



EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

A generous grant for Employment services will allow us to grow our Employment Program and transition community members and Clubhouse members into meaningful jobs where they can contribute to the community in positions that highlight their skills and interests.

The Employment Team remains hard at work assisting members with resumes, job searching, job applications, interview preparation and on-site job support. Our new staff members, Ashley and HK have made great efforts to develop relationships with local businesses in the hopes of having more opportunities available to our members. With their commitment to our program and the members' commitment to success, we have had two members recently become employed. Congratulations to Evan and Jerick for both getting hired this summer!

Evan began working at Nova Car Wash as an attendant in June. Jobs that Evan was hired to perform include belt instructor, kiosk instructor, and custodial maintenance. In preparation for his role, Evan would perform work tasks within the Clubhouse on the Maintenance Unit and he would participate in exercise programming in the KNZ Neurofitness Gym to maximize his strength, balance and stamina to tolerate being on his feet throughout his work shifts.



Jerick was hired at Yuppie Puppie in July after taking time to explore his skills and interests. Jerick's role at Yuppie Puppie is "Dog Attendant". Jerick, an avid dog lover, is responsible for the supervision of the dogs in a daycare setting and ensures the safety and well-being of the dogs in his care. From feeding and walking to kennel maintenance and monitoring dog behavior, Jerick is very happy in his new role.



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
Events & Volunteers



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 Deborah@synapsehouse.org



IBICA Conference Recap

By Will B.

On July 17th and 18th, we were all lucky enough to be able to join and view a live broadcast of the annual

IBICA (International Brain Injury Clubhouse Alliance)

conference. There, they discussed the progress they've made in the past year, as well as any changes to expect going forward. IBICA sets some of the important guidelines for brain injury Clubhouses like ours. It was with their plan, regulations, and guidance that we were able to establish and maintain our organization, presence in the Chicago area, and thrive as a large, influential brain injury Clubhouse since 2014. To this day, IBICA helps us stay on the right path, and follow a set list of recommendations on how to plan every day for our members that attend our day program such as following a consistent schedule, meeting and interacting with other brain injury survivors, and working alongside our valued staff. Synapse House employees experienced therapists (Occupational, Physical and Speech) and employment specialists, all of whom can assist our members with getting back into life whether that be independent living, working out, or the workplace, for example.

The IBICA presentation included a direct report on internal changes being made, including new hires and promotions for higher level staff, which could potentially affect the decisions they make going forward. These changes are important to be aware of as they may trickle down to our Clubhouse and affect how we do things. It was very interesting watching this meeting, as we were able to learn a lot of changes being made in the background that may alter my daily experiences at Synapse House. They left time at the end of the conference for anyone in the audience to ask questions, all of which were answered in high detail by one of the executives there. On the spot, I thought of a question about fundraising for a smaller nonprofit organization like ours, and even though I don't run the Synapse House Clubhouse, I care a lot about its outcome and continued operation. Synapse House is very helpful for someone like me, a brain injured individual that lives nearby. I appreciate the help and structured schedule that the Clubhouse setting provides me on a weekly basis, and the continued rehabilitation they provide for me during my recovery and continuing to achieve new goals. Having a further understanding of funding and cost of operation is important for all of us to be knowledgeable about, as raising money is how we keep the doors open to provide this vital service to people who have had a brain injury or stroke.

GIVING
TUESDAY

Tuesday, December 2

**Please consider making a donation to support
our mission to:**

***"Engage, Empower & Employ those affected
by Brain Injury and Stroke"***

If you know someone in need of services or would like to share information about Synapse House with your healthcare provider, please contact: admissions@synapsehouse.org

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www.synapsehouse.org

Our Support Team

Deborah Giesler, Ex. Director, MS, CCC/
SLP

Vera Kramer, Development Director
James Farrell, Business Office

Clubhouse Work Unit Coordinators

Megan McClain MS, OTR/L
Erika Panatera MS, OTR/L
Angel Lucena-Johnson COTA

Employment Services

Ashley Gieschen
Achkei "HK" Wilson

KNZ Neurofitness Gym

Gina Pizzoferrato

Community Support Specialists

Dustin Bellair
Tony Chairez
Darla Kucera
Austin Vongphasouk

Transportation

LaShelle Morrow
LaTonya Davis

2025 Board of Directors

Marilyn Dingens, Board Chair
Nancy D'Andrea, Treasurer
Secretary—**Actively seeking**

Irene Abrons
Joe Bretz
Matt Dingens
Megan Gassel
Melissa Johnson
John Leone
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bubbles & brews

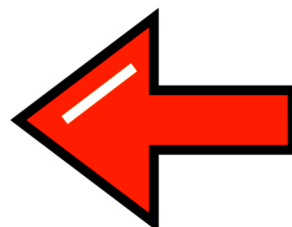
SAVE THE DATE
12th ANNUAL AUTUMN FUNDRAISER

Synapse House *Friday, September 19th*

.....♥.....

To engage, empower and employ adults
with acquired brain injury and stroke.

