



The Story of Trillium Drop-In Center

So it was February of 2008. We'd been open 5 months and we had some issues that needed to be addressed as soon as possible.

A handful of us were in the kitchen playing spades and chatting. The neighbors were doing their thing next door and you could, as always, hear every word. When they were there it was always lots of yelling and carrying on. We had two adjoining doors to the office condo and you could hear everything next door. We sometimes closed the kitchen and conference room doors in order to block it out on Saturday mornings. But this particular night we were in the kitchen tolerating it and having a good time playing spades. So Ann, seemingly out of the blue, said "wouldn't it be great if we could just open these doors and expand our space to next door, too?"

She mentions it again. And decides to find out who owns the property next door. She put three of us in motion and we all came back with the information on the same day. We had the name of the owner and Ann was ready to make a call. Just to inquire. And she did. And the owner of the property said he would love to rent to us and the office condo would be available in April! Can you believe it?

The next cool thing is around that same time we heard about a little bit more funding available for 'bricks and mortar' for established mental health consumer-operated programs.

We were going to get busy writing yet another grant.

And at the same time one of the other issues that we were having was transportation. A lot of mental health consumers don't or can't drive, and this county doesn't have the best bus service around. Even though we were sure to be on the bus line when we initially opened, it still wasn't enough.

So ok in this grant we were going to ask for

money to expand next door and to purchase a van and pay a driver, gas and maintenance. Our noses to the grindstone once again and rushing to get this thing written. Crunching numbers to make sure we get it right. It's stressful for sure but we have a vision. We have programs to run and services needed for our most vulnerable citizens in the county.

Well you know we've expanded and gotten the van a long time ago, so you know our hard work, thankfully, paid off on that grant, too. And you know we included a pool table in that grant and oh yeah a ping pong table, too.

So the next issue on our plate to address I guess was the confusion in our name. We named our center Prince William Drop-In Center from the beginning and even had the legal right to the name but no one bothered to mention that there was ALREADY a place called Prince William Drop-In Center in the county. And we didn't really think about how people would confuse us with a government program with the words "Prince William" in our name.

We're a private non-profit and people were thinking we were run by the county. And some people were hearing about us and ending up at the homeless shelter when they were trying to visit us. It was confusing and a little concerning so we started thinking. And if you know Ann, you know what I mean when I tell you she got her thinking cap on and came up with Trillium.

It was perfect. Trillium is a three petal flower found in the wild, symbolizing the three women who founded PWDIC. And it clearly illustrates the healing power of their friendship which has blossomed in the midst of challenging personal experiences over the last several years. A call to the lawyer, he filed the dba (doing business as), and it was official, we are now (and have been for awhile) Trillium Drop-In Center, Inc.

(Continued on page 4).

Transportation

Trillium Van

We provide transportation with our van to and from Trillium. Consumers need to sign up the day before a ride is needed by calling 703.763.3865. Our driver will confirm the times on the day of pick-up. All rides are a first-come first-served basis. The van capacity is 6, including our driver.

Tuesdays

Manassas pickup: 10 am
Woodbridge pickup: noon
Woodbridge home: 2:30 pm
Manassas home: 4:00 pm

Wednesdays

Manassas pickup: 10 am
Manassas home: 4:00 pm

Thursdays

Woodbridge pickup: 2:30 pm
Woodbridge home: 7:00 pm

Friday

Manassas pickup: 2:00 pm
Woodbridge pickup: 3:30 pm
Manassas home: 6:00 pm
Woodbridge home: 7:30 pm

Saturday

Manassas pickup: 2:00 pm
Woodbridge pickup: 3:30 pm
Manassas home: 6:00 pm
Woodbridge home: 7:30 pm

Make reservations one day in advance. No open beverages are allowed in the van. A donation of \$.50 is requested per day.

Call the day before a ride is needed. 703.763.3865

By the Numbers:

1032 people have visited Trillium 18,998 times. We've made \$220.32 in can recycling since July '08.

