



Omni Health & Wellness

Darah Thomson, a mental health advocate, founded Omni Health and Wellness after being distressed at the overall lack of support for individuals with severe physical or intellectual disability...and the dramatic way this affected their overall quality of life. About 10 years ago, Darah contacted the county hoping for some help in connecting with non-profits to offer fitness and wellness programs to the mental health community, and Transitional Services was one of the organizations that responded to that call. Darah began holding fitness classes at TSI's residential sites. Some activities included Zumba, yoga and band exercises. Today, her work with TSI has expanded to not only instruct on healthy living, but now instructs on healthy cooking and financial, environmental, emotional, spiritual and occupational wellness.

Like many advocates, Darah has her own experience with mental health. As a diagnosed bipolar, she struggled with mental health for her entire life, ever since facing a mental health crisis in the second grade. After getting help in her late



twenties, she realized there were ways for her to advocate for herself and that she had a voice. She realized that not only could she help herself, but she could help others and, in turn, those people could help even more people, spreading more strong voices advocating for themselves in the mental health community.

Darah was working in peer support and wanted to share some of the skills that she had learned since her own diagnosis with mental illness. She holds a degree in Movement Science from the University of Pittsburgh, and

she wanted to showcase that experience in order to help those who needed it. She considers her experience essential in her own recovery. Practices like yoga, meditation, mindfulness, healthy eating, exercise and budgeting are tools that can be used when recovering from a mental illness.

"The name OMNI comes from looking at someone as a whole and looking at humanity as a whole," said Darah. Some things she considers when looking at someone's health and wellness are their ability to get fresh food or health options and whether they live in a food desert. She looks at their neighborhood and their environment: do they live in a place where it is easy to access a gym, or do they live in a place where they can

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Although it has been almost two years since I began my role as Transitional Services' (TSI's) new CEO, it continues to seem like an exciting new beginning for me and for the future of Transitional Services. My name is Mary Anne Poutous. I am a licensed clinical social worker and bring to this position over sixteen years of nonprofit administration. As an administrator, my primary focus has always been to deliver the highest level of service and exceed the expectations of the customer. This is not always an easy task with the challenges of funding uncertainty, staff retention, competition, inexperienced workforce and the increasing social and psychiatric needs of our customers. The biggest question is, How can we overcome these barriers and continue to focus on what is most important...the individuals that we serve?!

At TSI, our employees are charged with providing services to many individuals with diverse and complex sets of needs. We strive to employ those who already have infused in their personalities our agency's core values of integrity, customer service, teamwork and communication. We know, however, that despite bringing to work a genuine desire to "make a difference" in the lives of others, the work can be exhausting and overwhelming.

I have adopted an "open door" policy. I want to get to know our employees and hear how they are doing

As CEO, I firmly believe that a workforce that feels that they have a voice and opportunities to be engaged is one of the most critical factors in providing consistent quality services. When employees are engaged at their place of employment, job satisfaction increases which, in turn, leads to higher quality of care.

To make employee engagement a priority, several strategies have been implemented over the past year. First, I want all employees to have the ability to share their concerns,

suggestions and ideas directly with me and with the TSI leadership team. I have adopted an "open door" policy. I want to get to know our employees and hear how they are doing. Second, I have made a commitment to do informal visits at our sites and join in on program staff meetings to listen and answer questions. Third, each month I send an email to all the employees with a brief update on board development, operational issues and external matters to keep all employees well informed on agency development.

Fourth, we have formed committees such as the Retention Task Force and an upcoming Workplace Violence Task Force that encourages employees from all programs and positions to have a role in the decision making for the agency. Fifth, we held the first all-day team building and engagement day for direct service employees. The goal for the day was to build connectivity, strengthen team work and recognize each employee's value to the agency. This will become a yearly TSI event. Lastly, we are working very closely with our managers to develop their own unique approaches to foster effective communication with their employees.

Employee engagement is not a one and done. The above stated strategies are just the beginning. It is a value that must be infused into the culture of our organization and become a constant priority. It is one that I and the rest of the leadership team of TSI have and will continue to foster and reinforce for the benefit of our valued employees and those whom we serve. ■



Mary Anne Poutous

**— Mary Anne Poutous
CEO, Transitional Services Inc.**



TRANSITIONAL SERVICES INC.

