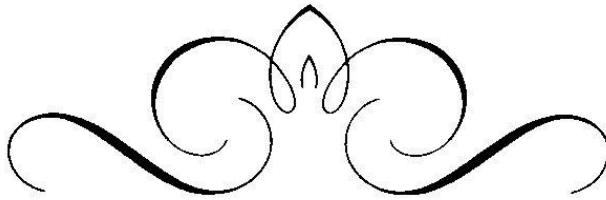


Volunteer Spotlight

May 2016



Austin Raglione

Prior to volunteering at the Men's Residential Center (MRC), Austin worked with the City of Portland's Police Bureau helping homeless men with criminal records. It was through those relationships that she was encouraged to volunteer at the MRC and continue making a difference in retirement. Austin joined the Men's Residential Center in January 2016 as a volunteer residential counselor, assisting staff and clients with every day needs.

The Men's Residential Center is a drug and alcohol treatment facility for men referred by the criminal justice system. Key to the success of this program is its focus on recreation and relationship building. Creating authentic bonds with others can be transformative for our clients.

One monthly recreational activity is pottery painting at Mimosa Studios, coincidentally owned by Austin. Austin and Mimosa have been so generous with their time and talents. In addition to Austin's role as residential counselor, she is assisting the MRC with creating a recovery tile mural for the center. This 140 piece tile mural illustrates what recovery means to our community, telling a story with each tile.

When asked about her most memorable experiences at the MRC, it's important to note that Austin volunteers on Tuesdays, which is the day new residents arrive. Often these men are coming straight from incarceration and they're grateful to be at the center, ready to make a change. Austin finds it inspiring to be a part of that intake process and to help the guys settle in on their first day. But she'll often visit on Mondays, as well, because that's graduation day. When men graduate from the program, it's an emotional evening shared with family present and a brotherhood of genuine love and caring for each other's recovery.

During her service with us, Austin has learned not to judge a book by its cover and to recognize that the stereotypes in our head of people who are incarcerated aren't true. Austin shared how astounded she is by the dedication of the staff is and how admirable they are, many of whom are in recovery themselves, to help show others the way out of a dark place.

The MRC welcomes Austin every day and makes her feel a part of the team. Austin knows it's not easy to put together a supportive and sustainable volunteer program, but VOA Oregon does a good job with volunteers. There's a lot of support and appreciation for those wanting to get involved in a meaningful way.

The MRC staff are grateful for the insight, energy, compassion, and respect Austin brings each time she volunteers.

Thank you, Austin, for making our community stronger.