Our Amazing Staff

We continue to be so blessed with our staff at Trillium.

Ann, as you know, is our fearless leader. Her vision and strength can clearly be seen at Trillium during every visit. Diagnosed with schizophrenia and depression years ago, she credits medication for her stability. For those who know her well, you know amazing inner strength has contributed to her mental health successes, too. She is a devoted mother to a beautiful daughter, and offers compassion to every person she encounters.

Cynthia, our Executive Director, brings all the Trillium puzzle pieces together. Diagnosed with PTSD, depression and a dissociative disorder a long time ago, she now manages her mental health stability with vitamins, herbs, and trying to keep her life in balance. She loves the challenges that running Trillium presents and is grateful to be realizing her dream of helping other people with mental health issues. Cynthia won't say this about herself, but I (Ann) will: Cynthia is incredibly smart, energetic, focused, warm and kind. If you think something will take a week to accomplish, Cynthia will complete it in two hours. She is a dynamo. Also, she cares deeply about the visitors to Trillium. She finds ways to help people with tangible, fast results that continue to amaze us. She goes way beyond the acceptable in her work to the extraordinary. We are extremely lucky to have Cynthia, and we love her lots!

Traci, our third Co-Founder, is busy with her daughter who is turning into a beautiful young woman. Traci is intelligent, spiritual, and a deep thinker with good ideas. She is an inspiration to us as a resilient survivor of incredible challenges. Facing serious physical and mental health issues, she is so proud and excited about what Trillium offers to the community.

Barbara naturally began leading support groups for us and has become quite the pool shark, starting tournaments at Trillium whenever she can. She loves staying active and is a fantastic story teller. Her sensitivity, compassion, and positive attitude come through clearly in every conversation.

Kevin is a dedicated husband and father to a beautiful girl. He struggled with schizophrenia for years and now has been stable for several years and credits his medication for his continuing success. He's a fantastic listener, runs a great support group, and is KISS's number one fan.

Nancy's youthful essence and joyful attitude are so apparent when you meet her. She's great at listening and loves to laugh. She loves to play Chess and is difficult to beat at Rummy. Whenever you see Nancy, you know what I mean when I say her love for life is contagious.

Orlando is our New York transplant for whom we are eternally grateful. He can rarely be beat at Chess, pool, and Spades. He's the world's coolest grandpa to six beautiful children and a loving father to two grown kids. He's got a great sense of humor and we are so proud of him for being clean and sober for awhile now.

Sharon is remarkable at taking on a challenge. She's the person to go to with computer issues, or any kind of issue, really. She wears many hats at Trillium and we couldn't be more grateful. She's a proud mother of two grown young women. When you meet Sharon you can immediately feel just how much she cares about people.

Our newest staff members are Eddie, Gloria, Michelle Z., Michelle S. and Tommy. Gosh, looking for new employees was a little stressful because we were thinking how could we possibly find people as wonderful as our staff that had been with us since we opened? (Continued on page 5).

Panera Dough- Nation



For some time we had been hearing this thing about getting some assistance to our food budget. We offer sandwiches and drinks and some snacks every single day to mental health consumers for free and I guess we noticed we serve a lot of hungry people. We kept talking about the Operation Dough-Nation Program at Panera Bread, thinking it might just be the perfect thing to help us out. So over the course of about 5 months we had several people attempt to take it on, to get it started. But something else more critical always kept coming up, like say, grant writing or mental health emergencies or sheer exhaustion from all the good work we are trying to do. One day an unknowing person happened to mention that he knew someone who worked at Panera Bread and could get us a donation for that particular night. And it took another person to volunteer to go pick it up. My goodness we were in awe at all the stuff we got from Panera Bread. I don't know if you've been there, but they must have the best bread in the county. And the stuff we got was way too much for just Trillium's use. That one unknowing person gave us just the push we needed and we got Trillium set up on a once a week dough-nation from Panera Bread in Woodbridge. And people from Trillium get to take it home, too. What we don't need for the Center's use, we give out to good homes all the time. Sharon, bless her heart, has been picking the bread from Panera up every Thursday evening for over a year now. How cool is that?

