



# The Starry Night Gazette

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## **Vincent House Donations, large and small.**

*(By Angela Parker & Elliott Steele)*

Fortunately Vincent House has a huge number of supporters. Almost every day people donate various items such as clothing, shoes, books, irons, accessories, and bedding. Located in the business unit, Hidden Treasurers, our small thrift store, is open to members and staff Monday – Friday from 9AM to 4PM. All items are affordable and our members appreciate this very much. Since we get so many items during the year, we collect them and keep them in storage for our annual yard sale fundraiser. For example, this year's yard sale raised over \$9,000.00 including cash donations, and we still have a 22 foot sailboat for sale. All of the proceeds from the yard sale will be used to help Vincent House members attend the 14<sup>th</sup> International Seminar in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



*(Constantine Tsavaris & Erin Gleason  
enjoy browsing through the newest donations.)*



Jeff Albertson, Aimee Hunnell,  
Gina Sansone & Susan Alvey

In addition, the work of the Clubhouse could not be accomplished without computers. Thanks to our Public Defenders Office and many other donors we are able to complete our daily work in addition to learning a great deal about computers. Although we have not staged a major capital campaign, our cash donations, grants and donations in kind have situated us to move into our own building, after major renovations, mortgage free and debt free. This year to date we have received cash donations from members and outside donors varying from \$1.00 to \$10,000.00 each. They are all very much appreciated, because they collectively help create the tremendous success our members experience at Vincent House.

*A Big Thank You to all our donors for your contributions, both large and small!*

## *“Those whom we support hold us up in life.”*

M.E. von Eschenbach

I wish the voices were not real...I feel like I can't get comfortable at times. I see things in my mind like pictures. I close my eyes and immediately start to dream. Like I see a picture off in the distance of the emptiness I see. I run so many scenarios through my mind of each and every situation. Doc and Vincent House have helped me overcome all this. Sometimes the ambient noise around me has me scared of the world...like I need to stay in the silence. But one thing I've learned to love is music, it's my passion.

I have also started to learn to put myself in other people's shoes because a mental illness is a full time job itself. One thing happens when I play my music - I always look at the bad and not the positive – I critique my own self in a negative way. Then there are friends at Vincent House that have been there to encourage me and helped me through this life long journey of recovering from a mental illness. I think you learn to look at the positive in your life...and yes I'm 21, almost 22, and I'm starting to see the positive things that are now stored in my head for life.

For example the first day I played the piano at Vincent House: Elliott and I picked it up and started conducting to classical music in the car and when Victor came up to me and said I can do it all, I believed him.

I'm truly a gifted pianist and a good person. One day I'm going to have a job as a pianist in a restaurant, church, or maybe even a hotel.

That's my goal.

Justin Shea



This piano was donated to Vincent House by Edna Davidson in memory of her mother-in-law “Grandma Tess” who enjoyed playing for endless hours for many years.

*May she be remembered in the hearts and minds of Vincent House's members and staff for years to come...0*

## **Our Experience at Vincent House**

We, the St. Leo Students, started our internship here at Vincent House on June 1, 2006. Two of us, Kirk Sadowski and Courtney Cavall, worked on Mondays and four other students, Summer Larson, Carrie Piechowicz, Amber Veaut, and Susan Swindle, worked on Thursdays. Kirk and Susan were in Member Services, Amber and Courtney were in Food Services, and Carrie and Summer were in the Business Unit. All of us felt very welcomed by the members and the staff. "We enjoyed the experience of feeling the cohesive and the family atmosphere throughout the clubhouse. All of the members were very open with sharing their experiences with us about their mental illnesses and taught us a lot about the mental health field. We would like to thank everyone for welcoming us in to their clubhouse family and for the learning experience we shared."

**Summer Larson, Carrie Piechowicz, Susan Swindle, Amber Veaut, Kirk Sadowski, and Courtney Cavall.**

## **How Cool is That? Kirk Sadowski**

Hello, my name is Kirk and I am one of the students from Saint Leo University. Dr. Cronin has been one of my professors for over a year now. I have taken several courses from him, and at this time I'm learning the practical part of work in psychology. This practical training is called a practicum, and Vincent House has been my first exposure.

Vincent House is a wonderful place where people come together and help themselves and help one another. The beauty of it is that everyone is put on an equal footing, and everyone gets along. The work gives meaning to the day and of course TEP checks bring smiles all around.

Harmony, equality, diligence, these are the words that come to mind as I think of you all. Vincent House is more than a building or a location; it is a group of people with a heart. This heart is filled with understanding and compassion. So I wish to thank you for sharing your heart with me so freely.

## **HHOOOOTT!!!!**

I never realized what hot really was until I moved down here in September '84. 'Twas okay that fall. Cool and cold for the one week of winter, and okay for spring. SUMMER, on the other hand, is a ***much different pot to cook in*** literally.

I didn't know what SWEATING was until I experienced a Florida summer. Up north when I sweat, physically working at something, my arms would get shiny, and sweat would get into my eyes and that's it!!!

If you know of anyone who is fifty pounds overweight, DO NOT MOVE TO FLORIDA ! ! ! !

