



the CRANIUM CHRONICLES



Fall/Winter 2023



Thank you for making our 2023 Roaring 20's Gala a huge success

Our 10th Annual Synapse House Gala occurred on Friday, September 29th in the Red Oak Room at Cantigny Golf Course. We had over 70 people present, 10 of them Clubhouse and Community Support Service members. The Roaring 20's theme brought a lot of fun outfits and accessories to enhance our celebration. We sold nearly all of our 50 raffle items and hope all of the winners enjoyed their items. Our members were busy in the Clubhouse prior to the event making our centerpieces and prepping for the auction. Others helped with creating the gala flyer and passing out brochures during the event. Clubhouse member, Matt Dingens delighted us with sharing his personal story and helped Board member, Bryan Bacon with the call for cash.

Thank you for everyone's support, this event was hugely successful, marking it as our most highly supported event since we opened our doors in Elmhurst in 2014. **Thank you** to everyone who donated time, money, ideas and decorations to help make our gala a roaring success. **Thank you** to board member, Melissa Johnson, for volunteering her time as Chair of our event and to Erika Panatera and the Gala Committee for their tireless efforts in organizing this hugely successful event.

Thank you to everyone who believes in our mission to support individuals and families who have survived brain injuries and are navigating life beyond tragedy.



PLEASE CONSIDER SERVING ON OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Impact our future & be a part of our growth

We Engage, Empower and Employ individuals affected by brain injury



INTERESTED?

Visit: www.synapsehouse.org/board-of-directors

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Join our Board of Directors or a volunteer committee.

Governance Committee · Gala Committee · Golf Committee

Synapse House continues to grow. Expanded program and service offerings are now available to members.

Interested? Please contact Janet Yardley at janet@synapsehouse.org

CLUBHOUSE UPDATE

By Megan McClain & Erika Panatera

Work Unit Coordinators, Occupational Therapists



Since January 2023, we have had 13 new members join the Clubhouse community putting us at 50+ active members. We have hosted many tours this year, introducing potential members and families, therapists and social workers to our programming, setting, and opportunities. We have had immensely positive feedback regarding our program and all that we offer and hope that as we foster our relationships within the community as well as with hospitals, clinics, and physicians, we will continue to grow our active member list.

We hosted our Open House on Tuesday, November 14th to celebrate our 1-year anniversary in our new space and to introduce the community to our mission. Our members helped prepare for this event with decorations, set-up, food preparations, cleaning, and creating fliers. We are hoping that through this event we will generate a larger referral pool and even more members.

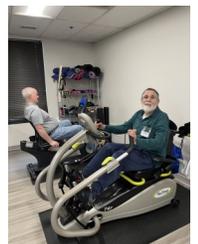
We continue to promote community integration through outings. Each month we go on 1 lunch outing, 1 activity outing, and 1 volunteer outing. Participation within the community is vital to the members' recovery as they learn to navigate different terrain and obstacles, problem solve through areas that may not be greatly accessible, read and order from menus, manage money, transfer into and out of vehicles, and interact with clerks who are unfamiliar.

We look forward to growing our program further in 2024 and all of the opportunities ahead!



In September, we kicked off KNZ Neurofitness gym challenges to engage our members and staff in friendly competitions to work toward fitness goals and promote healthy lifestyles. Our first challenge was in September where teams "rode" to Kansas City, MO on our Schwinn and

NuStep bikes. The winning team was featured on our social media page and won KNZ gym swag. We also celebrated with a lunch catered by Mission BBQ. Since then we completed a Zombies (staff) vs. Humans (members) competition recording daily cardio activity, and the Zombies came out victorious. Currently we are in an 8-week challenge called "Maintain don't Gain" to help us be conscientious of our holiday food intake and exercise output. Each week features a different aspect of health and is recorded on our personal logs. Being accountable for our own health is important in recovery, and our KNZ challenges are an integral part of us taking control of our health.



Visit our website to learn more about our programs, volunteering and donating.
www.synapsehouse.org

The Cranium Chronicles is published by Synapse House

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www.synapsehouse.org

Our Support Team

Deborah Giesler, Ex. Director, MS, CCC/SLP
Pattie Zinski, Development Director
James Farrell, Business Office

Clubhouse Work Unit Coordinators

Megan McClain MS, OTR/L
Erika Panatera MS, OTR/L
Kristina Chapman-Rapp MS.Ed, CPT, GEI

Employment Services

Jill Mueller MS

Exercise Physiologist

Kristina Chapman-Rapp MS.Ed, CPT, GEI

Community Support Specialists

Wendy Vandehei COTA
Dustin Bellair
Tony Chairez
DaeHong Kang

Transportation

LaShelle Morrow
Erica Howard

2023 Board of Directors

Janet Yardley, Board Chair
Basia Rudy, Secretary
Jim Meier, Treasurer
Bryan Bacon
Joe Bretz
Kayla Hicks
Melissa Johnson
Jerick Lacson
Laura Ludwig
Kelly Snow



