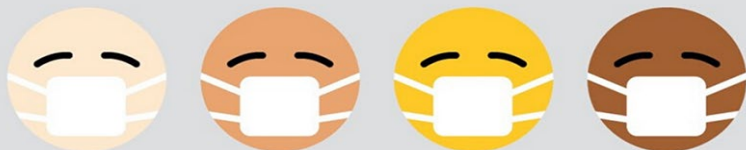


COPING WITH



COVID-19



LIFE CHAT

a publication of
The Recovery Advisory Council and
The Integrated Care Clinic



SPECIAL EDITION: THE CHALLENGES OF COVID-19

When coronavirus cases began showing up in Ohio, it wasn't long before we all were under stay-at-home orders. The isolation has been a big change for many people, including CSS clients. Here are the stories of several clients and how the quarantine has affected their daily lives and their relationships.



This is me holding my granddaughter in the hospital, 2 hours after she was born on 2/20/20. This is how I remember my life before the coronavirus. We had not started to isolate yet. This is how I want to think and the happiness I want to feel as I'm going through this pandemic. But, I'm usually lonely because we have to isolate. I haven't been with my granddaughter since she was born, but I keep 8 pictures of her, my son and daughter-in-law right beside my bed to fight off the loneliness.

— Lori Hackney

I have been a resident at Commons at Madaline Park 1 for 8 months. I used to freely go out, have guests, visit with family, but because of the coronavirus, we've been under lockdown for over 1½ months. Now, I can't have guests. It gets lonely. So, I'm finding other ways to connect with family and a few friends. I joined a weekly phone prayer line that lasts about 30 minutes. We pray for one another. We encourage one another, and ask how everyone is making it through the pandemic. Also, I've increased the amount of "thinking of you" cards I mail out.



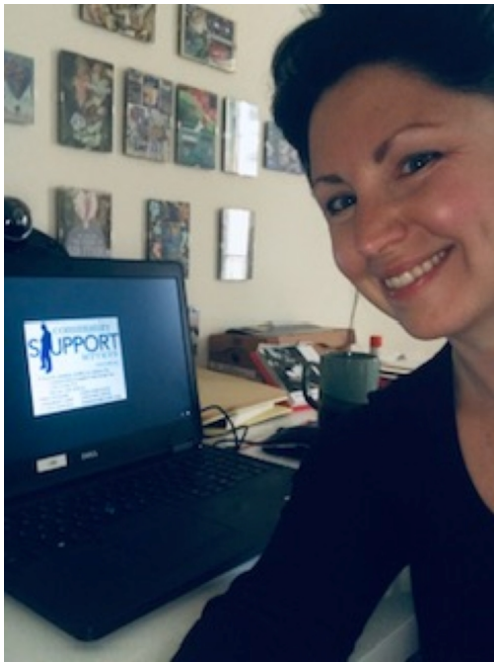
—J.

“Healing Through Art While Apart”

By Lacy Vitko, MA, ART-BC
Expressive Arts Administrator

In years past, this edition of Life Chat would highlight our annual Art of Recovery event, but with strict stay-at-home orders just around the corner, the March 12th event was cancelled due to COVID-19 precautionary measures. The cancellation of the Art of Recovery event brought the situation close to home for art therapy clients and other artists planning to be showcased, resulting in feelings of disappointment and loss. We move forward hopeful, crossing our fingers the rescheduled date of Thursday, August 6, 2020, will remain unhindered.

For the time being, art therapy has moved to a virtual platform, and, to my surprise and delight, the transition has gone more smoothly than I could have imagined. The video art therapy sessions provide a confidential space to continue providing quality care for clients, with the support of the creative process. The opportunity to continue to meet with clients on a weekly basis has provided predictability and stability in their lives; a sense of safety that the current pandemic has taken away.



Lacy Vitko, working from home.

Clients' response has been one of overwhelming gratitude. I've heard, "I'm just happy we can still have art therapy!" and "This is the one thing I look forward to every week." My work days now include dropping art supplies on clients' doorsteps and digging deep to find creative ways to encourage continued engagement, even as expressed lethargy and lack of motivation set in due to isolation and boredom.

As the weeks go on, I am finding myself witnessing a variety of emotions that ebb and flow, all masking a longing for some sense of certainty about the future. Within these uncertain times, the therapeutic alliance continues to remain the foundation for trust and security for individuals who are increasingly challenged to manage their mental health symptoms. Whether it's building on drawing skills, coloring for relaxation, or processing difficult emotions with the support of symbols and metaphors, art therapy remains a reliable space for clients to find encouragement and inspiration; to help see a sliver of light in these unpredictable times. Once again, as always, ART saves!

Lacy is currently accepting new art therapy clients via Telehealth. If interested, please contact your case manager for a referral.



