

medications, inhospitable shelters, and dangerous streets would turn anyone into a zombie. Says Bronwyn, "My job is to get people riled up."

Rucker is a social worker and theater director. (The program at John Heuss House also uses art and dance for those who are nonverbal.) She founded Meltdown, a Brooklyn group of teenagers who use drama techniques to address issues such as mental illness, substance abuse, distrust, and dissatisfaction. Bronwyn's goal is to engage clients through the arts and support groups...to vent frustration, build trust, encourage participation, help clients identify who they are and what they need. Then the case workers can take over and help the clients find housing and jobs. She calls this process "supportive counsel."

While Bronwyn searches for scripts and props, I explain to whomever will listen that New York City Voices is a newspaper produced by mentally ill people for mentally ill people. They respond to the message of recovery with their own turn-around tales (after all Wall Street is the land of Horatio Alger).

Sarah Messina says that drugs triggered her mental illness and got her thrown out of several shelters. Now she's on probation for drug possession. She takes medication twice a day. She says, "I feel like a real person. I keep clean. I'm not a bum. I deal with my mental illness every day....Like anybody else, I need love." She dreams of the day when she will have nice clothes, such as a pair of jeans for every day of the week. But today she is upset because her SSI check has not arrived and she has to wait five days for it.

Richard Smith is from Georgia where, he states, "there is no support for single people or childless couples." Apparently he's swallowed the bitter pill "that psychiatry is the only medical profession where the patient can be handcuffed and escorted by a cop. If you have heart disease, you don't blame the criminal on heart disease. At least you can come here and not be judged. It's a blessing. So many cities use this kind of place for storage, putting people in jail when they need a resume. I'm using this as a stepping stone to elevate myself."

A Healing Community is a Productive Community

Bronwyn calls John Heuss House a "healing community." Today's prescription includes acting out a play written by clients about self-help for depression and videotaping clients' pleas to the mayor to keep the healing community alive. Alvin reminds the Mayor that the Statue of Liberty is just out the door with its message of "give me your poor, your tired, your downtrodden. If this place is closed, it will extinguish the little flame of hope." (To help, call 212-785-0770.)

Another project of the drop-in center originated after 9/11. Called "Survival NYC" or "The Homeless Prevention Project," including