

FILLING A GAP IN RAMSEY COUNTY FOR PEOPLE WITH SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESSES

Clubhouses are a community-based recovery model for people living with mental illness, providing opportunities for long-term friendship, employment, housing, and education as well as access to medical and psychiatric services in a restorative and caring environment. The very first Clubhouse was started in New York in 1948, as an informal support system for former patients of a psychiatric hospital. Focusing on strengths and abilities rather than illness, Clubhouses adopt a holistic approach to treatment and support that addresses a fuller range of needs on the path to recovery, better enabling people living with mental illness to regain hope, dignity, and a sense of control over their goals and futures. Over 320 local clubhouses worldwide operate on proven standards that have been developed and backed by evidence over five decades. For more information: clubhouse-intl.org

Core Values and Key Components of the Clubhouse Model

- **Membership:**
 - voluntary and open to anyone over 18 with a diagnosed mental illness
 - enrollment process is easy and accessible
 - members are valued colleagues and critical parts of community
 - strengths-based approach where members have shared ownership and responsibility for the Clubhouse's success
 - members are not treated as patients or defined by a disability label that views them through a deficit lens
- **Community is therapy:**
 - an intentional community of opportunity and need
 - everyone can feel welcome, needed, and accepted as their true selves
 - recognizes that people do not become ill in isolation, and hence cannot truly heal in isolation either
 - reach-out calls or cards to remind members they are welcomed and needed at the Clubhouse
- **Work-ordered day:**
 - the structured system around which the daily activity of a Clubhouse is organized
 - used to help members learn new skills, hone their talents, build self-esteem and confidence, develop a sense of belonging, and make progress towards short- and long-term goals
 - purposeful and shared activities that reflect member-level and clubhouse needs that foster meaningful relationships
 - members draw on talents and strengths when choosing work and social activities
- **Decision-making and choice:**
 - members have choice in how they want to contribute and who they want to work with
 - open forums for joint decision making
 - consensus is required, even for small decisions
 - members often occupy leadership positions and are involved in calendar and meal planning

Why do we need Clubhouses?

One in 4 adults will experience mental illness in their lifetimes. One in 25 will experience a serious mental illness. Still, over 40% of US adults report not being able to access mental health care when they need it. The same 2022 nationwide survey found an average delay from onset of mental health symptoms to treatment of 11 years. There is a shortage of mental health services to meet this immense need, and far more funding and attention is directed towards crisis management. Clubhouses represent a cost-effective and high-impact proactive model that supports people with mental illnesses before they reach a crisis point. This model fills a critical gap by providing holistic support, and addressing psychosocial needs that together with medication help people with mental illnesses to escape the costly "revolving door" of multiple hospitalizations. Clubhouse members are far more likely to report close friendships they can rely on when they need help. They also receive ongoing support in areas such as housing, employment, and education, enhancing their physical and mental health as well as their connections to their communities and the workforce.

Clubhouses in Minnesota

There are currently two Clubhouses in Minnesota, both operated by Vail Place in Hennepin County. The first opened in Hopkins in 1981 in response to the growing need for community-based mental health services. Shortly after, in 1988, a second Clubhouse was opened in Uptown Minneapolis. Vail Place is committed to the Clubhouse model, believing in the ability of people with mental illnesses to take responsibility for their recovery and goals. Their mission is achieved through peer support, trauma-informed care, and culturally appropriate services.

NAMI Ramsey County has formed a broad coalition to advocate for the launch of the county's first Clubhouse. It will fill a gap for adults who live with serious mental illnesses including members of the BIPOC and LGBTIA communities. "Working together, we're excited to bring this vision to reality and pleased that Vail Place has agreed to serve as the operating agency for the Ramsey Clubhouse," state Clubhouse Committee Co-Chairs Mindy Greiling and Marly Yang.

According to Karina Forrest Perkins, Executive Director of Vail Place (vailplace.org): "*We have an assertive plan to advocate for Minnesota funding mechanisms that support Clubhouses statewide. Minnesota has abundant evidence that the current strategy for mental health services and supports is not working. A key reason is that we rely on a transactional exchange of crisis care, inpatient hospitalization, assessment, medication, and treatment. While all these services are an important part of the recovery journey, they do not support an individual once that phase is over. The Clubhouse does. In collaboration with our partners, we will make sure Minnesotans have this model in place for their mental health recovery journey.*"