



# The Starry Night Gazette

Vincent House, 4801 78<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
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www.vincent-house.org

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## Our Fifth Anniversary

### Five years of hope and opportunities – a member perspective

*The effects of mental illnesses can be devastating, to the individual, family and society. On January 20, 2003, Vincent House opened its doors and invited anyone struggling with mental illnesses to join an adventure of hope and opportunity. Ours was a modest beginning at a local strip mall, with just four staff and a few new members attending. As a new program, we needed to convince providers, case managers and "recruit" potential members. It took a lot of time and energy to make Clubhouse known. Five years later all that has changed: We have 4 - 8 potential members walking through our doors every week, seeking the recovery and transformation that Vincent House offers. The story that follows traces the experience of one such member.*

By Angela Parker

In January, 2003, when Vincent House opened, I didn't even know that a place like Clubhouse existed. At the time, I was living in Sarasota and my life was falling apart. I lost my husband, my family, my full-time job and my home, all due to delusions, hallucinations and telepathic thinking. The voices in my head told me to sell my home and move to Atlanta. I was intimidated by my mind to do so, and later in 2003, I moved to Georgia without knowing any family or friends in that area. Driving through Atlanta traffic was scary and very dangerous. I moved into an apartment and



Angela Parker and Alex Houser selling meal tickets. They are two of nearly 450 members.

joined a drop-in center. It was a very frightening part of my life. I was so sick and alone, and had no one to count on.

The voices told me that if I moved back to Florida, I would be hurt, so for a long time, I was even afraid to visit. Meanwhile, my family wanted me to move back to Florida and be closer to them. So after a year in Atlanta, I faced my fears and moved back to St. Petersburg. I immediately checked myself into the hospital and while hospitalized I met Cheryl Leisure. She told me about Vincent House. I noticed that some of the Vincent House members visited her, which I admired. She later convinced

me to give Vincent House a try.

After being released from the hospital, I joined Vincent House. That was 2004. During the past three years, I have participated in the work-ordered day at Vincent House. I sell lunch tickets, work in Casey's Café, make salads, prepare the entrees, and work in the Leisure (member) Bank named after my old friend Cheryl Leisure who is now deceased. I've had the pleasure of working in all of the units and I find it to be quite rewarding. We are like family here and I have gained close relationships. I enjoy going out on the weekends, participating in social outings and holiday parties, and traveling to various places. I have met many people that I would never have met. I've come a long way since those chaotic times in Atlanta.

I used to be hospitalized frequently, but now, with the right medications and being quite active at Vincent House, I haven't been hospitalized since 2005!

"There is a cusp between life and death... HOPE. Without hope, apathy alone prevails. Death by apathy is a long, painful road. Mental illness is that road - a road I know personally... a road we all know personally. Vincent House is hope... the cusp between life and death."  
- Clyde Kobayashi

## Our Next Five Years- looking ahead

### Ambitious Goals

#### Increasing opportunities for more members

We have gone from serving just a few members to nearly 450 lifetime members. We started in a strip mall and now have our own location on over an acre of land, debt-free and mortgage free. Vincent House is about fulfilling dreams and we have some big ones!

1. Build a 2-story addition and add 6-7,000 sq ft of space.
2. Add a commercial kitchen, dining room for 100+ people, a wellness center, a larger thrift shop and more unit space.
3. Double our number of paid rehabilitation staff.
4. Double our average daily attendance, from 45 to 90.
5. Double our paid employment opportunities, with members earning over a half million dollars annually.
6. Support expansion of ICCD Clubhouses across the state.
7. Host the 15th International Clubhouse Seminar, with over 1,000 participants from 30 countries!!!

### Why we need to expand and reach more people: A day in the life of a brand new member

Starlin Bradford became a member in late December, 2007. He is one of many new members counting on Clubhouse.



**NOW:** My day: Wake up at 7:00 AM. Put on coffee. Take shower. Watch the news. Drink coffee. Get dressed and groomed. Go to Vincent House. Do planning, type reports, enter computer data, do housekeeping. Make friends and share.

