



HELPING PEOPLE WITH  
MENTAL DISABILITIES TO  
ACHIEVE QUALITY LIVES

# TSI Living

Winter 2006

News for the consumers, staff, family & friends of Transitional Services, Inc.

## Relationships Can Heal

By Patricia Deegan, PhD (Article Used with Permission)

I have had the privilege of interviewing many people about their journey of recovery. One of the most consistent themes that has emerged in these recovery narratives is the importance of relationships. Relationships are the cornerstone of the recovery process for most people. Relationships that are marked by kindness and compassion can heal. Sometimes healing relationships are developed with professionals, but more commonly, people in recovery mentioned healing relationships with a friend or peer. Some people even reported a beloved pet was a significant part of their recovery. In a culture steeped in the belief that there is a “pill for every ill,” it can be important to remind ourselves of the healing power of human relationships.

The people I have interviewed mention certain important characteristics of people who were experienced as helpful in their recovery. Many said the helpful person showed fortitude, patience and love. Fidelity, patience and fortitude are evident when the helpful person is present during the most difficult of times and does not simply come around when recovery seems promising. People who are experienced as helpful are able to hold the relationship during times when the other does not reciprocate affection and care. This holding of love and relationship, even during the most barren and anguished winter of recovery, requires compassion. The word compassion comes from the Latin *passio*, to suffer and *com*, to be with. To be compassionate is to suffer with the person in distress. To be compassionate is a way of being with the other without an agenda to change them, to relieve their suffering or to suffer for them. Through compassion we can reach out to the other even when they refuse to reach back. With compassion we see the person, not the diagnosis or disorder.

Another characteristic of people who are helpful to the recovery process is that they believe in the person in distress, even when that person

does not believe in themselves. Believing in the other is not expressed in optimistic rhetoric such as, “I just know that in time you will do better.” Shallow optimism ignores the challenges and difficulties that the person in distress faces. Optimism may help us feel better, but it leaves the other alone and distanced. Believing in someone, on the other hand, takes the form of a fundamental affirmation of that person’s goodness. It is a hopeful stance that admits that the future is uncertain and ambiguous while simultaneously expressing a willingness to walk together into that unknown future.

People who are helpful to the recovery process are able to convey feelings and are experienced as being very human. No one reported that professional distance and demeanor were helpful. Instead, our own humanity is the bridge that connects us to people in distress. Sometimes humor can form a connection of warmth, joy and affection.

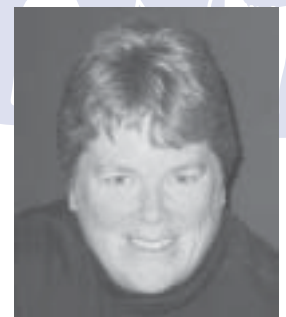
Sometimes helpful people convey their humanity by expressing sympathy, listening, and respecting the issues and concerns of the person in distress. Importantly, they avoid being judgmental and are accepting.

Relationship includes the idea of mutuality and reciprocity. This can be very healing for people who have been in the patient or client role for a long time. That is, being socialized into the role of a “good” mental patient often means learning to become preoccupied with matters pertaining to “me.” Socialization into self-preoccupation starts in the hospital where each day begins with a nurse asking you if your bowels are moving, if you slept that night, etc. Socialization into me-ness proceeds on through the years as each and every casemanager, therapist, residential worker or vocational rehabilitation counselor asks, “How are you doing?” Unlike normal social discourse in which ‘how are you doing’ acts as a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

From the CEO’s Desk..... 2  
 New Officers Elected at TSI..... 2  
 TSI Recognizes Employee Efforts..... 2  
 National Leadership Conference Benefits TSI ..... 3  
 Recovery Festival ..... 4  
 Unraveling the Transportation  
 Puzzle in Allegheny County..... Insert  
 Quality Services: A Personal View..... 5  
 Recovery: A Personal Journey ..... 5  
 Health Talk Begins ..... 6  
 Shall We Dance? ..... 6  
 Photo Gallery..... 6-7  
 Public Forum Drives Services ..... 8

