



The Open Door

March 2012

A look inside our Clubhouse www.howardlevinClubhouse.org

A Publication of the Howard Levin Clubhouse

Howard Levin Clubhouse

A Program of Jewish Residential Services
2621 Murray Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15217
(412) 422-1850

Newsletter Staff:

Chanell Avent
Adam Conway
Dean D.
Dan Dalton
Anna E.
Jessica Feldman
Mimi Gillis
Mike Hogan
Candace Hall
Sarah Hughes
Michelle Hunter
Kathy Hurwitz
Jim McKenna
John Mellott
Eric Sc.
Eric Smith
Ira Salkin
Delaine S.
Pat Tokar
Virginia Wendt

**Happy
St. Patrick's
Day!**

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Another Three Year ICCD Certification!!

by Jessica Feldman

"We did it again!" We passed our accreditation with flying colors. The faculty members were very impressed with the work we are doing and we were given a 3 year certification. Below is a copy of the letter they sent to us confirming our excellence!

Jessica Feldman
Howard Levin Clubhouse
2621 Murray Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

Dear Jessica,

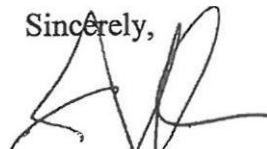
We are delighted to inform you that your self-study and recent visit from the Faculty for Clubhouse Development has resulted in accreditation from the International Center for Clubhouse Development. After reviewing your Self-Study, the Clubhouse Profile and the written report from the faculty consultants, we conclude that accreditation with a return visit in **three years** is indicated.

As you know, ICCD Clubhouse Accreditation involves an evaluation of the Clubhouse in terms of fidelity to the International Standards for Clubhouse Programs, and after careful study and consideration concludes Accreditation with a three-year return review is awarded to Clubhouses that substantially adhere to each of the categories of the Standards (Membership, Relationships, Space, Work-Ordered-Day, Employment, Education, Functions of the House and Funding Governance and Administration). These Clubhouses operate in a truly effective manner providing excellent opportunities for Clubhouse members. Solid peer relationships exist and are fostered by the cultural norms of the Clubhouse community as expressed in the Standards.

Congratulations on achieving such a strong, rehabilitative environment. We wish you continued success at providing the best Clubhouse services possible for members. Please feel free to contact me or your faculty consultants with any questions or concerns about the accreditation report and process..

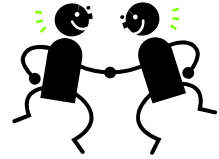
Finally, let me take this opportunity to acknowledge your community's commitment to excellence in Clubhouse practice as evidenced by your willing participation in this process. Thank you for participating

Sincerely,


Joel D. Corcoran
Executive Director

Working with New Members

by Adam Conway



Becoming a member of the Clubhouse community is something many reading these words share in common. For members, the process usually starts with a conversation, often with a therapist or case manager who has a relationship with the Clubhouse. Many therapists have made multiple referrals to the Clubhouse and recognize its value, while some are just now discovering us. After receiving a referral, we schedule a new member for orientation, almost always on a Tuesday or Thursday morning. Along with an orientation tour, all potential new members are invited to lunch and to stay for as much of the afternoon as they want. After that, we hope to see them again, and often we do, but during a busy day, it is sometimes challenging to keep track of these newer folks.

There are some essential formal steps that must take place when a member has returned several times after their orientation, these have traditionally been the responsibility of the director, Jessica, and the Senior Coordinator, Sarah. In recent weeks, however, we have spent a good deal of time integrating members into this “intake” process. Many conversations have been held around the green table and in small groups about how and why this should happen.

First, to answer the question of “Why,” we should look to the Clubhouse Standards.

Standard #11 reads as follows:

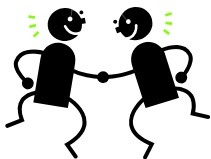
“Responsibility for the operation of the Clubhouse lies with the members and staff and ultimately with the Clubhouse director. Central to this responsibility is the engagement of members and staff in all aspects of Clubhouse operation.”

Standard #20 reads:

“Members have the opportunity to participate in all the work of the Clubhouse, including administration, research, enrollment and orientation, reach out, hiring, training and evaluation of staff, public relations, advocacy and evaluation of Clubhouse effectiveness.”

