



New Clubhouse Development:

International Clubhouse Community Growth and Innovations

«Our Journey for Quality»

Morten O. Flaten & Helene Molvig, Fontenehuset Rygge, Norway

This is our story, which we have called: The journey for quality. We have gone from not even existing as a Clubhouse, to becoming Accredited - in 2 ½ year. How could this happen?

When a Clubhouse is born, it`s comparable to a newborn kitten. The first focus is: Where do I come from? And then the kitten notices its siblings by its side. After a while, the kitten opens its eyes and steps into a larger community.

When we were asked to do a plenary, we sat down to discuss: what are the key factors for our success? After a while, we realized, that there are many factors, but *the* key-factor is you – the audience! It has always been important that we have had a constructive audience - asking good questions, giving advices, clapping their hands and being supportive – together we are a winning team.

We see our journey as a boat voyage, and all the persons we`ve met along the way, their support and critic, helped us to navigate as we moved forward.

We got our seed for funding in 2016 and immediately began to search for a house that would convey dignity and respect. We wanted to show quality as soon as possible, in respect of our members as well as the larger society.

The politicians and the board of directors focused on quality, mission, capacity, measurement and effectiveness.

The director and the staff were hired. We needed the right people in the boat. The staff was recruited through group interviews, and then put at the right seats. Wrong people were told how to swim before they left. The search for members began.

Our coalition in Norway has created a kind of template for successful Clubhouse start-ups, and helped us even before we opened the doors. The coalition is our safe haven – and we thank them all for reaching out to us.

From day one, we focused on knowing our history and developing for the future. The core values of the movement: relationships, volunteerism, and equality - are not on the walls at our Clubhouse -- but they are part of everything that we do.

We understand the Clubhouse model both as a place and a program, and in order to reach quality in both, we need to work on both at the same time. When we opened, the house was totally empty. All the members took part in developing and deciding the number of units, decorations and how to schedule our day. This creates ownership.

Good practice requires training, and we went to London and St. Louis. At our first training Robby Vorspan said «accreditation is your friend!» This had a huge impact on our next steps. Our main goal in the action plan was to get Accreditation – and that kept us on track. Thank you – as a key person for our journey.

The Standards were discussed daily and weekly, and our Norwegian mentor house was very supportive. We thank them for inviting and sharing their knowledge and competence.

A good communication with Clubhouse International has been important, as well as attending leadership training in Amsterdam and the executive fellowship leadership in New York. Thanks to you all for giving us the sense of being part of something bigger.

The work-ordered day is literally the foundation of your Clubhouse, and future projects will break down if your work-ordered day is weak. Therefore, we focused on creating a strong one.

During our journey, we have realized that communication is the key to success – and keeping our boat afloat. Some in our audience told us to be active listeners, and immediately we understood why we are born with one mouth and two ears. We need to listen more than we talk! It's about how other people see us. Are our mission and values visible through our behavior, our brand, our magazine, and on the social media platforms? Thank you for all the needed feedback that clarified our communication.

We always try to communicate with lots of humor: it lowers your blood pressure and raises your self-efficacy. Humor makes everything easier, even when we're struggling. We love the saying: «Shared sorrow is divided into two, but shared joy is twice as fun.»

When we make mistakes, we share the sorrow and responsibility and manage together. We have realized that if we are doing something wrong, it's a good idea to stop doing it. Early on we had some meetings where only staff were present, but doing something alone is a wasted opportunity for relationships, so we stopped doing that. Doing something wrong really made us stronger and more knowledgeable.

Our focus on quality by striving for Accreditation has given some amazing outcomes. Fontenehuset Rygge has been open for 3 ½ years – and we were Accredited in almost one year. We have a staff of five persons, 130 members - 30% of whom are below 30 years. We have two units. We have both an employment and a study consultant, 3 Transitional Employment jobs, a lot of partners, an innovation project, and we are an accountable organization in our local community. Thanks to our dedicated staff and brave members.

We have a great partnership with NAV - the welfare service in Norway. Together we are giving the local Rygge inhabitants several recovery options. NAV is also a great partner when it comes to larger discussions about supporting the well-being for many members. Staff from NAV and members are facilitating lessons together at the Clubhouse, and young members are invited to help NAV to design new services for young adults. This is amazing – we are fellows in creating the services we all need. Thank you, NAV, for being our partners as well as attending this conference.

