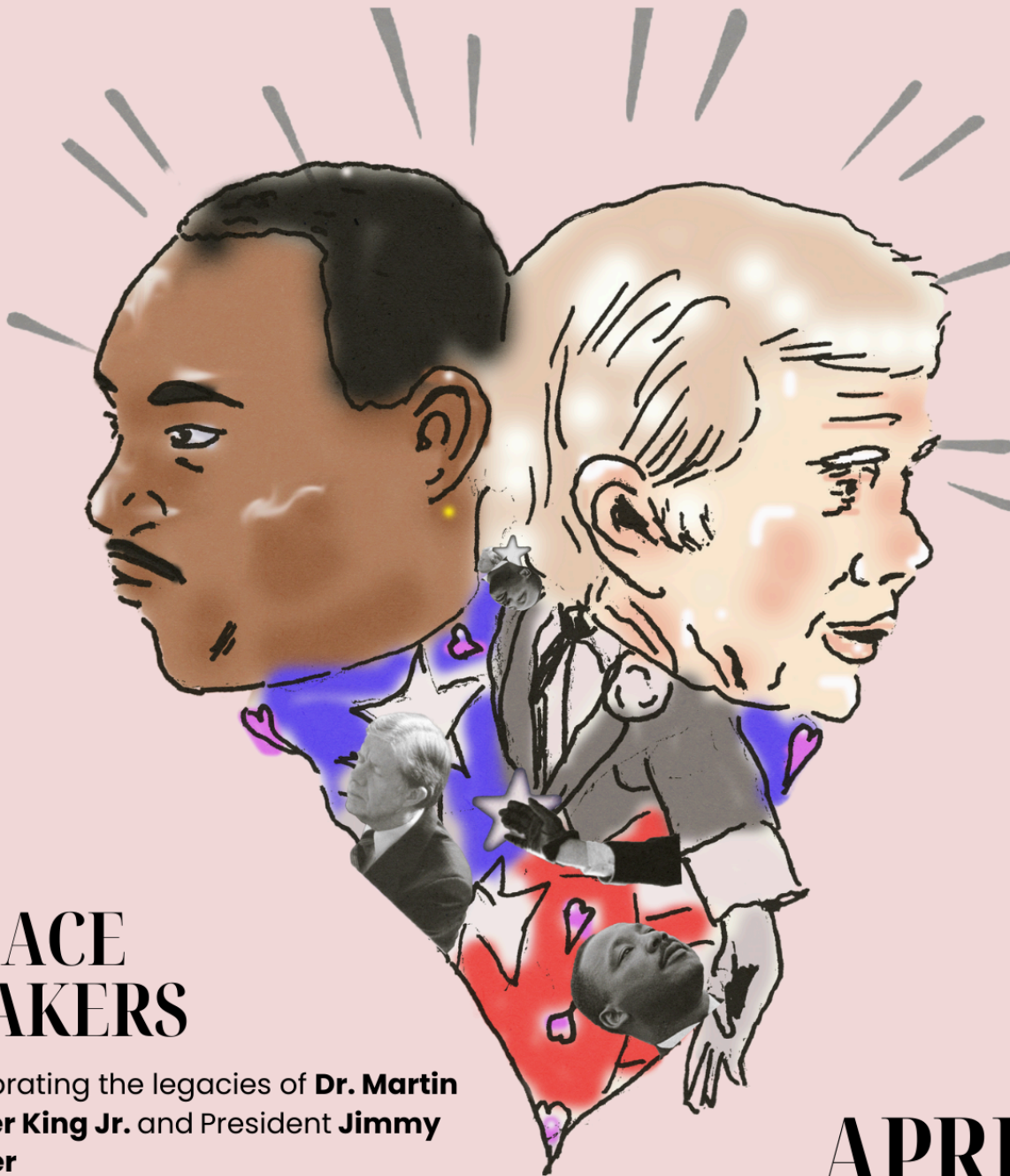


COMPASS

Mental Health Magazine



PEACE MAKERS

Celebrating the legacies of **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.** and President **Jimmy Carter**

APRIL EDITION

Mental Health Around The World
How Women Seek Treatment

COMPASS

Spring Issue

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Letter From the Editor



*Amy Muhlbach is the Executive Director of
Capital Clubhouse Inc. in Washington DC*

We are living in times of great uncertainty. Federal agencies and programs face constant cuts, and the services so many rely on are at risk. While these challenges are real, they underscore an essential truth: now is the time to support private nonprofits like Capital Clubhouse.

More than ever, people need connection. The ongoing loneliness epidemic makes isolation devastating. But community brings strength, empowerment, and hope. Every day at the Clubhouse, our members aren't just supported—they're empowered. They use their skills, grow their abilities, and work side by side with others. Instead of sitting at home alone or feeling disconnected from the world, they experience a sense of purpose and belonging. They learn, day by day, that they are not alone.

