Tyrike always had a way with words. Working with RHD's IDEATE, an inclusive employment program providing clinically-guided support to individuals with disabilities, he found a way to turn his poetry into a business opportunity. Tyrike is now a poet and entrepreneur, with a line of greeting cards sold at bazaars, festivals and a West Philadelphia boutique.

"Writing poetry makes me see things more clearly. It inspires me and it gives me hope," Tyrike said.

Tyrike is among the millions of Americans with "barriers to employment," which refers to any number of disabilities or circumstances that may prevent a person from finding and keeping a job. RHD founded IDEATE in 2014 to help people break those barriers.
IDEATE: Jonathan is fulfilling his goal with a job in pre-engineering capacity as an ‘order piler’ at Airline Hydraulics with Dave Quigley (below)

IDEATE is part of a national movement to put individuals who may have difficulty getting into the labor force, into the labor force, its labor force, the labor force,” Director Karelene Koval said. “We are STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) oriented, and we strive to support participants in obtaining opportunities with those components. The men and women in our program are remarkable. They are discovering their passion and the worth work can provide. For many, it’s a new level of validation.”

IDEATE participants receive customized support and direction. 95 percent are people with intellectual disabilities, 80 percent have complex behaviors that require behavioral support plans and/or safety plans, and 40 percent have experienced other arrest, adjudication or frequent police encounters. With support from IDEATE, 92 percent of program participants are earning regular income.

The process begins with a discovery period, during which coaches help clients determine what kind of work they want to do and the areas in which they might excel. Tyrike’s journey of discovery began with his employment advocate, Liz Cippon, who learned that Tyrike had a passion for poetry and writing. Under Quigley’s supervision, Jonathan now works in a warehouse manager for Airline Hydraulics, a provider of technology-driven products and services. Quigley had known Jonathan since he was a child. When he heard Jonathan was looking for work, he contacted the HR department at Airline Hydraulics, who worked with IDEATE to provide a job opportunity that would accommodate Jonathan’s special needs.

Under Quigley’s supervision, Jonathan now works in a pre-engineering capacity as an “order picker” – gathering, checking and delivering parts, among other things. “What Jon brings is determination, and a willingness to learn,” Quigley said. “He shows a lot of heart in this job.” Jonathan feels right at home at Airline Hydraulics. “Every day it’s something new,” Jonathan said. “We all help each other, like a team.”

Technology will play a large role in IDEATE’s future plans. Koval said, “We hope to break barriers by introducing those with IDD diagnosis into jobs with heavy technology, or like Jonathan, ensconced in the engineering field.” Koval said, “Starting in July, some of our members will be working virtually. That’s a major breakthrough.”

“So many of the people we support are often told that it can’t be done — and yet we are, we have, and we will.”

Benny was sitting in his apartment talking about his journey to RHD Coastal Wellness, from living in a group home and being hospitalized at Annapolis State Psychiatric Hospital before he was, in his words, “rescued by my angels. He lives independently in his own apartment with support from staff like Life Skills Specialist Linda Bogun and Wellness Coach Matt Domino.

“Why did you pick me?” he asked. “Why did you do all this for me?” “We’re a match made in heaven, Benny,” Bogan said. “Me? This old man?” Benny said. “You’re just getting started, Benny,” Domino said, with a laugh. At 87 years old, Benny is not only the oldest client at RHD Coastal Wellness, a Residential Intensive Support Team (RIST) program that provides the holistic services needed to maintain independent living with community integration for individuals experiencing homelessness, chemical dependency, and mental illness. Benny is the oldest person in New Jersey living independently with support from a behavioral health provider. “I can cook for myself, I can sleep when I want,” Benny said. “I listen to classical music. My life is better here.”

“I appreciate what they do for me,” Benny said. “So many of the people we support are often told that it can’t be done — and yet we are, we have, and we will.”

RHD’s Donna Torrisi honored with lifetime achievement award for work with FPCN

Donna Torrisi, founder and Executive Director of RHD’s Family Practice and Counseling Network, has been honored with the 2017 Loretta C. Ford Lifetime Achievement Award by the National Nurse Practitioner Network. Donna received the award at a sold-out luncheon in Washington, D.C. on May 16.

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I t's gametime, and the players bring their hands together in a huddle. A different player leads the chant each time, but it always ends the same and sends the team out on the court the same way: “R! H! D!”

The RHD Tigers are a basketball team made up of consumers from RHD Memphis, which provides residential habilitation, supported employment and personal assistance to persons with developmental disabilities in supportive, supervised settings. Staff at RHD Memphis started the team as a means of engagement for consumers, but soon found something extraordinary happening — as consumers worked to become a team on the floor, the lessons they took from the experience helped them grow and progress off it.