Mental Health Awareness

We have a meeting with a group of recovery-oriented organizations including NAMI-PW, CSB, and Little Jack Horner's Corner, once a month. And we know May is mental health awareness month and we're thinking we should do something special. So at one of our monthly meetings we're kicking around the idea and we decide to combine forces for May 2009. So the CSB has, of course, done this before and we at Trillium decide to take on the consumer art display for the event.

I think we got everyone busy. Designing the thing and cutting wood and putting it all together and redesigning the thing and signing people up for tasks. It was hectic and fun but most of all we were working together. Doing it to get it done. Especially on the night of the event. We had all our staff and all our volunteers working hard putting it all together making it happen. Showing off the beautiful mental health consumer artwork and even selling a few pieces of donated hand-made jewelry. And I hope you saw the angel pins. Those were donated by Michelle Z., some were made at Trillium, and they were adorable. We sold every single one. The night was a huge success. Lots of people talking about mental health recovery. It felt like a celebration, because mental health recovery is definitely something to celebrate. I think most people who work at and visit Trillium can attest to that. And it looks like we'll be doing it again this coming May.

At the same time, the Rappahannock Area Community Services Board (RACSB) graciously allowed us to participate in their event last May for Mental Health Awareness Month. Every year they organize an art show for mental health consumers, and this year it was held downtown Fredericksburg at the Paula Rose Gallery. It seemed to approach quick AND fast, but we managed to get five pieces of three of our artists into the art show. And can you believe three pieces sold?! Congratulations to Michelle Sese-Khalid, John Marckesano, and Carl Zeigler. And thanks very much to Bill Hartland of the RACSB for putting it all together and allowing us to participate.



Carl Zeigler with his artwork which sold in Fredericksburg.

Do you want hope? Do you want to stay out of the hospital? Do you want to learn recovery skills? Do you want to improve the quality of your life? Do you want to have fun? Then WRAP is for you!

A WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) Class is beginning soon. Can't join the class? Check with Tommy or Michelle S. about creating a WRAP one-on-one or self-guided online.

Budget Hearing



From left: Michelle Zahn, Michelle Sese-Khalid, Kevin Green, Ann Gurtler, Eddie Smith, Gloria Thacker and Christopher Glowacki

The Story of Trillium

(cont from page 1)

As you know, Trillium's roots are firmly in the Manassas support group Ann started many years ago. And the natural move was to have support groups here, of course. So Ann was leading a support group on every other Friday. It didn't take long for people to ask for a weekly support group, so we did. And Kevin stepped up and led the group sometimes on Fridays and we needed a group in the daytime, too, and Barbara was the natural candidate. But we quickly needed some training and Ann put herself to task once again, this time to locate Wendy Resnick, the founder of DRADA (Depression and Related Disorders Association), which was unfortunately no longer in existence. It took Ann a little time but she hunted Wendy down and gosh what a blessing that she was able to. Wendy came down from Maryland on a Saturday morning and in her gentle way taught our staff about how to lead a support group. Teaching us techniques to use and things to look out for when running a group.

And then there was crisis training. We're working with mental health consumers here at Trillium, and I don't need to tell you that crises come up. Sometimes more often than others but when they do we knew we had to be ready. And have some understanding of how to handle them. So of course we get Mary Azody of CrisisLink signed up to come help us out and give us much needed training.

So now we're all set. We're larger than when we opened and providing transportation and feeding hungry people and trained for leading groups and managing crises and seeing an average of over 30 people a day. We're busy. And tired.

