



# The Starry Night Gazette

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## 2-YEAR ANNIVERSARY: Finding Our New Home

By ELLIOTT STEELE

On June 13, 2007 we celebrated two years in our new home with a dinner of steak and salmon. This brought about much reminiscing about the process of achieving this goal.

Before we opened our doors in Buccaneer Plaza over four years ago we were already in search of our own home. We wanted a place where we could stay permanently; one that showed the dignity and respect we demonstrated every day at Vincent House. We also wanted room to expand to meet our continuously growing membership.

In March 2004, fourteen months after we opened our doors, we located our current Clubhouse. We had just tallied the results of our first member satisfaction survey, which demonstrated a strong need for more space. We went through a period of a waiting list of over 70 potential members, only to lift it after receiving some additional funding from the state which positioned us to hire a new staff person and expand our crowded Clubhouse by one unit.

It was Friday night and Dianne, some members and I just completed painting the new unit. On our way home we decided to stop for pizza. We sat in a back booth, trying to remain inconspicuous although we were covered with pale blue paint. Within a short period of time Dianne was spotted by a veterinary colleague. As we spoke we learned of a property for sale at 4801 78th Avenue. A few days later we drove by the building to take a look. There was no "For Sale" sign on the door, but it was obvious the building was not being used. However there was a pick up truck in the back.

We decided to knock on the door and eventually a gentleman peered through the crack of the door and said the building was indeed for sale. It was originally part of a package deal but there was no action as of yet. He did not want us to view the interior but took our phone number. We told him

about Vincent House and that this would be a great location for our new home; plenty of space for expansion and on the same bus line as our current home. Later that week he decided to show us the rest of the building. Dianne and I immediately saw the potential for fulfilling our vision with the help of extensive renovation work.

Just a few days prior we learned of the release of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) that was due in mid April. It would be an enormous amount of work but we could try to get all parts together before that short deadline. The next step was to discuss the possibility with the members, staff and board. It was not very hard to convince the members and staff of our vision. They lived the overcrowding every day. The board was a bit harder to convince. The vision was less apparent to them, but with much discussion and a lot of detail about renovations and the soundness of the structure, they gave their seal of approval.

Now we needed to explain to the owner how a CDBG Grant worked. First we needed an offer to purchase, contingent upon us being awarded the grant. This meant he would have to remove the property from the market about six months, until the money was

awarded, assuming we received the grant. This was a risk for the seller, a doctor who practiced general medicine in this location for over 25 years, but he was willing to take that chance to see his building continue to help people.

Everyone at Vincent House pitched in to help with the grant in one way or another. The board president and Dianne wrote the narrative and members and staff reviewed the work. I did the legwork. The board treasurer and accountant prepared the financial information in the midst of tax season. Over and over we reviewed, revised and reviewed again until we had everything how we wanted it. Finally the day the grant was due I picked up the financial information, we made our final revision and it was delivered just hours before the deadline.

Now the wait. This was our time to work on the details of the interior. On paper we removed walls, moved units around, put them back and moved them again until we found just the right way to make everything work. We spoke with the architect, Curtiss Haines, and received his seal of approval. And we continued to wait. Finally, in the summer, we heard the news.

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### So what's your wish for the *next* two years at Vincent House??

We asked Vincent House members and staff about their hopes and dreams for the future of our growing Clubhouse community. Here are some replies:

- \* More space for the operation of our Leisure (member) Bank. - Aimee Hunnell
- \* More variety in job opportunities! - Malcolm Campbell
- \* A wellness and exercise program so that we can stay healthy and lose weight. - Gigi Behar
- \* Expand the Hidden Treasures Thrift Shop and run it like a retail store. - Kim Kobayashi
- \* An oven for baking and more prep area in the kitchen. - David Ulch
- \* More supported and independent jobs. - Jackie Williams
- \* A fitness center. - Jeff Albertson
- \* An addition to our current Clubhouse. - Karen Maloof
- \* More people like the staff. - Randy Watts
- \* Soften the echo effect in the lobby area. - Michael Taddeo
- \* A weight room and showers. - Jonathan Godwin
- \* A meditation room. - Eddie Gares
- \* Cultivate more ethnic and racial diversity in our Clubhouse. - Michael Ross
- \* Host an International Clubhouse Seminar! - Elliott Steele

## Vincent House Founders Receive Award

Our very own Elliott and Dianne Steele were honored with a national award at the Annual NAMI Convention held this past month in San Diego, CA. They received the prestigious Phillip and Sarah Francoeur Award in recognition of outstanding achievement in providing needed services to persons with mental illnesses. Their commitment to persons living with mental illnesses began almost 15 years ago and led to the creation of Vincent House, Florida's first certified International Center for Clubhouse Development (ICCD) Clubhouse. So thanks again Elliott and Dianne for all your hard work, tenacity and perseverance! Your dream has become a reality - not only with the creation of Vincent House, but through the establishment of several new ICCD Clubhouses in Florida.