Both of these Standards imply that the members of the Clubhouse can and should be involved in the intake process to the greatest extent possible, although we also must recognize the need to respect the confidentiality of protected health information.

At this point, members have gathered in groups to learn about the documents involved in the intake process, and several have also shadowed Sarah as she worked with some new members on their initial paperwork. Some of these forms have been revised as a result and now include a member witness signature.



As we move forward with further integrating members into the intake process, we also encourage all interested members to attend the Membership Meeting on Monday afternoon at 3 pm, an informal meeting to discuss intake, upcoming orientations, retention statistics, and other issues related to membership.

A CONVERSATION WITH AUDRA THOMAS OF JEWISH RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

by Jim McKenna

A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to speak with Audra Thomas, director of Jewish Residential Services' (JRS) Residential Programs. Audra has been the JRS Residential Services director since February 2011. She has been a full-time JRS employee since 2001. She previously worked there, part-time, from 1994 to 1999.

Prior to speaking with Audra, I had assumed that JRS's mission was to provide housing for people with disabilities. Audra said many people believe that, which is one of the reasons that part of residential services is called Supportive Living rather than Supported Housing, the County's standard name. There is only one building where housing as well as service is offered, which is the Leonard Staisey House. The residential programs of JRS are Site-Based Supportive Living Services for Staisey House residents, Community Supportive Living Services for people living in their own residences, and similar services for people living at Charles Morris Hall and Jason Kramer Hall. These are buildings provided and managed by Action Housing, which is affiliated with the Department of Housing and Urban Development.



Currently, JRS Residential Services has eight staff members and provides services to 51 individuals. Marty Brown, the Residential Programs Coordinator, has been with JRS for almost nine years, and Residential Supervisor Zach Lees has been there for eight.

JRS provides different levels of services, depending on the needs of the residents they are supporting. Residents of Staisey House, which opened in 1992, and Community Supportive Living Program participants receive individualized one on one support. One aspect of this support is helping residents develop recovery and living goals. Once these are set, JRS counselors assist them in working on the skills required to achieve these goals. This may include, but is not limited to, counselors assisting program participants in finding the outside services they need. For example, counselors have helped participants return to school and even develop new study habits. The counselor will also help the participant find the outside support that can assist them with this.

JRS also works with people at Charles Morris House and Jason Kramer Hall. These residents are able to live independently but have mild developmental disabilities. They receive "group support" from JRS. JRS, in partnerships with the tenants, organizes weekly support groups, social activities, and Friday evening Shabbat meals for each residence. JRS's other clients are welcome to attend these events. Similarly, all JRS Residential participants are welcome to attend any events taking place at Staisey House.

JRS's residential services are open to anybody with a diagnosed mental health issue or developmental disability, as long as the need and the program services are a match. Audra stressed its counselors work closely together to provide optimum service to their program participants. They hold regular meetings twice a month and frequently exchange ideas on other occasions.

An article like this, of course, can only scratch the surface of the many aspects of an agency such as JRS Residential. Readers interested in learning more, or in assisting the Residential Program in some fashion, can consult the JRS web page (jrspgh.org) or call Audra at 412-422-6720.

Community Forum Summary

by Virginia Wendt

This column will serve to inform readers of general discussion topics at our weekly Community Forum meetings, as well as any consensus decisions reached. For more details, please see the complete meeting minutes kept at the Clubhouse. Enjoy, and look for this article each month!

February 2, 2012

A tabled item was discussed, regarding use of the Fitness/Clubtique room for working on notes and goals. A consensus decision was reached to use the Fitness/Clubtique room for exercising and shopping primarily; the former Clubtique area could be tried out for notes and goals. We agreed to take a dining room table upstairs to get a feel for how we want to utilize the area as a “conversation” place.

We discussed the following community issues:

It was stated that we have less than \$10 in the I.O.U. pouch; the importance of I.O.U.s being paid back, in order to continue the privilege, was discussed. Also, some of the I.O.U.s are quite old. Suggestions made were to e-mail or mail out gentle reminders, as well as remove older I.O.U.s of people we do not see often.

