



University of Arizona Recovery thru
Integration, Support & Empowerment-RISE
PO Box 245052
Tucson Arizona 85724-5052
www.fcm.arizona.edu/outreach/rise

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Recovery Support Specialist Newsletter
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Southeastern Arizona
Consumer-Run Services
(SEACRS)

Valley Owen, Recovery Support Specialist, is with Southeastern Arizona Consumer-Run Services (SEACRS). In her position as the Program Coordinator for the Comfort Zone, a Wellness & Recovery Center, Valley develops programs that will facilitate a strengths-based approach to wellness. These include peer-led support groups, educational offerings, recreational activities and social gatherings. She assists the Director in the day-to-day functioning of The Comfort Zone, which includes coordinating the efforts of one full-time and three part-time Recovery Support Specialists, as well as many volunteer participants.

The Comfort Zone approach to recovery places great emphasis on making positive choices for wellness, and this begins with making the choice to work against a tendency to want to isolate (something common to many of us.) The peer-led groups at The Comfort Zone include Valley's daily H.O.P.E. group (Holistic Optimal Plan for Empowerment), wherein participants discover at an experiential level the skills for managing the symptoms of brain-based disorders. On Tuesday afternoons Valley facilitates a peer group for people with Borderline Personality Disorder. Sheldon Cowles facilitates a men's support group once a week, and Joaquin does the NAMI C.A.R.E. (Consumers Advocating Recovery thru Empowerment) and S.M.A.R.T. (Self Management and Recovery Training) recovery groups.

As important as support groups are, at The Comfort Zone we still enjoy a balance of artistic, social and recreational activities on a daily basis. This is where the fun of swimming at The Cove (an aquatic center in Sierra Vista) and bowling outings help to get some good energy moving. Once the weather gets cooler, we plan to begin

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RISE (Recovery thru Integration, Support & Empowerment)
To Receive the RSS Newsletter please reply with the following information to:

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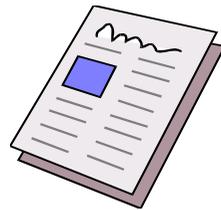
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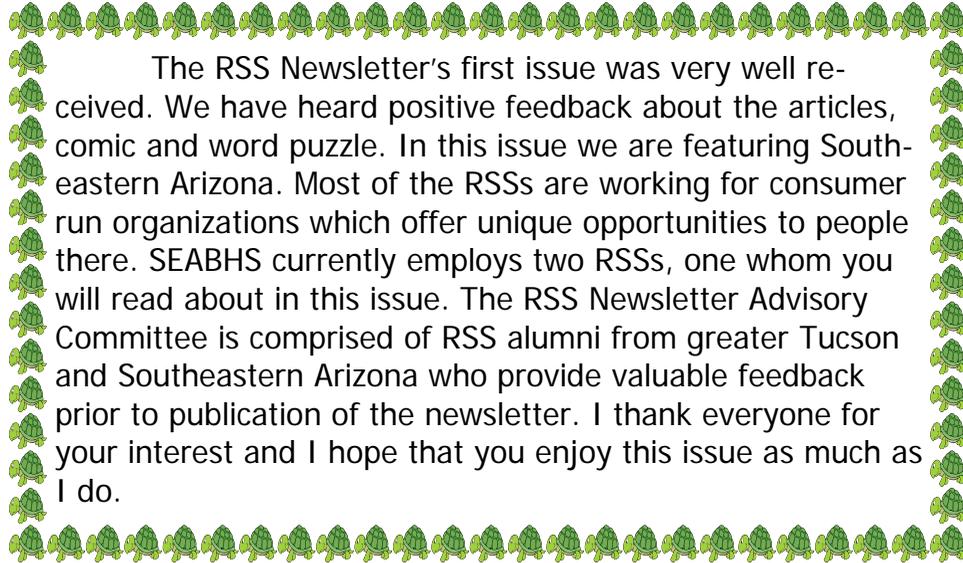
This newsletter is for anyone interested in the ongoing and growing RSS Pro-