It was stress that taught my heart to feel, and lead me down this path of steel
It doesn't bend it doesn't move, but I myself have something to prove
So much time to think and dwell on a single thought, the morning rises and is another day I am taught
Isolation is a familiar place and yes another day to face
It was stress that taught my heart to feel, it was art that taught my heart to heal
Think I can't help it cause I'm made this way, this morning let's see what my heart has to say
It freshens my mind, with the peace I find

— Joan Ahlstrom



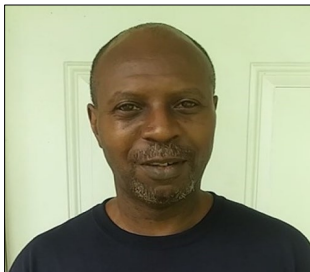
COVID-19: The impact on life, family and work

"I miss my family terribly. I would see them so much more before the pandemic. I have three adult children who at least call me daily, and I have teenage grandchildren. Fortunately, I did get to see them on Mother's Day!"

— Debbe Wise, MCSH Resident



"I moved here (Stoney Pointe) about two days before the stay-at-home order. I came without furniture and just a few essentials, so I was isolated with the bare minimum... Through all these changes, I was able to find security in my home. Home sweet home." — Joan Ahlstrom

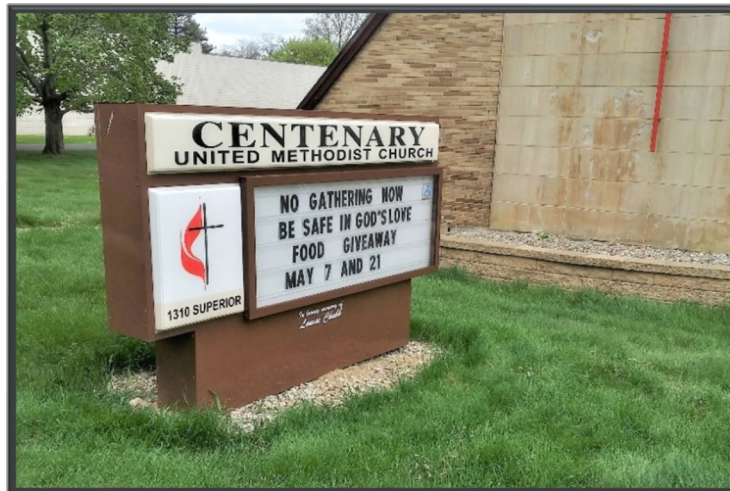


"I'm thankful to still be working at McDonald's during the coronavirus. We have not closed. I'm not at the counter. My job is in the back, cleaning up, so I haven't lost hours like other workers have."

— James Roberson



Angie Younessi joined CSS as Communications Associate in November. Among her duties are relaying new COVID-19 policies, information and requirements from CSS leadership to the staff and the public. She also has worked with Danya Bailey on Life Chat.



"I've been attending church services at Centenary every week for the past five years, and I'm also in a small choir there. To have the church doors close due to the pandemic has left an empty spot in my life. When you gather together at the church, you feel a goodness and satisfaction, not a disconnect or lonely. I'll be glad when it's safe for my church to hold services again."

— B. Roberson

United We Stand

We really need patience
During these troublesome days
Not knowing the outcome
Or what would be the best way

Each day is uncertain
About how many are sick and dying
With not much to be happy about
You wonder should you be trying

With masks on our faces
Everyone in their own fear
Being cautious about one another
Even those you hold so dear

I'm hoping for the best outcome
I'll not give up at all
We'll get through this together
And so we will not fall

— Lori Hackney



150 Cross Street, Akron, OH 44311

Coming soon!

As we work to provide you with the best services, we're pleased to announce you'll be able to access CSS through MyCare.

MyCare is a personalized, confidential patient portal allowing you to access your health information – anytime, anywhere. This convenient program provides you with a view of your electronic health record (EHR). With this access, you will be able to review lab test results, check upcoming appointments, request appointments, submit requests for refills of medications, and communicate with agency staff. More details will follow soon!



Mission Statement

Community Support Services: Helping you achieve a healthy mind and body while supporting you to live and work in your community.

Recovery Definition

Recovery is the continuous process of empowering an individual so he or she may live a satisfying and contributing life. It is a shared responsibility among the individual, the treatment staff, family, friends, and the community to:

- Discover or rediscover strengths and abilities
- Pursue personal goals
- Develop a sense of Self-Identify that allows the person to grow beyond his or her diagnosis

The Recovery Advisory Council is a collaborative effort with clients & family members to continuously improve the satisfaction of services for all Community Support Services clients.

Contact Danya Bailey at 330-253-9388, ext. 238, or Narkeetah Brazil at 330-253-9388, ext. 165, for the next scheduled RAC meeting and to contribute your artistry or recovery story.