



Introducing Vinland's Residential Transportation Experts!

See story on pages 2-4.

Pictured L to R are Larry Brazelton, Driver; Patti Schwartz, Services Associate; and Marty Zahler, Driver. Along bottom L. to R. are LaVonne Mielke (Semi-retired); Bob Johnson, Driver; Theresa Sveum, Administrative Associate and Carl Janzen (Semi-retired).

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Independence

Independence is a publication of Vinland National Center that is printed three times a year. The magazine currently reaches 6,000 subscribers. Articles may be reprinted if the source is credited and Vinland National Center is provided with copies. Permission to photocopy is unrestricted.

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VINLAND
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A PLEA FOR QUILTED COMFORT



Quilter Gail Swanson (on right) of Our Father's Lutheran Church quilting group delivers handmade quilts to Renee Olson of Vinland.

At Vinland, we have a long tradition of gifting every client who comes to our residential treatment center in Loretto, Minnesota a handmade quilt that they can take with them upon their departure. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, most quilting groups have ceased getting together for the past year!

For many years we have been fortunate to have had local quilting groups from across the state donate quilts for Vinland's clients—and we are running very, very short. Are you aware of any quilting groups that may be in operation that we could reach out to for help? Or a seamstress that knows how to make them? If so, please contact Renee Olson, Administrative Associate for Vinland at 763.479.4518 or ReneeO@vinlandcenter.org.

Many of our clients come from impoverished backgrounds—often homeless or from prison—so receiving a gift of comfort that they can take with them means a great deal to them, and is a continual reminder of the progress they made in their recovery while here. Any help or assistance you can offer would be so very appreciated! We are even willing to supply some of the materials if that would help! If local, our director of business development, Molly (mollyg@vinlandcenter.org or 763.479.4525), can certainly pick them up from you! Just reach out to either to make arrangements.

Thank you for any suggestions or referrals!

A SPECIAL NOTE

From Our Executive Director, Mary Roehl

Happy Spring 2021! We are all so grateful to see new signs of wildlife emerging from the wintry landscape at Vinland's residential campus, not to mention everyone starting to breathe a bit more freely.



*Executive Director
Mary Roehl*

As we all know, it's not easy to successfully navigate a pandemic, and I am so proud of how Vinland made sure to keep ourselves and our clients safe during COVID-19. We did this at our residential treatment center by consistently being masked up and continually reminding our clients to do the same. We had only one positive, non-symptomatic case of a client with COVID-19, and that is because of the due diligence and protocols everyone followed.

We, along with every other treatment center in the nation, had to figure it out as we went, but I am grateful to say we survived this pandemic without a single layoff or reduction in force. Our staff is now at a 75% vaccination rate, and we continue to mask and stay physically distanced. Our clients have been very good about trying to remember the "new" rules. When you have 61 beds and a constant stream of clients graduating, then those beds being filled—we have to reinforce rules and regulations daily as new clients join us!

On another note, I'm excited to share the news that Vinland Center is participating in the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) 1115 Waiver Demonstration grant. This grant allows states to improve access to high-quality, clinically-appropriate treatment for substance use disorder (SUD) and applies the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) criteria. Vinland has utilized the ASAM criteria for many years, so we are pleased that other providers within the state will be aligned as well.

Federal law prohibits federal Medicaid funding for people receiving behavioral health care in Institutions for Mental Disease (IMDs), which, by definition, are residential facilities with more than 16 beds. Because Vinland's residential location offers 61 beds, Medicaid clients' treatment services are currently paid by the state and counties in Minnesota. Participation in this demonstration grant will allow treatment costs to now be reimbursed through federal funding.

If a county sends an individual to Vinland for treatment under the current scenario, they would pay 23% of the cost and the state would pay 77%. With the 1115 Waiver Demonstration grant, the cost to the county would be 2%, the state share would be 4% and the federal share would be 94%. That's a savings to the county of 21% and to the state of 73%!

While the savings associated with this grant to all of us in Minnesota is substantial, it is also beneficial to those we serve. Providing the appropriate treatment at the appropriate time and in the appropriate setting to individuals will assist them in reaching their recovery goals.

We are proud to be able to offer Vinland as a place of care and respite for those with SUD issues combined with cognitive disabilities. Thank you for all of your support over the 35+ years we have been in existence. We couldn't do it without you.

INTRODUCING OUR TRANSPORTATION AND GREETING CREW

You may not immediately be aware of this team, as they seemingly operate so smoothly and with so little noise-making. However, they are often the first faces clients see upon their journey to Vinland from wherever we are picking them up from within the state of Minnesota.

When you think about it, this can be one of the most momentous changes in a client's life: taking the step into that van that is bringing you to finally get sober. Last minute changes of mind? You bet! We have had our drivers go all the way to Polk, Cook, Nobles and Fillmore Counties to pick up a client when they have suddenly "disappeared" or refused to answer the door. Frustrating? You betcha. Our Intake Team tries to do a very thorough job of being sure that the client is ready and wanting to come in. But sometimes, sadly, addiction wins. Even when a client does show up for their pickup time/place, there may be 6 or 8 hours of road time prior to returning to Vinland. Can you imagine the questions? Everything from "Who will my roommate be?" to "What's the food like?" gets thrown at them. (Not sure until you get there, and the food is amazing!) It's our drivers who are often credited for calming a client's nerves on their way to treatment, and helping them to better understand what to expect once they get here. They may have initially thought they had signed up to just be drivers, but the job is so much more. Often when we see "thank you" notes from recent graduates, they will mention wanting to especially thank one of our drivers for calming their nerves and making them feel more comfortable with their decision to get well. Not unlike the U.S. Postal Service—through wind, rain, sleet and snow—our drivers will be there to pick up a client when needed. We interviewed everyone on the team to give you a feel for who they are.

The Grande Dame of this crew is our amazingly cheerful and unflustered Patti Schwartz. Patti handles our front desk, so she is the first face you see when you walk in the front doors of Vinland's residential treatment location in Loretto, Minnesota. She is also the first voice you hear when you call us, and the one who ends up

chasing us all down so people can reach us! She handles every strange request/question/problem that a client might throw at her, plus handles every phone call that comes into our main line during traditional business hours. She is the tracker-downer, the message-taker, the reminder to "check your voice mail," and the one who eventually has most of the answers! She also is the supervisor and grand communicator to our drivers, getting all of the information from our Intake Team about the client—where they are, who are their support systems, phone numbers, etc. and helps arrange the time of pick up and drop off. She translates all this to the drivers while also organizing a second (or fifth) pickup for the day in another part of the state. In between, she is receiving deliveries, answering every random question for potential clients (and their support systems), like do we allow smoking (yes—no vapes, though) and can he bring his own pillow and blanket (yes). All the while she is organizing rides to a desperately needed doctor's appointment or court date for current clients.

We don't know how she does it all and still remains so kind and cheerful, but she is a CHAMP!

Enjoy the stories that follow about our amazing transportation and greeting crew!



Patti Schwartz
Services Associate

Patti is the glue that keeps it all together. She organizes our wonderful drivers' schedules, and makes sure our drivers have all of the information they need as they head off across the state. She is the kindest person; always having a smile for everyone and listening to clients who might just want to be heard, while she juggles the phone calls, schedules and paging requests from all around the property while still lending a patient ear. We couldn't be any luckier to have this person as our "face" of Vinland! Thanks for all you do, Patti—you are a lifesaver—literally!

Patti started with Vinland in June of 2005. That's almost 16 years! She had initially heard of Vinland from a couple of people within the field of substance use disorder treatment, and that's how she learned we were looking for a front desk receptionist/services associate. When asked what her first impressions of Vinland were, she said she had quite the initial experience: "My first week here, all of the employees were prescribed an ointment for scabies and there was a snake found by my desk! I wondered what I had gotten myself into!" Yet, she stayed! She also says she felt like family very quickly. (Don't worry—there are no more snakes—at least not inside—nor scabies!)



Marty Zahler
Driver

Marty has the distinction of certainly being our tallest driver, standing at 6' 2". You never hear him complaining when he has to crawl into the Vinland van to pick up someone in Thief River Falls, then another in Luverne; back-to-back. Marty has been a driver with Vinland's residential program for 10 years. Just as a side note, he gets very excited whenever we have a giveaway or gift card raffled off at one of our quarterly staff meetings!

Like so many others, he found out about the job opportunity when a neighbor of his (who was a driver at the time) told him about the opening at Vinland.



LaVonne Mielke
(Semi-retired)

LaVonne started with Vinland in 2006 and it almost instantaneously felt like "family." Starting off as an HST (Health Service Technician), she felt the group she worked with was wonderful, working as a team with great respect for each other.

Since then, she has helped out wherever she is asked, including backing up Patti at the front desk, data entry, intake booklets for the Intake Team and driving when needed. Now that she is semi-retired, we are lucky to be able to see LaVonne's smiling face whenever there is a need for extra help!



Bob Johnson
Driver

Bob has been a driver for Vinland for 12 years! He happened to know a few employees at Vinland and they had suggested he apply for a part-time driver's position. He said his first impression of Vinland was that everyone was very friendly and welcoming. Other drivers were informative about the role, and gave him insight as to what the position was really about! He said that Vinland treated him as "part of the family" right away. One of the drivers went with him on his very first pickup run and gave him all of the information he needed in order to perform the job well. From there, however, he was on his own! If he had questions, though, there was always someone available to ask.

Bob also took and passed the medication test to become a health service technician (HST) and did that along with part-time driving, but found he really enjoyed the driving position best, so ended up sticking with that. When we asked Bob what some of his most lasting memories of the job are, he said that as a driver, he was usually the first person a client would meet from Vinland and, at times, the last they would see when going on to their next designation. "They would be nervous on their way in and I would do my best to answer all of their questions. I always took pride when they would request me as their driver upon their exit."

