

The Geysir Chronicle

Edited and published by: Clubhouse Geysir, 105 Reykjavík, Iceland. Tel: (354)5515166 Fax: (354)5515136 e-mail: kgeysir@kgeysir.is Website: www.kgeysir.is

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Facts of interest about Clubhouse Geysir and Iceland.

- Klubburrinn Geysir is the only clubhouse in Iceland.
- There are 200 members.
- There are 3 TE placements and the 4th is in progress.
- The first Scandinavian Fountain house conference was in Iceland 2001.
- Current location of clubhouse would not have been possible if The Kiwanis movement in Iceland wouldn't have had a nationwide fundraising for buying a house for Geysir
- From 1999 25 members of club have had independent and/or supported employment

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Members and staff on a warm and sunny day this summer

Club Geysir's fifth birthday

The 6th of September 2004 club Geysir celebrated its fifth birthday. To establish and organize a clubhouse isn't an easy task, but with the work of enthusiastic people having a dream to come true everything is possible. This really is a fact looking back at the five

years which has passed since the Geysir was formally founded. It has always been the aim of Geysir to stand up to standards and be one of the best clubhouses in the world. „We have always put our aim high without though losing the target.“ says Anna Valdemarsdóttir

director. „We have always set our aim towards ICCD's certification. I think that we have been reasonable in our aim, and having been working on this for five years we are hopeful that we will get a three years certification this fall.“

Making access for disabled members

To be able to serve all members who wish to join the Club it is very important that the house is accessible to everyone. When Geysir moved its activities to current location the house was not accessible to people in wheelchairs. In the first



week of September contractors began improving access outdoor for the disabled. This is the first step in an expensive progress. Next step towards

this task is to have put up an elevator indoors. For making this constructions possible the club applied for and received a support from an official fund of the disabled, but according to regulations the club must provide access to all individuals however ones physical condition.

Studying at the University of Iceland:

An interview with Kjartan Emil Sigurðsson

Kjartan Emil Sigurðsson came first to Club Geysir directly from mental health unit of the local hospital. That visit took place in October 2003, but on his birthday at the end of February 2004 he formally joined Club Geysir.

How did you first hear about Club Geysir? „As said before I had been a patient at a mental health unit that I first came to Club Geysir. At that point a decision was made that the best possible treatment was to become active in Club Geysir. Certainly the Fountain house idea of the work-ordered day suited me perfectly.“

Kjartan Emil says that he participated in the club activity because it suited his longing for self-improvement. „And as mentioned before he found that particularly the work ordered day was helpful for him. The work atmosphere in the club is outstandingly positive and helpful. There is a genuinely good spirit among the staff as well as members of the club.“



Kjartan Emil is registered as a student in roman languages at the University of Iceland. „I will be attending two courses,“ Kjartan Emil says: „Twentieth century history and Nationalism and ethnic conflicts I guess the club is a part of the explanation why I am studying. One gains self-discipline through the club activity and the work ordered day. This latter is a positive item in the studying aspect of my life“.

How have you been able to improve through the club activity? „Basically you could say that cooperating with others is generally a positive element. Yet one can choose what to do and does not need to do some

activity or work. My closest relatives have also been able to improve their situation through my work and activity in Geysir. „I have to say that my family has been extremely helpful and encouraged me in all my activities. Before I did not do much during the day, but now I am preoccupied in working in the club.

Kjartan Emil sees his future evolve in the club although one could argue that this is a life long journey. „I will keep contact with the club for the rest of my lifetime. I gather it would be an opportunity to say that I am thankful of having started my journey at Club Geysir.

An interview with a members' relative



Dórgnýr

Dórgnýr Thoroddsen an independent film maker and nanny whose mother is a member of Club Geysir The Chronicle asked him to answer some questions.

