



2020 IS A HAPPY NEW YEAR AT SYNAPSE HOUSE!
Here's a quick look at some of the new activities, programs and staff at our Clubhouse.



2020 Focus on Fitness & Wellness Written by Scott, Clubhouse Member

We are pleased to announce an increase in programming at Synapse House. The Wellness Unit will bring us more opportunity for exercise. Staff instructed exercise will be scheduled at least 4 days a week. Another part of the Wellness Program will be more opportunities for Members



to volunteer throughout the year. Guest speakers will also be brought in to teach us on a variety of topics. Group discussions designed to help us with our life inside and outside of the Clubhouse will be scheduled on a weekly basis.

NEW Tai Chi Class at the Clubhouse Synapse House introduced a new Tai Chi class for Members. This February, a nationally accredited volunteer instructor from Taoist Tai Chi Society USA lead our Member class at the Clubhouse.

An Interview of Megan, a New Synapse House Student By Chris and Scott, Clubhouse Members

This article summarizes an interview by Synapse House Member Scott of Megan, a new Clubhouse student. Megan is from Freemont, California, undoubtedly a beautiful place in a warm, hospitable climate. This time of year that venue sounds wonderfully inviting. So we're curious why did she come to Chicago despite the cold, snowy weather that dominates us half the year?

The answer is graduate school at Rush University. When asked if she had recommendations for Synapse House to improve its daily programming, the response was "...engaging in an exercise program, team meetings and working together through a committee structure".

Asked how the Clubhouse can help her, she said that the Clubhouse could help her by developing her job skills like working with brain injured patients. Asked what her project was focused on, the response was "...working with caregivers, helping them develop goals and action plans".

Next I asked her about the duration of her work here at Synapse House. Her response "...April of this year or another three months plus". What do you plan to do after you leave the House? Her response "...move back to California (the state with former governor Jerry Brown), find an occupational therapy job and take the board exams".

Asked what she likes to do for fun, she replied "...watch Netflix, play tennis (another Chris Everett I bet), hang out with friends and explore Chicago, a.k.a. Chi-town".

The next answer hurts but I'll share it. When asked what baseball team she considers her favorite she said the Oakland A's. I personally would have preferred her to say the Cubs but she's entitled to her opinion. That's the interview. I hope you enjoyed it.



Thank you! Northern Illinois Chapter of the American Association of Neuroscience Nurses for donating proceeds from this year's Jingle and Mingle Holiday Party to Synapse House and **Affordable Cabinet Inc.** for the generous gift of material, labor and time spent building our new and beautiful reception area.

A message from the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

2019 came to an exciting close with numerous parties, family meet-ups and a lot of baking! Our Members, volunteers and staff were busier than ever fulfilling orders for our Flour to Empower holiday gift giving program. Thank you to everyone that participated. We are excited 2020 has arrived and have so much to share with you regarding what is NEW at Synapse House:

- **We welcome Helen Wood, Megan McClain and Kristina Chapman-Rapp to our Work Unit Coordinator team and Nathan Fair to our Transportation staff.** Helen and Megan are Occupational Therapists and Kristina is an exercise physiologist, all dedicated to working with Members as they reach for their rehabilitative goals.
- **We are increasing support for our caregivers.** It is a pleasure to introduce Megan, A Rush University Doctoral Student, who will offer a 6-week caregiver coaching program as part of her Doctoral Capstone Experience.
- **We are introducing a variety of new Fitness and Wellness programs** for Members and Caregivers. A wide range of activities will be offered from cardiovascular exercise to yoga. We are exploring Reiki for Caregivers, Trauma Release Exercises and alternative healing methods.

Enjoy this Winter's newsletter and read-on to learn more about these exciting Clubhouse enhancements as detailed by our Members. From all of us at Synapse House, Happy New Year!

Our most sincere gratitude for making our program possible.

Deborah Giesler

Deborah Giesler, Executive Director

Interview of Helen Written by Chris, Clubhouse Member

This is the story of Helen Wood, an employee of Synapse House (the "House"). Helen's role at the House is Occupational Therapy ("OT") and Work Unit Coordinator.

A graduate of St. Ambrose University in Iowa, Helen has been doing OT for six years, primarily working with people with a neurological diagnosis. In her spare time, Helen spends time with her husband and young son for fun. For example, they go to the zoo. We are excited Helen is on staff and welcome her to the Clubhouse!

Board of Directors Update

We thank Joe Urban for his service on our Board of Directors as Treasurer. Joe came to our Board in our infant stages and brought his wealth of nonprofit knowledge and expertise to our organization. We welcome Janet Yardley to our Board of Directors. Janet has been a key volunteer in our bakery and on our Marketing Committee for three years. Janet was elected to be the Chair of the Board of Directors. Courtney Fricke will step down as the Chair as she welcomes her second baby in June. Courtney will remain on the Board. We thank her for her leadership. Kent Jensen will step down as the Clubhouse Member representative as he returns to work. Congrats to Kent on returning to work! Basia Rudy and Joseph Lisle have been elected to serve as the Clubhouse Representatives. Basia will fill the role of Secretary on the Board and Jim Meier will be our new Treasurer.

Employment Program Significant Member Achievements

Through our work readiness programming, Members who feel they are ready to take the next step toward return to work participate in job coaching sessions lead by our staff.