The need to keep all members informed of staff absences was discussed, and we agreed that regularly posting a weekly staff schedule would begin, as well as purchasing a new In/Out board that staff could use (to show not only days off, but also breaks, trainings, etc.). B/E/E agreed to research possible boards.

The role of Community Resource Manager Michelle Hunter was discussed. She sometimes works as a generalist, as the full-time members do. She also provides access and information to outside community resources on matters such as housing, government documents, and education. She also works with individual members completing quarterly outcomes.

The following community projects were discussed:

We agreed upon which Clubhouse Anniversary card to use, and that each year a new card will be chosen for all to receive on their anniversary.

February 9, 2012

We discussed the following community issues:

Members who exercise in the Fitness/Clubtique room should let another person know they are doing so. Also, medical forms, which are kept in charts, should be made current for all members. It was agreed that these forms can be checked/updated when completing a monthly note.

We discussed the following community projects:

An art therapy student, Hanna, will be coming in weekly to help us create new signs for each area.

Jessica will be in touch with Hanna to coordinate a schedule of likely 3-hour visits.

Announcements of outside social events are encouraged, and can be made during Touch Base meeting or posted to the member-to-member board.

On this day, we had a budget presentation and the remaining items were tabled. Those items included: hygiene kits and reception desk policy.

February 16, 2012

A discussion of front desk policy occurred again, and it was proposed that we seek input from the architect who has worked here previously. It was tabled for another week, or until we receive that input. Another tabled item discussed was creating hygiene kits. We agreed we would make these kits, and a suggestion list was created and hung on a black pillar.

We discussed the following community issues:

It was raised that reading the announcements in their entirety at two meetings per day may feel redundant. It was mentioned that typically more people attend Touch Base in the afternoon versus morning meeting. A consensus decision was reached that B/E/E would work on streamlining and/or re-organizing the announcements to be more efficient, and return with findings at the next meeting.

Members expressed a need for chocolate at the Little Hippo (we had recently run out). It was discussed that Food and Horticulture is currently evaluating the nutrition values of the snacks we sell, what is in demand, and any changes we may want to make to better display nutritional information of snacks. Questions proposed were: should we raise prices on less healthy items? Should we raise prices generally? How shall we display nutrition information at the Little Hippo? A consensus decision was made that a sub-committee would prepare a presentation of this information for a future date.

It was suggested that attendees at meetings be recorded for the benefit of those who are not present. This way, one would be able to seek out someone who attended a particular meeting in order to get information. It was agreed that we could put together a template to record this information and put it in the meeting binder.

We discussed the following community projects:

Hanna, the visiting art therapy student, will return on either Monday or Wednesday to work on area signs.

February 23, 2012

The discussion around reception desk policy was again tabled until we receive feedback, via Jessica, from the architect.

We discussed the following community news:

Phoebe Sharp will be returning to the Clubhouse on Monday, March 12th in the afternoon!

We discussed the following community projects:

Creating a picture wall or book of members and staff was proposed, as a clear and easy way for newer members to learn names and faces. A consensus decision was reached to utilize the large wall space by the elevator for this purpose.

It was proposed that we consider exhibiting at the Where to Turn Resource Fair, an annual fair where over 400 social service professionals come to gather information on services for their clients. A consensus decision was reached that we'd like the Clubhouse to attend, and B/E/E will further research and likely register for this event within a week.

Hanna, our visiting art therapy student, will first work on a sign for the B/E/E area. We feel that focusing on one area sign for the time being would be a good use of time and effort.

Standard 7: Reaching Out to Other Members

by Jim McKenna

Standard Seven reads as follows: “The Clubhouse provides an effective reach out system to members who are not attending, becoming isolated in the community or hospitalized.”

This Standard means a lot to me. I often isolate myself from others, for reasons I often can't explain to them or to myself. When I joined the Clubhouse, I was very happy to learn that we had an organized reach out program. I remember asking that I be contacted if I had been absent for a couple of days and hadn't called in. Members and staff have done this for me, and it has helped me keep in contact with the Clubhouse and the rest of the world outside my apartment.

Many members do not need or want to be contacted this often. We do not have a “one size fits all” approach to reach out. If a member is not able to attend regularly, we wouldn't call if we hadn't seen them for a week. Some members do not like to be called; in these cases, we do not force reach out on them.

