CELEBRATIONS OF RECOVERY—A CONTINUING SERIES:
Individual stories of Success in Overcoming Mental Illness and Substance Use

Mental health and substance use disorder recovery is a journey of healing and change. It allows people to live meaningful lives, where they want to live, while working toward their personal goals. The process of recovery is unique to each person and can be defined only by that person. Professional supports and services can help people in their recovery journeys. A relapse is not a failure, but rather a challenge to be overcome. A person can overcome relapse and come out a stronger individual. It all takes time, and that is why recovery is a continuing process working toward a future that can hold many days of enjoyment, and the energy to get through the trials of life.

DEBORAH TOBIN
A Story of Recovery

My name is Deborah Tobin. I am proud to say I have been a client of GHS since I was 25. I am 60 years old now and have a diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder and Schizophrenia.

My life as a youngster was tough. My mother was a terrible mother. Things got so bad, I ran away from home at 16. Eventually, the court took me and my sister out of my mother’s care. I lived with my grandmother until I went away to college. I earned an associate’s degree at Suomi College in Calumet, Michigan. I lived with my aunt and uncle while I attended school. After earning my Associates Degree, I decided to pursue a Bachelor’s Degree at Northern Michigan University. My intent was to get my teaching certification.

I began experiencing symptoms of mental illness during my senior year of college and I had my first breakdown. My roommates wouldn’t let me continue to stay in the apartment we shared. So, though I earned a degree, a Bachelor of Science in Education, I never got my cap and gown and I did not walk in my graduation ceremony. From that point on, I struggled with self-doubt and confidence. Despite having earned a degree, I felt I was stupid and I couldn’t work professionally. Instead, I became a caregiver. I took care of my dad, my uncle and my nieces and nephews. Taking care of my nieces and nephews in particular, was the joy of my life. I couldn’t have children, but I found out how much I loved kids through caring for them. I had a relationship with a man I dearly loved that lasted 22 years. When he became seriously ill, I became his caregiver until he later passed away in 2012.

Eventually, I became a substitute teacher in the Genesee Intermediate School district. I taught for two years. I quit teaching because I didn’t believe I was doing the job well. Up to that point, my work experience had consisted mostly of taking care of my family. That is why my recent experience working as a greeter has been so important. My participation with the TEP program and PSR has changed how I see myself in the workplace. Now, I believe that I can work in the professional world and I intend to go back to teaching with newfound confidence.

I have learned so much over the years. I have learned to appreciate my family, especially my sisters and aunts. I forgave my Mom for her mistreatment of me and my siblings. Most importantly, I am grateful to God and to GHS for covering my services and for encouraging me to be the best I can be. I’ve learned that you can never give up. You are to always keep trying.
With the change of season comes the impulse to clean and replace the old with the new. But spring doesn’t just have to be about cleaning and reorganizing – it’s also a great way to start healthy new habits and break the old. Here are a few tips to get a head start in your spring health!

1) **Start an Exercise Routine** – The weather is getting warmer and the days are longer which makes it a perfect combination to get active outside. The American Heart Association recommends that individuals do moderate exercise for at least 150 minutes per week, or 75 minutes per week of vigorous exercise.

2) **Fresh Fruits and Vegetables** – Take advantage of the variety of vegetables available during spring. The Flint Farmer’s Market is a great place to get fresh fruits and vegetables. A healthy diet includes adding vegetables and fruit every day. Vegetables like broccoli, green beans, leafy greens, zucchini, carrots, and tomatoes are low in calories and high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Try to eat about 3 to 5 servings every day. Fruit is also a good source of fiber, vitamins, and minerals. You should try to eat about 2 to 3 servings of fruit each day.

3) **Drink More Water** – As the heat kicks into high gear it is harder to stay hydrated and more important to drink more water. Drink plenty of water before going outside and have plenty on-hand to stay hydrated.