Continued on Page 6

**Advisory
Committee**

Bits by Beth

- Dan Steffy,
Senior Advisor
- Diane “Crickett”
Austin
- Wanda Black
- Hope Cisek
- Angela Dingleline
- Valley Owen
- Ken Rogers
- Tyrone Scercy



The RSS Newsletter’s first issue was very well received. We have heard positive feedback about the articles, comic and word puzzle. In this issue we are featuring South-eastern Arizona. Most of the RSSs are working for consumer run organizations which offer unique opportunities to people there. SEABHS currently employs two RSSs, one whom you will read about in this issue. The RSS Newsletter Advisory Committee is comprised of RSS alumni from greater Tucson and Southeastern Arizona who provide valuable feedback prior to publication of the newsletter. I thank everyone for your interest and I hope that you enjoy this issue as much as I do.

Letters to the Editor

As with anything new, people are concerned about asking questions. I know that I usually am. So I have no letters to answer in this issue. I thought that I would let you know how much the partnership between CPSA and U of A RISE in the creation and development of the Recovery Support Specialist program has empowered individuals to take the next steps in their recovery. Beth, Dan and I watch people learn, grow and change in front of our eyes during the Institute and Practicums. Everyone who participated brought their unique talents and insights which added to the material. RSSs have used this as a spring board in seeking employment that fits their needs. This newsletter is to establish the importance of RSSs in the Behavioral Health system by presenting all that is being accomplished. Questions?

**Where do I send
“Letters to the
Editor”?**

**You may contact
Beverly McGuffin at:**

**E-mail:
beverlym@email.arizona.edu**

Phone: 520-626-7473

 * Beth C. Stoneking, PhD, CPRP Publisher *
 * Beverly McGuffin, RN, MS, CPRP Editor *
 * Jill Harman, RSS Reporter *
 * Linnette Klindedinst Page Designer *
 *
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Search and Find

Y	R	E	V	O	C	E	R	Q	T	N	C
T	D	R	L	Y	A	U	G	E	W	O	I
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- BALANCE**
- CERAMICS**
- COMFORT ZONE**
- HOPE**
- MORE**
- PEER LED**
- RSS**
- SEACRS**
- SMART**
- TRANSPORT**
- WELLNESS**

These words can be found throughout the newsletter.

Last Issue’s Answers

	P	E	R	S	Q	N	E	I	R	S	I	
A		M	E	N	I	Q	R			U	I	
D			C							P		
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Have you heard:

More RSS Institutes are being planned.
Contact Dan Steffy at 618-8811 for an application.

The previous newsletter can also be found at :
www.fcm.arizona.edu/outreach/rise



Recovery Support

Albert Biddle, RSS

“During my employment at The Comfort Zone, 10 to 12 participants attended ceramics at any given time. I taught these individuals dry brush, detail painting, and wellness exercises to calm them into a peaceful frame of mind. Along with this I was a van driver and took people to different activities, and also to and from home.”

Joaquin Guzman, RSS

Joaquin facilitates S.M.A.R.T. Recovery (Self Management and Recovery Training). He feels it is a sensible self-help program that can be used to facilitate recovery from just about any behavior or feeling pattern. “What I love about SMART is that participants are empowered to abstain and develop a more positive lifestyle. Labels such as alcoholic or addict are not used. The focus is on what you want to become.” A cognitive-behavioral approach called REBT (Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy) is used which was devised by psychologist Albert Ellis in the 1950’s. The peer group helps the participant rationalize their irrational thoughts or beliefs.

The four areas that are focused on in SMART discussions, where each person is working on their own issues are: (1) increase motivation (2) how to not act on urges to do the undesirable behavior (3) talking about life’s daily problems and getting feedback on how better to manage them or credit for obvious growth (4) developing a positive, balanced and healthy lifestyle.

