

The Updraft

Elevating the lives of adults living with serious mental illness.



3 CENTRAL PLAZA,
#320
ROME, GA 30161

Why Clubhouse?

Clubhouse is proven-effective with over 70 years experience in mental health recovery.

When you think Clubhouse, many things come to mind: a country club, treehouse, the little Rascals... None of these answer the simple, yet complex, question, "What is a Clubhouse?" The Clubhouse we speak of is a community in which adults living with mental illness find hope and opportunity. This place of hope ends the social and economic isolation that so many people experience after being diagnosed with mental illness. The Clubhouse model is a holistic, psychosocial approach to mental health recovery. **The model puts to advantage the basic human need to be needed.** Recovery is achieved when the healthy aspects of one's character are brought to the forefront by offering opportunities to work and contribute to community. Work is the normalizing factor that provides an avenue for people living with mental illness to find meaning and purpose in life.

The Clubhouse in Rome, Georgia, Elevation House, was founded in August 2018. NAMI Rome, a key stakeholder in mental health advocacy in the community, provided the seed money necessary for Elevation House to become incorporate as a nonprofit in the State of Georgia, and hire an executive director. Additionally, NAMI Rome provided matching funds towards a grant from The Community Foundation of Greater Rome to ensure comprehensive training for new Clubhouses through Clubhouse International for a representative group of Elevation House staff, board of directors and inaugural member. **Elevation House founders and NAMI Rome advocates knew the value of the Clubhouse Model of Rehabilitation.** Therefore, as a first step to developing a successful program, the training required to initiate the process of Clubhouse International accreditation was achieved in February 2019.

Clubhouse International draws its best practice standards from over 70 years of experience in mental health recovery. The Clubhouse discipline is a proven, cost-effective program for individuals with debilitating mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, clinical depression and schizoaffective disorder. Elevation House aspires to be one of more than 320 accredited Clubhouses in over 40 countries worldwide by 2024. **Accreditation will position Elevation House to become well known in Rome- Floyd, and the Northwest Georgia Region, as a high quality, vital community resource for adults living with mental illness.** Elevation House will empower individuals living with mental illness to achieve independence and employment in a dignified, stigma free.

Additional information about Clubhouse International is available at www.clubhouse-intl.org.

MISSION

End social and economic isolation for people living with mental illness in Rome, Georgia by operating a high-quality Clubhouse which enables successful recovery.

COMMUNITY

We build a supportive community through friendships and mentorships.

COMPETENCE

We offer opportunities for skill development that satisfy the need to be needed.

CONFIDENCE

We encourage self-belief through coaching, empowering members to thrive.



Hit the Ground Running

Elevation House from the eyes of our first member.

As the first member, when I first heard of Elevation House through NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), I pictured a swanky clubhouse with a café, modern furniture, perhaps a pool table – someplace where my diagnosed friends and I could meet for peer support and social interaction. I was very excited about this because I was spending far too much time in isolation at home.

I met with Carrie Edge, our Executive Director and Don Scuvotti, our board president. Carrie told me about the mission of the clubhouse – which is to help individuals with mental illness get their lives back. This meant support of education, employment, housing, wellness, and social needs and goals. **Elevation House wasn't another support network, it was about being well and staying well. A community where dignity is offered and a place to belong.**

When I heard about the mission, my enthusiasm grew exponentially. Many of us with mental illness are dependent upon family and government agencies to survive. **Elevation House breaks that; it is not just about surviving, it's about thriving and living a meaningful life of purpose.**



So, we hit the ground running! Carrie, Don, and I attended training in South Carolina on the Clubhouse model. For two weeks, we stayed at the guesthouse across the street from Gateway House, an established clubhouse that helps teach the clubhouse model to people all over the world. We attended training from 8 am – 4 pm. **The cornerstone of the clubhouse model is structured around a typical workday.** Members come in at 8 am, begin a workday based on the activities that make the

clubhouse operational – breakfast, snacks, dinner, clerical work, videography, newsletters, and even banking. The clubhouse was busy, busy, busy.