4) **Cut Out the Night Cap** – If one of your habits is having a drink before bed, or having a few at dinner, you may want to reconsider your next glass of Merlot. Alcohol not only causes dehydration, but is also associated with sleep disorders, high blood pressure and certain types of cancer. It is recommended that women limit themselves to one drink per day, and men up to two alcoholic beverages each day.

5) **Check In for a Check-Up** – Spring is the time to get back to the doctor for a head-to-toe check up! A periodic exam is not just about good medical care, but it also gives you the opportunity to learn more about beneficial health habits, counseling and community support services as well as an overall view of the best ways to take care of yourself and your family for a lifetime. Your doctor will let you know how often they need to test for high blood pressure, diabetes, other diseases, and cancer screenings.

6) **Protect Your Skin** – It’s going to get hot, the sun is shining, and your skin needs protection. Not only do men and women need to regularly moisturize their skin, but also protect it from the harsh rays of the sun. If you’re outside, make sure to use a sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher that protects against UVA and UVB rays. It doesn’t hurt to throw on a pair of sunglasses and hat as well!

7) **Renew Relationships** – It’s time to get out of the house and visit with your friends and family. Research has shown that good, strong relationships benefit your overall health and happiness. Spend the day with people you love, and schedule regular outings to enjoy the great spring weather.

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These Spring Health Tips are brought to you courtesy of:

**Advanced Care**

810-496-4876
Open Monday - Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

420 West Fifth Avenue
Flint, MI 48503
Located on the 1st floor behind the greeter’s desk
The GHS Consumer Newsletter

Our Lungs: Breathing for Life

Life is a series of breaths. Breathing is the most important of all the bodily functions. Children always breathe correctly. However, as we age our breathing shifts to the chest and becomes shallow and more rapid. Deep breathing is best. Take a few minutes each day to practice breathing deeply.

The Fire Breath
This exercise will raise the body energy level.

- Inhale and exhale rapidly through your nose with your mouth closed and relaxed
- Try to make the breaths in and out of equal length and as short as possible
- For your first time, do not go longer than fifteen seconds
- After fifteen seconds, breathe normally for a few seconds
- Repeat the Fire Breathe again, and stop the session after two minutes

If done properly you will feel a boost in your energy level

The Relaxing Breath
This exercise will lower the body’s stress level. Try it before going to bed to sleep better and relax more.

- Lie in bed on your back in a comfortable position
- Breathe out and count “one”
- Breathe in. Then count “two” the next time you exhale
- Only count the times you breathe out
- Try to feel your stomach expand with each “in” breath

If done properly you will awaken refreshed in the morning

Are you willing to invest just a few minutes a day in a breathing exercise that will improve your life?

John Williams Jr., A Continued Story of Recovery

The following is an update to my original recovery story. I am John Williams Jr. and I became involved with GCCMH, now GHS, as a resident of Grand Traverse House in July of 2012.

Nineteen months later, I am still here going strong, and moving forward in my new life of recovery. I was selected to teach the Self-Esteem group and have been sharing my strength, hope, experiences, and encouragement as a facilitator for over a year. I love being able to give back to the agency that has helped me so much.

I am involved in the Genesee Alcohol and Addiction Prevention Coalition. It’s a group of people working with the community to develop new and different ways to prevent and reduce substance use and mental health disorders.

I continue to glorify God in every aspect of my life. I am helping others to achieve success in their recovery along with a healthy life style. I like learning new ideas and skills, meeting new people, making new friends and having new experiences. I want to stretch myself to be the best person that I can be for my God, family, employer, and community. My goal is to complete recovery coach training and the internship program.

I have had several accomplishments since my original recovery story was published. I received an award from the Board of Directors of Genesee Health System that recognized my participation in the theatrical production, “From A to B”. I am proud to say that I have my own apartment and am furnishing it to my taste. I am also looking at opportunities to further my education and involvement with GHS.