What is your connection to Geysir? *My Mother is a club member of the Fountain House Geysir.*

How do you feel about the service rendered to relatives in connection with people with mental illness? *So far so good...in fact I think it's great although I haven't been much of a participant. But I've come to dine there a couple of times and been received very well, thanks.*

Do you find that there are prejudices against mental illness? *Absolutely. Many of them are based on proper-grounds but the biggest issue here is to make people understand that mental illness isn't necessary a final-judgement. Men-*

tally-ill persons can very well become again valid members of our society.

How important is it for you to know about Geysir? *Quite important. Knowing a club out there is rehabilitating people to become employed is very important.*

How did you like our open day for relatives and friends? *It was a nice experience. I got to know what it was all about. Count on my support again next time.*

Would you yourself wish to participate further in the work of Geysir? *Freelance, yes. I'd be ready to come and help at least once in a while.*



Andrea

Óðinn Einisson a member and Benedikt Gestsson staff from Club Geysir went to three week training at Genesis club in Massachusetts in the fall of 2003. Two weeks later they were joined by the director of Geysir Anna Valdemarsdóttir. Along with colleges from Oasis house in Utah, USA and Bryggjan Clubhouse in Sweden they formed the famous Group 75, which since then has become widely known in the clubhouse community.

For building up and developing a clubhouse it is of the utmost importance to have staff and members trained to increase their knowledge and skills on the ideology of the clubhouse movement and not the least to be able to inform new members, staff and board in the best possible way. Further more Geysir Clubhouse has had the long time goal of getting a certification from the ICCD. In strict relation to that goal an action plan was made for club to work on to achieve our aim towards certification.



Odinn og Benedikt on a site visit to the Plymouth plantation in Cape Cod

Heading for certification

To get connected to the clubhouse work ordered day at Genesis Odinn and Benedikt signed up for work in different units. Odinn worked in the Research and development unit while Benedikt worked in the Orientation and maintenance unit. „At the end of every work ordered day we had meetings, presentations and discussions. Also we went on visits to hospitals, TE placements, and

not to forget the social meetings at the guesthouses' back porch. Often there was interesting discussions and debates where new angels became clear.“

Kevin Bradley executive director and our guide was really cool and supportive in working out the action plan. He never got tired of referring to the ICCD standards to explain and improve or knowledge. „Look at the standards,“ he said. „There you will find an answer to almost every problem a clubhouse faces, because when looking closer into clubhouse community, it's more or less the same all over the world.“

This three week training was a good time for us. We met a lot of interesting people, both members and staff, the weather was always beautiful. We really enjoyed the hospitality and kindness of Genesis Club and are looking forward to Kevin's Bradley post site visit in the end of October.

Research and development

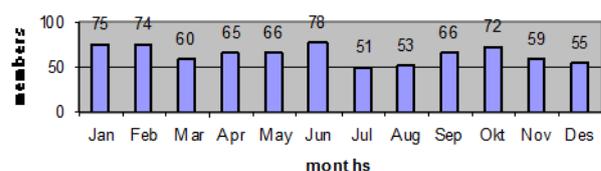
It is very important for every clubhouse to keep records and keep track of statistics on different topics to be able to develop the work inside the club, and not the least increase the quality and quantity of service the club offers. At Geysir Clubhouse we have tried to keep hold of records necessary for fundraising and how we are doing in general. We for example have done a survey on members age, when they come and how long they stay, how many individuals are coming to introductions and orientation, and how many accept a tour and keep on coming to clubhouse.

At Geysir we have not considered it necessary to collect or keep any written records on members' medical background nor have we been occupied with such matters.

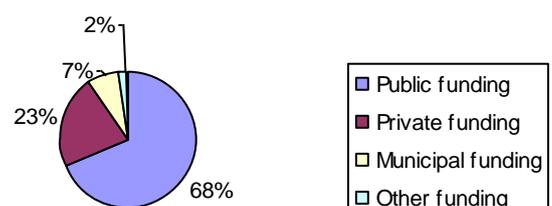
The main purpose though, is and will be to evaluate the effectiveness of the clubhouse model and describe the services that clubhouse provides for their members, and how we can be better and improve the clubhouse work.