Along with phone calls, cards are an important part of our reach out program. We send personalized greeting cards to each member on their birthday, and have recently begun sending Clubhouse anniversary cards. We also send cards to members who are ill or unable to make it in. Just as importantly, we send cards to celebrate members' achievements. We have a computerized program for making individualized cards. Many of our members feel deep satisfaction in preparing these cards.

I am proud of our reach out program. It has helped me a good deal and I have seen it benefit many other members. It is one of the things that makes the Clubhouse a special place to be.

Simple Snacks of the Month: Snacks for a day's worth of tasty 1 carb meals

by Chanell Avent

½ Cup cottage cheese
½ Cup canned pineapple (in natural juice)
Total = 1 Carb



2 teaspoons peanut butter
½ Cup apple slices
Total= 1 Carb

2/3 Cup light yogurt
1 oz. raw almonds (approximately 23 nuts)
Total= 1 Carb



Community Resource Corner

by Michelle Hunter

Section 8 Waiting List Reopens March 2012!!

Are you or someone you know in need of affordable housing? The Allegheny County Housing Authority will accept applications for the Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) waiting list March 13, 2012 through March 30, 2012. On April 20, 2012, a lottery will be drawn randomly via Allegheny County Housing Authority's computer system. The computer will place the applicant names on the waiting list in the order drawn.

This is an online application process. Beginning March 13, 2012, you can apply at the ACHA's website www.achsng.com. Clubhouse members can stop by the Howard Levin Clubhouse on Thursdays and Fridays during the application dates and I can assist you with completing the application online. Another option is to complete the application at the Allegheny County Housing Authority's downtown office at 625 Stanwix Street, 12th Floor, Pittsburgh, PA 15222.

As always, I am here to answer any questions that you may have. If I don't know the answer, I'll try my best to find it for you.

Free Tax Preparation!!

Tax season is here and this may be of value to you or someone you know. In 2011, did you earn up to \$20,000 or have a family income of up to \$40,000?

If so, the Allegheny County Money In Your Pocket Coalition may be able to help you file your taxes for free. IRS certified volunteers are available by appointment at various locations throughout Allegheny County to assist you.

To find out if you may qualify or to schedule an appointment, please call 412-255-1155 or visit www.pghfreetaxes.org.



Guest Cheffing

by Anna E.



On Thursday, February 17, I was the guest chef for lunch. I worked in the kitchen with Eric, Dan, and Sumit to make a spinach lasagna. It is a fairly simple recipe, made with layers of lasagna noodles, sauce, cheese, and spinach. For a side dish, Dan taught us how to make a rather gourmet fruit compote soup with a spiced cream cheese drizzle. It was delicious!

Anybody in the Clubhouse community is invited to guest chef in our kitchen and lead us in making one of their personal kosher recipes. It can be for a lunch or a Friday dinner. Members, staff, and our community supporters have all guest cheffed here, and we enjoy learning their recipes. It is a fun experience for us all!



HLC Attends the Port Authority Public Hearing

by Mike Hogan and Virginia Wendt

Due to a \$64 million dollar budget shortfall, the Port Authority Transit of Allegheny County (PAT) is proposing drastic cuts in service and another rate increase. This circumstance is caused by increasing Legacy costs to retirees, and a generous wage and benefits package to current employees. PAT has appealed to the governor and the state legislature for relief, but their entreaties have been rebuffed by both Gov. Corbett, and the Republican controlled State House. Given this reality, the service cuts and fare increase appear to be inevitable.

On February 29th, Port Authority held a public hearing wherein members of the community, and organizations that are concerned with public transit issues, could testify to the need for this service and the inevitable harm caused by the proposed cuts. A group of members from Howard Levin Clubhouse traveled to speak at this public hearing. All HLC members spoke movingly and forcefully, describing how their lives would be affected should service diminish or be cut entirely. Those who attended and spoke were Lee M., Patti E., Sean L., Wendell H., Delaine S., Aileen Z., Betsy S., and Virginia Wendt (Virginia also read a prepared statement by Mimi G., who was unable to attend).