When asked if there were any memorable challenges, he said that one time when he was sent to Target on a mission to buy bathing suits for female clients...he felt at somewhat of a loss...

He added, "Sometimes clients would try to treat you as if you were their personal driver. They didn't always understand that we would have to stick to the rules of only making the stops listed on our transfer slips. At times, a client might become unruly and we would have to try and settle them down."



Larry Brazelton
Driver

Larry has been a driver with Vinland's residential program for approximately 7.5 years. He first learned of Vinland when his wife met our past clinical director's wife at a gym, and when she shared that Larry was interested in part-time work, Vinland was suggested.



Theresa Sveum
Administrative Associate

Theresa has been employed with Vinland for 11.5 years. She was initially hired on as an HST and the rest, as they say, is history!

When she arrived at Vinland, her first impression was that there was so much care and comradery here and she felt like “family” right away due to this.

Theresa began as an HST, then became the HST Supervisor. Recently she was certified as a Treatment Coordinator and among a variety of other duties, she helps our new clients get access to Medical Assistance if needed once they arrive at Vinland for treatment. During non-COVID times, she also facilitates the Family Program educational groups on weekends focusing on subjects such as “Family Systems;” “Substance Use Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injuries and Mental Health;” and “Communication During Conflict.”

Editor’s note: As mentioned in our last newsletter, Theresa has been a lifesaver for staff and clients alike with her handmade masks. She continues to make them out of fun, seasonal material, then donates whenever someone needs one! *Thanks for all you do, Theresa!*



Carl Janzen
(Semi-retired)

Carl is our newest addition to the driving squad, having begun picking up clients and bringing them to their residential treatment program at Vinland about a year and half ago.

Our HR person, Debbie Larson, actually informed him about the opportunity. Some of his answers to our interview questions are here. Because he is a snowbird, he kept his responses short as he needed to get back to the beach!

“I was very impressed by the friendliness of the staff. Patti has been very helpful and supportive of me and all of the drivers. I really enjoyed my time driving with Marty when I first started at Vinland and was “learning the ropes.”

While driving for Vinland I have met some really interesting people. Working part-time has also allowed me to take time off for travel. Probably my biggest challenge was learning to rely on my phone and use my maps app!”

(Editor’s note: we are also thankful that Mrs. Janzen took time to sew some masks for us in a time of need!)

Q&A WITH OUR TRANSPORTATION AND GREETING CREW

Q: What was your first impression?

Marty: Overwhelming! There was a lot to learn about not only what the job was, but about our clientele, and the field of behavioral health in general.

LaVonne: It was going to be a challenge for me, as this was my first time ever working within the substance use disorder field, as well as having to learn quickly some of the nuances of individual clients' needs and behaviors.

Q: What are some of your best memories thus far?

Patti: Years ago, one of our clients said to me: “You make a down-and-out guy feel like a champ.” I try to remember that always.

Marty: Meeting some wonderful people (staff too—but I’m talking about our clients here) and just the fact that they appreciate what we do for them. It’s so rewarding.

Theresa: Definitely our client holiday parties!

Larry: When transporting a young lady back up to the reservation,

she thanked me for being so kind and patient with her.

LaVonne: The people I have worked with. Just coming through the doors realizing how lucky I am to be here. If I can help just one person on their trip to recovery be easier, I’ve succeeded.

Q: What have been some of your most memorable challenges?

Patti: Juggling all the transports can sometimes be a real challenge! Sort of like an air traffic controller.

Marty: Being able to win some of the clients' trust.

Theresa: Watching the pain and struggle some of our clients have to go through because of their physical injuries and/or traumatic brain injuries.

Larry: Showing restraint if/when an (intoxicated) incoming client might become abusive in language.

LaVonne: Some of the driving experiences in picking up/dropping off clients. Honestly, the stories we hear just cannot be made up!

Q: What do you hope to be your lasting legacy?

Patti: That I made a difference to someone—making them feel comfortable here and letting them know that they are important and that people care about them.

Bob: That I have been able to connect with Vinland’s clients, and that they have felt comfortable being open with me. It always makes me feel good when they tell me how much they got out of the Vinland program!

Theresa: That I cared.

Larry: I hope my legacy is being a kind, understanding person to both staff and clients.

Q: Final thoughts?

Patti: We’re all in this together. If you can show some kindness and compassion—you should!

Bob: This is a great part-time position for someone retired. I have only ever asked that they give me my “Golf Day” off. I’ve made many friends through

Vinland, and hope this continues for a long time!

Theresa: I have never worked in a more supportive and loving environment.

Larry: I really enjoy working at Vinland.

LaVonne: The HST group I worked with made coming to work really enjoyable. We worked and laughed together. I have the greatest respect for Patti and enjoy helping her whenever she needs me.

Q: What’s your secret?

Patti: Treat people the way you want to be treated.

Marty: Being myself!

Bob: The job has its challenges! You must have empathy, understanding, patience and the willingness to listen.

Theresa: I’m never leaving!

Larry: Patience.

LaVonne: Treat people like you want to be treated.

NO GOOD DEED GOES WITHOUT A FISHBOWL PULL

One of the things we implemented at Vinland's residential campus to help recognize (and reward!) positive behavior in clients is a "Fishbowl Pull." This is a great exercise that reminds us all to be mindful of the little things that can make a big difference in another's day. It's to help us recognize when a client does something thoughtful or helpful around the Vinland residential campus. It may be someone offering a helping hand to a new client, or deciding to do some extra cleaning of tables in the dining room.

Our health service technicians (HSTs) are those who are working overnights and most weekends, and they really get to know the clients on a different level, so they are usually the ones noticing the little things, like a client

stopping to pick up a piece of trash in the hallway, or when it snows, some clients will pick up a shovel and help out! We have even seen clients give a helpful hand to another during a medical emergency. When anyone on staff notices these positive behaviors, we send an email to the rest of the staff informing of the good deed, then that evening or the next morning they are allowed to draw out of the fishbowl for a prize. The ticket they draw tells them if they get a small, medium or large gift.

When they draw a GOOD JOB, they get a candy bar. SMALL is a prize out of the prize bin (things like markers, coloring books, socks, or snacks). LARGE is a \$5 gift card to Holiday and a JUMBO is a \$20 Holiday gift card.



What? I'm supposed to get a fishbowl pull?



Our Executive Director Mary approves!

We tell you this to not only get a better sense of some of the fun things we do at Vinland, but also to share some of the culture here. In fact, soon-to-be-retired gardener/housekeeper Colleen Bentley recently paged Fitness and Wellness Manager Jeff Willert over the residential campus intercom to report to the front desk (it's quite a long walk from the Therapeutic Exercise Center...). When Jeff finally arrived, Colleen was there with the fishbowl "cart" and told him he had to pull from the fishbowl because he had helped her move some weeds to a dump site. He was very confused, but indeed pulled and got a "Good Job." Of course, he declined the candy bar... Our Executive Director Mary Roehl came out of her office to give her approval and everyone had a good laugh.



Good Job, Jeff! Thanks for always going above and beyond!

MARCH WAS NATIONAL BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH!



Don Raasch, MA, LADC, CBIS, Outpatient Services Manager

Don Raasch, MA, LADC, CBIS, Outpatient Services Manager

There are more than 5.3 million children and adults within the United States who are living with a permanent brain injury-related disability according to latest statistics provided by the National Brain Injury Alliance (BIA). More concerning is that one in every 60 people are living with this concern. You may know someone, or even yourself, that suffers from this misunderstood disease. Thankfully, due to the ongoing efforts of the Brain Injury Alliance and our very own Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance, we are seeing a difference being made to help support those who continue to navigate their lives with this disability.

Let's start with some basic facts: Brain injury is a leading cause of death and disability in the United States. According to the BIA at least 2.8 million Americans sustain a traumatic brain injury (TBI) each year, with 280,000 of those resulting in hospitalizations. Of those injuries, about 50,000 are fatal, meaning there are approximately 155 deaths every day from TBI-related injuries.

- 47.9% are from falls
- 17.1% are from being struck by or against something
- 13.2% are from motor vehicle accidents
- 8.3% are from assaults
- 13.2% are from other or unknown causes

There Are Many Ways to Injure Your Brain

According to the Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA), a person in the U.S. sustains a brain injury every nine seconds, culminating in more than 3.5 million injuries each year. There are several clinical classifications for brain injuries. Doctors refer to injuries that do not occur at or around the time of birth and are not genetic or degenerative as an acquired brain injury. An ABI can be either a nontraumatic or a traumatic brain injury, depending on the injury's inciting source.

Traumatic Brain Injuries Include:

- sports injuries
- gunshot wounds
- car and motorcycle accidents
- abusive head trauma
- workplace injuries

Nontraumatic Brain Injuries Include:

- infectious disease
- toxic exposure
- metabolic disorders
- neurotoxic poisoning
- electric shock
- lack of oxygen
- drug overdose

There are three levels of TBI severity: mild, moderate and severe. Doctors determine the severity of the injury using the Glasgow coma scale (<https://www.glasgowcomascale.org/>) which examines motor response, verbal ability and eye opening—ranking patient responses with a total score between 3 and 15. A mild TBI lands on the higher side of the scale, whereas a severe TBI results in a lower score.

The above statistics do, however, have another revealing consistency, and that is those who are involved in the above may also suffer from a comorbid concern of a substance use disorder (SUD).

This disorder may have been diagnosed prior to the event or developed after as a result of their “new normal.”

