

Housing Options Made Easy, Inc.

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THE ADVOCATE

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NOTES FROM JOE'S DESK

During the last two months there I have had two wonderful experiences I feel compelled to write about. Recently I had the pleasure to visit Seattle, Washington to see how the peer movement is doing and provide some training. This trip left me with such gratefulness and joy that it's hard to put in words. The first was a personal issue: I have depression, panic and anxiety disorders and have had these disorders for 20 years. During this time I developed many phobias that kept me from doing many things that other people do without a thought. These phobias, all which are irrational, imprisoned me from living the life I want to live. During my recovery I have over-come and had victory over most of them. One of my last hurdles has been flying. I have not gotten on an airplane in over 25

years. As the agency continues to grow and we get the state and national recognition, I will need to do more traveling. Driving everywhere is not an option anymore. So I challenged my disorders, the phobias and myself and got on an airplane. Once my mind was made up, the fear disappeared and the flight was wonderful. I enjoyed just about every minute of it. This victory is huge in my recovery and healing journey. Now I am scheduled to fly to Florida, Chicago and soon Washington D.C. and New York City. My life has changed and the prison doors have been cast away. Freedom and joy has over-whelmed me in a grateful, satisfying way. The second thing is how lucky and fortunate we are to have a housing organization like ours. The services we provided from a peer foundation are not the norm in other states like

Washington and many recipients suffer because there is not an option like ours out there. Hopefully, someday there will be. We are being looked at closely by many states and the federal government. Are we perfect, no. But we do the best we can and are always looking for ways to improve. I am sincerely grateful and honored to be the Executive Director of Housing Options. I am so grateful to the NY state and the counties for believing in and funding us. Also to the board, staff and the peers, thank you for giving me the opportunity to personally grow and assist in growing the agency. Together, may we over-come many more barriers, but never forget were we have come from. Challenge yourself, attach the barriers that keep you from moving forward and may you find victory peace, love and joy daily and someone to share it with, (as I have).

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BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Housing Options Made Easy is coming up on 20 years of service. As a peer agency we have had our trials and tribulations. But, we are still here and growing stronger every day. Too all that have worked so hard, past and present, I can only say: outstanding, brilliant, exceptional and first-rate! We will be having a 20th anniversary. This event is planned for later in the year. So stay tuned for more information. Housing Options is all about creating job for peers. Already

in 2010 we are staring up 8 new housing requests in January alone, meaning additional employment opportunities. As of January of 2010 we have placed over 300 individuals in housing and provided more than 40 jobs within the peer community. As our staff continues to grow, I would like to welcome Natalie Reuben as our Regional Manager. She will be directly supervising our staff in the field. She comes to us with over 12 years if direct experience in housing placement in

a leadership role. To quote Joe Woodward, she really "hit the ground running". I also want to thank Anita Rusiecki for her years of service with our agency. Anita has announced that she will be retiring the end of December. We have all enjoyed Anita's good humor and steady nature, especially during some difficult times. Sincerely,
Mike Coffman, President

QUICK FACT:

One in four Adults- approximately 57.7 million Americans experience a mental health disorder in any given year.

QUICK TIP:

You can assist others in knowing what tools helps you in your recovery efforts, consider developing a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) and or complete an Advanced Directive.

THE TRADITION OF VOLUNTEERING

Looking at some of the benefits of doing volunteer work, you will find that helping in the community can reduce isolation.

Remember becoming a volunteer can often solve that problem. Housing Options has a number of consumers who are currently doing just that and say it has made a difference. Several work for meals-on wheels, one donates time at a nursing home teaching crafts, another goes through her local Penny Saver looking for apartments and letting the peers know where they are.

I myself was amazed in researching for this article the number of options available. All you have to do is think of what you like and take it from there. Do you like plants? How about a flower shop? Do you like animals? How about a pet shop or the SPCA? Do you like talking about politics? You guessed it, join your neighborhood party affiliation. The list is endless. One of the more interesting ones I found is the Olmstead Center for Sight. They are looking for volunteers to sit with patients in the waiting room, getting them coffee, getting them around the agency. For more information visit www.olmsteadcenter.org.

So put on your thinking caps. What have you always dreamed of doing, wanted to do...I'll bet you can find a way of accomplishing some of that by volunteering.

THINK ABOUT IT
THEN GO FOR IT.

Anita L. Rusiecki



An Apple A Day

Imagine...Jumping out of bed in the morning feeling totally awake, vibrantly alive and healthier than you have ever felt before! Imagine having boundless energy for every moment of the day with a clear mind and a feeling of inner peace and calm. Imagine that you are in the best shape of your life with a healthy body, no pains, no ailments and free of any excess weight. This is all possible within a few months by eating the live food way! Now that I have your attention; here's the bottom line.

