



**COMMUNITY
SUPPORT
SERVICES**

LIFE CHAT

A publication spotlighting CSS clients

November 2024

In this issue:

Holiday stress tips



List of available holiday assistance



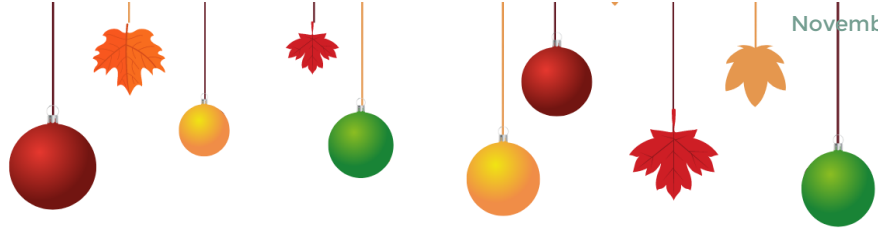
Success story



Area peer-support centers



Service animal policy



Stress relief is a holiday gift to oneself

By Melissa Trieff, treatment services counseling specialist

As we fa-la-la-la-la our way into another holiday season, it's important to maintain our self-care and prepare for the potential stress at this time of year. Even though it's called the happiest time of the year, many people experience difficulties during the season of cheer. These tips can help you to not feel like chestnuts roasting on an open fire.

- **Don't over-schedule yourself.** Consider what you truly want to do versus what you feel obligated to do. Prioritize your happiness when deciding how to spend your energy. Remember, it's OK to say "no."
- **Maintain your usual routines.** When scheduling gatherings, consider your normal routines and how to fit routine activities into your holidays. Don't neglect your needs. Make time for rest and relaxation.
- **Limit time spent traveling.** For holiday travel, try to book direct flights with minimal stops. Limit the number of events you agree to attend to reduce time spent traveling. Consider carpooling, or take advantage of ride-share specials or free taxi rides, and always choose a responsible designated driver.
- **Reach out for help if you need it.** It's OK to not be OK. Mental health concerns can persist during the holidays, and it's important to be aware of the increased loneliness that some people may experience. Consider volunteering or finding ways to socialize in your community. Lean on friends and family for support, and remember that hotlines and support networks are available.
- **Reconsider your gift-giving.** Plan your holiday spending, and stick to your budget. Handmade gifts and spending time together can be the most cherished presents. Consider teaming up with a friend or a coworker to explore events and social gatherings that offer chances to learn new crafts for creating special gifts.
- **Enjoy family time on your terms.** You have the right to choose what family looks like and don't have to adhere to societal views on family. Set boundaries with your family and reinforce them as you need. Take breaks if you need to, and keep in mind your ability to control how you respond to conflict. You may need to maintain awareness of the negative emotions you are experiencing and allow yourself the necessary outlets.



Continued on next page...



We want to hear from you!

For details about the Recovery Advisory Council (RAC) or to contribute your artwork or recovery story to *Life Chat*, call 330-253-9388 and dial 407 for Michelle Mace or 133 for Tina Lanzy.

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- **Be responsible with food and alcohol consumption.** Many holiday dishes are high in fat and sugar, which can sidetrack your health goals. Be sure to set aside time to maintain your physical health and consider activities that keep you moving. Practice moderation and be mindful of portion sizes. Stay hydrated and avoid alcohol if you're driving or prefer not to drink.
- **Respect your differences.** It's best to avoid topics that may stir up emotions. Take breaks or remove yourself from negative interactions. Focus on your similarities, and spend your energy in productive ways whenever possible.
- **Honor your grief.** It's common to experience losses during the holidays, so it's important to make room for your grief. You may need to adjust your traditions to help you cope with your grief, and it could be helpful to find a way to honor and celebrate your loved ones during this time.
- **Take time for yourself.** Society may portray a certain way in which holidays are expected to be spent, but it's important to remember you have the power to choose what's best for you during the holidays. Give yourself the gift of time and make sure to schedule activities you truly enjoy. Prioritize your needs and create opportunities to treat yourself.



Adapted from "10 Tips to Reduce Stress and Take Care of Yourself During the Holidays." Blog by Carol Kirshnit; published by UC Davis Health.

Where to find help with holiday meals, more

Need assistance this holiday season? Check out this list for free local meals and holiday giveaways.

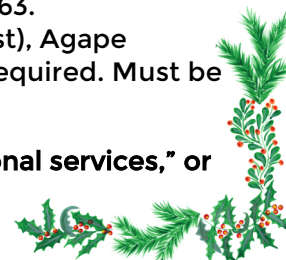
THANKSGIVING:

- **Thanksgiving turkeys** – For households at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. Drive-up service from 12:30-6:30 p.m. **Nov. 25** (while food lasts) at Joy Park, 825 James Ingram Way, Akron. Line up on the street, have trunk empty and open. Limit one turkey per family, no more than two families per vehicle. No smoking when being served. Do not call the agency or community center. Hosted by Good Samaritan Hunger Center.
- **Thanksgiving meals** – Lunch at noon (doors open at 10:45 a.m.); dinner at 6:30 p.m. (doors open at 5:15 p.m.) **Nov. 28**, Haven of Rest Ministries, 175 E. Market St., Akron.
- **Thanksgiving to-go meals** – From 5-6:30 p.m. **Nov. 26** at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, 129 S. Union St., Akron. Dinners fully cooked and offered in a pan for reheating.
- **Thanksgiving meal** – From 2-4 p.m. **Nov. 25** at JoAnna House II, 342 E. South St., Akron.
- **Meals and scarf/hat/glove giveaway** – From 2-4 p.m. **Nov. 23** at New Beginnings Outreach Ministries Church, 929 Wooster Road W., Barberton. Meals available to go. Phone: 234-678-8476.

