

THE COMPASSION CHRONICKLES

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

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CarePlus Coffeehouse: Beautiful Beginnings



Friends of the Coffeehouse

By Caitlyn Yerves, Director of Marketing

October 8, 2015, Paramus, NJ - The Care Plus NJ, Inc. Peer Mentorship and Advocacy group held a World Changing Compassion Coffeehouse to celebrate the clients of CarePlus during Mental Health Awareness Week. The Coffeehouse was adapted from TAFE events originating from Montclair State as a means to end loneliness on campus. The idea has recently been utilized at CarePlus to help spread awareness around the efforts of both TAFE and the Stigma-Free Initiative.

CarePlus has been one of the strongest supporters of TAFE for over a decade. It was really special to see everything come full circle, to be celebrating our success at one of the main places where it all started.

The event started in the Wellness Café, where guests were invited to meet, greet and eat. The TAFE excitement was spread through the use of the *Smile Catcher* and the *Good Detector*: compassion tools that have been used throughout TAFE's history. During this time there was also an open forum for discussion.

There was an outpour of gratitude from the clients. It's an honor to work alongside of people who really care about

themselves and others, people who want to share their story and make a difference.

After lunch Michael Weitzman, a Paramus Stigma-Free Task Force member, performed his motivational entertainment which aspires to inspire change in the way mental illness is viewed. Two of the Peer Mentorship and Advocacy group members also shared musical numbers with guests toward the end of the event.

This Coffeehouse was the second one held at CarePlus, with the vision of expanding the reach of the TAFE Mental Health Initiative in Bergen County. Guests who visited from outside the CarePlus organization expressed interested and provided ideas as well as feedback on how TAFE can continue to grow.

The Peer Mentorship and Advocacy group members who helped to organize the event have been training to become *Forever Friends* and recently began their volunteer work. ●

Any parties interested in vending, donating, setting up a venue, or volunteering as a Forever Friend can contact the TAFE team through the website: <http://turnafrownaround.org/>

A TAFE Exit Means New Starts for New Friends

By Allen Teplitsky, Administrative Specialist

As I step down as Director of Organization Development, I can only feel exultant with how far TAFE has come and the direction it is going. Although I step away from my fancy title, I will stick around as Administrative Specialist to support TAFE. The amount of support that CSP has given TAFE has stretched over 12 years. CSP is really amazing for this.

Alexandra Solares, Alexa, will be taking on this role. She has great knowledge of nonprofits and an eagerness to make our facilitation of new volunteers work smoothly. Alexa really wants to bring focus onto our key performance indicators (KPIs). KPIs are signs or steps that let us know our goals are being accomplished. I have confidence she will be an amazing addition. I think this opportunity for Alexa will be helpful to her and TAFE. Just as Drew stepped down and asked people to step up to keep the torch going, I do so, as well.

I would also like to take this time to recognize Tina Tao, our Smile Station Facilitator. She has whole-heartedly contacted volunteers with Alexa and handled my endless supply of dry corny jokes (I didn't even butter 'em up). Tina has put together graphs showing her analyses of our monthly applications to our website. She found out the most volunteers in the last few years have applied in May and September. Knowing this will really help us prepare for this May, as well, to dig deeper into other cool information.

I would like to show appreciation to the recruiting team. These volunteers have been helping fill everything from director to assistant positions for years now. The volunteers of who have been and are part of it are: Claudia Gao, Yasai Yuan, Hui Wang, Sharon Xinyuan, and Cici Yang. Hui, Sharon, and Cici continue to post, screen, and coordinate. You all have contributed time and vital effort to help TAFE grow as an organization. They have also been part of various TAFE Projects; Hui especially has been instrumental in the set-up of the facilitation team with her insight into how it can be successful. Thank you all!

As well, to the assistants, Smile Station volunteers, and all those who have dealt with my craziness enough to care, let's keep on! This means all you Directors, CSP employees, and specifically Afshan Ladha! There is no apology I can give for getting you in this fine, fun, and fantastic challenge of making the world less lonely. We have been through some serious horror, heartache, and happiness!

