

# Recovery Steps and Stories

FALL 2020: THEN and NOW

**Back in 1997**, there was a consumer publication called **"PEBBLES."** This newsletter featured client contributions as well as birthdays, announcements, puzzles and articles about everything from Earth day to voting to an explanation of what a "Blue Moon" is! **The February 1999** edition of PEBBLES featured an article called "What is the Web?" which explained the World Wide Web and how it was used. Talk about the good old days! *"You can listen to LIVE radio shows... the technology is getting to the point where you can WATCH video of TV broadcasts... you have to dial into it with a modem, a type of telephone... yes, computers do talk to each other..."*

**Recovery Steps and Stories** has been around for many years and is very much like Pebbles. We no longer feature client or staff birthdays but we do continue the tradition of publishing client poems, articles, artwork and recovery stories. In tribute to PEBBLES and in honor of client creativity, we've included some client writing in this issue of Recovery Steps and Stories. Stepping Stones has come a long way since the day of Pebbles but much thankfully remains the same. For long time staff and clients, this edition will be a "blast from the past." You'll surely recognize the names of some long lost friends. ***Here's to a fond trip down memory lane!***

## **Larry Scharnweber Steps Down as Consumer Recovery Support Specialist...**

**Larry Scharnweber** has worked as an RSA, an MHP, a Case Manager and the CRSS during his tenure at Stepping Stones. If you've been with the agency for any length of time, you know Larry. ***Larry won't be leaving the agency just quite yet; read Page Six for the details!***



**Tracy M writes:** ***"This client newsletter is dedicated with sincere gratitude to our Larry!*** Whom we will be forever grateful and cherish the many lessons, the laughter and all the wonderful memories. Uncle Larry, thank you for the many people whose lives you've help change, to grow and lead and live their best life of Recovery! To you, Uncle Larry, We don't say farewell. We say thank you from the bottom of our hearts, as you begin a new chapter in your Journey, we say Best Wishes, Our Friend Uncle Larry, from the bottom of our hearts!" ***Read about Larry on page 6 of this edition of Recovery Steps and Stories to learn more about Larry and his new adventures.***

## **"Stories from Ellen" (Ellen, August 2001)**

"One day a long time ago, when I worked at Blue Cross Insurance Company, I was walking across the State Street bridge and my half-slip fell down. I just stepped out of it and put it in my jacket pocket. Also, living at River Oaks, walking down the hallway after breakfast, my slacks fell down. They were a little big but I didn't think they were that big. You can be sure that I gave away those slacks. I could probably wear them now."

## **Consistency by Rita J (November 2000)**

Solid ground a necessity  
Anchored firmly in place  
Living in harmony  
Example of a measured pace  
Uniform in actions  
Life's analogy a race  
Principals in reactions  
We speak of and perform  
Leaves substance to assure  
Consistent and reformed  
Compatible when offered  
Competent means to usher  
In closeness to one and other  
A heart and head thinking the same thing  
Is the main goal also to remain  
Proportioned always with others  
Instructed and reassured  
Correspondence forms a trust  
All patterns in accord  
For such existence is a must.

## **Things Margie Likes (September 2005)**

Travelogues. Cooking nutritious. Corn Boil.  
Leather Craft.

## **Wish me a Rainbow, submitted by Debi H (October 2000)**

Wish me a rainbow, And yellow balloons.  
A wish you can wish me, wherever you roam;  
Dreams for my pillow, Stars for my eyes;  
A masquerade ball, Where our love wins first prize.

# THEN

## **The Black Sky by Sandy B (October 2000)**

The night stands cold with black skies. Then the black skies stand out from the darkness. There are no stars that give emotions and enchantment and that magic that surrounds that dark sky.

## **Untitled by Don B. (November 2000)**

Show me your love, Just show me your love  
It just has to be  
Up from above  
You're so beautiful  
And so very kind  
Please tell me that you will be mine.  
Show me your love, Just show me your love  
It just has to be  
Up from above  
I can feel your heartbeat  
So close to mine  
It's so lovely and divine  
You've swept me off my feet  
You're so very sweet  
Please show me your love, Just show me your love  
It just has to be from Heaven above.