As I write this it is the month of March—and as mentioned earlier, March has been designated National Brain Injury Awareness month! The BIA, who is one of the largest and oldest organizations that supports those who suffer from a brain injury, is again bringing awareness and support to this special month. The Minnesota BIA “envisions a world where every brain injury is prevented and where every injury is met with impassioned advocacy, extraordinary services, knowledgeable professionals, and quality choices. They work toward a Minnesota where everyone recognizes

Brain Injury Awareness continued on page 15

VINLAND STAFF GETS VACCINATED!



Health Service Technician Thomas DuBay getting his second dose!



Mental Health Therapist/Program Supervisor Melissa Petoletti after getting her second dose of the vaccine.



Health Service Technician Charles "Red" Green—he CAN'T stay at home—he's an HST (Health Service Technician)!

Director of Business Development Molly Gilbert, who is surprised she is still upright!



As Mary mentioned, we are excited to report that the team of professionals at Vinland were able to get vaccinated during the end of round 1A. Beginning February 1, 75% of our staff chose to get vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus. We are so proud of the fact that we had only ONE client in 12 months test positive for the virus! We had taken precautions by creating an "isolation wing" (formerly known as the Women's Wing) consisting of 8 beds out of our 61 beds total.

Every time a client reported a fever or cough or ANY potential symptom, we were thus able to quarantine not only the client, but the client's roommate(s) until we received test results back and their symptoms subsided. As you can imagine, we had quite a slew of residents claiming symptoms when it was taking three days to get test results back, but as soon as we were able to get access to the instant tests, complaints of symptoms miraculously dropped!

Some of our staff were willing to get a picture of themselves getting vaccinated and our Director of

Business Development Molly Gilbert was pleasantly surprised that she didn't even pass out! Now *that* would have been a picture!

Staff Grows at Vinland

Vinland National Center continues to grow and change! We are happy to announce several new hires who will help us continue to serve our clients in the best way possible.

- Rhonda Olson, RN
- Anthony Lalim, Health Service Technician (HST)
- Amanda Rhoades, Outpatient Intake/Assessments
- Chris Harris, Health Service Technician (HST)
- Laura Harper, Case Manager
- Nicole Quast, Billing Associate
- Allison Davis, Health Service Technician (HST)

Congrats and welcome to all!

GRATITUDE FOR BOARD OF DIRECTOR DONATIONS TO VINLAND

Vinland's residential location always has a need for men's athletic shoes and (larger) winter coats, not to mention just general clothing for new clients. We have a wide variety of clients coming to us, each with their own unique story, but sometimes they literally arrive with just the clothes on their back.

When we saw a new client wearing rags on his feet to the Therapeutic Exercise Center this January, we knew we had to put out a plea for any slightly used men's shoes and winter clothing. We were so proud to see Jerry Seck, president of our board of directors, lean in to immediately donate money to the cause. Then board member Al Seck (Jerry's brother) did the same, as well as hand delivering a couple pairs of shoes! That week, we went to pick up a "porch full" of winter clothes and shoes that board member Anne Krisnik rounded up through her Facebook/Neighborhood app plea! We literally had to borrow a Vinland van to be able to fit it all in on one delivery. Then during "Give to the Max" day, board member Karin Holt generously donated! In fact, on the day of our board meeting we immediately saw board members Neal Loidolt and Christina Carleton donate, while Judge Jana Austad gave generously for both the "athletic shoes fund" as well as writing a separate check for the general fund! Mike Martin also



just ordered a few pairs of new shoes from Target and had them delivered directly to us.

Many thanks also to board member Rachel Wobschall, who raided her brother's closet for us, and to Ted Suss for traveling from Southwestern Minnesota to bring his closet cleanouts to us! Our director of business

development was able to meet Ted in Bloomington when he was up in the Twin Cities for a meeting, so *that* saved us a several hour drive south! Therapeutic Exercise Manager Jeff Willert drove to meet board member Dan Skogen to pick up some gently used shoe donations on a weekend and we received generous cash donations from Christine Rice/Rice Family Foundation, Dr. Bob Haslow, and the Nolan

Foundation. In total, we received 15 pairs of athletic shoes + \$3975 from eight members of our board of directors, and our clients are eternally grateful to all for your help!

With a constant stream of clients coming in to fill 61 beds, we have a need for men's athletic shoes daily, so please continue to keep us in mind before you head to Goodwill to give away your used shoes! If you have any donations to make, reach out to Mollyg@vinlandcenter.org or 763.479.4525 and she will arrange to pick them up from you!

CLIENTS CHANGE US AS MUCH AS WE CHANGE THEM

We wanted to share a story of a recent graduate of Vinland's residential treatment program. Dana, also known as "Big Country," returned to Vinland in 2020 after first entering treatment here in 2017.

While he has not used alcohol or other drugs since 2017, he returned to complete the next step of a long journey to better manage his life. This includes issues with addiction to mind-altering substances, the criminal justice system, mental health, physical health and spirituality.

Here is Dana's story:

Dana started drinking, smoking marijuana and using meth during middle school. His life consisted of episodes of recovery (his first treatment was at age 16) alternating with active substance abuse and criminal behavior. His first felony charge was for selling marijuana at age 22, and he obtained convictions for two auto thefts and five fifth-degree charges for possession of drugs.

In 2007, when Dana was about 30 years old, he was the passenger in a car accident that left him in a coma with a broken vertebra in his neck. Since then, Dana has noticed that his short-term memory is impaired and that he experiences more anxiety than he did before the accident. He realizes that many other life events contribute to his anxiety disorder, but believes that the crash is the main factor.

After the car accident, Dana became more serious about trying to succeed in recovery and did very well between then and 2012. He experienced a relative stability in his life during that time and was able to hold a job. He built a solid relationship with his older daughter during this time. When she became a teenager and was understandably less interested in hanging out with her parents, Dana (for his own reasons) returned to drug use and criminal behavior. This was short-lived, though, as he had

another daughter in 2015. He remained clean for 18 months following her birth. The deterioration of the relationship between Dana and the mother of his second child made Dana turn back to drugs, and he was removed by the police on Christmas Eve of 2016 after a reported domestic disturbance between Dana and his child's mother.



Dana, upon graduating from Vinland, seeing his (adorable) daughter for the first time in a year.

The next nine months, Dana says he lived an "outlaw" lifestyle—staying in hotels and casinos, and using and selling drugs. He was arrested in September that year, having 100 grams of methamphetamine in his possession. Dana says he actually felt relieved by this because he saw that he couldn't quit on his own. He knew his lifestyle would lead to long-term incarceration or death. He says he was scared, ashamed (especially about letting his daughters down) and uncertain that he could turn his life around in spite of his best efforts.

Dana was released to Vinland on Christmas Eve of 2017. He made it evident that, in spite of his past, he was committed to doing whatever he could to be the man he wants to be and the father his daughters deserve. He focused on his faith to gain the comfort and strength it had given him earlier in life.

After graduating from Vinland, Dana went to the Kinnic Falls halfway house in River Falls, Wisconsin. After 90 days there he called Vinland to get advice about his next steps. Because he had the pending felony charges, he was advised to live in a supervised environment where others could report to the court that he was continuing his law-abiding behavior and continuing to demonstrate his commitment to recovery.

