

LIFE SKILLS REVIEW

Program
Coordinator

Special points of interest:

- Computer Classes
- Better Money Management
- Mental Health and Wellness
- Health and Nutrition
- Entitlements, Benefits, and Legal Issues
- Healthy Eating and menu planning
- Food Safety
- Understanding your fiancés

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COMPUTER CLASSES END '08 LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM

The summer 2008 session of the Life Skills Program ended on June 19 after eight intense but informative computer classes with instructor Frank Kiraly.

Some of the first classes focused on Charles Babbage (who originated the concept of a programmable computer). As well as bytes and megabytes (1,048,576 = 1 Megabyte), and creating folders.

Later classes were more intensified with subjects such as using the Internet, working with Microsoft Office programs, setting up email accounts and using different search engines.

Some of the really exciting classes involved learning about new programs like Google Earth and Picasa, two free programs that I downloaded to my home computer.

Through several assigned projects (homework) by Frank, we learned about other things besides computers. We found out, (except Diane) that the largest Egyptian pyramid was built by the Pharaoh Khufu. We learned (except Diane) that Meteor Crater is located outside of Flagstaff, Arizona, and we even found a good Chinese restaurant in Pittsburg.



The computer classes ended with a comprehensive test that included emailing, email attachments, creating folders, making Word documents and research on the Internet. Frank Kiraly's computer classes are always considered a highlight of the Life Skills Program!

Making Our Own Kind Of Music

One of the more somber but extremely important classes during the program was held by Terry Hicks, MA, LAC, CT who did a presentation on depression, bereavement, and grief. She especially talked about "disenfranchised grief," which are losses that

society does not recognize; forcing one to mourn privately. Something many of us in the program could identify with.

Terry showed us the different steps a person could take to work through grief and de-

pression. We learned that it is a different process for each individual, that each person has to "make their own kind of music." "A reference to the Mama Cass Elliot song from 1969. The class handouts were especially detailed and informative.

Dream Job Vs. Reality



One of the more interesting and fun classes during the program was the Career Development class run by Diane Hannisch.

Each class member was given a self-directed search, assessment booklet where we had to list our “occupational daydreams, you know, jobs we dream about having such as; movie star, musician, president of the United States etc..

Then we were asked to fill in if we liked or disliked doing different tasks like; fill out income tax forms, sketch, operate machines, work for charity, do public speaking. There were eight pages of tasks we had to rate. Each like or dislike had a point value and in the end the values were added up.

In a second booklet were listed occupations and we had to compare the sum of our tasks with the listed occupations to

see what we would really be good at. Needless to say there were major differences between our dream jobs and reality. For instance I listed president as one of my dream jobs, however according to the assessment booklet, one of the jobs I was more suited for was “shipping-order clerk, although congressional aide did pop up as well. It was, to say the least, a great eye-opening self assessment and reality check.

“Good money-management skills are important for everyone. Even if you think you’re doing OK, you can learn how to make your money go further.”

\$ Managing Money Matters \$

Scott Dingwall and Mary Halupa from the Family Guidance Consumer Credit Counseling Service (CCCS) took us on a rather revealing journey when they hosted classes on money management.

Scott showed us how important a budget can be, especially for people on a fixed income. It wasn’t easy, but he gave us a budget worksheet to fill out. When filled out honestly it really can open your eyes on all the money that is wasted.

Mary came in on a separate day and reviewed our budget worksheets and

gave us tips on where we might adjust our spending in order to



have more money at the end of the month.

She gave me some excellent advise on how to pay down my credit cards without leaving

myself broke.

The class was also informed about the how (annualcreditreport.com) and why of our credit reports and credit scores. We were shown how to retrieve our credit report and encouraged to do so on our computers. We learned what is a good credit score (720 or above) and how to achieve one.

CCCS offers low-cost credit and debt counseling services. Their counselors find individualized solutions for diffi-



Our Extraordinary Instructors

Diane Hannisch,
Scott Dingwall,
Mary Halupa,
April Brown

Terry Hicks,
Susan Jones,
Nicole Druham-McGinn,
Frank Kiraly

Thanks for taking the time to be a part of the Life Skills Program. The students really appreciate all of your support.

FUNDAMENTAL FOOD FACTS

Two important classes were headed by Susan Jones from Mercer Street Friends and Nicole Druham-McGinn from Mt. Carmel Guild.

These classes entitled Health & Nutrition I & II, touched on everything from the new federal government food pyramid to bacteria's that cause food borne illness.

One very important point that both Susan and Nicole emphasized over and over, was to wash our hands. It is recommended that a person wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds in order to properly kill any bacteria. We learned that food plays a huge part in our overall health.