**Patricia E. Deegan, PhD**, is an activist in the disability rights movement, a writer, lecturer and researcher. Pat is also an independent consultant with Pat Deegan & Associates, LLC and a Senior Program Associate with Advocates for Human Potential, Inc. She has many published papers that have been translated into 9 languages. Pat has lectured on the topics of self-directed recovery and empowerment around the



world, and has made three films on disability related topics. Pat’s current projects include researching a recovery-based approach to using psychiatric medications at the University of Kansas, developing recovery-based competencies for mental health practitioners, helping to restore forgotten cemeteries at state hospitals, helping consumers win money for new housing through the sale of state hospitals and developing technical assistance materials for people affected by the U.S. Supreme Court’s Olmstead Decision. Pat is a psychiatric survivor, having first been diagnosed with schizophrenia as a teenager. She received her doctorate in clinical psychology from Duquesne University in 1984.



Sharon Alberts, CEO

## From the CEO's Desk

**D**uring my tenure as CEO, I have had the wonderful opportunity of sitting on a number of committees. Most recently, I served on a panel that was exploring the concepts of recovery and attempting to educate others about them. I have also had occasion to hear about what organizations are doing and calling recovery. And, while all attempts are to be applauded, we aren't there yet.

Those that understand cultural changes, especially organizational ones, know that it takes between 3-5 years to transform an organization. With systems, especially broken ones, I think it takes a lot longer. I am reminded of the Civil Rights Movement that began well over 50 years ago with individuals such as Rosa Parks. Her actions on that fateful day when she refused to give up her seat on the bus mobilized blacks to boycott the bus system and spurred others on to fight for their rights as American citizens. Yet as a society we are still struggling to make our society one in which everyone is equally valued. It takes many, many Rosa Parkses sometimes over many years to change the hearts and minds of those in power. So

while we may want our mental health system to be suddenly transformed, we must realize that it will take many of us laboring intensely before we see a change in the way we view and treat people with mental illness.

I would offer some benchmarks, though, as we labor to transform our organizations. Recovery isn't changing a name of a program and hoping that the reformulated version works better. It is an individualized process of self-discovery in which people with mental illness are helped to gain or regain valued roles. It is not a power-over relationship but a collaborative one built on respect, hope, and really trying to get at what the individual wants and not what we as the professionals think is good for them. It's a shift from the medical model and pathology mode, in which the valued outcome is lessening of symptoms, to a rehabilitation and recovery model in which the valued outcome is a meaningful life. It's a shift from a model based on deficits and fixing to one which is based on utilizing the person's assets, strengths, hopes and dreams to help them achieve a quality life. Finally, it's the ability to see the person rather than the illness and to accord them their valued role as our neighbors, coworkers, colleagues and friends.

## New Officers Elected at Transitional Services, Inc.

New officers were selected for Transitional Services, Inc. at its annual dinner. **Glenn Callihan** was unanimously elected Chairperson of the Board. Mr. Callihan joined the Board in 2004 and is currently employed as the Vice President of Operations for Goodwill Industries. **Bonnie Mackin**, Project Manager for Verizon, was elected as Vice Chairperson, **Robert M. Johnston**, Financial Advisor with Legg Mason, was elected as Treasurer and **Barbara Vilanova**, a public relations consultant, was elected Secretary. In addition to the new officers, **Kathy Paskus**, MSW at Three Rivers Hospice was elected to the Board. The outgoing Chairperson, **Mr. Henry E. Luck, Jr.** was honored for six years of board service and his leadership as board chair for two years.



Former Chairperson **Henry E. Luck, Jr.** (right) passes the gavel to elected Chairperson **Glenn A. Callihan** (left).

## TSI Recognizes Employee Efforts

**T**ransitional Services, Inc. values its employees and shows it with its annual recognition dinner. This year's dinner, held on December 1 at Dave and Busters, gave the organization the opportunity to give special recognition to seven people (see **Photo Gallery, pages 6 and 7**) who won year-end Above and Beyond awards as well as one individual who received the Janet Sieber Award. The Janet Sieber Award is awarded to a person who has been with the agency

for at least ten years and made a remarkable contribution to the agency.