What is so special about the clubhouse model is that everyone- members and staff- go about the business of creating quality lives though work. Staff develop relationships with local employers who are given incentives to hire people from the clubhouse through the Transitional Employment Program (TEP). When a member is ready, they can move from TEP to Supported Employment Program (SEP). Then, as members become more skilled in their jobs and in coping with the day to day stress work often creates, they can choose to gain employment on their own in an Independent Employment Program (IEP).

During any and all of these phases, the member is celebrated. **Every accomplishment is acknowledged and the energy in the clubhouse is positive, welcoming, personal, and most importantly – it works.**

The clubhouse is a program designed around the human desire and right to work, live independently, and engage in meaningful social activities. The magic is that, people who may

have lost educational opportunities, employment, or independent living opportunities to mental illness, have a place to go that prevents relapse and provides support. **The structure helps members take back lost opportunities and create meaningful, vibrant lives.**

I am proud to be the founding member of Elevation House and can't wait to share my experience, strength, and hope.

THE NEED FOR A CLUBHOUSE

BY THE NUMBERS

National statistics provided by the National Alliance for Mental Illness indicate that:

- 1 in 25 adults in the U.S.–9.8 million, or 4%—**experience serious mental illness annually**

The application of this statistical model suggests the following:

- **1,456 citizens of Rome** have serious mental illness, and
- **3,860 residents of Floyd County** have serious mental illness.

We believe the actual number of citizens with serious mental illness in Rome-Floyd is higher due to the 2011 closing of Northwest Hospital and the high rate of mental illness among incarcerated in the Floyd County Jail.

...BUT HERE IN THE CLUBHOUSE, THE ILLUMINATING FEELING OF HOPE IS ALWAYS PRESENT AND ONE CAN WITNESS MIRACLES ON A DAILY BASIS.

Families Are the Hidden Benefactors

Our Founder and Board President shares his heart.

As our team was winding down our comprehensive New Clubhouse training at Gateway House, I found myself reflecting on our immersion with appreciation and a sense of accomplishment. **We had just spent two weeks embedded within one of the world's best Clubhouses and the education we received was priceless.** You can read extensively about the Clubhouse experience but the only way to truly understand the power of the culture is to live it. And live it we did!

At Gateway we saw a Clubhouse where people lived lives filled with purpose, dignity and community. These things are not a given in a society in which mental illness is misunderstood and stigmatized, but here in the Clubhouse, the illuminating feeling of hope is always present and one can witness miracles on a daily basis. In addition to extensive classroom training, we were privileged to work side by side with members and staff carrying out the vital work required to successfully operate the Clubhouse. The experience was both powerful and immensely useful which sparked the kind of excitement in our hearts that you feel when you know you have the opportunity to do something truly wonderful and meaningful in life's grand scheme. **We were about to return to our hometown of Rome, Georgia prepared to make our upstart Clubhouse, Elevation House, a reality knowing that it will change many lives in our community for the better.** Very few times in my life have I have been filled with such excitement and anticipation.



As our last evening at Gateway was nearing a close, everyone was in a celebratory mood and the excitement in the air was palpable as freshly trained colleagues from around the U.S. gathered with Clubhouse members and staff collectively one last time. I took a mental inventory of all that we had discussed during our two weeks and in the midst of this milestone-moment I realized that there was something I wanted to share with the group corporately. We had talked extensively during our training about the way a Clubhouse transforms the members, the staff and communities at large. In that moment though, I realized that I needed to unpack a few thoughts about another kind of stakeholder . . . families. **I couldn't allow this evening to end without sharing the thoughts in my heart about the way a Clubhouse impacts a family.**

I am the father of a son who lives with serious mental illness. Several years ago, we lived in Greenville, South Carolina and that is where we had our first exposure to a Clubhouse. At the time, my son was 19 years old and we had traveled a very difficult path since the onset of his illness at the age of 16. In between numerous hospitalizations we had

tried a multitude of therapeutic support initiatives in an effort to bring relief and healing and recovery to my son. Truth be told, those efforts were every bit about soothing my aching heart as they were for my son. **Witnessing the onset of serious mental illness with a close family member is one of the most difficult things anyone can ever experience and I was hurting for my son.** Love dictates that an entire family is impacted when one of their own becomes mentally ill.



