

When Heroes Rise

The Carriage House is unique. Since 1997 we have been providing the very best rehabilitation for women and men with the most serious mental illnesses – things like schizophrenia and major depression. We use the internationally replicated and evidence-based “Clubhouse Model.” Our work centers around our beautiful building on Lake Avenue.



Together, at the Carriage House, we work. Side-by-side. We meet together, and eat together, and work together. We help people go back to work and school, we help people move into better places and deal with poverty. We provide meaning, purpose, community, and above all, hope.

Then came the corona virus.

We were immediately challenged. One of the hardest parts of managing a serious mental illness is isolation. Even in the best of times, when people start to feel the symptoms of their illness, they stay at home. Isolation can be pretty dangerous, and can have some terrible consequences for folks with serious mental illness. And this far from the best of times.

So, what do we do? We build virtual community. We create ‘outreach families’ and ask that every member of each family keep tabs on each other. We give away cell phones to those who don’t have one and have conference calls twice a day – 7 days a week. We do Zoom meetings, make videos, deliver lunches and care packages, help people with food insecurity, and call everyone. Every day.

And on Easter Sunday, we delivered 200 Easter baskets and fresh flowers all over northeast Indiana. It was one of our best Easters.

Over the years, we have helped other Clubhouse programs get started. There are now 9 Accredited Clubhouses serving more than 1,000 active members throughout the state. The only renewable funding for these programs relies on people actually attending the Clubhouse. So this time poses existential threats for both the members of the Clubhouse and for the Clubhouses themselves.

Fortunately, we will live in a remarkable time. A time when heroes rise. Despite the gravest challenge of a generation – or perhaps because of it – we see the very best in people. The AWS Foundation, The Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne, The Elkhart Community Foundation, The St. Joseph County Community Foundation, the State of Indiana, and hundreds of individuals and businesses came to help. And, like the heroes they are, have marched in, filled the breach, and saved the day.

With the help of the Fort Wayne community, the Carriage House family has learned that physical distance is no barrier to community – and viruses are no match for love.