

# Thunderbird Clubhouse helps members become independent

By Caleb Slinkard Transcript Editor | Posted: Tuesday, October 13, 2015 9:22 pm

Pia Hilderbrandt has been a member of Thunderbird Clubhouse for the past two years, working side by side with staff members in the culinary program and making progress toward becoming an independent person.

Clubhouse members have severe, persistent mental illness and come and go from the Clubhouse as they please. They work alongside staff members in the culinary and clerical units as part of the organization's goal to engage their members.

"I've met a lot of wonderful people," Hilderbrandt said, who helps prepare part of the lunch the clubhouse provides. "I'm on transitional employment, I'm working on getting a driver's license and motorcycle license. We work and talk and teach each other how to do things, and we do it because it's good to be productive and good to do something with your life, instead of laying around depressed."

Hilderbrandt said Thunderbird Clubhouse is working to stop the stigma against people with mental illness.

"We learn how to work in society after a mental illness," Hilderbrandt said. "I believe I will get better, but even if I didn't come out of my mental illness, I'd have a nice community with which to spend my time."

The United Way helps the Thunderbird Clubhouse fund their employment services and their wellness program, which includes the culinary program, Thunderbird Clubhouse Executive Director Linn Blohm said.

"We help our members gain paid employment if they wish by providing job coaching, job leads and job advocacy," she said.

United Way also provides funds for the clubhouse's individual development accounts, or IDAs.



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Thunderbird Clubhouse provides its members with a productive place to eat, learn and work as they focus on their mental health.

“Our members commit to put \$15 per month in a savings account,” Blohm said. “We match those dollars two-to-one and at the end of the year, they walk away with \$500. A lot of our members use it as an emergency fund, as they’re on fixed income.”

Funding from the United Way also subsidizes the meals the clubhouse provides, so members can eat a healthy, well-balanced lunch for \$1. The organization provides smoking cessation programs, exercise programs and healthy snacks as part of their wellness initiative.

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