



HOSTING HOPE

by Ryan Krajewski

Academy at Bradenton hosted guests from Hope Family Services, Inc. for a Lunch & Learn. Our Board of Directors Chair Rosemary Stack also sits on their Board, and she joined them to make the introduction. I gave them a tour and answered their questions. They were particularly interested in learning more about our Transitional Employment program. I had the opportunity to share a bit about my story; what brought me to the Academy and how much I've gotten out of coming here for the past three years.

Our guests joined us for lunch, and, from all appearances, they seemed to enjoy every aspect of being here, including the great food and conversation. As a member, I appreciate when local business leaders are interested in our program and take the time to learn more about us.



Thank you to our guests! (L to R) Maria Briones, Char Young, Lindsay Hartman, Nathalie Estiverne, Vanessa Alcantara, Rosemary Stack, Jacob Brown and Juan Tello

WARM WELCOME TO NATHAN ENGLISH-BEY

by Nathan English-Bey

Before I joined the Academy at Bradenton, my family was worried about me because I just wanted to stay home and sleep. They wanted more for me, so when my uncle found out about the Academy, he wanted me to take a tour. I was open to checking it out but at first I was nervous that it would be more like a traditional school where teachers told me what I had to do. Once I learned that I can do as much or as little as I want, I got very excited to start coming.

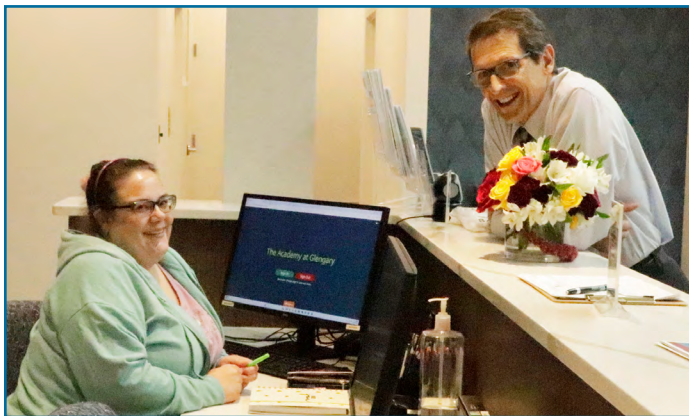


I attend the Academy three days a week, and I work in the culinary team, helping to make lunch. I've only been a member for about six weeks, but I've already learned so much about cooking techniques and different styles of cooking. Long before joining the Academy, it has been my dream to become a chef. The Academy is helping me pursue that dream without it being an environment that feels pressured.

When I'm not at the Academy, I enjoy writing and drawing. As it turns out, the Academy has workshops for both of these interests. I'm so glad I found this place!



Nathan English-Bey in Culinary



(L to R) Vanessa Tammaro and Academy Director William McKeever

HOLDING SPACE

by Vanessa Tammaro

Some people have the best of intentions but lack an understanding of what I go through living with major depression. I've had friends suggest I go off my medication, or change my lifestyle, or just take a walk. Most people without lived experience offer what they believe are solutions to my problems. If only it was that easy! Don't get me wrong; I'm grateful for my friends and loved ones, and I know that they are doing their best. But I wish they could just meet me where I'm at.

And this is precisely what I love about the Academy. Every member has their own reasons for attending. Many come for the skill-building or the opportunities to return to employment. For me, it is often simply a reason to get up and get dressed. Sometimes it is enough that I just walk through the doors as it pushes me to interact with others. Even if I'm dreading it, I always feel better when I allow myself to be seen. I don't expect anyone to solve my problems, it's enough that they just hold space for me. And while the staff offers me opportunities to be productive every day, they always accept "no" for an answer. And they don't offer unsolicited advice. I feel safe knowing that I am accepted for exactly who I am and where I am on any given day, even as every day I am changing.

A FUTURE DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE

by Claudia Silver

I am a third-year medical student at Florida State University. I was placed at the Academy at Glengary for two weeks to learn more about the non-clinical psychosocial community here. Since I have been here, everyone has been so welcoming and made me feel right at home.

I have watched members and staff share responsibilities and tasks seamlessly and I have had the opportunity to spend time with each of the three teams (Culinary Arts, Business & Technology and Graphic Design & Multimedia) at the Sarasota campus. Watching how willing members are to take on new tasks and help other new members has been amazing to see. Everyone wants to learn and teach others the skills they have acquired here. From hearing individual stories to learning new tasks firsthand from members, I have seen what mental health wellness can look like long-term thanks to a place like the Academy. I have learned so much from the members at the Academy and am so grateful to have had such an amazing experience here.



(L to R) Ivan Alonso, Jerry Clancy, Anthony Ramos, Patrick Callahan and Claudia Silver in Culinary

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