“I like my team,” said James, the Tigers’ point guard. “It’s not about me; it’s about the whole team. We work together. If you want to be a winner, you’ve got to show good leadership. You’ve got to be professional. That means you can’t quit. You can’t let your team down. You’ve got to stay strong. “On our team, we’re always telling each other: You can do it. Don’t give up. We stick together — like glue. ”

Devin Graffed, a Direct Support Professional at RHD Mainstay South, played basketball in high school and devotes extra time to coach the team.

“It makes them happy, and I think it’s really helpful,” Graffed said. “They’re not just playing — they’re playing for something.”

Every consumer at RHD who wants to be part of the team has a role somewhere — whether it’s playing or helping or cheering. In addition to consumers who act as cheerleaders for each game, an RHD consumer named Bobby who is too old to play acts as the team’s equipment manager, handing out towels and water and shouting encouragement.

“We don’t want anybody feeling left out; everybody is a part of it,” Graffed said.

“We always try to come up with creative ways for our individuals to have engagement,” said Terrance Ryan, RHD Memphis Program Director. “We’re person-centered, so it’s really about what they like and dislike. We try to introduce our consumers to different things, but a lot of the guys watch and love basketball. So we try to do something they would like. We were able to create this avenue for them, and it’s worked really well.

“Being on the team has really helped them to have a focus, learn how to work with others, taught them things about sportsmanship. It gives them something to look forward to, helps foster peer relationships as well as community relationships.”

Making a team was easy enough, but finding opponents was something else. Spurred by RHD staff, a league of local providers cobbled itself together so that consumers from different agencies could play against each other. Everyone worked together to formulate the league, scheduling games at the Raymond Skinner Center and lining referees. On game day, the place is packed — RHD staff shows up to support the team, and consumers who don’t play come to cheer on their friends.

“When the RHD people come and cheer, we get hyped up,” said Darrell. “It makes us want to win the game for RHD. We don’t want to let people down.”

When RHD is playing, the gym is at a full roar the entire time (“The games are a really big deal here,” Ryan said). Every shot, every play, every trip up and down the court gets plenty of positive reinforcement from the stands.

“It encourages them, and we want to perpetuate positivity, positive reinforcement, positive ways to get attention,” Ryan said. “It’s a good avenue for that. We have individuals who may not have been so social, who may not have known how to engage with their peers appropriately, and we’ve seen people open up and learn how to work with people they didn’t know. This setting has created something that propels them toward being more open, and more willing to socialize. Some of our guys have experienced a lot of growth and tremendous progress. Being part of the basketball team has aided in their success.”

Chase is one of the first consumers at the gym on game days; he wakes up excited and eager to go.

“Playing basketball with RHD has been very important to me,” Chase said. “It’s exciting. I love being a part of the team. One time I got sick and couldn’t play. But I went to the game and cheered for my teammates. That’s important.

“Basketball is about leadership. You have to show others that you don’t get mad if things don’t go your way. That’s what’s cheered me up in my life, that shows leadership — ignoring negativity, thinking about positive stuff every day.”

The RHD Tigers foster team spirit that helps consumers thrive at RHD Memphis

ON OUR TEAM, WE’RE ALWAYS TELLING EACH OTHER: YOU CAN DO IT. DON’T GIVE UP. WE STICK TOGETHER - LIKE GLUE.
RHD peer support helps people ‘find their light’

Brenda at RHD’s United Peers shows benefits of RHD’s commitment to Certified Peer Specialists in our programs

FROM RHD’S CEO

Dyann Roth, CEO of Resources for Human Development

At RHD’s Values Day, where we celebrate the Values that guide us and make note of the successes we see in our programs across the country, we give the Barbara Foust award to a RHD client who demonstrates exceptional courage, creativity and spirit. This year the award went to a client who is also part of our staff — Brenda Lewis, who is a person in recovery from mental health challenges and who also works as a Certified Peer Specialist at RHD’s United Peers.

At RHD we view peer support as a core component for success in human services. Certified Peer Specialists assist persons in recovery as they work to live as independently as possible. Peers in RHD programs demonstrate and model recovery through education, training as a CPS, and their own lived experiences.

“I came into United Peers feeling like I wasn’t wanted and wasn’t understood,” said Brenda, as she choked back tears. “They supported me and helped me to grow. They helped my family to understand me. I’m grateful for United Peers. I’m not alone in the dark, “ said RHD Peer Mentor Stephanie McKee. “I help them to wellness, “ said RHD Peer Mentor Dwayne Williams.