All award recipients epitomized the agency's core values: Integrity, Teamwork, Communication and Customer Service. In addition to these special awards, many people were recognized for reaching milestones in their years of service to TSI.

This was also the time for introducing our new Board Chair, **Glenn A. Callihan**, and acknowledging other board members present as a way for employees to recognize the contributions of the Board to the welfare of the organization. The event itself, complete with an excellent dinner, gifts for all employees and many door prizes was one way TSI shows its appreciation for all its dedicated employees.

## NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE BENEFITS TSI

Performance Plus Professional Development, Inc., just named to the Pittsburgh 100, the *Pittsburgh Business Times* list of the area's fastest-growing privately held companies, held its annual Leadership Conference in Pittsburgh on September 14-15, 2005. This conference, which is hosted in a different city each year, lived up to its title of The Ultimate Leadership Conference.

The conference brought together national speakers such as Ron Canham (Tucson, AZ), G. Eric Gordon (Dallas, TX), Dr. James Johnson (Parkersburg, WV), Jeff Tobe (Pittsburgh, PA), and Wendy Kaufman (New York, NY). They spoke on topics such as Dealing with Negativity in the Workplace; Ethics, Leadership and the Bottom Line; Coloring Outside the Lines; and Balancing Your Life as a Leader. Steve Gilliland delivered the keynote speech "Translating Vision Into Reality." The two-day conference attracted participants from around the country.

The conference was a truly great event. In addition to affording members of TSI's Leadership Team the opportunity to hone their leadership skills, challenge their assumptions, and hear inspir-



**Ed Picchiarini**  
(far right) of  
*The Provider Alliance*  
sits on the  
*Executive Panel.*

*Sharon A. Alberts* accepts the  
proceeds from the conference  
from **Steve Gilliland.**



ing speakers, TSI benefited from the conference in a more tangible way as well. Performance Plus Professional Development, Inc. chose to donate the proceeds of the conference to Transitional Services, Inc.

**Steve Gilliland**, CEO of Performance Plus Professional Development, Inc., has been working with TSI for over three years to develop an exceptional leadership team. Gilliland notes that it is unique for a nonprofit corporation to put as much effort into developing leaders as TSI has. TSI's work with individuals with mental health and intellectual disabilities has created a need for strong leadership. "In today's fiscal climate, communities expect nonprofit companies to act like the competitive businesses that they are," notes **Sharon Alberts**, CEO of Transitional Services, Inc. "That's one reason why we partnered with Performance Plus Professional Development—to become a regional leader."

Transitional Services, Inc. extends its heartfelt thanks to Steve Gilliland and Performance Plus Professional Development, Inc. for their generosity and support. A big thank you also goes to Comcast for their sponsorship and promotional support of the Conference through Comcast Newsmakers.



For more information on Performance Plus Professional Development, Inc., visit their website at [www.performanceplus1.com](http://www.performanceplus1.com)

DEEGAN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

perfunctory greeting, mental health discourse requires the client to take the question seriously and to answer by revealing more about "me." In addition, in most mental health settings, clients are not encouraged to help each other or anyone else. In this sense, the currently popular term "consumer" seems apt. It conjures the image of a large mouth consuming and consuming without a hint that it would be possible to contribute something back.

Socialization into me-ness, self-preoccupation and being a consumer means that many people are denied the opportunity to discover they have something to offer to other people. This iatrogenic wounding is another reason relationships can be so healing. It is healing to learn that one needs and is needed, cares and is cared for, and can receive as well as give." For additional articles and resources on recovery related topics, log on to [www.patdeegan.com](http://www.patdeegan.com).