We can't do it without you. Here's how you can help:

- **Spread the word.** If you know someone living with a mental illness, tell them about us. Let them know they don't have to navigate life alone.
- **Connect us with local businesses.** Our members are willing and able to work. See how we can partner through our Employment Program.
- **Volunteer.** Whether it's helping with our education program or supporting our Employment Dinner, your time makes a difference.
- **Donate.** Any amount—big or small—helps sustain our mission.

Engage in our community—whether you're a member, supporter, or partner. Help us make Clubhouse not just the best-kept secret in mental health recovery, but the best-known solution.

With Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Muhlbach".

Executive Director, Capital Clubhouse

Clubhouse News

Capital Clubhouse Inc. is a nonprofit specialty care provider in the Washington DC area, dedicated to providing sanctuary and support to all those living with a mental illness. Call **202-817-9042** for more info.

SPRING HAS SPRUNG!



LIFE IN THE BLOOMING CITY

March in the Nation's Capital means one thing: flowers. This year, hundreds of thousands of people gathered from all around the world at the famous Tidal Basin to see the mosaic of pink and white crowns of the cherry blossom trees.

Originally a gift from Japan at the turn of the 20th century, they have come to symbolize friendship, renewal, and inner peace, all things meaningful to a healthy mind.

For this reason, Capital Clubhouse continued its annual tradition of a field trip to see the cherry blossoms and spark a community dialogue about healthy social relationships.

DISABLED EMPLOYMENT IN A MODERN AGE

EDUCATIONAL EVENTS RAISE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

What's the best way to stay competitive in a workforce with emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence? These were the type of questions graduate students Rebeca Demeterco and Evan Fishell sought to elucidate in their audacious presentation event, *Employment Dinner: A Night of Questions*.

Earlier that month, another employment dinner, *In Conversation with Laura*, Laura M. Labovich laid out why in today's work climate, applying to jobs in person beats applying online.



NEW PARTNERSHIPS PROMOTE OPPORTUNITY



At Capital Clubhouse, community and collaboration are at the heart of everything we do. Each semester, we are fortunate to welcome students from The George Washington University Occupational Therapy program, who bring fresh energy and expertise to our psychosocial work. This unique partnership allows students to gain hands-on experience while making a meaningful impact on the health of our Clubhouse members.

This semester, we had the pleasure of working with Sara and Kawthar, two dedicated interns who helped facilitate our Work-Ordered Day program by assisting in Clubhouse operations, event planning, and teaching our members essential life skills like cooking and cleaning.



Beyond their professional guidance, their greatest gift is their openness and willingness to connect. By fostering friendships and encouraging socialization at comfortable paces, they have helped members feel seen, valued, and engaged in a way that extends beyond therapy.

For Sara and Kawthar, this experience is more than an internship—it's an opportunity to witness occupational therapy's role in mental health firsthand. "Occupational therapy isn't just about helping people complete tasks—it's about restoring confidence in everyday life," Sara shares. Kawthar adds, "The Clubhouse model proves that healing happens in community, through shared goals, structure,

and support." Their passion for the field and belief in its transformative impact is evident in everything they do, and their presence continues to leave an imprint on both members and staff alike.

As our partnership with GW's Occupational Therapy program grows, we remain deeply grateful for students like Sara and Kawthar, who embody the spirit of learning, connection, and empowerment. Each semester, new interns bring fresh perspectives, and our members gain dedicated allies on their journey toward stability and fulfillment. This exchange of knowledge and friendship strengthens our mission and reminds us all that meaningful change happens when people come together with care and purpose.

CLUBHOUSE PREPARES FOR MAY MENTAL HEALTH EVENTS

Capital Clubhouse, in conjunction with our accrediting body and satellite partners, are preparing for various awareness building and fund raising events taking place through-out the month of May. First is Clubhouse Giving Day, a fundraising event from May 1st-14th. LEARN MORE HERE. <https://www.clubhousegivingday.org/organizations/capital-clubhouse>. Then meet us May 8th for the social event, *It Blooms*, where we also say goodbye to two of our longtime interns and one employee: 3-5pm at Capital Clubhouse. Mental Health Action Week is the 19th-23rd, where we raise money to help those disabled by mental illness. You can donate here: <https://capitalclubhouseinc.networkforgood.com/> Lastly, we have a free employment dinner event, Thursday the 22nd, 5-6pm, *A Night Of Questions, Part II*, catered by Maggiano's with secret guest speaker. Mark your MAY calendars!

“These talks really highlight how the employment sphere is always evolving, and those with mental health issues won’t be exempt from new realities.” Says Clubhouse Generalist, Dana Lee Harington.

While these talks were educational in nature, they also asked some thought-provoking questions, such as why should you work? Should you work with a debilitating mental illness? Are you going to be able to compete fairly? And more. Executive Director Amy Muhlbach, LCSW, chimed in.



(PICTURED ABOVE) One of the Employment Dinner speakers, Laura M. Labovich

“It seems like these are easy questions. Ideally, we’d want everyone to find a job they love doing and make a living. But for those of us on disability, social security, or just have low-functioning capabilities, it gets more complicated. We work towards finding purpose, getting out of isolation, and making sure needs are properly accommodated.”