I have a firm belief that if you want to bring about change, you’ve got to do something different. If you want to get something you never had, you have to do something you never did. These changes in my life didn’t just happen. I made them possible with the help of GHS.
Genesee Health System Community Housing Department is a resource for GHS case managers, consumers and others. However, the department not only provides assistance with housing needs, but assistance with applying for Social Security Disability benefits. They can assist you in getting into SUD (Substance Use Disorder) treatment or outpatient services. Unlike other programs, they do have programs available to help you with getting housing even if this is your first instance of homelessness. Their goal is to help you to maintain a stable living environment to bring you to a point of self-sufficiency and independence.

A Medicaid law regarding housing has a goal in place to get someone from a group home setting into an apartment. Persons with a physical or mental disability may need help performing daily tasks. The law seeks to make a way for those needing the assistance to live in their own home.

Anyone who is a consumer in the GHS network is encouraged to work with their Case Manager to set a goal for housing. Have your Case Manager contact the Housing Department to set up an appointment. Your Case Manager is a resource just like the Housing Department. You can work with your case manager to find a place to fit for your specific needs. There are a couple different Housing Case Managers that will work hand in hand with you to achieve your housing goals. DO NOT be afraid to tell your Case Manager any problems you are having where you live (i.e. problems with utilities, building issues, being harassed, etc.). They are there not just to help you with your services at GHS but with any issues of concern.

William Doub, MAUP, is also who you would go to for your Social Security Disability. He has been a huge help to me! He knows the process and everything that needs to be in place for you to file and get your disability. Just as with almost all departments and staff, the stuff you share with Bill about your disability is private. He will only share what is needed to be shared to win your case. There has to be a release of information in place for him to share - which is no different than your therapist or medical doctor. He has made me feel safe and secure in sharing even the darkest parts of me that needs to be there to get my disability. If you need these resources, I urge you or your Case Manager to call and make an appointment to see Bill Doub.

The people who work in the Genesee Health System Community Housing Department are special. They are there because they care. They will go the extra mile to get the help that you need to live a life worth living. They want to see everyone living in a secure, stable living environment that you are able to maintain independently. I have been blessed finding them as a resource. They are a wonderful group of people and if they can’t help with something they will try their best to find someone who can. I highly recommend you use them as a resource if you are in need!
The Way I Have Seen Stigma Throughout My Life

Part One

~ Written by Deborah L. Duckett

I started seeing stigma from a physical handicap from the time I was born. My grandpa was in a wheelchair from rheumatoid arthritis. I saw stigma towards him, people thinking he couldn’t do anything anymore. He showed them different! He was a carpenter and farmer. After having to go to the wheelchair, there was not a Volkswagen vehicle or small engine he couldn’t repair. Back in the 60’s and early 70’s there weren’t any wheelchair accessible motorhomes or lifts that could go into vehicles. My dad, uncle, and grandpa took a school bus with a wheelchair lift and made a motorhome for him and my grandma to live in. Then, they took a Volkswagen van and made a wood ramp with pulleys for him to wheel up into, leaving only the two front seats for grandpa and grandma. People would try to do stuff for him that he could still do and he would tell them he was fine, he could do it himself. He has always been a great inspiration to me and also he told me many times, “Whatever your obstacle in life is, there is still a way to overcome it and live a wonderful life”. They traveled the U.S. seeing all kinds of places and fishing anywhere they could, proving what he said through his own life! He also wrote and published a book about their travels before he passed called, “The Way I See It” By: Wheeling Joe {his C.B. handle, nickname}.

My grandpa was the person who discovered that I was going blind. He would call me and I would walk into his wheelchair not to his lap. He told my mom {he was my Mom’s Daddy} that I couldn’t see, and sure enough I couldn’t. I was completely blind in my right eye and legally blind in my left by the time I was five. I still did everything any other kid did! I rode a bike, climbed trees, fished, caught frogs and snakes for pets, and learned how to shoot a bow. I also learned, while going blind, how to walk and stuff without having my sight or depth perception. That was something I have never had or really regained. I had surgery and after a year of recovery I could see almost perfectly and I saw what Santa looked like for the first time. There wasn’t much I didn’t do myself, grandpa showed me that! I went blind again in 1999. I relearned how to drive and everything else again. Now having both mental and physical disabilities, I am trying to do the same thing and not let it stop me from doing the things I love and enjoy in life. I can’t do everything that I could, but that doesn’t mean that my life is not very fulfilling and enjoyable. I enjoy giving back to many of the places that are helping me keep that life! That is the best part. I saw stigma and how to overcome it with education and the example set by my grandpa and using it myself through my whole life.