This important issue affects us all, bus riders or not! Without the service of public transportation, many members and staff of our clubhouse community would be unable to attend. The health and wellness of our community is directly affected by this issue. For more information about how you can make yourself heard, call or visit HLC and remember to check out the Advocacy bulletin board.



Snow Tubing at Seven Springs

Mike Hogan

In February, the Howard Levin Clubhouse social program was in full swing. We had done in the past interesting but sedate outings like a trip to Clayton and the Andy Warhol Museum. This time we wanted to pull out all the stops. So the HLC loaded up Howie and headed east to the place that always has snow—Seven Springs Resort.

The problem was that it didn't have much snow. The snow tubing slopes were covered by machine groomed snow. This was adequate for the purpose, but it had melted and refrozen, making the slopes slick and much faster than we had anticipated. The snow tubing lanes looked like trouble, and they proved to be as advertised.

While individual tubing is a lot of fun, getting a group together for a pack run is what the snow tubing experience is about. At the top of the steepest hill, we formed a tube train. (See picture below). We had no idea that this run would be a disaster.

Through the first 3/4 of the run, things were going good. But, we were picking up speed like a NASCAR stock car, and we had no idea how to slow down! We sped through the landing zone, and then rammed headfirst into the chain link fence at the base of the hill! Catherine O. took the brunt of the collision. I was in the back of the train, and tried to slow us down, but got a scrape on my right shin for my troubles. I wouldn't notice it for several days. Fortunately, the others were unhurt.

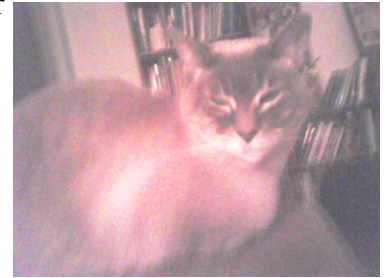
Snow tubing reminded me of my youth. I used to sled down hillsides much steeper than these, and I rarely got hurt. The slopes at Seven Springs are controlled mayhem. We found out that the controlled part was not always the case, and it made for some good fun. I think that I speak for all that we're looking forward to some more chaos next year.



Pet of the Month: Nilla

by Mimi Gillis

An e-mail came into Kathy Hurwitz saying that they needed a person to adopt their cat, as their children & grandchildren were allergic to her. I went home and asked my husband if we could take her into our home and surprisingly he agreed. The day of her arrival I was so happy. Her owner Enid brought her to our apartment. Nilla was our new 10 year old Siamese cat's name. Enid brought her supplies: a cat carrier, toys, her favorite thing (a sock), and her records for the vet. She was okay until Enid left. The only place she would stay was my bedroom closet so I put her food, water, and litter box in there. For two weeks she would not allow me or my husband anywhere near her without hissing or meowing. Finally she began to wander out of her space. It took more time, but if I held out my hand she would sniff it then let me pet her. Nilla, as Enid did tell me, likes yarn. She loves it when I knit. She is a wonderful companion. Nilla likes to be near me a lot when I am home. She will cuddle up close to me and purr. Recently she started to think she is a person and will just put her head under the covers and sleep. I am very grateful to Kathy and Enid for making this possible.



Remembering Whitney Houston

by Eric Smith

While some of her songs may be before my time, R&B/Pop singer Whitney Houston was a phenomenal success in the music industry. From her pop-style debut album *Whitney Houston* to her R&B album, *Just Whitney*, she was able to capture the listener with her one of her kind vocal delivery. I remember going to the local ice skating rink and having fun skating to 80's Whitney songs. She was also fun to sing and ride along in the car with my babysitter in the 80's and early 90's.

In 1983, Houston was discovered by music media mogul Clive Davis, who worked on executive producing for different bands and artists of that era (and helped discover some of them too).

Recommended Whitney hits to download:

My Love Is Your Love (1998). Catchy fun R&B/pop tunes from the late 90's and from her successful platinum comeback album of the same title.

Bargain Bin Record Reviews by Mike Hogan

Failte! Welcome to the March edition of my long running column. As is the custom of this column, March is the month that I discuss aspects of Irish music. This is in honor of my patron saint, Patrick. In the past, I have discussed Irish Celtic music, and the music of Enya. This year I'd like to talk about several other Irish women singers, who are not as well known as Eithne Brennan.

