

40 Years in the Athens Community
JOIN OUR SUPPORTERS!



RENOVATION OF THE THIRD FLOOR NEW MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM



THE RITA GILLICK RESOURCE CENTER A MEMBER OFFICE SPACE



COMMUNITY ILLUMINATION MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS EVENT

THE GATHERING PLACE

Former mental patients now on the outside gather for companionship and security at The

Gathering Place

story by SUE RIBBLE-COHEN
 photos by JOHN KAPLAN

I was their idea from the beginning. They needed a place just to drop in. A place to talk about the difficulties of day-to-day life. Then they came up with the idea for The Gathering Place, although it didn't have a name back then. Some of the former patients at Athens Mental Health Center used to meet once a week in a church basement. In October 1976, they finally found a place of their own. The large, brick house with stained-glass windows, located at 7 N. Congress, has a home-like interior — from the comfortable living-room furniture to the work-in-progress

Left: Image from a 1981 news article celebrating The Gathering Place 5th Anniversary

What a Happening

December 1976

to started getting the Gathering Place from David Stanton on July 15 and were very fortunate to receive donations of furniture, labor and suggestions from several members of the committee. These include a color TV from the Ladies Auxiliary of A.M.A., and some annual labor from several members to put the Gathering Place ready for the opening.

We are pleased to have a married couple, Tom and Shirley Flynn, as our co-directors. The Flynn's have helped us organize 6 to 8 dinners for members, card parties and an open house last November which had an attendance of over 100. They have also had the house open everyday so we can watch TV, play ping-pong, etc.

All the members have worked together to make the gathering place a success. Some have done 100 miles above on KATV, written a letter to the editor of the Messenger and have helped and aided greatly to the success for the Gathering Place.

We want to thank everyone involved in this fine organization for their efforts to make it a success. The group hopes to continue and to improve as we go along.

December 1976

10:30 Dinner
 11:00 Christmas Party 1 p.m.
 12 Christmas Party 5:30 p.m. (Athens mental health patients invited)
 15 Christmas dinner—this to be announced.

Letter from the editors
 It is a pleasure to have a new letter published for the Gathering Place. We hope the communications, and this is our first issue with, will be as good as ever. It is our hope to have some 10 to 15 members involved in the next issue. We are looking for a new general editor and a new editorial board. We are looking for a new general editor and a new editorial board.

Special thanks to
 Lewis Wilson, D.O.
 Dennis P. Doolittle
 Dec 1976

Above: The "What's Happening" Gathering Place News Letter, December 1976

Celebrating 40 Years of Community Mental Health Support: 1976-2016

The Gathering Place is a consumer oriented peer support recovery center for adults coping with mental illness. Services are designed to promote recovery by enriching and empowering each individual so that s (he) can create a meaningful and joyful life. Staff and members work together to provide peer support, linkage services, advocacy, mental health education, recreational and wellness activities, access to healthy food, and community integration opportunities.

Below: An early meeting of the GP founders, 1978



Highlights from 2015-2016

***December 2015-** Completed a major \$85,000 renovation on our 100+ year old Victorian house. Thanks to funds from the O'Bleness Foundation, Central Avenue Church, Osteopathic Heritage Foundation and The Athens Foundation, we have been able to completely upgrade our 3rd floor attic space into a beautiful multi-purpose room, and upgrade whole house HVAC, floors, and electric.

***January 2016-** The Gathering Place and Athens Photographic Project were selected as one of five organizations in the state by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to improve opportunities for consumer engagement, leadership, and advocacy in health and wellness activities in the Southeast region. The project is continuing for the 2016-2017 year. These funds are for regional and state work and are not a part of our regular income and expense budget.

***April 2016-** Our 40th year kick-off with an Open House & Awards Ceremony to show off the upgraded facility and to honor both long-time founders and current supporters. Two annual awards were created to honor founders Anne Stempel and the late Shirley Whan:

The Shirley Whan Mental Health Service Award was received by David Walters for his many years of service to The Gathering Place and to community mental health in the Athens area.

The Anne Stempel Mental Health Partnership Award was given to two deserving collaborative partners; Scott Winland, for his work with area music fundraisers Benefest and The Athens Community Music Festival, both of which integrate our members into the events; and Central Avenue Methodist Church, for their lead gift in our renovations and continuing support of our "Community Illumination" Mental Health awareness event, held annually at their uptown location, Central Venue.

*Continuing the
MISSION of
Community
Integration,
Healthy Living,
and Personal
Development*



Top: Member trip to Cincinnati Reds and Recovery Center of Hamilton Co.
Center: GP gardeners at work
Bottom: The Gatherers perform at Community Illumination

Staff

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Ginger Schmalenberg, Resource & Development Director
Brittany Silverman, Program Manager
Daniel West, Support Specialist
Matt Welsh, Support Specialist

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October 2016

Dear Friends of The Gathering Place and Community Mental Health Supporters:

The Gathering Place is celebrating 40 years of mental health support in the Athens community 1976-2016!

The Gathering Place is a consumer oriented peer support recovery center for adults coping with mental illness. Services are designed to promote recovery by enriching and empowering each individual so that s(he) can create a meaningful and joyful life. Staff and members work together to provide peer support, linkage services, advocacy, mental health education, recreational and wellness activities, access to healthy food, and community integration opportunities.

Some of the community members that we serve are more at-risk for poverty, poor physical and mental health, food and housing instability, lack of community integration (arts and recreational pursuits) opportunities, and experience challenges in maintaining employment and healthy relationships.

In order to meet our mission and provide services in our community, we rely on the generosity of individuals and businesses from our community to help supplement our yearly sustainability funds received from our Athens-Hocking-Vinton Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board (317 Board). Our expense budget is **\$160,00 annually** and 317 funds received are **\$116,000**.

In honor of our 40th year in the community, we are asking for a donation of \$40 to become a 40-Year Anniversary Supporter of The Gathering Place. Your generosity will make a difference in our community by allowing us to continue our work of providing basic needs and services to individuals and advocacy for mental health and wellness in the Athens area!

We have enclosed a donor pledge card with our other levels of giving for your convenience and you can also donate online at our website: www.thegpathens.org. Remember that every donation makes a difference, regardless of size.

Thank you for your continued support!

Sincerely,

Mary Kneier, Executive Director

Ginger Schmalenberg, Resource and Development Director

Supported by the 317 Board of Athens, Hocking, and Vinton Counties, United Appeal of Athens County, Membership Dues, and Community gifts of time and donations.