50th Anniversary Celebration

In 1966, Orville J. “Bud” Royer established Transitional Services as a halfway house for newly released mental patients. Bud Royer dedicated his life as a mental health advocate. The *Pittsburgh-Post Gazette* noted him as a “pioneer in the development of transitional living for mentally and physically disabled people from institutions.”

Royer held a master’s degree in Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh, where he was a lecturer and part-time faculty member at the graduate schools of social work and public health. He also served as the president of the Pitt School of Social Work Alumni Association. Additionally, he served as a consultant to mental health programs in Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York

and Hawaii, and to the Community Support Project of the National Institute of Mental Health.

In a 1972 interview, Royer shared that he was working to undo 30-40 years of damage done by the mental health system, noting that Transitional Services received several patients who were deaf, but were mistaken for mentally ill.

This May, Transitional Services Inc. celebrates our 50th year since our incorporation in 1969. An April 7, 1969 *Pittsburgh-*

Post Gazette article that announced the incorporation recognized: “Since being founded, Transitional Services has placed more than 175 ex-patients in its own ‘halfway house’ in furnished apartments and in foster homes.”

In honor of this milestone of the 50th year of Royer’s mission to help people with mental disabilities discover and achieve their hopes and dreams for a meaningful life in the community, TSI will be celebrating with a Gala Event on Friday, May 10, 2019 at the Hyundai Club at PNC Park from 6-10 p.m.

Sponsors, agency staff and guest, and other key stakeholders will be in attendance. The event will feature hors d’oeuvres, cocktails, dinner, live entertainment, a Chinese Auction and presentations on the history of the agency. ■



Five Decades of Helping Others – A Lifetime of Caring



TSI, QUALITY & CARF

In January 2019, Transitional Services (TSI) successfully was awarded accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

CARF International is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote the quality, value and optimal outcomes of services through a consultative process and continuous improvement services that center on enhancing the lives of individuals.

CARF believes that 1) all people have the right to be treated with respect and dignity; 2) all people should have access to needed services that achieve optimal outcomes, and; 3) all people should be empowered to exercise informed choice. The primary purpose of CARF is to develop and maintain current, field-driven standards that improve the value and responsiveness of the programs and

services delivered to people in need of life enhancement services.

TSI engages CARF to conduct this intensive survey of all our programs and services every three years to assure that we maintain the highest level of quality to meet or exceed these standards. Achieving this accreditation is no easy task and is a testament to the hard work of our dedicated employees, who strive to hardwire these best practices into everyday operations. To keep our focus on this critical effort, TSI has welcomed into our family a Healthcare Quality and Performance Improvement Coordinator, Theresa Wray. She will be charged with the important task of keeping quality at the forefront of our day-to-day work and assuring that we are ready for our next survey in 2021. ■

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walk their neighborhood? Maybe they live in a place that doesn't have sidewalks, or maybe it's a high-crime area. Darah tries to look at someone as an all-inclusive person.

"Our mission is to bring wellness to everybody, as in people that are able-bodied, people that are disabled, people with a psychiatric disorder—our goal is to bring wellness to everybody," says Darah. Her organization offers personal training, small group personal training, corporate wellness classes, boot camps, kickboxing, lunch and learns, healthy cooking demos, adaptive wellness classes, and groups.

Darah shared one of her favorite quotes about wellness. "Wellness is an active process of becoming aware of making choices towards a healthy and fulfilling life. Wellness is more than being free of illness, it is a dynamic process of change and growth." She said, "I'm not going to one day wake up and not have a mental illness, so for me, health and wellness focuses on living well with my mental illness, still achieving my goals, being active and living a fulfilling life."

