

PETER'S STORY: REALIZING A DREAM



Peter describes the years before he came to Tasks as a decade of cycling between institutions, drug use, and uncontrolled mental illness. He recalls one period when he went for an entire month without shoes, having only a pair of slippers for his feet.

"I wasn't leading anything like a mainstream life. Real life was something I only saw for brief glimpses. Those people that were parts of my old life, like family and friends, had pretty much lost all hope in me—like the person they had known had gone."

Peter learned of Tasks' Training Center through a chemical dependency program. After graduating from the Training Center he moved to the Transition Lodge and participated in the Jobs Training Program. There were setbacks, but he kept working toward his goals of staying sober and getting a job. He worked with Kim, the Placement Coordinator, to revamp his resume and email. He credits the good rapport he had with his case manager, Katrina, as a major factor in his success in treatment and connecting to sober housing. After applying for a number of jobs, he landed his top choice—a position in a floral shop.

Since getting his job last September, Peter's progress has been "meteoric," as described by his current vocational coordinator. He has moved to full-time hours, gotten a raise, and is now the point person for house plants in the shop, making steady progress toward his career goal of being a design florist. In the meantime, he continues to check in with his vocational coordinator twice per month, mostly about work. For Peter, the support he receives is a key to independence: "I am drawing on support because support allows me to live as independent of a life as I can."

Peter's job has brought many positives, including new friendships with his co-workers, growing closer again with his family, and the rewarding experience of helping people



Peter wants to give back, donating plants that can't be sold for other clients.

plan the most significant events in their lives, such as weddings and funerals. Nearly every day, he is involved in some way in helping someone plan a loved one's funeral, and this

is a responsibility that Peter takes very seriously—he feels honored to be able to help in a family's most difficult time.

Being part of a business enterprise doing what he loves has brought a new perspective on life, and advice for others:

"I hadn't given up before, but it has been a refreshing change of pace and a new look into humanity from what I had seen in my darker days. You know, like one of the best things you can do for yourself is get a job. To people who just don't believe that they can, try it. Go after your dream job."



Peter has been invaluable in keeping the plants alive in the office!

Peter's advice for others:

- Stay organized.
- Shoot for dream jobs.
- Get out there and start working.
- Do what makes you happy.



BRIDGING THE BENEFITS CLIFF

Bill came to Tasks in search of employment and to improve his mental health. Due to his schizophrenia and history of alcohol abuse, Bill had never been able to maintain stable housing or employment in his adult life-time. Like 90% of new clients at Tasks, he relied on public benefits for his essential needs—he lived in a subsidized apartment and received General Assistance, Food Support, and Medical Assistance.

Bill did not realize it, but he was approaching the benefits cliff. Tasks could help with getting a job but once Bill started working, the increase in his income would mean that his rent and medical premiums would increase, food support would end, and he would have increased transportation costs. The benefits cliff refers to the point at which income from employment will cause a loss of benefits, but not enough income to make up for the loss.

The benefits cliff causes a powerful disincentive to work and is highly counterproductive to both achieving self-sufficiency and mental health recovery. As Kassia Janezich, Tasks' Director of Program Operations says:

“For most of our new clients, public benefits have been the only source of financial stability they have known. The idea of losing their benefits causes them great stress and anxiety. Many will quit working rather than risk losing that stability.”

We're excited to announce that Tasks Unlimited, through our Jobs Training Program (JTP), has been selected by Hennepin County to participate in a pilot program to develop new ways to address the benefits cliff. JTP provides paid on the job training in janitorial services integrated with supports in employment preparation, career advancement, mental health, socialization, housing, wellness, and financial management. Enhanced program

Fact: According to a study conducted by NAMI, the rate of unemployment among people receiving public mental health services is **80% nationally and even higher, **86%, in Minnesota** (NAMI.org).**

elements geared to help participants navigate the benefits cliff include:

- Individualized benefits education and navigation assistance from pre-intake through exit to inform and help trainees plan for changes in benefits.
- Career pathway programming including resume writing, interview prep, and work readiness, with ongoing one on one support.
- Direct assistance through a new Benefits Cliff Fund—transportation costs and footwear are key needs.

With support from Tasks, Bill avoided the worst impacts of the benefits cliff. Even though he was briefly hospitalized during the training period, his job was held for him and he was able to return to work. Staff advocated for him to retain health insurance. He is currently working 32 hours per week in his chosen field, enough to maintain his stability, and is seeing improvements in his mental health through working.

To learn more about Tasks' Jobs Training Program, please contact Ashia, our Admissions Counselor, at 612-767-2060 or admissions@tasksunlimited.org.

