10 YEARS
CREATING COMMUNITY & OPPORTUNITY

B’MORE Clubhouse
**MISSION**

B’More Clubhouse empowers adults living with mental illness to lead meaningful and productive lives of their choice in the community.

**VISION**

We envision a world where people with mental illness have access to opportunity where self-actualization is supported and individuals are not defined by their illness.
Ten years ago I moved back to Baltimore City to join the start-up team at B’More Clubhouse. I had been working at Fountain House in New York – the largest and oldest Clubhouse in the world – and was eager to join what was then the smallest and newest Clubhouse in the world. I came not only because Baltimore is special to me, but because I knew that Baltimore needed and deserved a world-class Clubhouse. Baltimore needed a place where people with mental illness were respected and appreciated, and above all, were given the opportunity to lead meaningful and productive lives of their choice in the community.

Over the past ten years we have built a remarkable community of individuals who work together, support, and inspire each other daily. We have seen more than 700 members enter through our doors, many of whom have long ago moved on from the Clubhouse and followed through on their goals to return to work or school. We have forged dozens of partnerships with local employers, mental health providers, state agencies, and universities. Just this year we received licensure from the Behavioral Health Administration, an important validation that not only has led to increased access to public funding, but also marks a huge step toward replication of the Clubhouse model around the state of Maryland.

We have now achieved our goal of building a world-class Clubhouse right here in Baltimore. During our accreditation visit this spring, we achieved the highest possible conformance to the 37 standards set forth by Clubhouse International. We are ready to significantly expand the size of our membership and to help develop new Clubhouses in other areas of the state that also need and deserve the opportunities that a Clubhouse can offer.

I love Baltimore. The citizens of this city are authentic, resilient, and loving. The members of B’More Clubhouse represent the best characteristics of our city and the potential for what we can achieve when we support each other as we work towards common goals.

Thank you to the countless individuals who have helped to make our first ten years at B’More Clubhouse an incredible success. I look forward to continuing this vitally important work with you as we move forward.

JASON WOODY
Executive Director

The members of B’More Clubhouse represent the best characteristics of our city and the potential for what we can achieve when we support each other as we work towards common goals.
Serious mental illness has the potential to upend lives and often contributes to unemployment and isolation. B'More Clubhouse opened its doors in April 2009 to serve people with mental illness in the Baltimore region, following the International Clubhouse model – a research-backed initiative to provide individuals with the resources and support they need to lead fulfilling lives.

Clubhouses are a powerful demonstration of the fact that people with mental illness can and do lead normal, productive lives. Clubhouses provide members with opportunities to build long-term relationships that, in turn, support them in obtaining employment, education, and housing. Participation in the Clubhouse gives members a sense of purpose, improved self-worth, and opportunities to re-enter society through paid jobs and school.

In 2009, B'More Clubhouse had only a handful of members; ten years later, it is a thriving organization with four work teams and more than 135 current active members benefiting from the Clubhouse’s many opportunities.

The Clubhouse has seen its share of change. It moved from East Read Street to a new location on East Franklin Street, began a transitional employment program, and developed a robust membership. In 2011, it achieved its first accreditation through Clubhouse International – a major validation that the Baltimore program is living up to the international organization’s standards. Throughout that time, the mission has remained the same: to empower adults living with mental illness to lead meaningful and productive lives of their choice in the community.

Mental illness may be a common denominator among the members, but that’s not what defines B'More Clubhouse. The organization is founded on community and support – it’s a restorative environment where people can discover renewed purpose.
A DAY AT THE CLUBHOUSE: WORKING IN UNISON

The Clubhouse model is built on a work-ordered day in which members contribute to the functioning of the Clubhouse. Members’ input is essential on all levels, including decisions about hiring staff. Members and staff collaborate in different teams focused on membership, communications, culinary, and career development.

△ In addition to answering phones and overseeing the front desk, the Membership team maintains the organization’s database, processes large mailings, and manages all inquiries regarding membership.

△ The Communications team updates social media, manages advertising, produces a newsletter, organizes creative social events, and creates its own news program, “B’More TV.”