## **YOU by Jerard E. (February 1999)**

You covered my mouth with your hands  
You said, don't talk, let's enjoy the night  
With our famous song  
You said: let's not spoil the night  
You showed it all.  
I became foolish, you love was so great  
I can't handle it all,  
You've broken the ice of my heart  
You gave me the warmest blanket  
you can find  
It was raining and I was freezing  
You held me tight, that you would never let me go  
I was shaking and shivering  
You wash my hands with all your love  
I'll never forget that moment  
You will always be remembered for the love you shared  
No doubt, it was you going out to love  
I didn't know, you were saying, goodbye.

## **Fall by Nancy (September 1999)**

The Autumn is a pretty month. September the leaves are in colors of red, gold and brown; and, it gets cooler. The annual Labor Day parade is celebrated. The air is crisp and clear. I remember playing in the leaves. Having wiener roast and marshmallows. Autumn is a fun time.

## **Don't Change by Megan (September 2005)**

I will never change the person I am or my feelings. I like who I am. No one can take that from me. I'm glad that I can love and care about people so much. I believe no matter who you are don't let anyone change you. You can only change you.

## **"Elections" by Jeff C (April 1998)**

People who vote are the biggest part of all elections. The voter is the one who has some or a lot of say in the elections. Most people vote for the one he or she feels would do the best job or whatever topic voting on. In government, the right to vote is one of our most cherished privileges. The constitution and laws of both the United States and the State of Illinois and the city of Rockford guarantee and protect this right.

# NOW

## **Ode to James O. By Colleen McC**

I'll always remember that wonderful smile  
Also a man of great personal style  
Your kindness and willingness to lend a hand  
No matter the job or person.  
I witnessed this first hand  
Ever the gentle man with a big heart  
Holding the door or pushing a cart  
I enjoyed the times we spent  
Playing Farkel and practicing  
reading  
The socializing was something both of us  
were needing  
Saturday night's pizza with you  
Is something I will miss, and I'll try not to be  
blue  
The day they told me you had died  
I sat in my room and cried  
I was in disbelief 'cause you were taken and had so much to live for  
It hit a lot of us right to our core  
I know you're in heaven looking at us  
For reasons I don't know, so I'll try not to cuss  
You played a special part in River North's day  
But God had a say with a different play  
Rest in Peace dear friend  
My heart may be broke, but I'm trying to mend.



# Recipes for Success / Recipes for Disaster

## Mexican Pizza Merriment by Tanya B and Michelle R

### Ingredients

- 3 cups of joy
- 1/4 cup of pepperoni happiness
- 1 cup of merriment marinara sauce
- 1/2 can of reaching for hope refried beans
- 1 cup of letting go lettuce
- 1/2 lb. of loving others cheese

**Directions:** Bake in the oven for the rest of your merry life!!!

## Marvelous Madelines by (Anonymous)

- 1 ounce of merriment
- 1 package of laughter
- 1 teaspoon of awareness
- 1 tablespoon of forgiveness
- 1 stick of naturally losing inhibitions
- 1 sprinkle of low stakes
- 1 zest of no threats
- 1 cube of the aura of someone you trust
- 1 wad of endless money
- 3 cloves of not caring what people think.

## Recipe of A Politicians Disaster of Epic Proportions by Larz S

- 1 can of Split the Beans
- 3 fish of Malarkey, filleted
- 2 lbs of Sack of Shits
- 3 tbsp of saltiness
- 1 Qt. of Bullshit
- 1 Drop of Truth
- And one 6 pack of Corona
- Finally, one year of 2020 in a nutshell



## Untitled Poem by Colleen M

Stepping Stones is a place I know  
 It's helping me on my path to grow.  
 There are a lot of us with many talents  
 We are looking forward to achieving balance.  
 Don't count us out because you may not know  
 Everything in our hearts, minds and souls.  
 We come together every day  
 To take our meds and go our way.  
 It's up to you to make your life and live  
 For everyone has something to give.  
 There are many things we try to overcome  
 It affects us all and not just some.  
 We are working toward different goals  
 And together we deal with the highs and the lows.  
 We are a family just the same  
 And Stepping Stones is the name of the game.



