



MY SECOND FAMILY

by Preston Zorn

September is Suicide Prevention Month. It's an opportunity to shed light on this epidemic and learn how to support those who are wrestling with thoughts of suicide. My dad, Andrew Zorn, took his life on September 13, 2016, when I was only 11 years old. My dad was, and still is, my hero. He was kind, funny, and loved his family so deeply. I try my best to do the same. But, like my dad, I also struggle with depression.

I've attempted suicide twice in recent years. I felt so alone and lost in life. I felt like my only option was to give up. Thanks in part to the Academy, I now know that is not true. Since joining the Academy in April of 2024, it feels as if my life has turned a page. The Academy provides me with structure and purpose, allowing me to contribute my skills and talents in meaningful ways. They have given me a job at Sarasota Memorial Hospital through their Transitional Employment Program. I now have friends, and I am there for anyone who needs to let out their deepest darkest thoughts. I can crack a joke like you would not believe. I will love this community at Academy at Glengary like they are family, because they are like my second family. You never know what beauty lies ahead so you just have to stay on the ride.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, call or text 988 immediately or visit [988Lifeline.org/chat](https://988lifeline.org/chat)



Preston Zorn at Sarasota Memorial Hospital Transitional Employment

WARM WELCOME TO JUAN TELLO

by Juan Tello

I am the new Care Coordinator in the Business & Technology team at the Academy at Bradenton.



I was born in Bogotá, Colombia and moved to Bradenton almost 15 years ago. I've always had a passion for mental health, and I was raised to be of service, especially by the nuns and priests in my family. My brother and I would go on volunteer missions with them throughout Colombia to help the less fortunate. I went on to earn a degree in Psychology and later worked as a case manager in social work and in the mental health field, including working at Centerstone.

From the moment I first walked into the Academy, there was a sense of warmth and comfort, and above all else, a sense of belonging. Everyone is helpful and kind. The work done here is not just vital to the Academy mission, it is often life changing for members. I am grateful to put my skills to use in such a connected community, with members and staff working together, and genuinely believing in each other. I can't wait to see where it takes me, and how I can make an impact.

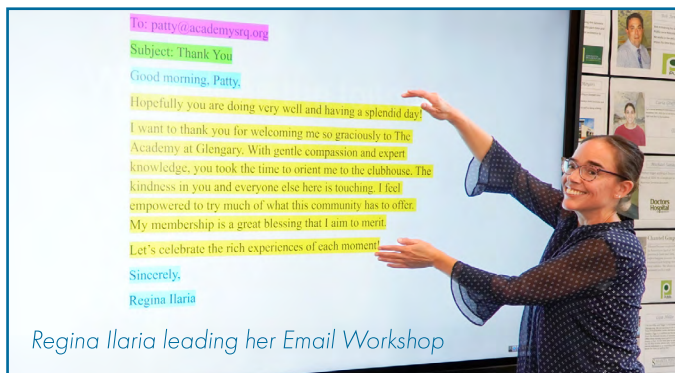
A little more about myself; I have many hobbies such as fishing, gardening, meditating, listening to all sorts of music and, although I am a little rusty now, I also like to play bass guitar.



Juan Tello (center) working with members in Business & Technology

GREAT DAY AT THE ACADEMY

by Regina Ilaria



Two weeks ago, not one but two monumental experiences blessed me: I facilitated my first Academy workshop, and my only brother Michael came to visit all the way from Brooklyn, New York!

Promptly at 11:30am, my eyes met the sight of my fellow members all seated and awaiting an exploration of Emails: Ways to Write Them and Why They Matter. Everyone was fully attentive and participative throughout my PowerPoint presentation, and we generated some pertinent and perceptive discussion of the subject.

To culminate the workshop, I challenged members to write an original email to our director, William McKeever on a choice of three topics. There was much concentrating, planning, conferring, and revising among us as we composed and sent him clear and sincere messages. Very special thanks to Bailee, whose encouraging presence calmed me; she smoothly moved my PowerPoint along and skillfully helped everyone write.

Meanwhile, Michael enjoyed a memorable day, complete with a guided tour of the facility, a front-row seat at my workshop, and a deliciously nutritious lunch of fresh Florida grouper in mouthwatering corn chowder.

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I dearly love my brother, and I greatly esteem his opinion, so I find his impressions of this day wholly invaluable and reassuring. Emailing me afterwards, Michael observed that the Academy is "welcoming and modern." He appreciated our modern technology and loved the creative use of the walls to display essential information. In his brief time here, he could see how kind and supportive Academy staff is, and he was impressed by our connection to agencies and businesses in the community. In closing, his email to me expressed that he could clearly see that "the Academy...recognizes your work ethic, intelligence, and talent...I wish the whole world were that way."



Ray Reilly working on his budgeting skills

FINANCIAL EXPLORATION

by Ray Reilly

I attended a workshop on financial wellness hosted by Dawn Custer of Cadence Bank. Dawn has presented at Academy at Bradenton several times, but this was my first time attending her workshop. The topic was budgeting. Dawn advised us to first figure out what our total income is for the month. She then encouraged us to prioritize the necessary bills such as our utilities, rent and groceries over the luxury expenditures like going out to dinner or a movie. This will ensure that our basic needs are met first without running out of money at the end of the month. This was a very useful presentation that taught us to be mindful of not overspending and going into debt.

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