Nutrition comes from three sources; carbohydrates, fats and proteins. We need all three to be healthy. However – the human body needs specific proteins, not just any proteins. Did you know that broccoli has more protein than a steak? Proteins from vegetables are the perfect source of proteins our bodies need to stay healthy. Now let's talk carbs (carbohydrates) – there are good carbs, things like fresh whole fruits – and then there are no-so-great carbs such as processed foods – (pasta, baked breads, cereals etc.) And fats are essential for the brain to function – as well as all our other organs to function optimally. Fats from live food sources are exactly what the body requires to function best; these would include avocados, olives, nuts and seeds (not roasted), raw nut butters.

Did you ever notice the signs at the zoo telling us not to feed the animals? That's

because processed foods (the ones man has made) with chemicals, additives and bad fats will make the animals very sick and die. Yet we stand there reading these signs while eating our popcorn, cotton candy and ice cream cones... what's wrong with this picture?

Cultures that eat this way – don't experience heart disease, cancers, diabetes, or the other degenerative diseases that Americans die from.

Go back to my first paragraph – if you want a clear mind, a feeling of peace and good energy, then choose foods that your body needs to function at its highest level.

I'm munching on some raw peanuts, raisins and raw granola, along with a glass of carrot/celery juice. I make different choices because I want different results.

I leave you with this challenge – you've been given the most amazing and miraculous machine on earth, your precious human body but it requires very specific fuel to function at its highest level – how are you going to take care of your miraculous amazing body this New Year?

Submitted by: Becky Davis
Peer Specialist

“Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little”
Edmond Burke

FRIENDSHIP LINE

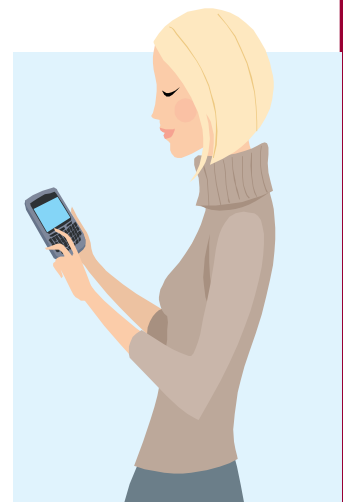
Our callers often call with the question, what is a peer support line and what kinds of things do we talk about? Our Friendship Line is peer support over the telephone.

Your telephone call is confidential. Housing Options Made Easy employs peer staff are provided ongoing trainings to better serve our callers. We have a toll free number that you can call and talk to someone that has or is in mental health recovery. Someone just like you!

Here are some examples of common requests that our callers make.

- “Let me tell you about my day”
- “I just want someone to listen to me”
- “I wondered if you have a number for the food pantry”
- I feel frustrated, my family doesn't understand me”.

It's your call!



Friendship Line
1-877-IAM-HERE
1-877-426-4373

WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN RENTING AN APARTMENT

Apartment hunting can be a very stressful time for people. Often individuals will jump at the first apartment to relieve the pressure of apartment hunting without checking to see if the apartment is one that they will be happy in. Being unhappy in an apartment can have a negative impact in a person's life.

The key to a successful apartment search is to take the time to thoroughly look at the apartment and the neighborhood. To assist you in that bring a notepad and pen when apartment hunting and make notes of the following:

Check out the neighborhood to see if it is a safe place to live. Find out how close it is to the nearest grocery store or bank. If you ride the bus find out how close it is to a bus route. If you have a car is there adequate parking. Find out who are the neighbors. Do they have kids or pets? Do any of the neighbors have attack dogs such a Pit Bull or Rottweiler. If you have a pet find out the landlord's policy regarding pets.

When looking at the apartment find out from the landlord how the apartment is heated and what fuel is used. Ask the landlord what the average monthly utility costs are for the apartment. Take a look at the furnace and the hot water heater to see how efficient they are. This is important if you are paying for the utilities. Look to see if the apartment has been weatherized and if double pane windows are installed. Again an important consideration if the heating is not included. Find out if the apartment includes a stove and refrigerator.

Look to see how big the rooms are and if there is enough closet space in the bedrooms. This can be important if you have a king size bed. If

the apartment is on an upper floor how wide are the stairs that lead to the apartment. If you are moving in a large sofa up the stairs will you be able to get it in the apartment. Make sure that the apartment will be large enough for you and your family.