Number of members coming each month 2003.

Average members coming each month 65.



Financial income of Club Geysir



An Interview with Ralph Bilby from the ICCD

Geysir Chronicle: Earlier this year you were here on an unusual mission. Can you tell us how that came about?

Ralph: Well, Anna and I met at clubhouse conferences over several years and talked about doing some TE development work together. So when I had a trip to London for an ICCD Board meeting, all the travel details worked out. But it was really Anna who made it happen. You know how hard it is to say “no” to her.

Chronicle: Yes, we do. You refer to this as ICCD Technical Assistance. What does that mean?

Ralph: The idea is to partner up with clubhouses to do TE development together. They identify employers they would most like to work for, and I make the request for a meeting through the head person’s office. It starts by asking permission to write a letter describing in greater detail what we’d like to discuss. The letter often gets passed, but coming from the head office, people pay more attention, and there’s a better chance to get a high level meeting.

Chronicle: We know you had quite a few meetings, but for the record, would you list them.

Ralph: Oh, it was an amazing group of meetings. I flew in on Wednesday morning on an overnight flight, slept for an hour, then we met with the Reykjavik Zoo and Islandsbanki. Then Thursday was even busier. We met with Parmaco/Delta at I think an hour or so before dawn, then the Icelandic Ministry of Social Affairs, the Public Library, the City, and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. That, and a really amazing lunch at the clubhouse. It was such a great day. At the end, Anna, Asgeir and I were interviewed by the Morgunbladid newspaper, and there was an article the next week.

Chronicle: Yes, you look a little cold in the newspaper picture. Who went with you to the meetings? It wasn’t just you presenting the program was it?

Ralph: Oh, not at all. Anna was at each meeting, of course, but then different people from the clubhouse partnered with us for different meetings. My role was to present the clubhouse



Anna Valdemarsdottir managing director of Club Geysir and Ralph Bilby. Picture taken at Ralph’s visit last winter

in the context of the international movement, cite some high recognition employers they could identify with, and show pictures of clubhouse members working for famous companies. The Geysir team presented the clubhouse’s impressive history, answered a lot of questions, and in the course of the meeting, won them over to seeing what a good partnership TE it could be.

Chronicle: Well, it was successful because we’ve since started placements with several employers. Was there a particularly favorite meeting for you?

Ralph: Well, I liked them all, but I suppose I was most charmed by the Reykjavik Zoo. It was such a cool place. I can easily imagine the members working there in the summer and being proud of their job. Plus we met with this really attractive woman named Sigrun, not that that matters.

Chronicle: Well, you do seem to remember her. Now, let’s talk about your impressions of the clubhouse. How did it compare to some of the other clubhouses you have visited.

Ralph: Oh, I love Klubburinn Geysir. It’s such a beautiful space, so loving decorated, and functional too. But it is the people that make it the most special. We had the great lunch that I mentioned. I clearly remember all of us eating and talking together. I have some fine pictures from that lunch. It’s just

the sort of clubhouse I’d want someone dear to me to belong to. I think anybody who comes there is going to feel important. That’s the way everyone was treated. Honestly, Geysir was a discovery. This charming clubhouse, advanced in so many ways, out in the middle of, well, not exactly in the middle of anything, I guess. But so wonderful. I’m really proud of the ICCD’s association with Geysir.

Chronicle: Thank you. That rather leads us to your impressions of Iceland.

Ralph: Iceland is great. A great country. Kind of like the size of Manhattan, just more spread out over, well, lots of glaciers and rocks I suppose. But I got some lovely postcards of the country outside the city. Very rugged and beautiful. My nieces and nephews loved those cards.

Chronicle: And Reykjavik? What did you think of the city?

Ralph: It’s quite an amazing city. It feels big, like an important capitol, but then there are hardly any really tall buildings. That’s a distinctive combination I’ve never seen before. Maybe its just living in Manhattan that makes it so remarkable. But I was also taken by the beauty of the architecture and design. That Reykjavik City Hall, as an example, is stunning in it’s interior. Filled with tasteful art.