**THIS IS WHAT HEALING FROM TRAUMA FEELS LIKE:** you are holding a dam together with superglue and behind it is a giant ocean of pain and all you have is this superglue for the cracks in the cement. The trickles of pain through those cracks are enough to terrify you, but everyone around you seems oblivious, thinking, well you look like you're holding it together, you look like you're healing ... so you must be fine  
 Nikita Gill



**REMEMBER: THIS NEWSLETTER IS FOR YOU, BY YOU!** "Recovery Steps and Stories" seeks articles, photos, original artwork, poetry, short stories, jokes or just about ANYTHING you would like to share with peers. We're especially interested in personal stories of recovery to help spread the word that RECOVERY IS FOR EVERYONE! If you would like to contribute something for future issues, please mail donna@steppingstonesrockford.org and she'll make sure the information gets to the right person.

# Recovery Steps and Stories

CLIENT CREATIVITY: THEN and NOW

## THEN

### **The Sound of Music by Margaret (September 2005)**

The sound of music soothes us  
And our brains become alive  
Work no longer seems a burden  
Busy as a bees in a hive.  
We draw like artists before us  
And we rack our brains to write  
Surely there is something we can do  
The music lively and bright!

### **An Ode by Carl (September 2005)**

An Ode to people that are both mischievous and malicious,  
down right liars. I know more than you think. I see through you.

### **Words of Encouragement by Julie (August 2001)**

Sometimes the days come to pass when we all do have problems. It can bother both family, friends and others. It can hurt them and us, but it really isn't our fault we were born with it. It came to pass from somewhere unknown. Even though we have ways that will help us if we give them a try, we should try and cope with our mental illness. The following ways that you can help:

1. Take your medicine
2. Try counseling
3. Understanding and realizing to try and let it help you. Let miracles happen! It should and hopefully will help you.

### **Pick one or Pick None by Mike (August 2001)**

I am very upset when I have a girlfriend who is hitting on someone else, because I think that she is trying to go out with someone else. I am sick and tired of it totally. I am tired of the games and the mind-playing. Please stop what you are doing now. I regret ever giving you girls a chance to come into my life. You have stabbed me in the back one too many times. Enough is enough. Have a good life without me. Bye bye forever.

### **Numb by Brian (January 2005)**

I fell numb      I feel like shit  
Don't act dumb    I don't like it.  
I feel numb      Why should I be  
I feel so numb    I want to be me  
I feel numb      cuz you don't love me  
Don't act dumb    I'll make you love me.  
I feel numb      I feel like shit  
Don't act dumb    Love me damnit.

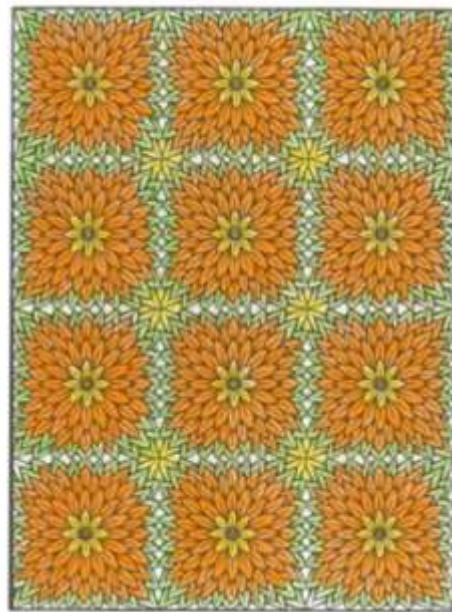
## NOW

### **She used to live on a Busy Street by Colleen M.**

She used to live on a busy street  
Where the cars and trucks and people meet.  
The echoes of children laughing in the dark is  
what she hears  
When she tries to sleep in Belvidere.  
The silence is not broken by  
The lone voice crying out in sighs.  
No one hears the tears of a tormented soul  
Where she is, no one knows  
She smokes one last cigarette  
Hoping that it would be her last breath.  
But there is hope outside these 4 walls  
And an ambulance gets called.  
She is taken to a place for help  
This is where her symptoms melt.  
The cycle continues for what seems like eternity  
She realizes her life is worth more  
than a body on a gurney.  
Time drags on and is lost  
Until she finds the right meds at any cost.  
For there are some people who care  
And she really has nothing left to fear.  
For when night turns to dawn  
She is somehow very calm.  
Just by sharing and being open  
It is her way of somehow coping.  
She is worthy of your attention  
And did I forget to mention,  
She usually has a smile on her face  
And if she doesn't she probably needs a call,  
someone to talk to or a warm embrace.  
So if you see her again  
Just say 'Hi' and be her friend.