These singers share one trait. They are all more political than Enya. This includes Enya's older sister, **Moya Brennan** (nee Maire). Moya Brennan has had a twenty-five year career as the lead singer of Clannad. As such, she moved into the forefront of Irish music. Moya has had a solo career for more than 20 years, and has released seven albums in this time. They are mainly rock albums with a hint of Irish sensibilities. Her last studio lp, *Two Horizons*, has a heavy, "new age" production sheen, to the point of obscuring Moya's singing. I'd go with one of her earlier albums for an introduction.

Irish singers **Karan Casey** and **Mary Black** take a decidedly more political approach. Mary Black's "Song for Ireland" is a direct challenge to Irish citizens to take back their government. Karan Casey's roots are in jazz and folk. She has since come to sing Celtic-type music. Karan was the lead vocalist of **Solus**, an advanced Irish Celtic band. I have Mary Black's debut CD, *Completed*, and two Casey CDs. I really enjoy them, and pull them out when I need a Celtic fix.

Another Celtic singer who is not typically "Irish" is **Maev**. (She pronounces her name "Mave"). Maev has a bell clear soprano which resonates well with traditional Irish ballads, such as "Red Red Rose." Many of these songs could be sung in a "Celtic" way, but this is not the best for Maev's voice. She was the lead soprano of a choir called **Anuna**, and she still sings in the style of a choir singer. I find that it is a thrill to listen to her, but she is less relevant to contemporary events than Casey or Black.

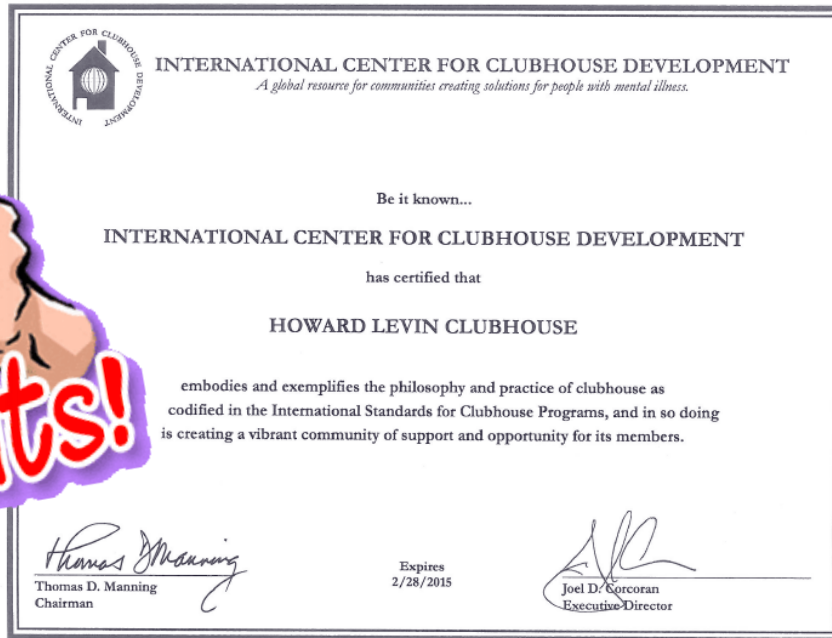
Finally, there is the **Celtic Woman**. This is a musical troupe of several Celtic singers who sing Irish songs before a big orchestra. Maev was a member a few years ago. The Celtic Woman musical act was the brain child of Michael Flatly, who also gave us *Riverdance*. I find the big orchestra bogs down the singers, and detracts from the Celtic flavor of the music. Nonetheless, many people like this kind of music and the Celtic Woman CDs and Videos sell quite well.

With St. Patrick's Day upon us, I always like to do something which reflects my Irish heritage. This year I'm not up to reading James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* or listening to all seventeen of the LPs released by Clannad, as I have in the past. Listening to these Celtic singers is a relaxing way to celebrate my traditional holiday. 'Til next month—Slan!

As always:
KEEP ON ROCKIN'



WE DID IT AGAIN!



**Another 3 year certification!
Yahoo! HLC members and staff!**

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