



# The Starry Night Gazette

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www.vincenthouse.org

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## Our Emerging Identity

### RECOVERY THROUGH WORK PARTNERSHIPS

Our defining moment has arrived. While intentions have been clear since our creation eight years ago, our identity has not always been obvious. What exactly is Vincent House? What are our values? What do we strive to accomplish? The Vincent House community has decided to look within in order to answer these questions. This edition of our Gazette is dedicated our journey of self-discovery.

As you may know, Vincent House was founded by two parents who witnessed the dire need for increased rehabilitation services for persons living with severe and persistent mental illnesses throughout Pinellas County. Please consider these important facts:

- The **Florida's jails and prisons comprise** our largest treatment facility for people living with psychiatric illnesses.
- Psychiatric illnesses comprise the **largest disability group** on governmental benefits.
- The **highest unemployment rate of any disability group** belongs to psychiatric illnesses, with national studies putting that unemployment rate at a dreadful **85%**.
- **1 in 4 families** are affected by schizophrenia, bipolar, major depressions, PTSD or other psychiatric illnesses.
- **Florida is consistently ranked 48<sup>th</sup> or 49<sup>th</sup>** out of 50 states, in per capita mental health funding.

So what's the answer to the current crisis in mental health? Our new branding provides a no nonsense solution: **Recovery Through Work Partnerships**. It's a back-to-basics approach centered on work. Yes, W-O-R-K. Vincent House finds success through hard work, personal responsibility and the collaborative efforts of members and their families, community leaders, mental health professionals and area businesses. The results are remarkable: Reductions in hospitalization and incarceration rates, increased productivity, rising employment earnings and a dramatic increase in quality of life. The pictorial column at right will give you a clearer understanding of the rehabilitation process of our Recovery Through Work Partnership.

#### Recovery Through Work Partnerships

Back to Basics - Efficient - Cost Effective

#### How do costs<sup>1</sup> compare?

\$45	\$180	\$1,000	\$40,000	\$40,500
Daily cost/person	Daily cost/person	Daily cost/person	annual cost / person	annual cost / person
<b>Recovery Through Work Partnerships</b>	<b>Psychiatric Treatment Outpatient</b>	<b>Psychiatric Treatment Inpatient</b>	(costs to society) <b>Incarceration</b>	(costs to society) <b>Homelessness</b>

<sup>1</sup>Sources for cost analysis include SAMHSA, the Public Defender's Office and Pinellas County providers. For more information, contact Vincent House.

#### A Life Renewed

By Ed Dyer

On February 6, 2010, I became homeless for the first time. It was the toughest thing I ever did in my life. I stayed at a local shelter. I didn't like the place and the people there made me very nervous. I was going thru some mental illness, so living there was not good for me. If it was not for a great friend coming to my rescue, I don't know where I would have ended up. My life has greatly improved now with the help of Vincent House.

When I first started in **Recovery Through Work** at Vincent House I had no idea what I

wanted to do. With the Food Service Team at Vincent House I built my stamina and learned how to give good service, run the dishwasher and wait on tables. I thought I'd never get to work again. Even in this difficult economy, Vincent House helped me land an awesome job at the Coast Guard Air Station. I really love this job and I even earned the "Catch A Star" award this past month at work. My favorite part of the job is working in the dish room. I really like working with Bill Dietz, my Project Manager, and the other supervisors. Now that I have a job and good confidence I can focus even more on my recovery.

*Ed is pictured at right with his first paycheck.*

#### SNAPSHOTS Recovery Through Work in action

##### Our State-of-the-Art Facility



##### Membership is Voluntary



##### Hands-On Training



##### ...More Training Options



##### Training Leads to Paid Employment



##### And that First Paycheck!



## Armed Services' Veterans Speak Out

### Why Care about Recovery Through Work Partnerships?

By Gordon DeLonay

What does our community get out of the **Recovery Through Work Partnership** at Vincent House? Why should our State Representatives care about the need for a place like Vincent House?

I am a member diagnosed with and being treated for bipolar disorder. Because of my illness, my world was turned upside down. All my relationships as a father, a husband, a brother, a son, as well as a member of society were wrecked and failed. I was only capable of creating chaos that left a trail of pain and confusion to those closest to me, leading to ultimate isolation from them. I became a burden and liability to my employers and those I worked for, leading to multiple terminations and complete unemployment. Through episodes of incarceration and hospitalization, I finally ended up homeless and totally alienated, having nothing but the clothes on my back. Finally accepting my illness and being committed to recovery, I was able to find treatment through the Veterans Administration Medical Services. As a veteran, I was extremely fortunate to be directed to Vincent House.

