

Mental Health America to hold fundraiser and raffle at Taste in Hampstead

By Brian Hodge Oct 17, 2018 Updated Oct 19, 2018



Photo (L-R): Sharon Matthews, Mainza Jones, George Jones, Wilbur Wimbush, Marie Peterson, Jeff Martin - MHA in Montgomery President, Otis "Tony" Boggs, Gerald Carrigan, Angela Cobb, Michael Gray, Jimmie McCall, and seated in front, Pamela Robinson.

Mental Health America (MHA) in Montgomery is hosting a special fundraiser and art auction on Thursday, October 25 at Taste in Hampstead. For \$50 visitors will get two drink tickets, a raffle ticket and a 1-year membership to MHA in Montgomery. Among other prizes there will be City of Montgomery Box tickets for up to 34 people at a future Montgomery Biscuits game and a 4-day, 3-night stay at a condo in Gulf Shores. Additional raffle tickets can be purchased for \$25. There will also be artwork, painted by the consumers of MHA's Montgomery facility including handprinted works, ceramics and mixed media pieces. The event will be held on October 25 at Taste (5251 Hampstead High Street Montgomery 36116) from 5pm until. Enjoy wine, beer and tapas as you browse the selection of raffle items.

My boss Jeff Martin, Publisher of the Montgomery Independent, is currently President of the

MHA in Montgomery Board of Directors. He invited me to visit the Friendship Club which meets three days per week, to get a firsthand look at some of the artwork MHA's consumers have made for the auction. It was also a chance to meet the group personally and talk about how being a part of MHA makes them feel. All of the group members have some degree of mental disability and like any other group of people some can get along easier than others. Not all have supportive families but rely on the Friendship Club and MHA in Montgomery for guidance, support and in some cases the only hot meals they will have during the week.

The atmosphere at the Friendship Club was nothing if not friendly. Almost immediately I got an enthusiastic greeting, even as they were hard at work on their art projects. Marie, who seemingly makes a point to give every new person she meets a hug, seemed genuinely excited to see me. It is hard not to have a smile on your face when you meet her.

Jeff treated the entire group, including Gloria Moore who runs the day-to-day operations of MHA in Montgomery, to lunch around the corner at J.W. Beverette's Soul Food at 1172 South Decatur Street. Tony and Gerald were sitting next to me at the meal. Tony had a healthy distrust of politicians when the topic came around, but pretty soon the conversation switched to football. It was hard for it not to as J.W. Beverette's dining room, a stone's throw from Alabama State University, is decorated wall to wall with football regalia. Gerald wanted to make it clear, and requested that I include in the article that he is an Auburn fan.

Gerald also told me a little about his family and the abuse he says he suffered from relatives. That was hard to hear. In fact there are many disadvantaged people in Montgomery with stories that are hard to hear. One way we can make a difference is to support organizations that are in place to help and see the need firsthand. The Friendship Club provides hot meals, social activity and frankly ordinary opportunities for people who are under extraordinary strain. The group members often help out in the garden and last week they went to the Alabama National Fair. Success at the fundraiser on October 25 will mean that MHA in Montgomery can continue to help people in Montgomery who very much need and deserve it.

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