



# The Starry Night Gazette

Vincent House, 4801 78<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Pinellas Park, FL 33781  
Telephone 727- 541- 0321



Volume 5 Edition 10

www.vincent-house.org

OCTOBER 2007

## THE GAMBLE

By Clyde Kazuo Kobayashi

It was 2001 when Dianne and Elliott Steele approached the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Aleisa McKinlay of DCF was familiar with drop-in centers and day treatment programs. However, she and her colleague Jeffrey Watts were not prepared for what was yet to come.

Intrigued by the idea of "Vincent House", they listened intently, learning that participants were called "members" not "consumers" or "clients." Elliott Steele further explained that the International ICCD Standards are regarded as a "code of ethics" for staff and a "bill of rights" for members. Equally impressive was the rigorous evaluation a Clubhouse undergoes for a three-year certification and the phenomenal testimonials from Clubhouse members across the globe. Some states like Pennsylvania and Massachusetts have over 30 Clubhouses! Vincent House's goal is to surpass those totals in Florida.

The closing of G. Pierce Wood State Hospital in Arcadia made additional funds available. Could Vincent House be a channel for some of this funding?? It was a risk that DCF considered taking and there was something about the Steele's determination that inspired confidence.

I initially heard about Vincent House at a drop-in center and my first visit was on February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2003. Sometimes, there'd be just three members in the work units! Vincent House was still in its infancy. Two large coolers were used as a refrigerator and a gas grill for cooking. In order to build membership, staff sometimes worked 12 hours a day or more, including seven days a week for the first six months.

Back then I was a broken man... I lost my will to work and consequently my will to live... unconsciously... my Japanese heritage worked against me; I yearned for death by ritual suicide... If it weren't for the sincere dedication of Vincent House's staff I wouldn't be alive today...

In my eyes it took extraordinary foresight and courage for DCF to fund a program as revolutionary as Vincent House. It was an untimely gamble, one for which I will always be eternally grateful...



Pictured from left to right: Dianne Steele, Vincent House; Jeffrey Watts, DCF Circuit Director, Adult Mental Health; Clyde Kobayashi, Vincent House member; Debbie Spellman, DCF Program Administrator, Mental Health and Substance Abuse; Elliott Steele, Vincent House; William Janes, Assistant Secretary, DCF, Mental Health and Substance Abuse.

Wednesday, September 19<sup>th</sup> was a milestone. The new Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Abuse visited Vincent House from the Tallahassee office of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Well dressed in a two piece suit he casually introduced himself as "Bill Janes." Impressed by Vincent House's high morale, he clearly saw how the International Center for Clubhouse Development (ICCD) Clubhouse Model and the "work ordered day" helped members return to work while preventing suicides, hospitalizations and criminality. He commented on the need for more prevention and rehabilitation services, like those offered by Clubhouse programs. Mr. Janes is a true visionary.

Mr. Janes' enjoyed his visit to Vincent House; it was his first experience of an ICCD certified Clubhouse. Accompanying Mr. Janes were Debbie Spellman, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program Administrator and Jeffrey Watts, DCF Circuit Director, both of whom were already well familiar with our Clubhouse. They spent the entire afternoon talking at length with members and staff. DCF is currently considering funding more Clubhouses across the state of Florida and this informational visit by Mr. Janes was an important part of the process.

### CURRENT MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS

Lifetime Members	Average Daily Attendance	Total Member Earnings
426	46	\$300,000+

"We are very proud of Vincent House. Vincent House has proven to be a place where people with mental illness can go and get the support they need. We hope more places like Vincent House become available for people with mental illness. Thanks to the members and staff of Vincent House for all that you do!"

Mr. Jeffrey Watts  
Director, Adult Mental Health  
DCF, Circuits 6, 12, & 13

In late 2002, Florida's Department of Children and Families, under Circuit Director Jeffrey Watts, decided to provide funding to a new and unproven organization named Vincent House. Since that modest beginning, Vincent House has achieved three-year certification by the International Center for Clubhouse Development, currently serves over 400 lifetime members and has promoted the development of ICCD Clubhouses across the State of Florida. The Department of Children and Families continues to be our primary funding source. Thanks for believing in us!

## MY GREAT HOPE: Member Plans to Attend the International Clubhouse Seminar

*Carla McPherson will be joining nine other members and staff at the 14th International ICCD Seminar in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from October 13 - 18. She is looking forward to this unique opportunity.*

By Carla McPherson

Since I am under thirty, I am concerned mostly for young adults within the Clubhouse setting. We need to be catching them before they get off course and get them back on track before age 25-30 so that they know more about themselves and are able to know the repercussions of their symptoms. If they are able to know and set their goals, they'll find other ways around the obstacle course.

