



Magnolia Clubhouse: Bringing Hope to Men and Women Who Live with Mental Illness

The statistics for mental illness reveal a national crisis. One in four people lives with a mental illness, but fewer than half get treatment. Because treatment often consists of medication, some benefits, and perhaps housing, this still leaves most to live in isolation and desperation. Magnolia Clubhouse fills this critical void in our community mental health care system. Established in 2004 and located in University Circle, Magnolia Clubhouse is the successor to Hill House (founded in 1961) that was a pioneer in the field of psychiatric rehabilitation. It is one of 300-plus Clubhouses worldwide based on the Clubhouse Model started at Fountain House in New York City. At the heart of the model is the philosophy that being needed, having work and purpose, together with others in a community, is rehabilitative and that both mental and physical health is enhanced when isolation is reduced. Members and staff work side-by-side to run the Clubhouse—on any given day you will find members cooking lunch, enrolling new members, creating a daily in house news show in our digital media lab, entering data, working in our upscale resale shop, or maintaining the property. The work of the Clubhouse also includes advocacy and community education. Police Crisis Intervention Training is part of the community education we are involved in. We are also currently involved in advocacy with Fountain House and other Clubhouses across the country, to promote the development of a mental health driven response to mental health crisis when police intervention is not needed.

While 80% of those with mental illness are unemployed, most want to work. The Clubhouse supports employment and supports members in continuing educational pursuits—from GEDs to graduate degrees. In keeping with its holistic approach, both behavioral and primary care are offered on-site in the Magnolia Clubhouse Clinic.

With research-proven outcomes, the Clubhouse Model is one of the most effective—and sustainable—resources available for improving and saving lives. Members have higher rates of employment, social connections and quality of life, and lower rates of hospitalization and incarceration. Remarkably affordable, one year at the Clubhouse costs less than one week at a hospital. One of three Clubhouses in Ohio, Magnolia and the Ohio Clubhouse Coalition is working diligently with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to increase this availability of this service across our state.

During this time of the pandemic, Magnolia Clubhouse continued to operate remotely and engaged in leadership activities in the international Clubhouse network, produced webinars to share best practices in the delivery of the virtual Clubhouse, and sustained employment and education supports. These efforts also included the development and worldwide administration of a COVID Impact Survey for Clubhouses. Connection to the international network is also a unique strength of this approach which unites members and staff of Clubhouses around the world in our shared vision: one day, the social rights movement for human justice to which Clubhouses are dedicated, will no longer be needed. People who live with mental illness everywhere will live lives of dignity and fulfillment and reach their full potential.

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