratulations and good luck. Our purpose, after all, is to help members recover and reintegrate into the community, not to retain members; the members we never see again are among our greatest successes. If he’s wrong, I say welcome back. I missed you.

Career Development Unit

By Carla Marjerison and Rob Peden



We would like to welcome Betty Steens to the Career Development Unit. She is interested in working in the Clubhouse Closet.

Congratulations to Chris Smith, who was selected to fill the opening at the Nutty Guys group placement. A new Supported Employment opportunity has also been developed through Valley Services. It will consist of serving as host/hostess at the ARTEC South cafeteria. If you are interested, please see Amber in the CD Unit.

Olivia Jorgensen, a relatively new member, has begun working toward her high school diploma. The unit has been making a lot of plans for the Graduation Ceremony, which will take place on May 24 at 6:00 pm. The location will be the Wells Fargo building at 299 S Main Street, and refreshments have been selected and ordered. The coordination committee will meet each Monday at 2:00 pm to work on the program, invitations, and spotlighting the graduates at the ceremony.

Culinary Unit

By Brooke Baltazar

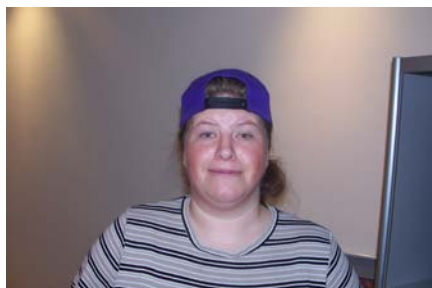
We want to welcome Lynn Sorenson to the culinary unit. She has taken the opportunity for the temporary position. She is doing great so far.

Tess has made the moved to the culinary unit and will return there upon her recovery.

We want to welcome Katrina Hayden to the culinary unit. She has prepared some fantastic meals.

Business Unit Update

By Betsy Odgen



We want to welcome Jeff Stayton and Kim Tanner. Kim Tanner has been helping organize business cards and offering support to the newsletter. Jeff has helped with stats for the UCN.

Pete Doegnes, a volunteer, has been so wonderful in teaching members about computers. He recently taught us how to create our own email address and also how the Internet works. Thank you so much Pete.

Collette Soffe has become a permanent employee at Alliance

House. She will stay in the business unit. We are so glad to have her here.

We have been working toward improving our tours and involve more people in them. We have developed new tour cards and hope people will join us in supporting this improvement.

Advocacy Update

By Chris Smith and
Carla Marjerison

The Advocacy Committee has started meeting the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month, rather than every Tuesday, now that the legislative session is over. Several members of the Committee have continued to try to establish contacts at SLCC and the University of Utah, so that Alliance House members and staff can start to educate more members of our community about mental health and the Clubhouse philosophy.

Eleisha and Carla attended a Medicaid Retreat April 12, 2006, organized by Judi Hillman of the Utah Health Policy Project. The majority of the time was focused on understanding the Debt Reduction Act (DRA) and brainstorming how to advocate for the future of Medicaid. The DRA includes changes that will affect who can get on or stay on Medicaid as well as what premiums or co-pays will be required. Several changes are mandatory however; there are many others that will be up to the discretion of our State Legislature. There is more information about the Retreat

and the DRA in the Advocacy binder in the CD Unit. The general consensus was that money is not efficiently allocated in the Medicaid program and costs for healthcare in the U.S. are much higher than other first world countries due to administrative costs and inflated prices.

Judi will be working on creating reports concerning the cost of the uninsured on the economy. These reports can be presented to the Interim Committee that will be meeting over the next 6 months to make decisions about changes to Utah's Medicaid. There may be speaking opportunities for A.H. members during this process.

Please feel welcome to join the Advocacy Committee meeting at 2pm on May 9th or May 23rd. We can always use more creative input into advocating for issues that affect all of you.

Recovery

By Gary Lansberry



“We as consumers can not expect the communities that we live in to help us if we can not breakdown our own stigmas and increase our own empowerment.”

I believe that Denial – Acceptance - Recovery and Empowerment are the four key steps in recovery for consumer with mental illness. As one would ponder what their personal recovery is or would be, there is a process to recovery involved. Part of it is involving others into a network of people supporting our process of recovery and the many steps that are taken to bridge it. And it's a never ending life process. One must learn to bridge their illness and not let it bridge them.

I was diagnosed fourteen years ago with bipolar category II disorder and I did not want to accept having the diagnosis. I fought it year after year and through networking and medications, I finally came to terms with it and started the acceptance process.