IN MEMORIAM

Remembering Father Don McLaughlin

February 16, 1952–August 6, 2023

Father Don served as a priest and pastor for over 40 years and he had an expansive love of wine, travel, and theater. He was a dear friend of the Zinski family, dating back to his days as pastor at St. Michael catholic parish in Wheaton. Father Don was a consistent and long-time supporter of Synapse House. Since opening our doors in Illinois in 2014, Father Don was present at our fundraising events, markets, and dinners. He was a reliable donor, financially contributing to our program throughout the year. His dedication and contributions to the Synapse House community have been greatly appreciated and we remember his impact fondly.



Remembering Member John H.

September 1, 1951–November 7, 2023

John joined the Clubhouse community in Spring of 2021 and was a consistent member throughout the past 2.5 years. John will be remembered by us for his love of sailing on Lake Michigan and his quiet wit. Early on, John would pen stories of his time on Lake Michigan and tell us of his sailing adventures. John was also a man of many jokes. He'd quietly make a pun or joke about the happenings in the Clubhouse, but if you weren't paying attention, you'd miss the humor and laugh out loud moments. John will be greatly missed by our Clubhouse community, but we are grateful for the time we had with him as he brightened so many of our days.



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS AND SPONSORS FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT IN 2023

A very special **THANK YOU** to Tony H's soon to be brother-in-law, David Halper (Pictured bottom right—blue shirt) from the Hudson Insurance Company for recommending Synapse House as a charitable organization for 2023. Through his submission, we received a \$25,000 Grant from Odyssey Group Foundation that will help fund programming and our kitchen remodel!



To all of our volunteers who show up weekly and monthly to donate your time to our Clubhouse and it's mission, **THANK YOU!** Without the physical assistance of our volunteers, many projects would go un-finished. Our volunteers help our members attend to tasks and follow through with selected and assigned work. It is with their support and dedication to our program that we can collaboratively accomplish the goals established for both the organization and for the individual members.

Board Members

To our board members, we **THANK YOU** for your time, planning and decision making abilities to help drive Synapse House forward. Behind the scenes is an ongoing effort to remain on budget, set and meet our goals, and fundraise. With the support of our dedicated board we are able to set our sights on the future and the potential of our program.

A special **THANK YOU** those who have served their term and are rolling off of our board: Mort Hart, Basia Rudy—Secretary, Laura Ludwig and Jerick Lacson. And a hearty **WELCOME** to our newest board members who will begin their term in January 2024: Marilyn Dingens and Nancy D'Andrea, and Matt Dingens and Anthony Simone as our Clubhouse Representatives.

Open House Recap

By Matt D.

On Tuesday November 14th Synapse House held an Open House to allow the community to see our new and improved facility. During the week prior to the open house, the staff and members were busy creating one of a kind artwork and pretending the relatives were visiting for the first time and putting a shine on everything.



After another standard day at the Clubhouse, the excitement began to build as we did the final clean-up and put out the decorations for the open house. As the Members proudly showed the arriving guests around their new facility, the remainder of the guests had great conversation and even better snacks. As a member, I enjoyed the opportunity to meet my fellow members' families and loved ones. It was nice to see the smiles and hear the laughter. Some of the members were different people with their families around them.

It was a well attended event and we hope to have opened new doors for partnership opportunities to grow our program.



2023 HIGHLIGHTS

◆ 4 New Staff ◆

◆ 8 Clubhouse Member Employed ◆

◆ 9 Member volunteer outings at Operation Support our Troops and Phil's Friends ◆

◆ 13 New Clubhouse Members ◆

◆ 16 Member lunch and community outings ◆

◆ 20 Students from 6 universities and colleges completed fieldwork in Occupational Therapy & Speech Language Pathology ◆

◆ Nearly 1,000 Meals cooked since July 1, 2023 when the culinary unit reopened ◆

◆ 1 Family picnic ◆

◆ 1 Family outing and fundraiser ◆

◆ 2 Golf & Gala fundraising events ◆



PRIORITY PROJECTS THAT NEED FUNDING

1. Complete build out of our restaurant grade kitchen so that members can safely and efficiently prepare for, cook, serve and clean up from meals. Adequate space, appropriate set-up and sufficient storage are essential for members to utilize the space for rehabilitative purposes to enhance their physical and cognitive skills such as: endurance, standing balance, gross and fine motor coordination, sequencing, following directions, and social engagement.

