



BREAKING THE SURFACE

by David Meyersburg

Clinical depression has been a part of who I am since I was in my early 20s. I was prescribed one drug after another in an effort to find the key to relieving my affliction. When one felt like it was working, I held my breath, only to find that after a few weeks the efficacy would wane, and I was back in the abyss again.

Driven by my lack of progress, I enrolled in the Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) at the Cornell Behavioral Health Pavilion at Sarasota Memorial Hospital (SMH) for a 6-week program, where I learned strategies to deal with my mental health. During the final weeks of the program, I was encouraged to investigate the Academy as a next step in my recovery. I toured the facility, met the wonderful staff and members, and decided perhaps this was what I needed. I attended for about three months, during which time I realized I still needed something else, something I had to identify and procure on my own.

I returned to the IOP at Cornell with the goal of creating an action plan to help me to achieve my goals. Volunteer work at SMH provided me with the solace I sought. I initially volunteered for one shift a week. Weeks later, I asked for a second and then a third shift a week. I would have happily offered my services every day of the week, but hospital policy only allows three half-days per volunteer. Those three days became my stability, my reason for existing. I found that being of service was imperative to my own wellness.

(continued at right)



(L to R) David Meyersburg and Preston Zorn in Graphics & Multimedia



That was just over a year ago. I began thinking about how I could spend my unscheduled days. I began working on a project with a friend. It was a compilation of sound effects for a two-act play that depended on some interesting sounds to add depth and vibrancy to the production. It brought me back to the Academy! I was met with enthusiasm by everyone, and settled comfortably in as multimedia staff AJ Ramirez's mentee to learn what I could about putting together an audio program. I have since finished the project, presented it, and received excellent reviews on my work. I have AJ and the Academy to thank for that... and for so much more!

Two months ago, after my psychiatrist advised me that he had "tried everything he knew to help me," I began seeing a new doctor who has been practicing psychiatry decades longer, and who has knowledge of medications that once were considered cutting edge. He prescribed one such medication for me. In a matter of weeks, my lifelong depression had receded to the point that I began to feel like a "normal" human being. With this new-found mindset, I returned to the Academy to help others in *Breaking the Surface*.



Vanessa Alcantara on graduation day!

TAKING A LEAP FORWARD

by Vanessa Alcantara

I just achieved a huge milestone, and I want to share it with my community!

Over five years ago, I began working at the Academy at Glengary while finishing my final semester of undergraduate studies in Family and Child Sciences. While working at the Academy at Glengary and now, Academy at

Bradenton, I started to find purpose and meaning in my life. I fell in love with human services and being of service to our members and mission. Expanding our services into Manatee County fueled my passion to learn more about nonprofit management and leadership. This led me to enroll in graduate school while working full time at the Academy.

As a first-generation high school and college graduate, I believe education is the key for advocacy and positive change in the world. I was challenged; there were days I got limited sleep and experienced self-doubt, but as the coursework enhanced my understanding of transformational leadership, strategic planning and public sector communications, passion and excitement invigorated my pursuit. I am grateful to have earned a master's degree in public administration (MPA) from the University of Central Florida. My hope is to use my degree to continue serving the Academy and advancing in my emerging leadership role. Lastly, I want to thank the Academy community for all their support over the last two and half years.

"The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." – Dr. Seuss

SMART COOKIES

by Jay Fisher

Now I know you are wondering... making cookies at the Academy? How can this be a wellness activity? Hear me out! Social wellness is about coming together as a community, and trying something new fosters our intellectual wellness, and being creative promotes emotional wellness. Ok, maybe that's a bit of a stretch, but we are all about moderation, and I must say, making and decorating cookies was sweet. Like, the 8-Dimensions of Wellness sweet you might say.

We gathered together with a rainbow of icing and sprinkles to express ourselves in cookie technicolor. It's art you can eat, and it was actually delicious. What was also good about this experience was how members built each other up, complimenting each other's creations and sharing ideas. Some decorated holiday trees while others went abstract. But the fan favorite was our representation of the 8-Dimensions of Wellness. Here at the Academy, we are always thinking outside the cookie box!



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