Chronicle: And the people, what were your impressions of Icelanders?

Ralph: Well, look at Anna, she's such a star -- so full of life and vision and wisdom. The whole Geysir clubhouse community shares that, in a shy sort of way. Shy to American eyes, anyway. And the people we met with in the meetings. A more developed sense of community interest and responsibility than I see in the States or a lot of other places. But Iceland is on a different scale than many places I've been. I understand people were talking about not wanting to let two American jet fighters leave Iceland. Two planes! But I'm sure they're important to the people who have related jobs. And then there's the Blue Lagoon. Where else on earth would you find that?

Chronicle: Yes, we heard you were there. Any impressions you want to share?

Ralph: Well, Anna and Peter took me bathing at the Lagoon, and then we had a really wonderful gourmet dinner overlooking the water. It was a frosty night, but the water temperature was perfect. Quite warmed me up after the newspaper photo. My favorite part was the waterfall massage. Oh, and the sauna cave, and the carved lava trail with its fairy tale lighting leading up to the complex. Oh yes, and the mud treatment. You just can't find decent geysir mud hardly anywhere these days. I feel like my complexion has been better ever since. Don't try to talk me out of it.

Chronicle: On the contrary, feel free to share that with anyone you like.

Thanks to Ralph Bilby

Members and staff of Club Geysir want to thank the ICCD and especially Ralph for his visit to Geysir Clubhouse in february 2004 to start our TE-program. Ralph put much effort and care into his work and was really cool, well organised and professional in his work. Without his visit and help we would probably not have achieved as good response from employers as we introduced the TE-policy

Members and staff of Club Geysir

TE PLACMENTES:

It makes one more active in real life



G Chron: How long have you been actively a member of the club?

Rosa: I have been involved formally with the club for one year. Before that I had frequently visited the clubhouse on its former location.

G Chron: How did you hear about the club?

Rosa: I heard about the club from Pétur Hauksson, who is a medical doctor.

G Chron: Why do you attend its activities?

Rosa: Just to meet other people and increase my self-esteem.

G Chron: What are the benefits of attending the club?

Rosa: There are many benefits to the clubhouse activity. The work gives one stability and the chance to do some work. It makes one more active in the real life.

G Chron: Has the club influenced the fact that you are employed in any way?

Rosa: I got the job at Íslandsbanki through the club Geysir. And I have done a really good job there.

G Chron: What do you like best about the club?

Rosa: The club gives one many chances, for instance to work and to prove oneself in work.

G Chron: How have you been able to increase your benefit by participating in the club activity?

Rosa: The main benefit is that I did get the job I have. That is of course a great benefit. I have tried to come here regularly. If I was not working I would be active in the club activity.

G Chron: How do you see your future within the club activity?

Rosa: I see it optimistically. It gives you the priceless opportunity to get some work and for that I am grateful.

The Work in the Club has an encouraging effect

by Þorgerður Hanna Hannesdóttir

I work as a consultant at the outpatient care of a mental department. We attend patients with severe depression, manic-depression, anxiety disorder and personality disorder.



teaching, relaxation, outdoor activities and social competence training. There are 6 staff members, a psychiatrist, 2 nurses and 3 consultants. A part of my job as a consultant is to show my patients how to build up stamina and handle life.

We visit, among other, a library and art-galleries in order to look at methods, both of relaxation and the up-building of stamina.

The outpatient care opens at 8 o'clock all week-days and scheduled programs begin at 9 o'clock and last till 12 o'clock all days, except Fridays. We finish the week by having lunch together.

The program comprises of interviews with individuals and families, group therapy, art-workshops,

We tell people about Club Geysir during therapy, ex. with various pamphlets and booklets which the club provides. When we visit the club, which is on a regular basis, we are welcomed by both staff members and the club members alike, who tell us about club activities. It is always apparent how

club-members progress towards the goals they have set themselves. A part from the efficient work within the club, many have turned to studies, or started working with the support of the club.

