



Communicator

Spring
2024

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Director's Chair

Greetings colleagues:

Happy spring to you all. This edition will share a variety of success stories and celebrate our diverse community.

Looking ahead to the summer, I am excited for our Employment and Education Celebration in June, when we will try a

new program to celebrate our members' accomplishments. We have also begun planning to host a community health fair in July. Finally, we have a new blog to share our good news. Check it out!

<https://spiritcrossingclubhouse.blogspot.com>



GB and MaryBeth

As we celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month and our program anniversary in June, this will also be a time to mourn the loss of a friend and colleague. GB M. passed on April 24, 2024, after a long battle with cancer. GB never lost her spirit to impact others through friendship, creativity, and the love of all creatures while she fought the impacts of this terrible disease.

We wish to honor and recognize GB's contributions over the last two decades to Spirit Crossing Clubhouse. Her involvement took on a variety of forms. GB was considered a charter

member of Spirit Crossing Clubhouse. She was involved in the Clubhouse Coalition and Advisory Council work. GB contributed creative writing and artwork to the *Perspectives* publications, introduced dual recovery initiatives by facilitating peer-led groups, attending conferences, and giving presentations about her recovery journey and special interests.

More recently, she organized opportunities for members to share their recovery stories in the *Recovery Crossing* podcast project. Late this winter, GB agreed to share some of her Clubhouse memories.

The following interview was completed by Caroline F. with GB via voice text. Here are the excerpts from the recorded conversation:

"Hi Caroline: My biggest achievements with Clubhouse ... I got to be a part of this growing movement back in 1998, ... the opening of a Clubhouse [program] when it was just couches and chairs and old TV's dropped in a room, ... starting the work-ordered day and learning about what that meant, ... stomping out stigma and what an incredible thing that is, and then representing Spirit Crossing Clubhouse with the Clubhouse Coalition. In 2005, I got to go to Oregon and represent us in a convention. ... My absolutely biggest favorite achievement is the pod/videocast and getting that done. ... That was very fulfilling, and I loved that we got that done."

“My fondest memories are of campouts up in the Poudre Canyon, and I look forward to that every single year. ... teaching cooking and addiction classes over the years to members ... I want to add one more thing, Caroline. It has been a priceless gift over the years to watch my colleagues grow in their careers, employment, education, relationships, [and] emotional intelligence. ... Being a part of that is a gift that can never be replaced.”

I would like to add one of my fondest early memories of GB. In 2001, we worked together at DIA greeting Clubhouse colleagues arriving to attend the Western Regional Conference in Denver. Spirit Crossing was involved with the Clubhouse Coalition to host this ICCD* event. We were so excited to be a part of that Clubhouse conference and welcome visitors from all over the country, especially the leadership from the ICCD.

Several visitors shared that we made a great impression as we greeted them with cheers, hugs, and welcome posters as they came off the escalator to collect their luggage and board their transportation. The whole conference experience convinced us to take the next steps in Clubhouse development: complete colleague training and seek accreditation.

The work with GB on this day at the airport and her involvement in the coalition with me strengthened our relationship. GB, I honor you with gratitude and remember you with joy! More details of the life celebration for GB will be announced later in May.

Be well ~ Nat

**ICCD – International Center for Clubhouse Development, AKA Clubhouse International*



MaryBeth S., **GB M.**, Stephanie H., Caroline F., Elena C., and Natalie B. at the 2023 Rocky Mountain Clubhouse Coalition meeting at Guernsey State Park



This is GB's favorite rock.

Unit Updates

Street Level Updates

- 1) The kitchen hours are now 10:00 am to 1:00 pm to ensure that we are following the Larimer County Health Department requirements.
- 2) Our Clubhouse now has a break room on the Street Level Unit, located in the small conference room across from the restrooms. Breakfast items and a coffee bar are available for all colleagues.

Garden Level Updates

- 1) The Media Team has started a Clubhouse blog for posting newsletter articles. Check it out!
<https://spiritcrossingclubhouse.blogspot.com>
- 2) Specific days of the work week are now dedicated to a different aspect of education and employment. An education study group is scheduled on Mon. and Tue. at 1:30 pm. On Wed., Thu., and Fri., a cover letter and resume review, and mock interviews are scheduled.
- 3) The Media Team in coordination with the Food Service Team is adding nutritional and allergenic information to the weekly lunch menu that is posted on our Facebook and Instagram pages.

Congratulations Clubhouse Members!

The following Clubhouse members have recently gained employment: Dan B., Jordan M., Sam S., Matthew M., Anna Marie P., Sean E., Joseph N., and Scott S.

