



GMC NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GEORGETOWN MINISTRY CENTER

CLUB HOUSE GMC STYLE

Homeless people are by nature alienated from society—trudging invisibly from place to place, developing safe bases where they feel comfortable for an hour or two, and then moving on. The public library, a Starbucks, public buildings, and parks all serve as momentary homes for people who have none. The feeling—whether it builds up over time or is part of an undiagnosed mental illness—is one of worthlessness and disconnection.

On the other hand, when someone walks into Georgetown Ministry Center he or she is welcomed with open arms. This feeling of having “a place to belong,” rather than simply a place to be tolerated or to be taken care of, is a crucial component of the Clubhouse Model (see Wikipedia “Clubhouse Model of Psychosocial Rehabilitation”).

The Clubhouse is all about empowerment, ownership, membership, and belonging. Our problem is the Clubhouse model assumes stable housing and treatment, neither of which are common among the people we welcome into our Center each day.

Lately, we've been transitioning the role of moderator at our weekly house meetings over to our members. I watched a woman masterfully run the house meeting last week and I knew it was right. Her touch was light and sophisticated as she allowed people to speak freely, but then carefully and diplomatically pulled the conversation back to topic. No feelings ruffled. Nobody disempowered. Just right.

As staff, we must learn to step back away from our normal roles, allowing space for a member to step up. It is not easy to let go.

Members struggle just as much with this new set of rights and responsibilities. Having so much influence over the program without having to ask seems alien.

We have discovered amazing maturity and intelligence among our members. When someone is barred, we allow that person to come to a house meeting and ask the members for reinstatement. We have been amazed at how thoughtful members have been about this process, including setting reasonable stipulations to reinstatement. The discussion is always mature and well articulated, and thus far, barred members have been successfully reinstated when going through this process.

We hope the Clubhouse concept will evolve here at the Center. Our goal is to create and maintain a Clubhouse that is welcoming, empowering, nurturing, and respectful for all.

—*Gunther Stern*

A TALE OF TWO SUCCESSES

Seneca: Around the middle of this past summer, Seneca found his way to GMC by way of Baltimore and was trying to deal with a multitude of issues, including untreated mental illness. Over the course of the summer, GMC Case Manager Roy built a trusting relationship with Seneca and realized that though Seneca had been to a number of case management organizations in his quest to receive his VA benefits, he never settled long enough for success. Roy also figured out why Seneca was not receiving VA benefits, even though he was honorably discharged from the military (see Military Casualties back page).



Seneca and Jimmy proudly display new keys!

Seneca made a great connection with not only Roy, but also with Dr. Crosland, GMC's general practitioner, and Dr. Koshes, our psychiatrist, who himself is a veteran and also works with the VA. Together, GMC staff helped stabilize and support Seneca physically and mentally. While appealing a negative decision previously made on Seneca's VA benefits, Roy also helped him apply for SOME's Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing program.

As he became more excited about his future now that he could see progress, Seneca gained a reputation in our center as a very outgoing and sociable person. He took on the task of managing our computer sign-up list every day, as well as being a positive role model.

Seneca moved into his own place on Oct. 22, 2013 and proudly sends Roy pictures of his room.

Jimmy: At the same time Roy was helping Seneca apply for an SRO, he was also helping Jimmy apply for one. While Seneca had only been coming to GMC for a few months, Jimmy had been a regular at GMC for a few years.

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Jimmy was never seen without two things in his hands: his guitar and a book, which was always one of the great classics. He could talk about everything ranging from physics to philosophy to opera. Outgoing, positive, and thoughtful, Jimmy befriended many of our volunteers who always asked us, "Why is someone so smart homeless?"

Slowly, though, Jimmy's sunny disposition started changing. He became hostile, and we observed him suffering from clear signs of mental illness, including delusions and paranoid thoughts. His behavior reached the point of requiring an FD-12, the code in DC for involuntary hospitalization.

Later, with newfound clarity from treatment, Jimmy found his way back to Georgetown Ministry Center. Our psychiatrist and general practitioner, who began to form a relationship with Jimmy even though he refused to see them before his hospitalization, were able to monitor his medication and health. Roy made sure to keep Jimmy's spirits up during the application processes for SSI and an SRO. It helped that Seneca was also in a similar housing situation, and the two formed a friendship as Seneca helped Jimmy fill out an online application and showed him pictures of his new apartment.

On November 14, 2013, Jimmy moved into his own apartment! We are so proud of Jimmy's commitment to monitoring his physical and mental health, as well as his willingness to work with Roy on benefits and housing. Next step: find Jimmy a new guitar!

