

RANDOM ACT BY A PEER SPECIALIST:PART 10

by **Howard Diamond**

New Year, New Peer Specialist Responsibilities, New Roles for Some?

As the New Year began, there was murmuring and buzzing around the water cooler and vending machines at Hunter Case Management led by the returning Steve Washington. By his facial expressions, it was apparent to all that he was delighted to be back full-time and had the dubious task of reorganizing the paperwork that Mary left. Not that she was messy, but Steve had his own method of doing office routines. Within three days he will have the office in ship-shape. Moreover, once the commotion subsides, and the loud whispering lessens he could concentrate on his tasks.

At 10am, a week from now, an entire staff meeting will be held and Steve will be prepared and ready. Currently, Taylor Thompson is on his extended vacation and Holly has been assisting Assistant Director Karen Collins. In his absence, she was given added work plus more duties and responsibilities by Karen to see what she could handle effectively. When asked, Holly stated that she did her best and tried to do what was needed. Overall, her dedication, perseverance and knowledge definitely got noticed. Other Supervisors around the agency went to Karen to extend some praise for Holly and what she has achieved. Most importantly, Karen saw this firsthand and her efforts will not be forgotten.

Holly could not wait for the weekend. Her entire body ached from the extra work and its inherent stressors. Due to this, she was able to give reasons to pamper herself. From getting a cut and styling session to go to a spa, she did everything to unwind. At the spa, Holly was put in a hot bath with oils and fragrances to open her pores and her sinuses. Additionally, she allowed herself to get two forty five massages to knock out more tension.

By the time Monday actually rolled around, Steve arrived by 8:30 to make sure everything was ready for the 10am entire staff meeting. Par normal, Taylor strolled in at exactly 9:00 plus Holly and Karen were shortly behind in the next elevator. Was this a coincidence or a planned event? At 9:45, staff began throughout the large conference room and by 10:00, Karen tried to get the staff seated and quiet.

Karen began the meeting by thanking everyone for being here today plus she asked all to stand and applaud one another for a good year and for a productive twelve months to come. When the staff got resettled, Karen with the assistance from a few of the Supervisors plus a short PowerPoint did a year in review. Three gift certificates of \$50 from the local Walmart were given to worthy individuals.

In addition, a \$100 and a small plaque was presented to Secretary Steve Washington for his heroism in the line of duty because he saved two teenagers from further injuries while getting a broken arm himself. Coincidentally last week he returned to Hunter full time and we wish him

well and continued success. Oh yes, Karen added that Steve was promoted from Secretary to Office Manager effective January 4. Finally, the Assistant Supervisor position Section One of the Peer Specialist Unit has been narrowed to two fine candidates, Frank Ford and Holly Stephens. For the people who do not know them, stand up and be recognized. A nice ovation of approximately three minutes ensued, which caused embarrassment for both.

For the rest of the month, Taylor will be aiding in the training of a new Supervisor in a different unit. Meanwhile Frank will be assisting Karen, much like Holly did at the end of the year. At the start, Frank seemed personable and willing to offer his hand. By his second week, he was becoming quite inflexible and too stern for his own good.

Frank, five foot ten and 185 lbs., now 48, soon to be another year older, brown eyes, grayish hair with scruffy sideburns and eyebrows. He rarely smiled. His no nonsense way of handling people and situations turned off many and his unapproachable aura mainly caused delays in making appointments and scheduling contacts with coworkers and clients. Recently divorced for the third time about four months ago, Frank has two daughters, twenty-five and twenty-two. None of his ex-wives nor his children are in contact with him, which according to Frank is fine. Each of his alimony checks are sent by a money order to his exes PO Box so there is no communication amongst anyone.

After the meeting, Frank was formally introduced to the immediate staff of Section One by Steve except for Holly who had to run to a court appearance with a consumer. Visibly a non-happy Frank informed Steve that Peer Specialists do not belong in the courtroom testifying. It was mentioned that Frank is also a Peer Specialist. However, Steve explained that Holly will not make any statements, she is mostly there for moral support. Also, Holly knows plus understands the policy plus has worked with this person for over a year and has appeared with him in court several times.

A Fresh New Office and a Surprise For Someone

Crosstown at the Pollock Therapy Group, Jane Frederick was on vacation from December 23 through the end of the year and the first week or so of this one. While she was away, her office Room 314 was painted and new furniture was ordered to spruce up her room. As Jane opened the door to her supposedly redesigned room, she found only a broken cabinet, plus an unfinished desk and chair. Also, the walls still smelled from a fresh coat of paint plus it had a host of other unpleasant scents. No way Jane can stay in this room, plus it would be hard for her to run therapy sessions from this messy room.

