

## 2023-2024 WINTER/SPRING COMMUNITY OUTINGS

**COMMUNITY OUTINGS** are important for our Clubhouse Members to engage in activities in unfamiliar and unpredictable environments, while exploring leisure interests and what the neighborhood has to offer. Featured below are Member accounts and photos of recent outings.

*I went the Downers Grove Library and I had a lot of fun. I went to the second floor, and I read a book. The book was called Jaime Foxx -ACT like YOU GOT SOME SENSE. I read a couple of pages before it was time for us to leave. -Cathy*



**-Lacey** Members visited "The Farm" in Westmont. We were able to purchase pumpkins and tour the FARM. The day was perfect for touring. It was warm but not hot. The purchase of pumpkins was an additional treat. There were many sizes of pumpkins as well as other items.

Our recent visit to Operation Support Our Troops was truly a successful one as always. We helped to "stuff" items such as oatmeal and hot cocoa into care packages. These packages were then to be sent to the troops overseas where they received them as quickly as they can, to bring a little calmness to their busy and very stressful days. **-Sherry**



**-Frank** On this day, we took a small group of 5 to Cantigny Park. It was raining so we couldn't spend much time outside, where there were many tanks to view. Inside the museum they had displays of army gunman and even 2 tanks! We learned much about the pictures and the tactics used by the powerful Army. We had a great time learning about our past created!

We went the Lizzadro Museum in March and saw a lot of rocks and minerals. Our modern list of Birthstones is rooted in Biblical text. Many of the gemstones we know and love today were also treasured in ancient times. In 1912 the American National Retail Jeweler's Association created an official list of birthstones. The American Gem Society and the American Association of Jewelers adopted this list in 1952. They are very beautiful, and I really liked the Last Supper Ivory 18<sup>th</sup> Century Italy and the Mah-Jongg Set in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century China. **-Cathy**



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](http://www.synapsehouse.org)



## 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](mailto:janet@synapsehouse.org)



## CLUBHOUSE UPDATE

By Megan McClain & Erika Panatera

Work Unit Coordinators, Occupational Therapists

Our Clubhouse program has been steadily growing with new Members every month. We have also added a new van driver, Latonya Davis, to our Transportation team, which helps bring 4-6 Members to the Clubhouse daily. We are hoping to acquire another transportation van, to add an additional route so we can provide services to even more Members who can benefit from our programming. With the increase in active Members we are cooking 20+ meals each day, so we look forward to our kitchen renovation to improve the space within the Culinary Unit.

Since January 2024, we have volunteered at Operation Support our Troops three times, we have hosted two Clubhouse theme days, and we have gone on six outings to Tail Gate for Dogs, Stan's Donuts, the Downers Grove Library, the Lizzadro Museum, Cantigny First Division Museum and Suburbanite Bowl. We benefit from these outings in many ways to address physical and cognitive skills within the community, in unfamiliar environments and among novel audiences which puts our rehab training into real life scenarios. While our outings are meant to be therapeutic in nature, the best parts are enjoying each other and the activities and goodies our neighborhood has to offer.

**Thank you for your continued support of our program to engage, empower and employ those affected by brain injury and stroke.**



Ark Wealth Partners located in Lombard, IL has chosen Synapse House as their beneficiary of donations and volunteering for 2024. They learned about us from one of our member's sister who works with the team there. She submitted Synapse House to their pool of options and as a team they decided our mission and purpose is meaningful and worth supporting. They hosted a donation drive for Synapse House in March, which aligned with Brain Injury Awareness Month. On April 4th they delivered a check and bags and boxes of items that the Clubhouse uses regularly for daily maintenance and business operations. **THANK YOU** to the team at **Ark Wealth Partners** for supporting us and the ongoing recovery of our Members.



Visit our website to learn more about our programs, volunteering and donating.  
[www.synapsehouse.org](http://www.synapsehouse.org)

# The Cranium Chronicles is published by Synapse House

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[www.synapsehouse.org](http://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  
Megan Gassel

## Employment Services

Jill Mueller MS  
Angel Lucena-Johnson COTA

## Exercise Physiologist & KNZ Gym

Kristina Chapman-Rapp ACSM-EP, CPT, GEI  
Allison Ottolino PT

## Community Support Specialists

Dustin Bellair, Tony Chairez, DaHong Kang,  
Darla Kucera, Wendy Vandehei

## Transportation

LaShelle Morrow  
LaTonya Davis

## 2024 Board of Directors

Janet Yardley, Board Chair  
Actively Seeking—Secretary  
Jim Meier, Treasurer  
Bryan Bacon  
Joe Bretz  
Nancy D'Andrea (Treasurer Elect)  
Marilyn Dings (Board Chair Elect)  
Matt Dings  
Melissa Johnson  
Anthony Simone  
Kelly Snow



**Become A Sponsor!**



Our annual Golf outing is around the corner and we are hoping to break another record this year by having all 18 holes sponsored. If you, or anyone you know is looking for business exposure sponsorship at our golf outing is a great way to market.