The work in the club has encouraging effect on most of our clients and is a priceless support for those who attend it.

We who work at the outpatient care have had an outstanding collaboration with the club and think it is a priceless asset for our clients.

Þorgerður Hanna is employed in rehabilitation for the mentally ill in the largest hospital in Reykjavík.

Kári Ragnars in TE placement

An active club member



Q: How long have you been involved in the club activities?

A: Approximately fourteen months.

Q: How did you hear about the club?

A: I heard of the club at Reykjalundur, which is a rehab center.

Q: In which unit do you work?

A: I began working in the office unit until November last year and since then I have been working in the cafeteria.

Q: Why and when did you decide to

com to the clubhouse?

A: I began coming to the club in order to prepare myself for active life and full employment and I will be starting a new job tomorrow (6th September 2004).

Q: What are the main benefits of being an active club member?

A: There are many benefits. There is the possibility of overcoming isolation and find something to do. The club spirit is very good. One tends to find a new side to oneself by working and the work increases self-esteem.

Q: What do you like best about the

club activities?

A: Good cooperation between the club members. And also the work-ordered day gives you an incentive for further labor.



Q: How have you been able to make better your situation through the work in the club?

A: Participation in the club activities has good influence on your self-esteem and also your stamina. Furthermore, it tends to lead to a normal functioning of your day.

Q: How do you see your own future evolve within the club activities?

A: It is quite clear that I will keep on coming to this club once I have found a job. If I will later on go to school I hope that I will be able to come as often as possible in order for me to participate in the club activities.



Social activities of Club Geysir

The Club Geysir is a very worthy workplace as far as social activities are concerned. One factor in the preparation for full employment or full study is the habit of working during certain hours and to be able in ones spare time to have enjoyable hobbies or events.

This is in the spirit of FountainHouse philosophy and leads to better human contacts. In our club there is a tradition for certain events to take place outside of the work-ordered day. To decide upon the social events and social activities at the regular house meetings have proven essential. At these house meetings members produce ideas which are discussed and decisions taken regarding their exercise. Often members produce good ideas and the decision is taken to announce these ideas to see what interest there is in that particular activity. Also we publish a small



On the ferry to Vestman islands

newsletter which is sent to members once a month where you can find information on social events which are current in the coming month.

First Thursday each month the club has an open house until 9.00 p.m. We cook dinner and then we engage in social activities of some sort. These open evenings are perfect for those who are

working in order for them to keep contact with the club. During the summer we have gone out of town where we have done some grilling, instead of having an open house. The second Saturday each month those who enjoy the outdoors have a chance to take a light stroll in the neighbourhood of the town. Often time is taken in the wild nature to eat some picnic if there is any picnic around. The social activity of going to a coffeehouse together takes place

at least once a month and coffee is not the only thing that is drunken.

Our yearly "Þorrablót" is a standard event, but also the Christmas dinner and the Relatives day. These events are manageable because of good cooperation between members and staff. It is our ambition to have these occasions as grand as possible. Therefore this is a good opportunity to get to know the club where you have friends and the relatives of the members coming together. The relatives day was a success as the purpose was to get better contact with relatives and find unity in action. The relatives were involved in the preparation for Relatives day in the way of active participation and in baking pancakes. This day became widely published since the biggest daily newspaper covered the occasion.

One autumn evening the women of the club held a women's night. The ladies came together during an evening and were introduced to the latest in fashion and received some



From a seminar on leadership

practical advice on make up and make up products. This evening was thought to have been a great success and it is going to become an annual event.

