

THE COMPASSION CHRONICKLES

THE TURN-A-FROWN AROUND (TAF) FOUNDATION, INC.

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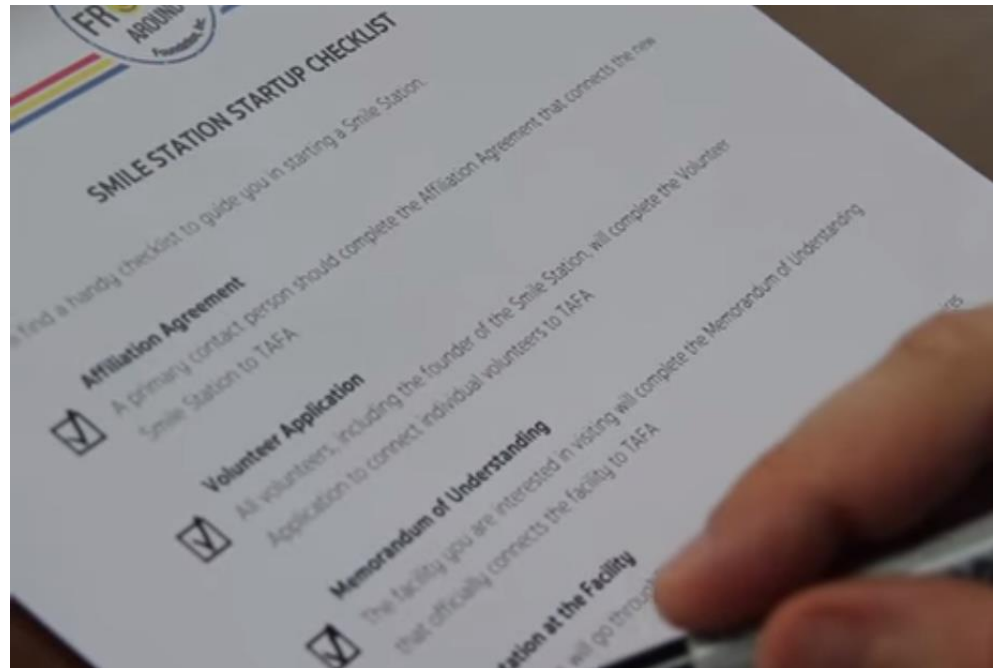
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How to Start a Smile Station

By Caitlyn Yerves
Director of Marketing

We are thrilled to announce the launch of our most recent project – the How to Start a Smile Station video. The goal of this tutorial is to simply outline the necessary steps that it takes to build a successful Smile Station and end loneliness.

After months of brainstorming, outlining, filming and editing, the video was published on YouTube at the end of June 2015. In less than four minutes, the video explains how one person can initiate a massive change in their community.

The five steps that are outlined are: to find a local facility, perform a search and rescue, create community support, start visiting, and report back to TAF) headquarters.

This project was a collaboration between TAF) marketing and Sheryll Franko, the award winning filmmaker and owner of Falling Awake Productions. Sheryll also produced the film “Crazy Enough to Care,” which initially helped to take our message of ending loneliness to a new level.

By creating this easy to follow guide, we believe that we will be able to market our efforts on a much larger scale. Instead of having to take phone calls and explain to each interested party, volunteers can simply watch this video to learn all that they need to get started, build a Smile Station, and keep track of their growth, progress and service.

The tutorial was filmed at Gates Manor in Montclair, NJ. This nursing home has been the focal point of compassion for the Montclair State University Smile Station. The moments captured throughout the night were joyful, inspiring and authentic.

It is our hope that other facilities will observe the pure and unconditional love that is present in the services that TAF) and our volunteers offer, and will want to become affiliated with our mission so that they can End Loneliness in their facility.

Stay tuned to our [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#), as we are anticipating much more marketing activity, including a promotional video in a few months’ time! And check out our [How to Start a Smile Station](#) video in the meantime! ●

Management Committee Spotlights

By Jackie Dorey
Staff Writer



Ed Johns, NHI Director

What do you do as part of your work with TAFE?

First of all, I visit a lot of people. In a month, I could visit a hundred people, or even more. We bring kids together with residents in the nursing home and they just do fun activities together. The last time I was there, the activities person was playing the

guitar, and everyone was just singing and dancing and having a good time. I was so impressed by the love and compassion they had for the elderly. I also speak at churches, TV interviews, and do a lot of Christian radio interviews all across the nation.

What is your favorite part about volunteering?

I walk into a nursing home and can usually point out the people that don't have a visitor just by their faces. Making them smile makes me feel like I'm here for a reason.

Is there any friend that you have met during your visits that has made an especially big impact on you?

