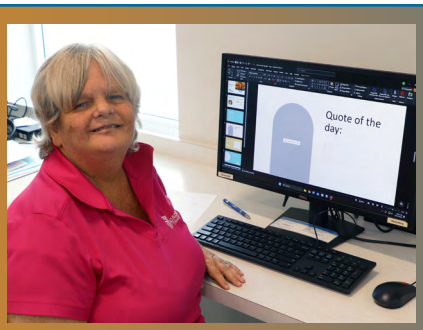
# ACADEMY TIMES

ACADEMY AT GLENGARY | ACADEMY AT BRADENTON

NEWS OF THE ACADEMY AT GLENGARY AND ACADEMY AT BRADENTON

October 16, 2026






## WHY NOT? "Y" YES

The Academy relies on an amazing array of community partners to provide our members with opportunities to pursue goals within the 8-Dimensions of Wellness. The Palmer Ranch YMCA is one such partner. For the past year and a half, under the guidance of our Wellness Coordinator Brooke DePuy, Academy members have been improving their physical wellness at our local YMCA. The Academy van departs two to three afternoons per week, providing interested members with the opportunity to do strength training, stretching and cardio at the newly renovated Palmer Ranch Y.

*"The Academy has helped make going to the gym a consistent part of my routine. Without the Academy, I wouldn't have access to a gym or the accountability and support I need to show up regularly. I feel proud of myself after every visit."* **-Joshua Starcher** *"My favorite part about going to the YMCA with the Academy is going together as a group. I love having the opportunity to exercise using the machines and work on improving my balance."* **-Regena Grant** *"Going to the YMCA as a group with the Academy gives me inspiration to workout. The bench machine is my favorite thing to do at the Y."* **-Andrew Cavazzi**

We would like to thank the Palmer Ranch YMCA for opening their doors to us and helping Academy members build healthy spirit, body and mind.



*Members and staff working out at the Palmer Ranch YMCA*

## UNITED FOR MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS

*by David Meyersburg*

I worked on the Academy's presentation on Developing Effective Advocacy at the annual U.S. Clubhouse International Conference recently in Arlington, VA. 20 Academy members and staff attended the three-day event where 540 colleagues from 29 states and Washington D.C., gathered to share best practices in the Clubhouse model. With Program Director Billy Elkins's excellent prep work, I put together a slide presentation that I thought would be informative, thought provoking, and engaging to view. Our Executive Director William McKeever reviewed the presentation with me, suggesting improvements and changes.

Traveling as part of a large group of Academy colleagues was challenging and pleasurable. We all came away with a new appreciation for each other. We presented on the first day. Focusing on advocacy at the program level, my part segued into William's on the Florida Clubhouse Coalition. Afterwards, several folks approached us with questions and feedback. A dozen individuals sought me out to compliment me on my presentation and explain how it had altered their thinking on the subject. The three days were exciting, informative, and satisfying.



*(L to R) Academy Director William McKeever and Member David Meyersburg at the Clubhouse Advocacy panel representing the Academy at Glengary and the Florida Clubhouse Coalition*




*(L to R) Jade Murph, Bailee Steury, Austin Azevedo, and Juan Tello outside of the Genesis Club in Worcester, MA*

## INSPIRED TO GROW

*by Austin Azevedo*

I felt very honored to be chosen to go with our Young Adult Coordinator, Juan Tello, to the Young Adult Seminar at Genesis House in Worcester, MA. I was nervous about flying but I overcame my fear because I wanted to step out of my comfort zone and try something new.

The purpose of this trip was to learn how to outreach more young people (18-30) and get them excited about joining the Academy. We collaborated with other programs around the U.S. and shared ideas, guiding us through creating an Action Plan to engage young adults. Without giving away too much, part of our plan is to invigorate our supported education program and help members get their GED or college degrees.

Meeting members and staff from other programs, and getting to know my Academy colleagues better was a highlight. We really bonded on the trip. It was a splendid time! Now that I'm back, I feel a greater sense of ownership and pride, and I'm motivated to help the Academy grow.

## RAISING AWARENESS ON CAPITOL HILL

*by Paul Hennekes*

On September 30, I had the opportunity to participate in Clubhouse Advocacy Day. I was joined by Academy Program Directors Vanessa Alcantara-Mangrum (Bradenton) and Billy Elkins (Glengary).

Clubhouses from across the country converged on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC to meet with members of the US Congress. Vanessa, Billy and I met with legislative assistants for US Representative Greg Steube, Senator Ashley Moody and Senator Rick Scott, who also is Chairman of the Senate Special Committee on Aging. We shared with the legislative assistants that Clubhouses are a crucial aspect of the mental health continuum of care.

We emphasized that Clubhouses need federal and state support and funding. We encouraged them to join our Congressional Clubhouse Caucus and even suggested a hearing on Clubhouses for the Committee on Aging.



*(L to R) Billy Elkins, Vanessa Alcantara-Mangrum, and Paul Hennekes at our Nation's Capitol for Clubhouse Advocacy Day*

We also invited them to tour either or both of the Academies. I really enjoyed the experience, and we all learned a great deal during the course of the day.

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