With the **Recovery Through Work Partnership** at Vincent House, I have been able to be reintegrated into the community and workplace from which I had been absent for more than twelve years due to my illness. In doing this, I have established my dignity and self-esteem. I have rediscovered long dormant skills and talents. Finally, with what is now a complete approach to mental health rehabilitation, thanks to the **Recovery Through Work Partnership**, I have a balanced and realistic self-reliance. How can my community and all those around me not benefit by the contribution I am now able to give? The answers to my questions are now self evident. As for me, my thankfulness and my gratitude for the life I now have goes beyond words and beyond my capability of expression.



Gordon, shown above while training at Vincent House, is currently in paid employment.

## Something to Prove



Curtis is one of nearly 40 Armed Services' Veterans who attend Vincent House.

By Curtis Mitchell

I may be considered a 100% disabled veteran of the U.S. Coast Guard, but I want to prove that I am not all washed up. I do not want to wind up in a nursing home or some other institution to be forgotten about. I want to have meaning and purpose in my life. Vincent House helps me in **Recovery Through Work**. I am getting job skills that I will offer to my community and society. I am not a danger to myself or others, and I want to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative. So I am coming to Vincent House and I will prove that I am not all washed up!

## RECOVERY THROUGH WORK PARTNERSHIPS the costs of waiting

The following excerpts come from a presentation given by the our Program Coordinator to Pinellas County Legislators at our Annual Legislative Breakfast in January, 2011.

By William McKeever



Every member who attends Vincent House has a diagnosis of severe and persistent mental illness that includes schizophrenia, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), bipolar and major depression. Our members face huge challenges such as homelessness, incarceration, stigma, unemployment, and frequent psychiatric hospitalizations.

Imagine that your loved one is intent on climbing a high mountain – but that he or she has never even gone on a hike before. Who would say, “There’s no need to need to train or have the right equipment or be prepared. If you have a problem, don’t worry; just call 911 or Mountain Rescue.” Of course, none of us would say that. Instead, we would urge our loved ones to prepare, build their skills and have the right equipment. In our culture, we expect that persons with disabilities integrate society and lead productive lives. But with mental illnesses, individuals often have a difficult, treacherous mountain climb.

As a society, how do we support the integration of persons living with mental illnesses? How are we spending our money? It seems that we specialize in rescue missions and emergency services. Simply put, our society deals with mental illness as a

perpetual “911” crisis: Inpatient hospitalizations, outpatient care, emergency room visits, homeless shelters and incarcerations. Those are expensive services, ones we all pay for as taxpayers. Isn’t there a better and more cost effective way?

Vincent House has an answer: **Recovery Through Work Partnerships**. *Why work?* Work is our starting point, work is our means, work is our method and work is our end result. It’s all about work. Through work, we help people acquire the skills, abilities and self-confidence needed to climb that mountain on their own and become productive members of society. And it is through work that we break cycles of homelessness, psychiatric hospitalizations, incarcerations and unemployment.

Unfortunately, our current funding levels do not allow us to meet the demand of people clamoring to get into Vincent House. At last count, I found 264 applicants on our list for admission. Imagine, on an average year we accept 65-70 new members. New applicants may now wait years for the services we offer. What might those 264 people with bipolar or schizophrenia or PTSD be doing while they wait? We’ve discovered that Vincent House has many waiting rooms, but not the type that you might expect. Our waiting rooms are the county jail, the local homeless shelters, the crisis centers, the unemployment offices, the local psychiatric hospitals and the nearby emergency rooms. Those are expensive waiting rooms, and they are neither comfortable nor hopeful.

There’s a better way - it’s called **Recovery Through Work**.

## The Payoffs are Life Changing

By Jennifer Kraus

When I first came to Vincent House, I was quite down and pretty hopeless. When asked about going to work I said that it would be a good thing but truly in my heart I didn't believe it was possible. I felt that my illness had taken me too far down that I was no longer capable of holding a job.

Through my time at Vincent House I have slowly learned some very useful skills. I have been blessed to be able to work alongside some really wonderful

people at Vincent House. Whenever I'd see employed members, I felt inspired and hopeful through their example.

After three years at Vincent House, I finally became interested in a paid job at the Sirata Beach Resort. I thought, just maybe I could do it! After 8-9 years of not working, I am now earning a paycheck. I can't believe that I have been blessed with this opportunity to be working.

I love working this job and taking care of customer needs. I am so thankful to Vincent House for giving me back a sense of usefulness, hope and purpose.



