The “Field of Dreams” Approach:

A Lesson in Staff-Client Project Collaboration

Co-Created and Co-Presented by staff and clients of the Trillium Supportive Housing Etobicoke York (SHEY) program
ABOUT THIS PRESENTATION

This presentation is just the latest collaborative opportunity for staff and clients involved in the Trillium SHEY Program’s Recovery Based Initiative.

Please be aware that the slides, photos and text of this presentation are the result of staff and clients working together.

Thank you for your interest in the journey we will share with you today.
I believe that these groups are very instrumental to people’s recovery and to creating a positive attitude for themselves.

-Jennifer
Some Background-
The Introduction of Ongoing Groups to the Trillium SHEY approach

- Trillium SHEY provides mental health case management to clients living in supportive housing.
- In 2007, in order to address the interest of many clients in dealing with addictions, SHEY partnered with West Toronto ACTT to provide a stages of change, motivational concurrent disorder group.
- This group was designed to provide quick and easy access to ACTT, SHEY and other Trillium community mental health clients hoping to strengthen their change readiness.
Initial Concerns

- Regular ongoing attendance was initially problematic at times for SHEY clients. Some expressed reluctance to re-involve themselves with what seemed to be formal, hospital-based approaches to problems they experienced most significantly in their daily lives.

- Feelings of isolation and hopelessness were felt to be unaddressed.

- In 2008, a new change-readiness, motivation and peer support approach was discussed and planned with several clients.
Adjustments Made

Two changes were made:

1) meetings were based in the community

2) clients were involved in co-facilitating, leading and preparing sessions.

The name for this group, provided by a client and chosen by the group, is TWANA, which stands for Together We are Not Alone.
The Basics

- Quick and simple access to groups for registered Trillium clients

- No mandatory attendance

- Clients who choose to can contribute to administration or running of groups

- Staff help coordinate access to rooms, equipment etc. but otherwise do not necessarily lead groups on their own
Other Groups/Projects:

Along with these initial efforts to provide new opportunities for growth and change other projects and ideas came into being.
The Fundamentals Art Group

The Fundamentals Art Group was started in 2008 to offer clients a forum for their artistic interests. Following the same principle of client involvement and co-planning, this group also helped initiate two annual Coffeehouse events where clients showcased their talents.

A collaborative project made by members of The Fundamentals Art Group
The Garden Group

- For clients with an interest in gardening, a monthly outing to local gardens was initiated in 2008. This has led to other events as well, including trips to Canada Blooms.
New Connections

- Arising from discussions in the TWANA weekly support group New Connections is a computer literacy and training group that takes place on-site at Trillium West Toronto.

- The group was spearheaded by clients who sought more access to and learning about computers. One client in particular has been able to offer his professional training and soon-discovered teaching skills to help his peers with this project.
Purpose and Perspective

- The groups are opportunities to work creatively with clients on creating community. The group topics rely on everyone’s interests and skills, from beginner to experienced.
- The project work done by case managers and clients can be carried over beyond the context of a group.
- Outcomes include new friendships, new confidence and new options and activities.
- One client shared how having the group to look forward to each week and a project to plan helped them reduce the time they spent on unhealthy activities and habits. This client had not been able to get out regularly in years and has spent the last month attending a group weekly.
Client Feedback

- Clients report improvements in such areas as:

Confidence
Social Support
Sense of Purpose
SELF-DETERMINATION PRINCIPLES
AT WORK IN GROUPS

- ALL GROUPS ARE OPEN-ENDED

- CLIENTS CHOOSE WHEN AND
  HOW OFTEN TO ATTEND

- CLIENTS CONTRIBUTE/SELECT
  TOPICS

- LEVEL OF
  INVOLVEMENT/PARTICIPATION
  DETERMINED BY CLIENT
Interest-Action-Community

Knowing what external resources are available to people feeling isolated is important, but tapping into their inner resources, their true interests and preferences, helps create a connection that will carry the individual from Interest to Action to Community.
Change and Growth are Always Within Reach

- Together we can stretch the horizon of learning and recovery.
- Sometimes the untapped resources are within (inner); sometimes they are without (external).

**Inner Resources:**
- leadership, mentoring, creativity, curiosity

**External Resources:**
- available space (the room used for the New Connections group was under-utilized, as were the computers and many of the programs installed on them); available participants (clients from any Trillium program have been welcomed and attend groups); available community partners (local artists have volunteered time to teach groups or participate in Coffeehouse, donating artwork as well).
## Parallel Growth:

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<th>Client</th>
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<td><strong>Allowing/entertaining ‘change’:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Sharing skills and interests (non-clinical)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sharing skills and interests (non-illness)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Having an attitude of give it a try</strong></td>
<td><strong>Having an attitude of give it a try</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Achieving new results</strong></td>
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THE RESULTS

Current Groups Initiated by SHEY Clients and Staff


Client Contributions: Co-facilitating groups, Summaries, Newsletter, Print and Graphic Materials, Relaxation Exercises, Picking Topics (including locations for Garden Group), Research, Community Outreach to generate interest.

“It’s an amazing class. Especially first time I see the motherboard and it’s components, and how all the hardware works.”

-a New Connections participant
**Interest Indicator**

**SHEY CLIENT GROUP ATTENDANCE (2009-2011)**

- **Have Ever Attended Group (26 out of 38):** 68%
- **Regularly Attend Group (15 out of 38):** 39%
- **Occasionally Attend (11 out of 38):** 28%
Currently there are six clients regularly running or helping facilitate groups (or 16% of client base experiencing leadership roles)
Opening up our program ...
to people’s SKILLS, CURIOSITY and INTERESTS...
creates a new aspect of...
Sharing our experiences can be incredibly beneficial to our peers. Sometimes it can seem you are the only one struggling while someone else in our community may have experience in dealing with the same issue.

-Sarah
After I started the group, I never felt so happy. I’ve found something that really interests me and there’s no stopping me now.

-Debra
In my real story, Mental Illness led me to complete Isolation over a period of years and I found myself giving up at various times. Attending Computer Group, Media Group, TWANA Group has been the foundation of rediscovering my strengths.

-Jatinder
I feel empowered.

-Masih
As I walk with hope
my journey will be
my own special life my
own special glory.

-Rita
New PARTNERSHIPS

- Foremost, the clients and staff of SHEY share group responsibilities, collaborating on a regular basis.

- SHEY has reached out and worked with: Salvation Army, Among Friends, LAMP and local artists.

- Within Trillium, the clinics at M-site and West Toronto Community Mental Health provide referrals, IT and Operations assist with rooms and equipment.
Looking Ahead: OUTCOME MEASURES

- Use of a consistent method of measurement (such as the Recovery Assessment Scale) may help track changes.

- Interested clients could learn how to help collect anonymous data and help the Recovery-Based Initiatives track progress and address concerns.

- Other program planning days to be scheduled to continue client involvement.
A Field of Dreams Production

- Written, photographed and designed by SHEY staff and clients working together.

- Thanks again to everyone who participated.