

**November 1, 2017**

**OFFICERS**

- MaryAlice Houghton M.D.**  
*President*
- M. Kathleen Eilers**  
*First Vice President*
- John Griffith**  
*Second Vice President*
- Sara Paull CPA**  
*Treasurer*
- Lois O'Keefe**  
*Secretary*
- Rachel Forman Ph.D.**  
*Assistant Secretary,  
Executive Director*

**BOARD MEMBERS**

- Mary Kay Braza**
- Paul Brodwin Ph.D.**
- Lee Carroll**
- Shoshana Elias**
- C. Frederick Geifuss II**
- Dennis Hanson**
- Mark Jensen**
- Rickey McCaskill**
- Lynne Oehlke**
- Arnold Peltz**
- Heather Ramirez**
- Frederic T. Robinson**
- Mark Rose**
- Anne Witczak**

Dear GAC Friend,

The scariest time in my life was when I was 14 years old and a high school freshman. Voices in my brain were telling me things, tormenting me. Then I had a complete breakdown and I was hospitalized at Sinai Samaritan Hospital. There were even more scary times throughout high school, but I managed to graduate. I then enrolled at UW-Oshkosh to study engineering; a week after I got there my mind shut down and I couldn't do the work. At the end of the semester, I went home.



I held a variety of jobs—at Taco Bell, BSI Office Interiors, National Utilities/Napa Distribution Center. And then another breakdown. And another. Eventually I would endure 12 hospitalizations and much pain.

Someone suggested that I go to Grand Avenue Club (GAC). I did the tour, but was not entirely comfortable and did not join. I endured yet another hospitalization. And then, in February 2008, I tried GAC again. I joined the Colleague and Community Services Unit. There I kept GAC's attendance records and worked closely with the Business Manager.

Just 4 months later I was recruited for a job in GAC's Paid Employment Program. During the summer of 2008 I worked at the United Way Group Placement. Bolstered by a satisfying employment experience and with the support of the GAC community—staff and members—I went on to do several Transitional Employment positions: a custodial position at Children & Family Community Partnership (CFCP); a Kit Packer position at Derco Aerospace; and an In-House Messenger/Clerk position at Foley & Lardner. The CFCP job was a short commute from GAC and the job at Foley is walking distance from the Clubhouse, but Derco Aerospace was a full two hour commute in each direction from my home in St. Francis. I am proud that I never missed a day of work! I was there even during severe snow storms.

Then I was offered a custodial TE at the U.S. Federal Court House, which eventually became an Independent Employment position for me. I worked at the Court House from 2011 through 2015 but gave it up because it became much too physically demanding. I then did a food service TE at Renaissance Child Day Care Center.

210 E. Michigan Street - Milwaukee , WI 53202-4901 - tel (414) 276-6474 - fax (414) 276-1606 - [www.grandavenueclub.org](http://www.grandavenueclub.org)



2016  
Health Care Hero  
Award



2013 Field  
Agency of the  
Year



2012 Distinctive  
Innovation in  
Social Services



All this time, from 2008 through 2017, I had the benefit of GAC's placement managers for TE, the work support groups at GAC and, frankly, the appreciative vibes from my GAC colleagues. Because I had a strong preference for a clerical position, I also did check reconciliation in the Education/Employment Unit. I really wanted to go back to work.

I could not have been more pleased when I was offered a brand new TE as an Office Clerk at the Clinical Trials Office of the Medical College of Wisconsin Cancer Care Center (MCW). I work from 9 am to 1 p.m. on Monday through Friday. My tasks vary: I take apart specimen kits for reuse, archive files, help with the symposia that the office organizes, do the daily mail run, and tidy up the conference room. MCW is a very nice place to work and my co-workers are appreciative of my efforts.

Now, at 43 I think of my life as having two distinct phases: "Before GAC" and "After GAC." Before I joined GAC I was on my own out in the world and I was drifting. Since I joined GAC I have had the support I've needed to succeed. I'm confident that GAC will always support my goals, see me through my ups and downs, and never insist that I have to be perfect.

November 2017 finds me both working at MCW and going to GAC regularly. There I find familiar faces and lots to do. I'm very close to my family, but GAC is my primary support for the things I want to do with my life. I can count on my Clubhouse colleagues for stability and continuity. I can't imagine not having GAC in my life.

**And I want to tell you—with a great sense of pride and relief—that I have not been hospitalized since I joined GAC in February 2008!**

When I was approached about sharing my story with you for the purpose of enlisting strong support for GAC, I was glad to do it. I want GAC to be available to all Milwaukeeans who can benefit from it as much as I have.

Please contribute generously to GAC's Winter Appeal. My fervent wish is that GAC will always be a lifeline for Milwaukeeans who have experienced mental illness.

We look forward to hearing from you, and I look forward to personally thanking you for your support.

Sincerely,



Breck Ticknor

Proud Member, Education/Employment Unit, Grand Avenue Club