—Stephanie Chan

GMC NOW ON ETSY.COM

Every Monday morning, GMC Board Member Pat Davies comes in to our center with knitting needles, crochet hooks, and skeins of yarn in tow. Some of our guests come in just to participate in the knit and crochet group, and over the past two years, we have discovered some truly talented knitters! We started collecting the blankets, hats, stuffed animals, and scarves that they made and selling them at crafts fairs and other events. As we began amassing more and more crafts, we decided to find a way to expand our audience.

We are proud to launch GMC's very own Etsy site, where we will post a selection of our favorite blankets, stuffed animals, bags, hats, and more! Check it out at www.etsy.com/shop/CraftedbytheHomeless, or find it on our website. After taxes and shipping, all proceeds will go directly to the homeless individual who lovingly created the piece of art. These make great presents for the holidays, birthdays, and baby showers! They are really well made and adorable.

—Stephanie Chan



WE ARE "ONE OF THE BEST!"

The Catalogue for Philanthropy has chosen Georgetown Ministry Center as "One of the Best" nonprofits of the 2013-2014 year! We are so excited to share this news urge you to see our feature on the CFP website or on page 47 of the hard copy Catalogue. Thank you very much to all of our supporters, volunteers, and friends for helping us be one of the best!

Some 220 organizations applied this year to be part of the 11th annual Catalogue, and we were one of 74 to be selected. We survived a rigorous evaluation and financial review process to be included in the Catalogue, which is widely recognized in the DC region as the Good Housekeeping seal of approval" for community-based nonprofits. This honor and affirmation of our work is very meaningful to us as we continue to end homelessness one person at a time. We hope you find it affirming of your investment in us.

Please feel free to explore the online Catalogue (<http://cfp-dc.org/>) and share the Catalogue website with your friends and family. You can also request a hard copy in the mail on the Catalogue's website. We hope that you'll support us through the Catalogue this year.



—Stephanie Chan

HELP THE HOMELESS

We would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Help the Homeless campaign. We had two successful events in October that involved a walk or 5k run. Walker & Dunlop, who were returning sponsors for Georgetown Ministry Center this year, had their employees sign up to walk or run at a nearby high school track. Walker & Dunlop employees were great! Many of them showed up to run before heading to the office that morning, including Howard Smith, a long-time friend of GMC and COO of Walker & Dunlop, and Willy Walker, CEO of Walker & Dunlop.

Only two days later, GMC and Georgetown University held a 2k walk and 5k run for the Georgetown community. Georgetown University students took on most of the planning responsibilities, from acquiring snacks and food to organizing check-in and day-of registration. GMC staff and Georgetown University students have already begun planning next year's 2k walk and 5k run!

Sadly, this will be the last year that we can participate in Fannie Mae's Help the Homeless event. We missed the required goals of 250 registered participants by sixteen people. Quite honestly, it has been getting harder each year, as the goals have required more resources than a small organization like ours can muster. On the plus side, we now have the freedom to customize all aspects of the event, from the registration process to the entry fee to the time of year we hold the event. If you attended this year's event, we would love your input on how to make this 2k walk and 5k run a tradition that the entire Georgetown community looks forward to year after year!

—Stephanie Chan

SUCH GREAT SPIRIT!

A warm fall night, a glittering tent, happy Georgetownians laughing, and free-flowing hors d'oeuvres and libations -- that is what the successful Spirit of Georgetown event honoring Page Evans looked like on October 17. Co-Chairs Colman Riddell, Elizabeth Hague, Amy Porter Stroh and Carrington Tarr worked incredibly hard to put together this amazing soiree that was held in the garden of Brooke and Stephane Carnot's home.



Photo by Oliver Devine

L-R Carrington Tarr, Colman Riddell, Amy Porter Stroh, Elizabeth Hague, Jocelyn Dyer, Gunther Stern, and Page Evans.

As guests filtered in, they saw the Secret Service milling about. "Who's coming?" they asked us at the check-in table. We were honored to have Vice President Joe Biden and his wife, Dr. Jill Biden, attend the event! Mr. Biden, a long-time friend of Page Evans' parents, came to bestow his congratulations and well wishes on Page.



Photo by Oliver Devine

L-R GMC President Jocelyn Dyer, Executive Director Gunther Stern, Spirit Honoree Page Evans and our surprise guest, Vice President Joe Biden.

We could not have wished for a better night. Everyone was in great spirits, and there were many rave reviews about the food from Broad Branch Market and wine from Well Oiled Wines. And, of course, we greatly appreciate the support from our other sponsors: Washington Fine Properties and partyhands. The final checks have arrived in the mail, and thanks to Page, Colman, Elizabeth, Amy, and Carrington, we raised an amazing \$92,365! Thank you to all who attended. We hope to see you at next year's Spirit of Georgetown.

