

## **Charter House Provides Beacon of Hope for Those Recovering from Mental Illness**

**Submitted by Jerri Nicole Wright**

Some Michigan legislators have proposed plans to swiftly legislate big changes to the Public Behavioral Health System, completely ignoring past outcry and recommendations for maintaining and improving the public system. I implore all legislators and Governor Whitmer to pause and take time to hear from those who stand to be most impacted by this proposed legislation.

I share my story in hopes all can understand what it means for those individuals and families that rely on the programs and services provided by Michigan's current Public System:

I had been released from the psychiatric hospital but I still wasn't well. My symptoms of mental illness were so prevalent that I wasn't ready to part of the community. At that time in my life I stayed in my apartment with my boyfriend, Tom. I was homebound, isolated, and lonely. I kept my therapy appointments, my psychiatrist appointments, and my medical appointments. I would do those things with Tom's help and was almost totally dependent on him. I desperately needed a place in the community.

Charter House Clubhouse was an answer to my painful isolation, boredom, and loneliness. It is a welcoming place where people diagnosed with mental illness can come and find meaning and purpose in their life again. It is considered a psycho-social rehabilitation program and Community Mental Health Authority of Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham Counties is our parent agency.

Charter House gave me a reason to get up in the morning. At the Clubhouse we have what is called our Work Ordered Day. Members sign up for tasks for the operation of our program. Dedicated staff work with us side by side to teach us how to do our jobs. We work together as well as play through planning social activities together.

It was hard after years of seclusion, but I couldn't have found recovery in isolation. It was through clubhouse relationships and connection where I experienced the grace of transformation. Eventually my peers became my friends and in fact, now they along with staff are like family.

The first in Michigan, Charter House was founded in April, 1978. There are now 47 Clubhouses in Michigan and over 350 in 34 countries. Charter House is accredited through the International Center for Clubhouse Development.

Why do Clubhouses work? It's been proven through Evidence Base Practice that Certified Clubhouses aid in recovery from mental illness. Outcomes include less days in the hospital, fewer hospitalizations, fewer arrests, and a higher degree of satisfaction with their lives.

They work because we start from where we are at accepting and embracing the humanity in each member. Clubhouse gives us the dignity we have been denied and the opportunity to take back, reclaim, and with grace, redeem their lives. We are restored to a state of wellness despite having a mental illness.

Charter House is a strong beacon of hope for the Greater Lansing Community. If you want to know more about Charter House visit: [www.charterhousemi.org](http://www.charterhousemi.org) or to learn more about CMHA-CEI at [www.ceicmh.org](http://www.ceicmh.org).

Please support and strengthen the system without making these big changes, there are many the good things about the current system and a lot of people rely on it.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today,

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