OMNI Health and Wellness will be transitioning to the online market in summer 2019. Darah plans to start a podcast *See Through Other's Eyes*, where she will interview

people with disabilities to allow them to share how they manage their illness and their wellness. The future also holds online groups and YouTube channels to help spread her message of wellness advocacy to others. "One of my future goals is to create an online bakery that employs and empowers folks with disabilities and educates a population about individuals with disabilities." She also hopes to create a website and app that allow people to stream adaptive workouts so



people that live alone or don't have access to an adaptive gym can see people like them and in similar circumstances achieve their goals.

Darah shared some advice for those who are struggling to regain control of their health and wellness. She encourages people to start slow. Change is best made through small, realistic goals,

"One of my future goals is to create an online bakery that employs and empowers folks with disabilities and educates a population about individuals with disabilities."

such as drinking more water and slowly incorporating exercise into their routine and then slowly integrating fruits and vegetables into their daily diet. "Change is hard, so it's easier to do small, incremental changes that form large change," she said.

She also encourages setting goals and then rewarding oneself for reaching those goals. If you form a habit of drinking water, buy yourself a new water bottle or buy a new article of clothing for every ten pounds lost.

OMNI Health and Wellness, a mobile site that serves Western Pennsylvania and Ohio, can be contacted at darah@omnihw.co or 412-849-6813. Follow them on Facebook under Omni Health and Wellness. ■

Planning for Your



The understandable sense of burden or defeat that may occasionally punctuate your life with diabetes has a name: diabetes distress. Doctors are just beginning to understand this condition and how it affects your health and well-being. What is clear, though, is that diabetes distress can have negative effects on the individual living with the disease—and that’s why researchers are seeking ways of overcoming these negative emotions. There is no cure for diabetes, but it can be managed. Balancing the food you eat with exercise and medicine (if prescribed) will help you control your weight and can keep your blood glucose in the healthy range. This can help prevent or delay complications. Many people with diabetes live long and healthful lives.

You may be familiar with three types of diabetes:

■ TYPE 1

Diabetes 1 is not a childhood disease. It occurs at every age, in people of every race and of every shape and size. In fact, there are more adults who have type 1 diabetes than children, although it was previously known as juvenile diabetes. In type 1 diabetes, the body does not produce insulin.

■ TYPE 2

When you have this disease, your body does a poor job of turning the carbohydrates in food into energy. This causes sugar to build up in your blood. Over time, it raises your risk for heart disease, blindness and other nerve and organ damage. It strikes

people of all ages, and 1 out of 3 people don’t know they have it.

■ GESTATIONAL DIABETES

A condition in which women develop diabetes during pregnancy. There are more than 200,000 cases per year in the U.S. The diagnosis rarely requires a lab test of imaging, and treatment from a medical professional is advised. Gestational Diabetes can last up to several months or years. Being overweight and experiencing fatigue can be early symptoms. It can be treated with a nutritious diet and exercise. Medication may or may not be prescribed by your obstetrician.



MOST EXPERTS RECOMMEND THREE AREAS OF FOCUS IN MANAGING DIABETES. THEY ARE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, MEDICATION (IF PRESCRIBED) AND HAVING A FOOD PLAN. BELOW ARE TIPS:

Regular physical activity can help you...

- * Lose weight.
- * Lower risk of heart disease.
- * Possibly reduce the need for medication.
- * Gain energy.
- * Increase well-being.
- * Improve overall health.
- * Too much physical activity can lead to low blood sugars (hypoglycemia), so carry a fast-acting carbohydrate snack. Signs include weakness, shakiness, hunger, irritability, headache, dizziness, trouble

concentrating and light-headedness.

Medication

- * Take your Medication as prescribed by your doctor.
- * Never take someone else's diabetes medication, even if it is exactly the same as yours.



If you miss a dose call your doctor or your pharmacist.

- * Talk to your doctor and educate yourself regarding the types of insulin (long, short and intermediate).
- * If you use a syringe or pen, rotate your injection sites.
- * You can use a detergent bottle to properly dispose of your diabetic supplies.

- * Take your blood sugar as often as recommended by your physician.
- * Have a Food Plan.
- * Control your portion sizes.
- * Eat regularly (small portions several times a day).