Sweating is a whole new way of life! For example:

1. You need to carry water, and not because it's trendy!
2. A sweat towel to catch the drips off your face & the visor of the cap you wear to keep the sun out of your eyes!
3. Sweating so hard that when you change clothes there is not one thing that is dry! i.e. shirt, pants, belt (if leather), underwear, socks, even your shoes and no rain!!
4. In winter, on a cold day, 50-60 degrees, no wind and you can sweat walking!
5. Sitting at home, no A.C., ceiling fan only. Doing nothing but listening to the radio or reading, basically no physical activity and you SWEAT!

Good reason to leave Florida don't you think!

Yours in sweat, **Larry Hanes**

**Standard # 31: The Clubhouse has recreational and social programs during evenings and on weekends. Holidays are celebrated on the actual day they are observed.** We adhere to this Standard by having some pretty neat outings such as picnics, Lowry Park Zoo, Boyd's Nature Preserve and the Clearwater Aquarium. We go to the Fireworks on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, have great Thanksgiving dinners, and fantastic Christmas parties on the actual holiday. Having this Standard fosters socialization and friendship. It also helps the recovery process.

## **Memories of Dear Friends of Vincent House Will Always Be With Us**

**Nancy Doyle**, who first introduced the Veterans at Bay Pines to our work-ordered day program, passed away on July 14, 2006. Her enthusiasm, dedication and contribution to the VA Day Program, NAMI and the growth of Vincent House were freely donated and invaluable beyond measure.

**Robert E. Scofield**, beloved father of Vincent House member, Steve Scofield, passed away on July 9, 2006. Flags were flown at half mast to honor his memory in his hometown of Columbus, Ohio. He will be truly missed by friends and family.

## **ADVOCACY CORNER "Counting the Costs"**

On Tuesday, July 11<sup>th</sup>, Elliott, Elizabeth, and a group of members went to the Radisson Hotel for a Press Conference on Depression "Counting the Costs" and its effects on the State, community and individual. The focus was on the personal and financial costs of depression, need for care, resources, access and support. According to Richard Durstein, about 19 million US adults suffer from Depression; costs of depression are higher in damaged relationships due the inability to hold a job and financial repercussions. People who suffer with major depression find it difficult to get adequate care and treatment. Of those surveyed with major depressions, workability has been affected 20% of the time, 34% relationships with others, 60% relationships with children. The average in Florida is 75% greater than the national average. It takes from 8 up to 12 days to get someone stabilized on a new medication. There is an obvious gap in services between hospitalization and Fact Teams. State Representative Leslie Waters spoke on Florida legislative milestones and her experience while being on the PEHMS' board. She advises to reach out to elected

officials and have them hear the issues. She also gave some information how the state financially helped some of the programs, including Vincent House. "Remember to be persistent, professional and say thank you", she says. Dr. Krishan Batra spoke about the clinical effects and modalities for Therapy and their effectiveness. Many treatments fail because they are not complete. Dr. Batra believes that in year 2020 depression will be the leading debilitating illness. Mary Warner, a member of Vincent House, spoke about her personal experiences with depression. After she was diagnosed with depression, Mary had to be hospitalized because the medicine alone didn't help. In a cycle that went on for years, Mary would go to the hospital, work part time, go back to hospital; she lost her house and car. After a long journey, Mary has settled her life and family. She has become a Vincent House member and spokesperson.

I started my first TEP at Liberty Lanes on June 13, 2006. I work Monday through Thursday 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and every other Friday from 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm. I clean all the glass windows and also sweep outside the building, all the main entrances, keeping all leaves and cigarette butts swept up. I don't mind walking around the parking lot sweeping up trash and cigarette butts. It lets me collect my thoughts for the day. It is a quiet environment. I then return inside the bowling alley to clean the bathrooms. I am called to the alley from the front desk by two-way radio I wear clipped to my belt. I get busy putting the bumpers up on the alleys for the young children. What I enjoy most is seeing the children that come into Liberty Lanes having fun with joy and laughter. I have to make sure all guest and employee lockers are cleaned and in good condition. The staff is nice and has been a big help to me. I am so grateful that Vincent House gave me an opportunity to get employment at Liberty Lanes for the next six months. I also believe that it is important to give back to Vincent House by volunteering my services a couple days a week. On my present job, I have learned to accept more responsibility as well as when I volunteer at clubhouse.

**Karen Maloof**  
with her first paycheck



SOMETIMES I wonder "Is my life important? Have I made a difference in the world or in my life?" My mind tells me, that I don't matter. That people wouldn't even notice or miss me if I wasn't here. Then, when I was having a bad day, out of the blue, a boss who I thought didn't even notice me says "We're glad you came to work today!" Or I get up the nerve to say to a stranger... "Are you the little boy's dad? I've been watching you and want you to know, keep up the good work." He says smiling "Thank you, he's only 4 and I try my best." Or when over dinner I tell a friend, out of concern, that his drinking is killing him. That's when I wonder "Was I put here for a reason, even though I don't know what it is, or why? Have I made a difference in other peoples lives?" So when I'm down with despair and am thinking the worst about myself, that's when God softly whispers to my soul, and tells me "Yes. You really do MATTER." Thought by: Debbie Cibik