One in three members that come into a Clubhouse community will be job-seeking. Another third are training to become job-ready, meaning learning skills and gathering materials such as I.D.’s and resumes, to be able to work someday. For many, the prospect of full employment from a private company is uncertain given the many barriers to entry, such as stigma.

But the newest barrier seems to be a rapidly techno-centric economy that has ever-updating rules.

“These talks are meant to educate and inspire hope, but also to keep people realistic. Like, say, if you don’t have a working email today, you just aren’t going to get hired anywhere.”

But a working email is just the beginning. A good example comes from Demeterco’s presentation on resumes, and how many industries are using applicant tracking systems, or ATS’s, to screen potential employees. These AI programs scan resumes for keywords, and automatically discard those that don’t comply with their strict requirements. That means saying goodbye to fancy graphics, headings and verbiage.

“Employers for managerial positions at Exxon Mobil, all the way down to stocking clerks at Target, are making this shift, potentially making your resume go unseen by human eyes if you aren’t careful. And the trend is only getting worse.” says Demeterco.

These educational talks ask us to stay viable in the modern world by considering the development of relationships with employers, and tapping into our networks, especially in person, and to familiarize ourselves with the cutting edge technology used in the workplace.



(PICTURED ABOVE) Members of capital clubhouse talk to fake AI interviewer chat



PEACE MAKERS

Part of the series, “Holistic Pillars of Mental Health” By Staff 4/18/2025

For decades, two distinct figures of the American conscience, Martin Luther King Jr. and Jimmy Carter, have loomed large as advocates for justice, equality, and compassion. While their legacies are most often framed in terms of civil rights and global peace-building, an unspoken thread connects them directly to the cause of mental health. By confronting the systemic evils of poverty, inequity, and war, they forged pathways toward the liberation of the mind—a reality intrinsic to mental well-being.

When reflecting on mental health, we sought to cut through the noise and misinformation that often clouds the topic. The timing of the drafting of this publication—coinciding with Valentine’s Day and Black History Month—naturally brought themes of love and social justice to the forefront. These reflections were further shaped by the recent passing of a former president, who, at the remarkable age of 100, left behind a legacy defined by peace and compassion. These moments of collective remembrance and celebration offered a poignant reminder of the enduring connection between societal progress and mental well-being.

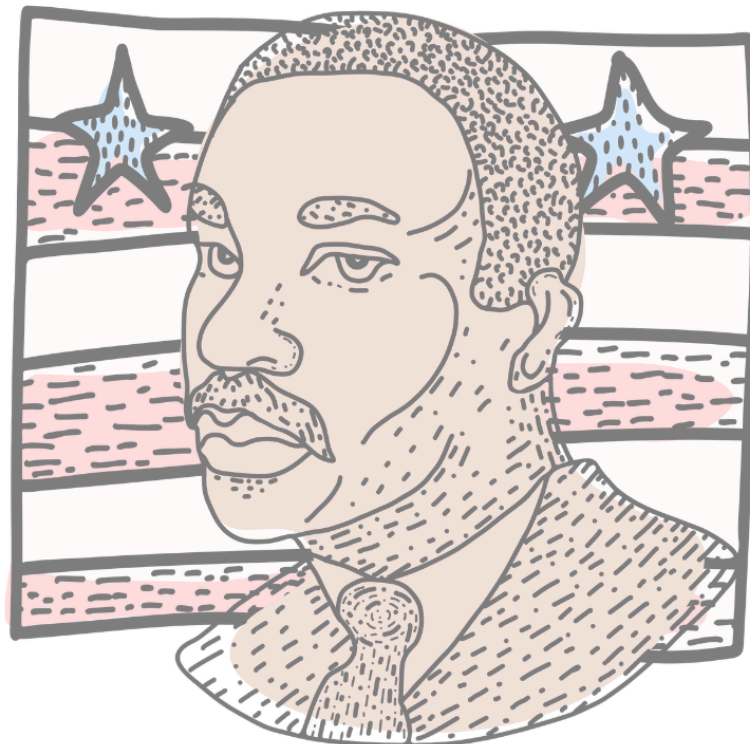
Dr. King’s eloquent dream of a just society was not simply about desegregating lunch counters or securing voting rights. It was, at its heart, an all-encompassing vision of human dignity. In his famous “Beyond Vietnam” speech, King decried the “giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism.” He saw poverty as a moral failure, its grinding effects rendering entire communities vulnerable—not just economically, but emotionally and psychologically. As researchers now confirm, financial instability and chronic stress form a vicious cycle that perpetuates mental illness.

Programs birthed under King’s inspiration, such as the Poor People’s Campaign, exemplify how social justice movements can double as safeguards for mental health. Poverty is more than the absence of material wealth—it is a siege on hope, a thief of opportunity, and a precipitator of anxiety, depression, and substance abuse. King’s insistence on tackling poverty was an implicit acknowledgment that a just society and a mentally healthy society are inseparable ideals.

