



TOUR. TALK. CONNECT.

by Thaddeus Haddad

The Academy at Bradenton hosted the Manatee County Chamber of Commerce this week. The Chamber has been a strong and committed community partner since our inception, so it was particularly meaningful to show them the signed ribbon still hanging on our wall from the Chamber's ribbon-cutting ceremony that officially welcomed us to town in June 2024.

I gave them a tour alongside fellow members Eugene Smith, Ray Reilly, Austin Azevedo, and Grant Goodin. Grant provided a wonderful testimonial on his current Transitional Employment (TE) position at the State Attorney's Office. We look forward to working with the Chamber to build more business relationships in downtown Bradenton to expand our TE opportunities and foster confidence, skill-building, and self-reliance in our members.

We enjoyed lively conversation over lunch. I shared how instrumental the Academy has been for me over the past several years. Academy Board President Rosemary Stack and I initiated an engaging discussion about the 8-Dimensions of Wellness and how we incorporate these dimensions into members' goal-planning, highlighting our commitment to growth.

It was another successful Lunch & Learn for one of our strong community partners, where our culinary team dazzled everyone with delicious delights.



Members, staff, & Manatee County Chamber of Commerce visitors

WARM WELCOME TO SUSAN GRIFFITH

by Susan Griffith

I recently started working at Academy at Bradenton as the transportation specialist, and I also have the privilege of working with members in the culinary team when I'm not transporting. Many years ago, I worked with people with traumatic brain injuries and found the work extremely satisfying. When that job ended, I took a job selling cars. That lasted a year and a half and it was extremely stressful!

I was thrilled when I found the Academy. Within minutes of walking in the door at the Academy at Glengary, I was amazed. It was so impressive to see how everyone works together. I went home so excited, telling anyone who would listen: the Academy is amazing!

My favorite thing about the Academy is seeing the friendships that have developed between the members. Knowing that prior to this, many members were lonely and didn't have a social life. Hearing them make plans together makes wearing a hairnet worth every minute. Because of the stress of the last year and a half in car sales, I've put on forty pounds. But now that I am stress-free and finally able to practice self-care, I've started following a raw vegan diet and I have energy like never before. I came here to be of service to members, but the Academy has inspired me to start my own wellness journey.



Susan Griffith, Academy at Bradenton's new transportation specialist



Preston Zorn at his Transitional Employment (TE) position at the State Attorney's office

THE END IS JUST THE BEGINNING

by Preston Zorn

I had a great experience working at the State Attorney's Office. I worked there for eight months, scanning documents and picking up and delivering mail to other agencies in the area.

When I started there, I was nervous because it was unlike any job that I've had before. Those nerves went away quickly as I learned how to do my job and gained confidence in my ability to do the work.

I learned a lot at the State Attorney's Office. The greatest thing I learned was how to interact with my coworkers in a professional environment. This skill will prepare me for jobs where I have to interact with coworkers.

Now that my time at the State Attorney's Office has ended, I will put more time into working at the Academy.



Preston Zorn delivering mail for the State Attorney's office



(L to R) Vanessa Alcantara-Mangrum and Ashley Muscat at the Centerstone Life;Story walk Academy booth

TALK THE WALK

by Ashley Muscat

On Saturday, I went to the Centerstone Life;Story walk with our program coordinator Vanessa Alcantara-Mangrum. I woke up at 4:30 am, which is pretty early for me. Vanessa picked me up at 5 am and we went over to Nathan Benderson Park. We set up our table with Academy information and waited for the crowds to arrive. I got to see a lot of the other vendors, which was fun!

People came by to learn about what we do, and they took some of our logo give-away items. It was great getting to share our mission with the people who came to the walk! We didn't take part in the actual walk this year, but I still had a good time! Telling others about our mission at the Academy is a great way to grow our community. It's just one of the many ways we become a bigger champion for mental health wellness!

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