*From left to right: Jack Yatsko, Director of Training of ICCD; Joel Corcoran, Executive Director of ICCD; Dianne & Elliott Steele; Ralph Bilby, Program Director of ICCD; Mark Glickman.*

### Our New Home

*(continued from page 1)*

We were being recommended for the grant; however it had to go before the County Commission for approval. We were all ecstatic!

The next step required Phase I and Phase II environmental surveys. This was a most difficult time since an adjacent property had a rusted gas tank and another property was an auto repair shop. We needed to pass these environmental surveys but were unable to do anything but wait nervously for the results. We could not have any environmental damage to proceed with the grant. We continued to wait. When we finally received the result, a clean report, we were home free!

In November 2004 we closed on the property and finally owned our own home. We celebrated! With the assistance of the CDBG grant, our own fundraising and fiscal responsibility we owned the building mortgage free and debt free. We hired McNeil Construction for renovations. To save money, he parked his demo trailer at the back door and we began filling it with concrete, paneling, plaster, tiles and fixtures. From the very first day of demo

when a finishing nail punctured my forearm, to the removal of the heavy x-ray machine, we filled dozens of trailer loads totaling tons and tons of wreckage.

Now it was time for Jim McNeil, Sam and Moses to put their muscle and creative skills to work. John Jones re-plumbed the entire building, and Galleria/Castle Supply was very generous in donating the materials. From the date of closing on the property it took 7½ months to demo, renovate, paint and move in. During that time we reached consensus on carpet, tile, paint color and many other decisions. The contractors chuckled when they saw me paint four windows and two doors on the small building in the back, with six different color combinations. We made many trips back and forth with the big bus to monitor the progress, see the colors and reach consensus.

Mayor Mischler and "People Helping People" converged on the property with saws, chain saws, rakes, and a chipper to convert our "jungle" into a manicured yard. Trees came down, bushes were trimmed and we

## A Member's Voice

By Carol Delgado

Before I came to Vincent House, I was at home, often feeling very isolated and depressed. My counselor suggested Clubhouse in order to give some meaning to my daily life. The moment I stepped through Vincent House's doors, I knew I had found a sanctuary with new friends and smiling faces. After 8 fun-filled months, I feel like I have really contributed to this life-saving Clubhouse. Even though I am only one of many Clubhouse members, I have become a link in this long chain of support. I want to thank every one of you.

### desperately seeking...

A single, unattached, versatile, ready for action, new or little used digital camera. Vincent House is requesting your assistance with the acquisition of a camera that will meet the needs of our Member Services expanding Media area. Uses to include photos for daily and monthly newsletters, member ID cards, employment photos and much more.

If you can assist us with this, please contact Elliott Steele:

727-541-0321

### More Transportation on the Way!

Vincent House is excited to announce the awarding of two new passenger vans through a Department of Transportation grant. In January 2008, we will improve transportation service for our membership with one 7-passenger van and one 8-passenger van. The vans will be used to transport members and staff to group TE jobs, take members on social outings and provide rides for several members who are unable to ride the public bus system. We will now retire some of our older vehicles - including a van with over 200,000 miles! All of this thanks to the Department of Transportation!



Vincent House recommends: CANVAS, a must-see movie that authentically portrays schizophrenia. It focuses on the experience of an average family. Coming soon to theatres!

found our beautiful palm tree which had been hidden for years by the Brazilian Pepper trees. On June 13, 2005 we crossed the threshold of our new home, on over one acre of land. We were all very proud and thankful for our accomplishments. This is an experience every Clubhouse should undergo. In less than two and one half years we grew from a large ice chest and shopping daily to our beautiful new building with a double stainless steel refrigerator and more.