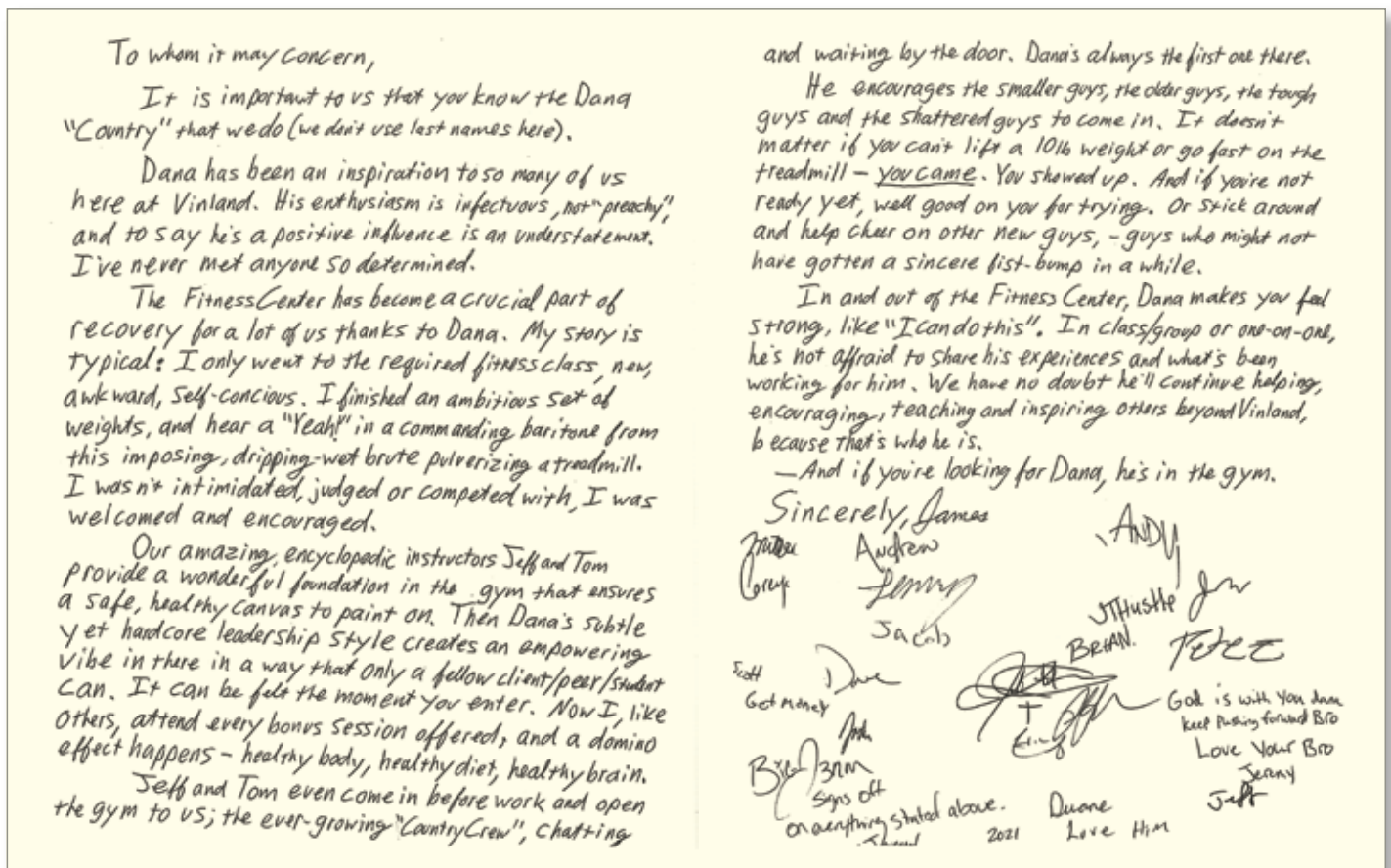
Dana continued on next page

Following Vinland’s recommendation, Dana went from Kinnic Falls to Changing Gaits, which takes in men in recovery for sober housing. The residents there care for horses which are used for equine therapy and trail rides for disabled kids, teens in recovery and the general public. Changing Gaits also performs horse rescues for abused and neglected horses. Dana was assigned to “Chief,” a horse that had “rain rot,” a hoof/skin fungus that needed ongoing attention and care to recover. Changing Gaits was essential to the restoration of Dana’s faith, and put him in touch with people who helped him to follow his faith openly and proudly.

After eight months of continuing success and progress in recovery at Changing Gaits, Dana had to return to Hennepin County District Court to be sentenced. On the way, Dana was helped by Allison, a friend of Vinland who works as a “disposition adviser” in the public defender’s office. Allison meets with people charged with crimes and makes recommendations to the court on appropriate alternatives to incarceration, if appropriate. In Dana’s case, the prosecutors were confident that they could convict Dana of the first-degree “sales” charge that required a sentence of 86 months imprisonment.

With Allison’s help, however, Dana’s case was assigned to a young attorney in the public defender’s office who did everything she could to help Dana. She acted as what lawyers are ethically required to be for their clients—a “zealous advocate.” She spent several hours with Dana and his counselor from Vinland explaining all of his options and possible outcomes. Ultimately, she was able to negotiate a sentence with the county attorney’s office that would allow Dana to avoid the first-degree “sales” conviction and avoid the mandatory 86-month sentence. Instead, he was allowed to plead guilty to the first-degree possession charge, which allowed for the possibility of “boot camp” (officially known as the Challenge Incarceration Program—CIP), a prison alternative. This agreement also required that his sentence be no less than 75 months.

The judge started out by noticing the courtroom was packed with supporters of Dana. He said that he understood they were hoping he could avoid prison, but that he didn’t have that option. The judge said he was impressed with what he’d learned about Dana and that he would support his application to boot camp once he became eligible. The judge also noted that of the 25 or so people who came to show their support for Dana at



his sentencing, only a few had known him prior to his arrival at Changing Gaits.

In spite of all of this, Dana was led from the courtroom by deputies to serve a 75-month sentence. It should be no surprise to anyone that Dana's faith and commitment to positive change were challenged during his time in prison. But because he never let his challenges stop him, he completed multiple programs and was awarded opportunities and recognition for his focus on recovery and putting his history of addiction and crime behind him.

This allowed Dana to move to boot camp after only 15 months. Boot camp is just what it sounds like. Up at 5 a.m.; bed made to military specifications; uniforms expected to be ironed with perfect creases; chopping wood for hours; compulsory physical training and no rest until bedtime at 9 p.m.

Dana was released again to Vinland on November 16, 2020, and continued his mission. He was noted as a major leader and role model for his peers, especially in his work in the Therapeutic Exercise Center, and he was also known for providing encouragement to others to make positive change. In the process, Dana has lost 86 pounds in the last year!

Dana will be on parole in the Challenge Incarceration Program (CIP) until November 2021, and then he will be on felony parole until 2025. The instructions and restrictions on Dana's behavior for this next year are contained in an 11-page document. Included are requirements that Dana call his agent from a landline every morning before 9 a.m. to prove he's at his approved housing, and call every time he leaves the house for any reason. In addition, he is required to perform community service, get a part-time job, and attend two recovery meetings per week. It's a LOT, even for someone without a TBI to remember to do, but he is determined to successfully navigate his conditions of parole.



Dana ("Big Country") in his new shoes from Vinland and (used) winter coat!

One of the issues Dana had, besides arriving from prison with only the clothes on his back, was that he needed a winter coat. Any that had been donated were too small, as he is very wide around the shoulders. When board member Anne Krisnik rounded up clothes from her friends and neighbors, we told her we had that special need, so she went to Goodwill and found him this (pictured at left) coat! He was so pleased!

To continue access to the ongoing support he needs, Dana was accepted into sober assisted living at the Sojourn Suites house in St. Bonifacius. At Sojourn, Dana has access to support in his efforts to secure housing, employment, and the return of his driver's license for the first time since 2017. He is also working on rebuilding his relationship with his daughters.

We are all honored to have been able to get to know Dana, and we thought you would be impressed with him,

too. Other clients have learned from his example how seemingly insurmountable obstacles can be overcome. In fact, in the midst of his stay, other clients got together and submitted this letter (pictured on previous page) to bring attention to how much he has helped others while here. *We're not crying, you're crying!*

His determination and hard work have proven to us—and more importantly him—that he can succeed in recovery. His positive leadership of others is already missed at Vinland and it has only been one week since he moved on to his next step in life. Keep being that positive, natural leader that you are, Dana! We're all pulling for you!

Many thanks for help getting the details right from Dana's former counselor and case manager, Tim G., and for editing help from Renee O., Administrative Assistant at Vinland.

COLLEEN BENTLEY RETIRES!

Molly Gilbert, M.Ed., Director of Business Development



Colleen Bentley

Colleen B. has been with Vinland National Center at the residential location for 11.5 years as (primarily) our gardener, but as you will learn below, she has taken on other roles during the winter season. She is finally able to retire from her work with us—though she is still keeping her gig as gardener/landscape artist for the golf course she lives on and has worked for, for over 20 years! You can't stop this woman!

I took some time to interview Colleen about her time with Vinland not long after her retirement send-off party we gave her. She let us know that she *is* willing to come back to maintain our past Clinical Director Duane Reynold's memorial garden, and plant our annuals for us. Whew!

How did you first learn of Vinland and connect?

Mary (Vinland's executive director) heard via word of mouth of my gardening that I had been doing for Cedar Creek Golf Course in Albertville (where I have worked for 20 years). We had mutual friends so she reached out to me to see if I might be interested in doing some part-time gardening for Vinland's residential location in Loretto.

I worked part-time to begin with while also working full-time at the golf course. My first winter with Vinland, I was offered a part-time housekeeping gig and I said, "Yes." By that time of year my work at the golf course is done, so this was a great way to keep busy! During the summers, however, there was no shortage of "busy-ness," as I averaged 60 hours per week between my work at the golf course and my work here.

What were your first impressions of Vinland?

I thought it was a beautiful place with the restored prairie and lakefront property. I will admit I was a little intimidated by the clientele at first, as I had no experience whatsoever in the substance use disorder or mental health fields! But that passed quickly as once here I was able to see that everyone was treated like family, which I do have experience with! I was truly impressed with the staff and how caring they were, not only with the clients but with each other.

How long did it take for you to feel assimilated/like you were "family?"

Once I started working inside. See, no one really knew what kind of a detailed cleaner I am (I credit my mother and grandmother for this and my work ethic!) When I first started I wasn't sure the level of cleaning needed, so you would find me in the Therapeutic Exercise Center giving it a deep and thorough cleaning, sometimes three times per day! So I got to know Jeff and one of his previous assistants, (Jed) REALLY well. Just the way they both treated me was so warm and friendly, and that really helped me to feel like I was "home." They really took an interest in me as a human being and I will always remember that fondly.

What were some of your roles while at Vinland?

Primarily gardener in the spring, summer and fall, and housekeeper in the winter. But recently it was discovered that I was indeed the infamous "Chalk Fairy" that would randomly strike around campus! I would mainly leave chalk messages on the paved path through one of the main gardens for staff and clients to be greeted with daily. I tried to come up with different, inspirational quotes for people who are trying to stay sober and improve their lives. It was fun looking up different sayings online, and then trying to fit them into the numbers of paver/steps that everyone walks on daily. Without anyone knowing who was leaving these messages, I had the opportunity to overhear so many great things about what those sayings meant to people—plus I would watch people just stop in the middle of the garden and...breathe! Often that was exactly what the messages were asking folks to do: Just. Breathe. And be present. I know mindfulness techniques are something



Colleen Bentley revealed she was this summer's "Chalk Fairy," who wrote messages of inspiration on the walkway through the front garden for clients and brightened our days with positivity and fun!

that is taught/focused on here with the clients, and it was so great to actually see a client suddenly “get it.”

I am always amazed at how my gardening seemed to help people in recovery. The clients would always ask questions about the plants and flowers and tell me how much they loved to garden but gave it up throughout their using. They so appreciated all of the beauty nature provides. Just being surrounded with nature is something so many of our clients weren't used to—many having come from the inner city, surrounded by concrete, or just holed up in a dark room somewhere with their addiction. I was so happy to be able to be a part of that reintroduction to nature for them.

What are some of your best memories?