Artwork created by our dear friend Kathy A, River North, 2020



Artwork by Ernst, River North



### Why do we include client artwork in Recovery Steps and Stories?

**“Art – no matter whether you choose to create it yourself or simply observe and enjoy it – is a relaxing and inspiring activity for many people...It is a great way to express your emotions without words, process complex feelings and find relief. In this article, we will take a closer look at art therapy and discuss its mental health benefits.”** So, whether you are enjoying other peoples’ work or making your own, it’s all good! You don’t need to be an artist to enjoying making art. Just create art! **“...people explore emotions, develop self-awareness, cope with stress, boost self-esteem, and work on social skills”** by making art. All you need are some art supplies or a visit to a museum or a few minutes looking at the art in Recovery Steps and Stories!

**If you are convinced you can’t make art, don’t forget that Adult coloring pages serve as a wonderful therapeutic tool.** Start coloring and let the rest go! You can find free pages to print on the internet. All you have to do is google “adult coloring pages” and you’ll be all set. If you don’t have a printer but you do have a smart phone or tablet, you can download programs which let you “color” electronically. That’s a pretty cool way to relax and do something fun...that’s free!

**Seriously! You don’t need to be an artist to benefit from making/enjoying art.** “The beneficial effects of creating aren't dependent on a person's skill or talents. "It's the process, not the product." Go forth and make—or enjoy—some art!

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-art-therapy-2795755>

<https://www.rtor.org/2018/07/10/benefits-of-art-therapy/>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mental-health/the-healing-power-of-art>

Below: Artwork from the Men of City View.

Wes and the big fish that DIDN'T get away!



# Get to Know Larry Scharnweber

**I know you've been an RSA, MHP, Program Manager and the Community Support Specialist during your time with Stepping Stones of Rockford. What sites have you worked at during your time at Stepping Stones?**

Sites that I have worked at: Overdene, City View, River North, as RSA; River North as MHP & River North & City View as Case Manager. Left CM Job in 2013 got CRSS credential in 2014.

**How many years have you worked at Stepping Stones?**

My 21st year starts on 9/25/2020.

**Did you have to go to school to learn about being a CRSS?**

I attended a weeklong formal training offered by DEPRESSION BIPOLAR SUPPORT ALLIANCE (DBSA), and took CRSS examination at Threshold in Chicago in 2014. The CRSS credential requires on job training & hours of supervision from masters level clinicians, too.

**What kind of things do you do as the CRSS?**

As a CRSS I have, facilitated groups, helped revive and sustain client newsletter, presented & tabulated annual client survey, planned and managed agency Halloween party, played softball with clients and staff for several summers at the park near Overdene, promoted Wellness Recovery Action Plan, peer counseling with various clients, worked to promote the concept that Recovery is For Everyone & rudimentary beginning for client advisory council.

**I hear you a big fan of meditation. How did you learn to meditate?**

When I was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2014 I read that men with that diagnosis had significantly better outcomes if they meditated. I bought a book (10% Happier by Dan Harris) and began to practice (using several different apps at first). Today I have a daily meditation practice & study Buddhist philosophy & neuroscience related to meditation & contemplative practice. I am waiting for pandemic to end to go on my first 10 day meditation retreat.

**You're always listening to music. What kind of music do you like the best?**

My musical tastes are quite broad, with emphasis on Rock, Folk, Singer Songwriters & Pop. My playlists have things from the late 40's to some current hits ( but the bulk of my favorites can be found in 60's - 80's).

**Do you have any pets?**

We currently have 3 pets. 2 cats ( Izzy & Lily) and one spoiled Shih Tzu (Maxx).

**What's one fact about you that most of us wouldn't know about you?**

I think the thing that might surprise most people is that I struggle every single day battling symptoms of depression. I credit my personal WRAP with helping me manage to keep and stay well. It is what has inspired & sustained me in presenting the message of Recovery here at Stones.