Good thing that Jane had no appointments until that afternoon. Suddenly, one of her colleagues, Ed Hall and new office manager, Claire Jenkins poked their respective heads through the ajar door and Ed began speaking about some of the changes at Pollock Therapy Group. In addition, Jane, after looking around noticed that her phone was neither in working condition nor connected to any wall. Plus, she realized that her computer and printer and files were nowhere to be found.

At that moment, Jane wanted an explanation and she was about to get one. Walking slowly while being escorted by Ed and Claire, Jane tried to extract information from either, but was unsuccessful. The trio continued down the hallway to Room 310, a bigger office that has been vacant for over an extended period, probably six months or more. All room numbers on the third floor will be altered and the phone system will be updated effective Saturday January 9.

Claire started about two weeks ago, after the previous office manager retired. Her slim figure and being, 38 was enhanced by her 5 foot 7 inches, long lanky tanned legs and pinned up curly blonde hair accompanied by bright bulging green eyes covered by an assortment of multi-colored plastic framed eyeglasses. Also, she had some freckles on her bronze face, legs and arms. Previously, she worked six years for another Mental Health Clinic and before that three years a private Psychiatrist.

During the rest of the morning, new furniture and other items were placed into several offices in Jane's section of the third floor. Her area and parts of the floor above were almost completely renovated with the hope it would be finished by the weekend and said it was wishful thinking plus nonrealistic. All of the therapists handled phone calls from the smaller meeting room located on the third floor and sessions will be held in vacant rooms on both floors. Included was room 330, a vacant room with a desk and chair plus limited furnishings. It will have to do until all is finished on Jane's office and both floors.

Over exuberant Claire bolted through the corridors. She stated that there will be a brief staff meeting at twelvish on the fourth floor in the bigger conference room. Being so excited, Claire almost spilled the beans about what was going to happen at the meeting. Lyle and Ed slowed her down in the corridor. Eventually Claire regained her composure and this day continued without any more extreme outbursts.

Around noon, Jane and a few coworkers decided to walk up the flight of stairs to the conference room. Ed had a few questions for Jane, which she figured was a stall tactic. However, Jane did not quite understand what was occurring. At about ten past noon, Jane flung the doors open to a great surprise. There were tables of catered food aligning the room, pictures of Jane on the walls celebrating Jane's decade of service for Pollock Therapy Group. There must have been around an eighty to hundred people walking in and out of the conference room that were acknowledging Jane and her dedication.

At this juncture, Jane was overwhelmed and did not know what to say. So Ed brought Jane and Claire to their respective seats at the main table directly across from the door where Lyle Sargeant plus The Executive Directors, husband and wife, Morris and Elizabeth (Beth) Pollock were seated. Lyle, 55, is five foot eight inches, beer belly about 190 lbs. with balding gray hair plus a salt and pepper bushy goatee.

At approximately 1pm, Morris began speaking about Jane Frederick and her many accomplishments and Lyle took over and made an eloquent speech, while pointing to pictures on the walls. When he was finished, Lyle stated to the sixty people remaining in the cramped

space that Jane was promoted to Supervisor of new therapists with a big pay raise. Also, being Lead Therapist and head of this committee stated that Jane will have no sessions until Monday, causing utter confusion for her. She was informed that Claire canceled her entire schedule and appointments for the next two days, except for her hospital visits tomorrow. Through the entire proceedings, Jane continually cried tears of happiness which created a fictionalized pond in front of her.

There were more festivities to come. Without anyone noticing, Claire excused herself from the party. Shortly afterwards, she returned wheeling in a cake and other desserts plus tea and coffee to further commemorate this day. During the dessert time, Morris Pollock stood up while he offered his praise of Jane plus gave a pin signifying her decade of service. Beth got up and presented her with a gift certificate from a local department store. During the completion of the gathering, staff continued to send best wishes to congratulate Jane.

On Friday the eighth, Jane did not meet with anyone at the office plus her furniture was incorrect another time, with the wrong wood, all of her wall decorations were not what was ordered and her room needed to be repainted with an additional coat. Also, Lyle informed Jane that her room would not be ready for at least ten days or two to three weeks, so her sessions for the foreseeable future would be down the hall in Room 330. Most of her clients will have to adapt all right. But will Jane?

**New Year Changes At The Police Station, Too.
Coming Soon In Random Act By A Peer Specialist: PART 11**

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