



Towne House Clubhouse hosts annual pre-Thanksgiving meal

By Deborah Allard
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Towne House Clubhouse's pre-Thanksgiving dinner

FALL RIVER — Heaping plates of turkey with steaming mashed potatoes and vegetables were passed out much to the delight of the members, friends and family of Towne House Clubhouse.

It was the annual pre-Thanksgiving dinner to bring everyone involved with the clubhouse together for a meal and social time.

Run by Fellowship Health Resources, Towne House Clubhouse was a division of the May Institute for many years. Fellowship Health took over last year and moved the program from its Purchase Street location to 1706 President Ave.

This was its first Thanksgiving dinner in its new digs.

"It's been going really great," Clubhouse Director Frank Pace said.

About 60 to 80 members were dining just after noon Wednesday. More were set to arrive.

Pace said the clubhouse fits in well with Fellowship Health Resources' other programs for people with mental illnesses. It offers community support, peer advocates, group homes and more.

"It coordinates all the services," Pace said.

The members at clubhouse run the facility together. They are involved in culinary activities, such as cooking the annual Thanksgiving dinner and other meals, as well as administration, employment and education.

Funding for this year's dinner was provided by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, which donated \$500 to purchase the 20 turkeys needed for the meal. The turkeys were cooked at Corrigan Mental Health Center, while members of clubhouse prepared all the side dishes, set the tables and decorated the site.

Some of the members go beyond helping out at the site and have become mentors to members with substance abuse and mental health issues.

Joe Ainley, a recovering alcoholic who suffers from bipolar disorder, understands that other people need help. He stopped drinking after he suffered an alcohol-related stroke 13 years ago that left him unable to read or write for four months.

Now, he and volunteers Dave Furtado, Phil McCarthy and Kevin Johnson help other people in similar predicaments.

"If you see a guy in the street, call us," Ainley said. "We help the people that no one else does."

To learn more about Fellowship Health Resources or Towne House Clubhouse, visit <http://www.fellowshiphr.org> or call 508-672-2023.

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