Many reading this newsletter may not be aware that our former clinical director, Duane Reynolds (who passed away in 2015), was a master gardener and the former Minnesota Horticultural Society president. I'll never forget that, as he had “MHS” for his car's license plate!

When he passed away—I lost my gardening mentor. Suddenly, instead of asking Duane for his advice, I had to start googling things! Thank the heavens for Google.

When Duane suddenly passed, everyone was really torn up about it. We just knew we had to do something special. We decided to make a memorial flower bed in his remembrance, and I knew the *perfect* spot! It is in the shape of the letter “D” and faces Lake Independence on the bluff. Making Duane's Memorial Garden was by far my biggest and most emotional accomplishment. I've created many flower gardens/ “beds” here at Vinland, but that one means the most to me. It was a heck of a lot of work, but something I am so proud of.

We also have a green roof that was dedicated by Kraus-Anderson to us following our 2013 building addition. I had never even *heard* of a green roof before that, but it is so beautiful, and something everyone really enjoys.

One of my stronger memories was one year when one of the female clients arrived at the beginning of winter—and she had no jacket. I noticed this and went to the Chalet (where we keep our donated clothing for clients in need) to try to find her one. When I gave it to her she cried and said “this is the nicest thing anyone has ever done for me.” That really sticks with me to this day, how the smallest act of kindness can mean so much to another.

Between employees and clients, I would get many, many questions on how to plant what, where? How to best care for this or that type of plant. Why am I getting spots on this indoor plant, etc? I was glad I was able to help when needed and hopefully save a few houseplants in the process!

What are some memorable challenges?

It would certainly get frustrating when you would clean something, and 20 minutes later walk past it and it was like you were never there! Just spills of drinks and all the dishes showing up where they shouldn't be, etc. But then I would have to remember that many times it's really not intentional. Sometimes our clients weren't taught to pick up after themselves. And more often than not it would be a memory issue—something that is very common with a traumatic brain injury. Because Vinland specializes in working with those with cognitive disabilities, I found that gentle reminders would really help them, vs. getting all mad about it.

What will be your lasting legacy at Vinland?

Creating Duane's flower bed in his memory. It certainly won't be “Chalk Fairy!” That, and just helping to keep things beautiful for the clients.

Final thoughts?

Working here changes your life. I am more patient and tolerant with others, now. I've also learned about mindfulness, which helps me in many aspects of my life! Small gestures that you do make an impact, and can change your life in a most positive way!

It's been a pleasure working here, a lot of fun, and I will truly miss all the clients and staff—except maybe Jeff. KIDDING!

What's your secret?

Enjoying my work. And it helps to have a sense of humor. :^)

Thanks for all your (beautiful) work for Vinland over the past 11+ years, Colleen! Your humor and talent will be missed!

Oh, and CONGRATULATIONS!!

Colleen's beautiful work.



VINLAND OUTPATIENT SERVICES CELEBRATES SECOND YEAR OF PROBLEM GAMBLING TREATMENT

Katie Richard, B.S. LADC, CBIS, CPGC, Problem Gambling Counselor

Vinland Outpatient Services is celebrating our second year of problem gambling treatment programming for the community! It began as a small but mighty program that has steadily been growing.

In partnering with other community agencies, Vinland has been able to increase awareness of the need for gambling counseling in Minnesota. Gambling program staff are also participating as part of a group of providers who are working towards adding new programs and legislature regarding gambling addiction to the state of Minnesota, including Northstar Problem Gambling, Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), Project Turnabout's Vanguard Program, Club Recovery and M Health Farirview, among others.

Vinland Outpatient Services currently offers both sessions and groups to clients on a regular basis, with a curriculum that helps people understand their addiction and how to best overcome it. Treatment plans are very individually focused and grow with the clients' needs.

Even through a year of the COVID-19 pandemic and staff changes, the gambling program has been able to

increase its client base and successes! In April 2020 Vinland's problem gambling program (VPGP), like many others, moved online to offer services to help keep both clients and staff safe during the pandemic. Telehealth has allowed Vinland to maintain the same level of care and empathy for their clients who remain out in the community, just as they would in person.

We are looking forward to continuing to grow our group sizes, expanding resources for clients, and growing our clients' success stories. Please help us in continuing to spread the word that this specific program is open to all adults in need, regardless of whether they have a TBI or cognitive disability, and that the state of Minnesota has funding for problem gambling treatment. Minnesota residents can access these services at no charge based on need.



**STATISTICALLY,
MOST BETS LOSE.**

**IF YOU'RE GETTING
IN OVER YOUR HEAD,
IT'S TIME TO STOP.**



Katie Richard, B.S. LADC, CBIS,
CPGC, Problem Gambling Counselor

We'd like to introduce you to Katie Richard, Vinland's gambling counselor! Katie has been a part of the addiction field since 2015. Katie actually was an intern with us at the very beginning of her career, where she had Mental Health Supervisor Melissa as her mentor. She says she was taught well!

She then went on her way working at two different treatment centers within the Twin Cities until July 2018, when she returned to Vinland to be a case manager for our women's wing. She transitioned over to our Outpatient location when we had a need for a case manager there, and soon after took on the supervisor role.

She is a certified gambling counselor and recognizes the unique challenges a gambling client faces. As with substance use disorder clients, she wants to see them succeed.

Feel free to reach out to Katie for help or with questions about this very special program. Katie can be reached directly at KatieR@vinlandcenter.org or 763.479.4882.

Brain Injury Awareness continued from page 6

brain injury, its causes and effect, and where all individuals living with brain injury are encouraged to realize their full potential and their value to our community.”

BIA is about education and advocacy to bring awareness to this disability. The current campaign is also designed to allow others to attempt to better understand what it is like to live with a brain injury. This is done through:

- Increasing understanding of brain injury as a chronic condition.
- Reducing the stigma associated with having a brain injury.
- Showcasing the diversity of injury and the demographics of the community.
- Improving care and support for individuals with brain injury and their families.

The March 2021 awareness campaign is titled #MoreThanMyBrainInjury. The theme, according to the BIA, emphasizes the fact that unfortunately people with disabilities tend have their lives defined for them. This awareness initiative allows for those who have a brain injury to become aware of those definitions and rewrite their own story. Go to <https://www.biausa.org/brain-injury/community/personal-stories/tell-your-story> if you still would like to share.

This is a safe place where people can share their stories and where others can comment on the stories they've read. They do not edit the stories, except to edit/redact information for privacy purposes and concerns relating to third party intellectual property rights. The words are the writer's own, but BIA does list a few simple rules.

Some of the focus areas are:

- Speak up, Speak out
- Know the facts
- Get creative
- Do more

We encourage everyone to visit the BIA website to understand how you can write and share your own story.

Many thanks to our friends at the National Brain Injury Alliance. We utilized some of the information on their website for this article. Also, credit to Caleigh Findley at ASBMB Today for some of the information in her article—<https://www.asbmb.org/asbmb-today/science/030121/brain-injury-awareness-month-2021>).

Any questions? Contact Molly@vinlandcenter.org or our friends at the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance at <https://www.braininjurymn.org/> or <https://www.braininjurymn.org/aboutUs/contact.php>.

LETTERS FROM ALUMNI

We often receive notes of gratitude and updates from our alumni, telling us how they are doing and what their time at Vinland meant to them. For the purposes of authenticity, we are not altering their original form. So if you catch a typo or two—well, that's on purpose...

Greetings Vinland Peeps!

I have had the opportunity to reflect on times in my life when turning points influenced my personal development. My time at Vinland, both in-patient and outpatient, has been one of those opportunities. In-patient dried me out and began putting nourishment and exercise into my body. In-patient also strongly emphasized the need for continued treatment.

I want to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude for the quality of services I received during my time with you all.

You treated me with respect from day one. You treated me as a human being rather than “differently” because I am in a chair, because of my heritage, or because of my experiences.

Don (ed. note: Don Raasch is our Outpatient Services Manager), I was impressed with your manner and interaction with all the clients. I did not know you were the director. I thought you were like the greeter or overseer of us folks coming in! The incentives for attendance and tying that into our recovery were smooth and effective. I appreciated the way you took an interest in my life as it was happening in the present.

All the support staff was exactly that; Supportive! The interactions I observed and experienced were comfortable and safe. I did not feel like staff was trying to “fix” me. I felt like I was directing my own pathway for recovery. If staff observed me veering off my path, staff challenged me to look at my behavior and choices. I liked the fact that all staff kept informed with my journey in recovery. This was helpful for me because I experienced a community of care.

I am very clear a person needs to be committed to recovery. This does make a difference in the investment a person is willing to put into the process. I also believe that an environment of support and education affects a person's recovery. I know in my life I have been deeply committed to recovery and yet I fell hard. I had to get a better understanding of how I operated in the world of conflict and chaos. I had to learn new skills and then practice repeatedly.

I'm still practicing, I'm still learning, I'm still falling; but I'm sober, I'm reaching out to my support peeps, I'm listening, I'm truthful, I'm humble and I'm grateful. Oh how I wish I had the key of recovery for everyone. Today I know without me there is no other.

Thank you to each one of you there at Vinland!

Respectfully, Meg



Former client, R.M.

Hey Erik (ed. note: residential case manager) I wanted to say Hi! and give you an update on my life. I am now employed! I am working for a great company as a Client Program Manager, in a client-facing online testing company. It's very challenging and exciting. I know I could not do this if I were not sober.