The younger brother of one of my best friends at school had Cerebral Palsy. His was only a physical handicap. People stigmatized him all the time thinking he was also developmentally disabled, which he was not! He walked with a cane through his junior high years. By the time he was in high school, he walked on his own with no cane. He proved to everyone by education and example how they were stigmatizing him and how their thoughts were wrong! He ended up being a teacher & coach and still is to this day. He has three beautiful daughters who have also gone on to college now. He overcame a lot of stigma then when we were young there was not much of any education about anything along that line. Another friend has a sister who has Down Syndrome. She went through school, graduating high school on a time certificate. I use to babysit her a lot because a lot of people would see her and act like she had some kind of disease that they would catch; this was in the early 80’s. We also took her with us to the movies, roller-skating, any of the activities we did that she liked. She was a beautiful child and grew into an even more beautiful woman. You can’t find a kinder heart or soul! I have seen her actually give someone her shirt off her back leaving her standing there in her bra when they were cold.

...Continued on Next Page
The Way I Have Seen Stigma Throughout My Life

Part Two

~ Written by Deborah L. Duckett

These experiences are probably what lead me to want to work in group homes. I went through the classes to be certified and was hired having my hepatitis B shot before so I could start working. So, as soon as I turned 18 I started working. This was in the mid to late 80’s through the mid 90’s. I even opened homes where we went to the institutions to bring people to their own houses. For so many it was the first time they had lived in a house or anywhere but an institution. We took them shopping for their clothes, out to dinner, to the park for picnics, to the movies, etc. - all the things we do in our lives! The looks and actions the “public” had towards these wonderful people was as if they were lepers. I would try to educate the people who I saw with these looks as much as I could but it made me very angry! This helped make it a passion of mine to try and change the minds of people who are showing all this stigma. When people are educated, they understand that everyone is a person with a heart and mind! It is still a passion of mine that will probably never die until stigma dies! Workshops started to open and many of these people started earning their own money working an 8:00 am - 5:00 pm job, five days a week and being able to buy all the little things that their Social Security Income did not allow them to buy. As the years went on it has gotten better because so many more people are educated but, I still see this stigma at the bus station, on buses, even at GHS. I see it pretty much everywhere!

So many people say to me every day you walk just fine. You don’t need that walker. I tell them the walker is the reason I can walk fine and most of the time that I can walk at all. Without it, I would be falling down constantly and injuring myself worse daily. We all have to remember we are all unique in our own ways from head to toe & that is what makes our wonderful world work so well. If we were all the same and good at the same things how would we ever function? When you see someone giving you those funny - stigmatizing looks educate them on whatever it is that makes you wonderfully unique in our world! Or if you are not comfortable with talking to people about it, carry copies of information on the different things you may be afflicted with. Your doctors and GHS have a fountain of information that is meant to be circulated to educate everyone, use this! Your brain is part of your body and if you are like me and have a “mental” and “physical” handicap there is no difference the way I see it. It is all a handicap of your body!

So to stop the stigma, we all have to find the strength to educate people! Educate them on your wonderful uniqueness! God made us the way we are for a reason, so that we can all work together for a better world. Help us wipe out stigma; find your own inner strength to do this for yourself if for no one or nothing else! Don’t let anyone tell you that you should be anyone but your own wonderful you.

We are all beautiful, unique and wonderful just being ourselves!!!!!
**Wednesday, May 14, 2014 • 1:30-3pm • State Capitol Lawn • Lansing**

FREE T-SHIRT & LUNCH!