Lastly, I give a shout out to all the TAFE volunteers I have

met throughout the years and will meet in the future. You are golden! The passion I have seen and love between people formed from TAFE has been powerful. The beautiful moments of caring have made me and make me stick with this rowdy bunch that really hope to make the world a beautiful transformed place where society takes better care of all within it. So you, reading this, who sits beyond this 4th wall; Thanks. Yes, you are part of TAFE. High-five! I thank you for it all in any butterfly effect way that it played out.

As well to Drew Horn: in the great words of Pink Floyd's Richard Wright, "Shine on you crazy diamond." ●



Alexa Solares



Tina Tao



Hui Wang

Social Support and Loneliness

By Afshan Ladha, Director of Operations

As a psychologist in training, I'm expected to assess for social support resources for diagnostic and treatment planning efforts. I actually had the opportunity to examine the relationship between social support and previous suicide attempts at Mt. Sinai Beth Israel Medical Center.

Social support can be divided into three categories. Tangible support refers to the support for finances and materials. Appraisal support is in regard to self-esteem and self-worth. Closely related, belonging support refers to how much a person feels they belong to a social group.

The findings cut across race, indicating the importance of social support in predicting suicide attempt across cultures. All three variables of social support appeared to be protective against suicide attempt in the psychiatric inpatient population.

In understanding these types of social support, we can see how impactful loneliness can be in someone's decision to end their life. I love being part of a field that aims to treat psychological disorders and an organization that provides one of the major tools to overcoming them.

*Findings were presented the 2015 Association for Psychological Science Convention in New York, NY. ●

Celebrities Vocalizing Change

By Mehnaz Ladha, Staff Writer

Following the shooting at Umpqua Community College in Oregon, the issue of mental health has been in the spotlight with personalities like Last Week Tonight host John Oliver and actress/singer Demi Lovato advocating for government reform. Mental illness is often brought up in public discussion following a tragic event where the perpetrator is often diagnosed with a mental illness by the media. The attention brought by the media perpetuates stereotypes that individuals suffering with mental illness are violent and a danger to society.

The late-night TV host devoted a significant amount of airtime to explain how illogical it is to blame gun violence on mental illness. Citing directly from National Center for Health Statistics, Oliver emphasized how of the 120,000 gun related deaths that took place between 2001 and 2010 in America, fewer than five percent were caused by people with mental disorders. While this data cannot be denied, political officials and candidates link mental illness with gun violence.

NAMI reports that one in five Americans experience a mental illness. Although these figures are significant, the current system is shattered and the government is not doing enough to help people suffering with mental illnesses. Oliver criticized the government for using "greyhound therapy," the practice of putting people on buses and sending them to other states," to solve the problem. Also, imprisoning individuals with mental illnesses is not only ineffective in terms of treatment but also dangerous and expensive for the government.

Lovato draws attention to this personal cause and works at Capitol Hill to urge politicians to develop reform policies. In early October, she met with legislators at the National Council for Behavioral Health's Hill Day and discussed options for comprehensive reform as well as methods to raise awareness for mental health. She has been an active voice in de-stigmatizing mental illnesses working with organizations like "Be Vocal: Speak Up for Mental Health."

Those suffering with any kind of mental illness, whether it is depression, bipolar disorder, or any other disorder, find themselves alone and isolated from the community. This is where the role of TAFE comes in. Creating friendships with people experiencing feelings of loneliness will provide them with a support system. As the latest research from neuropsychologists Stephanie and John Cacioppo indicate, lonely people subconsciously guard themselves from social interactions, as they fear social withdrawal and/or rejection. Society is responsible for helping individuals with mental illnesses conquer their feelings of loneliness so they can work on living a successful and happy life. ●



Angel Ed and Mom, Quarter Auction

Quarter for Your Thoughts?