The idea, said Raymond Harrod, Family House NOW’s director, is to “teach responsibility and budgeting and more, all while they are taking care of their kids so that’s not a shock to the system when they leave and have to learn all over again.”

RHD’s commitment to Certified Peer Specialists in our programs includes the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the American Academy of Nursing. In 2015 the Pennsylvania Dental Journal described the health center as the “source of the future for health care that the center cares for the whole person, including their primary care, oral health and mental and behavioral health.”

Community Leaders join global movement supporting RHD’s One Stop Approach in the Big Sell Off

At RHD’s Values Day, Philadelphia community leaders came together to distribute RHD’s One Stop Approach in the Big Sell Off. The event was a part of the 2017 Big Sell Off, an international collaboration between street papers in 35 countries, supporting and celebrating the more than 350 vendors at 112 street papers worldwide working to change their lives and escape poverty and homelessness.

RHD works with 20 parent-led way with Tina’s Wendy working with RHD’s One Stop Approach to see how people treat those who identify as homeless or low income. The results made for a moving story on FOX11s “For Goodness Sake” segment. Tammy Harvey, Family House NOW’s director, said, “This is where we’re at, and that’s why we’re here. It’s a part of our mission to change their life and break the cycle of homelessness.”

One Stop Approach is a voice of advocacy and a source of meaningful income for people experiencing homelessness.

RHD peer support helps people ‘find their light’

Philosophy Inquirer features RHD’s Family House NOW: Rehab for mothers and their children allows them to recover together

The Philadelphia Inquirer featured RHD’s Family House NOW in a story about substance abuse treatment programs in the Philadelphia area where women can live with their children, so the family can recover as a unit.

“The program saved our family,” said Ms. Hall-Sheffler. “I’ve said it to everybody, ‘It saved my life,’ ”

Family House NOW, founded in 1995, is one of approximately 10 substance abuse treatment programs in the Philadelphia area where women can live with their children. The Family House NOW director, t.o. “teach responsibility and budgeting and more, all while they are taking care of their kids so that’s not a shock to the system when they leave and have to learn all over again.”

Family House NOW is a long-term residential treatment facility for women experiencing mental illness and chemical dependency, and their children. Special components address drug/alcohol addiction, mental illness, skill development, and parenting skills, as well as prevention and intervention for the children. Family House NOW is in collaboration with Audubon Farmhouse that works with mother and child in a residential treatment setting.

RHD hosts Mayor’s Task Force to Combat Opioid Epidemic

RHD hosted the Mayor’s Task Force to Combat the Opioid Epidemic for a community listening session. Concerned citizens joined us to help create a plan to address the heroin and opioid epidemic in Philadelphia. RHD has been a leader in fighting addiction for over 45 years, and is offering aid in recovery, trauma-informed, person-centered services that work in any community setting. More info: DBHIDS.org/opioid

RHD in the News: Changing Lives, Making Headlines

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Ellas from RHD’s Defunki Springs featured on book on people with disabilities in the workplace

Ellas, a client at RHD’s Defunki Springs, is featured in the new book Embracing Inclusion: People With Disabilities Thriving in the Workplace. Ella’s story is one of overcoming obstacles through the many dietary department 20 years ago with the help of RHD’s Defunki Springs, a community-based clubhouse model and day program serving adults with developmental disabilities. But she went above and beyond by earning her high school diploma.

“RHD helped me a lot, and the so glad I have my job,” Ella said “I love working at the hospital. I like working with the patients. People in the hospital, you want to help make their day better, and it’s a job where you’re not alone in the dark.”

Ellas’s story is one of overcoming obstacles through the many dietary department jobs she has worked.

Ellas’s story is one of overcoming obstacles through the many dietary department jobs she has worked.
Smile!

The Dental Center at Stephen and Sandra Sheller Family Services, part of RHD’s Family Practice & Counseling Network, recently began integrating dental and medical care for children, allowing the center to expand services in one of Philadelphia’s most vulnerable communities.

In this edition …

1. RHD basketball foster team spirit that helps consumers thrive at RHD Memphis
2. RHD Coastal Wellness finds age no barrier in supporting Benny
3. Clients at RHD’s IDEATE become entrepreneurs, do work that has value
4. RHD’s Lower Merion Counseling Services awarded CBHC grant

Plus more …

About Resources for Human Development

A national human services nonprofit founded in 1970, Resources for Human Development serves tens of thousands of people of all abilities every year with caring, consumer-driven services across environments and more. In partnership with local, state, and federal government and others we serve, RHD builds better lives, families and communities.