

Another Ambassador Luncheon is in the books, and it was a smashing success! Our dining room was full to capacity with guests who seemed to hang on every word of our diverse guest speakers. Among those who educated and inspired us were Linda McKinnon of Central Florida Behavioral Health Network, Dr. Matthew Thomas of Sarasota Memorial Healthcare and Sheriff Tom Knight of Sarasota County Sheriff's Department. Our own Aaron Collmer took to the stage to talk about his journey to recovery and overcoming the obstacles that once held him back. Paul Hennekes also shared his personal journey while inviting

our audience to become part of the solution. And Caroline Robinson as emcee just made us smile the whole time because it's hard not to smile when she lights up the room with her gratitude.

Guests commented that lunch was delicious, and the service was warm and efficient. By now, our seasoned members really know what they're doing, and they are part of training our newer members. After several successful Ambassador Luncheons, we are three-parts well-oiled machine and one part giddy excitement.



Sheriff Tom Knight



Dr. Matthew Thomas





Linda McKinnon



Phil Boyer and Carolyn Robinson



Aaron Collmer



## MY HOW OUR GARDEN GROWS

The Academy is so grateful to Hope Clubhouse in Ft. Myers for gifting us a variety of unique fruit and vegetable plants last year. We are growing some plants that many of us have never seen before such as pigeon peas, dragon fruit, and even a peanut butter fruit tree. Members sign up daily to water and maintain our expanding garden. We have been enjoying the scrumptious home grown flavor in our daily lunches, and it has added to our wellness. You just cannot find this level of freshness in a grocery store. It takes a lot of work to plant, maintain and harvest a garden, but come take a look and see for yourself why it's all worth it. I mean who has a peanut butter fruit tree?



Our Garden



Dragon Fruit



Peanut Butter Fruit Tree



Pigeon Peas

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Monday, February 24** Telephone Training - 8 a.m.

**Tuesday, February 25** Tour Guide Training - 8 a.m.

Wednesday, February 26 Menu Planning - 11:45 a.m. Wellness Wednesday - 3 p.m.

Thursday, February 27

Customer Service Training - 8 a.m. Employment Workshop - 8:15 a.m. Newsroom Meeting - 11:30 a.m. Dinner/Movie Night - 4 - 8 p.m.

**Friday, February 28**Welcome Desk Training - 8 a.m.

## **ONGOING**

Breakfast is served: Monday-Thursday, from 8:15 - 8:45 a.m. Friday Buffet, 8:45 a.m.



The Academy values our partnership with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). NAMI provides support, education, awareness and advocacy to individuals with mental illness and their families. Learn more through their Peer to Peer and Family to Family classes. Visit namisarasotacounty.org for more.

## **STAYING CONNECTED**

No matter how far away a member travels from the Academy, they are always as close as their cell phone through an app called Slack. We encourage all of our members to download and install the app. Staff then can invite members to join our closed group that only Academy staff and members can access. One of our members, Ian Churchill, is in South America right now, but he knows what's happening at the Academy by checking Slack. Ian can read the latest news, learn about upcoming events and even post photos of his travels. Watch for his story in an upcoming issue.



Ian Churchill, circled, with students from the school he is attending in Columbia.