Similarly, Jimmy Carter's presidency—and more importantly, his post-presidential life—offers an enduring blueprint for how compassion can shape public health. The Carter Center, founded in 1982, became a pioneering advocate for mental health equity. Long before the term "mental health stigma" entered the broader lexicon, Carter argued that mental illnesses deserved the same care, funding, and advocacy as physical conditions. His unflinching support for the Mental Health Systems Act in 1980 underscored a commitment that, while eventually diluted under later administrations, still resonates as groundbreaking.

Carter's quiet war against poverty and disease in the Global South mirrors King's domestic focus. Eradicating preventable diseases like Guinea worm or river blindness may not, at first glance, seem tethered to mental health. Yet the joy of renewal—the restoration of livelihoods, of autonomy—inevitably uplifts the human spirit. Each clean well drilled, each village transformed, becomes a living testament to how humanitarian aid is never just about bodies, but about souls.

In reflecting on their legacies, one cannot help but marvel at how deeply their work aligns with the foundational struggles of those living with mental illness. By targeting the macro-conditions that exacerbate mental distress—whether systemic inequality, social marginalization, or economic despair—they built a framework for healing. Today, mental health advocates would do well to see themselves as heirs to this legacy. Dr. King and President Carter remind us that real change requires courage—not just to treat the symptoms of mental illness, but to dismantle the structures that perpetuate it. They call us to imagine a world where peace isn't merely the absence of conflict, but the presence of conditions where the human mind can thrive.



What do you think of when you think of the words “mental health”? Oftentimes we in the United States have a very Western perception of it. Here in America, we tend to think with an individualistic mindset, meaning we place great importance on the self and our own individual needs. In other countries, there is more of a community mindset, so people tend to put themselves aside in order for the greater good of the community.

Take, for example, the Japanese. According to Lauren Wolkoff of Georgetown University, in 2011 a magnitude 9 earthquake hit the tropical country, leaving many with extreme losses in people and property. Many around the world, especially in the United States, expected Japanese citizens to be distraught with stress and despair, but much to the shock of global media, the Japanese were stoic and calm in the face of their adversity. This is because of a Buddhist concept called *gaman*, which means something like “endurance” or “perseverance” in the face of great difficulty.

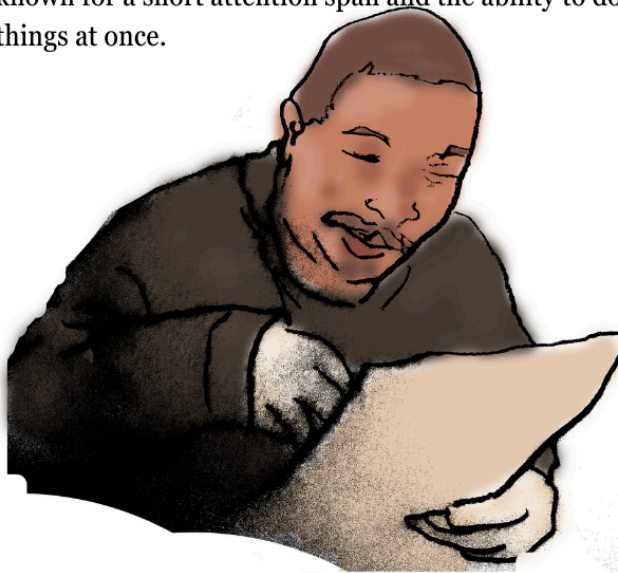
In many other countries, this phenomenon can be seen where people will place their individual needs on the back burner for the good of the community. While there are circumstances in which this can be detrimental for a person with mental health issues (such as when a person is born into an abusive family and feels obligated to self-sacrifice for hurtful people), sometimes this community-based thinking can be quite beneficial even on an individual level.

Wolkoff's article states that in Indian and African countries, people with schizophrenia tend to hear voices that are “friendly, playful and even God-like”, compared to their Western counterparts, which hear harsher and scarier voices. It is believed that this is because of the perception of schizophrenia and what it means in two different parts of the world.



It could be that in the West, schizophrenia is so heavily stigmatized and feared by individuals suffering from it that the voices and hallucinations feel intrusive, whereas in other countries a schizophrenic individual may be perceived as magical or even powerful. This would have a direct effect on what kind of hallucinations the person might experience and whether they perceive them to be threatening or not.

Due to the variety of meanings and presentations in different cultures, it can often be difficult to pinpoint a diagnosis for a patient, let alone what medications they ought to be on or if medication is even necessary. To make matters even more muddy, everyone's disorder does not present the same. Some patients who have attention deficit disorder can display symptoms that may fall into the autism spectrum, but may not be autistic. For some with ADD, they may be terrible at multitasking when stereotypically a person with ADD is known for a short attention span and the ability to do many things at once.