Being aware that «Accreditation is our friend» has given us many friends in our community. On the World Mental Health Day in October, we are arranging a movie night in our garden. Due to that, some young members went out a week ago to ask for donations of supplies, and came back with five big shopping trollies filled to the top. People want to give, because they care.

Two years ago, our Clubhouse had a Halloween party for the neighboring kids. This event helped to reduce stigma. When having a party, we are tied together with fun and joy. We thank our neighbors for caring, and for coming.

We have a partnership with the correctional services. People in the correctional facility can now come voluntarily to our Clubhouse, and start their journey for increased well-being.

We work closely with the hospitals and the ACT-team. They recommend people to come to the Clubhouse before being discharged from the hospital – then we can take care of the «missing link» and fewer people will slip between the cracks.

During the Executive Leadership Fellowship, our journey went to Fountain House New York. They have given us the opportunity to exchange knowledge, learning and competence utilizing WebEx. We thank them for their support, which is of great value for our latest innovation concerning young adults.

The school dropout percentage in our county has for decades been around 30%. Our young members say the drop out is due to mental issues. We wanted to be part of the solution for this community problem. At our policy meeting we made a decision to enter into a great partnership - with the local Soroptimist club. This is an international non-

profit organization working for the empowerment of girls and women (but they like men too) and they love the Clubhouse model. In this project, we are partners in integrated community care.

After a while we named the project #SMS. #SMS is an acronym for studies with support (just flip the M upside down and it makes sense even though it's Norwegian). The other meaning is that we need to reach out to young members on new platforms like SMS, because the future is based on technology. Young members are doing an amazing job reducing stigma and reaching out to others by telling their stories of hope for school classes. The result of our collaboration with the high schools is a powerful and effective agreement: «A dropout day from school can be an active day at the Clubhouse» and being at the Clubhouse doesn't count as absence from school. The whole Clubhouse is included in the project, which eventually and gradually is implemented in the daily practice.

The county and the municipalities believe in us. Together we are filling in the gaps, rather than minding them. They see both the quality from our Accreditation - and the quantity. Because of the numbers of young adults who are going back to school, we are getting grants to operate the project even further. Thanks to all participants for making our internal and external community flourish.

I stand here humbly. There are so many people and organizations that have made our journey possible. Thank you all, but most of all thank you Morten and all the other members for supporting me to be the best version I can be. Without you by **my** side, on this journey, I think we still would have been at the pier.

Our journey for quality is a never-ending story. The journey is one-step forward and two steps back, and it is so meaningful. Every journey is different and it should be. Focusing on the few words «accreditation is your friend» - helped us to enhance and brave our wilderness together with you all. During our journey we kept some key components and glued them together and utilized time to reflect **in** action, **on** action and then **for** action.

One member I met at training in London gave me a really good advice, and we'll give him some credit. Utilizing his words made quality possible, and summarizes our journey. When I asked, «What is needed to become a great director?» He replied: «Walk with your Clubhouse and community, and listen with your eyes!»

I knew about our Clubhouse through my nephew at Fontenehuset Oslo Øst, from the very same day our house was founded.

Ten years ago, I realized I could not work anymore, due to my progressive condition. This sent me into eight years of severe depression that ended with a divorce and eight months of excessive drinking. When I decided to do something with my life, I realized I was living in a town where I knew virtually no one. I would not be able to sober up without creating new relations. Therefore, I remembered my nephew's recommendation 18 months earlier and visited our Clubhouse. In 2 ½ years I've gone from being an angry, disillusioned and lonely man to being almost the same person I was 12-15 years ago; full of self-esteem, serenity and able to see the world around me. Hell, I even got a new BFF and a new girlfriend!

Our values and the international Standards are close to religion to me. The Clubhouse makes it possible for me to do what I feel is important, at my own pace, and my goal is without exception this: Whatever I am doing, it should benefit both our Clubhouse and me. This is something I try to convey to the other members. My personal long-term goal is to enter the Clubhouse International Accreditation Faculty. Some people want to work making lunch or sit in the reception; I want to do what I do now. The possibilities in a well-functioning Clubhouse-environment should be close to endless.

A Clubhouse needs to remember they are a part of the community. We strive to be a supplement for services already in place. We also find it important to create an environment where we work side by side with other services in our community. As an example, this fall I will hold my 3rd course in life-strengthening theories and practices. This is something I do side by side with an employee at NAV Rygge. This very fruitful collaboration has brought many ideas to the table. And I, as a member, am sitting at that table!