

# GRAND AVENUE *club*

*A community that works*



November 2018

Dear Friend of Grand Avenue Club,

I had been running a call center for 10 years and then in November 2012 my life fell apart when all my health issues caught up with me: fibromyalgia, gastroparesis, depression, PTSD, and anxiety. I didn't know it then, but I also had bipolar disorder. My frequent physical and psychological breakdowns really took a toll. **I lost my job because of my health issues.**

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Ex Officio

My job loss meant losing my health insurance and access to my doctors and medications. I went through a severe withdrawal and a complete break from reality, suffering several minor strokes. I was bedridden for 9 months and barely mobile for a year. Although my application for Social Security Disability was rejected, I qualified for Badger Care, a state health insurance plan. I did get help, but progress was slow. After a year and a half of physical therapy, I was only able to walk 3 blocks and stand for 20 minutes. I was then diagnosed with bipolar illness and was offered psychotherapy every other week.

But I was still a wreck, leaving my room only to go to the bathroom or to a doctor's appointment.

## BOARD MEMBERS

**Mary Kay Braza**

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**Mary C. Theisen**

**My therapist recommended joining Grand Avenue Club (GAC),** but I wasn't ready to force myself out of the door to get there. I ended up being hospitalized for a breakdown. I had lost all hope and felt reduced to nothing. When I was released from the hospital, my therapist mentioned GAC again. It sounded interesting, but I had to get out of the house first. Finally I came to GAC and joined. I chose to work in the Education/Employment Unit. My goal was to get back to work.

I started slowly at GAC, coming in every other day. The walk to the bus stop was very hard, but at least I was leaving the house and being around people after years of isolation. I loved using my computer skills; so on most days I helped put together GAC's daily newspaper. Everyone was so welcoming and supportive. I was dealing with so much, but someone was always there to help or to listen.

After a few months I was given the opportunity to do a Group Placement at United Way. This gave me confidence and I felt productive. I was then offered a Transitional Employment Position at Derco Aerospace. That was when things started turning around. I was earning a regular paycheck again! Because I was so motivated, I learned Derco's computer system quickly and got to do other things around the warehouse. I was doing so well that I went off my primary anti-depressant.

210 E. Michigan Street - Milwaukee, WI 53202-4901 - tel (414)276-6474 - fax(414)276-1606 - [www.grandavenueclub.org](http://www.grandavenueclub.org)



2016  
Health Care Hero  
Award



2013 Field  
Agency of the  
Year



2012 Distinctive  
Innovation in  
Social Service



Grenesha Reed, Eva Norton, Amy Multhaus  
and Imogene Hines on their way to work, February 2017

The work experience I got at Derco was enough for me to land a full-time Independent Employment position with Astronautics Corporation of America. I have been working there 40 hours a week for 6 months. Now that I'm able to be on my feet so much, I'm constantly moving parts and boxes. For the first time I have health, dental, vision, and life insurances as well as a 401K. Because my supervisor has urged me to take advantage of a tuition reimbursement program, I am making plans to return to school to study Inventory and Production Management. That way I can move up and work in several departments.

**Because of GAC's support and opportunities, I went from near death and a disconnect from reality to being a functional person taking care of herself.**

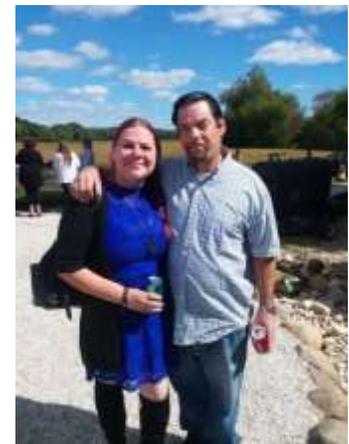
I've just gone off my second anti-depressant. In the last 2 years I have lost almost 80 pounds. I have opened up to being in a relationship with my boyfriend for the last 6 months – this, after closing myself off from others for years.

I would not be where I am today without GAC and that is why I hope you will contribute generously to GAC's 2018 Winter Appeal. Your contribution will mean that many more members will be able to resume a good life or experience such a life for the first time.

Sincerely,



Amy Multhaus



Amy and her boyfriend, Summer 2018

- *Amy's story is one of many illustrating how Grand Avenue Club opportunities lead to increased productivity and life satisfaction. We serve approximately 450 active members every year.*
- *As of today 238,021 children and adults in Milwaukee County experience the challenge of a mental illness. Of these 57,125 cope with schizophrenia, bipolar illness, and major depression.*
- *Active Clubhouse members have significantly lower mental health care costs and far fewer psychiatric hospitalizations compared to other psychiatric patients.*
- *In 2017 GAC members earned \$1.4 M in taxable revenue, nearly all of which was spent in Milwaukee County.*

**Your generous support is critical to our success. Thank you!**