Here's my facebook post from my first day: Some of my personal stats on this transition:

- ✓ 10 months in transition
- ✓ 73 books consumed
- ✓ 88 group networking meetings
- ✓ 68 one-on-one networking meetings
- ✓ 12 professional development/continuous learning classes
- ✓ 9 final round opportunities
- ✓ 2 great job offers
- ✓ 1 really good fit

I'm sharing this as a single example of a job transition story. STATS! MEH... those old things... Many stories are longer or shorter, all require great effort, self-examination and support. You would be surprised how effective a kind word or a random email can help motivate another. (That said, I have been told to reign in my enthusiasm, I believe the term was “Helpy Helper.”)

I had a big milestone a little while back, 100 days! I'm at 113 today and feeling really good. I'm working with a therapist, and still attending Smart meetings. I have used your quote from my first day... many times, whenever possible. When people ask what is different, I let them know “I no longer give myself permission to relapse.” Changing my mindset to a growth mindset, one of empowerment made the difference to me.

Thanks, RM

OUTPATIENT SERVICES UPDATES

Kayla Gilsvik, BA, Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CBIS)



Kayla Gilsvik, BA, Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CBIS)

Vinland Outpatient Services has been providing both substance use disorder and problem gambling outpatient treatment via Telehealth since April 3, 2020. Who knew that we'd be still doing this almost a year later?! For our group and individual sessions, we use the virtual platform "GoToMeeting" and have found that most clients get the hang of it quickly and find it to be very similar to Zoom. As expected, there have been some challenges. However, we were surprised to find that there have been many more benefits than we anticipated!

Initially, it took some time for our clients to get acquainted with a new group format, find their footing with the technology, and accept that they wouldn't be able to see their peers and group leaders in person. We'd frequently get the question "When are we going back in person?" However, that question has become increasingly rare, as virtual programming has become more and more acceptable over the course of this pandemic. We've found that many clients are very appreciative that they can join group from the comfort of their home and not have to worry about the risk of getting sick. Over time, the technology issues have become less frequent and we have found that new clients have come to expect virtual programming now, and are prepared for it.

Since "going virtual," we've seen increased group attendance, with clients no longer having to worry about transportation issues, finding childcare, dealing with the weather, etc. Many clients have enjoyed the privacy and comfort that comes with being at home, and the fact that they can essentially roll out of bed and join group without worrying about traffic and getting ready on time. Virtual programming has allowed clients that live farther away to join us that might have once hesitated due to their travel time.

This has also been true for R25/drug-alcohol/problem gambling assessments, as well! The ability to conduct these assessments over the phone has allowed us to help people from all over the state that we normally wouldn't have access to due to lack of transportation. In addition, while in person, clients typically were only able to access individual counseling with their case managers while they were in the building, either directly before or after group. Now that we are virtual, case managers have much more flexibility to meet with clients at different times throughout the day.

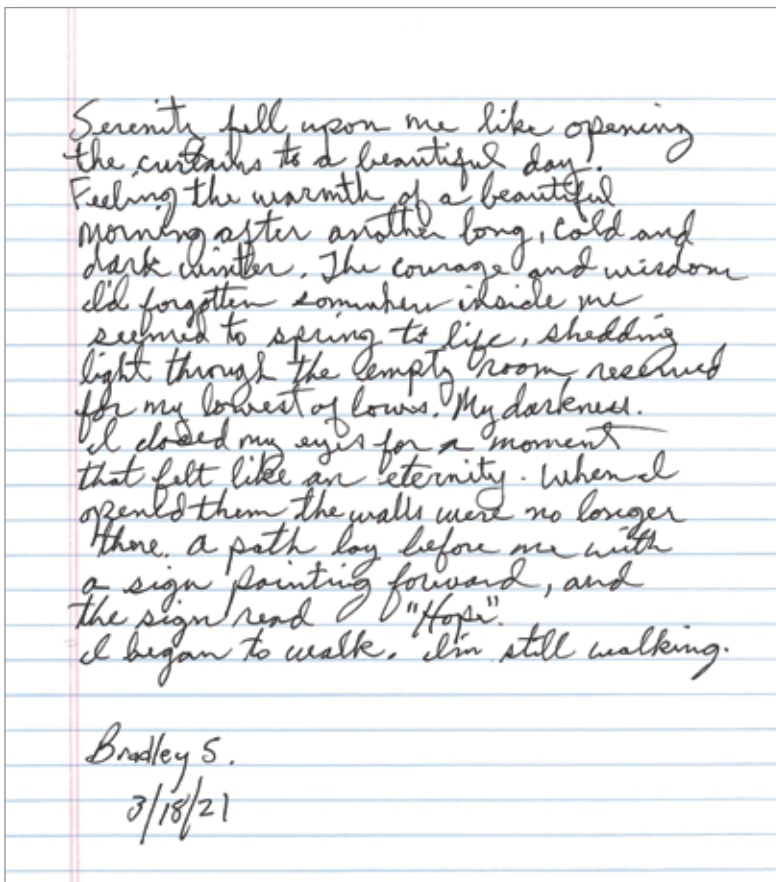
While we still encounter technical difficulties occasionally, both staff and clients have learned a lot along the way and have made adjustments and overcome challenges. Case managers have shown their creativity and have continued to find ways to keep groups interesting and maintain some of the normal activities that we did in person, including yoga, jeopardy, sharing videos, music, and meditation. Clients have even been able to do show and tell with items from their home and once in a while, we even get to see their pets!

We're continuing to look for ways to maintain engagement and find resources for clients that don't have access to technology at home. Currently, we're submitting a proposal to Hennepin County to receive free laptops for clients who are eligible.

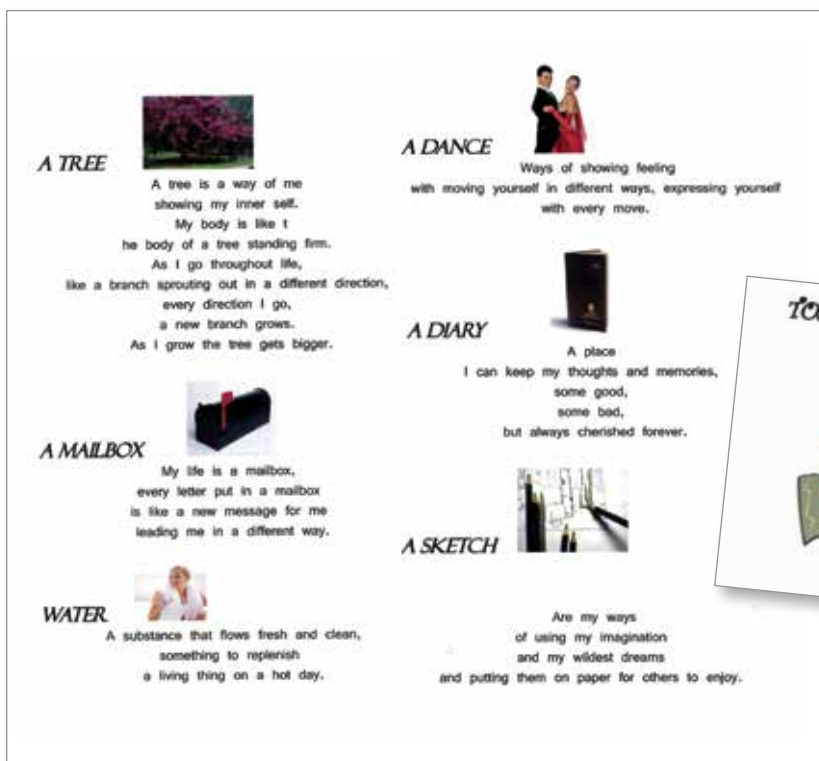
While we definitely miss seeing our clients in person and look forward to the day that we can all be together again, the pandemic has shown us our clients' dedication and ability to adapt to changes and challenges.

POETRY CORNER

Once clients begin to heal from their addictions, they often find themselves getting in touch with their creativity. The many years spent suffocating feelings and anything resembling emotions with alcohol and drugs can make it frightening to begin to express one's self again. At Vinland, we encourage our clients to start to express themselves through art. Activities offered include mask-making (painting a blank mask to represent how they envision their brain injury or cognitive disability), drawing, coloring, journaling, etc. A constant has been the discovery of self-expression through spoken word and/or poetry. A couple of clients reached out to our editor and volunteered their work for inclusion in the newsletter. Enjoy!

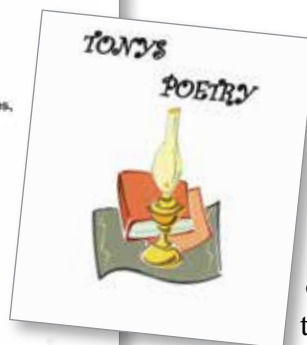


Poem from previous client, Bradley S.



We have a recent graduate, Tony B., who was very excited to share his book of poetry with us. We just received a copy in the mail from him today!

It has 10 pages, double-sided, of "poems" or thoughts about things like "Haircuts," "Pizza" and "Flowers." Also some... less appealing ones... that talk about flatulence (a common subject in his poetry).



We copied his longest poem to share with you here. Again, we are copying the book as it came to us to remain true to its original form.

If you are interested in getting your own copy of Tony's book and supporting him in his quest to be a poet, contact mollyg@vinlandcenter.org and she can get you in touch with Tony.

See Tony's story and more poems on the next page.

POETRY IN MOTION: TONY'S STORY



Anthony B.

I was born February 18, 1980 in St. James, Minnesota. My early life began in Wisconsin with my single mother, one brother and one sister. When I was five years old my mother passed away and I moved in with my grandmother for a short period of time. We soon moved in with my aunt and uncle who lived in Coon Rapids, Minnesota.

When I was 10, I met a family who desired to adopt me. I went back and forth with that family from Willmar, Minnesota and my uncle and aunt for two years while they completed the adoption process which was completed when I was 12.


