



**COMMUNITY
SUPPORT
SERVICES**

LIFE CHAT

A publication spotlighting CSS clients

Sept. 2022

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RAC participant's
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Supported Employment
Success Story



RAC participant's artwork



New Lifeline information



We want to hear from you!

For details about Recovery Advisory Council (RAC) or to contribute your artwork or recovery story to Life Chat, please contact Narkeetah Brazil at 330-253-9388, ext. 165.

Out of darkness, into the light

Using darkness and light to describe where people are in their lives suggests viewing a spectrum of colors reflecting life's dynamic conditions and emotions. The RAC group was inspired by the recovery story of member Derwin and arrived at the darkness versus light theme as they considered the phases of their lives before, during and after they experienced an epiphany, a revelation, an awareness.

The figurative lightbulb brightened their paths and changed their course from the darkness of suicide attempts, alcohol/drug abuse, displacement and loneliness in society, and inattention to their mental illness. The light brought appreciation of life, abstinence from alcohol and drugs, recognition of their worth, acceptance of mental health treatment, and the vision a better future. Their expressions are shared in this issue.



- RAC Co-chairs, Danya Bailey and Narkeetah Brazil

Finding hope at a journey's end A RAC member shares his story



RAC member, Derwin

It was Thursday, November 25, 2021 – the most impactful day of my life so far.

It was not the day I met the president at the White House or the other visit where I narrowly missed him. It was not one of the 30 days I spent hiking the Colorado wilderness with Outward Bound nor one of the days I spent doing humanitarian work in Latin America. It was not one of the days I spent in the U.S. Air Force Reserves or studying at Harvard.

My eventful life has brought countless peak experiences that have shaped me, but nothing compared to that fateful Thanksgiving Day. Instead, that holiday began with me sitting alone, mentally disoriented, and feeling

defeated in a Midtown Cleveland Hilton hotel parking lot, inadequately dressed for the blustery cold.

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I had spent an inordinate amount of money – all that I had – on a six-month, 6,300-mile impromptu, cross-country road trip... a trip predicated on a psychological delusion. In my mind, I was being targeted and tracked by some evil powers and needed to remain in motion to stay alive. Both the literal and figurative trip ended with me sleeping on a plastic mat in a Lutheran Church gymnasium, surrounded by 25 or 30 other men from the closest homeless shelter.

The next morning, I left the makeshift shelter and went to an emergency room. Thanks to a social worker, I was connected to Community Support Services (CSS). Through the day treatment program, I have truly learned about bipolar disorder for the first time while picking up mindfulness techniques to keep me grounded during the treatment process. I realize that bipolar is a brain disorder and not my fault.

Given that a social worker saved me by connecting me to CSS, I believe I can repay the favor by providing counseling and resources to others in crisis. Perhaps my life can be an example that this disease is beatable and that those with bipolar can use the challenges to create an extraordinary life.

Ten Thanksgivings from now, I want to have four things: a single community to invest in, a long-term employer in which to serve through social work, a partner to love, and a son to adopt. This has become my life's vision, and I believe I have enough time and the personal capability to fulfill each item within the next decade. That, to me, would be the best recovery story.

- Derwin



RAC member **Carol S.** created this scene based on Derwin's story, which he shared at a RAC meeting. He spoke of watching a storm near a lighthouse while in a state of mental unrest. Here Carol incorporates Derwin's feeling of tranquility realizing that, through treatment, he could find a safe harbor offering peace, joy and a better future.

I exist, therefore I am.

I am one of many.
I am a number.
I am counted.
I count!!!



This poem is the culmination of a life lesson it has taken me 50 years to accept. Whether I like it or not, I was brought into this world and I have to deal with it. Being born to parents who were not mentally, emotionally, or financially able to care for me, I became a part of "the system." As a ward of the state, I had to figure out for myself what it meant to live as a human being. "One of many" acknowledges the struggle that came with finding where I fit in with this world. I didn't deal with this well.