The opportunity to attend the International Seminar in Milwaukee is the chance to learn more about Clubhouse. I want to connect to young adults from all over the world and advocate for the daily pressures that all of us face,



such as social discrimination and peer pressure. It's hard to try to fit into a society where people with mental illness are not understood. The stigma of mental illness means that people want to keep us at a distance.

I grew up in a place where you had to be perfect in order to be accepted. That's not easy. I think that the whole subject of mental illness is taboo. So by going to the Seminar, I hope to clear up some of the misunderstanding for youth and learn ways that we can empower ourselves to better our lives.

Clubhouse is a place where I can accept my mental illness, enjoy my life and accomplish my goals. There's a lot of successful people out there with mental illness. I aspire to have a career in law enforcement. And that's going to be me in five years—one of those successful people with mental illness!

## Clubhouse Members Make the Difference Discount Bus Pass Program Approved!

By Lisa Sanders

On Wednesday, September 5<sup>th</sup>, several Vincent House members and I attended a public budgetary hearing at the Pinellas Suncoast Transportation Authority (PSTA). The Board of Directors of the PSTA was proposing an elimination of the bulk pass discount fares for human service providers and their consumers. It was our opportunity to tell them what these bus passes mean to us.

When we arrived to the hearing, we filled out yellow cards requesting permission to speak. Then, we sat in the audience and waited our turn. When they called my name to speak, I got up to the microphone and faced the Board members who sat at a large semi-circle table. I had only three minutes to talk. I wasn't nervous at all – I just kept thinking about how important these bus passes are to me. I was determined to tell the Board members my side of the story. My discount bus pass gets me to work everyday. It's a part-time job at the Bowling Alley and I never miss a day! Without a bus pass, I would not be able to go to work. If I didn't keep my job, I would not be able to pay for my apartment. It would turn all of our lives upside down. I wouldn't be able to survive on my disability check alone, and probably end up back at an Assisted Living Facility (ALF). That's a place I never want to return to.

Several other Vincent House members went up to the microphone to speak. They shared their stories and told the Board how important these bus passes were. These passes are tickets into the society, for work, socializing, shopping, meals and recovery programs like Vincent House. Without bus passes, it's easy to isolate at home, and that's not good for people with mental illnesses. But, not everyone in the audience was in agreement with continuing the discount bus pass program. Some people spoke against it. After everyone in the audience had their chance to speak, the PSTA Board discussed the need to support the most vulnerable people in Pinellas County. They voted 11-2 to put the bulk pass discount fares back into the budget! Thanks to the PSTA Board for taking the time to listen.

Now, when I see other people on the bus with discount fares, many with disabilities, it makes my heart feel good knowing that I helped them to have a rightful place in society.

## Vincent House looks to expand Diversity



*Member Eddie Gares, pictured at left, gives tour in Spanish to visitors from Bolivia and Peru.*

By Eddie Gares

I recently had the privilege of giving the first tour of Vincent House in Spanish. This comes following my translation of the Vincent House brochure into Spanish to help the Latino population in this region of Florida. This first tour was given to visitors from Peru and Bolivia as they learned about all the opportunities that Vincent House has to offer its members. The guest were also treated to a wonderful lunch of Egg Foo Young and Egg Drop Soup, which they thoroughly enjoyed!

Pinellas County has a growing Spanish speaking population that includes people from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. While Tampa has always had greater diversity than Pinellas County, we are finding more Latinos moving to this side of the Bay. We plan to distribute our Spanish language brochures to prospective members, community resources and health providers that work with the Latino community.

***Vincent House is looking to increase the diversity of its membership and staff by reaching out to young adults and ethnic minorities.***

## Vincent House Members

# CELEBRATING RECOVERY THROUGH WORK

during September - 2007

### TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT

Jeffrey Albertson	Skate Park
Gigi Behar	Liberty Lanes
Bill Champion	Senior Services
Brian Craver	Skate Park
John Diede	Skate Park
Larry Haines	Seashell Books
Gary Hinkson	Pro-Clean/Raytheon
Alex Houser	Tri-Glo/Raytheon
Carol Jackson	Galleria Plumbing
Cindy Kelly	Suncoast Center
Stephen Gregosky III	Seashell Books
Jason Michaud	Tri-Glo/Raytheon
Karen Maloof	Tri-Glo/Raytheon
Ron Ritchie	Tri-Glo/Raytheon
Lisa Sanders	Liberty Lanes
Chris Schaer	Tri-Glo/Raytheon
Allyn Spidella	Tri-Glo/Raytheon
Joe Stabile	Pro-Clean/Raytheon
Athena Steele	Suncoast Center
Michael Taddeo	Suncoast Center
Jackquelyn Williams	Skate Park
Ed Wohlford	Tri-Glo/Raytheon