Ana was one of my favorite ones. I did one of my first TV interviews with her. She passed away about a year ago, but she was one of my best friends ever. She had a picture on the wall of when she was a little girl and she looked exactly like Shirley Temple. I remember the second time I went to see her, she said, "Ed, I've been sitting in this hallway and in my room for many, many years, and you're the first person that has come to visit me." That broke my heart and still does.

Do you think your visiting has impacted your forever friends' mental health?

I can see improvement in the mentality of every single one that I visit. They have something to look forward to every week. The look on their face goes from "doom and gloom" to unbelievable happiness, even just from one person visiting them. There's actually been a study done on people who don't get visitors. They die quicker, and when they're alive they're [more sick] during the week.

What would you like to accomplish with TAFE in the future?

I'd like to get an RV and travel all through NJ, or even the entire country. Go to different nursing homes, churches, radio stations, and just get the word out. Is it realistic or not? Only god knows. But I would love that. ●

Johnna Johnson, CCI Director



What interested you to join TAFE?

To help those who find it difficult to smile daily.

What are you hoping to accomplish in your role?

Create awareness for the need to build a bridge between our seniors and youth.

How does your personality align with TAFE's mission and culture?

My daily life is to help others. I love to give and offer support to those without a support system.

If you could be any animal, what would it be and why?

A lion because strength is needed to protect those who have no protection. ●

Zannatul Ferdous, Administrative Assistant



I was born in Queens, New York to two loving parents from Bangladesh. Soon after, my parents and two sisters and I moved down to northern Virginia to start a new life in the suburbs. I graduated from T. C. Williams High School went to Virginia Commonwealth

University in the fall with the intentions of going to

School to become a doctor one day. At the time, I was a biology major on the pre-med track because I felt that becoming a doctor was the only way to help people. Living in the middle of Richmond city opened my eyes to see how there are so many ways to help people in need. I changed my major to psychology because I wanted to understand why one acts the way they do and different states of the human mind. I found TAFE while searching for internships online and I really liked the premise behind TAFE. I love how the mission of TAFE is to make sure we end loneliness by creating friendships. I feel that depression and other problems in people can be solved as easily as making one friend who genuinely cares about them. I wanted to do my part in connecting people with each other and ending loneliness, and what better is it then to start by setting down roots? ●

Moving Forward with Multiple Sclerosis

By Jackie Dorey
Staff Writer

At 27, my mother Kelly learned that she had Multiple Sclerosis over dinner from her in-laws. Her neurologist happened to know her father-in-law personally, and thought delivering the news indirectly would be “less of a hit” on her. There’s no ideal way to find out such information, but she certainly would have preferred to be told privately in a doctor’s office. Understandably, my mother was terribly confused and upset. “I didn’t really know what MS was...I thought I was going to die,” she said.

My mother’s symptoms began with occasional blurred vision and numbness. For the last 10 years, her symptoms have been slowly progressing. Now, the entire left side of her body is numb and she experiences memory loss. Although MS is not fatal, the disease is severely debilitating to the central nervous system in a way that forced her to completely readapt to her mind and body.

Over two decades after being diagnosed, my mother sits in our sunroom with our orange cat Frankie on the chair next to her. Although she has taken a slew a different medications to alleviate her symptoms, she feels that positive lifestyle changes have been the most helpful in treating MS. A better diet has made her feel tremendously better.

“A lot of the medications didn’t help me, they just made me sick...Believe it or not, the best treatment has been eating better. That has taken my fatigue away completely,” my mother said.

She makes sure to eat a lot of raw vegetables, fruit, and green smoothies. In her kitchen, a NutriBullet blender and basket of ripe bananas, apples, and oranges sits on the counter. She also has cut out a lot of meat and sugary foods.

Surrounding herself with supportive friends and family has also been extremely important in keeping my mother moving forward in her life. Talking to people she loves when she’s feeling down is her favorite form of therapy. She mentioned me and my sister Lauren, who are 17 and 21, and her friend Theresa, who also has MS.

“My kids make me proud, I think about them a lot,” She says. “My friend Theresa is amazing. She never has a bad thing to say about anything or anybody. We get each other. We can talk about exactly what we’re going through. It makes us feel better that someone totally gets what you’re going through. We laugh about things.”

In addition to a balanced diet and good company, my

mother stressed the importance of keeping a positive outlook on life. She listens to happy music, watches funny movies, and reminds herself that it’s not so much her obstacles, but her attitude, that dictates how she feels. When those without a chronic illness wonder in awe about how she gets through the day, her answer is simple.