**BEFORE:** Wake at around noon. Put on coffee. Watch news. Maybe shower, maybe not. Log onto the Internet. Take a nap around 5:00. Stay in the house and isolate.

**Enough said! Thank-you Vincent House for re-introducing me to the world, and more importantly....to me!**

## What Vincent House Means to Me

By Richard Baker (nightwing1rb@yahoo.com)

Before I found Vincent House or even knew there were such things as Clubhouses I lived in despair. I have struggled with mental illness all of my life. I had a nervous breakdown in 1998 and was finally diagnosed with schizophrenia in 2000.

I have lived a full life, I was in the Air Force for six years, I worked as a journeyman electrician and I graduated from Auburn University as an electrical engineer. I have two sons and two beautiful grandchildren and although I had a loving and supportive wife and family they had little or no understanding of mental illness, though they were being affected by it. Their idea of "helping" me was to keep me isolated and to keep it quiet. There were no plans for any sort of recovery.

I was in and out of the hospital with nothing to look forward to but more of the same when I was released. My illness finally cost me my marriage in April 2004, and running out of options, at the age of forty, I moved to Florida and in with my father. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

My psychiatrist had read about Vincent House in the St. Petersburg Times and suggested that I should check it out. So that night I got on the Internet and looked it up, I got the number and called to arrange for a tour.



William McKeever, left, works with Richard Baker on this month's *Starry Night Gazette*.

I came in August 2004 and was really impressed. I had never dared dream of a place such as this! Here I found people with similar interests and problems all working together to better themselves toward the greater good. Since that time I have become a regular

at Vincent House, I try to come at least 3 days a week.

My family and my doctor have said that they have seen a 75% improvement in me since I have been a regular attendee. I contribute to Vincent House by participating in the work-ordered day in the business unit. I am also working again in Transitional Employment for the first time in five years.

Being a part of Vincent House these past three years has really made a positive change in me. I have gone from feeling totally disabled to feeling enabled and I am reconnecting with the community. I am starting to reestablish a relationship with my two sons and I now have hope that I will be able to become a positive part of my grandchildren's life.

I now believe that recovery is possible for me and feel that someday I will once again be able to work in a field of my interest. Vincent House means so very much to me and I would like to thank everyone involved in the operation of it, both members and staff. I feel as though I have a new family, one that understands me.

### IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

#### SOUTH CAROLINA TRAINING CENTER SUPPORTS OUR DEVELOPMENT

Gateway House is one of eleven certified ICCD International Training Bases and has actively supported Vincent House from its inception. They have provided valuable technical and program assistance, including countless hours of phone consultation. We are indebted to the mentoring and expertise Gateway House has offered us over the years. Thank you! We look forward to another successful training.

*One Vincent House member and two rehabilitation staff will be attending three-week Comprehensive Training in the Clubhouse Model at Gateway House in South Carolina beginning on February 25, 2008.*

**Aimee Hunnell:** "I hope to learn networking. I feel this will make the Clubhouse even better. I want to get out and know people and get ideas from them that will benefit all of us at the Clubhouse. I want to get the word out to other Clubhouses that Vincent House IS making a difference. I am also looking forward to working hard while having fun at the same time!"

**David Ulch:** "I am looking forward to meeting others and gaining knowledge that will help improve my ability to work at the Clubhouse."

**Bob Canada:** "I am looking to solidify my experiences and knowledge. I want to be successful so that Vincent House can succeed."



Aimee Hunnell, left, and David Ulch, right, are planning to bring new skills and knowledge back to Vincent House after attending training in South Carolina.

One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, "My son, the battle is between 2 wolves. One is Evil. It is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego. The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf wins?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."

