

8th Annual LIVE

from the Academy

Discover the magic of mental health recovery!

AUGUST 13, 2026
7-8pm EST



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"DID YOU SAY LIVE?!"

by Carolyn Daniele



Carolyn Daniele and Brooke DePuy filming the 2026 "LIVE from the Academy" promo video

I came to the Academy about a year ago feeling lost and lonely. I began in the Culinary team—it felt like a safe space with familiar faces each day and, with my love of cooking, it was a good fit for me. It took me about three months before I felt comfortable enough to say hello to other people. I saw members engaging in other teams and workshops, but I was still too self-conscious to try any of them.

Then one day, Program Coordinator Billy Elkins tapped me on the shoulder and asked me if I would like to speak at the Conversations Across the Aisle (CATA) meeting. I was very surprised. After he explained that my speech could be written down and that I didn't have to memorize anything, I felt a huge relief, but still anxious. Reluctantly, I said yes.

On the big night, it seemed as if the room kept filling and filling with people! There were about seventy people, my heart beat faster and my brain said, "RUN!" With Billy's kind words of encouragement, I took the microphone and spoke.

I felt like Rocky Balboa! It was scary, but fun. My fear no longer runs me. The door opened and I accepted. Next, I will be co-hosting our 8th Annual "LIVE from the Academy" livestream alongside our Wellness Coordinator, Brooke DePuy. Did I mention it will be LIVE?! We just finished a very funny and exciting promo video. I've done improv in the past, and it's been great to use those skills again.

Nothing can stop me now! Yesterday, I facilitated a workshop called "Playful Art for Wellness." As an artist, I see the value in using your creativity to be present and create something new. What seemed like a minor opportunity really turned the tide for me. I found my voice here at the Academy as well as renewed energy for life, creativity and friendships.

WARM WELCOME TO NICOLE CASA

by Nicole Casa



I heard about the Academy at Bradenton from Centerstone. They were shutting down the day treatment center there and wanted me to continue the progress I had been making.

It is the right place for me; everyone is so friendly and helpful. It's like the TV show Cheers, "where everybody knows your name." I thoroughly enjoy hanging out with friends and exploring new places with them. I love having new experiences and learning new things.

The Academy has taught me so much in the short time I've been here. I've learned how to properly cut and prepare several types of vegetables as well as prep salads and work on appetizers in culinary.

Recently I have been spending time in multimedia and graphic design where I have learned how to design cards. In the future I hope to learn so much more from all three teams.



Nicole Casa (far left) along with members and staff working in culinary

PRIDE IN PLACE

by John Peacock



Members, staff and guests gathering debris

As a part of practicing our environmental wellness, recently Fort De Soto National Park Guide Hollis Hatfield and interns Morgan Kersey and Teagan Streets presented to us about the history of Fort De Soto and the importance of keeping our local area clean. Then we picked up trash along Glengary Street, where we

take our daily wellness walks after lunch. We worked very hard in the Florida heat to gather seven bags of trash and two tires!

Academy member Michael Silverman said, "For my birthday this year, I wanted to give back. If you see garbage in your community, you could be the one to fix it. Now, every wellness walk is a little bit more inspiring. Let's keep this idea moving. Together we can roll tires!" (*Quite literally*).

Thank you Michael, members, staff and our guests from Fort De Soto who participated in the Glengary Street clean up.



Members, staff and guests after the Glengary Street clean-up



STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

As part of our involvement in the Bank On Coalition, we now partner with three local banks: Florida Central Credit Union, Regions Bank, and TD Bank. These respected financial institutions have generously agreed to volunteer time to educate Academy members on a variety of topics. We have created a calendar of workshops occurring every other month throughout the fiscal year, rotating through each of the three banks.

In our monthly wellness planning meetings, members propose topics that interest them and enhance their financial wellness. From budgeting and building credit, online banking, identifying fraud and more; experts in the field come to the Academy to present on these vital topics. Additionally, TD Bank will offer workshops on occupational readiness, twice a year, in January and July.

We are deeply grateful for this coalition. Financial wellness can be an intimidating topic for many, but workshops such as these serve to take the mystery out of banking and finances. We offer big thanks to Mark Smith, Senior Manager of Financial Security with United Way Suncoast, for connecting us to BankOn, coordinating the many moving parts, and being an effective change agent.

We always say it takes a village. This partnership is further proof that there is strength in numbers.

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