

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

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(L to R) Ashley Muscat "passing the staple remover" to Gerry Zago

ENDINGS ARE BITTERSWEET BEGINNINGS

by Ashley Muscat

Completing my Transitional Employment (TE) at the Public Defender's Office was an achievement! The nine months I spent there provided a really great work experience. But alas, my time came to an end on April 2 (the day after my 30th birthday!). As much as I would have loved to stay longer, it was time to "pass the staple remover" along to Gerry Zago who is taking over for me. I'm sure Gerry will do a great job there and will do well just like I did. Passing the staple remover is our way of saying "good luck, I'm sure you'll do great." I will cherish my time at the Public Defender's Office forever. Thanks to Public Defender, Larry Eger, for creating this opportunity for members in the first place!

Now that the TE has ended, my goal is to get my GED. I will utilize free resources so I can hopefully pass the test and either get another job or go back to school. I'll likely do the latter so I can become a lawyer and achieve my future career goals. The Academy is teaching me that the sky is the limit, and I know I can do it!

WARM WELCOME TO YVONNE MILLER

by Yvonne Miller

I've been a member of the Academy at Glengary since December, 2025, having learned about it while I was in outpatient therapy. When I first joined, I tried out the Business & Technology Team, and now I work in the Culinary Team. I used to come in three days a week but now that I drive, I often attend five days a week. I especially enjoy coming in early on Wednesdays and Fridays to help with breakfast.



Since I've been at the Academy I've made a lot of friends and I've learned a lot, for example, how to be a tour guide. I love attending our socials, particularly the monthly friendship circle, because I really enjoy meeting new people. I am very happy to be part of the Academy and I am excited to renew and add to my goals in culinary.

A little about me: In 2006-2009, I worked as a dishwasher in Sarasota. This year marks 43 years of marriage for me. I have a son who is 25, a daughter who is 37, and a dog named Pepper.



(L to R) Yvonne Miller and Ian Churchill making salad in Culinary



Omar Tlemsani (Center, striped shirt) and Academy at Bradenton members and staff on a wellness walk

A LANGUAGE ALL ITS OWN

by Omar Tlemsani

I've been taking American Sign Language (ASL) class in college and it is a language all its own. I have known Signing Exact English (SEE) all of my life because I have two deaf brothers. So, learning ASL is easy for me.

There are differences between ASL and Signing Exact English. For example, SEE uses hand signs as words, while ASL is generally more a poetic and abbreviated language, even having a grammar of facial expressions for the hand signs. For instance, in ASL, rhetorical questions are had with the eyes widened and the lips pursed, while with a normal question, the brows are furrowed and the expression is quizzical. ASL is a language that opens up the mind for it is spatial, intuitive and emotive in nature.

I'm excited to bring ASL to an Academy workshop. Other members have expressed an interest in learning it. This makes me happy because the more people learn ASL, the less isolating it will be for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.



(L to R) Stacy Richards, Kim Timmerman and Yvonne Miller in the Culinary Team

SHARING DREAMS & GROWTH

by Bernie Walsh

Recently, we had visitors from the Chobee Clubhouse in Okeechobee, FL. Two staff members, Selena Rivera and Stacy Richards joined us for a day of sharing, learning, and inspiration. After they

had the opportunity to tour and interact with our teams, Selena worked with me in the Business Team, while Stacy integrated into the Culinary Team and was absolutely enamored by our kitchen facilities. She remarked that it was the first time either of them had visited another Clubhouse with such a state-of-the-art kitchen.

During lunch, conversations about their future dreams, including a full herb garden and more members joining in their culinary efforts, began to flourish. Stacy shared a picture of an exquisite meal she prepared with her members and I was duly impressed.



(L to R) AJ Ramirez and Selena Rivera working in the Multimedia Team

We wrapped up the day in a meeting with Billy Elkins, our program coordinator and Kim Timmerman, a new Academy member. Selena and Stacy shared their excitement about putting the insights they gained into action back at Chobee Clubhouse, along with reflecting on the fun they had during their visit. Billy reflected on the humble beginnings of the Academy at Bradenton's Culinary Team, with only two rice cookers and a microwave.

It was a reminder that taking small steps with what you have, while involving the support of others, can lead to utterly amazing and enriched lives.

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