Member Spotlight: Raychel J.

By Raychel J.



I became a member of Spirit Crossing Clubhouse in October of 2023. There were a few people on my care team from SummitStone that told me about the Clubhouse but, at the time, I was not old enough to become a member. At first, I thought the Clubhouse was like a nursing home by how some people described it, but I can now clearly and confidently tell you it is *nothing* like a nursing home. I decided to be a member because the place felt like a friendly community, and I wanted to be part of it. With my ADHD, I wanted to see what help I could get to be productive throughout a normal working day. I also became extremely interested when I found out about the Supported Education and Employment programs, which I needed and still use.

I want to continue getting help with my education to finish high school and start college. Currently, I am enrolled in an online school, and I needed a place to work and get help. Wanting to continue to learn how to self-advocate and make more friends, which has been very difficult due to my online school and COVID, is still a crucial learning staple for me right now. Not only have I been getting wonderful help from the staff but also the members. Since I do my schoolwork at the Clubhouse, I have learned to ask for help and support on things that I don't know how to do, which used to be quite difficult for me. In April, I started my semester, and I will continue to receive help from both members and staff, which I greatly appreciate.

There are *many* things that I greatly enjoy doing at the Clubhouse. If you were to come to the Clubhouse, you will most likely find me in the Garden Level Unit working on Spirit Crossing's social fliers with the help of our wonderful Media Team. I have deeply enjoyed having the opportunity to regularly use our Media Room and post social fliers. Multiple members and staff say that I have been a great help with getting more members in and increasing the amount of posts we make; but to be very honest, I wouldn't have been able to use this opportunity if the Clubhouse didn't accept and include me in everything I want to help with and more.

Like I said earlier, I am enrolled in an online school. When COVID hit, I was in 8th grade and had a virtual graduation. My mom enrolled me in a Christian online school where I was a student when I was younger, and I have been a student at this high school ever since. Currently, I am a senior and hopefully will be graduating in 2025. I've always had a love/hate relationship with school, and that's because of the subjects. Some of my favorite subjects have always been science, art, and most of all, spelling.

Save the Date!

Field of Honor Setup

Spring Creek Park

Friday, May 24, at noon





In 8th grade, I won first place in my school science fair with a project about which textured object could calm down an autistic child quicker. It was a case study to help me figure out how to calm down my autistic brother from sensory overload with kinetic sand or a squishy. I learned a lot of new things about autism and how to help and support my brother through my research.

One subject that I despise is math. Math has always been a tough subject for me along with English. I love writing freely but, when it comes to certain formats and details or terms, it gets overwhelming and there is too much to remember. Thankfully, the Clubhouse has given me multiple chances to test my math and English knowledge by letting me run the snack bar and make social flyers in the media room.

Careerwise, I want to become an actor. With acting, there is a small chance of getting regular acting gigs and pay. With that, I have decided to have a backup income source with a career in the medical field. I love working with kids and the elderly, so I'm browsing for a job in that field.

I have a friend named Delaney who I have known for the past six years. We started as neighbors but became best friends. And she has supported me through thick and thin. She was one of the people who gave me the confidence to come by and tour the Clubhouse. Ever since I became a member, Delaney has asked me about my day and what it's like being a member. So, when I found out we were having an open house that offered tours, I immediately invited her and gave her a tour. She liked the idea of the place and said she will try and get a referral as soon as she can. Recently, she got a referral, and now she is a new member of our Clubhouse! I am so excited for her to get the help she has been wanting and asking for, and I hope the Clubhouse is everything she is looking for and more, like it is for me.

Max H.'s Clubhouse Journey

By Schuyler B.



Max H. became a member of Spirit Crossing eight years ago, so he could regain his social skills. He appreciates that our Clubhouse creates a welcoming environment and that Clubhouse members are encouraged to set goals.

After high school, Max worked on the installation of cell phone towers for six years in all the US states, excluding Alaska. Part of the installation process required him to hang upside down in a harness under the antenna. In his next job, he did HVAC repairs for five years. Then, he became a general manager for Blackjack Pizza in Loveland.

I asked Max about his favorite and least favorite cities and states. His favorite city was

Save the Date!

**Heart Health Screening
and Presentation**

Wed., May 29, at 2:00 pm

Health District

Baton Rouge, Louisiana because the diverse culture reminded him of South Florida, the area where he is originally from. Max's two favorite states were Montana and North Carolina. He made good friends in Montana and enjoyed the beaches in North Carolina. These beaches reminded him of Fort Lauderdale, his hometown.