- * Check food labels for calorie, carbohydrate, total fat and sodium amounts.
- * Don't rush! Eat slowly and really enjoy your meal.
- * Learn to make healthy food choices (talk to your PCP about a consultation to a nutritionist).
- * Plan your meals and snacks ahead of time. ■



Seasoned & Safe

It is the time of the year that we dust off our grills and load them with all of our favorite foods. Many of us have “Secret Seasonings” and family rituals of how we prepare and serve our favorite dishes from the grill. Although most people enjoy a good cookout, we all need to be very careful that we are being safe with cross-contamination, the fire and general grill safety. Here are a few tips to help your food be seasoned and safe!

- * Always keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. (Have a cooler or ice handy if necessary.)
- * Never reuse any surface that you have prepped or prepared any type of fish, meat or poultry without properly washing and disinfecting the area.
- * Wash hands thoroughly after touching any meat, fish or poultry before moving forward with your grilling.
- * Placing your meat and fish on separate sides of the grill or using grilling baskets can further reduce the risk of cross-contamination.
- * Remember to always cook your meat fully.
- * Stand far enough away from the grill so that any large flames will not be able to reach you. Follow the directions on all lighter fluids to prevent overuse.
- * Be certain the fire on the grill is completely extinguished before moving it indoors or closer to your home. ■

Halloween Fun

On October 31, 2018, staff and individuals participated in Halloween festivities. Individuals played glow-in-the-dark mini-golf while dressed in their costumes. Staff participated in a Halloween contest by submitting their costume for vote by their peers. **Brandie** won first prize for “Sweepstakes Winner” and **Jenise** won second place for her interpretation of an “ice cream cone.” ■



2nd Place:
Ice Cream Cone ▶

1st Place:
Publishers Clearing House Winner
▼



Holiday Luncheon

On December 13, 2018, over 100 people gathered at the Monroeville Double Tree Inn for a holiday celebration. The individuals enjoyed a delicious buffet of traditional holiday fare and exchanged laughs with friends, old and new. Following lunch, the merriment moved to the dance floor. ■







Helpful Tips for STRESS MANAGEMENT

There is no doubt that everyone has stressful times. Managing life's everyday ups and downs can affect your health on almost every level, often with lasting consequences. Chronic stress may lead to persistent increases in blood pressure and blood sugar. Stress can affect mental health, increasing symptoms of depression or anxiety, which also can increase risk for heart disease and stroke. And while your body is well engineered to handle stress on occasion, when you constantly go on red alert, the aftermath can be dangerous.

THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF STRESS:

- * Daily Stress
 - Work/family balance
 - Going from one obligation to the next
- * Technology Stress
 - Ping of phone, computer, tablet or social media postings demanding your attention
- * Relationship Stress
 - Interactions with spouses, significant others, kids, family or friends
- * Social Concerns
 - Climate change, politics, gun violence and terrorist threats.

UPSIDE OF STRESS

It's not all bad. In fact, those anxious emotions can actually be beneficial when you approach it in the right way.

“Stress can be debilitating, or it can be enhancing.”

Once you appreciate that stress makes you better and stronger, it changes your brain, it makes you more resilient, and it changes the way you respond to it. Research suggest that people who experience a moderate level of adversity during their lifetime develop skills to cope with stress proactively. ■

TEN TIPS TO MANAGING STRESS

1. Regular exercise
2. Deep breathing
3. Regular sleep patterns
4. Listening to music
5. Asking for help when you need it
6. Spending time outside
7. Sipping herbal tea
8. Talking about it
9. Eating healthy
10. Enjoying yourself

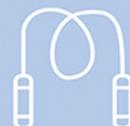
WHAT IS CAUSING US STRESS?