### Supported & Independent Employment

Susan Alvey	William Kuropatwinski
Alice Bongiorno	Bonnie Lawniczak
Nancy Brown	Gayle Marchiniak
Nicholas Cercone	Philip Noonan
Debbie Cibik	Rand Pierce
Tess Daniels	Bob Pitts
Don DiCarlo	Warren Prince
Eddie Gares	Shannon Riley
Art Hallman	Heidi Rippen
Kim Harrell	Beth Schweikert
Kathleen Hartwell	Theresa Stabile
Elizabeth Hoff	Terry Taggart
Eileen Jones	George Torrence

### Casual Employment

Kerry Birchett  
Gerard Caldarise  
Christine Dotson  
V. Mike Hodges  
Aimee Hunnell  
John Markle

### Continuing Education

Bridgette Elias  
Kathleen Hartwell  
Michael Serkes  
Justin Shea  
Jeff Suzanne  
Edwin Wohlford

## Happy Driver Update!!!

By Debbie Cibik

Well I no longer work for the school bus company, the job got to be just a bit too much. I was working 9 hour days and trying to deal with the children got to be harder and harder. But don't fret, I got another job right off the bat. The new company I work for is a senior citizen independent and assisted living home. I have the great pleasure of driving wonderful folks and two vehicles, one is a wheelchair lift bus and the other is a van. I drive the residents to and from doctors' appointments, to various outings like the Pier, Wal-Mart, the bank, or the grocery store.

The people that I work with have all made me feel like one of the family. We just had our company picnic and my partner and I both went. I was also asked by my boss if I would like to join her bowling league, which I gladly did. I also get a free lunch everyday and/or breakfast, depending on how early I've got to work. The residents at the home are all wonderful; they have accepted me with open arms and warm hearts as the new driver. I'm having a ball and loving my new job. I look forward to going into work each day. I work on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays for about 3 to 4 hours per day.

The best part of the deal is I'm no longer going to lose my disability benefits. This was my biggest worry of all before with my other job. While I no longer drive a school bus, I'm still doing what I love...driving, only now it's with a company that I feel at home with.



**Van Gogh's Palette, Inc.**  
**4801 78th Avenue**  
**Pinellas Park, FL 33781**  
**Return Service Requested**



**NONPROFIT ORG**  
**U.S. POSTAGE PAID**  
**ST. PETERSBURG, FL**  
**PERMIT # 2401**

With a friend by your side, washing dishes in the Food Services Unit can be fun!



## OCTOBER 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Cubed Steak  <i>Mary Opalanko</i>	Jeff's Macaroni & Cheese	Tuna Salad <i>Eunice Carter</i> <i>Malcolm Campbell</i> Employment Dinner— Chicken Alfredo	Sloppy Joes  <i>Brian Rivard</i>	Chef's Surprise	NAMI "End the Mystery" DINNER  <i>Johna Klarich</i> <i>Harry Boucher</i>
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	Beef Stew  <i>Kim Harrell</i>	Sausage & Sauerkraut	Chicken Caesar Salad	Chicken & Rice Black Beans	Chef's Surprise  Pizza & Movie 4:30 - 7:30pm	NAMI SUNSET STROLL  <i>Susan Phillips</i>
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	Tuna Melt & Tomato Soup  <i>Michael Kilroy</i>	Chicken & Rice  <i>Ed Creter</i>	Hot Dogs <i>Steven Frank</i> Employment Dinner— Pasta Primavera	Ravioli	Chef's Surprise	PICNIC HONEY- MOON / CALADESI ISLAND STATE PARK
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
	Quesadillas	Vegetarian Casserole  <i>Ginger Arauz</i>	Eggplant Parmesan	Spaghetti & Meatballs  <i>Art Hallman</i>	Chef's Surprise Social Event Halloween Party 4:30	
28	29	30	31			
<i>Leslie Leuzinger</i>	Ziti	Alex's Shepherd's Pie	Cheeseburgers & Potato Salad  HALLOWEEN			

**Menus are subject to change. Casey's Café offers alternative lunch – call to order before 11:00 A.M.**