“People always say to me, ‘I don’t know if I could ever handle it, I don’t know how you do it.’ And I say, ‘Do I have a choice? What’s the other option? These are the cards I was dealt and I have to deal with it. Don’t get me wrong, I have bad days where I’m like, ‘I don’t think I can do this anymore,’ But doesn’t everybody?” ●

Support TAFE!

TAFE thrives on the donations from its supporters. If you are interested in donating, please visit our [Donate page on our website!](#)

Mental Health Initiative Updates

By Mark Duffy
Secretary

TAFE is part of a mental health peer initiative in Middlesex County supported by county government through the efforts of the Mental Health Administrator Penny Grande, a longtime supporter of TAFE. This unique partnership assists in providing a continuum of mental health peer operated supports that include the CSPNJ Moving Forward Community Wellness Center, the Middlesex Wellness Respite, the peer advocacy program at the Screening Center at Rutgers and TAFE. These initiatives working together to offer support to people who are lonely and/or in crisis. By engaging them in a cocoon of support, people are not only getting help by being engaged by likeminded people, they are also being diverted from psychiatric inpatient admissions and for some assisted through the screening process. These people are also offered friendship while being recruited as TAFE Smile Station volunteers.

The Smile Station located at the Moving Forward Center is recruiting these active volunteers who are reaching out to peers that are lonely and/or living in nursing homes. TAFE volunteers are offering Forever Friendships using compassionate love to reach out to those who are disconnected from their families, friends and communities.

Through the past efforts of Joe Meany and now Elena Kravitz TAFE is providing a way for people in the New Brunswick area to connect and care for each other. ●

Fighting for Help

By Mehnaz Ladha
Staff Writer

Although it's been widely accepted for decades, a recent study released by Center for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed that mental health problems are much more common among the poor than any other socioeconomic class. The reason? People living in poverty cannot afford to seek treatment.

Individuals are not always living in poverty when diagnosed. Socioeconomic statuses drop after being diagnosed with a disease, igniting the downward spiral and burdening the individual emotionally, physically, and financially.

In an attempt to assist the millions of people without health insurance, the Affordable Care Act helps individuals get insurance and requires companies to provide extensive coverage of mental health care. Coined as Obamacare, the Affordable Care Act has been accepted by young individuals throughout the nation. Youngsters who have received health insurance through the Affordable Care Act have been reported to be more likely to seek mental health care rather than any other medical treatment (Saloner & Lê Cook, 2014). But like any other problem, the solution to the inaccessibility to mental health care is not so simple. Even with the support of the Affordable Care Act, individuals continue to struggle finding mental health care because of two reasons: it is either because they cannot find providers that accept the insurance or because they will have to pay out-of-pocket for every treatment and prescription.

The complexity of this problem calls for a series of solutions. Various mental health organizations, including the National Alliance on Mental Illness, have called for improvements on mental health care coverage. From working in a Bergen County Borough Hall, it's become clear that the mentally ill are taking center stage because of the STIGMA-FREE campaign. Towns across the nation have taken the pledge to eliminate stigma surrounding mental illnesses and to foster an environment of acceptance and understanding. Although the core of the movement is to eliminate stigma, this movement can and will go further to promote greater mental health care coverage so that no one can be denied treatment because of his financial situation. Currently in its initial stages, the STIGMA-FREE campaign has garnered the attention of public figures and will continue to draw attention to psychological health.

Communities can unintentionally draw themselves away from people suffering with mental illnesses, possibly in fear of not knowing what to do, what to say, or how to act.

Individuals with psychological health problems, however, are left with feelings of vulnerability and loneliness. While TAFAs mission is to end loneliness one friendship at a time, it too is fostering an environment of acceptance and support. Like the STIGMA-FREE campaign, TAFAs is working to break down barriers and together these two organizations can push for greater mental health care coverage. The more attention that is drawn to psychological health care the more likely it can be improved. ●

**If anything moved you in this newsletter,
please visit our new [website](#) to learn more
and get involved!**

The Smile Station Express

The Smile Station Express
travels from town to town,
setting up Smile Stations
to turn your frown around.

Who will love the loveless?
Who will be a friend?
Who will seek and find the lost?
Who will bring loneliness to an end?

Will it be the worship house?
Love is what they teach.
Or the local bar and grill?
With beers within your reach.

Elk clubs, moose, and lions,
any animal will do.
Kids from grammar school to college,
it could even be your friends and you.

So climb on the Smile Station Express
as we gather each Forever Friend.
Start a Smile Station right now,
is the message that we send.

Just think about the lonely
and how they will come alive.
Just think about the forgotten
whose soul you will revive.

So will you become a Forever Friend?
Don't make us wait or guess.
Please bring your unconditional love
and join the Smile Station Express.