## Recovery Festival



On Sunday September 19, The Allegheny County Coalition for Recovery (ACCR) with cosponsor Message Carriers held its fourth Annual Recovery Festival 5K Walk and Picnic at the Schenley Park Oval. The festival was open to the public and intended to raise awareness and support for mental health and substance use recovery. The day's festivities commenced with the Voices of Recovery Choir singing the National Anthem to inspire the walkers for their short trek. Marc Cherna, the Director of Allegheny County Department of Health and Human Services, along with Allegheny County's Deputy Director of the Office of Behavioral Health Services, Pat Valentine, were present to participate in the walk and share words of encouragement and support. A bountiful lunch ensued immediately following the completion of the walk. While individuals enjoyed fried chicken, burgers, sausages and other tasty side dishes, they were treated to the folksy fun sounds of singer and song writer Cathy Hickling and her band. Attendees were later inspired by testimonials of individuals who shared their stories of recovery and triumph over their addictions and mental health disabilities. Commemorative T-shirts designed by local artist DJ Jackson were provided to all walkers and individuals who purchased raffle tickets for the prize drawing at the end of the day. Community Care Behavioral Health Organization, Whole Foods, and Allegheny County were also sponsors of the event.



## Quality Services: A Personal View

**M**y name is Don Yandel, and I have had the unique experience of having been a consumer of services at one of Transitional Services, Inc. programs seven years ago. Now I am an employee in the Quality Department of the same organization. One of the reasons I consider my experience unique is that now I am in a position to share with other people what I found to be the most valuable help to me in terms of my recovery. In other words, I hope to provide

readers with a clearer view of what quality services look like.

Recovery can often be a frightening experience for many reasons. The uncertainty of one's future along with the realization that there may be a need to define or redefine roles such as parent, worker, sibling, or volunteer can be experienced as both overwhelming and exciting. Here are some of the quality services that were provided to me at TSI and which



I found to be helpful. The staff at TSI was especially sensitive to the ambivalence I felt about my recovery. They connected with me quickly and in a very meaningful way and always endeavored to help me clarify and pursue my goals. They did this with a consistent commitment to understand me as an individual. Staff worked with me collaboratively in looking inwardly at my hopes, dreams and desires. Overall, their collective efforts helped to empower me in my recovery. One other helpful experience that I still use today is that I am careful not to force myself to do something that I may not be ready to do. I instead, allow myself to pursue my goals and interests at my own pace. This skill was demonstrated to me through example by the TSI staff.

The other piece that makes my experience unique is that I now have the opportunity to help staff further improve upon their skills in working with people. The Quality Department evaluates services in various ways. Surveys, as well as chart and program reviews, are means through which services can be measured. The results of these quality tools provide our department with information about how well staff is working with people. This information is passed onto the staff in the form of objective feedback that is meant to be used by staff to look at areas in which they might improve. I find my work rewarding because I know that the end result of a survey or a chart review is going to benefit both the staff and the individuals with whom they work.



## Recovery: A Personal Journey

**M**alcolm Wright is an individual who overcame the obstacles presented by racism to achieve great success in his life. He was also able to use his knowledge of overcoming obstacles when he first started experiencing symptoms of schizophrenia. Malcolm was born and raised in Ohio. His father owned his own business and taught him that education was the key to reaching goals in life. Malcolm took the advice and received a degree in architecture from Akron University. He then moved to Georgia, where he began his career, working his way to one of the bigger firms in Atlanta. "Architecture is a business for the rich," Malcolm reflects. He felt that he did not receive some of the more prestigious jobs at the firm due to the old boys' network, which did not include Malcolm due to the color of his skin. He overcame this obstacle by, as he puts it, "outworking them." During that time, he



began to experience symptoms of his illness. He said he did not understand, at the time, what was happening to him and struggled to make sense of it for some years. He was 28 years old when he was finally diagnosed with schizophrenia. He tried to use the strategy that helped him to overcome obstacles in the past, but "outworking" was not an effective way to learn to live with the illness that was now part of his life. Malcolm was not able to continue working successfully as an architect.

He went home to try to recover. It took him about 10 years to learn to deal with the illness. "I learned that taking my medications and going to therapy were the keys to managing my illness," Malcolm recalls. "Once I learned that I was able to pursue another degree in construction management, I looked for a part-time job. I was offered a job that paid a great deal of money to combine my experience as an architect and my degree in construction management. So I took the job." The success continued. "I was then offered a job as a teacher at Akron University."