—Stephanie Chan

Board of Directors

<i>Christ Church, Georgetown</i>	Catherine Ballinger Elizabeth Bluhm
<i>Dumbarton United Methodist Church</i>	Martha Dickey
<i>Epiphany Roman Catholic Church</i>	Susan Gschwendner
<i>First Baptist Church, Georgetown</i>	Vinette Saunders
<i>Georgetown Lutheran Church</i>	Connie Baker
<i>Georgetown Presbyterian Church</i>	Alexander Bullock Pat Davies
<i>Georgetown University</i>	Ray Shiu
<i>Grace Episcopal Church</i>	Drew Davis Kimberly Ludwig
<i>Holy Trinity Catholic Church</i>	Linda Formella Joe Ryan
<i>Keshet Israel, Georgetown Synagogue</i>	Jessica Ribner
<i>Mt. Zion United Methodist Church</i>	Deborah Owens
<i>St. John's Episcopal Church</i>	Jocelyn Dyer
<i>St. Luke's United Methodist Church</i>	Dorothy Preston
<i>St. Paul's K Street</i>	Jeremiah Cassidy
<i>St. Stephen the Martyr</i>	Laura Wilson

And from the community...

<i>Citizens Association of Georgetown</i>	Page Robinson
<i>Community Representatives</i>	Pierre Moyer Beth Neilsen
<i>Georgetown Business Association</i>	Elizabeth Webster
<i>Georgetown BID</i>	John Wiebenson
<i>Georgetown Clergy Association</i>	John Graham

Officers

President	Jocelyn Dyer
Vice President (acting)	Susan Gschwendner
Treasurer	John Lange
Secretary	Martha Dickey

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Executive Director	Gunther Stern
Outreach Director	Roy Witherspoon
Business Manager	Dymenn Sasser
Program Coordinator	Stephanie Chan
Shower Program Managers	William Jenkins Lucane LaFortune

Consulting Physicians

Psychiatry	Ron Koshes, M.D.
George Washington Psychiatric Resident	Michael Morse
Family Practice (with Unity Health Care)	Catherine Crosland, M.D.

Development Director

Claire Spencer-Spears

MILITARY CASUALTIES

Seneca left rural southwestern Virginia to make something of himself and, more importantly, to serve his country. He was a normal fellow with friends and a commitment to his family. His drive to move ahead with his life brought him to the army. He was enthusiastic and excited by the possibilities of his future. After a year of service though, he starting getting confused. He came to formations poorly dressed, slept little, and had voices telling him that he was no good, that people were trying to harm him, and that the food was poisoned. He became hyperactive and afraid and stopped responding to commands from superiors. Ultimately, he was seen as a problem.

Instead of sending him to the mental health clinic for treatment, his command administratively separated him from the army by having a military psychiatrist diagnose him with a personality disorder. Seneca left the army without money; homeless, and mentally ill. After traveling around the country for a few weeks, he landed in an emergency room in New York, where he was admitted to the psychiatric unit and diagnosed with schizophrenia. He spent a month there and was able to apply for social security disability benefits.

Despite all of this, last year Seneca came to us dirty, hearing voices, scared, and in need of help. As a former army psychiatrist, I knew that Seneca needed medication, which he willingly took. As a veteran myself, I knew Seneca was entitled to Veteran's benefits and needed housing. As it turns out, the housing was easier to get than the benefits (see A Tale of Two Successes on page 1).

The VA benefits, on the other hand, are not so easy. Seneca should have been medically separated from service. His mental illness, occurring while on active duty, entitled him to VA benefits; compensation and pension. His command chose to expeditiously discharge with a personality disorder diagnosis and a Chapter 5 separation, which does not entitle him to VA benefits. We are currently working with the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) to get Seneca's separation changed to medical, allowing him to receive much deserved benefits.

Seneca's problem is not unique. Since 2001, the military separated 31,000 service members with a diagnosis of personality disorder, meaning that the structure of the person's personality or character is inflexible, maladaptive, and generally unchangeable. By definition, a personality disorder pre-exists military service, and the symptoms displayed cannot be caused by another mental illness. In 2008 a Government Accountability Office review found that hundreds, if not thousands, of these Chapter 5 discharges were improper. Only 8.9% of the Chapter 5 separations were processed properly. Service members with PTSD, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder are being separated without benefits, and many of them, like Seneca, are ending up on our streets. The number of these homeless veterans is not certain. Last year we helped another homeless veteran with severe mental illness get housing and benefits. I don't think Seneca will be our last.

—Ron Koshes, MD

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GREATER WASHINGTON