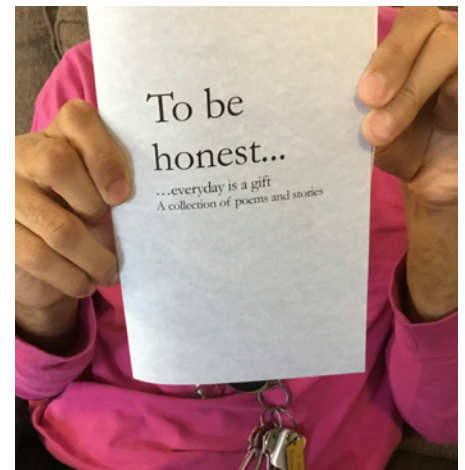
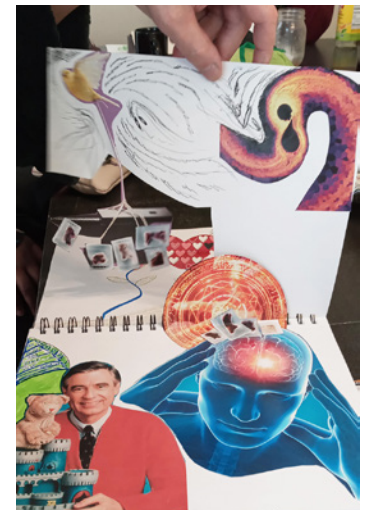
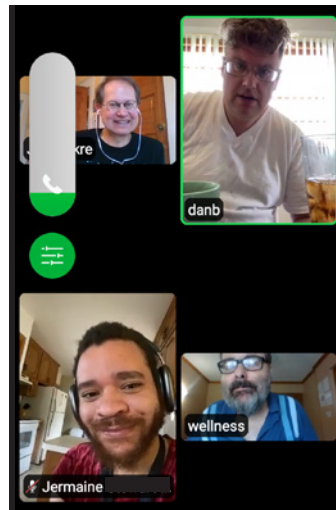
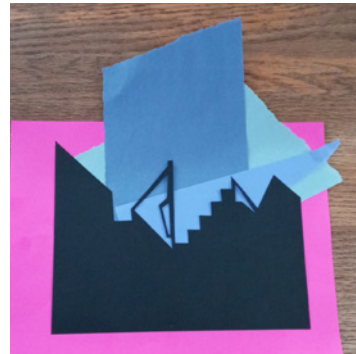
CREATING ARTS LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

This spring we are wrapping up three grants which greatly expanded arts learning activities for Tasks clients. With funding from the Minnesota State Arts Board and Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, we've worked with Teaching Artists associated with the arts organization COMPAS to offer seven 6-week residencies in a variety of art forms, including memoir writing, spoken word poetry, animation, photography, drawing, and weaving, as well as a drumming workshop and individual art kits. The pandemic necessitated adjustments: receptions were cancelled, classes moved online or were modified to hybrid formats. However, the art residencies went on, and feedback from workshop participants was overwhelmingly positive.



Here's a sampling of some of the work produced over the past 18 months. Congratulations and thanks to all the artists, teachers and participants!

The creativity will continue to flow thanks to a new grant from the MN State Arts Board. Five more residencies are planned over the next year—in photography, mosaic, drumming, poetry, and memoir.



These activities are made possible by the voters of Minnesota through grants from the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council and the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.





TRANSITION LODGE REOPENS

We're thrilled to be welcoming new residents to the Transition Lodge once again. The T-Lodge was closed temporarily for renovations but is open again and accepting new clients. This unique program for individuals who are transitioning to independence offers affordable housing in an 8 bedroom converted duplex, fast entry to employment through the Jobs Training Program, and staff and peer support with mental health and daily living skills. For information about eligibility, please call our Admissions Counselor at 612-767-2060 or email admissions@tasksunlimited.org.

Thank you to the generous supporters who provided items for welcome baskets, fresh bedding and other household items.



"At the Crisis center, we had everything done for us. I like it here because there is guidance and understanding but we are expected to do things for ourselves."

—K., new Transition Lodge resident



SCAN ME

Key needs at this time: items to help unwind and de-stress such as puzzle books, word games, art supplies. Visit our Amazon wish list (scan the code at left) for suggestions on these and other needs. Shop here: <https://amzn.to/2PPEXeF> or email Dana at development@tasksunlimited.org.



Thank you and welcome new Transition Lodge residents!

Follow us online or sign-up on our website to receive updates, information about upcoming events, and opportunities to become more involved with the work and mission of Tasks Unlimited!

Facebook: www.facebook.com/tasksunlimitedinc

Twitter: www.twitter.com/tasksunlimited

Email: info@tasksunlimited.org

Online: www.tasksunlimited.org

Guided by the Fairweather Model, Tasks Unlimited provides supported employment, housing and recovery services to create opportunities for people with mental illness so they can achieve their full potential.

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