**IMPORTANT:** Transportation to the event is provided.
Check-in from 9:00am-10:30am at GHS at 420 W. Fifth Ave. on the day of the event to receive your t-shirt.
The bus will be leaving from GHS promptly at 11:00 a.m.

**2014 WALK-A-MILE REGISTRATION AND RELEASE FORM**

Please fill out neatly and completely. If you need assistance in completing the form, or you have questions related to the event, please contact GHS Customer Services at (810) 257-3705 TTY (810) 257-1328.

Return completed form to Customer Services, 420 W. Fifth Ave., Flint, MI 48503. **Deadline for registration is April 23, 2014 at 5pm.**

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While attending the Rally, I agree to the following:

- Some information could be disclosed simply by being there. Specific type of information to be disclosed: includes but is not limited to photographs, audiotape, videotape, film, recordings, radio, other media including social media, and written articles (with or without a photo).

- Photographs and video taken during the event can be used for print, publications, social media, and television just to name a few.

- Please be aware that this authorization will allow the release of said documents up to twelve (12) months after the date of this authorization.

- This authorization expires in twelve (12) months

- This consent may be revoked by me in writing at any time. However, I understand that Genesee Health System may release or be in the process of releasing prior to receiving my written revocation. The Agency may rely on this release.

- I understand the purpose for which I have signed this consent and that obtaining services is not contingent upon this consent and or authorization. A copy of this release is as valid as the original release.

- I understand that information contained in media coverage will include protected health information and treatment. Treatment information involving alcohol or drug abuse, Human Immunodeficiency Virus or AIDS, or a serious communicable or sexually transmitted disease must be specified in this consent. According to the Michigan Mental Health Code this information is confidential and is protected (Mental Health Code PA 258 and / or Federal Statute 42 CFR Part 2). This information should not be shared, duplicated, or copied unless consistent with the stated purpose on this authorization. Any information that the client, parent of a minor recipient, or legal guardian with authority to consent shares outside of this consent will not be the responsibility of Genesee Health System and/or its contractors.

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Happy Winter! And quite a winter it has been. I am sure many of you had difficult times with the snow and ice and power outages (I did), and hopefully there was no long lasting damage done. If you had a particularly bad experience, please let your case worker or Customer Services know, and we will see if there is anything we can do to help. Fortunately, there are many agencies in the County that are available to assist.

The good news is that spring is just a few weeks away, although it is hard to tell since it is still very cold. Please make sure to keep yourselves safe and warm during these periods. This is one time that I will not be telling you to go outside and be active.

There are a lot of important things happening in Lansing. I am sure you all may have heard about Medicaid expansion. They have expanded who can receive Medicaid. Overall, this is a good thing, as more people will have services. There is a bit of a bad side to this. CMHs’ across the state are losing some funding called general fund, or GF for short. We are losing this because everyone thinks we will have more money once Medicaid expands. Unfortunately, we do not know if this is really true for everyone.

The result was we had to stop services for some individuals who did not have Medicaid. If you are one of these People, please make sure your case worker or Customers Services is aware, and tell them you want to apply for Medicaid. We think a lot of the people in this situation are probably able to get on Medicaid.

So, again, PLEASE, if you had your services stopped, make sure you tell someone you want to apply for Medicaid. We cannot promise that everyone will be able to get services back, but we are working hard to help as many individuals as we can.

I am sorry we had to do this, but we did not have any choice. Hopefully they will restore some of this funding.

I am sorry I could not bring you a cheerier message to begin the New Year.

I am hopeful that it will get better.

Stay well.