CHRISTMAS:

- **"Happy Birthday, Jesus" Party** – From 2-3 p.m. **Dec. 7** (Doors open at 1:30 p.m.) at Haven of Rest Ministries, 175 E. Market St., Akron. Music, singing, gifts and refreshments. Gifts for registered Akron children up to age 12, accompanied by a parent or guardian. Siblings aged 13+ may attend but will not receive a gift. Entry with tickets only. Child must be at the event to receive a gift. Register by **Nov. 15**; call 330-535-1563 and ask for David John.
- **Christmas celebration** – Jake's Reach party with hot meals and boxes of groceries to take home, and a visit from Santa. Clothing available. From 11 a.m.-1 p.m. **Dec. 21** at Firestone Park United Methodist Church, 250 N. Firestone Blvd., Akron. Details at jakesreach.org.
- **Christmas meals** – Lunch at noon (doors open at 10:45 a.m.); dinner at 6:30 p.m. (doors open at 5:15 p.m.) **Dec. 25**, Haven of Rest Ministries, 175 E. Market St., Akron. Details: 330-535-1563.
- **Christmas food baskets** – Drive through, **Dec. 7**, starting at 9 a.m. (while supplies last), Agape Storehouse, 340 South St., Akron. Limit of three households per vehicle. Photo ID required. Must be present to get a basket. Hosted by Akron Bible Church.

For a list of more help for the holidays, visit www.211summit.org and click on "seasonal services," or dial 2-1-1 or 330-376-6660 to reach the United Way of Summit & Medina.



'You've got to keep going' Housing is first step to success for client

Heartbreak led to a downward spiral for Laquan H. Kicked out of his home when he quit college, he tried to build a life while staying with friends, working and saving money. Then things took a tragic turn. His grandmother, who he was very close to, passed away. His best friend was killed, and the mother of another close friend died. "I really couldn't take it," he said.

He struggled with his mental health, bounced from shelter to shelter and ended up in jail. He used drugs to numb the emotional pain and make him more comfortable in environments full of strangers.

One night in 2020, an interaction with police landed him at St. Thomas Hospital. That was the turning point - a case manager from CSS talked to him about finding housing. He eagerly accepted the offer. "I was willing to wait to transition to a better life," he said.



Laquan stayed at a shelter until he was placed in a group home. Nine months later, he moved into an apartment provided through the Blue Heron program offered at CSS. Clients who are enrolled in the program receive intensive case management, so they can gain the skills and knowledge to maintain their housing. They also are linked with service providers, substance use treatment options and doctors.

Handling his own bills was a new challenge, but Laquan enjoyed the freedom of his own space, freedom he didn't have when staying at a shelter or with friends. That motivated him to keep working hard, paying his rent, taking his medication and keeping his appointments.

"When it's all said and done, you've got to keep going," he said. "From small stuff to giant, you have to just be grateful at the chance as it is."

Laquan has been in his apartment for three years now and currently works as a full-time shift lead manager at Taco Bell. When he's not working, he enjoys playing video games, recording hip hop songs and spending time with his 8-year-old son, "working to get him to be the best he can be." He's also saving for a car and dreams of returning to college to get a degree in information technology.

Dawn Rohrig, who oversees the Blue Heron program, is thrilled with his progress.

"Laquan has worked hard since coming into the program. He has been able to keep his focus on his goals and to overcome any barriers presented to him to be able to spend time with his family, obtain and maintain a job he enjoys and does well, and to independently keep his apartment," she said. "We are very proud of him and congratulate him on a job well done!"

Laquan encourages others who are struggling to accept help, noting that the path to a better life sometimes requires a boost.

"CSS is a good program to start with. You just have got to give it all it takes," he said. "You can depend on somebody else instead of just depending on yourself. All you've got to do is go for it and move forward all of the time."

Looking for support?

Sometimes, it's not easy to find others who understand your life experiences. Fortunately, Summit County offers several spots that offer peer-supported recovery programs, social connection and resources for people living with mental health conditions, substance use disorders or both. Here are three:

Summit Recovery Hub

This peer-based agency supports recovery through meetings, education, social activities and community advocacy. Find out more at www.summitrco.org.

Tyler's Redemption Place

Tyler's offers hope to individuals and families affected by substance use disorder through peer-based support, wellness programs, social activities, group meetings, Bible study, fitness programs and more. The facility offers drop-in peer support six days a week. For more, visit www.hopeunited.life.

Choices Social Center

Choices is a peer-run organization for adults with mental health challenges. It offers free meals for members, peer support, group outings, creative activities, games, resources and more. Membership is free with a referral from a mental health provider. Visit <https://choicesakr.com> for more details.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

150 CROSS ST., AKRON, OH 44311

CSS service animal policy

CSS adheres to state and federal guidelines regarding service animals, as defined by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) within its facilities and on the agency campus.

Emotional-support animals are not permitted in the agency or on its campus.

The ADA describes a service animal as any dog individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. The work or tasks performed must be directly related to the individual's disability.

As emotional-support animals are not trained to perform specific jobs or tasks, they do not qualify under the ADA.

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-identity 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.