Ok so maybe we aren't all set at this point. My goodness we all got tired running around every day and we desperately needed more staff. It's been a busy 2+ years. We put the word out, found and hired the perfect people, and NOW we're all set. All set doing what we set out to do. What our hearts led us to do. Hopefully, we're having some success helping people with mental illness in Prince William County. And there's still a lot more to do.

On Friday, January 8, 2010, seven of us met at Trillium at 7:30 a.m. full of anticipation. As we piled into Trillium's beautiful maroon van, we were people on a mission.

We were going to the Annandale Northern Virginia Community College campus in Fairfax, Va., to attend the state legislature budget meeting to speak our minds and tell the legislature that we wanted no cuts to mental health. Five of us were going to speak, two for moral support.

We arrived and stood in a long line to sign us our names to speak. The talks did not begin until 10 a.m. and Ann Gurtler, as our first speaker, was number 78 in line to speak, so we found ourselves waiting until nearly 3 p.m. to speak.

When Ann's name was called, she went up to the microphone and we all went in mass up to the front to wait our turns afterwards. We came with speeches prepared, and many letters from a lot of our consumers that could not be at the meeting, and left those with the legislators.

Coming to the microphone in front of the legislature and others in the audience is a nerve-wracking but empowering experience.

We come as people who have and are experiencing mental illness and we are sharing a part of ourselves with others, and regardless of the outcome of the budget meetings, where we can always hope that we made an impact, we felt good about ourselves for having shared our stories.

Creative Writing

Words on white paper,
Thoughts rendered in ink or lead,
Creative writing.

The fire in the eyes,
Eager students having fun,
Words on white paper.

Workshop at Drop-In,
Fun with nouns pronouns and verbs,
Creative Writing.

Alternate Thursdays,
From five-thirty to seven,
The conference room.

Just Drop In

Come in and **play games**. We have Monopoly, Scrabble, Pictionary, Checkers. Play a game of **Chess** or enter our ongoing **tournament**. Our Champion is Orlando.

Can you beat him? **Play cards**: Spades; Tonk; Rook; Pinochle, Rummy, Uno. Learn how to play any of these games. Just ask our facilitators!

♣ Are you **creative**? Come in and make Jewelry. Do latchhook. Don't know how? Nancy can teach you. Paint with watercolor or acrylics.

Draw with crayons, colored pencils or markers.

Enjoy a leisurely game of **pool** or enter a tournament. ♣ Come and use our

computers! We have two, they are great for surfing the web, playing games, doing research,

or just exploring. Want to **learn how** to use a computer? Sharon is our resident guru, but many of our facilitators can get you up and running on something cool. ♣ Need some **quiet**

time? Our Tranquility Room has the best couches and a stereo. ♣ Support your inner

couch potato! Come in and **watch tv**! Have a sandwich. Get something to drink. **Just**

hang out. Our facilitators love to **chit chat**. Just come on in and talk with them. Drop

in and make some new **friends**.

Our Amazing Staff

(cont from page 2) If you know these five people, you know just how successful (LUCKY!) we were.

We hired Eddie as our second Van Driver and as a Facilitator. His calm and willing demeanor is truly a blessing. Eddie is diagnosed with schizophrenia and has been stable for 2 years. He's looking forward to going to school for Information Systems next semester. He's originally from Africa, he loves soccer and I don't think he's missed a Redskins game.

Gloria was visiting Trillium regularly and it was a no-brainer to hire her. Her nurturing nature is amazing to feel and to watch. She's diagnosed with schizophrenia, compulsive behavior, depression, panic disorder and is an insomniac. She has 9 beautiful grandchildren, is a Michael Jackson fanatic, and loves the Redskins. She's 59 and is thriving in this brand new career.

Michelle Z. had been volunteering, mostly behind the scenes, for over a year when we realized she was looking for paid work. We quickly hired her before anyone else got a chance to. Her strength, compassion, kindness, and intelligence are a well-appreciated addition to our staff. She is happily married, loves her 3 critters (two dogs and a regal cat), and has been managing bipolar for 22 years.