This can make it hard for many people from non-Western or non-American cultural backgrounds to get properly diagnosed, have a healthy relationship with their doctors, or be able to advocate for themselves and their care. Mental health is a complex experience for every individual who suffers from mental illness, and we all bring into it our own individual and cultural spin on it.

Based on the research found, I believe that mental health around the world is often centered around community needs which can make different diagnoses present in a different way from how it might present in someone here in the States. With the three areas discussed in the article, individuals may present as more “stoic” or less intense in their mental illness due to the role that community plays in their mental health. This insight could help shape the American mental health system by providing a new kind of wisdom to the field.



Mental Health *Around the* World

By Hunter Flores, Capital Clubhouse Inc., DC 4/16/2025

Drew Barnes: Sizzling Anxiety

How an aspiring Michelin-star Chef conquered anxiety in the kitchen

By Oscar Padula

In 2023, Drew Barnes, a long-haired lanky silhouette, stood outside the opulent Chatelet Theatre and watched his fellow classmates file in the building with penguin black robes and golden tassels to attend the American University of Paris graduation ceremony.

Barnes remained outside — unsure if he was even invited.

After a year of heart-thumping panic attacks and sleepless sweat-covered nights, Barnes nearly flunked the remaining credits of his political philosophy major — consecutively missing his morning classes.

“By the time I needed to be on the train, I was just physically petrified in my bed,” Barnes said in a reserved southern drawl, **“I went back to the States really to just handle that and figure myself out and my mental health.”**

That summer, Barnes scrambled to earn his degree and return to his family in Colorado, and followed them shortly after to his home-town, Knoxville Tennessee. His mission to find a solution to controlling his mental health. Unexpectedly, he found the solution in the kitchen.

“There is a meditative joy to chopping and peeling, I can sometimes get lost in it and start slowing down,” Barnes said before elaborating on one of his favorite meals to cook: Thai red curry.



Cooking for Barnes is Jazz: an improvise process of infused notes and textures in union. And as a former choir singer, the Jazz of cooking focused his mind — which began to heal his anxiety.

As the therapeutic benefits kicked in, Barnes cooked obsessively. The solitary curry, turned into a braised duck for his sister, and eventually a multi-course Thanksgiving meal for the entire family.

After finishing the monstrous three meal course: a succulent butterball, golden mashed potatoes, and sage infused stuffing—his aunt encouraged him to become a chef.

“It was the first time I had ever let myself believe that I could do that sort of thing,” he said with a school-boy smirk, and made it his mission to become a professional chef at a world renowned institute in the city he hastily left, Paris.

But to achieve his dream, there was one snag.

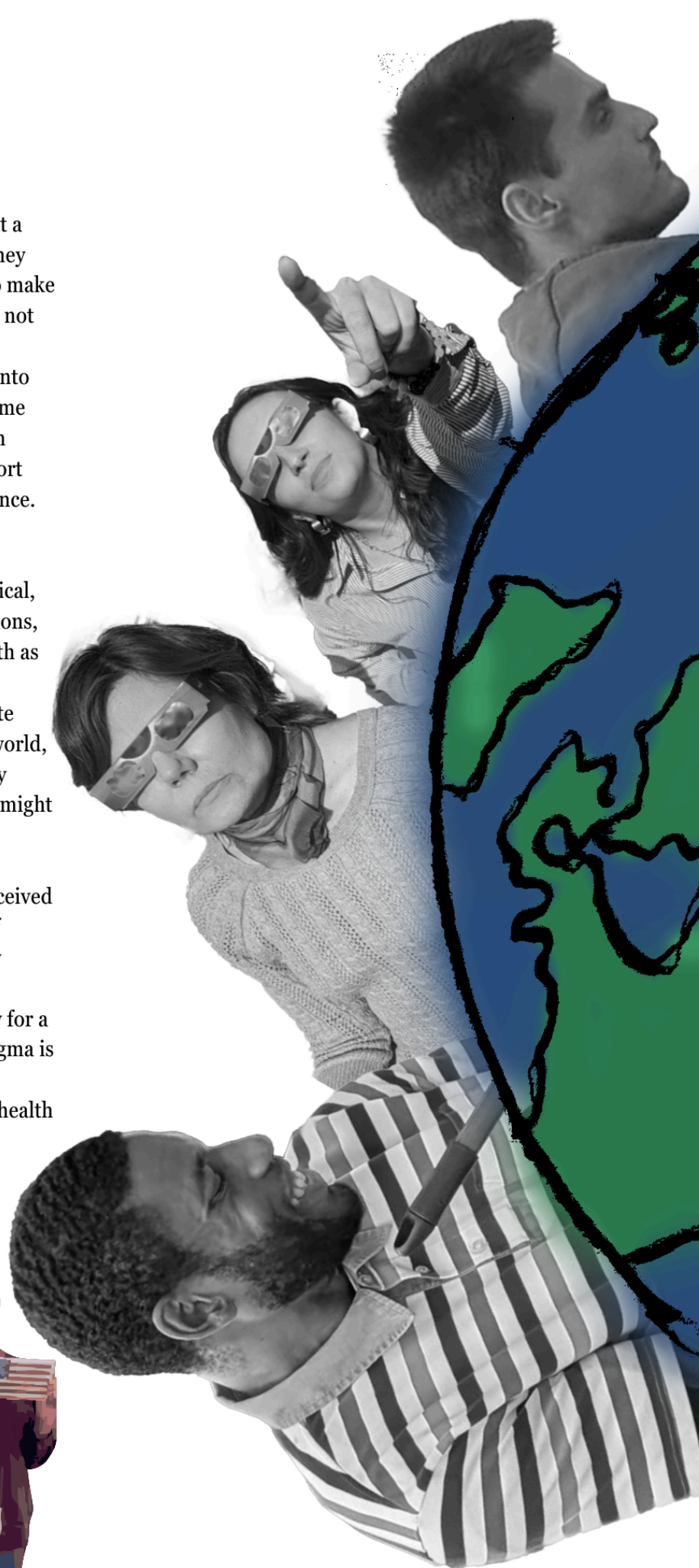
“before I moved to another country and spend a bunch of time trying to learn this skill outside of the actual profession, I needed to know that I wasn't going to fall apart the moment that I've got into a real kitchen,”

