



LIVING WELL

Integral Care's peer support specialists have lived experience with mental illness or substance use disorder. In this newsletter, they share stories about recovery and offer hope for tomorrow.

Lead Editor: Nathaniel Hall, Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team Peer Support Specialist

An Interview with Darilynn Cardona-Beiler

Darilynn Cardona-Beiler is Integral Care's Director of Adult Behavioral Health Systems. She was a major force behind the new apartment community, Terrace at Oak Springs. Nathaniel Hall interviewed her.



Nathaniel: Thanks for doing this interview, Darilynn. Can you tell our readers what Integral Care's Terrace at Oaks Springs is?

Darilynn: Terrace at Oak Springs is a first-of-its kind housing community in Central Texas. It's a unique 50-unit apartment community with onsite support services and an integrated primary and mental health care clinic. Fifty people living on the streets will have a permanent home there. The clinic will be open to adults in the surrounding community. Terrace at Oak Springs is modeled after other successful Housing First programs across the country.

Nathaniel: What is meant by "Housing First"?

Darilynn: Housing First is a proven solution for people who have experienced chronic homelessness. The goal is to move people from the streets into housing as quickly as possible. The idea is that once a person has a safe, stable

place to live and appropriate support services, recovery begins. Once a person isn't worried about where they will sleep that night, they can begin focusing on their health, finding a job or volunteer work that matches their interests.

Nathaniel: With safe and stable housing, do you feel that recovery from mental health struggles and other significant life challenges is enhanced?

Darilynn: We know that a safe, stable home is the foundation we all need to do well physically, emotionally, socially and financially. Factors related to housing have the potential to help – or harm – our health in major ways. Homelessness can often cause or worsen mental illness, drug and alcohol use, and chronic health conditions. Homelessness is traumatic. People experiencing homelessness often live with many personal challenges, such as the sudden loss of a home or adjusting to conditions of shelter life. Some people, particularly women, may have histories of trauma, including sexual, psychological, or physical abuse. A home offers peace of mind. You can take care of your personal needs and focus on your mental health and well-being.

Nathaniel: Please tell our readers about the integrated primary and mental health care clinic at the Terrace at Oaks Springs location.



Darilynn: The 3000 Oak Springs Clinic will open later this year. It will serve Terrace residents and will be available to adults in the community who are eligible for Integral Care services. The clinic will offer mental healthcare services with support from a psychiatrist, medicine, individual and group counseling, drug and alcohol treatment, supported employment services and peer support. Primary healthcare services include physical exams, sick visits and treatment for long-term health problems like diabetes.

Nathaniel: What are some of the components of the living area at the Terrace at Oak Springs that will offer a sense of community to the residents?

Darilynn: Activities will be held in the community room, such as movies, cooking or art classes. Individuals moving into this community will be part of a resident council. The council will develop community rules and help look after the property. There will also be opportunities to come together with the larger neighborhood, for example to be a part of a neighborhood association.

Nathaniel: How does it feel seeing your dream of a Housing First community in Austin become a reality?

Darilynn: We are making history. We have been working to develop this project for the last 5 years. It took all of us at Integral Care to make this happen. As an agency, we've never done anything like this before. I am so thrilled about this huge accomplishment.



Ode to Normalcy

Century old oaks and landscape mute the pain I feel
My pod in the basement is colorless,
like a concentration camp cell
Photos of lost friends and lovers pierce my heart
A phone dangles from the wall

But who can I call? Who can relate?
My room isolates further, my bed hard, my body numb,
North wind chills my nerves and cells relentlessly
I feel like the cactus covered in thorns

Sleep and junk food weaken the pain,
but thorns penetrate my dreams,
Covered with five blankets, a mouthpiece
to stop grinding teeth-
Waking up takes hours.