Last but not least a summer trip is made each year out to the countryside. The summer trip is a big part of the social activities of the club. A special committee is formed to organize the trip and included in this committee are members, staff member and a board member. A trip has been made to Sauðárkrókur and Grenivíkur, both places are ast North-Iceland. This year the trip was made to Vestmannaeyjar, which are islands at South-Iceland. In Vestmannaeyjar a group of people from the club went on an excursion around Vestmannaeyjar. Also, the group sailed to nearby isles, as well as having a look at the local fish factory and another factory which makes candle lights. During the evenings some of the group enjoyed the night life of Vestmannaeyjar and it was found to be in an excellent state. All agree that the summer trip was a resounding success and already preparations are being made for next years' trip. The financing part of next years' trip has begun. Thus a bazaar has been held once, which turned out to be an overwhelming success.

The social life makes it all the more easy for people to acquaint with one another and unites club members together. It is our hope that the social life keeps getting better alongside the work-ordered day and other club activities.

Interview with Jóhanna María director of the board:

Necessary for Club Geysir to be active in foreign relationships

“I have been the chairman of the club Geysir for almost 2 years,” says Jóhanna María “Before I had been a member of the board for two years, and gotten the opportunity to get to know the clubs’ operations and methods. The former chairman, Jón Snorrason asked me to take over and I considered it a challenge which I could not refuse. I was of course quite grateful for the trust that I was shown being offered the post of chairman and I’ve tried to do my job the best to my ability. I find it rewarding to work with all the positive and jovial people that participate in the club. There is so much energy and the members have an unbreakable faith in the clubs’ activity. The work for Geysir has given me a new and healthier view on life.”

Jóhanna María says what she finds most interesting with being the chairman is to get to know all the good people, that she has met through this job. “I have had a nice working relationship with members and staff alike and this has proven to be of added value for me. Sure it can be of help that the club is alternative in its activity, since all of the work is done by members themselves, four staff members, and through voluntary work of the board members. This is a grass root work and makes the club interesting to me. In this respect this job is more interesting than other social activities that I have been involved in before. Also we have got positive response from public administrators blessed by support and subsidies from business and other institutes, such as Íslandsbanki, Iceland Ex-



Jóhanna María addressing guests at Geysir 4th birthday

press and Friends of Children Fund.“

Jóhanna María believes that because the clubs’ board is voluntary there are exceptionally interested individuals who get involved. “These are individuals who are doing voluntary work and thus have a keen interest for the clubs’ activity. The board is made up of uniquely capable individuals, who have shown a remarkable friendliness and are seen to be a valuable contributors to the clubs’ activity. One could argue that there is unwritten division of task between board members and each board member has a certain position in enhancing the clubs’ role.”

Jóhanna María says it is necessary for the club Geysir to be active in foreign relationships, because the clubs’ work is built up around the ideology of Fountain House, an international community. “Clubmembers, staff and boardmembers have actively participated in conferences and visited clubhouses

abroad to learn new things to put into practice, because the club is in constant development. I would like to mention that Iceland Express Airline supported the club very generously last spring by giving the club 40 flight tickets and has that made us able to send more members to participate in our foreign co-operations.”

Last spring four members of the board, two clubmembers and the director went to Sweden and Denmark Jóhanna María says that the clubhouses in Malmö Sweden and those they visited in Denmark were in many ways really different from ours. “I would especially like to mention the clubhouse which we visited in Taastrup, a stones throw from Copenhagen, because sadly, there was some tranquil over the operation, although all the place was in extraordinarily good condition for the kind of work the Fountain House idea is supposed to. The main reason is supposedly that clubmembers can’t come there on their own free will, but have to get an

acquiescence from Public health authorities which will decide whether this way is the right one for the person. This is really different from our situation, and really takes away the persons’ right to choose how to deal with his disease and become active in the community again.”

Introductions and orientation on behalf of the club have been done regularly from the founding of Club Geysir, and are always improving. They are much more powerful now than they were in the beginning, and now there are regularly organized visits to the clubhouse, where psychiatrists, people in the nursing field, and other professionals in psychological health are introduced to the clubs’ work. Clubmembers are a leading example on how participation in the clubs’ work can affect the recovery of the mentally challenged individuals, and have they themselves been really efficient in introducing the club in various places.