On May 10, 1993, at 13 years old, I was riding my bike with two of my friends. We were going to a city park on Robbins Island to play and ride on the bike trails. As I was crossing the road I was struck by a car. This accident changed my life. I was in a coma for three and half months and spent over five months in the hospital. Many who were taking care of me did not believe that I would live. I was first taken to Rice Memorial Hospital in Willmar, flown to another medical center in Minneapolis and later to the third hospital. I spent

more than a year after coming out of the coma in rehabilitation and speech, physical and occupational therapy. This event has left me with permanent Traumatic Brain Syndrome.

At 14, I moved into a group home for a few years. With determination and hard work, I graduated from Willmar Senior High School in 1998 and completed a one-year program at Ridgewater Community College in 1999. I have been a part-time employee of Godfather's Pizza for nine years and still am employed there today.


As I was visiting with one of my friends in 2002 at one of our local coffee shops, the first poem came to me. The title was "Love and Soul." I typed the poem down on my friend's computer. After losing what we thought was a saved copy of the poem it was found and thus began my interest in expressing experiences and things I see in poem form. From this point I kept writing poems as I saw things that I wanted to express myself about. After writing enough poems to assemble a book of "Tony's Poetry," I had copies made at Office Max and sold them around town, one by one, until I had enough money to purchase one first used computer and printer.

I would like to bring joy and happiness to those who read my poems and look forward to many years of expressing what I see and find good in my life and the world.




INTEGRITY

Is the Way of showing
right and wrong?
Right is the path that will lead me
to where I should be going towards God.
Wrong is the path that will
dig me a hole
deep, deep, deep into evils ways.



FLOWERS

A sight that will brighten
the hearts of a lonely one,
and give a sense that
will freshen your soul forever.



SNOWMEN

As the winter season approaches, one
thing I love to do is build snowmen as it brings happiness
to my heart.
As I pack the first snowball, and start rolling it around,
wonderful thoughts are soon to be found.
The bottom one is the base, or the foundation, as I
round it off to a ball, it brings back memories that I can
recall.
The body is the center, by now creative thoughts start
to enter.
By the time I get to the top, creation time has come
to a stop.
As the face starts to appear, my heart begins to fill
with happiness and cheer.
With two eyes made out of coal, feelings express deep
from my soul.
With a nose made out of a cherry, thoughts and
feelings turn very merry.
With a smile made out of candy, made me feel just
fine and dandy.
With whiskers made out of coffee grounds, caused my
heart to turn round and round.
For the hat, nothing special, just a plain old hat, got it
all together, what do you think of that.
With a scarf wrapped around his neck, thought about it
twice, but what the heck.
Now that my snowman is finished and done, next thing
I new, out came the sun.
As my snowman starts to drip away, all my feelings
are in dismay.
As I stand before nothing but a puddle, my heart
crunches up to a tight huddle.
As my feelings are torn apart, ideas for next year
begin to start.
As the snowman creates from start to finish, my pain
was soon replenished.
Once my smile stretched out from side to side, my
hurt feelings were pushed aside.
Once the snowman was created in my mind, the joy in
my heart was easy to find.
Now that my thoughts were bright and clear, I just
waited for winter to appear.
As the year went by fast and clean, I new winter was
soon to be seen.
After the hot summer days were over and done, the
cold winter weather soon begun.
As the temperature dropped from high to low, I stared
into the sky and watched it snow.
After the snow covered the grass without a trace, the
assembly of my new snowman was soon to take place.
As I bundled up all snug and warm, my new snowman
was soon to be born.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Molly Gilbert, M.Ed., Director of Business Development

DID YOU KNOW THAT the month of MARCH was NATIONAL BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS—and—PROBLEM GAMBLING MONTH?



Molly B. Gilbert, M.Ed., Director of Business Development

Because Vinland offers addiction treatment services for those with brain injury AND problem gambling, we've been firing on both cylinders! We were so excited to have this national push to help people recognize the needs of each population, that we posted on our social media (<https://www.facebook.com/VinlandCenter> + LinkedIn, plus Twitter) every other day during the month of March on one of the two topics.

The 2021 PGAM (Problem Gambling Awareness Month) theme was “**Awareness + Action**” #AwarenessPlusAction #PGAM and the goals of this campaign were:

1. To increase public awareness of problem gambling and the availability of prevention, treatment and recovery services.
2. To encourage healthcare providers to screen clients for problem gambling.

On our social media you will find YouTube videos, Ted Talks, interviews with those in recovery from gambling addictions and testimony of those in recovery from brain injury and addiction. Help can be found!

PGAM is a grassroots campaign that depends on the participation of the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) state affiliate, organizational and individual members, state health agencies, gambling companies, recovery groups and a wide range of healthcare organizations and providers. Groups across America held conferences, aired public service announcements, provided counselor trainings, hosted health screening days, ran social media campaigns and many other activities in order to increase public awareness of problem gambling and the availability of prevention, treatment and recovery services.

It is estimated that approximately 160,000 to 214,000 Minnesotans struggle with this addictive disorder, which can destroy lives. Compulsive gambling can result in social, emotional and financial devastation, including loss of relationships, housing, emotional and physical health, and career or educational opportunities.

- **Problem gambling can strike anyone in Minnesota**, regardless of race, gender, age, socioeconomic status, or level of education.
- **The stigma and shame associated with problem gambling** severely inhibits gamblers from seeking the help they need.
- **Problem gamblers commit suicide at a higher rate** than those with other addictions and mental health disorders. 40% of those in treatment for problem gambling reported attempting suicide.
- **Problem gambling does not occur in isolation.** In many cases, it occurs in the company of co-presenting issues. For example, gambling disorder and alcohol/drug addiction are frequently part of a dual diagnosis.
- **75% of all problem gamblers** have an alcohol disorder.
- **10–15% of those with SUD** (Substance Use Disorder) have a co-occurring problem gambling disorder

IMPORTANT FACT:

Minnesota has funding for problem gambling treatment. Individuals and families in Minnesota can access these services at no charge based on need.

This provision recognizes that problem gamblers have often depleted many of their financial resources. Therefore, lack of money for treatment should not be an obstacle if a resident of Minnesota needs help.

If you are outside of Minnesota, most states offer professional resources, and there is a listing by state on the National Council on Problem Gambling website: www.ncpgambling.org.

If you know of anyone who might want to explore help for their gambling problem, they can reach out to our Problem Gambling Program here at Vinland by calling us directly at 763.479.4881. Because we are offering this treatment virtually, clients can simply log on from the privacy of their own home or in their car and connect with our counselors.

Join us in helping to bring awareness to the fact that problem gambling is one of the most deadly addictions.

Virtual Webinars

Aside from promoting our newer Problem Gambling Program, I feel fortunate to have been able to adjust quickly to the Zoom/Microsoft Teams/GoToMeeting format of offering webinars to the community about Vinland National Center, and the work we do in helping those with brain injuries and other cognitive disabilities in substance use disorder treatment.

We were recently invited to present webinars to the Mayo Clinic, Allina Health, Rice County, Ramsey County Veteran's Court, Regions Hospital, Justice Point of Ramsey County, Recovery Services in Pine City, and the Paradigm SUD Treatment Center at Moose Lake Correctional Facility within the past few months. We've also presented to several other treatment centers in the community, and continue to participate in the state of Minnesota's Transition Coalition monthly meetings, as well as the many monthly or quarterly provider meetings held across the state.

I've also had the distinct pleasure (?) of hosting virtual "tables" for Vinland at various conferences across the state, as well as had our clinicians present at these conferences virtually. What a world!

It's been said that the most popular phrase of 2020 was "You're on mute"... Yes, it's been an adventure for all, but I must say, everyone has been very understanding of various capabilities experienced from presenters, etc., throughout these conferences, which has been nice to witness, in a year where everyone has been spread a bit thin.

Although we miss seeing everyone in person and getting great hugs, I will say my car is appreciating the lack of wear and tear, and I do *not* miss those overnight trips in (often) budget hotels.

However, the light is beginning to shine through, as those of us in the field who are lucky enough to have received both vaccinations are starting to get together in small groups to meet for lunch and catch up on each other's programs, lives and updates! That has felt monumental. Just to not have to do my own dishes has been life changing...

CEU Sessions Available

If you know of a group that might benefit from learning about the good work Vinland does, or to have a CEU (Continuing Education Unit) session where we talk about what we have learned in our many years of working with clients with brain injuries and other cognitive difficulties within the substance use disorder treatment realm, feel free to reach out to me. Most places are able to get 1–1.5 CEUs per presentation.

Programming Notes

A couple of reiterations on our programming in case you haven't heard: Vinland is currently ONLY ACCEPTING MALE CLIENTS. When the pandemic hit, we were fortunate enough to have a low female census so, it was an easy decision to turn those 8 beds (out of 61) into an isolation wing for any clients who might start presenting with COVID-19 symptoms. We do not have an estimated date when we will start accepting female clients again; however, we work regularly with some wonderful partners in the community who work very well with our clients. Feel free to reach out to me if you would like me to send you a list of options we feel comfortable referring to.

LivingWorks Lodges

Finally, our LivingWorks Lodges for permanent sober living, located in Crystal, Minnesota has a couple of RARE room openings! Please see pages 24-25 and contact Gina Chamberlin at 763.210.6708 or gchamberlin@vinlandcenter.org to discuss possibilities and application procedures. It's a wonderful option for those with cognitive deficits who are really dedicated to their sobriety and have at least 90 days of recovery achieved thus far ("Boot Camp" can count towards this!) Everyone gets their own bedroom, and some rooms have en-suite bathrooms, otherwise they share a bathroom with one other resident. They are new construction, gorgeous, and right on the bus line. If you know someone who might be a fit, call Gina right away!