We are thankful to our members, staff, board of directors, Dr. Latus, donors, grantors and everyone else that participated in making this dream come true.

### Standard # 13:

The Clubhouse is located in its own physical space. It is separate from any mental health center or institutional settings, and is impermeable to other programs. The Clubhouse is designed to facilitate the work-ordered day and at the same time, be attractive, adequate in size, and convey a sense of respect and dignity.

Vincent House Members

**CELEBRATING RECOVERY THROUGH WORK**

during June - 2007

**TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT**

Jeffrey Albertson	Skate Park
Brian Craver	Skate Park
John Diede	Skate Park
Larry Haines	Senior Services
Gary Hinkson	Pro-Clean/Raytheon
Carol Jackson	Liberty Lanes
Cindy Kelly	Suncoast Center
Karen Maloof	Tri-Glo/Raytheon
Gayle Marchiniak	Galleria
Ron Ritchie	Tri-Glo/Raytheon
Lisa Sanders	Pro-Clean/L. Lanes
Chris Schaer	Tri-Glo/Raytheon
Allyn Spidella	Tri-Glo/Raytheon
Joe Stabile	Liberty Lanes
Athena Steele	Suncoast Center
Michael Taddeo	Pro-Clean/Raytheon
Jackqueline Williams	Skate Park
Judy Wilson	Suncoast Center
Ed Wohlford	Tri-Glo/Raytheon

**Supported & Independent Employment**

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

**Casual Employment**

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

**Continuing Education**

Bridgette Elias  
 Kathleen Hartwell  
 Brian Rivard  
 Michael Serkes  
 Jeff Suzanne

**My Experience of Transitional Employment**

Well, for me, it went from a 6-month to a 9-month position employed by Professional Cleaners at Raytheon Corporation. It was a welcome extension in time. Now, I can take another position with only 5 work days off between jobs instead of waiting 60 work days for another TEP to open up. I will go on to my fourth TEP at Suncoast Center on July 9th.

Elizabeth Hazlewood (Caryl) trained me at Raytheon and she didn't leave out much. In fact, so much was taught that it took awhile to get it to gel and perform 3 hours a day, 5 days a week. Well, finally it gelled! The biggest challenge (almost impossible for awhile) was to do 3 hours of work even though I completed the assigned work in less time. I think that stemmed from some nightmare situations at a previous job prior to joining Vincent House. Anyway, I can now do the 3 hours without fail and feel really, really good about it.

Thanks...Mike Taddeo

We now accept donations online!  
 Visit us @ [www.vincent-house.org](http://www.vincent-house.org)



**JULY 2007**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	SOCIAL 7
	Chicken Tacos with Nachos	Mostacholli with Sausage <i>Danny Shellabarger</i>	Independence Day Picnic and Fireworks <i>Tony Kaliski, Eddie Gares, Toni Citelli</i>	Beef Stew	Tuna Salad Sandwich with Chips	Mazzaros Italian Deli <i>Constantine Tsavaris, Jackquelyn Williams</i>
8	9	10	11	12	13	SOCIAL 14
<i>Norman White</i>	Ginger's Hungarian Stew	Chili with Fritos	Meatball Hoagie and coleslaw	Grilled Ham and Cheese with Chicken Noodle Soup	Karen's Baked Ziti <i>Pizza &amp; Movie 4:30 - 7:30pm</i>	Oldsmar Flea Market <i>Eileen Anastasia, Larry Haines</i>
15	16	17	18	19	20	SOCIAL 21
	Sour Cream Chop Suey <i>Karen Donnelly, Nicholas Cercone</i>	Taquito Casserole	Ham Tetrazzini <i>Employment Dinner—Chicken Stir Fry</i>	Chicken Cacciatore	Grilled Ham Steaks <i>Michael Taddeo</i>	"Seminole 8" Movie 15 Free Tickets <i>Raju Ratti</i>
22	23	24	25	26	27	SOCIAL 28
	Richard's Swiss Cheeseburgers with German Potato Salad	Chicken Salad <i>Ron Stegman</i>	Hoagies with Chips <i>Mark Stanciu, Michael Ballenger</i>	Meatloaf and Potatoes	Baked Tilapia	Cici's PIZZA <i>Gary Taylor</i>
29	30	31				
<i>Stephanie Bain</i>	Baked Salmon Patties	Southwest Chicken Rice				

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