Michelle S. has been our WRAP Facilitator and volunteer since we opened. We tried to hire her the first time around but she was busy having a child. So when we had more positions open up we had to finally hire her (we weren't taking no for an answer) and we are blessed. Her kindness and caring towards others is evident in the first moments you meet her. She is a dedicated wife and mother, and quite active in her church.

Tommy visited Trillium with others and volunteered whenever he was able. We scooped him away from another job and we couldn't be more grateful that he was willing to be scooped. He's dedicated to helping others and isn't afraid of a challenge. He's great at running one of our support groups and loves reaching out to people that just need to talk.

See what we mean when we say we are blessed? These remarkable people all offer something unique to Trillium. There's so much going on every day, and it all comes together beautifully because of what our staff is willing to offer other people.

Need someone to talk with?

Join us for a supportive self-help group.

Peer Support Groups

Consumer-operated mental health groups that promote recovery through peer support.

These are a mutual support group for mental health consumers, including depression, bipolar, anxiety & other issues.

These groups meet at Trillium Drop-In Center:

Every other Tuesday 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm

Every other Wednesday 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Every Friday 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Run by mental health consumers for mental health consumers.

IN OUR OWN VOICE

In September, Gloria Thacker and Michelle Zahn, participated in the NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) “In Our Own Voice” program, and learned to present their own stories together as presenters in front of an audience.

The program has the two presenters show a NAMI video made for the program, stopping for specific sections such as ‘Dark Days,’ ‘Coping,’ ‘Treatment,’ and ‘Successes, Hopes and Dreams,’ and each speaker talks from their own experience, spending about three minutes per presenter on each subject and then some time for questions from the audience.

Audience participation is important because it helps them understand mental illness and understand better about recovery.

The NAMI website has a wonderful explanation of what is meant by recovery:

“Anyone familiar with mental illness knows that recovery is not a singular event, but a multi-dimensional, multi-linear journey characterized more by the mindset of the one taking it than by his or her condition at any given moment along the way.

Understanding recovery as having several dimensions makes its uneven course easier to accept. Much as we don't blame the cancer patient for dying of invasive tumors, we can't condemn a consumer whose symptoms overtake his or her best efforts to manage illness.

Recovery is the point in someone's illness in which the illness is no longer the first and foremost part of his or her life, no longer the essence of all his or her existence.”

Besides one other person that has been trained in the program in Prince William County, Gloria and Michelle are the first set of speakers to be trained to speak in our county.

They learned to present for the first time in front of twenty other mental health consumers, two trainers and eighteen other presenters who were learning to present for the first time as well.

The training can be a life-changing experience.

Michelle says “It increased my self-esteem because I was learning to do something that terrifies most people – public speaking and I was learning to share my story. I feel that doing so may help educate people and reduce stigma. It was a powerful weekend, on many levels as the speaker is forced to think about their own story and what they have been through and learn how to present in a fairly short amount of time.”

Michelle has also kept in contact with another person who participated in the program, a NAMI member from Roanoke and that person has also confirmed that the program changed her life. She feels that she is moving forward in her life in wonderful ways and she and her fellow presenter are doing presentations in their area.

Gloria, Michelle, Traci, Cynthia and Phil Ross are looking for venues for our first presentation.

Special Recognition

At Trillium Drop-In Center, one thing that is greatly appreciated is our terrific staff and our members who contribute to the welcoming environment. A recognition program that has been implemented here at Trillium has boosted self esteem and amplified the cohesion that is present.

The June recipients were Alan Thibodeau and Talel Siddig. Alan was recognized for his pleasantness when driving peers to and from their homes and sometimes to the hospital. He is also helpful in making crafts such as Mother's Day cards. Talel is also very helpful and considerate. He has been spotted never saying no as a volunteer, helping out with daily chores. He is said to be nice and someone who likes to joke around.