△ The Culinary team plans, shops for, prepares, and serves nutritious meals for members.

△ The Career Development team helps members pursue their career goals by helping them with application processes or registering for classes. An important component of this team is the Transitional Employment Program, through which members can work part-time at a job while fully supported by Clubhouse staff. This program enables members to gain or regain work experience, build confidence, and establish current references.
BY THE NUMBERS: 2018

TOTAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS SERVED
209

TOTAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS WHO WERE EMPLOYED
84
WITH AN APPROXIMATE TOTAL EARNING OF
$672,000 COMBINED

TOTAL NUMBER OF MEALS SERVED
4,192

TOTAL NUMBER OF REACHOUT CONTACTS MADE TO MEMBERS
6,532

TOTAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS ENROLLED IN A FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAM
25

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

2018 TOTAL EXPENSES $517,802

FUNDRAISING $33,126 (7%)
ADMINISTRATIVE $16,500 (3%)
PROGRAM $468,176 (90%)

2018 TOTAL RECEIPTS $513,759

GRANTS $343,091 (67%)
INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS $113,293 (22%)
GOVERNMENT FUNDING $57,375 (11%)

NOTE: UNAUDITED CASH-BASIS RECEIPTS AND EXPENSES
When Joe Weiss, 47, first came to B’More Clubhouse in 2012, he decided it wasn’t the right program for him at the time. He completed two psychiatric rehabilitation programs (PRPs) and maintained the goal of returning to the Clubhouse.

“I told myself one day I’m going to transition from PRP to B’More Clubhouse,” he says.

He returned to the Clubhouse in 2018 and now works as a digitizer in the Johns Hopkins library through the transitional employment program.

“I felt kind of young again doing this work,” he says. “I think B’More Clubhouse is good at that, at helping people reclaim a part of their lives. It might not just be career-wise; it might be having a group of people and a place to call their own for a little while during the day.”

Since starting the transitional employment, Weiss has more energy and improved self-confidence – both aspects of his life that have been affected by his schizoaffective disorder.

“I’m trying to feel more whole,” he says.

Now, his life is stable enough that he can pursue his other personal goals, like quitting smoking.

“My life is more in place to accomplish some of the things I couldn’t do a few years ago,” he says.

At the Clubhouse, Weiss does everything from working on major projects to mopping the floors. He appreciates that here, staff and members work together.

“On a good working day at the Clubhouse, they say you can’t differentiate between who’s staff and who’s a member,” Weiss says.

He participates in other community-building aspects at B’More Clubhouse. For instance, he’s a member of the “Slow Running Club,” which takes a gentle jog to the Inner Harbor once a week.

“I think B’More Clubhouse is a lot different than a lot of communities,” he says, describing it as having “the magic of a non-clinical mental health organization.”
Little has been more important to Allen Sneed than looking out for his younger brother Dante. This remains true today, when Allen is 62 years old and Dante 47. So, when Dante needed a fresh environment where he could stay active during the day, Allen started researching local organizations. He wanted somewhere Dante could engage with other people, rather than sitting at home. After taking a tour of B’More Clubhouse, they were hooked. Allen immediately knew this was somewhere the staff and members treated each other with genuine care and respect.

“They treat you like family,” Allen says. “Here at B’More Clubhouse, these people care for Dante.”

Since that tour one year ago, Dante continues to go to the Clubhouse five days a week. He’s started opening up and talking more as he’s built relationships there. He participates in many Clubhouse activities, including tending to plots in a local urban garden. He especially loves the Thursday theme nights at the Clubhouse – he’ll often return home sporting a lei or a party hat.

Dante’s relationship to his anxiety and depression has also improved now that he’s become an active member of the Clubhouse community.

“IT definitely gave him a big sense of purpose,” Allen says.

With this new motivation, Dante has been able to achieve greater independence. He now works as a porter for Regency Centers every Tuesday morning. And, with the Clubhouse’s support, he’s on his way to move out of his brother’s house and into an assisted living home for the first time in several years.