Max's least favorite cities were Chicago because of the gang activity and New York City because of the crowds and pollution. His least favorite state was Wisconsin because of the stench from agricultural activity. He told me he would roll up the windows of his vehicle and turn off the AC before crossing the state line into Wisconsin.

Max recently earned his GED and is now attending Colorado Counselor Training where he is pursuing a two-year program in addictions counseling. So far, he has completed eight out of 28 classes. Max plans to complete the second level curriculum, consisting of 20 additional classes. Then, he will complete 200 hours of counseling practice. Max has a goal of eventually finishing his master's degree and starting his own addictions counseling practice.

The Rocky Mountain Clubhouse Coalition Visits Robbie's House

By Schuyler B.

In February, the Rocky Mountain Clubhouse Coalition visited Robbie's House in Laramie, WY. The coalition participants consisted of members and staff from Spirit Crossing, Frontier House in Greeley, and Iris House in Casper, WY.

Robbie's House was started in 2023 by Debbie H. to honor the memory of her son and his love of art, music, and community. On our tour of Robbie's house, we viewed an arts and

crafts room, a quiet room, two kilns for firing pottery, the kitchen, and a large collection of current and vintage video games that were donated by a Clubhouse member of Robbie's House. After the conclusion of the tour, Keith B. and I were greeted by Rudy, a black labrador retriever owned by Loretta R., the art director.

Although Robbie's House is open only two days a week, the average daily attendance is 20. See <https://www.robbieshouselaramie.com/> for more information.



Members and staff are busy preparing lunch for the coalition guests.



Here is some of the food being prepared for our lunch.



Colleagues Tanner T., Natalie, B., and Stephanie H. are getting ready for St. Patrick's Day.



Raychel J. decorates a bulletin board for St. Patrick's Day.



Clubhouse members are eating lunch after shopping in Old Town.



Chase H. is holding a ball python at the Petco social.



Sherry S., Raychel J., and Ben G. are also at the Petco social.



Rudy, a labrador retriever owned by Robbie's House Art Director Lorretta R., gets some affection from Spirit Crossing staff member Keith B.



A member donated their entire video game collection to Robbie's House. This collection includes current and vintage titles.

Autism: Myths and Misperceptions

By Schuyler B.

Autism awareness is when you know who I am. Autism acceptance is when you're glad to see me. — Kaelynn Partlow, autistic advocate and educator

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurological and developmental disability that results in difficulty with communication and interaction with other people and includes restricted interests and repetitive behaviors. The word *spectrum* in ASD refers to the wide range of symptoms and severity presented by people with this disorder. Historically, diagnoses such as

Save the Date!
Clubhouse Giving Day is on
Tuesday, June 4th.
Help us fundraise for
Spirit Crossing Clubhouse.

#ClubhouseGivingDay2024



TO DONATE



SCAN ME

autistic disorder and Asperger syndrome were classified as separate conditions. Now, these diagnoses and others are grouped together under ASD.

The broader diagnosis of ASD was established because many affected individuals fall outside of the strict definitions of the narrower diagnoses. In addition, their intellectual and communication abilities may change over time. However, some individuals who were previously diagnosed with one of the autism subtypes now do not meet all the criteria of the new umbrella diagnosis.

Although a person can be diagnosed with ASD at any age, ASD is a developmental disorder because the symptoms generally appear in the first two years of life. If a child is closely monitored, the signs can be noticed at 18 months or younger. A reliable diagnosis of ASD is more common around two or three years of age. While *there is no cure for ASD*, early intensive treatment can greatly improve the lives of many children.

ASD people of all ages can also develop other medical or behavioral health issues. Medical issues include increased rates of intellectual disability, gastrointestinal conditions, sleep issues, or seizures. Behavioral conditions may include increased rates of anxiety, irritability, depression, tics, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or gender dysphoria.



In 2017, actor Sir Anthony Hopkins revealed he was diagnosed with ASD as an older adult. In retrospect, he said, "I could never settle anywhere. I was troubled and caused trouble." Describing himself as a loner, Hopkins added, "I don't go to parties. I don't have many friends." He is best known for his remarkable ability to memorize lines. During the filming of Steven Spielberg's 1997 hit *Amistad*, Hopkins memorized a seven-page courtroom speech, delivering it in a single take.

A Brief Interview with Clubhouse Member D. F.

Schuyler B.: What autism stereotypes have you experienced?

