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Winds of Wellness

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Stay Emotionally Healthy

No matter how good or bad you think life is, wake up each day and be thankful for life. Someone somewhere is fighting to survive.



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Staying well emotionally is just as important as keeping physically fit.

Give yourself permission to take a break from your worries and concerns. Recognize that dedicating even a short time every day to your mental fitness will reap significant benefits in terms of feeling rejuvenated and more confident.

Follow these tips from the Canadian Mental Health Association:

- ✓ Daydream – Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a dream location. Breathe slowly and deeply. Whether it's a beach, a mountain-top, a hushed forest or a favorite room from your past, let the comforting environment wrap you in a sensation of peace and tranquility.



- ✓ "Collect" positive emotional moments – Make it a point to recall times when you have experienced pleasure, comfort, tenderness, confidence, or other positive emotions.

- ✓ Learn ways cope with negative thoughts – Negative thoughts can be insistent and loud. Learn to interrupt them. Don't try to block them (that



never works), but don't let them take over. Try distracting yourself or comforting yourself, if you can't solve the problem right away.

- ✓ Do one thing at a time – For example, when you are out for a walk or spending time with friends, turn off your cell phone and stop making that mental "to do" list. Take in all the sights, sounds and smells you encounter.



- ✓ Exercise – Regular physical activity improves psychological well-being and can reduce depression and anxiety. Joining an exercise group or a gym can also reduce loneliness, since it connects you with a new set of people sharing a common goal.

- ✓ Enjoy hobbies – Taking up a hobby brings balance to your life by allowing you to do something you enjoy because you want to do it, free of the pressure of everyday tasks. It also keeps your brain active.



- ✓ Set personal goals – Goals don't have to be ambitious. You might decide to finish that book you started three years ago; to take a walk around the block every day; to learn to knit or play bridge; to call your friends instead of waiting for the phone to

ring. Whatever goal you set, reaching it will build confidence and a sense of satisfaction.

- ✓ Keep a journal – Expressing yourself after a stressful day can help you gain perspective, release tension and even boost your body's resistance to illness.
- ✓ Share humor – Life often gets too serious, so when you hear or see something that makes you smile or laugh, share it with someone you know. A little humor can go a long way to keeping us mentally fit!
- ✓ Volunteer – Volunteering is called the "win-win" activity because helping others makes us feel good about ourselves. At the same time, it widens our social network, provides us with new learning experiences and can bring balance to our lives.



- ✓ Treat yourself well – Cook yourself a good meal. Have a bubble bath. See a movie. Call a friend or relative you haven't talked to in ages. Sit on a park bench and breathe in the fragrance of flowers and grass. Whatever it is, do it just for you.



Member Spotlight - Joseph from Safford



Safford Wellness Connection's Member Joseph

Had it not been for Wellness Connections, Joseph probably would not be feeling hopeful about securing a job.

The 25-year-old has struggled to find work, partly due to misdemeanors on his record.

While a previous agency had worked to remove them for nearly two years without success, Vocational Rehabilitation Coach Ruth Johnston was able to achieve what Joseph thought to be impossible in just two days.

"Hopefully that will make a difference," he said. "Now I'm working on my fingerprint clearance."

Joseph has been attending Wellness Connections for about two years, and started working with Ruth earlier this year.

He likes that the center offers him activities to keep him occupied, especially while he is not working.

"I even attend the Understanding Addiction group, even though I don't have an addiction, just so I can learn more about it," he said, adding that he would like to find a position that allows him to work with people with mental health issues.

He knows, however, that in today's economic climate he has to start on the first rung of the ladder and work his way up.

"At this point I'll take anything," he acknowledges. "I've done a couple of interviews, which is more than I had before I started working with Wellness Connections. Ruth has really pushed me to get stuff done, like completing my Associates Degree and getting my resume written. Working with her has been a big help."

Fun in Photos



Safford Members at Arcadia Camp Ground at Mt. Graham



Douglas Members at Care Fair in Douglas at Airport Park



Nogales Members in Tucson preparing for a round of night-time miniature golf.

Benson Mobile Members at Mt. Lemmon, Rose Canyon Lake Picnic



Staff Spotlight, Ruth Johnston, Safford

Within two weeks of starting work with Wellness Connections in Safford, Ruth Johnston admits she wanted to quit.

“I just didn’t know if this job was for me,” she recalls. “I had never worked in this kind of environment before.”

But when she told the center’s Program Manager, Steve Nath, that she wanted to leave, he told her to give him two weeks.

“That was last September and I’m still here,” said the Outreach and Peer Support Specialist, who is also a Vocational Rehabilitation Coach. “I just fell in love with the members and I built relationships with them. Now they are practically lining up to come and talk to me, usually just for a chat.”

Before joining Wellness Connections Ruth had no idea what it did. But something drew her to

the building on Thatcher Blvd.

“I had been praying for a job and one day I was just driving by and decided to drop in,” she explains. “I didn’t know anyone and I met with Steve, talked with him and he hired me on the spot.”

Ruth now spends her time either out and about in the local community promoting Wellness Connections and attending events like job fairs, or working with other area agencies to help the members find work, housing or health insurance.

She knows that establishing connections is the key to success.

“I work a lot with Cindy Stratton at DES Vocational Rehabilitation. My goal is to look for job placements or to work on job retention.”

It is a role she takes very seriously, even to the point of learning one member’s job at the local

Wal-Mart so she could help that person improve in their daily duties and remain in the position.

“I like to do job coaching,” said Ruth. “But the biggest challenge is overcoming the stigma that’s out there with many employers. A lot of what I do is getting to know the businesses and the people who run them.”

Ruth also works with the members to get them ready for the workforce, including resume writing, mock interviews, clothing and work appropriate behavior.

Right now, she is holding one-on-one sessions, but hopes to add group classes in the near future.



EMPLOYMENT TIP - Practice Your Handshake – Your handshake says a lot. A nice, firm handshake says you are professional. A floppy handshake gives the impression you are passive and lacking in social skills. Too firm of a handshake gives the impression of aggressiveness. Practice your handshake with a friend.



The Process of Remodeling

Wellness Connections is under construction.

Work began in mid-July and is scheduled to be completed in mid to late September. Some of the highlights are:

The kitchen now has a CPG-36,000 BTU commercial stove featuring 6 burners, a 24” flat top with 2 36” deck ovens,



which according to Sean, “Will allow us to train in any cooking method to prepare members for entry level jobs in the food service industry.”

The new stove is housed in the newly remodeled kitchen which has increased in size to allow comfortable culinary training classes.

Another highlight is the “HUB” still under construction in the photo. This area is for staff members of the Sierra Vista and Mobile programs to do daily documentation, required by our funders. Above you can see Sean and Elijah hard at work. This room,



which is over 300 square feet, alleviates the necessity for staff desks allowing more room for member activities and programs.

There is a new member computer room and a new fitness room that will have doubled in size making room for classes such as yoga and Zumba.

Excitement is in the air with the anticipation of completion.



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Wellness Connections' Mission Statement & Overview

Mission Statement:

"Wellness Connections is committed to providing peer-led, life-enhancing opportunities for mental health recovery and wellness."

Overview

Wellness Connections has provided behavioral health and addiction recovery services based on a peer-led model since February 2002. Wellness Connections maintains a qualified staff of Recovery Support Specialists, Peer Support Specialists and Behavior Health Technicians.

The expected outcome for all Wellness Connections' program members is a significantly improved quality of life. Funding is provided through contracts with Cenpatico, the Department of Veteran's Affairs, Bridgeway and the DES Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. Fundraising and grant funding are also pursued in support of Wellness Connections' mission.

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