

## MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

When we focus on the person and not the diagnosis, we create more supportive conversations about mental health.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support/helping-someone/how-to-talk-to-someone-about-help>



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## THE FIRST COURSE TO CAREER SUCCESS

by Preston Zorn

Last week we had our first ever employment dinner at the Academy at Glengary. Our Career Services Specialist, Lynn Rupe, organized and led the dinner.



Members and staff gathered for the employment dinner meal and conversation

We discussed topics such as: what our dream job is, challenges and successes we've had in the workplace, and what motivates us to work other than making money. There were many great answers to these questions which sparked great conversation.

Dinner was prepared by our brilliant culinary team (big thanks to them for staying late and preparing and serving the delicious buffet). We all had a great time, and we are looking forward to making this a monthly thing with more employment-related topics and possibly even guest speakers.

Thank you Lynn for organizing our first employment dinner.



Culinary prepared a nice meal for the employment dinner

## WARM WELCOME TO ZACH BELL

by Zach Bell

I am 38 years old, and I grew up in Manatee County close to the beach. I like to fish and spend time hanging out with my family.

I learned about the Academy at Bradenton from Centerstone. As soon as I took the tour, I knew it would be a good fit. Everyone was so friendly! I really liked seeing the culinary team because I would like to get job and work in the restaurant business.

I plan on doing more culinary, but I also have become interested in graphic design & multimedia. This is an example of the Academy showing me something new I didn't even know I would love. So far, I've learned how to use cameras and make birthdays cards in addition to learning my way around a commercial kitchen.

With the Academy's help, I look forward to a productive future.



(L to R) Zach Bell and Alicia Velez in Culinary

# STRENGTH THROUGH SUPPORT

by Ashley Muscat



Ashley Muscat speaking at the Align Consulting AMP UP Awards Luncheon

This week Academy at Bradenton hosted the Align Consulting AMP UP Awards Luncheon. An hour before we were expecting 30 guests, I was asked if I would give a short testimonial during their presentation. That didn't give me much time to prepare, but I happily said YES! I was told that I had 2-3 minutes to share why the Academy is important to me.

At first, I didn't know what I was going to say, but, when I stopped to think about it, it was easy to come up with examples of how much I've gained from being a member. It came down to two major changes in my life: employment and friendships. I let our guests know that these changes came about because of the



(L to R) Culinary team members Jose Campos, Jalissa Helmick, Kurt Kalinowski, and Ryan Krajewski serving the Align Consulting AMP UP Awards guests

Academy's focus on the 8-dimensions of wellness (social and occupational wellness are two of them).

I explained my nine-month commitment to my Transitional Employment job at the Public Defender's Office and how much it built my confidence, especially since I hadn't worked since I was 17 years old.

The other big change in my life is that I have a very full social circle now. Before I joined the Academy, I kept to myself and often felt lonely, but now I have plans with friends nearly every weekend. I know that I've put in the hard work to get to where I am now, but I credit the Academy for being the main reason I am where I am today.

# FINANCIAL WELLNESS TAKES CENTER STAGE

As a Bank On Coalition member, the Academy's Wellness Coordinator, Brooke DePuy, and member Vera Crenshaw represented the Academies at the Financial Empowerment Summit in St. Petersburg, FL. Attendees ranged from financial institution partners, local government leaders, and local nonprofit organizations from Sarasota, Manatee, Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Desoto counties.



Vera Crenshaw at the Bank On event

Speakers covered how to make banking access practical, inclusive, and sustainable, and how we as a coalition can ensure every individual has access to safe, affordable financial resources. Vera Crenshaw notes, "through problem solving discussions, the coalition leverages financial security for people to have a safe place to secure their money, protection against scams, and improve overall financial wellness for members."

A key theme that aligns with the Academy's mission is, "Meet the people where they are!" As everyone's financial situation is unique, it's important that we prioritize their needs where they are today and where they want to be tomorrow. Another recurring concept that came up in every panel discussion was the value of trust. Building trust within our communities is the only way the coalition can collaboratively move their mission forward and improve long-term financial security and stability.

They both left the event with an even larger network of individuals that can help us improve the financial wellness of our community.

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