

**New York-Presbyterian**  
The University Hospital of Columbia and Cornell

Katherine Ponte  
ForLikeMinds  
New York, New York

December 14, 2020

Dear Katherine,

On behalf of the Psychosocial Rehabilitation staff and our patients, I am writing to thank you for your organizational volunteer program at the New-York Presbyterian Hospital, Payne-Whitney Clinic.

We first hosted your organization, ForLikeMinds/Psych Ward Greeting Cards, 1½ years ago. We could not have imagined the impact that the Psych Ward Greeting Cards program would have on all involved - patients, hospital staff, donors, and collaborators. The program and its benefits have far exceeded our expectations.

The Payne Whitney Clinic has been a great proponent of peer support. We have regularly hosted speakers from National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Each year, staff and patients alike march together in the NAMI-NYC Metro Walk. For the past several years, we have had Peer Specialist interns rotating at our sites. We have seen firsthand the benefits of peer-to-peer interaction in inspiring hope, responsibility and resilience.

That is the message that inspired you as a patient several years ago, as you worked on your recovery as a person diagnosed with bipolar disorder. We are grateful that you stayed in touch about the various recovery activities you were pursuing over the years. We saw how you took your recovery principles to heart and put them into practice. We were very moved when you "paid it forward" and created ForLikeMinds, your social media site for mental health peer support. We were only too pleased to share this information with patients.

In June of 2019, you told me that you wanted to deliver get well cards with recovery messages to our patients. The Psych Ward Greeting Cards was born! The idea was so creative, such a good fit for all of our patients, and simply made such good, common sense, that we immediately agreed to participate. We intuitively realized the potential of this special project.

Since that time, over 800 patients have received cards at our Weill-Cornell Campus, in the Psychiatric Emergency Department, Extended Observation Bed Unit, inpatient Units, and outpatient programs. In addition, in Spring 2020, we started to disseminate cards at our Westchester Division to an additional 200 patients and growing. This has made a difference for patients, who greatly appreciate the recognition and support they are receiving.

We can attest to many benefits of the program:

- Beautiful cards: The cards are very beautiful, whether handcrafted by artisans or commercially produced
- Moving messages: The messages about recovery, often by people who have a lived experience of mental health issues, inspire hope and resilience
- Treats and thoughtful extras: Packages come with candy (both regular and sugar-free) which sweeten the lives of our patients
- Inspiring hospital visits: Patients benefit from meeting you and hearing your story
- Deliveries during COVID: We are so grateful to receive shipments of cards and candy each month throughout the pandemic, so that the program can still thrive
- Special holiday packages: Your generosity and creativity in sending a variety of holiday extras (such as Chanukah gelt and Christmas stockings) goes a long way in building a positive holiday spirit

We are touched that you are helping others with mental illness during challenging times, as well as creating a deeply meaningful way that allows people to also help others. Your commitment, enthusiasm and determination to ensure quality cards, messages and thoughtful extras makes your program a true stand-out!

Word is spreading about your fine work at our hospital. Your program is highly regarded, and has impressed staff and patients alike!

We would like to thank you, and the myriad of volunteers, who have all come together to make this program possible. We thank you, Katherine, for creating and managing this program. We thank the patients who made heartwarming cards and messages for other patients. We thank the many card designers for their beautiful cards, as well as dozens of card donors from across the country. We thank the companies who made our patients part of their workplace mental health initiatives.

A special shout-out goes to the remarkable members of Fountain House for their touching handmade cards and messages, and to the great support group members of NAMI-NYC who have also written messages in cards.

Above all, we would like to especially thank those living with or supporting someone with mental illness for sharing their inspiring and empowering stories of recovery, and those of their loved ones.

Thank you for enriching our program offerings. We look forward to our ongoing collaboration. We wish you every success in your organizational development in 2021!

Sincerely,



Chaya Weinstein, Ph.D., OTR/L  
Occupational Therapist

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