At The Comfort Zone, Joaquin goes around the room and does check-in to see how each person is doing. Then, he focuses in on a topic or a person in need and rallies the group to get involved in the energy and the process. The peer group has grown in intensity and desire for longer meeting times in just two weeks.

Specialists in the Field

RSSs on the Road...

Recovery Support Specialists Elvin, Juan and Albert travel an average of 3000 miles a month as the M.O.R.E. (Mobile Outreach for Recovery Empowerment) program provides peer support services to four different communities in three counties. We currently visit Douglas, Safford, Nogales and Bisbee.

M.O.R.E. provides peer support services, vocational assistance, mental health education/training, crisis support, food assistance, socialization opportunities, lunch and MORE. If we cannot provide the service, we will find someone who can. Our goal is to increase awareness on recovery as a possibility rather than a false concept. We look forward to expanding our services to other communities as we persevere in getting the message of recovery concepts to the outlying areas and as the SEACRS (Southeastern Arizona Consumer-Run Services) organization grows, we hope to identify and employ future RSS graduates in these areas.

It is a blessing as well as rewarding to have the opportunity to explore and learn the various cultures and people during our endeavors.

From Left to Right:

Albert Regain, Program Director, Elvin Corder and Juan Parra all from M.O.R.E.



Cartoon
 By James E. Babcock
 Content by:
 Diane "Crickett" Austin



Recovery vs. Non-Recovery Environment

People use respectful language that supports recovery values	Psychobabble and mental health jargon are used
Consumers employed at all levels of the organization	Consumers employed in "token" or entry levels positions
Mutual relationships exist between supporters & consumers	Hierarchical system of care
Recovery is a part of the vision and mission of the organization	Vision & mission focus on quality of service delivery
Consumers are integral participants in the development, implementation, delivery & evaluation of services	Consumers may or may not be involved in the development, implementation, delivery & evaluation of services
An individual's cultural & ethnic background is important	Has cultural competency plan for agency that meets requirements
Hopeful with high expectations	Low Expectations
Recovery is the goal	Stabilization is the goal
Clear exits with graduates returning and sharing experiences	There are no clearly defined graduation criteria or program exits
Information & Psychoeducation are provided	Little access to information & education
Choice & self-determination are encouraged and supported	Compliance is valued
Free will & choice are nurtured and respected	Coercion is used to achieve compliance
Consumers take risks and view failures as learning experiences	Consumers are protected from trial-and-error learning
Program & non-program options offer individualized treatment	"One-size-fits-all" treatment approach
Consumers live in housing of their choice in the community	Consumers live in "treatment centers"
Peer support, psychosocial rehabilitation, and treatment are equally valued	Medication is the primary tool

SEACRS Continued...

outings to the Health & Racquet Club to work out together. Afternoons usually consist of a peer-led artistic activity going on, such as ceramics, art, leather-work, bead projects, etc. In August, the Comfort Zone had an art sale at the local swap meet.

Valley feels very strongly that sustaining her own level of wellness is imperative to be able to maintain her schedule and commitments. Regularly utilizing the Health Club of which she is a member is a big part of her own wellness plan, along with good nutrition. Of all the tools in Valley's personal wellness toolbox, a good night's sleep is the one that is the biggest key. Daily exercise and (finally) letting go of a persistent coffee-drinking habit, along with getting to bed early every night have made a big difference in her sleep habits.

As a volunteer activity, Valley facilitates an evening NAMI C.A.R.E. group once a week for individuals with depression and bipolar disorder. She also is a believer in advocacy and is a Board Member for the Arizona Center for Disability Law, and a member of their PAIMI Advisory Council (Protection & Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness.) Membership in Rotary International and Toastmasters International help to provide her with balance in her personal life as well as opportunities for community involvement. Valley is a single mother with two teenagers (both in college). 🌸



Valley Owen
(Comfort Zone)



SEABHS in Nogales

Sylvia Diaz works for SEABHS (Southeastern Arizona Behavioral Health Services) as an RSS. Not only does she feel comfortable with disclosing her disability with her employer, but she also has the opportunity to work and help others in their recovery.