*Jennifer, above, poses with her very first paycheck in 9 years. Her three years of dedication and commitment to Recovery Through Work have paid off in many ways!*

# Members Employed

## January - February 2011

### Supported & Independent Employment

Dan Adams	Courtesy Clerk
Josh Babcock	Seller
Michael Ballenger	Irrigation Specialist
Nancy Brown	Case Manager Asst.
William Champion	Peer Counselor
Robert Comiskey	Service Clerk
Pat Curtin	Intern
Tess Daniels	Administrative Asst.
Jennifer Dean	Dining Services
John Dean	Laundry Clerk
Edward Dyer	Food Service
Stephanie Freskos	Concessions
Eddie Gares	Recovery Coach
Craig Hayden	Ground Maintenance
Brian Howe	Prep Technician
Patty Kremzier	Housekeeping
Avishan Lashgari	Service Clerk
Bonnie Lawniczak	Machine Operator
Karen Maloof	Filing Clerk
Gayle Marchiniak	Kennel Assistant
Jason Michaud	Environ. Services
Philip Noonan	Maintenance
Jennifer Palm	Dining Services
Angela Parker	Transportation
Michael Ralston	Transportation
Shannon Riley	Recovery Coach
Heidi Rippen	Service Clerk
Ron Ritchie	Transportation
Lisa Sanders	Transportation
Chris Schaer	Telemarketer
Beth Schweikert	Laundry Clerk
Justin Shea	Recreation Leader
Michael Taddeo	Grounds

### TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT

<b>Ann Barker</b>	<b>Senior Services</b>
<b>Shannon Braley</b>	<b>Sirata Beach Resort</b>
<b>Gordon DeLonay</b>	<b>Suncoast Center</b>
<b>Jesse Finkel</b>	<b>Sirata Beach Resort</b>
<b>Shana Gillette</b>	<b>Sirata Beach Resort</b>
<b>Chiquita Ivory</b>	<b>Sirata Beach Resort</b>
<b>Jennifer Kraus</b>	<b>Sirata Beach Resort</b>
<b>Brian Roth</b>	<b>Public Defender's Office</b>
<b>Dawn Scherer</b>	<b>Public Defender's Office</b>
<b>Catherine Smith</b>	<b>Suncoast Center</b>
<b>Shaun Sutherland</b>	<b>Sirata Beach Resort</b>
<b>John Williams</b>	<b>Sirata Beach Resort</b>

### Continuing Education in 2011

<b>Michael Ballenger</b>	<b>Jennifer Palm</b>
<b>Latoya Johnson</b>	<b>Aloysia McPherson</b>
<b>Clyde Kobayashi</b>	<b>Heidi Rippen</b>
<b>Bob Krehbiel</b>	<b>Justin Shea</b>
<b>Gayle Marchiniak</b>	<b>Jason Sulimay</b>
<b>Sean O'Brien</b>	<b>Jackie Williams</b>





## RECOVERY THROUGH WORK PARTNERSHIPS Vincent House Re-Brands Itself!

The current issue is dedicated to our *back to basics* solution to the current crisis in mental health. At a time when mental illness is too quickly associated with despair, violence and hopelessness, our Recovery Through Work Partnership offers a unique, cost-effective solution. Read on to find out why!

### ON THE FAST TRACK: Into the Workforce after Six Weeks

*As a mother of an 11 year old boy, Shana has much at stake. While her success with our Recovery Through Work Partnership is dramatic, much depends on the motivation of each individual member. Vincent House offers a wide range of training opportunities and support services, a state-of-the-art facility and access to the best employers in Pinellas County. Members, like Shana, earn their recovery through effort and hard work.*

By Shana Gillette

Over the years I have been to many day treatment facilities and drop-in centers. Day treatment is okay for a short period of time but what about the long term? Whenever I finish a treatment program I always feel left out in the cold. I don't like to just sit around staring at four walls all day.

I am 43 years old and have been living with mental illness (bipolar) since my mid twenties. Last year I had some issues with my illness that landed me in the psychiatric hospital once again. When my doctor referred me to Vincent house I was skeptical. Now that I am a member here at Vincent House I have found that Vincent House is the opposite of what I thought it would be. Here it is all about *recovery through work*. I have been at Vincent House about six weeks and not only have I learned new skills, I have learned about my potential to be employed.

Every day I come to Vincent House I am dressed professionally and ready to start my day. The hard work has paid off: This week I start working! The feeling of wearing a uniform and just being in the workforce again feels great, of course getting paid does also! Without Vincent House I would not have had these opportunities.



January 23, 2011: Shana engages in intensive training at Vincent House.



February 28, 2011: Shana is successfully employed at the Sirata Beach Resort