Barnes submerged himself in the gritty world of a professional kitchen for a family style Italian eatery, unsure if his mental health would snap.

Due to the variety of meanings and presentations in different cultures, it can often be difficult to pinpoint a diagnosis for a patient, let alone what medications they ought to be on or if medication is even necessary. To make matters even more muddy, everyone's disorder does not present the same. Some patients who have attention deficit disorder can display symptoms that may fall into the autism spectrum, but may not be autistic. For some with ADD, they may be terrible at multitasking when stereotypically a person with ADD is known for a short attention span and the ability to do many things at once.

Mental illness carries diverse connotations across different cultural landscapes, often shaped by historical, societal, and religious factors. In many Western nations, there has been a growing recognition of mental health as an essential component of overall well-being, accompanied by efforts to reduce stigma and promote professional care. However, in various parts of the world, attitudes toward mental illness are still influenced by centuries-old beliefs, where mental health struggles might be attributed to spiritual forces or moral failing

Ultimately, understanding how mental illness is perceived in different countries underscores the importance of fostering a global dialogue around mental health. By sharing insights and promoting cultural sensitivity, societies can learn from one another, paving the way for a world where mental well-being is prioritized and stigma is diminished. Bridging these gaps requires education, advocacy, and a commitment to recognizing mental health as a universal human right.



To his delight, a professional kitchen gave him a new perspective to conquer his anxiety and harness his mental health.

“I found peace in having a vocation, having people that rely on me and having the pressure to get something done and make something happen.”

The quick pace of the kitchen exposed Mr. Barnes to a world of controlled chaos, where the staff used open communications and teamwork to make timely meals, a “life changing” lesson for battling his anxiety.

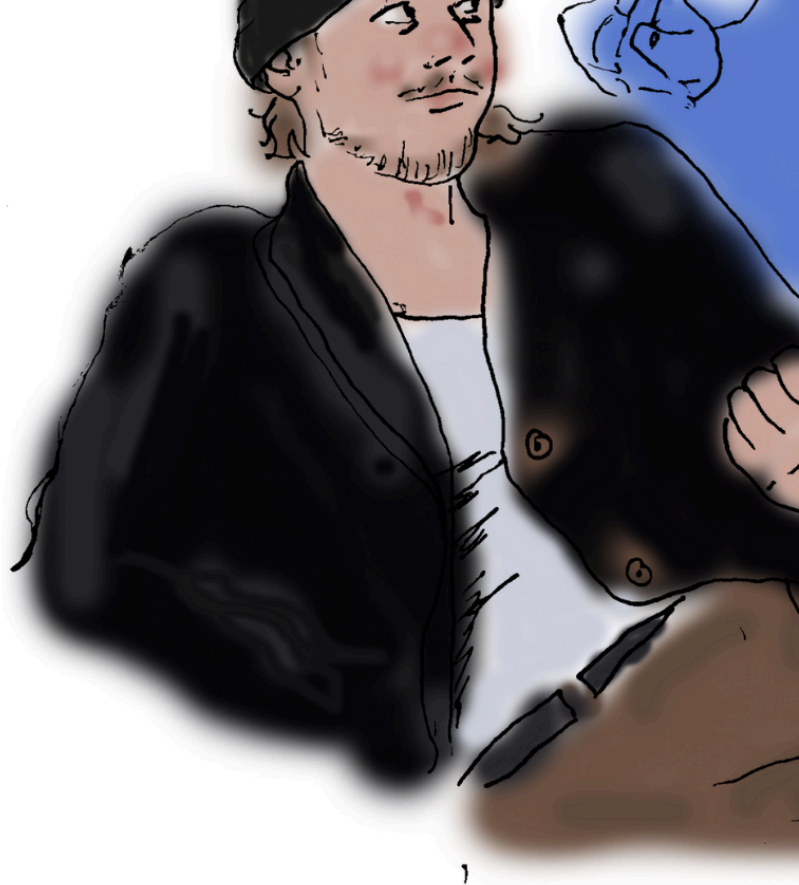
Not long after working in the kitchen, did he earn the respect of the head chef and find the confidence to apply to Ferrandi, the prestigious Paris-based culinary school. But while waiting for a response, Mr. Barnes had a “heated moment”, that nearly broke him, after accidentally over-salting a pork dish,