Susan pointed out to us how important it is to eat a variety of foods to get the energy, protein, vitamins, minerals, and fiber we need to sustain good health. She also introduced us to words

like macronutrients, (proteins, carbohydrates, and fats). and micronutrients, (vitamins and mineral).

We learned that a good diet will include lots of protein. Protein builds muscle, builds new cells, fights infection, and is needed for hormone, antibody, and enzyme formation. The best sources of protein are from meat, chicken, fish, beans, eggs, milk products, soy, and nuts.

“Let thy food be thy medicine, and thy medicine be thy food.”

HIPPOCRATES

We learned to differentiate between good and bad fats, something a lot of us were confused about. It comes down to Saturated vs. Unsaturated fats. Saturated fats are the good guys, and are in most plant type foods, while unsaturated fats are the bad guys, and are in most foods from animals. This is where food labels come in and how

important it is to correctly read them. The really bad stuff to avoid is **Trans Fats**. The really good stuff to look for on a food label is mono-saturated fats which can be found in things like olive and canola oils.

WATER WATER WATER

Susan also stressed the importance of water in our daily diet. That it is the most important and frequently overlooked nutrient. The average person should drink 8-10 cups (8 oz.) a day and that can include anything liquid at room temperature.

One important but overlooked aspect of food that Susan covered was Menu Planning. She showed how good menu planning can keep food costs down, improve nutritional intake, save time in the grocery store, and help to avoid impulse shopping. The “Eating Healthy” handout was an excellent reference to a host of important food



Goals of good nutrition:

- Provide needed nutrition for your body to work and grow.
- Enhance energy level.
- Prevent vitamin and mineral deficiencies.
- Prevent food/water borne illnesses.
- Prevent/minimize nutrition related medical conditions
- Work together with medications.

Food Safety, Just as Important As Food Eating

In the second part of our Health and Nutrition classes, Nicole Druham-McGinn showed us the importance of food safety, such as proper food refrigeration, proper thawing techniques (avoid the danger zone, temperatures above 40 degrees), and to separate...don't cross contaminate.

We learned of the many different kinds of bacteria that can cause some pretty nasty illnesses if food safety is not practiced. *Escherichia coli* is a particularly nasty bacteria. I'll leave out the symptoms just in case someone reading this is eating or has a weak stomach. Nicole also went into greater detail

about reading and understanding food labels. We now know that under the “% Daily Value” heading, 5% or less is considered low and 20% or more is considered high. Nicole also answered that age old question of plastic cutting board or wooden? The answer is plastic.

The Technical Stuff

Rounding out the program was Jacquire Darby from the Law Project and Valerie Kerrigan from the NJ Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. Jacquire answered our many questions about dealing with Social Security Disability, Supplemental Security Income, and other entitlement and benefit programs. However, most of the time was spent on Landlord-Tenant issues. Many in the class told of their own horror stories about past dealings with landlords, and we learned that the Law Project could have helped with many of those issues.



Valerie came and educated us on how the NJ Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) could be a valuable resource when a person wants to think about finding a job or training for a new career. We were all encouraged to fill out some paperwork and set up appointments for an interview with the DVR..

Valerie reviewed the many different programs the DVR offers if one qualifies and how they are implemented. It was a real surprise to learn about the DVR and all that it offers. Some of the things a potential new employee can get help with at the DVR are:

- Vocational Counseling & Guidance
- Placement Services
- Guidance in work search activities such as resume writing, interviewing skills, job search organization
- Supported Employment
- Time Limited Placement and Coaching
- Job Accommodations
- Skills Training - Vocational school, technology or trade School, business school, etc.
- College Training
- Physical Restoration
- Emotional Restoration Services
- Mobility Equipment
- Driver Training
- Vehicle Modification
- Home Modifications

On A Personal Note

I would just like to thank the superlative and unrivaled Program Coordinator Diane Hanisch for recommending The Life Skills Program to me and for approving my acceptance into the program. Thanks to my Case Manager, the incomparable Jennifer Priest over at the Henry J. Austin Clinic for sending over the proper paperwork.

Thanks to all of our instructors for providing very informative, interesting, and fun classes. Thanks to my fellow classmates (David, Ruth Ann, Michael, & Diane), who I now

consider my friends, for the support, camaraderie and the many things I have learned from you. I hope we stay in touch in the future. I would highly recommend this program to everyone trying to make their way through life with HIV and all the

Thank You!

stuff that goes with the diagnosis. It is at times a fast-pace program with lots of information coming at you, but with everything in life, you will get out of it what you put into it.

All of the instructors presented their material in a way that we could understand with an undercurrent of knowing our unique situations.

I felt safe, comfortable, and that my privacy was respected throughout the 10 week program. I definitely learned and received information that will be put to use in my daily life and I now have knowledge of some powerful resources to use in the future.

Mario