FITNESS BITS



Jeff Willert, B.Sc., E.P.,
S.E.T., Fitness and
Wellness Manager



Tom Everett, B.Sc.,
Ex. Phys., S.E.T., Fitness
and Wellness Specialist

We love to collect notes that the guys in our Therapeutic Exercise Center share with staff daily. Not only are they the most positive, encouraging and motivating people you will EVER meet, they sometimes bring tears to our collective eyes when we read some of their observations on our clients' growth and all of the positive changes they are seeing. Get ready to smile!

I just have to share about three fellas: Cody, Sam and Damian. We conducted exit surveys on all three of them today. They were three of the nicest, most polite and motivated clients we have ever had the opportunity to work with at Vinland. All three became friends. All three were positive peers who motivated others to do better. I overheard them in the hallway talking about their experience here and how they were going to miss us. They were talking about their body fat and brain speed specifically.

It brought a warm fuzzy feeling to me. I just have so much hope for our people; that they can go out and become the individuals they want to be.

Vinland brings people together in such a unique and special way. I wish some employees or board members could hear what we hear almost every day. It gives such satisfaction to know that we are truly making a difference!

I have to share a great story. In our bonus fitness class we offered at 4 p.m. today, one of our current clients, Duane, shared a story about Nicole, Connie W. and Nancy from housekeeping. Duane received his divorce papers today and is having a rough go of it. He is a very sweet man.

As it turns out, Nicole, Connie and Nancy took the initiative on their own to hang a banner on his door congratulating him on his 1,000-minute cardio achievement!

They also said if he ever needs to talk “we are here for you.”

Duane told me: “They are not housekeepers, they’re my friends.”

How cool is that? Yet another example of Vinland staff doing what Vinland staff does!

As John was filling out his comment card this morning—when talking about his continued plan for structured fitness activities once he moves on to his next step of recovery—he said, “*It’s not a graduation, it’s a continuation!*”

Derek has graduated and has moved along to his step-down program. He surprised himself while with us. When he got here he was a doubter and seemed disinterested in anything we had to offer.

He showed up, worked as hard as he could—safely—and made huge changes in his physical health. His pain went down, his function improved and he gained muscle! He was very deconditioned when he got here. He has “acquired” a bounce in his step, and actually smiles a lot now!

It was a complete 180-degree change. So fun to see.

I gave a guy a NEW pair of shoes this morning. He looked at me, smiled and said “I haven’t had a new pair of shoes in 20 years!”

SAYING GOODBYE TO BOARD MEMBER, DR. GARY STRANDEMO

Editor's Note to Fitness Bits

It has been proven that the two most healing things one can do for a brain injury is 1. Physical Exercise and 2. Sleep. Our clients desperately need both when they arrive at Vinland.

Because of this, the general public isn't usually aware that our Therapeutic Fitness Program is a mandatory part of the treatment plan at Vinland's residential treatment location. In fact, it is a one-hour class held Monday through Friday, that requires *all* clients attend. Trust me, there is very little arm-twisting involved, as this is one of the most fun parts of their day! In fact, this program is so popular, that Jeff and Tom had to add "bonus" sessions at 7 a.m. and 4 p.m., where there are lines out the door of clients wanting to participate. Recently, they even added an additional session on Saturday mornings!

As you can see, the need for athletic shoes is very real, as not only is this a required part of their day, but this is a program that, on average, clients see a 33% reduction in chronic pain with NO PILLS. Just the "safe, slow, gentle" therapeutic exercise program that these two former employees of the Minneapolis Neurology Center created specifically for our clients. It has played a huge role in helping to change our clients' lives for the better.

Our forever thanks and gratitude to our board members for providing us with our very own "athletic shoes" fund! We couldn't do this without your help, and our clients who arrive without anything except flip-flops on their feet are so very grateful.

Patrick K. Coleman, Vinland National Center Board Secretary and Acquisitions Librarian, Minnesota Historical Society

Dr. Gary Strandemo, longtime Vinland supporter and board member, passed away September 3, 2020 from complications of leukemia. He was 74 years old. He was born of proud Norwegian stock in Kenyon, Minnesota and hopped an egg truck heading east to attend Harvard where he played baseball and football. A lifelong athlete, Gary was an accomplished cross-country skier, biker, and canoeist.



Patrick Coleman, (left) and Dr. Gary Strandemo, (right).

Upon returning from Boston, Gary completed medical school at the University of Minnesota in 1975. It was there that he met and married then nursing student, Barb Lund, his lifelong love and friend. The couple soon moved to Cass Lake to work for the Indian Health Service.

In 1979 Gary moved to St. Cloud and started the first member-owned HMO in central Minnesota where he earned the love and respect of the community, practicing family medicine until his retirement in 2013. Gary's greatest joy and first priority was always his family. He loved being a husband and a father to his daughter, Rosa, and daughter Ana, who broke Gary's heart when she died of complications of lupus in 2012.

Gary was a great humanitarian and environmentalist both of which took him around the world to volunteer his skills and talents. Vinland, along with Gary's countless loyal friends, will miss his generosity and his open heart, his boundless curiosity, love of life, calm demeanor, wry smile, enthusiasm for great books, stories of exotic birds and his intelligent informed opinions.

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

LivingWorks Ventures, in partnership with Vinland Center, provides permanent supportive housing for individuals who are living with cognitive impairments and are in recovery from substance abuse.



Greetings Friends and Colleagues of Vinland!

We wanted to share that Vinland has a few rare openings in our permanent/long-term supportive, SOBER housing in Crystal, Minnesota! Because this housing tends to be permanent, we don't often have openings and therefore don't widely promote. If this doesn't apply to your area of expertise, maybe there is someone within your organization or circle of friends or co-workers who might want to know about this as a potential resource? We ask that you help share this information, as again, it is rare that this opportunity comes about. We have a client who has been there for over 12 years, so we're not kidding when we say this has the potential to become permanent sober housing!

See the next page for more detailed information. Gina Chamberlin, the lodge coordinator, would be able to help with questions regarding the application process or any specifics. Her contact information is at right.

There are currently three male and three female resident openings at two long-term/permanent supportive sober houses in Crystal, Minnesota. In partnership with LivingWorks Ventures, Vinland provides supportive permanent sober housing services for adults with cognitive disabilities in recovery from substance abuse. To qualify, individuals must be able to succeed with minimal amounts of support, and provide verification of long-term homelessness (LTH), or have the ability to meet the individual financial requirements.

Thank you for helping us spread the word!

Gina Chamberlin, Lodge Coordinator
LivingWorks Ventures Inc.
Vinland National Center
Direct: 763.210.6708
email: gchamberlin@vinlandcenter.org

OPENINGS FOR NEW CLIENTS AT TWO HOMES IN NEW HOPE

QUALIFIED RESIDENTS

- Successful applicants are individuals who need minimal amounts of support and supervision to remain independent, sober, and healthy.
- Funding is through self pay and GRH.

LIFE AT LODGES

- Private bedroom, shared living areas and kitchen.
- Located in New Hope, a suburb of Minneapolis.
- Easy access to bus lines.
- Lodge staff have limited on-site hours, but are available for emergencies 24 hours a day.

LivingWorks Lodges

763.210.6708

email: gchamberlin@vinlandcenter.org

Permanent Sober Housing → Independent → Community Integration



→ Independent living for adults with cognitive disabilities in recovery from substance abuse

- Lodge living is ideal for men and women with cognitive disabilities in recovery from substance abuse who need minimal amounts of support to remain independent.
- Lodge living is designed for people on a fixed income who can benefit from the extended support network the lodges provides.
- Under minimal staff supervision, residents are responsible for creating a safe, stable and healthy living environment.
- Residents share in running the household, including chores like purchasing groceries and preparing meals. Residents make their own house rules and manage their own activities and finances.

→ Lodges are a unique place to call home

- LivingWorks' lodges are up-to-date and well-maintained homes in established residential communities. Each lodge is conveniently located near shopping and public transportation.
- Lodges are unique among similar supportive housing options because each resident has a private bedroom.
- The lodges feature shared common areas to ensure a community atmosphere, providing residents with the opportunity to establish friendships and reinforce the network of support that is so important for lodge residents.
- LivingWorks Ventures currently manages two lodges in the northwestern suburbs of Minneapolis. A number of rooms are reserved for residents who have been previously homeless.

→ Guidance to ensure success

- On-site staff serve as advisors to the lodge and its members and are always available in emergencies. Because the lodges are designed for people who need minimal amounts of support to remain independent, on-site staff is limited.
- On-site staff are professional alcohol and drug counselors who provide services at the lodges through a contract with Vinland Center, a non-profit that has been providing substance abuse treatment to adults with cognitive disabilities since 1990.

→ Lodges are an affordable housing option

- Funding is through self pay and GRH. To discuss availability, please call 763.210.6708 or email gchamberlin@vinlandcenter.org.





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About Vinland National Center

763.479.3555

Vinland National Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that enables individuals with multiple disabilities to live productive and fulfilling lives through a whole-person approach that addresses the mind, body and spirit. Vinland's programs meet the complex needs of individuals living with brain injuries, serious and persistent mental illness, learning disabilities and other neurobehavioral disorders. Our primary focus is on substance abuse treatment including mental health services, a renowned therapeutic exercise program, family programming, outpatient services and permanent, supportive housing for adults with disabilities in recovery from substance use disorder.

Earn CEUs with Vinland's Online Webinar Library

You can watch recorded webinars on Vinland's website and earn CEUs for free. Webinar topics include substance abuse treatment for individuals with cognitive impairments, dual diagnosis, therapeutic exercise, and mindfulness meditation. Vinland offers free webinars as a way to share our expertise with other health care professionals.

➔ *To view recorded webinars, visit VINLANDCENTER.ORG/EVENTS*

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