“I was told by my manager that I ‘wasn’t gonna get into the French culinary school of shit’, when I was applying to [Ferrandi culinary school] and that just hit me like a brick, like a brick to the head. That was the only time that I cried actual tears afterwards, it was brutal, but the next day I came in and my chef talked to me and he was like ‘hey, you know I would never fire you.’”

Instead of being horrified to return, Mr. Barnes found “resilience” in the kitchen and his ability as a chef. Soon after he was accepted at Ferrandi.

Now in Paris, a full-time culinary student, Mr. Barnes has the confidence to wake up and get out of bed,

“I’m no longer painfully anxious, I can look forward to having a plate finished at the end of every day, no matter what, I will have produced something.”



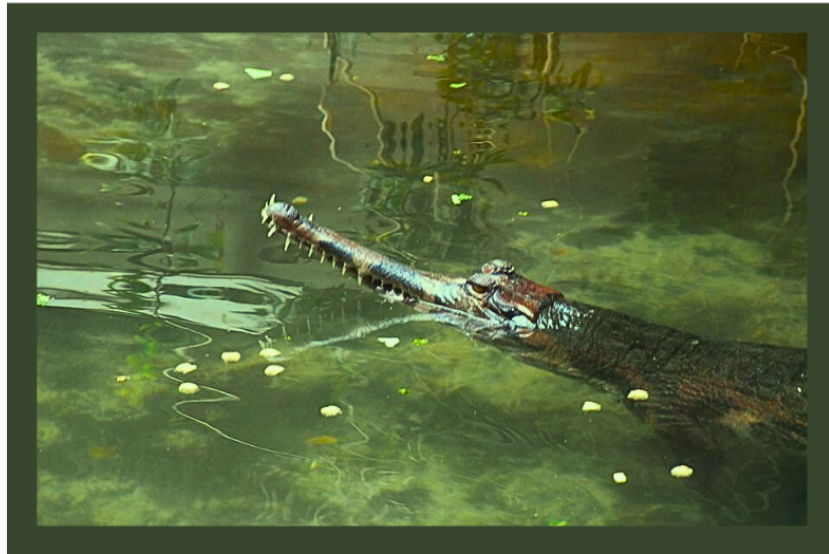
CREATIVE CORNER



"Boundaries" by Isaac

Creative Corner

The following are creative submissions from those with mental illness. All are welcome. If you'd like to have your artwork featured in next quarter's edition, please send to info@capitalclubhouseinc.org



“Croc at the the National Zoo” by Bill Calbert

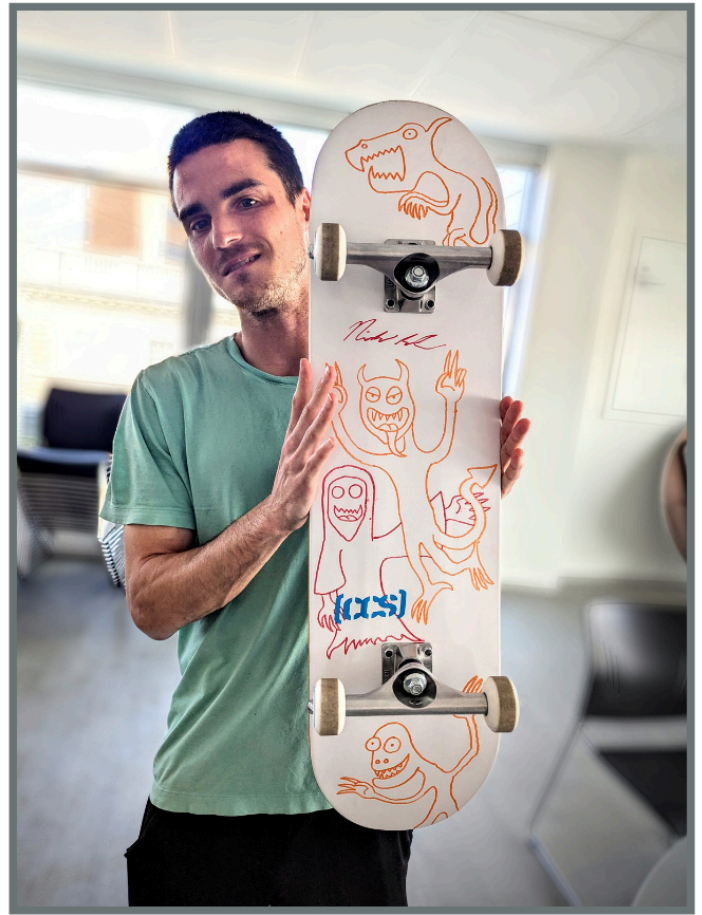
“I faced my darkest nights of dread on the harsh streets, and I fought my way out of hell. But when the sun would rise, and I felt its light. I found the inner strength to not give up and move forward.