Sponsorship ranges from \$250 (Hole Sponsors) - \$10,000 (Premier Sponsors).

Please contact Pattie at [pattie@synapsehouse.org](mailto:pattie@synapsehouse.org) if you have any leads or interest in supporting us at the 2024 Golf outing at Glen Oak Country Club, in Glen Ellyn, IL.

To purchase tickets to play in the golf outing please visit [www.synapsehouse.org](http://www.synapsehouse.org) (click on the golf link)

**EARLY BIRD PRICING ENDS**

**SATURDAY, MAY 4TH**

*Save the Date*

**SYNAPSE HOUSE  
11TH ANNUAL  
FUNDRAISING GALA**

*Friday,  
September 27, 2024*

ABBINGTON BANQUETS  
3S002 ROUTE 53  
CORNER OF ROUTE 53 AND BUTTERFIELD RD.  
GLEN ELLYN, IL 60137

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

For donation and sponsorship information,  
please visit our website [www.synapsehouse.org](http://www.synapsehouse.org)

## EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM—IN THE NEWS

By Colin O.

On Wednesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, Synapse House took the employment Members to Tailgate for Dogs located in Elmhurst. Tailgate for Dogs is a daycare, boarding, grooming, and training facility that promotes social opportunity and exercise for dogs. Upon arrival, the staff members talked to the employment team members about a career in doggy daycare. We discussed good interview skills such as eye contact, talking about past experience, and having a good handshake. After, we were introduced to the dogs and got to play with them, we got to see where the dogs sleep, where they are fed, as well as where they are groomed. We finished the day with delicious pizza. Overall, our experience there was very informative and enjoyable.

**Below is a newspaper article from The Elmhurst Independent Newspaper featuring our trip to Tail Gate for Dogs ([www.tailgatefordogs.com](http://www.tailgatefordogs.com))**

Thursday, March 7, 2024 - The Elmhurst Independent

### Tail Gate for Dogs welcomes members of Synapse House

**Share tips on careers in animal care**

On Wednesday, Feb. 21, Tail Gate for Dogs had the pleasure of hosting members from Synapse House for an unforgettable day filled with four-legged friendship and a pizza luncheon. Synapse House is a rehabilitation agency whose mission it is to Engage, Empower, and Employ individuals affected by brain injury or stroke.

At this particular event, the employment Members visited Tail Gate For Dogs to learn about careers in animal care. Tail Gate hosted an informational career discussion, facility tour, and lunch for Synapse House members.

"Our Members who are seeking employment benefited greatly from this visit and were all smiles when they returned to the Clubhouse today," said one Synapse House official.

The four-legged friends at Tail Gate greeted their guests with wagging tails and endless excitement, creating heartwarming moments and fun for all involved. Not to mention, photo opportunities!

From playful romps to cuddle sessions, the bond between our pups and Synapse House members was truly special, said one observer.

Tail Gate would like to extend a special thank you to Synapse House, for bringing a day filled with smiles and laughter to Tail Gate for Dogs.

Tail Gate for Dogs & Synapse House are excited to continue to foster a community of love and positivity together.

To learn more about Synapse House, visit [Synapsehouse.org](http://Synapsehouse.org).



SUBMITTED PHOTOS Elmhurst Independent

This guest from Synapse House made a new friend when he visited Tail Gate for Dogs on Wednesday, Feb. 21. Synapse House is an agency for persons affected by brain injury or stroke.

Members of Synapse House enjoyed the four-legged friends they made while visiting at Tail Gate for Dogs recently. Guests were greeted with wagging tails and heartwarming fun for all involved. To learn more about Synapse House, visit [Synapsehouse.org](http://Synapsehouse.org).



## COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES (CSS) FEATURING: GENO by Frank F. & Megan M.

Allow me to introduce you to our special friend Geno or how you may know him as Steven. This 34-year-old is not only a veteran soldier (served a year in Iraq and Hawaii), but he loves to do things like going sky diving, watching anime or even play paintball. Currently Steven is living with his parents in Des Plaines, he enjoys relaxing with a nice game of frisbee! His specialty in the Army was fixing night vision goggles so he was incredibly important.

Since joining the Synapse House community, Geno has been contributing greatly to the Maintenance and Culinary Units. Geno is not one to ever sit down, so he's always seeking work to complete which is beneficial to our organizational needs. Geno recently completed the four week Food Handlers training class at Synapse House and obtained his Illinois Food Handlers Card on March 14, 2024. Geno has also been a great contributor to our volunteer opportunities, helping out at Operation Support Our Troops–America. While there, Geno will share stories about his time in the service and how the care packages we help put together will be greatly appreciated by the service men and women who receive them.

When Geno is not at the Clubhouse, he is in the community with his CSS companion, Darla. Together they have been on several adventures such as the Field Museum, the Brookfield Zoo, and the Arcade. Geno has been a great addition to our Clubhouse community and we look forward to learning more about him and seeing what life has in store for him.



