

Changing Lives

Meredith O'Brien & Associates, LLC teams with Shore House



(l to r) Meredith O'Brien, LCSW (founder), Carianne D'Oriano, LPC, Tatiana Grant, LPC, NCC, Barbara Tatum, LPC, Jessica Lupon, LPC, John Muldoon, PHD, LPC

The first week in October is Mental Illness Awareness Week- a time when we educate the public, fight stigma and provide support for those living with a mental illness. Approximately 1 in 5 adults in the United States experiences a mental illness each year and for some it substantially interferes with or limits one or more life activities. This month Meredith O'Brien & Associates, LLC is teaming up with Shore House, a community that builds recovery through work, education and socialization. Located in Long Branch, it is a vital resource for those with mental illness.

Here is a story from one of its members:

My name is Dan Pineiro, aka Danny Rocker. For the last 30 years I have lived with bipolar disorder. I had a pretty typical childhood. I played sports and got good grades, even graduated with honors. I went off to Rutgers and that's when things started to unravel. Two months into my first semester I suffered from severe depression and started seeing a psychiatrist. I was diagnosed with clinical depression. Two months later, I experienced the first of many psychiatric hospitalizations. I was placed on medications but they made me feel worse and I stopped taking them.

The next decade was a blur of manic episodes, two suicide attempts, hospitalizations and jail. I was not taking any medication and was very unstable. I got into an argument



with a stranger over using a pay phone and I threatened people I thought were going to harm me. I crisscrossed the country, couldn't hold a job and was broke and homeless. I spent six months in Spain with family until I wore out my welcome. I returned home, still unstable and wound up in prison for making terroristic threats. I was found not guilty by reason of insanity. I was monitored by a judge and transferred to Trenton Psychiatric Hospital. I spent two and a half years there and was monitored every six months. I realized it was important to take my medication, even if the side effects made me tired and gain weight.

I was now stable, but sleeping almost 15 hours a day. My peer support specialist recommended Shore House as a way for me to connect back to my community. I started in April of 2015 and have been a member ever since. Shore House isn't your typical day program. They believe work is restorative and peer support is the best form of rehabilitation. The members run the house. For the first time in my adult life I felt needed, wanted and someone was expecting me to be there. I have made many friends who I see outside of Shore House. I am participating in the Transitional Employment Program and have a job working at Supplies Masters Inc. in Long Branch. I work part time from 10-2pm and go to Shore House when I am finished for the day.

The most important thing to know about those living with a mental illness is that mental health consumers who are medication compliant, go to therapy and most importantly have a support system such as Shore House can be functional members of the community and should be treated just like everyone else.



Please reach out to Shore House for more information at 732-759-1595 x140 or visit www.shoreclubhouse.org.

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