But as bad as it was I learned something about myself, That I could go through hell and still survive.”

“Darkest Nights” by Roy Alexander



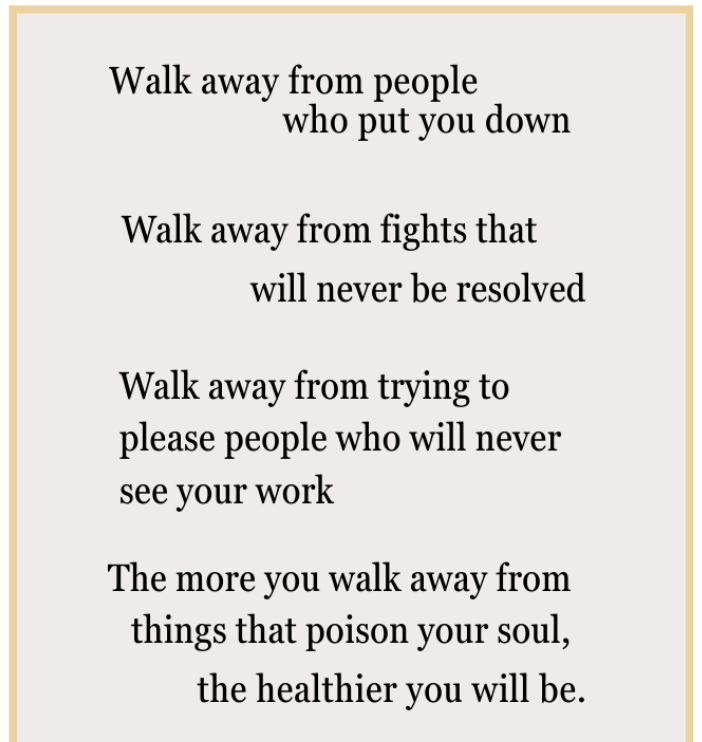
“Araminata” by Somyr



Skateboard design by NCL



“I’m just here” unedited photo by Jon Winskill



Untitled by Teona

CROSSWORD

By Capital Clubhouse member, Isaac (solution in the next edition)

There's something in
the air

Across:

1. Something caused by eating beans
4. Dove's call
7. "___ aaah"
8. Music genre
- *9. Ways to get clean
- *11. Blooms
13. Olive ___
14. What I beams are made of
18. Test for potential life sciences college credit (abbrev.)
21. Pie ___ mode
- *22. Sight on a sunny day
25. Property of some coiled metal and the starred clue answers
27. Hawaiian dish made from mashed, fermented taro
28. Haircuts
29. Month after Mar
30. Movie score (abbrev.)



Down:

1. Attend alone
2. Shout from the monkey bars
3. It's worn on a foot
4. Top of a hill
5. Rower's implement
6. Special ___
10. Times to beat (abbrev.)
11. Key ___
12. 52 in Rome
15. NoSweat Ave
16. Deer-like creature
17. A single potato chip, perhaps
19. To open in Spain
20. Split down the middle?
23. Ctrl + Z
24. Self images
25. Relaxation location
26. Soda

Special Thanks

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Saying Goodbye:



A heartfelt thank you to all the volunteers, students, and AmeriCorps service members who have dedicated their time to this vital cause. Your contributions are more than appreciated—they are life-sustaining. It is because of individuals like you that we are beginning to turn the tide in the battle against stigma. We also extend our gratitude to the donors and financial contributors, to Food Rescue, and to everyone who gave what they could to keep our program alive, thriving, and transformative.

To our supporters and partners: your efforts do more than just keep the lights on—you give Washington, DC, a renewed sense of hope for a brighter future. This is no small feat in a city grappling with some of the highest rates of mental illness and some of the lowest access to care. You are rare agents of change, truly making a profound impact on society. Not many can claim such a role. Thanks to you, many here have rediscovered a sense of purpose and are profoundly grateful for your unwavering support.

Sponsors:



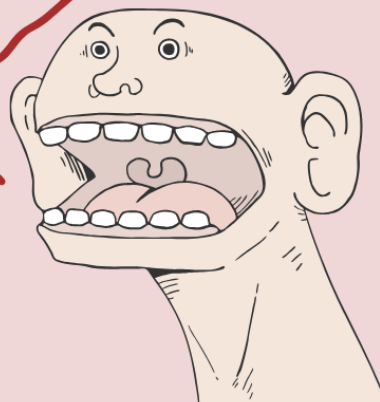
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