Dan Russell
Community Events

~Prepared by Deborah Duckett

Sloan Museum
- Space: A Journey to our Future, Currently through May 4, 2014
- The Brave and the Faithful: Michigan in the Civil War
- Witness the birth of General Motors, the UAW and the manufacturing industry that made Flint a leading industrial center

For Ticket information: 810-237-3450 or www.sloanlongway.org

Buick Gallery & Research Center
- The 1910 Buick Bug: The fastest tracked record setting car of it’s time, only 2 were built
- The M-18 Hellcat Tank Destroyer: A key factor in decisive WWII battles
- A 1917 Buick: A touring car that you can climb behind the wheel of
- View a 1940 soda fountain from McKenzie’s Drug Store
- The Perry Archives: Home to a collection of local histories, photographs, and records that help trace your roots

Workhorse Trucks are all on display now through March 30, 2014.

Longway Planetarium
- Travel through space and time to visit far away worlds
- Explore the wonders of science and technology
- Bring your own telescope or share one of the Planetarium’s to examine the moon and planets up close during Star Parties

Sloan Museum, Longway Planetarium & the Buick Gallery all offer classes and hands on learning for every age.

Wonderful family experiences await you!

Comcast is offering Internet Essentials for families

To qualify for the Internet Essentials class your household must:
- Be located where Comcast offers internet service
- Have at least one child eligible for participation in the National School Lunch program
- Not have subscribed to Comcast internet service within the last 90 days
- Not have an overdue Comcast bill or any unreturned equipment

If your household meets the criteria listed above, internet service can be purchased for a monthly cost of $9.95 + tax. Low cost computers are available upon initial enrollment for a one time cost of $149.99 + tax. Comcast is also offering free internet training online, in person, or in a printed document.

If you have any questions about eligibility requirements or would like to apply for the Internet Essentials through Comcast, please call 1-855-846-8376 or visit the website at: www.InternetEssentials.com
Do you want to know more about your rights? Have questions? You can talk directly to a Rights Advisor by calling (810) 257-3710 or (810) 762-5298 TTY.

If you would like to speak with someone in person, come to the Office of Recipient Rights at 420 W. Fifth Ave. and ask to meet with a Rights Advisor.

Access Center and Substance Abuse Services: (810) 257-3740 (810) 232-6310 TTY

Crisis Line: (810) 257-3740 (877) 946-3648

WHO IS CUSTOMER SERVICES HERE FOR? YOU!!

Customer Services has you covered if:

- You are unhappy with your services.
- You need help with service choices or changing providers.
- You’re looking for great information about the GHS Network.
- You want friendly, knowledgeable staff to help with information about places to get assistance.
- You’re interested in participating in groups and trainings that are both informative and fun.
- You would like to borrow from our resource library which has videos and pamphlets on a wide range of interesting subjects.
- You need accurate information provided in a professional, friendly manner.

Customer Services:

- Does presentations, distributes information and participates in health fairs in the community.
- Does follow-up surveys, evaluations and provides a suggestion box in our lobby— WE CARE ABOUT YOUR OPINIONS!
- We will always provide accurate information in a professional and friendly manner.

Are you missing something? Do you think you may have left a personal item behind while at GHS? Check in with our Customer Services department to see if your items was turned into the lost and found.

Genesee Community Health Center
422 West 4th Avenue
Flint, MI 48503
(Across the street from Hurley Medical Center, off the corner of 4th Avenue and Grand Traverse)
(810) 496-5777

Monday - Friday
8 am to 4:30 pm
WEDNESDAYS: 8 am to Noon
Closed daily from 12 pm to 12:30 pm
www.genchc.org
Email: info@genchc.org

Serving all your healthcare needs:
- Under one roof
- Regardless of your ability to pay
- Focused on you and your family
- With people who really care

Without YOU, we wouldn’t be here!!

KNOW YOUR OPTIONS!
When to file a Grievance or Appeal:
- Denial of Services at Access
- Denial of Hospitalization
- Medicaid Fair Hearing
- Local Grievance process
- Local Medicaid/Non-Medicaid appeal
- Service Delay

Any of the above apply to you?
Contact Due Process at (810) 424-6065
or Stop into Customer Services at 420 W. Fifth Ave. and ask to file an appeal.

NAMI Genesee County (810) 232-6498
Project Vox (810) 496-5599

Some of our GHS Network Partners

GHS CHAT