Joining this community hasn’t only changed Dante’s life – Allen knows it’s also had a significant impact on himself.

“It’s really been a relief, because being able to trust somebody to take care of him is very important,” he says. “I don’t know what I would do without the people down here.”
Bonnie “Raven” Lane, 46, joined B’More Clubhouse in 2019 following a profoundly distressing moment in her life – her boyfriend was shot and nearly died. She struggled to leave the house for anything other than minor errands.

However, the Clubhouse offered a new community to support her through this depressive period.

“I think it’s a great place, and it brings out a lot of the potential that people don’t know they have,” Lane says.

Spending time at the Clubhouse helps her keep busy and socialize while nurturing her long-burning passion for activism. Lane continues her work as an activist – she has spent almost 15 years in this field – by joining with other members to coordinate with local advocacy groups to improve the mobility system on which many members rely.

She’s also compiling a spreadsheet of subsidized or low-rent housing in the region where members might be able to live.

Just as Clubhouse members have encouraged her, she also assists others. She recently taught a fellow member how to type on a computer, for example.

“I take for granted that I know how to do that,” Lane says. “Being able to teach skills to people who need them, I really like that.”

Although Lane has struggled with depression and trauma throughout her life, she’s grown more positive since coming to the Clubhouse.

“It’s the people, really,” she says. “It’s very supportive, very friendly.”
Tavone Lee has a warm grin and infectious laughter; his positivity always brightens the mood at B'More Clubhouse, where he spends his days off work. When his therapist suggested he join the Clubhouse in 2013, he just wanted a place where he could go to get out of the house.

But at the Clubhouse, he found so much more – a new community.

“Everybody here treats me with respect,” he says. “The people here make me feel comfortable.”

This inclusive, stimulating environment has helped Lee improve his outlook and take care of his mental health.

“I get to see most of my friends at the Clubhouse. I talk to the staff, too,” he says. “I stay well, I stay out of the hospital, and make sure I have my medication.”

After 16 years of unemployment, Lee didn’t believe finding a job was a real possibility for him when he joined the Clubhouse. But, when a fellow member found work, he began to reconsider. If they could get a job, why not him, too?

“I felt like I could never go back to work,” Lee says. “I came here, and they made me feel confident in myself to go back.”

With staff support, he began the transitional employment program. He is now working on his second placement at a local YMCA, which dovetails with his lifelong love of fitness. There, he works at the front desk, cleans exercise equipment, and supervises and plays with kids in the youth program. Lee also leads a Clubhouse wellness activity, during which he guides other members on a walk outside or through an indoor stretching session.

These days, when Lee has free time, he no longer stays inside watching television by himself. He exercises, takes walks, and engages with the community.

“I feel like I can do anything I set my mind to,” Lee says.
When Ashley Funk learned about B’More Clubhouse’s transitional employment program, she realized it was a perfect match for the YMCA.

“Our mission is to provide opportunities for those in our communities in many different ways,” says Funk, associate executive director at the Y in Waverly. “We’re focused on holistic health: mind, body, and spirit. That includes having financial stability and gaining life skills, so we thought it was a great opportunity for us as an organization.”

The YMCA in Waverly accepted their first employee from B’More Clubhouse, Tavone Lee, in October 2018.

“The partnership has gone really well,” Funk says. “I’m excited that we could partner in this way, and I hope that it continues and really grows.”

Their employee from the transitional employment program works three days a week in three different departments, which helps him develop various workplace skills. He applied for the job and participated in the onboarding process, just as any other employee would.

“For most people who are coming to the Y, they may or may not know about our partnership with B’More Clubhouse. They just know him as another Y associate,” Funk says. “He’s just there brightening people’s day.”

One factor that has facilitated the success of the program is the Clubhouse’s commitment to open communication. For instance, if the member has to miss a shift due to a doctor’s appointment or other issue, Clubhouse staff are on call to fill his shift.