In July, we had the pleasure of two wonderful people being recipients; Gloria Thacker and Irene Loizides. Gloria is recognized for being helpful and giving good advice and making problems sound solvable. People have said such nice things about Gloria such as how she is a blessing, a good listener and teaching her peers games such as spades. Irene is being recognized for consistently going out of her way to vacuum for the center. Irene is always helpful.

August blessed us with Barbara Boyd and Lance Miller. Barbara went the extra mile for someone's living situation. She was supportive and compassionate about helping this individual during a life changing event. Barbara has also helped many of her peers obtain Trac cell phones. Lance made a generous donation of chairs for the center. He also worked his rear off during our “Taste of Summer” event. He cooked all day and cleaned up the Food Prep area.

There were many other nominations for these months and there have been more winners since then; Cynthia Dudley, Chris, Henry Ashby, John Marckesano, Sharon Castonguay, Kevin Green, Ann Gurtler, Orlando Gonzalez, and Barbara Boyd. All our recipients, those nominated and the countless others are priceless. Trillium has an incredible crew of people who help make us a comfortable stigma-free place where peers can go and be respected. Thank you so much for all the aforementioned people as well as the many, many others who make Trillium the fantastic place that it is.

A Snapshot From Virginia Beach



From top left: Barbara Boyd, Lance Miller, Kevin Green, Eddie Smith, Melanie Poole, Tommy ZumBrunnen, Traci Jones. Middle from left: Ann Gurtler, Michelle Sese-Khalid, Sharon Castonguay, Nancy Sandberg. Front from left: Gloria Thacker, Michelle Zahn, Cynthia Dudley, Orlando Gonzalez.

On the warm autumn days of October 2-5, 2009, the staff of Trillium Drop-In Center embarked on an exciting weekend of team building and camaraderie at Virginia Beach. Friday, four vehicles loaded with eager passengers and their belongings made the long three hour trek to the shore. With the beach and ocean providing the relaxing backdrop, team building exercises were completed including such tasks as passing an apple from neck to neck and a listening activity very similar to the age-old telephone game. We learned each other's priorities and what was important to each one of us. The trust fall was a challenge, but we respected everyone's choice as to how much trust we were comfortable with.

The exercises were only the beginning of this bonding weekend. From karaoke in the evening to meal preparation, working together became second nature. Night time strolls along the shore line with the full moon lighting the way and sand between our toes, the serenity of the environment solidified the importance of relaxation. The fun and bonding was irreplaceable. Staff learned more about each other than they ever could in the brief interactions they were used to at the center. Some members only knew each other by name as they do not work the same shifts. After this weekend, we all now know which staff member wins the snoring war.

Cool Happenings

We held an 8-week Yoga class that started in October
Kevin leads Walking Group on Thursdays at 1 pm
Barb started her Feeling Good Seminar on the first and third Monday of each month.

We have Poker Nights scheduled a couple times in January.

We have a mental health consumer who plays the Native American Flute for us here at the Drop-In Center every other Saturday. His music is hauntingly beautiful.

We will be holding Crochet classes in January.

We have a Book Group once a month, where you can bring in a book you are reading and discuss it with the group explaining why others would like to read it too.

We have Music Group once a month, led by Gloria, to play and discuss music.

Tommy leads a Dual Diagnosis Group, for people who have both mental illness and substance abuse issues on the second and fourth Monday of the month.

We are planning to have an upcoming 50's Dance Party, 6-9 on Wednesday, January 27. Dress up in 50's clothes or come as you are and dance to 50's tunes!

Membership Form

Everyone is welcome to join. No financial contribution is necessary. All contributions are welcome.

Name _____

Address _____

City State Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

_____ I want to get involved! Please contact me!

Please tell us how you heard about Trillium: _____

Enclosed please find the following donation _____

Please complete and return to:

Trillium Drop-In Center
13184 Centerpointe Way
Woodbridge, VA 22193

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Woodbridge, VA 22193
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