D. F.: Only boys have autism. I hate that. In high school, I knew someone who thought that all autistic people were nonverbal. I've had people talk to me like I was four-years-old, despite being told not to. My grandmother thought I was a math genius. I hate math.

Schuyler B.: What do we need to know about autistic people?

D. F.: Don't tell someone to stop *stimming* if it's not hurting themselves or anyone else. Not all autistic people are overly sensitive to stimuli. Most people want to be referred to as an *autistic* person rather than a person with autism. The word *with* suggests that autism can be removed from the person.

Note: *Stimming*, a term for self-stimulatory behavior, is the repetitive body movements commonly seen in people on the autism spectrum. See <https://tinyurl.com/mrxm7fdt> for more information.



Dan Aykroyd, comedian, singer, actor, and screenwriter cowrote *Ghostbusters* and *The Blues Brothers*, both hit movies. Aykroyd credits his ASD for his success in writing *Ghostbusters*. He said, "One of my symptoms included my obsession with ghosts and law enforcement — I carry around a police badge with me, for example. I became obsessed by Hans Holzer, the greatest ghost hunter ever. That's when the idea of my film *Ghostbusters* was born." He added that his obsession with police and college study of criminology also served him well when writing the *Blues Brothers*.

Myths and Misperceptions

Myth #1: Vaccines cause autism.

Parents and anti-vaccine activists mistakenly blame the Mumps Measles Rubella vaccine for causing autism. They use Andrew Wakefield's 1998 research that claims this vaccine causes a hypothetical bowel disorder named autistic enterocolitis. A thorough investigation of Wakefield's research revealed that his data was falsified. The Lancet retracted the paper in 2012.

Autism is mainly an inherited disorder. Scientists estimate that up to 80 percent of a child's risk of developing this disorder is determined by DNA. However, environmental and behavioral risk factors may also play a role. In addition, many factors may have to co-occur and reinforce each other for ASD to arise.

According to the research, known risk factors for ASD include siblings of autistic children, a large age differential between parents, and a high fever during pregnancy. If one child in a family has ASD, the chance that the first sibling will be diagnosed with ASD is 18% higher than in the general population.

Parental age is also a major risk factor for ASD. Men over 40 are more likely to father an ASD child than men younger than 30.



**Spirit Crossing
Clubhouse**

Save the Date!

**16th Annual Peaks to
Success**

**Employment & Education
Celebration**

Wednesday, June 12, 2024

5:00 – 7:30 pm

Fort Collins Senior Center

Women at the beginning or end of their childbearing years, roughly their teens or in their forties, are also more likely to have children with autism. The biggest risk is when older men have children with much younger women.

Finally, a pregnant woman who experiences a high fever in her second trimester increases her child's chances of developing ASD by 40 percent. The reason for this finding is unknown. The evidence suggests that inflammation in the mother's body may be associated with a delay in the development of blood vessels in the fetal brain during a critical point in the development of the central nervous system.

Myth #2: Autistic people are geniuses.*

Autistic savants are people who demonstrate some special cognitive ability (art, music, arithmetic, spatial skills, or calendar abilities [for example, determining the day of the week of a date with speed and accuracy]), exceeding what most people can do. Nearly 10% of autistic people have savant abilities.

Myth #3: Autistic people are unable to speak.*

Around 25 to 30 percent of children with ASD have a condition known as *nonspeaking* or *nonverbal autism*, speaking fewer than 30 or so words or not speaking at all. A nonspeaking autistic person may still use words in other ways (for example, writing). Words that are spoken or overheard may also be understood by a nonspeaking autistic person.

Myth #4: Autistic people don't experience emotions or empathy.

About 50 percent of people on the spectrum have *alexithymia*, a condition characterized by difficulties with understanding and expressing one's own emotions, including empathy. Thus, the coexistence of this condition with ASD may partly explain the misconception that all ASD people lack empathy.

Another reason is the tendency for miscommunication when an autistic person interacts with a non-autistic individual. ASD people may have difficulty recognizing facial expressions and might not display many facial expressions themselves. Thus, neurotypical people may encounter difficulty reading their emotional state and mistakenly conclude that ASD people lack empathy.

**Clubhouse member D. F. asked the current author to address this myth.*



Temple Grandin is a world-renowned scientist, designer, professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University, and a well-known author and speaker on animal behavior and autism. Grandin is primarily a visual thinker who has devoted her career to devising systems to alleviate the anxiety of animals and ASD people.

Resources

The ARC of Larimer County
<https://thearcoflarimercounty.org/>

Foothills Gateway
<https://www.foothillsgateway.org/>

National Institute of Mental Health
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/>



Picabo A., Raychel J., and Chase H. are at the Fort Collins Senior Center.