## CELEBRATING BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH

March was brain injury awareness month and every year at this time, the Clubhouse Members take extra time to reflect on their injuries, survival, recoveries, progress, and the future. This year the Members completed multiple projects focused not on what has been lost after surviving brain injury, but the strengths that remain and have been uncovered through the healing and rehabilitation process. Below are photos of Members working to identify positive attributes of their brains (and selves).





Know someone looking to get into shape?  
Continue to work on their recovery?  
Join an exercise class in person or online!  
Personal training is also a great option!



### **Spring Into Shape–In progress: April & May 2024**

Purpose: Members test their aerobic capacity, fine motor skills, standing balance, mobility, walking ability, power, endurance, and fall risk.

Members will participate in appropriate assessments in order to gauge physical abilities. This will give staff a baseline for which to compare gains and create physical goals. Members will be asked to approve the established goals and be reminded of them for the purpose of motivation. Members will be re-tested annually/ bi-annually to measure progress in previously assessed areas.

### **King and Queen of Hearts Challenge–February 2024**

Purpose: Members emphasize cardiovascular fitness which helps prevent blockages in the vasculature. Exercise also improves blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood glucose.  
Outcome: 19 members participated in this program with 4 top winners.



### **BINGO BODY–January 2024**

Purpose: To challenge strength and power of participants through unique exercises.  
Outcome: 15 members signed up and 3 prizes were awarded.



**Our weekly classes offered at the KNZ Neurofitness gym target different areas daily to promote improved strength, balance, coordination, endurance and overall health. Below are descriptions of our classes which are offered to Members and to the community.**

**“The Fierce 45”:** HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) class, which increases oxygen consumption, coordination, improves mood, strength, power, balance, and endurance. In this class, you will perform repeated bouts of high intensity effort followed by varied recovery times.

**“Stretch and Flex”:** A Gentle yoga in sitting or standing which trains strength, muscular endurance, increases proprioception, flexibility, balance, eases back pain, improves stress management, sleep, and increases focus and concentration. Come move your body in order to become more fit and flexible, to improve your breathing, and to relax your mind!

**“Neuro- Knockout”:** A Kickboxing class which increases cardiovascular endurance, decreases stress, tones upper and lower body, increases hand-eye coordination, increases proprioception, increases scanning abilities, trains balance, increases body weight strength, and endurance.

**“Strength and Sculpt”:** Focuses on resistance training (seated or standing). You will perform exercises designed to improve strength, endurance, concentration, focus, balance, and body composition. You will use weight and/or bodyweight exercises.

**“Dynamic Dance”:** Improves mood, increases coordination, increases proprioception, increases bone density, improves cardiovascular endurance, boosts memory, increases flexibility and strength.

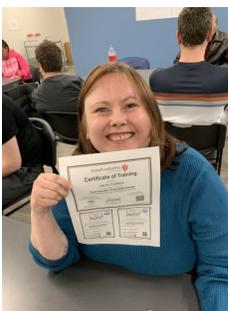
**Upcoming Classes to look for include: Mat Pilates, WERQ, and classes for Hemiplegia. For a calendar of events, please see our website at [www.synapsehouse.org](http://www.synapsehouse.org)**

**Personal training offered 4 days a week: M/T/W/F from 8a - 9a and 3p - 4p with our Exercise Physiologist Kristina Chapman-Rapp**

## MEMBER & CLUBHOUSE ACCOMPLISHMENTS



- In March, Scott B. got a job working at Home Depot!!! (Pictured right)
- So far, we have welcomed 11 new members to the Clubhouse and Employment programs in 2024.
- We participated virtually in the IBICA (International Brain Injury Clubhouse Alliance) chat on February 20th to learn about how to lobby for brain injury.
- Member Bryan Y. is pursuing a long term project focused on improving the coffee bar. He is meeting with peers to discuss plans for how to make the coffee bar more business-like to simulate work experience for Members' future employment.
- During our daily movement breaks, staff has been assisting Members with ambulation and standing to work toward personal goals of being able to tolerate standing and transferring safely. Consistent training with safe mobility is important to help reduce caregiver burden (or injury) as well as prevent falls and increase independence when Members are performing daily living tasks such as dressing, bathing, car transfers, community activities and pursuing leisure interests.
- Our level II OT student, Adam, led a four week food service training group in February and in March and April, Five Members have acquired their Illinois Food Handlers Cards. This certificate allows Members to work in the Culinary unit preparing, serving, and clearing food. Should a Member desire to pursue employment in the food service industry, this functional training will carry over into a work setting and will look great on a resume!



**Special Thanks to our Donors and all who contribute to support our mission**

**Giving Tuesday** - In memory of Kevin Bretz and a thanks to Synapse House for all the important work that you do. -Matt, Brittany, Kate, Noah & Joey

A donation was made in memory of Linda Carr Farkas by Janice Giesler



**NEW EMPLOYEES**

**TRANSPORTATION—LATONYA DAVIS  
KNZ—ALLISON OTTOLINO  
CLUBHOUSE & MARKETING—MEGAN GASSEL**



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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](mailto: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**



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



**Gala  
 September 27, 2024  
 Abbington  
 Distinctive Banquets**

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](http://Synapsehouse.org/events)