Sylvia Diaz

She does numerous jobs such as: groups, outreach, meetings and staffings. She receives a clinical list of member's names and phone numbers for outreach. She calls people to see how they are doing and if they need anything. If they don't come to group she goes out to their residence and checks on them to make sure they are alright. If they are not home at the time of the visit she leaves them a letter stating that she was there and to contact her to let her know they are okay.

Her supervisor and co-workers are very helpful when it comes to finding resources on the computer and they always take the time to answer any questions she might have. They are very supportive of her when she is stressed and needs to talk.

Sylvia supports her recovery and wellness by doing the activities from the Wellness & Recovery Circle and this helps her stay healthy. She also attends to her needs by taking her medication regularly, keeping herself out of stressful situations, and a lot of rest and relaxation.

Sylvia likes the way the RSSs in the practicums share and support one another in their jobs. When they share concerns or ideas that are in the job environment, it helps her cope and understand how to handle situations that might arise. She became an RSS because she wanted to help people and give them hope for recovery. It helps to be in recovery herself. She likes to be able to help a member get back into the community and lead a normal life.

Sylvia is working with Families First Outreach. She is preparing to start a WRAP group in the near future and also be a facilitator for a women's group. 🌸

Recovery Support



Ray Finn, RSS

**-By Ray Finn, RSS and
Angel Wright, CORE**

Recovery Support Specialists in Bisbee provide basic peer support with a small group called CORE (Community Outreach for Recovery & Empowerment). CORE is a very open and loosely organized group of individuals that provides basic peer support for each other. CORE has weekly meetings open to all members in the community, every Friday afternoon from 1:00 to 3:00pm. Ray Finn is also employed at The Comfort Zone as a Recovery Support Specialist

The Recovery Support Specialist Institute provided invaluable tools that facilitated the Recovery Support Specialists in planting the seeds of hope, so that the participants of CORE are beginning to believe that recovery is an attainable goal; with personal commitment, hard work and a little bit of help from each other any obstacle can be overcome. CORE works by providing both emotional support and some personal assistance to its various members based on individual need. CORE members help each other with things like trips to the grocery store, basic home maintenance, transportation to and from meetings and by being there in times of need.

Ray says, "I have noticed in these weekly meetings that by validating the individual member's feelings, it gives them a new sense of self. This empowers them to learn to become their own advocates. By helping each other, we build our own self-esteem and the confidence it takes to continue in our own quests for knowledge and our journey of recovery." 🦋

Specialists in the Field

Sheldon Cowles, RSS

Sheldon Cowles, a Recovery Support Specialist, is an Assistant Program Coordinator at The Comfort Zone. He has been with them for a little over two years and is using the skills he has learned throughout his recovery to keep himself well. He assists other members with being involved in or learning skills to help them in their own recovery. He participates in a group for men's support once a week, by being involved instead of leading the group. It tends to be more of an open-ended support group than something taught to others. Part of his tasks on an average day will include transporting members to and from The Comfort Zone and one-on-one mini support sessions with many of the members. He sometimes allows himself to be utilized as a safety buffer between members having different viewpoints. Talking while driving to The Comfort Zone helps get a feeling about how a member is doing. Sheldon tries to find out if anyone is going to need extra support during the day or if they are in a good frame of mind. He also helps by working on maintenance in the building or vehicles and at times, he teaches comparison of repairs/preventative maintenance on a vehicle as a way to symbolize prevention and maintenance of our health and how to stay mentally tuned-up.



From Left to Right:

Joaquin Guzman,
Sheldon Cowles and
Al Biddle all from
The Comfort Zone

