



ALL THE WAY TO TACOMA

by Ryan Krajewski



Ryan Krajewski (Far R) with members at PHA Clubhouse Tacoma

My brother and I were very close. In late summer of 2024, he, his wife, and my nephew moved from Florida to Tacoma, Washington. We talked about the Clubhouse in his town, PHA Clubhouse Tacoma, and I had planned to visit them the following year. But sadly, on October 25 of last year, I woke up to the

news that my brother had passed away suddenly. It was devastating, and it has been very hard, but thanks to the Academy, I was able to get through it. I am truly grateful for the Academy and the support it has given me.

Last month, I finally found the courage to travel to Tacoma for my nephew's birthday. While I was there, I decided to visit the Clubhouse as my brother had suggested. I am very glad I did. I took a tour with Steve Ross, a staff member there. He showed me everything they do and explained how their Clubhouse operates. It is very similar to what we do here but has its own culture and community. Like us, they were very welcoming.

I also want to thank Academy staff for helping me call their Clubhouse ahead of time and letting them know that I would be coming for a tour. I am grateful for the Academy and for the opportunities and support it has given me. Visiting the PHA Clubhouse Tacoma was a meaningful experience, and I am glad I was able to make the trip.

WARM WELCOME TO EMILY LETSON

by Emily Letson



I joined the Academy at Glengary at the beginning of July. I am very grateful that an Academy board member, Melissa Crowley, recommended the program to my mother. It feels like I have been given a second chance at a successful future. I moved to Florida in 2020 and for almost 5 years I dealt with the nightmare of being sick with what turned out to be Lyme Disease. Having a safe place to go that helps me rebuild my computer skills, use my brain, practice my verbal skills and be a part of an inclusive caring community fills me with a sense of purpose I have not known in a very long time.

My goal is to eventually be able to find a full-time job and a little place of my own, and I feel like this is an achievable goal thanks to all the wonderful help and resources the Academy and the staff offer. This is an incredibly magical program, and to anybody who is on the fence about becoming a member please give the Academy a chance!



(L to R) Emily Letson, Brooke DePuy and Robert Martin in B&T

LUNCH, LEARN, LEAD

by Thaddeus Haddad



Thaddeus Haddad (Back L) giving a tour to the Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) visitors

Last week, the Academy at Bradenton hosted 30 law enforcement officers from the Manatee County Sheriff's Office and Bradenton Police

Department for a Lunch & Learn as part of their Crisis Intervention Training (CIT). Manatee County's CIT program is a 40-hour law enforcement training designed to equip officers with skills to safely respond to mental health and behavioral health crises, reducing unnecessary arrests and improving community outcomes. It was a pleasure to give a tour with fellow members Ashley Muscat, Nathan English-Bey and Austin Azevedo while our culinary team prepared a delicious meal that left the officers going back for seconds (and thirds).

During lunch, I connected with Bradenton Police Officer Lopez and Practice Coordinator Elizabeth Reyes from Centerstone, leading to a meaningful discussion on reducing chaos in crisis situations. I shared my thoughts on how overwhelming environments with flashing lights and multiple loud voices can hinder communication and may lead to perceived non-compliance. Officers emphasized their role in de-escalation, highlighting the importance of recognizing the stigma surrounding both mental illness and law enforcement. An important takeaway for me was that just because someone has had negative experiences with law enforcement in the past does not mean that all officers should be viewed unfavorably. Similarly, I believe the officers left the Academy realizing that individuals living with mental health challenges are not always difficult and, in fact, can thrive in a supportive environment. A big thank you to Carrie Renninger from the Bradenton Police Department and Elizabeth Reyes for organizing this Lunch & Learn.

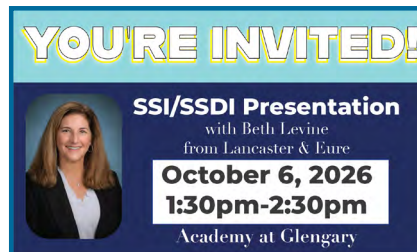
THE SSI/SSDI SCOOP



Beth Levine presenting to Bradenton members

We had the recent pleasure of having Beth Levine, an attorney at Lancaster & Eure, P.A. and longtime community partner of the Academy, present at our Bradenton campus about the ins and outs of social security disability income (SSDI) and supplemental security income (SSI). She shed light on this oft daunting process; covering the differences between the two government entitlements, who is eligible, how employment and assets impact each one differently and how to start the application process. She also managed our expectations by letting us know that the timeline for getting approved can be a long one.

Our members and staff, as well as parents who were in attendance, had some great questions for her. Beth definitely knows her stuff! We're grateful to have access to her breadth of knowledge on the subject, and her generosity in spending the afternoon with us.



For members and family of members who may have missed it, she will be presenting on the topic again at our Glengary campus in Sarasota on October 6 at 1:00 pm.

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