



## **THE BURGEONING CLUBHOUSE MOVEMENT:**

### **Adventures in Clubhouse Expansion Around the World**

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#### **The Compass House Story**

I remember my first visit to a Clubhouse. It was Carriage House in Fort Wayne, IN, and our group from Oregon was attending the New Clubhouse Development Training. I had no idea what to expect, and in my mind I was trying to identify who the members and who the staff were. What I quickly found was that I could not tell the difference, everyone was running around all over the place, and setting up for our arrival. Needless to say, I was very confused, and had the first blow to what I thought the traditional clinical boundaries were and those that I was used to seeing. It wasn't until Joel and Jack invited a man named Andy Wilson up to welcome everyone that I identified a staff. Standing before us was a man wearing a worn down green hat, and Birkenstocks, as he spoke I could tell that he sounded like an Executive Director, but he dressed a man at a BBQ with family on the weekend. I found out later that he kept some professional cloths hanging upstairs just in case he needed them for a meeting. I was intrigued, and at that moment I began to fall in love with Clubhouse.

We are forever grateful for the New Clubhouse Development Training, because 13 months after attending that training, Compass House opened its doors and began its journey as a Clubhouse. However, the journey of opening a Clubhouse begins long before we open our doors. As I stated above in the community of Jackson County we had nothing that even remotely looked like a Clubhouse, and it was desperately needed, and with the climate of healthcare change the timing was right to introduce a model that was evidence based, but new to Oregon.

The passage of the Affordable Care Act had a unique impact on Oregon. Our States response with the expansion of Medicaid dollars was to create Coordinated Care Organizations (CCO's) that controlled the spending of the State's Medicaid dollars. These CCO's govern regions, and give local control to the allocation of Medicaid billing and dollars. What this meant for us is that access and expansion of services came very, very fast. However, in 2012 in the midst of this expansion we had two peer run drop in centers get closed down for various reasons. So, now in the midst of service

expansion, we had a gap emerge almost immediately in what we would call peer to peer mental health support. It was during this time that Stacy Brubaker relocated to Southern Oregon from Salt Lake City, Utah and became the Division Manager of Jackson County Mental Health. Stacy had a career at Valley Mental Health, and had recently turned down a job to be the Director of Alliance House. When Stacy arrived in Southern Oregon, she realized that there were no Clubhouses, and thus introduced the community to the model, and rallied the County's support to make it happen. I was then the Vice Chair of the County's Mental Health Advisory Committee, and was looking for a volunteer commitment, and that was what tied me into this. From Stacey's initial presentation we developed our working group that drove our Clubhouse project through to completion.

That is the spark that got us going.

I have a secret to tell you- On most days I feel that I have no idea what I am doing. If you have ever heard of the term "fake it till you make it" that describes me on some days. Just smile, nod your head, listen, speak, **and look confident** . Every day in the Clubhouse I find myself throwing what I think I know out the window and replacing it with statements like "I have no idea, but we will call Alliance House", or "that is an amazing question, why don't you give Bill Waters a call at NorthStar Clubhouse", or "I belong to a really cool Directors email list, let me send out an email and we will report back to the House meeting next Thursday on what we discover".

When we first heard of the Clubhouse Model, we did our best to wrap our heads around it, but still struggled with how it all works, but despite this initial struggle everything seemed to align itself perfectly for us. We were guided by Dee Anne Everson the Director of our local United Way to meet with Chad McCommas to ask for the remainder of DASIL's funding (DASIL was one of the drop in centers that closed). Instead we left with their non-profit status, remaining funds, and we merged their Board of Directors with key members of our Working Group. Despite that early success we still didn't know fundamentally what we're looking at. Luckily, Alliance House connected Stacy with Jack Yatsko, and within a few months after our group formed, we were headed to the NCD training at Carriage House. From there everything changed. We saw our first Clubhouse, we developed an action plan that acted as our roadmap. A fire was lit, and as Jack stated, "we went gangbusters" in our community, and at this time through Jackson County Mental Health we were able liquidate the assets from Hawthorne Center into Compass House (Hawthorne Center was the other drop in center that closed).

We held our first workshop for Strategic Planning, and came up with our mission, vision, values, and name of our Clubhouse. Side note, my wife told me to throw the name Compass House into the mix, at first I told her that was a horrible name, but it grew on me, and resonated with our Working Group, and I believe that the key to a happy marriage is this statement "you were right dear".

Giving us an identity helped immensely, and as we did all the legal paperwork for the non-profit name change, we also began searching for granters. Keep in mind that because of Stacy and her role at Jackson County Mental Health we

already had our biggest financial backer in place, and this gave us and other funders a major vote of confidence. We met with community leaders, and gathered letters of support, and managed to garner support from local foundations. We held a meet in greet event that over 100 people from the community came to, and we established lasting media relationships that gave us plenty of press coverage before we ever opened.

As money and support began to accumulate, we began searching for a property. This was led by Kathy McNeill, Liza, and Halima. This committee looked at many properties, and helped us narrow down our selection, and began our negotiations for our lease and remodel of the space. During this process we first encountered NIMBY, but we were able to use the evidence behind the Clubhouse Model to successfully maneuver through this issue, and keep on track to develop a lease and secure the location.

As all of these pieces continued to fall into place, we were also working to hire our Executive Director. Obviously, this person is me, otherwise this might be a little awkward right now. However, we did a competitive process, and opened the job up to the community, and posted it with Clubhouse International. I nervously submitted my resume, and letters of recommendation, interviewed, and the result is self-evident at this point.

Once I was hired we finalized the contract with Jackson County Mental Health, which would give us startup funds, and imbedded staff inside of Compass House (they didn't come immediately). We finished the lease, and began the permit process for the remodel, and we headed off for our Colleague Training at Alliance House. Our clock was ticking and we were just a few months away from opening.

Upon our return at the end of May 2014 from the colleague training our deadlines were abundant, and we surged to meet them, with to goal of opening our doors. We painted, met with contractors, wrote for more grants, and began moving in. Our very first members came and we began doing mock WOD's to begin setting up our Clubhouse space. We did more community presentations to those that would refer members to us, and we geared up for a hard opening.

Then on that fateful day of August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 still without our County staff, we opened our doors, and a new reality set in. There are many things from back then that I would do differently, but that is a topic of the NCD Workshop at this seminar. However, I will say that Andy Wilson was correct that the most important thing that a new club can do is make sure the WOD is strong.

In our first year of operating we found that 97% of our active members had 0 hospitalizations, and 96% had 0 jail stays. We are now working with Klamath County and Lincoln County to establish Clubs in their communities. We are branching out to join statewide boards, and task forces to further promote the Clubhouse Model. Our goal is to spread the Clubhouse Model around the State of Oregon, and to one day be able to stand up here and not just tell you the story of Compass House, but tell you how Clubhouse Oregon has changed the world of mental health care in our State.

Doing this takes a community, and that community must hold a shared vision of Clubhouse. This vision cannot live in a vacuum, or only be held by one person, but it has to breathe through all of us, working together to create it.

Demosthenes once wrote that ***“Small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises.”*** I believe that in Oregon we are entering into a new dawn of opportunity, and that the Clubhouse Model will become a model that every community will want to replicate, and we will be here to help them do it.