

[CLIENT PROFILE]

HERVY KENNEDY, JR.

results
success
inspiration

It's been said that attitude is everything. If there's a single human being who proves that adage true, you just might find him each weekday morning in an easily overlooked building located near Grand River and Livernois in Detroit. Like clockwork, he arrives at 8 o'clock sharp, ready to welcome the day with a warm smile and encouraging word. He's an ambassador for Goodwill.

And he's a member of A Place of Our Own Clubhouse, a critical resource for adults managing mental illness in our community.

By his own admission, Hervy Kennedy, Jr. loves to shop. Whether he's searching for clothes and hats at a neighborhood boutique, or hunting down fresh produce at the city's famed Eastern Market, it seems Hervy has a taste for the finer things in life. But talk to him for just a few minutes and you'll see that in his eyes this place, the Clubhouse, holds more treasure than all the world's retail palaces combined.

"I love being here!" Hervy announces. "For eight years, this place has been my favorite spot in town. I belong here. I'm a leader here. I need the Clubhouse and the Clubhouse needs me."

Goodwill's A Place of Our Own Clubhouse is a psychosocial rehabilitation program. It does not offer medical therapy. Instead, members come here to focus on things beyond their illness, like talents, strengths, abilities and interests. The Clubhouse is not just a social spot, though building relationships is a key goal of the program.

The Clubhouse is open to adults who have a current diagnosis of chronic or severe mental illness and who do not pose a threat to the community. No program fees are paid by members. Goodwill's Clubhouse is one of only a few operating in Wayne County and it is a lifeline for people like Hervy who would otherwise risk being isolated, discouraged and forgotten.

Hervy's struggles with mental illness began over 30 years ago. Now 57, he has faced mental illness for more than half of his life. His condition began with an episode of severe depression after a family member passed away. Over the years, Hervy has lost his mother, aunt and sister. Each passing has been traumatic.

Decades ago, when he was uncertain how to cope with the symptoms and unaware that he was, in fact, facing a true illness, Hervy began abusing drugs. It was a pattern that lasted until he finally overcame his addiction on November 11, 2006. Hervy says the Clubhouse played a pivotal role in helping him become drug free.

"What I find here is love and purpose," he shares. "Before the Clubhouse, I was ashamed of my diagnosis. Now, I understand that mental illness is what I have but it's not who I am. The Clubhouse gives me a chance to be more than my disease."



Summer Berman, program manager, checks in with Hervy to review schedules and front desk procedures at the Clubhouse.



STORY CONTINUES ON REVERSE

Goodwill began operating A Place of Our Own just over 10 years ago with support from the Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency. Today, the program has 80 active members and on average welcomes 40 people through its doors daily. Hervy is the first face they see. He explains, "I'm the receptionist and I watch the front door to make sure people are where they belong. We keep a safe environment so everyone can feel secure."



Friends from the Clubhouse participate in a mental health advocacy event on the front lawn of the Michigan State Capitol in Lansing.



Hervy says he found true love at the bus stop on his way to the Clubhouse just over a year ago. From time to time, his girlfriend, Mary, stops in for a visit and to catch up on the latest happenings at the Clubhouse.

Far more than a friendly gathering spot, the Clubhouse is perfectly aligned with Goodwill's mission because one of its core principles is the value of work. Work and similar responsibilities help define people and help us all become who we want to be. Generally, when you meet someone new you always ask, "What do you do for a living?" Imagine not having an answer. How would you handle that? That's the unfortunate experience of many adults with mental illness. The Clubhouse gives people a sense of identity and purpose through a work-ordered day, relationships and recreation.

The organization and operation of the Clubhouse are shared by staff and members, side-by-side. The work-ordered day parallels typical business hours and is the core of the program. During the work-ordered day, members voluntarily participate in meaningful work, which is divided into four areas covering business and clerical, food and social, membership and opportunities and education. Group outings for social and recreation activities take place in the evenings or on weekends.

The Clubhouse is a place where individuals with mental illness are wanted and needed. Goodwill helps these adults strive for, and achieve, their full potential. Thanks to the Clubhouse, Hervy is doing exactly that.

He recently entered a Wayne County program for supported education that is helping him learn how to study, take tests and access resources on campus so he can continue his education. His ultimate goal is to attend the culinary arts program at Schoolcraft College and become a chef.

Hervy says, "If I didn't have the support of Goodwill and my connection to the Clubhouse, I would probably be dead, in prison, homeless or some other place that's not good. Instead, I'm setting goals and spreading a positive attitude everywhere I go. I enjoy that. It reminds me that my life is important... that I am important and that I have value."