- Structural changes to improve the work flow for meal prep, cooking and clean up
- Purchase and installation of handwashing and dishwashing sinks to meet DuPage County Health requirements.
- Installation of HVAC and gas line

2. Automatic door openers to improve accessibility for our members, families, potential members and guests

- Entrance and exit doors
- Bathrooms

WAYS TO DONATE TO SYNAPSE HOUSE

Did you know that gifts of cash are not the only way to help our cause? Some methods of gifting can be advantageous to you from a tax and financial planning aspect. Speak to your CPA, tax or financial advisor about the gifting methods below:

- Gifts of appreciated stock
- Donor-advised Funds (DAT)
- Gifts from IRA-qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD)
- Employer Matching Gift Program
- Supply Drives

For more information, please our website at www.synapsehouse.org.



Welcome to our newest Synapse House team members:

- Dustin Bellair
- Tony Chairez
- DaeHong Kang
- Erica Howard

Dustin, Tony and DaeHong are all Community Support Specialists working with our veterans in their communities.

Erica is providing transportation helping to expand the accessibility of our programming to members who need additional support.

Synapse House in the News: Check out member, Mike K. and Director, Deborah on YouTube.com as they discuss the benefits of the Heart and Soul Equine Foundation where Synapse House has volunteered our time. They are featured during the "Benefits" section at minutes 2:35-4:00.



(To view the video, SEARCH: Pat Beauvais–Rescuing Race Horses)

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

By Jill Mueller, Employment Specialist

With great joy we celebrate 2023 with having had 8 Clubhouse members obtain employment through our program!

Recently, with our current members exploring employment options, we have turned our focus to challenging ourselves by taking on new and /or non-preferred duties at Synapse House. We want to increase our comfort level for potential employment by taking on new challenges. Who knows? We may even find out that we have a hidden talent or interest!

COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES (CSS) FEATURING: YURIY



Meet Yuriy! He is an active member of our Community Support Services working tirelessly every week with our CSS staff to engage in physical activities outside of his home. Yuriy is dedicated to his recovery and with the help of our CSS staff he is able to attend his Physical Therapy sessions throughout the week to focus on improving physical abilities such as his core strength, sitting and standing balance, ambulation, and overall coordination. Additionally, he has a cycle at home he enjoys riding and he likes getting outdoors to enjoy the fresh air. Without the support services Synapse House provides, Yuriy would be limited in his community activities and likely bound to his home. Yuriy, you are incredible, thank you for inspiring us with your commitment to yourself and recovery.



2023 FALL ENGAGEMENT IN CLUBHOUSE WORK, COOKING & COMMUNITY OUTINGS



During our **WORK ORDERED DAY** members are engaged in organizational tasks to help operate our non-profit business. They assist with mass mailings, research, fundraising, cleaning and maintenance, donor letters and cards, blog posts, newsletter contributions, interviews, and group discussions, to name a few. Participation in the work-ordered day simulates a typical working day and while performing structured work tasks members are actively rehabilitating skills that may have been impacted by their brain injuries such as: sequencing, following directions, short term memory, attention to details, time on tasks, sustained attention, fine and gross motor skills.



In partnership with our focused organizational work, we also like to have some fun with theme inspired days and cooking lunch. Engagement in **ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS** that are new is important post injury to elicit joy and identify new skills.

(Pictured - left: chili cook off, serenity room meditation and football theme day)



COMMUNITY OUTINGS are important for our Clubhouse members to engage in activities in unfamiliar and unpredictable environments, while enjoying what the neighborhood has to offer and exploring leisure interests.

Pictured right - (Cantigny Park in Wheaton, IL and The Farm in Westmont, IL)





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PLACE
 STAMP
 HERE



SYNAPSE HOUSE WISH LIST & EVENTS

Set-up a donation drive or schedule a supply drop-off.

Email megan@synapsehouse.org for more information. Bold items we have a greater need for.

Copy Paper

Post-It Notes

Cleaning Wipes

C-Fold Paper Towels

Latex Gloves

White Cardstock

Toilet Paper

Hand Weights

Letter size Envelopes

Postage Stamps

File Folders (letter size)

Large Bulletin Board

Gas Gift Cards

Uber or Lyft Gift Cards

Cases of drinking water

**Gift cards to Wal-Mart, Jewel,
 Office Depot, & Mariano's**



**June 3, 2024
 Golf Outing
 Glen Oak Country
 Club**



**Gala
 Fall 2024
 Date & Location
 TBD**

For a snapshot of our Clubhouse programming, Culinary unit meals, Employment training and members in the spotlight, please follow us on Social Media:

Facebook: Synapse House

Instagram: @synapsehouseclubhouse and @synapsehouseculinary

Twitter: @SynapseHouse

YouTube: Synapse House



For more information or to register for an event go to Synapsehouse.org/events