- unknown

# CELEBRATING RECOVERY THROUGH WORK

Members  
Employed

during  
January - 2008



## TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT

Jeff Albertson  
Richard Baker  
Gigi Behar  
Brian Craver  
Stephen Gregosky III  
Larry Haines  
Alex Houser  
Carol Jackson  
Gayle Marchiniak  
Jason Michaud  
Allyn Spidella  
Joe Stabile  
Athena Steele  
Michael Taddeo  
Jackie Williams  
Ed Wohlford

Tri-Glo/Raytheon  
Suncoast Center  
Liberty Lanes  
Tri-Glo/Raytheon  
Seashell Books  
Suncoast Center  
Seashell Books  
Galleria Plumbing  
Senior Services  
Tri-Glo/Raytheon  
Tri-Glo/Raytheon  
Tri-Glo/Raytheon  
Seashell Books  
Suncoast Center  
Liberty Lanes  
Tri-Glo/Raytheon

## Supported & Independent Employment

Susan Alvey	Ralph Morphew
Nicholas Cercone	Philip Noonan
Bill Champion	Rand Pierce
Debbie Cibik	Bob Pitts
Tess Daniels	Warren Prince
Don DiCarlo	Michael Ralston
Eddie Gares	Shannon Riley
Art Hallman	Heidi Rippen
Kim Harrell	Ron Ritchie
Kathleen Hartwell	Chris Scher
Eileen Jones	Beth Schweikert
Milen Karpuzi	Therese Stabile
William Kuropatwinski	Jason Sulimay
Bonnie Lawniczak	Terry Taggart
Diane LeClaire	George Torrence
Karen Maloof	Judy Wilson

## Casual Employment

Kerry Birchett  
Gerard Caldarise  
Aimee Hunnell  
John Markle

## Continuing Education

Kathleen Hartwell  
Michael Serkes  
Justin Shea  
Jeff Suzanne

## Back to work in our Food Service Unit

By Gary Hinkson

It's great to be back at Vincent House. I am happy to be working again in the Food Service Unit. I am back with all my old friends, staff and members. It feels like old times again and I feel real good about it.

You see, the last year and a half I haven't spent too much time in the Clubhouse because I have been working paid Transitional Employment jobs. It's been a good experience to work in the community again. I feel real good about it and the money's good for my wallet! And I love to spend it. But, I decided to take a break for a couple weeks after finishing my last job. My next goal is to get a permanent job in Supported or Independent Employment through Vincent House.

Vincent House has done wonders for me and I couldn't have done it all without the Clubhouse. It has built up my confidence and my abilities. I feel like I have the stamina, punctuality, effort and dedication to be a success on the job. I now have my own apartment and a good place to live. Life has been good and Vincent House has opened those doors for me.



**Van Gogh's Palette, Inc.**  
**4801 78th Avenue**  
**Pinellas Park, FL 33781**  
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celebrating **five years** of work, recovery  
and community

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**FEBRUARY 2008**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
					Chef's Surprise <i>William Kuropatwinski</i>	Lowry Park ZOO
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Beef & Bean Enchiladas  <i>Thomas Adler Jay Allinder</i>	Pasta Primavera  <i>Jeffrey Albertson John Arena Jennifer Kraus</i>	Tuna Casserole  <b>Employment Dinner</b> Beef Stroganoff	Barbeque Chicken	Chef's Surprise  <i>Chris Rousseau</i>	Florida STATE FAIR
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
<i>Nancy McGunigle</i>	Ginger's Beanie / Wienies	Grilled Cheese and Tomato Soup	Chicken Caesar Salad  <i>Barbara Morison Lori Thomas</i>	Beef Stew	Chef's Surprise  <b>Pizza &amp; Movie</b>	"Hermann's Royal Lipizzan Stallions" Myakka State Park <i>Alynn Spidella</i>
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	BLT Wrap  <i>Richard Bryson</i>	Vegetarian Spaghetti	Bean Burritos w/ Nachos  <b>Employment Dinner</b> Salisbury Steak & baked potato	Chicken Quesadillas  <i>James Brown</i>	Chef's Surprise	Seminole Eight Movie  <i>Jackie Chenery Muriel Muschamp</i>
24	25	26	27	28	29	
	Chicago Style Hot Dogs  <i>Denise Fowler Erik Hirshals Gina Sansone</i>	Baked Ziti	Home-made Chicken & Noodle Soup  <i>Steve Swain</i>	Meatball Hoagie  <i>Barbara Rockenbach</i>	Chef's Surprise	

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