



**COMMUNITY  
SUPPORT  
SERVICES**

# LIFE CHAT

A publication spotlighting CSS clients

April 2021

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Farewell to Lacy Vitko



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## Art of Recovery returns in virtual format

With coronavirus still a concern, CSS chose once again to present Art of Recovery as a virtual event, ensuring that the artists, clients, supporters, and staff could enjoy it safely. The public was invited to view and bid on the 63 original pieces of artwork in an online auction, which started March 7. Then, on March 11, the event came to life in a live one-hour broadcast that highlighted the artwork and stories of the 29 featured artists and the role of art therapy in their recovery.

More than half of the featured pieces were sold by the end of the event, including the piece awarded **Best in Show**: a three-dimensional piece created by **Pamela Somerville**. The piece included dryer lint, cat fur, magazine images, and wood on a cardboard box. In her artist's statement, Somerville said the images on the various flaps of the box represented different aspects of her life or how she believes she and her diagnosis of bipolar disorder are perceived by others. Other winners this year included

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## We want to hear from you!

Contact Danya Bailey at 330-253-9388, ext. 238, or Narkeetah Brazil, at ext. 165, for the next Recovery Advisory Council (RAC) meeting or to contribute your art-istry or recovery story to Life Chat.

(See back page for RAC information.)



**WINNING ARTWORK:** (Top, left) "YOU" by Paul Buchanan won second place in Art of Recovery 2021. (Top, right) "Best in Show" went to "Don't Judge a Box by its Cover" by Pamela Somerville. (Bottom) Third place went to "Free Flow" by Heather Brazil.

## Lacy Vitko bids farewell to CSS, art therapy clients

This year's Art of Recovery was the last one for CSS Expressive Arts Administrator **Lacy Vitko**, who created the event. She's moved on to other employment, but she couldn't leave without saying "goodbye." Below is her farewell message. Clients also shared their fond thoughts about Lacy and art therapy (on Page 3).

"As an art therapist, I continually encourage art making as a means of emotional expression, serving as a catharsis, and acting as a container to hold the spectrum of emotions. Over the years, Life Chat has served as my own container of sorts, providing a space to verbally encapsulate the power of art through the lens of professional witness. For that reason, it seems fitting that I would utilize this platform to say goodbye to the clients I have served and supported for six years. While I am excited to embark on a new chapter, I am also saddened to leave behind relationships with clients and a program I hold dear to my heart. With my departure, I offer a gift of personal artwork and poetry in return for all that has been shared and entrusted to me. Endings are never easy, but they are an opportunity for renewal, and to feel appreciation for what has been."

With sincere gratitude, Lacy Vitko, MA, ATR-BC, Expressive Arts Administrator



### Hope Springs Eternal

Meeting the end of a cycle, I make a wish

That art will eternally be a vessel for transformation

Up through twisted roots, kept safe under a warm sky, the potential  
to begin again prevails

For with growth through adversity comes a gift of gold

Only when we connect with our strength within

May you always remember that the heart knows the way, and love  
is the key

And with this knowing comes freedom, trust, and certainty

That hope springs eternal

### Art of Recovery continued...

"*IOU*" by **Paul Buchanan**, which took second place. The piece, a reproduction of colored pencil on paper, depicted "the masonic symbolism joining Alpha and Omega as one flesh." New to Art of Recovery this year, Paul created a number of imaginative works, including a mixed media sculpture that resembled a castle, complete with beds and furnishings inside. This year's third place award was presented to **Heather Brazil** for her work, "*Free Flow*," a glassy, richly colored piece created with alcohol ink and resin on ceramic tile. In her artist statement, she said, "I create art because there's not enough beauty, for the sake of beauty, in our world."

Kudos also go to our honorable mention winners: **Rodney Hylton**, "*Untitled*;" **Pam**, "*Growth*;" **Jeff Kilburn**, "*A Beautiful Night*;" **Simon Roman**, "*Death and Rebirth of the Universe*;" **Mark Rose**, "*Hanging in There*;" and **Susan Jeschke (Vogt)**, "*The Block of Emotions*."