ALTER BREWING COMPANY
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For donation and sponsorship
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volunteering and donating: www.synapsehouse.org

OUTINGS, VOLUNTEERING & CELEBRATIONS



If you know someone in need of services or would like to share information about Synapse House with your healthcare provider, please contact

deborah@synapsehouse.org



The KNZ Neurofitness gym remains busy throughout the day while members engage in individual exercise as well as therapist-led group sessions. During the morning, members are encouraged to sign up for individual exercise on the bikes, the universal gym and/or to complete their personalized home exercise programs. The staff Occupational Therapists lead hemiplegia group once a week, and with so much interest in this group, we've had to edit the group protocol in order to meet the needs of all interested. The Occupational Therapists have also begun health and wellness training through therapeutic intervention with an interested member, once a week, with the long term goal of independent living.

Afternoon group exercise programming, led by our Physical and Occupational Therapists, continue to attract members of all skill levels to boost strength, balance, coordination and overall cardiovascular conditioning. We welcomed a new member on the virtual platform during this interim and continue to host our regular virtual members alongside our in-house members during exercise groups. In addition to strength training, endurance training, and yoga, we are introducing Tai Chi this fall as another exercise option to meet the interests of all participants.



Congratulations to Scott B for recently receiving his third award within his department at The Home Depot. Scott was most recently recognized for his safety within his department (see photo). Scott was a Clubhouse member from 2018 through late 2023 when he transitioned into the Employment Program. Scott would travel over an hour to Synapse House to be able to receive in-person assistance from our Employment Team. After a few months of drawing up a resume and applying for jobs, Scott was hired by The Home Depot in April 2024. Congratulations to Scott for maintaining and thriving within his role at The Home Depot and setting a great example for his team and others impacted by their brain injury to model.



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS! YOU ARE THE HEART OF OUR CLUBHOUSE!



THANK YOU TO OUR RAFFLE, BEVERAGE AND CASH DONORS!



COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES (CSS) - FOR VETERANS



VALOR GAMES RECAP

By Kevin B and Justin R

On August 12-14, 2025, The Chicago Park District hosted the 11th Annual Valor Games Midwest in Chicago, IL. The Valor Games Midwest is a three-day Paralympic sport competition for disabled veterans and wounded, ill, or injured service members. This year, two of our Synapse House Clubhouse members participated in multiple events. **Kevin**, with his wife, Carretha and **Justin** with his mom, Catherine attended the event for two days each. Kevin and Justin were pleasantly surprised when they ran into each other at the cycling event as they had not previously discussed participation in the games. Kevin participated in discus, shot put, and rowing and Justin participated in archery, cycling and rowing. Justin scored 158 in archery, cycled 2.6 miles and **placed 4th in rowing!** Justin reports liking that there were many resources for veterans available at the event. **Congratulations to both of you for your hard work and commitment to participating in community events that highlight your strengths.** You are a positive representation of your armed service divisions as well as Synapse House Clubhouse and the community of those who are affected by brain injury.



ART COLLABORATION with TONY AIRFORCE VETERAN



Tony has a deep love for the arts and creativity. This summer, he planned to host an art class for other Clubhouse members at Synapse House. Tony and Ashley selected a painting to recreate, following step-by-step prompts from a YouTube video. Members who volunteered to participate took on this project over the course of four sessions. They created really beautiful projects that they can enjoy in their homes. The value of finding hobbies and leisure activities to pursue plays a vital role in recovery and identifying skills that members may be surprised they possess.



If you know someone in need of services or would like to share information about Synapse House with your healthcare provider, please contact deborah@synapsehouse.org

Thank
you

Thank
you

Thank
you

Thank
you

At the heart of every thriving community lies a group of dedicated individuals who believe in something bigger than themselves. At Synapse House we are incredibly fortunate to have such individuals on our Board of Directors—leaders who have given their time, wisdom, and passion to help shape a stronger, more inclusive future for brain injury survivors.

Serving on the Board of a brain injury Clubhouse is more than governance—it's a commitment to restoring dignity, purpose, and connection for those whose lives have been changed by brain injury. Our board members have stood by our mission and their leadership has been instrumental in helping us grow—whether through securing resources, expanding partnerships, improving our Clubhouse programming, or amplifying the voices of our members.

As Synapse House continues to grow in impact and reach, we want to recognize an individual who has played an important role in shaping our journey. We want to extend our deepest gratitude to **Bryan Bacon**, who has faithfully served on our Board of Directors and aided with development of our nonprofit since inception.

Over the years, Bryan's contributions have helped guide Synapse House through pivotal moments such as the Covid pandemic, Vision 2020, and expansion to a new location.

As Bryan transitions from his role on the board, we are not only thankful for his years of dedicated service but also excited for the continued impact he will make as an advocate and friend of Synapse House.

On behalf of Synapse House Clubhouse—our staff, volunteers, members, families, and fellow board members—we say thank you, Bryan. Your leadership has truly helped pave the way toward a brighter, more inclusive future for all those affected by brain injury.

With deepest appreciation,
Synapse House Clubhouse Community



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Toilet Paper
Cleaning Wipes
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Gas Gift Cards
Uber or Lyft Gift Cards
Gift cards to Wal-Mart, Jewel, Office Depot, & Mariano's



If you have any raffle items you would like to donate to our fall fundraiser (gift baskets, tickets, lodging), we will happily accept your generosity.

Please reach out vera@synapsehouse.org to coordinate item drop off or delivery.



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

YouTube: Synapse House



YouTube

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