Check to see the condition of the apartment. Is there paint peeling off the walls? This is an important consideration if it is an old building and you have young children. Look at the outlets and overhead light fixtures to check that there is no loose or hanging wires. Check all the light switches, outlets, and phone jacks to make sure they work. Check to see that the faucets work and are not leaking and that the toilet flushes properly. Make sure that all the doors close properly and that you are able to open and shut the windows. Look at the condition of the walls, ceilings and floors in each room.

Note the cleanliness of the apartment. What is the condition of the kitchen or the bathroom? Look for evidence of insects or rodents behind appliances or along the baseboard. Check to see if there are any pet stains on the floor or if there is a strong pet odor present in the apartment. If there is carpeting look for the presence of fleas.

Don't just look at the surface but really check to make sure that the apartment you are looking at meets the housing quality standard for safe, clean and affordable housing. If you like the apartment and decide to rent it make sure that the landlord will make any necessary repairs before you move in. If there is a lease involved make sure you know the terms of that lease. Taking the time to ensure that this is the apartment for you will make for a more enjoyable experience.

by Denis Bouchard

THROUGH THE YEARS

Housing Options Made Easy, Inc. was started in 1990 to answer to the growing number of individuals being discharged from the psychiatric hospitals. Some consumers had been hospitalized for a long time and navigating the community proved difficult as individuals may have lacked the opportunity to create a social network outside of the hospital setting before discharge. Housing Options Made Easy, Inc. assisted many that may have struggled with substandard housing or homelessness. Peer Advocate Specialists were provided to offer choice, opportunity and hope in obtaining community integration. What makes our program unique is the peer aspect, having someone help you that truly understands the struggles and challenges of moving through the community.

Housing Options Made Easy, Inc. continues to assist individuals with a mental health diagnosis with rental stipends, peer support and education. Were extremely proud to announce that we are getting ready to celebrate our 20th Anniversary this year! Please visit our website for more information about our programs and to view a complete history at www.housingoptions.org or contact us by telephone at 1-800-421-1114.

Laura Bentley
Training Coordinator

I WAITED FOR THE WIND

Standing there beside me, I know that you see the candle in the window and you are wondering in discomfort for an answer to why the light doesn't reflect off the glass

Waiting and pacing throughout my life trying to find a way to explain why the glow is not in dancing in my eyes, hoping once again that this too will pass

Perhaps in time, a light will shine to symbolize hope in some way so that you too don't give up on me like I have done to myself so many times before

Outside there are children crying, cars racing to places that seems incredibly urgent, mail delivery to homes besides mine, the day passes by so painfully slow

Words come to me though the care that you show me by being here when tomorrow is not certain even though a smile is not acknowledging your presence, still I know

You never give up trying to reach me; attempting to understand the lack of light as the candle flickers close to the end of what was once a beautiful site to see

Thank you for being there to close the window to keep that candle lit, opening up another door when I shut you out and most of all thank you for loving me

Anonymous

LETTERS TO HOUSING OPTIONS

Some times we feel were are at the end of our line but when one door closes another opens light at the end of your journey. It was all made possible when I was introduced to HOME (Housing Options Made Easy). I had a very long hospitalization. I lost everything. The good people at HOME made it possible for me to have a second chance. Providing me with an apartment of my own on the bus route. Furniture and a brand new bed. I am eternally grateful. Isreal and Becky are guardian angels. God bless them. Written to HOME, with much appreciation and gratitude.

D.G.

HOUSING OPTIONS MADE
EASY, INC.



75 Jamestown St.

Gowanda, NY 14070

(716) 532-5508

We're on the Web...
housingoptions.org

Address

SUPPORT GROUPS

DTR

*Holistic Alternatives to
Wellness*

Woman's Focus Group

Wellness Support

If you are interested in attending a support group in your area please call to check availability or to obtain information on developing a group.

For more information on locations, dates and times please contact our Gowanda

Office

1-800-421-1114

Our Mission

To achieve social equality for individuals with a mental illness by providing supported housing and other services so that individuals can live with dignity and have choices in the community.

Tribute Gifts

What better way to remember a friend, loved one or family member on special occasions than with a monetary gift to Housing Options Made Easy, Inc. Your gift today can help us to continue providing the excellent programs and services to individuals in need as we have been for twenty years. We need your ongoing support!

For more information and a form, please visit our website.

**FRIENDSHIP
LINE**

1-877-IAM-HERE

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- FREE
- EMPOWERING
- SUPPORTIVE
- PERSON FRIENDLY
- ENCOURAGING
- CONFIDENTIAL
- NON CRISIS CALLS