Mike P. and Sherry S. are playing pool at the Fort Collins Senior Center.



Raychel J. and Stephanie H. are at the Denver Zoo.



Raychel J. at the Denver Zoo is comparing her height with various bears.



Stephanie H. is showing her student project at a FRCC graphic arts exhibit.

Recipe Spotlight: Chicken Tortilla Soup

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Serves 6

Homemade Tortilla Strips

1 tbsp olive oil

8 6" corn tortillas, cut into thin strips

Chicken Tortilla Soup

1 tbsp olive oil

1 medium onion chopped

3 garlic cloves, minced

1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and diced

1 tsp ground cumin

1 tsp chili powder

1 lb chicken breasts

1 20 oz can crushed tomatoes

1 32 can chicken broth

1 14 oz can black beans, drained and rinsed

1 14 oz can corn, drained and rinsed

1/2 cup cilantro, chopped and divided

1 tsp salt

1 lime, juiced

Toppings

1 large avocado, diced

1 lime, cut into wedges

Instructions

Homemade Tortilla Strips

Preheat a pan with olive oil over medium-high heat. Fry tortilla strips in batches until crisp.

Chicken Tortilla Soup

- 1) Preheat a pot with olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion, garlic, and jalapeño and sauté until vegetables are soft.
- 2) Add cumin, chili powder, chicken breasts, crushed tomatoes, chicken broth, black beans, corn, cilantro, and salt. Bring to a boil and let simmer for at least 25 minutes.
- 3) Remove chicken from pot and shred using two forks. Add shredded chicken back to the soup. Simmer another 5 minutes and add lime juice. Serve the soup with some tortilla strips, cilantro, pieces of avocado, and lime wedges.



**Which recipes from our Food Service Team would you like to see in the next edition of the Communicator?
Drop by the Clubhouse, and let us know!**

Pet Spotlight

By Stephanie H.



Mochi is my male bearded dragon lizard. Bearded dragons, also known as *beardies*, have an area under their neck that puffs out and turns black when they feel threatened or scared. This species is native to the desert regions of Australia and grow to a length of 18 – 22 inches. Mochi likes to eat fruits, vegetables, and crickets. My bearded dragon has an area of his enclosure that includes a sun lamp and a hammock. He also has a log that he can hide under to cool off. Mochi likes to snuggle with stuffed animals and me. In addition, he likes to run around and explore the living room. Mochi is afraid of ceiling fans and my green hat.

Sit with animals quietly and they will show you their heart. Sit with them kindly and they will help you locate yours. — anonymous

Do you want to feature your pet in a future edition of the Communicator? Drop by the Clubhouse, and let us know!



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Mental Health Awareness Month



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 2:30 pm E&E Planning	2 11:00 am Open Tours 2:30pm Newsletter Meeting	3 2:30 pm Supported Education Meeting	4 8:00 am Shopping in Estes Park
5 Cinco de Mayo	6 1:30 pm Garden Level Development Meeting	7 9:30 am House Meeting	8 2:30 pm Wellness Work Group	9 11:00 am Open Tours 2:30pm Newsletter Meeting	10	11 9:00 am NAMI Walk (Denver)
12 Mother's Day	13 1:30 pm Media Team Meeting	14 9:30 am Calendar Planning 12:00 pm Advisory Council 12:30 pm Clubhouse Closed	15 2:30 pm JEDI Work Group	16 11:00 am Open Tours 2:30pm Newsletter Meeting	17 4-7pm Supported Education Celebration	18
19	20 1:30 pm Street Level Development Meeting	21 9:30 am House Meeting	22 10:30 am RMCC Meeting 2:30pm Wellness Work Group	23 11:00 am Open Tours 2:30pm Newsletter 4-7pm Game Night	24 12:00 pm Community Service Social Field of Honor Setup	25
26 9 am-4 pm Veteran's Plaza SCC Booth	27 Clubhouse Closed	28 9:30 am Job Development House Meeting	29 2-4:30 pm Heart Health Presentation & Screening	30 11:00 am Open Tours 2:30pm Newsletter Meeting	31 2:30 pm Supported Education Meeting	

New Member Tours: Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays at 11 am. Tuesdays at 2pm.

New Member Orientations: 9am-2pm. Daily

Zoom meetings are now only by request. If you would like to join by zoom for any of our meetings, please contact the Clubhouse and request a Zoom connection. Thank you!

Zoom Meeting ID: 915 7856 0906