Accepting my diagnoses was not easy either, but through the process of breaking down my own personal stigmas and a desire, it became obvious that the next eleven years would be defining moments and lead the way to recovery. Once I finally came to this stage of acceptance; it became much easier to continue the recovery process.

I personally believe that the experts cannot come up with a recovery program that is 100% because everyone's mental illness is so individualized, and old school thinking does not cut it anymore. We need to be progressive with our recovery and reintegrating ourselves into the communities that we live in. We must not shy away from social networking, Clubhouse Model, education, and

employment, which in turn can give the consumer empowerment and increase the recovery process.

But this is easier said than done. Why? As a consumer we need to break down a few of our own personal stigmas with mental illness first before we can expect others to help us continue to grow in the recovery process.

Also, those who live in the past have no future. We need to access the powerful individual tool that each of us have, self-advocacy. The biggest damaging tool we have is denial. When a consumer and/or family member learn to advocate for themselves or their loved one, it becomes more viable for them to get what they need as a part of their recovery.

You have a voice in your recovery process with your mental health system, psychiatrist and therapist involving your treatment plan and working together as a team. Getting involved with decisions about your medication and what to do on a daily basis is very important, nobody can read your mind and tell you what you are feeling and/or thinking. Knowing how to advocate for one's self brings serious empowerment to the individual recovery process.

Employment Spotlight

By Rob Peden



In mid-June, Alliance House's Transitional Employment Placement at Youth Services will be up for grabs. I am fortunate to have held this placement since September 16, and I guarantee that Youth Services is among the finer TEs that Alliance House has ever had.

The name of the organization for which you would be working is Salt Lake County, Division of Youth Services. Its primary function is to provide counseling and a safe haven for troubled young people...sort of like Alliance House, but with a built-in expiration date. Youth Services provides counseling on both an outpatient and residential basis. One of its more interesting features is the operation of Christmas Box House, designed along the guidelines developed by Richard Paul Evans in his book *The Christmas Box*, and providing therapy, safety, and an array of other services to abused and neglected children under twelve.

The job itself was remarkably well designed by, as I gather, the lovely Pat Berckman, the lovely Janet Hickok, and the somewhat-less-lovely Brad Thomas. About thirty percent of the job consists

of reception – announcing, scheduling, and directing clients and inquiries, and running the main switchboard. About fifty percent involves data entry into a basically straightforward, though somewhat flaky, database system called Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (RHYMIS), which may be a cooler name than the system actually merits, but you’ll learn to cope. About fifteen percent is fairly conventional filing, and the remainder shredding and special projects.

The only truly bad part of the job that comes to mind is transportation. The nearest bus stops are 3300 S West Temple, 3900 S West Temple, and State Street at Guest Avenue. Each entails walking about a half-mile each way. If you drive the location is quite convenient, at 3600 S off of West Temple.

The pluses are myriad and obvious. Most of the people you would work with are mental-health professionals who either do or would appreciate the clubhouse model of recovery. The few non-professionals will fool you; their attitudes, the caring and respect for the clients they serve is inspiring. I found that this caring and respect, both from the professional and lay staff, extended to me; I’ve been very impressed by the kindness and consideration shown me. I would list all the people who have treated me well, but have been advised this will be only an eight-to-twelve-page issue.

The facilities are attractive and comfortable. The reception desk

is about as public as space can get and the records room is a secure area accessible only by staff. The moving shelves in the records room may frighten you initially, but trust me there is no danger. The physical demands are minimal: the actual filing will require standing for perhaps a half-hour a day, and you may occasionally need to lift a box of files, weighing...what...twenty-five pounds?

The mental demands are somewhat more rigorous. You’ll need to maintain concentration and alertness almost every moment; precision and exactness are paramount. The reception part of the job requires a certain degree of people skills. You’ll want to act consistently, courteously, understandingly, and helpfully. By and large, the people you’ll deal with are confused, hurt, distressed, and need a great deal of help. Sometimes the clients are also troubled. If worse comes to worse, rest assured that wonderful Margaret Laforet is only a few feet away, combining unlimited knowledge with refreshing, unbridled enthusiasm. Brad also has a detailed understanding of the organization and its operations, and shares his knowledge and expertise generously and unhesitatingly, despite his overwhelming workload.

