

THE COMPASSION CHRONICKLES

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

VOLUME 4: ISSUE I

In This Issue:

*Forever our Fearless Forever
Friends*

*Management Committee
Spotlight*

Intergenerational Friendships

*The TAFE Vision in High
Definition*

*Management Committee 2016
Goals*

Forever our Fearless Forever Friends



Joe Masciandaro, Colleen Meyer, & Mark Duffy

By Caitlyn Yerves
Director of Marketing

Our mission would not be where it is today without the insurmountable support of the three individuals who took the TAFE team under their wings like angels on Earth. There is no way to explain the true blessing it has been to learn from these leaders in compassion who have done everything in their power to keep the mission to end loneliness alive. It is with thankfulness in our hearts and faith in our future that we say goodbye to our Executive Board.

One reason that what we are doing with TAFE is so important is because it can truly increase the quality of life for the people who have nobody. Our team was lucky to have direction from Joe Masciandaro, a visionary advocate and expert in mental health. His organization, Care Plus NJ, has supported TAFE from its infancy. We are truly honored by our relationship and are eager to continue to learn from Joe's example.

There are so many complexities that come with developing a system and maintaining an organization. The TAFE Management Committee is in the process of complete the foundation for the mission to grow on, and we are anticipating an official lot on the fertile grounds within the

Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey. Mark Duffy is a long-time supporter of TAFE who has given the team a place to take ownership of the mission to end loneliness. His understanding of our dedication has created a whole new world of possibility to take TAFE to the next level.

The spirit of TAFE is really what it is all about; the connection of one person to another, the power of ending loneliness one Forever Friendship at a time. Colleen Meyer has been an incredible incarnation of the compassion it takes to move mountains. She has been a consistent cheerleader and has insisted that we celebrate because every person counts. Colleen has reminded us to enjoy the bells and whistles, but focus on the simplicity: one Forever Friendship at a time. Without her belief in what we are doing, we probably would not be doing it.

There is no doubt that this is not goodbye. It's not even a *see you later*. We know that you are always there to guide us, and so we will keep your smiles on file in our hula-hearts. Thank you for helping to pave the way to ending loneliness. You will forever have Forever Friends in us, we love you! ■

**A huge THANK YOU and hula-hugs to Colleen Meyer,
Joseph Masciandaro, and Mark Duffy for their devotion
toward this cause and belief in us!**



Elena Kravitz, Director of the Mental Health Initiative

What interested you in TAFE?

I was at a conference quite a few years ago where I met this oddly wonderful man Drew Horn; he had a hula hoop and a personality as round and wide as the hoop. After bombarding me with jokes and laughter, he got to the nitty gritty of what he

was about. It spoke to my soul. TAFE just fit! He summarized my lifetime - what I felt, what I thought, and why I do what I do. I had gotten into the field of mental health for the reasons of caring and sharing and healing and feeling - all short of saying loneliness out loud. We may all have different challenges that we need to get past. but we can't do any of this without each other. What better way than making one friend at a time.

What are the goals you are hoping to accomplish in the short-term and long-term?

For the short-term: to create opportunities for people to connect, create a place with the TAFE Coffeehouses for people to meet and greet - a social network.

For me: to meet new people as I go, to grow, to learn

For others: to see a smile where there was none before. To laugh. To bring awareness to the isolation that exists with mental illness. To laugh. To grow the volunteer team and help them to inspire others to do the same. To laugh.

For the long-term: that people know to call TAFE for a Forever Friend (it should be that easy). Ultimately the stigma of mental health should be eradicated. How can that happen? Through friendships, no matter who we are. To laugh.

To laugh with others is joy.

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

I like to have fun and enjoy people. I believe no one should be left behind. My own personal experiences have brought me to a place where my beliefs about the basic human need are amusing and different and beautifully blended. Laughter has always been my saving grace - gotta stick with what works! ■

Joseph Meany, Smile Station Coordinator



What interested you in TAFE?

I met Drew at the Neptune Community Wellness Center around the fall of 2010 and he left a strong impression with his unique wacky style as well as his passion for positive social change and compassion for those who struggle in so many

ways. A few months went by and I saw Drew at the CSPNJ Administrative Office (as I was an employee at the time) and I thought "Hey, it's that wild dude I met at the center!" We had a conversation and again I was very inspired by his message of hope and positive social change. I reached out a few weeks later to meet Drew for lunch and became involved with TAFE ever since.

What are you hoping to accomplish, short-term and long-term in the mental health initiative?

For me personally, I have been inspired by the work of Jack Bucher and have always been drawn to his message of "helping peers to transcend from the patient role." I have also been very lucky in the mentorship, support, and guidance I received under Mark Duffy. I mention this because these two individuals impacted, very drastically and very positively, how I view the mental health field, community based services, and direct services. My short term and long term goals all involve working directly, side by side, with Peers to engage in positive social change through ending loneliness, not just in the mental health field, but in communities in general.

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

I am thankful that TAFE puts up with my personality. I have always been a very creative person and I greatly value TAFE's flexibility in incorporating my thoughts/ideas while working towards TAFE's mission.

If you could be any animal, what would it be and how would you explain that?

A German Shepherd Service Dog fits my personality and the work that I do. ■

The TAFE Vision in High Definition

By Caitlyn Yerves
Director of Marketing

Fifteen years ago, the concept of ending loneliness may have seemed like a tremendous undertaking. The daunting task of being a candle in the dark inspired our friend Drew to scream out for the people who suffer in silence. His consistent desperation succeeded in making all of the right connections to turn his dream into more of a reality. Those who have been captured by this challenge of compassion should always feel gratitude towards Drew for opening our eyes, testing our minds, and setting our souls on fire to melt away the frozen lakes of loneliness. The experience of being a Forever Friend is a transformation for everyone involved.