When a Member is ready to return to work, our staff may partner with them through our Employment Program to identify jobs, create resumes, apply for positions and prepare for interviews.

We celebrate the following recent successes.

- Throughout January and February, several Members prepared for interviews with numerous local companies.
- Recently, a Member graduated from our Employment Program after completing the process that concluded with successful long-term placement in a new job.
- Another program Member has completed four months in a new job and continues to do very well.

Winter's Significant Member Achievements

- Chris distributed all name tags to Clubhouse Members, staff and volunteers without assistance.
- Ben led 2 Taekwondo classes over winter break.
- Tony H. and John have taken lead on organizing and owning the Flour to Empower bakery.
- Jan and Joe are creating a computer class to teach fellow Members the basics of Word and Excel.
- Jackie has been helping with grocery shopping and does a fantastic job.

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561 N. York St.
Elmhurst, IL 60126
877-932-1120
www.synapsehouse.org



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Our Mission is to **ENGAGE**,
EMPOWER and **EMPLOY** individuals
affected by brain injury and stroke.



Holiday Gift Giving

We baked 200+ breads, brownies and cookies. Favorites: Chocolate Sour Cream & Chocolate Peppermint breads.



A Perfect Evening at our Perfectly Paired Wine Dinner

Held January 16 at Adelle's Fine American Fare, Wheaton.

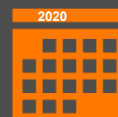


Holiday Party & Family Meet Up

Held at Francesca's Amici in Elmhurst



CLOSING 2019 AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE



THANKS FOR YOUR GENEROSITY! Written by Chris and Jan, Clubhouse Members

Sincere and deep gratitude to the donors to Synapse House's 2019 Giving Tuesday campaign. Our goal was to raise \$2,000. Thanks to many generous donations, we greatly exceeded the goal and raised \$3,500, which we used to purchase three new laptop computers for Members, who are brain injury and stroke survivors like us, to use in the Clubhouse. Thank you very much for your support and for this new equipment that Members are using to rebuild our computer skills and work skills.

CHRISTMAS CHEER AT THE CLUBHOUSE Excerpt from article written by Tom, Clubhouse Member

We at the Clubhouse wanted to celebrate the Christmas holiday with a party for all the Members and their families. A Christmas tree was decorated ... we arranged tables along one wall...we placed silverware and a napkin at each place setting. There was a decoration in the center of the table. The Members were in a holiday spirit...

The Members and family gathered around the table and prepared to join in the table fare. There was pasta, appetizers, garlic bread, salad, and refreshments. We all enjoyed the fabulous meal with nobody wanting more. When the meal was finished a large plate of cookies and ice cream cake were brought to the table. They were in the shape of Christmas presents and ornaments. They were the perfect end to the meal.

...One thing that was very noticeable, was that the party was enjoyed by everybody and the Members interacted with everybody and showed that the Clubhouse is working in its mission. **Read the complete article at: www.synapsehouse.org.**

A NEW YEAR'S GOAL! Excerpt from article written by Tom, Clubhouse Member

As we enter the New Year I am thinking of improving my speech. It is most important to accomplish if I want to move forward in my recovery after my brain injury. I really have to think about it. I have to slow my brain down to try and speak more clearly and articulate every sound I want to make. That sounds easy, but believe me it is not.

My brain knows what to do, and I want to do the right steps needed to achieve this task. Only practice and repetition over and over will let me attain this goal and not get upset when people ask me to repeat what I am saying. I must remember that my learning to communicate with others is important and is essential if I want to move forward in my recovery.

Please, join us at Synapse House on March 10 @ 1PM
for a special nutrition and healthy lifestyle presentation given by a local dietician.

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www.synapsehouse.org

PLACE
STAMP
HERE



NEW to the Flour to Empower Bakery The Empowerment Cookie

We are proud to introduce the newest addition to our bakery family - The Empowerment Cookie! This cookie contains a wonderful balance of oatmeal, peanut butter, chocolate chips and raisins. It is sure to satisfy your sweet tooth. Try one today!

In our Flour to Empower social enterprise bakery, Clubhouse Members and staff bake and package delicious breads, brownies and cookies. Order online to pick up in our bakery or ship to your friends, family and colleagues.

Shop online: www.synapsehouse.org/shop

2020 Special Events Calendar

June 8, 2020 - Synapse House Golf Outing & Dinner on the Veranda at Glen Oak Country Club, Glen Ellyn. Enjoy 18 holes of golf on one of Chicagoland's most beautiful private golf courses and a fabulous dinner on the veranda. The day starts at 10:30AM with registration and practice on the range, followed by a buffet lunch. Golfing launches with a shotgun start, best ball format, at 12:30PM. Finish your day with cocktails and dinner on the veranda beginning at 5:00PM. Not a golfer? No problem—join us just for dinner and cocktails.

October 3, 2020 - 7th Annual Harvest Moon Gala at Elmhurst Art Museum. This year's Gala theme will be a Night at the Museum. Come out and celebrate our mission with us. Committees are already hard at work planning an amazing evening in a unique and beautiful setting.



"Like" Synapse House on Facebook for the latest news and information on upcoming events!

Register for our events online: www.synapsehouse.org/events