“From an accountability standpoint, they always did what they said they would do, and they were always communicative of what was happening and what was going on,” she says.
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The idea of opening a Clubhouse in Baltimore interested Cathy Brill, executive director of the Leonard & Helen Stulman Charitable Foundation, not just because she admired the program model, but also because of the founders’ enthusiasm. “We were impressed with their passion and commitment,” she says.

The Stulman Foundation supports programs in the fields of mental health, health, and aging, with a particular focus on supporting Baltimore-region initiatives. The foundation provided one of the first grants to launch B’More Clubhouse.

Brill recognized the need for the Clubhouse model locally. People with mental illness, especially those belonging to communities lacking services, could benefit from an accepting community they could contribute to every day.

“It’s a model and an approach that’s really helpful to people with mental illness and doesn’t exist anywhere else in Maryland,” she says.

She appreciates that Clubhouse members have the freedom to make decisions about how to contribute to the organization. She also values the importance of the Clubhouse as a space the members can call their own.

“There’s a real sense of ownership in the Clubhouse among the members,” she says.

The Stulman Foundation has continued to be a funder for B’More Clubhouse throughout the years. Thanks to the support of these funders, the Clubhouse has developed and flourished. The Clubhouse earned its certification and gathered diverse staff, members, and volunteers. It’s no longer an upstart – it’s an established organization ready to consider how to achieve greater sustainability.

“When it started up, it was a handful of people with a dream,” Brill says. “It’s a great way of helping people regain their lives.”
Anette Goelet’s cousin once experienced what she refers to as the “revolving door” between the hospitalization and recovery among people with mental illness. Her cousin would go to the hospital, recover, spend time in therapy, and go to the hospital again. She realized her family member needed something else. “A place to be where she could be respected and do things that interest her and she could think about moving forward with her life,” Goelet says. “The Clubhouse is that something else.”

After witnessing how the Clubhouse model helped her cousin, she joined the Clubhouse International board. And, when local activists decided to establish a Clubhouse in Baltimore, she mentored them through the process.

“We think that many people with mental illness can get back to the workplace and live by themselves with support,” Goelet says. “So, having support in the community, a place to go, a place to be accepted, and a place where they can leave their diagnosis at the door, and work with the parts of themselves that are not their illness” is an incredible opportunity.

Goelet now serves on the B’More Clubhouse Advisory Board and has witnessed the many milestones the organization has achieved since the very beginning. She can recall the very first transitional employment placement: A prep chef and dishwasher in 2009 at Shapiro’s Café.

“That was a big step and a big moment,” she says. These “big moments” continue year after year.

“There’s so many moments,” Goelet says. “When members graduate with their GEDs or college degrees, it’s always a big celebration.”
Every week, Deirdre Smith joins B’More Clubhouse members at the Ash Street Garden to tend to their plots: weeding, watering, harvesting vegetables, and composting. She has been leading the gardening program with B’More Clubhouse as a volunteer for about five years, and she wouldn’t have it any other way.

“They’re just incredible people,” she says. “They just shatter all stereotypes, and it’s just a joy to be around them all.”

Smith has a background in farming and so was at home with the seeds and the soil. Working with people with mental illness, though, was a new experience.

“It was revolutionary,” she says. “To understand over time what people are going through, what they’re facing, it’s very humbling. There’s so much depth to everyone.”

At the end of their shifts, the members take their harvested food back with them to the Clubhouse to prepare meals.

She appreciates that the Clubhouse takes the partnership seriously and makes it a priority.

B’More Clubhouse is always communicative, she says, and members are always on time to garden.

However, beyond the work and beyond the food, Smith believes the heart of the gardening program is the camaraderie and community that develops.

“It’s very rewarding to be able to get to know them,” she says. “They’re here because they want to be around people, they realize that that’s important to them.”

Over time, Smith learns more about the members – who’s getting a new job, who’s moving into new housing, who’s starting to socialize more. She discovers similarities between their lives and hers.

“It’s a way of making connections. I have a really, really different life from these guys, yet we have a lot in common, like gardening,” Smith says. “Everybody needs a community. Everybody needs to be connected to something. And, I’m connected to them. They’re definitely my community.”
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