My name is Michael L. Ballenger. I'm 21 years old and 6 foot 1. My hobbies include video games, movies, and last but not least, my Legos, which should never have an age limit! I also love sports, it is my life. Church, family, and then sports. My mental illness has plagued me for about a year. The first time I went to a not so pleasant place. Suncoast is much better. My father did some investigating to get me started at Vincent House. Almost since I started going to Vincent House I have been at Casey's Café. They have some deals there, like coffee for a quarter. Also, Vincent House started me on my first TEP (Transitional Employment Placement) on 7-11-06 for about 6 to 9 months. So that has gone on for about a week now. I also have two other jobs. One is for my father, and that is sprinkler installation, and that is for commercial only. Another job is for the Saint Petersburg Times. I'm a correspondent for high school football. So in September I might be working all three jobs at once. That's tough

enough on a normal person much less a person who has a mental illness such as me. Also, Vincent House is very family oriented.

The people there are very nice. OK, sorry about the novel, I wrote. This article comes to an end. Sincerely, Michael Ballenger



Michael volunteering at Casey's Café

## WORKING NINE TO FIVE CURRENT TEP's

**Michael Ballenger** (1st TEP), **Justin Shea**, **Daniel Shellabarger**, **Joe Stabile**, and **Alex Houser** are members of this newest Group TEP at Raytheon which began on June 6, 2006.

**Joe Brinegar**, **Craig Haydon**, **Michael Ralston** and **Michael Taddeo** have worked a Group TEP at 688 Skatepark from 3-20-06.

**Debbie Cibik** – is on her 2<sup>nd</sup> TEP at Galleria/Castle Supply Co.  
**Larry Haines** – 2<sup>nd</sup> TEP is at Suncoast Center-Medical Records.  
**Carol Jackson** – 3<sup>rd</sup> TEP is at Suncoast Center-Medical Records.

**Karen Maloof** - 1<sup>st</sup> TEP at Liberty Lanes as a Lane Attendant.  
**Susan Phillips** - Does filing on her 2<sup>nd</sup> TEP at Senior Services.  
**Lisa Sanders** - is Lane Attendant on her 3<sup>rd</sup> TEP at Liberty Lanes.

**Gina Sansone** - 1<sup>st</sup> TEP at Suncoast Center - Medical Records.

**Athena Steele** - enjoys filing on her 2<sup>nd</sup> TEP at Senior Services.  
**Judy Wilson** - enjoys her 3<sup>rd</sup> TEP at Galleria/Castle Supply Co.

The expression on each face of our members while receiving their first pay check says everything: **Judy Wilson**, **Joe Stabile**, **Alex Houser**, **James Kraus**, **Joe Brinegar**, **Daniel Shellabarger**, **Justin Shea**.

## MEMBERS in SUPPORTED, INDEPENDENT & CASUAL EMPLOYMENT

Alice Bongiorno, Nancy Brown, Nicholas Cercone, Elizabeth Cook, Tess Daniels, Christine Dotson, Eddie Gares, Jack Gordon, Kim Harrell, Craig Haydon, Aimee Hunnell, Elizabeth Hoff, Kim Kobayashi, Bonnie Lawniczak, John Markle, Zara Moore, Rand Pierce, Bob Pitts, Warren Prince, David Reed, Shannon Riley, Beth Schweikert, Michael Taddeo, Terry Taggart, George Torrence and Edwin Wohlford.

Please, mark in your calendar:

**Employment Dinner is on Thursday, August 3, 4:00 PM.**



## August 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Grilled Cheese w/ Tomato Soup	2 Caesar Salad  Matt Lewis	3 Moussaka <i>Employment Dinner</i> <i>4:00 pm</i> Clarence Case	4 Chef's Surprise  Robert Pitts	5 <i>Exotic Bird Show</i>
6  Eric Peek	7 Christine's Surprise Craig Haydon Bonnie Lawniczak Jeff Suzanne	8  Chili Dogs  Mike Erland	9  Tuna Salad Wrap with Chips & Carrot Stix	10  Beef & Bean Burrito with Nacho Chips Athena Steele	11  Alex's Stuffed Peppers	12  <i>Movie, Games &amp; Pop Corn at Vincent House</i>
13  Eric Seigfried	14  Chicken Stir Fry  Theresa Pearson Rodney Bell	15  Crab Salad  Eileen Jones	16  Ron's Pasta	17  Chris Scher's Enchiladas	18  Liver and Onions  Clyde Kobayashi Maria Pierce Ray Dunning	19  <i>Devil Rays Game</i>  Chris O'Hagan
20  Ed Wohlford Steve Helgesen	21  Taco Salad	22  Gyros  Dave Scanlan	23  Pizza  John Markle Nancy Brown	24  Bacon and Cheese Burgers Sheila Geiger Karen Maloof	25  Ralph's Lasagna	26  <i>Salsa Dance lessons at Baywalk</i> Stephanie Harrell
27	28  Baked Fish	29  Chicken Salad Stuffed Tomato	30  Eggplant Parmesan	31  Crab Cakes  Elliot Freeman		