This position reports to Janet Hickok, whose official title is Compliance Coordinator. She displays a positive genius for knowing how much supervision each of her staff requires and

remains hands-off or provides guidance as necessary. Her kindness, charm, and understanding make me wish I’d screwed up a little more often to gain the pleasure of her attention. If you need an exception to your work schedule – working extra hours to get a day off or tweaking your schedule to attend a special event – Janet will try to accommodate you. She is a very, very cool lady.

Salt Lake County designates the Youth Services TE as a part-time, temporary emergency hire. It requires a background check, but you get a rather nifty-looking ID badge. There are no benefits. Still the pay is good, \$8.50 an hour. You’ll work five four-hour days, from 1:00 to 5:00. Paydays are the fifth and twentieth of the month. Dress is business casual. They discourage jeans or shorts.

I’ve very much enjoyed working with everyone there and I expect to miss the job and people dearly.

Clubhouse Insider

By Duncan Macdonald and
Sue Hanson





We have three fantastic members graduating. They are Theresa Price, Chris Jones and Mary Krmzyan. The graduation will be held at the Wells Fargo Building on May 24th at 6:00 p.m. We are excited about this wonderful occasion and hope many will attend and celebrate with our graduates.

We are sending out registration forms for our Western Regional Conference in May. The UCN Meeting was held at the Yarrow Hotel last month to get everyone excited about this big event. Keep your eyes open for our colorful registration form.

All of the Utah Clubhouses will be having a Lagoon Day on June 8th. The cost will be \$10.00 and lunch will be catered. Come meet all of your clubhouse friends from around Utah.

Our Book Club, which is led by Laurie Bryant and Carla Majerison, is finishing *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*. We will be picking a new book soon. Thanks to Laurie for all of her hard work.

“I enjoy it because it gets us together to talk about what we read.”-Cheryl Law

“I feel that the book club gives us a fun way to share our ideas.”-Duncan Macdonald

There will be a Board Retreat on May 6, 2006. All of the board members will be meeting here at 9:00 a.m. They will be discussing numerous things including the functions of the board and the future of Alliance House. They will also inform new members about the history of Alliance House. The short- and long-term goals of Alliance House will be discussed. They will have a discussion about how to do better as an agency to improve our relationship with the community. Debra Falvo will be there to discuss the relationships with Valley Mental Health and other government agencies.

Standard of the Month

By Katrina Hayden



Being a new member and wanting to get involved with something besides sitting around the house and twirling my thumbs, I decided to write about Standard #1. It reads “Membership is voluntary and without time limits.” As with anything you do, you get out of it what you put into it. Standard #1 allows you to test the waters, set your own boundaries as it says without limits.

Being a new member I think this has been great. It has given me an opportunity to jump in and get my feet soaking wet, meet some great new people, use some skills I haven’t used in a while that the other clubhouse members appreciate. This makes me feel needed and wanting to participate more. I have been able to contribute in the kitchen, set some goals that will help me both in the clubhouse and in the work setting. Now I am writing this article. All of these are things that I enjoy doing and have not been able to do in a while. The clubhouse experience thus far has been one that I am enjoying and look forward to attending Alliance House every chance I get. After all, what is life all about except experiences, good, bad, and new! So standard #1, “Membership is voluntary and without time limits,” means to me that the world is now open and available to the rest of the clubhouse just by being a member.

Jeremy’s Sound Byte

By Jeremy Christensen
Executive Director



Another great month. Many events are coming. Alliance House is growing. Members are getting jobs, going to school,

building relationships. We have seen a lot of new members in this past month. I am always surprised to see how welcoming everyone is to new faces, involving everyone in the activities and tasks that we do everyday. What a great place to be a part of.

There continues to be a lot of changes as well with staff, TEP's and events. I have to thank everyone who has been so flexible and adaptable to these changes . . . in such a way that Alliance House has continued to see growth. In fact membership has increased in the past month and a half by 20%. As this continues we may soon be at capacity for our new building, but we still have a ways to go.

We have members who we have not seen for a while and potential members who do not know of the great opportunities that await them at Alliance

House. Let's keep up the great outreach efforts and passing along the things we learn to others in our community, being a part of the great recovery movement that is Alliance House.

April Birthdays

2 nd	Karen W.
3 rd	Daphne Bradshaw
5 th	Raylene Heath
9 th	Joshua Larson
11 th	Mike Agar
14 th	Denis Boucher
15 th	Cathleen Fryer
20 th	Marcia Sawyer
20 th	Joy Maxwell
25 th	Mike Staples
28 th	Jeremy Christensen

Did you know?

The thrift store profits for the month of March were \$269.22.

We use this money for recreation and for our education fund.

+ _____ +

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