"Ha, ha", I chuckle, "how much deeper can I go?"
"I'll descend deeper, the opposite of a soaring bird!"
Then self-hatred erodes sadness,
as waves on a powdery beach
Weeks of indecisiveness lessen

Eventually I trudge out of my room
Reaching the ground floor
Endless activity and colors begin to engulf me
Red roses, blue jeans and an army green windbreaker

Photos and art projects regain significance
Mom and Dad visit me and we get fresh air by the oak trees
The new room is cozy, my attitude smooth, my appetite back
The basement and my thorns haunt me no more!

Tomorrow's diversions make sleep an inconvenience
Rest arrives with one blanket and no mouthpiece
Up at dawn I have solutions for all - this patient needs medication
This one just music

Time, wisdom, and doctors begin my road to normalcy
Meds, blood tests, movies,
Ten weeks later a routine emerges
As bedtime approaches I reflect

Did I survive another day?
My name is Brian Charles and I'm glad to be here.

Poetry by Brian Shade

*Integral Care Peer Support Specialist
East 2nd Street Clinic*

7

Self Esteem Boosters

By Nathaniel Hall

Certain symptoms of mental illness may negatively impact our level of self-esteem. We may question ourselves and what we are capable of doing.

Low self-esteem may lead us to pull away from friends and family. It may make us less motivated to take care of ourselves. It can lead to feelings of hopelessness.

My go-to activities to improve self-esteem:

- 1** Try something creative – color, draw a picture of something you see, write a poem
- 2** Make a list of your accomplishments
- 3** Do something nice for someone else
- 4** Treat yourself to something fun, like a good movie, or an occasional hot fudge sundae!!
- 5** Find activities that make you laugh
- 6** Replace negative, pessimistic thoughts with more positive optimistic thoughts
- 7** Make a list of positive affirmations. Here are some of my favorites:
 - "I can get well and stay well."
 - "I have the potential to advance in so many areas of my life."
 - "I can relate with others who struggle with some of the same issues that I do."
 - "I can set the pace of my own recovery."
 - "I have the potential to live my life with a sense of meaning and purpose."
 - "I have the right to make mistakes and learn from them."

Client Highlight - Loretta

My name is Loretta. I am a mother of 5 beautiful children. I have worked as medical assistant and I had aspirations of becoming a nurse. Due to domestic violence, I found myself homeless for 2 years. Being homeless was freedom from domestic violence, but being on the streets can be very difficult for a woman. I was finally connected with a caseworker from Integral Care and within 3 months I had my own apartment. When I received the keys to my apartment it was the first time in a long time that I could say, "I feel safe." The door to my future opened. Integral Care brought me hope. Having safe and stable housing is the most beautiful gift I have ever been given.

For more Integral Care stories of recovery, visit Integral Care's YouTube page: youtube.com/IntegralCareAustin.



WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?

We're accepting submissions for future issues of Living Well. Share your creative writing, artwork or personal story of recovery with us for consideration. Please send submissions to Nathaniel.Hall@IntegralCare.org. We can't wait to hear from you! Please note: unfortunately, not all submissions will be printed.

Resources

Psychiatric Emergency Services

Walk-in mental health urgent care for adults and children | 1165 Airport Blvd., 2nd Floor, Austin, 78702

Hours Monday – Friday, 8am to 10pm
Saturday, Sunday and Holidays, 10am to 8pm

24/7 Helpline

A helpline for anyone who needs immediate emotional support | [512-472-HELP \(4357\)](tel:512-472-HELP)

Caritas of Austin

Housing programs, job placement, food pantry, classes to learn to manage your finances and more

Lunch served Monday - Friday, 11am to 12:30pm

[611 Neches St.](https://www.caritasofaustin.org) | [512-479-4610](tel:512-479-4610) | caritasofaustin.org

About Integral Care

We support adults and children living with mental illness, substance use disorder and intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our services include a 24-hour helpline for anyone who needs immediate support, ongoing counseling to improve mental health, drug and alcohol treatment to help with recovery, and housing to regain health and independence.



Facebook.com/IntegralCareATX



Twitter.com/IntegralCareATX

IntegralCare.org

24/7 Helpline: 512-472-HELP (4357)