From the time I first contemplated my existence, I obsessed about suicide, with my first of many attempts beginning at 11 years old. Two overdoses resulted in needing my heart and breath restored. I've always felt like nothing more than a number, a tool or asset on someone's financial report or a statistic to be tabulated and accounted for. Feeling like I didn't own or have control over my life, why exist? However, as the nation has grieved so many lives lost during the pandemic and by so much violence, I have accepted that I actually do count and that I matter. Finally, I realize and accept my being here. There is a divine purpose in my being alive today. I no longer want to die. Today, I embrace this life and intend to make the most of it.

- Angie Fawn



Supported Employment Services Success Story

By Joel Voorman, SE Recovery Specialist

Supported Employment client Kenneth Belkosky walked into the large conference room at CSS dressed in a suit and tie. He was at the agency to share his story with the Supported Employment Steering Committee about what it took for him to achieve a successful outcome with the program. Kenneth proudly spoke to upper management at CSS, members of the Summit County ADM Board, and Supported Employment staff.

Kenneth spoke about his job at McDonald's and the sense of satisfaction and pride he has for being a productive employee. This job marks the first job he has held in a very long time. "It feels great to be a working man," he says.

Supported Employment Specialist Alisa Harris worked diligently with the client to set him up for success. Alisa created a resume for Kenneth that helped him stand out from other applicants, worked tirelessly with him to make sure he could perform well in a job interview, provided resources for Kenneth to get appropriate job interview clothing, and advocated to the employer that Kenneth would be a great employee.

Alisa still continues to provide support to Kenneth to help him be successful on the job.

Ken's future goals are to maintain his job as long as he can, continue his path with sobriety, and to "keep moving on up the ladder to greater things."



Ken Belkosky



"I Fight to Embrace Light"

Dark tunnels, dark night - I fight
Gloomy sky, birds take flight - I fight
Rain pouring, storming with no sun in sight - I fight
Feelings feel confusing, voices say I'm losing - I fight

Home with nothing but candles lit, in a dark room I sit - I fight
Words from others try to entangle me, when will the pain go - I fight
Homeless thoughts, when I had no place to go in the cold snow - I fight
I'm not a captive anymore, tears fall flat on my jeans, it seems - I fight

I do not embrace darkness; I use darkness as a catapult
To shoot away negativity, how I fight, I fought
With light as my theme, I overcome obstacles like Rocky
Seeing a gleam of hope always, with a scope of doorways open for me
I envision nothing but greatness, with love surrounding my fate
With light, prayer, gratitude, inspiration, and good guidance as my date
Sunny days with an outlook as clear as a spring water mountain itself
There's no stopping a strong-willed individual, ask yourself

Rich direction, with God as my protection
I suffer no rejection because I fight to keep bright reflections
Now what do I see in front of me, luminous pathways, beyond the veil
No more darkness, as I penetrate shiny light and ready to excel

-Shannon



COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

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National crisis line is now 988

In July, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline changed its phone number to a simple three-digit number— **988** — and now is known as the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**.

Anyone in crisis can call 988, text to 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. Veterans can press 1 after calling 988; text 838255; or visit veteranscrisisline.net to chat.

The line is answered by a network of more than 200 local crisis centers.



The change was the result of the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act, which aimed to make the number easy to remember.

Mission Statement

Community Support Services: Helping you achieve a healthy mind and body while supporting you to live and work in your community.

Recovery Definition

Recovery is the continuous process of empowering an individual so he or she may live a satisfying and contributing life. It is a shared responsibility among the individual, the treatment staff, family, friends, and the community to:

- Discover or rediscover strengths and abilities
- Pursue personal goals
- Develop a sense of self-identity that allows the person to grow beyond his or her diagnosis

The Recovery Advisory Council is a collaborative effort with clients & family members to continuously improve the satisfaction of services for all Community Support Services clients.