Congratulations to all the participants in Art of Recovery, and thank you for sharing your artwork!



Video of Art of Recovery can be viewed online at [www.facebook.com/CommunitySupportServices!](https://www.facebook.com/CommunitySupportServices/)

## Art therapy clients share reflections about Lacy Vitko, art therapy

"When I met Lacy, I really didn't know much about art. When I had a question...she was inspiring. She would help me find a color or some form of media. She said I was the 'glitter queen.' ... At (age) 59, she told me I was an artist." –**Carol S.**

"Lacy was a beam of light to all who knew her. She was an encourager, sincere, and welcomed people who never knew art. She helped me open up my feelings. I'm accepted. I felt good about myself, not down on myself. I had the opportunity to do artwork and what came out from it was the truth...We accepted the truth of ourselves through art. Working with Lacy was really an adventure and I miss her already." – **Pam Boothe**

"When I walked into art therapy, I didn't know what to expect, not knowing the impact it would have on my life. From day one, I knew it was for me. I fell in love with it immediately. I love it over any other therapy! Lacy is professional, nurturing AND strong, all at the same time. She just knew me, just understood me...Now, I can be more open and creative with and around others. I'll never forget the things she did and said. She left me with a lot!" – **Connie D.**

"Art therapy has given me my mental freedom back. Lacy was an absolute treasure to work with." – **Alex Griss**

### "Has anyone seen my therapist?"

Has anyone seen my therapist?  
Saying goodbye is a must.

Although I'm feeling blue,  
I start this day anew.

Even though it seems we met by chance,  
My life, my future, she did enhance.

You don't ever lose someone in your life.  
Knowing this, I erase my strife.

So, if anyone has seen my therapist,  
tell her she'll surely be missed.

– **Joan Ahlstrom**

## Supported Employment Services Success Story

By *Joel Voorman, SE Recovery Specialist*

**Robert Anderson** was once barely managing to keep afloat, working various jobs, including porter and car detailer for Enterprise Car Rental, and a bell ringer for the Salvation Army. He was struggling to find a sustainable job that he could enjoy and envision himself at for the foreseeable future.

One day, while attending a group at Portage Path Behavioral Health, Robert overheard chatter about the Supported Employment program at CSS and the success other group members had been finding there.

Robert had Portage Path staff refer him for CSS services, and shortly after, he was working alongside Supported Employment Specialist



*Robert Anderson*

Michelle Mace to help him achieve his goals. Michelle assisted Robert with creating a resume that could stand out from other applicants and presented him with job leads, and they rehearsed job interview scenarios together so that Robert

could feel comfortable and confident once the opportunity presented itself.

Michelle's assistance, coupled with strong follow-through and a positive attitude on Robert's end, netted Robert a job with ABM Parking Services, the company that manages the majority of Akron's parking garages. His duties include cleaning, maintenance, and customer service.

Robert says his supervisor has praised him for being reliable, honest, hard working, and flexible. His willingness to help out at a different garage during the pandemic did not go unnoticed.

"It makes me feel like I've accomplished something when I put in a day's work," Robert said.

Robert has faithfully stayed in touch with the Supported Employment program over his six years of working. Although he is self-sufficient, it's of comfort to Robert to know CSS staff is here for him should he have any employment-related concerns CSS can assist with.

Robert desires to keep up the good work for ABM and, eventually, return to school with high hopes of starting his own business one day.



# COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

150 CROSS ST., AKRON, OH 44311

## RAC seeks feedback

The Recovery Advisory Council (RAC) is requesting your opinion on how CSS is doing. Connecting with you through satisfaction surveys is a way we can improve services and meet your needs.

Building client relationships and trust is one of our top priorities, and your answers to surveys are important. All responses are kept confidential and anonymous.

Surveys are located in the lobbies of the 150 Cross Street and 640 Wolf Ledges buildings. Please place completed surveys in the locked box under the lobby bulletin board at 150 Cross Street. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, you may receive a phone call to complete a survey.

## 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.

