



HIGH HOPES FOR MY FUTURE

by Long Pham



Member Long Pham speaking at our recent Fundraiser

I think I was just born sad, long before it had a name. I was just a really unhappy kid. It was perceived as a character flaw and left scars that I live with to this day. There was no one to offer help, and the persistent question, "why are you always so sad," left me feeling isolated. There was never talk of my possible future.

It wasn't until I was 33 that I received the diagnosis of depression. The label was actually a huge relief. I finally had scientific proof that it wasn't my fault! When I hit rock bottom, I checked myself in the Cornell Health Pavilion at Sarasota Memorial Hospital. That's where I first learned about the Academy. But the toll that major depression can have on your basic survival skills is no joke. It took another year before I was brave enough to schedule a tour. Finally, in 2025, while working with a therapist, the name popped up again: the Academy. This time though, I grabbed on for dear life.

The Academy provides opportunities that I couldn't have imagined. I've found friendship and deep-rooted community. It has become my safe place to practice communicating. Through the Academy, I worked at the State Attorney's Office, where I made even more friends. (Thanks, State Attorney Ed Brodsky!) I learned so much there, including communicating my needs. The skills I developed led me to a permanent job at

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Join us for our
2nd Anniversary
Open House
Celebration

THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2026
11:30 am - 1:30 pm

- See how we've grown
- Enjoy delicious food
 - Meet our members, staff and Board of Directors
 - Learn about our Ambassador Program
 - Network with our community partners



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Publix which I hope turns into a career. But if it doesn't, I know there will be many opportunities for growth and success... and I'm sure more bumps in the road, but nothing I can't handle.

The Academy demonstrates the transformational power of community, teamwork and support. They have given me tools to help me create my future. Once I became clinically stable, it was that next step. They walked beside me as I rebuilt my life from ashes.



Members and staff in our self-study accreditation workshop



Thank you to our recent Academy at Bradenton guests! (L to R) Member Ashley Muscat; General Manager of Sunset Cadillac Bradenton JJ Henthorne; Academy Board Member Melissa Crowley and Chef Instructor Alicia Velez

Lunch & Learn's at the Academy serve to foster awareness and understanding of mental health recovery in a supportive, non-clinical setting. Recently, our Academy Board member Melissa Crowley brought JJ Henthorne, General Manager of Sunset Cadillac Bradenton to meet our members and provide them with an opportunity to see our services firsthand. We are pleased to announce that JJ Henthorne has become an Academy Ambassador, helping to further our mission.

Interested in scheduling a Lunch & Learn?

Please contact Patty Haltinner at 941-921-9932.

GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER

Every three years the Academy participates in an accreditation review conducted by faculty from Clubhouse International, our governing body. This process is an important opportunity for us to reflect on our work and ensure we are living up to the values and practices that guide the Clubhouse model.

In preparation for the accreditation visit, our community is engaging in self-study. The self-study involves taking a close look at each of the 37 standards. By reviewing these standards together, we can identify the areas where we are doing well and areas we need to strengthen our practices.

Member Scott Cleary adds, "as a member I've been included in the self-study workshop every Wednesday, in preparation for our July faculty visit and review. To me, it is an honor to be at these meetings to learn more about the standards and be asked for my input. I really like and think it is cool to be a part of a community that has changed my life. Thank you for this opportunity to share and be valued."

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