**What's next for you as you retire from CRSS?**

It turns out I will not be leaving the agency just yet. I'm stepping down to work overnights for the next year or so & then when the pandemic is passed & things are more normal, I will move into full retirement. My goal in retirement is to see some of the USA and enjoy my family, friends & life.

**Larry, we are so glad you'll still be with Stepping Stones! Thanks for all your work!**



**THEN:**

*Here is an excerpt from Pebbles, as written by*

*Skip many a year ago!*



**LARRY SCHARNWEBER**



Larry has always met my requests in a timely fashion. He has given me duplicates of his and my CD collection for many CD's. He treats all the residents the same. He's very professional in carrying out his duties.



Life should not only be lived, it should be celebrated.





## Busting Stigma, The “NAMI Way!”

As we hope you fine readers already know, **NAMI advocates, educates and busts stigma like no other.** You can find NAMI on the internet, social media, on TV and radio. In fact, you’ll see flyers, printed information, gatherings and events. As their website says, they listen and lead. NAMI’s vision is inspirational! They are their to help us during the recovery process. **Hope:** We believe in the possibility of recovery, wellness and the potential in all of us. **Inclusion:** We embrace diverse backgrounds, cultures and perspectives. **Empowerment:** We promote confidence, self-efficacy and service to our mission. **Compassion:** We practice respect, kindness and empathy. **Fairness:** We fight for equity and justice.



**We are incredibly fortunate to have NAMI Northern Illinois located at our Main Office.** What a resource! Danielle is a powerhouse of whom we are most grateful. Check out their work at [naminorthernillinois.org](http://naminorthernillinois.org)

**Unfortunately, stigma is alive and well in our country.** It takes all of us to bust that stigma. But how to do it? As NAMI indicates on their website: “All of us in the mental health community need to raise our voices against stigma. Every day, in every possible way, we need to stand up to stigma.” From NAMI’s website:

**TALK OPENLY ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH:** “I fight stigma by talking about what it is like to have bipolar disorder and PTSD on Facebook. Even if this helps just one person, it is worth it for me.” – Angela Christie Roach Taylor

**EDUCATE YOURSELF AND OTHERS:** “I take every opportunity to educate people and share my personal story and struggles with mental illness. It doesn't matter where I am, if I over-hear a conversation or a rude remark being made about mental illness, or anything regarding a similar subject, I always try to use that as a learning opportunity and gently intervene and kindly express how this makes me feel, and how we need to stop this because it only adds to the stigma.” – Sara Bean

**BE CONSCIOUS OF LANGUAGE:** “I fight stigma by reminding people that their language matters. It is so easy to refrain from using mental health conditions as adjectives and in my experience, most people are willing to replace their usage of it with something else if I explain why their language is problematic.” – Helmi Henkin

**ENCOURAGE EQUALITY BETWEEN PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ILLNESS:** “I find that when people understand the true facts of what a mental illness is, being a disease, they think twice about making comments. I also remind them that they wouldn't make fun of someone with diabetes, heart disease or cancer.” – Megan Dotson

**SHOW COMPASSION FOR THOSE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS:** “I offer free hugs to people living outdoors, and sit right there and talk with them about their lives. I do this in public, and model compassion for others. Since so many of our homeless population are also struggling with mental illness, the simple act of showing affection can make their day but also remind passersby of something so easily forgotten: the humanity of those who are suffering.” – Rachel Wagner

**CHOOSE EMPOWERMENT OVER SHAME:** “I fight stigma by choosing to live an empowered life. To me, that means owning my life and my story and refusing to allow others to dictate how I view myself or how I feel about myself.” – Val Fletcher

**BE HONEST ABOUT TREATMENT:** “I fight stigma by saying that I see a therapist and a psychiatrist. Why can people say they have an appointment with their primary care doctor without fear of being judged, but this lack of fear does not apply when it comes to mental health professionals?” – Ysabel Garcia

**LET THE MEDIA KNOW WHEN THEY'RE BEING STIGMATIZING:** “If I watch a program on TV that has any negative comments, story lines or characters with a mental illness, I write to the broadcasting company and to the program itself. If Facebook has any stories where people make ignorant comments about mental health, then I write back and fill them in on my son's journey with schizoaffective disorder.” – Kathy Smith