This vision of ending loneliness becomes clearer when people become passionate about being compassionate. Our management team has been working to develop a system that can be easily recreated and documented so that this mission can spread to the masses. What we must continue to consider moving forward is this: how do we define what we do, how do we duplicate what we do, and how to we track what we do? Luckily we have intelligent individuals who are using their unique expertise to answer those questions with innovative approaches.

The possibility of ending loneliness can become a reality if we can make caring the new cool. One goal is to make TAFE trendy; if college kids would hold coffeehouses at nursing homes we could really start to see some positive change in our world. We are building a strong social media presence this year to create volunteer engagement and direct more traffic to our website. By developing a strong digital presence, there is a better chance of us connecting with individuals who will lead their communities in joining our mission. It is our vision to keep TAFE simple, professional, and resourceful in connecting compassionate souls with lonely hearts.

It can be argued that we are living in a time of mental health revolution, and what we are working to do with TAFE is a big part of that. As our team works together to maximize the efficacy of our system and market our message effectively, there is no doubt that we will create positive change in the communities that we touch. As much as Drew believed his dream was intangible, it is actually within reach. Stay tuned for a World Changing year! ■

Management Committee 2016 Goals

By Allen Teplitsky
Administration Assistant

Elena Kravitz, Mental Health Initiative Director, actively participates and leads volunteers to mental health facilities and community events. Later this year she will explore funding opportunities, finding local volunteers from New Brunswick, and starting visits to a RHC facility. She will see to isolated people coming back to the outside.

Johnna Johnson, College Campus Initiative Director, has held community events at mental health facilities with local students. Her goals are to get into a new facility every quarter, increase community involvement with help of her volunteers, work with sororities to use volunteer hours to visit the lonely, and finalize donations from her network.

Angel Ed Johns, Nursing Home Initiative Director, visits multiple locations a week and speaks to get people to visit the lonely. Facilities ask him to visit, such as the Pittsburg Home, at least once a month. Ed has supported TAFE through fundraisers such as quarter auctions over years, and looks to continue to do this as a voice for TAFE at churches, radio stations, and even businesses.

Caitlyn Yerves, Director of Public Relations, focuses on marketing and outreach. With the *How to Start a Smile Station* video created, she plans to grow our social media presence through LinkedIn and Facebook to publicize the promotional video and Drew's biography. Also, keep an eye out for Smile Stations started through Care Plus Coffee Houses, rebranding TAFE, and looking at grant renewal.

Alexandra Solares, Director of Organization Development, has a team which guides volunteers to successfully visiting or becoming new talent. She collaborates with other directors, volunteers, and facilities to make sure visits happen to end loneliness. Her 2016 goal is to have our process quicker, smoother, and able to handle influxes of volunteer interest while fostering lasting relationships.

Afshan Ladha, Director of Operations, with the success of the website, collects information from the directors, facilities, and volunteers. Her facilitation of meetings and timely minutes keep the Management Committee organized. She maintains the website and plans to add an innovative yet simple resource page.

Allen Teplitsky, as Administrative Assistant, has created the TAFE Monthly Report, filled positions with the help of the recruiting team last year, and has set Alexa up as Director of Organization Development. He collaborates across initiatives as director continued functioning and communication. He collaborates with CSP, mitigates risk with new projects, and manages growth within TAFE. ■

Intergenerational Friendships



By Mehnaz Ladha,
Staff Writer

Google Images

In a society where people are comfortable with obscurity, it is rare to find a film that downplays the romance to highlight a different type of relationship. However, Nancy Meyer's *The Intern* does just that. The film, starring Robert De Niro and Anne Hathaway, focuses on a growing intergenerational friendship between 70-year-old intern Ben Whittaker and millennial CEO Jules Osten. The resistance in the beginning transforms into acceptance, eventually leading to the creation of a true friendship between people of different generations.

Intergenerational relationships are no different than ordinary friendships, yet they are rarely seen in society. At the local coffee shop, there might be a group of old men sipping hot coffee and reading newspapers. Across the room, there could be several young teenagers slurping iced coffees as they stare into the vortex of their smartphones. Perhaps the only time you might witness an intergenerational relationship is when a grandmother brings her grandchildren in to treat them with sugary donuts. It is natural for people of the same age group to spend more time together, as their friendships are cultivated at places like school and work. Those who step out of the norm and find a friend, either older or younger than they are, will reap the immense benefits of intergenerational relationships.

Older folks have decades of experience under their belts and they are often eager to share their stories with the younger generation. Since they have already survived some of the most challenging phases of life that young adults might be experiencing, they can act as the light at the end of the tunnel, reassuring you that if they could do it then so can you. People of different generations are a great resource to turn to, as they can shed some light on perspectives that would otherwise be left unexplored.

In any relationship, there is always something to learn and when it comes to these generation gap friendships, the lesson is a cultural one. Younger individuals spend time bringing their aged friend up to speed on the latest technology and popular trends in modern day society. The older person in the relationship will share traditions that have been forgotten and left behind. As the friends learn from each other, they each will grow stronger as an individual with the support from someone who has a different life experience and story altogether.

These relationships greatly impact longevity. According to a group of Australian scientists, having a circle of friends at an old age will be more effective than being surrounded solely by family members. Although this group of friends can be of the same age, younger friends will encourage activity and living a healthier lifestyle just as they do.

As most of us hope that we become healthier and more active this year, we should also strive to build relationships with people significantly older or younger than us. Fortunately, our resolution can be made possible through volunteering with organizations including TAFE. By spending a minimum of one hour a week acting as a Forever Friend or even just a volunteer to the organization, we could bridge the generational gap and establish the relationship that society needs to see. ■

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.