The journey for Malcolm was not without its difficulties. "Other challenges were now thrown in my way by my family. A family that was once supportive to me throughout my life now started to be very competitive and not as understanding. The challenges were such that I felt I had to leave the state of Ohio and move to Pittsburgh. I had to start my life all over again."

TSI is now part of Malcolm's recovery journey. "With the help of staff, I have been able to rebuild my life again. I've started up an internet business that is a research and design firm. I feel that it has been very successful. I feel that working for myself is the best way to go. I really feel that I'm getting my life back on track. I know that I've accomplished some of the goals in my working environment. I am now focusing on my health where I'm learning to live with my diabetes."

Malcolm was willing to tell his story because he hoped it would help others who are learning to live with mental illness and recover. His advice is direct: "The key to my success has been consistency and perseverance. The message I would give to others is never to give up."

## TSI...

### Selected for Participation in State Workgroup

Pennsylvania is one of five states recently awarded a grant from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to establish Peer Support Specialist as a Medicaid payable service. The Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) convened a select workgroup of state agencies, providers, advocates and service users to create a formal description of Peer Support Specialist. Transitional Services, Inc was one of only six providers in the state selected to participate in the workgroup. The completed description will be used in the State Plan amendment that will be sent to CMS for approval after the first of the year. Initially there will be 20 Peer Specialists trained in various regions of the state with plans to expand the program after the 3-year grant is completed.

### Presented at PARF Residential Division Meeting

President of PARE, Eugene Bianco invited staff from TSI and Precision Care Software to present information about the Precision Care software system at a recent PARF Residential Division meeting in Harrisburg. Difficulties around efficient clinical record keeping, management of human resources, training and donor information, accurate billing, and generating reports are problems shared by many providers, who were eager to hear about possible solutions. Precision Care is a software company based in New Paltz, NY that specializes in user-friendly and customizable web-based data systems for human services providers. TSI has used the Precision Care software system over the past year with great results. Transitional Services was the first provider in Pennsylvania to use Precision Care.

## Health Talk Begins

For over six years, the Healthy Living Project (HLP) has provided individuals with cognitive disabilities at TSI important health information. The committee has educated people about good nutrition, safe community practices, exercise, diabetes, assertiveness and many other health related topics. To address different learning challenges, the committee has employed many methods to teach the needed information such as games, written materials, picture-formatted information and even social events with health-related themes.

The HLP's next project is a Health Talk Series. The Health Care Quality Unit (HCQU) has partnered with the HLP to hold four monthly presentations starting in January 2006 and going through April 2006. Tammy Tremba, RN of the HCQU will be leading the discussions on four selected issues: Nutrition and Diabetes, Community Safety, Personal and Oral Hygiene and In-Home Safety. Community and in-home safety are particularly important topics to TSI's service users. Quality statistics from 2004-2005 report that 98% of people participating in TSI's Mental Retardation support programs live in the community safely without incidents involving police or that compromise safety.

Tammy told us, "I'm excited to be working with TSI. It's nice how the Healthy Living Project is so active in teaching the consumers. I think they'll really enjoy the talks." The series is open to all participants of Transitional Services' MR programs and will be held every second Thursday of the month in the afternoon.

## Shall We Dance?



**DO YOU WANT TO IMPROVE** your physical strength, flexibility and stamina? Are you looking for a new opportunity for leisure activity? Maybe you'd like to increase your comfort level and self-esteem by interacting in a social setting. Participants in the Expressive Movement Group run by Mary Miller of the Mary Miller Dance Company are doing all of this and more.

Participants are led in warm-up exercises that focus on stretching and breathing to prevent muscle injury. Then, according to Jennifer Mullins, Community Supports Supervisor at Transitional Services, Inc., "Mary talks with each person to gauge their personal comfort and physical capability levels. She leads the group in a series of movements—many of which are improvisational in nature." Group members use their arms and legs in the fullest range of motion they are able. If they need to take a break, Jennifer says, "Mary encourages them to pick up an instrument and play along while they rest."