**DON'T HARBOR SELF-STIGMA:** “I fight stigma by not having stigma for myself—not hiding from this world in shame, but being a productive member of society. I volunteer at church, have friends, and I'm a peer mentor and a mom. I take my treatment seriously. I'm purpose driven and want to show others they can live a meaningful life even while battling [mental illness].” – Jamie Brown



**This is what our collective voice sounds like.** It sounds like bravery, strength and persistence—the qualities we need to face mental illness *and* to fight stigma. No matter how you contribute to the mental health movement, you can make a difference simply by knowing that mental illness is not anyone's fault, no matter what societal stigma says. You can make a difference by being and living [StigmaFree](http://StigmaFree).

<https://www.nami.org/About-NAMI/What-We-Do>

<https://www.nami.org/blogs/nami-blog/october-2017/9-ways-to-fight-mental-health-stigma>

## LOL (Laughter is the best medicine)

**What did the Buddhist ask the hot dog vendor?**

“Make me one with everything.”

**You know why you never see elephants hiding up in trees?**

Because they’re really good at it.

**What is red and smells like blue paint?** Red paint.

**I waited and stayed up all night and tried to figure out where the sun was.**

Then it dawned on me.

**I bought the world’s worst thesaurus yesterday.**

Not only is it terrible, it’s terrible.

**What do Alexander the Great and Winnie the Pooh have in common?**

Same middle name.

**There’s a fine line between a numerator and a denominator.**

(...Only a fraction of people will get this clean joke.)

**What do dentists call their x-rays?** Tooth pics!

**Did you hear about the first restaurant to open on the moon?**

It had great food, but no atmosphere.

**Why are toilets so good at poker?** They always get a flush

**Why is Peter Pan always flying?** Because he Neverlands. (This joke never grows old—hahaha!)

**You heard the rumor going around about butter?**

Never mind, I shouldn’t spread it.

**Someone stole my mood ring yesterday.** I don’t know how I feel about that.



**Relaxation meditation**, which helps bring calm by using an object of focus such as your breath or a visualization, is a proven tool to help manage and ease stress. Not every meditation technique is meant for relaxation, but try this today! Here’s an exercise to try, which uses deep breathing, body scanning, and awareness to calm the body and mind:

- 1. Focus on your breath.** Find a quiet space and get comfortable. Begin by taking five deep breaths — in through the nose and out through the mouth. As you breathe in, think about taking in fresh air; as you breathe out, think about letting go of any stress in the body and mind. On the last exhalation, gently close the eyes.
- 2. Check In.** Pause and take a few moments to settle into your body. Acknowledge your senses, noticing any sounds, smells, tastes; feel the weight of your body on the chair, or wherever you’re sitting.
- 3. Body scan.** Scan your body from head to toe, observing any tension or discomfort. Scan a second time, observing which parts of the body feel relaxed. Take about 20 seconds for each scan. Notice any thoughts that arise without attempting to alter them. Note your underlying mood, becoming aware of what’s there without judgment.
- 4. Back to the breath.** Return your attention to your breath. Breathe normally, simply observing the rising and falling sensation in your body. Focus on the quality of each breath. Is it deep? Shallow? Long or short? Fast or slow? Now, begin to silently count the breaths: 1 as you inhale, 2 as you exhale, 3 on the next inhalation, and so on, up to 10. Then start again at 1. If thoughts bubble up or your mind starts to wander, don’t worry. Just guide your attention back to the breath.
- 5. Just sit.** At the end of your breathwork, spend 20 to 30 seconds just sitting, allowing your mind to be free. It doesn’t matter whether you’re calm and focused or you have a lot of thoughts. Just let your mind simply be.
- 6. Prepare to finish.** Finally, bring your awareness back to anything physical you may be experiencing. For example, your posture or where your feet make contact with the floor. Notice any sounds. Then, slowly open your eyes. Try to recognize how your mind feels and then make an intention to carry those feelings of calm and relaxation into the rest of your day.

<https://www.headspace.com/meditation/how-to-relax>