One day a friend told us about Gateway House and suggested that we check it out. When we arrived, we were momentarily confused because it looked nothing like a hospital or clinic. It was warm, homelike and vibrant. **There was a buzz of positive energy flowing through the building and everyone in the building was moving with purpose.** Looking around, we were unable to distinguish between Clubhouse staff and members. We just saw lots of people moving deliberately and positively. We were greeted by a staff member who gave us a tour of the Clubhouse and explained how Clubhouses operate.

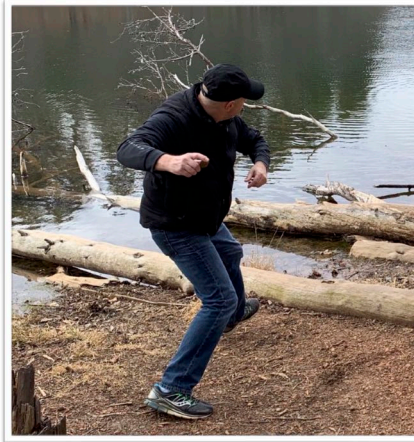
In less than an hour, we came to understand the fundamentals of Clubhouse culture. There is no hierarchy because staff and members operate as a team of equals. We learned that Clubhouses are purposely understaffed so that members are needed to complete daily operations successfully. **Each weekday centers around meaningful work within the Clubhouse, a concept known as the Work-Ordered Day.** During this process, the once stifled dreams of members become reignited: Gainful employment, higher education, quality housing and meaningful relationships all become possible once again. Social activities are scheduled during certain evenings and the Clubhouse gathers as a community to celebrate holidays. When a member doesn't show up, another member will reach out to them to make sure they are ok and to encourage them to come, reminding them that they are genuinely appreciated and needed. As a father, I had an overwhelming sense of hope for my son after that tour.

On this final evening of New Clubhouse training, as we prepared to travel back to our hometown of Rome, Georgia to start Elevation House, each colleague was given an opportunity to address the collective Clubhouse one last time. We were simply asked to share anything that we wanted to leave with Gateway members and staff and this was my message: We talked extensively over the last two weeks about the powerful benefits of the Clubhouse for people who live with mental illness but Families are the hidden benefactors of the Clubhouse (cont. page 4)



Families Are the Hidden Benefactors (cont.)

As a dad who endured a multitude of desperate, fruitless therapeutic efforts with my son, I remember being very tired and greatly in need of hope when I toured Gateway House for the first time. **When I experienced the brilliance of Clubhouse culture and the authentic, sustainable healing that was taking place, I remember the weight of the world falling from my shoulders like a ton of bricks.**



Healing and recovery were right there in plain view every time we turned a corner in the Clubhouse. I realized with resounding and radiant conviction that my son's dreams were still attainable and, because of this, our family had a new source of hope. Opportunities abounded for friendship, employment,

housing, education and purpose! Gratitude in my heart overflowed. **Gateway House gave our family a precious gift by showing us that people could actually take their lives back.** So this evening, as our group prepares for our trip back to Rome to prepare launch plans for Elevation House, I cannot wait to bring families through our Clubhouse! I am thrilled at knowing that I will have the opportunity to look into the eyes of weary mothers, fathers and siblings and see the weight of the world peel away from their troubled souls as they realize the

transformative power of our Clubhouse. I am humbled at the thought that I will have the privilege to witness lost hopes recaptured as families once again allow themselves to believe that healing and recovery is possible.

A final thought. Like millions of families who experience the journey of mental illness with one of their own, I had prayed countless times for a transformational opportunity for my son. I know that the Lord led us to Gateway House which opened the door to learning about the broader Clubhouse community. This was the inspiration for Elevation House and we look forward to joining Gateway and the other 300+ Clubhouses around the world elevating lives and

helping to heal entire families. **In the end, just as love dictates that an entire family is impacted when one of their own becomes ill, love also dictates that a family is profoundly victorious when healing occurs for that family member.**

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH ELEVATION HOUSE



@ElevationHouseRomeGA



@elevationhouseromega



@elevaterome

Join Elevation House's mailing list!

Just send your email address by text message:

Text **ELEVATELIVES** to **22828** to get started.



Message and data rates may apply.



WWW.ELEVATIONHOUSE.ORG

706-413-2323

INFO@ELEVATIONHOUSE.ORG