By Caitlyn Yerves, Director of Marketing

October 7, 2015, Alpha, NJ - The third annual Turn-a-Frown-Around Foundation, Inc. Quarter Auction was held at the Almond Tree Manor in Alpha, NJ to raise funds and awareness around the mission to End Loneliness, one Forever Friendship at a time.

Angel Ed Johns is an Alpha, NJ local who has been transforming communities for years through his volunteering and dedicated service to others. When Angel Ed was connected with Drew Horn, co-founder of TAFE, in 2013, he decided to join the mission to end loneliness.

Anyone who has met Angel Ed for even a few moments would know that he is a Forever Friend making machine. His fiery passion and urgency became the model which we aspire to duplicate.

Over the past few years, Angel Ed has teamed up with "Quarters for a Cause Charity Events" to organize what has become the Annual TAFE Quarter Auction. Throughout the night, vendors had tables set up for guests to explore, and offered a number of auction items and

door prizes. Food and drinks were also available through the Almond Tree Manor.

During the auction, Angel Ed was also able to share his story and his vision, with the simple request that more people join the mission to end loneliness. The event brought in over \$1,400 for the cause!

It's amazing to watch him in action. He organizes these amazing and fun events, and what is really powerful is how he so freely gives out his personal cell phone - he is completely dedicated to the cause.

The TAFE team is already looking forward to running the event again next year, however the Quarter Auction has become so popular that it now requires a wait list. The team is planning to find a new venue for next year so that there can be a 2016 TAFE Quarter Auction. ●

Management Committee Spotlight



Caitlyn Yerves,
Director of Marketing

What interested you to join TAFE?

When I first met with Drew to interview for the opportunity to help with the book project, he kind of reminded me of a mixture of Jerry Garcia and Robin Williams - so I obviously immediately fell in love with him, heart and soul. As he passionately explained his mission and

compassionately shared his story, I felt his truth resonating through my bones. It was an intense and majestic - even mystical - encounter. I had always wanted to write a book, and have always wanted to change the world. [As] I came to understand everything that TAFE stands for, I knew that I had stumbled upon a great part of my life's purpose.

What are you hoping to accomplish, short-term and long-term as Director of Marketing?

My main goal here is to get this message out to the masses, because really what we are asking of others is such a simple request. In the short-term (and abiding to practicalities) I am working to establish a virtual system that can be duplicated, in which people across the country will be able to plug-in, find helpful tips, and easily share their experience with others to encourage more volunteers. In the long-term (and abiding to my World-Changing heart of a dreamer) I am working to complete the book "I'm So Bipolar I Should Have Been An Elevator Operator" THIS YEAR and get it into the hands of people of influence - anybody who could easily encourage thousands of individuals to pick up a copy, read through the story, and do their part in the mission to end loneliness.

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

My personality... I mean, it pretty much IS TAFE. I live for compassion and unconditional love. [If] you were to ask most people who know me, they would say I'm a real hippie at heart (though I am not a fan of labels, and I prefer "yogini"). As Drew poured his heart out to me over the past four years, I couldn't help but to agree with most of the things he was saying. [It] was like he was reiterating so many things I had already thought. I like to believe I have been blessed with the spirit of TAFE, especially because of how closely I worked with Drew. I also like to think that I am grounded and determined enough to complete the things that Drew was not able to - of course, with the excellent assistance of our OMMMazing

TAFE Management Committee! I believe everybody deserves peace of mind, and loneliness is a distraction from that. [It] seems so simple to say it, but I have had the first-hand experience of knowing that real friendship is the antidote to that kind of suffering.

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

This is so funny, because I think this is the question that really bonded Drew and I from Day 1. He had this question he would always ask: are you a land animal or a sea animal? He would go on to say that land animals tend to be very logical, straight forward, and law-abiding, whereas the water animals tend to be a little more wild and free. [My] answer? A dolphin. I would always choose to be a dolphin because I believe I was a dolphin in a past life. And have you ever seen those guys playing around? They are ALWAYS having a good time! •

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.