Gretchen Oliverio, CSS II at TSI, has accompanied five group members since this opportunity began this past summer. When asked to comment about the group, Gretchen said, "It encourages cooperation among the participants during partner activities. It helps participants to improve their overall health and well being." One participant stated that she had a decrease in her pain from arthritis the next day after attending the session. A few group members stated that they enjoy the social aspects of this activity.

Funded through a partnership between Transitional Services, Inc. and the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, the group runs on a six-week cycle and will continue through May 2006. Sessions are held at The Friends' Meeting House in Shadyside from 6-7 pm. Any person who receives services at TSI who is interested in learning more about the group or wants to join should call Jennifer Mullins at 412-331-5370. You can visit Mary Miller's web site at [www.marymillerdanceco.org](http://www.marymillerdanceco.org).

## Consumer Activity Committee Hosts Holiday Party

An evening of food, fun, music and dancing was enjoyed by both consumers and staff at the annual holiday party held on December 8<sup>th</sup> at the Holiday Inn Parkway East. Consumers brought with them homemade holiday cards for the troops overseas. Each card reflected the particular holiday celebrated by its creator. The Consumer Activity Committee planned and coordinated this well-attended event. The committee is looking for individuals who receive services from Transitional Services, Inc. to become members and help plan future agency-wide events. If you are interested in joining the committee, contact the Main Office at 412-461-1322 ext. 249 for more information. Transportation to and from the meetings will be provided to you.

# Above & Beyond



**Boniface Igba**  
*CSS I Bryant*  
 Showed quick action in an emergency situation



**Chuck Brendle**  
*CSS II Dohrman*  
 Customer Service



**Michelle Welsh >>**  
 Leading by Example



**JANET SIEBER AWARD: Craig Dorin** (*pictured with Janet Sieber*)  
 Coordinator of Quality Operations – Outstanding contributions to the agency's Long Range Strategic Plan & Goals



**Robert Reimensnyder**  
 Discovering what's important to our internal customers



**Ron Lankey**  
*Assistant Property Manager*  
 Teamwork and Interdepartmental Communication

Absent: **Becky Vroon**, *Casual Pool*, Exceptional Teamwork;  
**Ira Taylor**, *CSS II South Braddock*, Exceptional Customer Service



# Service Awardees



**5 Years – Chris Hartman, [Sharon Alberts], Bonita Prioleau, Ron Lankey, Lori Graham, David Treece; Absent: Tracy Clark**



**3 Years – Laurie Elliott  
Absent: Victoria Marshman,  
Trish Maglicco, Jenise Shealey,  
Kathy Doloughty**



**15 Years – Renay Trotter, [Sharon Alberts], Gerry Henry; Absent: Karen Perry**



**<< 25 Years – Janet Whitney  
with Sharon Alberts (left)**

**20 Years –  
Johnnie Smithson  
Absent:  
Barbara Utterback  
Yvette Johnson  
Nanji Formukong  
Pat Jackson**



# Public Forum Drives Services

**T**ransitional Services, Inc. held its annual Public Forum on December 6, 2005 at The Friends' Meeting House on Ellsworth Avenue in Shadyside. When the organization held its public forum in 2003, participants said they wanted recovery-oriented services. So, the focus of this year's forum was recovery. Participants learned that the implementation of both psychiatric rehabilitation and the peer support component of the Community Supports Program at TSI are benchmarks of our transformation to supporting a recovery-oriented environment at TSI. After dinner, the participants at the forum broke out into small groups to give vital feedback concerning respect and empowerment, key elements of recovery. This feedback will further shape and reshape services at TSI.



*A big thanks to Citizens Bank for their donation  
for the Consumer Activities Committee!*



*TSI participated in the Homestead  
Christmas parade on December 3, 2005.  
The sleigh was created by TSI's  
Property Management Department.*



***Transitional Services, Inc.***

806 West Street  
Homestead, PA 15120-1566  
412-461-1322  
412-461-1250 fax  
[www.transitionalservices.org](http://www.transitionalservices.org)



Transitional Services, Inc. has been accredited by  
CARF for the following programs:

- *Community Housing: Psychosocial Rehabilitation (Adults)*
- *Community Services: Community Living Services*