- ▲ Unexpected Expenses 43%
- ▲ Making ends meet 34%
- ▲ Healthcare costs 29%
- ▲ Tax changes 18%
- ▲ Rent increases 16%
- ▲ Losing a job 12%
- ▲ Interest rates 12%
- ▲ Rising house prices 11%
- ▲ Financial market performance 9%
- ▲ Childcare costs 8%
- ▲ Falling housing prices 4%

GET



&



UP



MOVE

Over the last two decades, obesity has significantly increased in the United States. According to The State of Obesity, the adult obesity rate was at or above 35 percent in seven states, and at least 30 percent in 29 states. Pennsylvania has the 24th largest rate of adult obesity in the nation of 31.6 percent, tying with Georgia. According to the data, Virginia has the highest rate of 38 percent.¹

Most adults have traditional careers, which requires sitting in front of the computer for eight hours or more. Instead of breaking this sedentary lifestyle, it continues once we leave the workplace to

go home and binge watch our favorite Netflix series. Gym memberships are purchased on December 31st, never to reach their maximum potential. Instead, we indulge ourselves in hours of Facebook scrolling, Instagram lurking and following the latest YouTuber.

Most would say the root of this inactive lifestyle is due to the advancements in technology. However, it is this technology that provides a variety of resources to assist with replacing the



deskbound lifestyle with an active lifestyle. There are several free YouTube videos that will allow you to exercise or practice yoga in the comfort of your home. With the video streaming capabilities of Facebook Live, members are invited to participate in a live exercise class or fitness group. Many developers are dedicated to using technology to improve our health; we just have to be motivated enough to get up and move, and not just sit and casually watch. ■

¹ www.stateofobesity.org/states/pa

The information included in this article is informational only. All readers are advised to consult with their medical provider before beginning an exercise or diet routine.

HABITS TO GET UP & MOVE

1. Prolonged periods of sitting slow down your metabolism.

By utilizing a standing desk, you are increasing your blood flow and reducing your risk of obesity by encouraging movement.

2. Fitness apps help you to customize your own workout or follow a plan based on your desired outcome. Reminders to drink water or to get up can be sent to your phone, as we tend to reduce these routines during business hours.

3. Aspiring or current fitness gurus have benefited from YouTube. By subscribing to your favorite YouTuber, you can begin your active lifestyle from the comfort of your living room.

EMPLOYEE YEARS OF SERVICE



15 YEARS OF SERVICE
Joyce Snyder



10 YEARS OF SERVICE
Monica Scott



3 YEARS OF SERVICE
Johnnie Hicks



5 YEARS OF SERVICE
Laura Williford



5 YEARS OF SERVICE
Lynn Anne Pellegrino

Making a Difference

Through the Making a Difference Awards, TSI staff are recognized by their peers for demonstrating TSI's Core Values:

Communication, Integrity, Teamwork and Customer Service. Nominations are submitted to the Human Resources Department, and the committee votes to select the winner(s). At the end of the year, nominations that were extraordinary are selected to be presented at the annual employee recognition dinner.

In April, the staff at our Intellectual Disabilities group home were recognized for a Bingo night event. The program aims to have at least five of the eight residents participate in activities. The staff, management and individuals made the night

memorable for not just the program, but for the agency as well. Congratulations to the staff for a successful Bingo night!

"All the residents and staff, Cliff, Leslie and Todd, of the group home participated in a special St. Patrick's Day Thursday Night Bingo. We all had so much fun, fun, fun. Everyone who didn't bingo received a bag of gold chocolate coins. During intermission, Cliff and one of the individuals performed a hip-hop routine to the delight of the residents, who clapped along with the two dancing machines. We look forward to next week's game!! Special thanks to Todd and Kelly for the awesome gifts and support."



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MISSION STATEMENT

TO HELP PEOPLE WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES
DISCOVER AND ACHIEVE THEIR HOPES
AND DREAMS FOR A MEANINGFUL
LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY.

VISION STATEMENT

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE
CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PEOPLE WE SERVE.

A Glimpse Inside This Issue...

To Your Health!

50 Is Nifty!

Grill Talk

Special Gatherings

Move It!

Don't Stress

TSI LIVING

PUBLICATIONS TEAM:

**Keisha Becoate, Johnnie Hicks, Kellie Burnett,
Renay Trotter & Laura Quain**

PHOTO CREDITS:
Laura Quain



Transitional Services, Inc. has been accredited by CARF for the following programs and services:

- Community Services: Community Housing
- Community Services: Supported Living
- Community Housing: Psychosocial Rehabilitation (Adults)
- Supported Living: Psychosocial Rehabilitation (Adults)