

Making A Way The TAP Story

“Making a way in the world today takes everything you got,
taking a break from all your worries, sure does help a lot,
wouldn't you like to get away...sometimes you want to go...
Where everybody knows your name, and they're always glad you came,
you want to be where people know, people are all the same,
you want to go where...Everybody knows your name...”



- a place to discover and relate
- a place to eat, dance, play, sing,
and tell my story to someone who cares.

“I haven't had this many conversations all year!”

“Tonight was an awakening for me.”

“I forgot to call my husband for my ride home.”

“People are really hungry for a face-to-face conversation.”

“We're more alike than we thought.”

“It's not world changing, it's life-by-life changing.”

“It's about the *who* we are...the *what* we are is unnecessary...irrelevant.”

“I didn't walk in and wonder what to do... I was never afraid to interrupt or be interrupted in a conversation. Everything flowed.”

“This was magical.”

“I am not intellectually disabled, but I have a disability. Is the TAP for me?”

“Normal is a myth.”

“When our stories flow together...life pours out!”

In 1998, the Harbor, a group home for four capable gentlemen with varying disabilities, opened. Due mostly to a lack of self-identity and confidence, the residents sought on-line connections, which were proving unsafe and dangerous. Harbor owner Daniel Cashman worried that his guys had no social gathering space where they could connect in the same way as the rest of us -a place like Cheers, where everybody knew their names.

At the strike of the millennium, Daniel, his brother, and some wide-eyed cohorts, tried to open The Groove, a venue specifically designed to build community for our valued friends. With our 501c3 in hand and a few backers, we found a building and set to work. We quickly discovered that our idealism was not entirely popular with social services. The Groove was thought to be a luxury - a reach too far. Looming large was a foster care system - the group home construct. Services focused funding on maintaining this system and its recipients. The Groove lost its momentum, its community funding, and prior to ever opening them, we closed the doors.

Fast-forward to September 13th, 2016. A small band of ‘freedom fighters’ descend on a coffee shop on the east side of St. Paul, Minnesota: The TAP. These included attending friends: County representatives, local community members, other stakeholders, and...our valued friends. What we found together was empowering.



Attending Friends

Outside the confines of office cubicles and our day-to-day grinds, we spoke face-to-face. We shed identifying labels - Mark, a valued friend, played video games alongside a county employee, Kevin. The one thing Mark and Kevin knew for certain, no zombie stood a chance!



What we found in this initial test of The TAP was astounding. It allowed people to feel welcomed, valued, and above all...cared about. In this setting - rich with human connections - people flourished, conversations just happened, and everyone felt like the Shit. Natural and organic community supports just happened. It *was* "magical." We decided to do another event and another...

On December 2nd, 2016, we hosted our holiday party at a new larger location; our previous four events had seen an amazing increase in turnout. We began having more fun, with more people, while balancing the ratio of attending and valued friends. It was jaw-dropping. Our guests were expressing themselves, creating lasting friendships, and connecting over similar interests. We were truly Tapping All Possibilities and it was working. Friends were coming together and building community.

We could talk all day about what The TAP has done in just a short few months, but nothing speaks more powerfully than firsthand voices:



“They said I couldn’t drive!” Sara shook her car keys. “I can do this!” She had come with heavy work discrimination issues, found new friends and support, and left empowered and re-energized

“He didn’t have any way of meeting people,” a mother attending with her son remarked. As we discussed The TAP, she was interrupted by laughter. It was her son with his new friends. “That made my year!” she said.



“I haven’t felt this good about something in a long time.” Jason said after his first TAP wrestling club event. It had been hard for him to meet people and he was reluctant to attend an event. But...an attending friend suggested starting his own wrestling club, and he agreed to try. The club took off.

Two valued friends meet, hoping to change their worlds with websites, conversations and marketing ideas.

While canvassing, two attending friends met Suzy and Rose. Excited about their new rain garden and The TAP, they brought two more friends and their caretaker to the next event. When their new attending friends remembered them by name, Suzy hit the dance floor and Rose started shopping and bargaining for t-shirts.

“It was a sacred moment,” as Greg described dancing with a new valued friend. A busy senior pastor- he doesn’t usually attend church functions. But this one he did, and he danced his heart out. In his next sermon he referenced The TAP, “This seemingly insignificant event was bigger,” he said, “than a universe filled with stars.”

Anna Grace, a thirteen-year-old girl with her own “Happiness Baking” website, donates cupcakes and cookies for The TAP events.

Rae Marie dances, and dances, and dances...

“Thank you this makes me very happy!” - Lucy’s words to an attending friend. Lucy is a fighter. Her struggle? Depression and pain. Her weapon? Knitting her multi-colored skeins of yarn. But it stopped there - until someone from The TAP really *saw* her, and offered to sell her products at an event. So far "Luchie’s Originals" have netted ninety dollars....Lucy: Happy, thrilled and proud! Forever grateful and now, forever knitting!

Toshiana beamed as she sang soulful songs to excited cheers.

Danny lost his father days before an event, but came anyway because he “wanted to be with his friends.”



Tom, new to town, was the last to leave our after-party. We had met him on chance, and after hearing about The TAP, he offered his services as a sound man. New friends, doing sound- something he loved - and connecting: He had found a home at The TAP.



“I love my TAP family!” – a burst from Sam, who loves to close our events with classic rock solos.

At The Tap, Bernie and Raina initially served coffee, but ended up making the events their date nights.

We met Mike at our local pub. He is a skilled demolition/construction guy, able to gut any room and clean it down to the studs for new construction. He also unabashedly would tell you he has depression.

One night, drawn into a conversation over some music, he came alive, startling us with his next words: “I am a poet,” he said. He told us that he wrote to deal with “it” and that “poetry saved his life.” Listening to him read one of his poems left us heart-stunned. The TAP! Give this man a place to express himself!

He agreed to read his poetry and as he did the room fell quiet. Mike never looked back, sharing his poems that night and at each of our five events.

Most exciting is that our friend Mike is now connecting with neighbors he never knew existed. He read his poetry at the East Side Freedom Library’s open mic night. In attendance were district community members, a local valued friend group, church members, friends of The TAP, and library regulars. His poetry was met with applause, cheers, and an encore.



“The response I got that night literally has opened my eyes that I can do this. None of this was possible without you helping me to unmask myself publicly.”



With his honest, bare-knuckled struggle to speak powerfully to his depression and heal, and his strong desire to motivate others, he started the Urban Journal poetry club.

“I’m sick of writing in silence! It’s life that I’ve been missing out on and when the day ends I’m never satisfied. I can’t thank The TAP enough for giving me a place to express myself. I really needed this!”

As we continue to build The TAP community, we are seeking new and innovative ways to naturally support human rights, greater independence, and self-determination. Sometimes a valued friend's inability to access community and culture like the rest of us, is their greatest disability. The TAP is changing that.



Living happens in moments that are variable, challenging, and filled with uncertainties. Life is fluid. It pops off in spontaneous and combustible ways. It churns and shifts. Life is wild ideas, creative solutions for untapped possibilities. Outside the norm is truly where we all live, and it's untamed and beautiful. The TAP is igniting people. Where does that end?

The blue light flashes,
The time is now,
I can't hold back,
I won't take a bow

It's not finished,
It's not profound,
These words spoken,
Some,
I still mumble for now.

Consider this real,
Consider it somehow,
How desperate the end,
How desperate now!
-Mike (Prenosil)