



a Facebook community of over 34,000 members. Our online [ForLikeMinds](#) community aims to: (1) Overcome isolation by connecting people with similar lived experiences and backgrounds; (2) Engage and empower individuals with mental illness and their caretakers through knowledge-sharing, providing peer and one-on-one support, and strengthening and building communities; and (3) Allow participants to control their experience by easily managing interactions on their terms and maintaining anonymity, privacy, and security at no cost."

**4. You have also started an outreach program called [Psych Ward Greeting Cards](#). How did that get started, and how does it work?** "I've had three hospitalizations during my lifetime, and each was a very lonely time during which I felt hopeless and discouraged. People don't often visit patients living in a psych ward, and so it can be very isolating. ForLikeMinds connects a lot of people, but it became clear early on that we weren't reaching people in hospitals. I began asking people if they would donate individual greeting cards with hopeful messages for me to give to inpatients. The response was immediate and positive. At this point, I have delivered over 1,500 cards to people during their psychiatric hospitalizations. Patients can pick the card that speaks to them. Even though they will never meet the card writer, patients feel less alone and touched that a complete stranger would send them a card filled with kindness and encouragement. I love that I can facilitate these acts of kindness and help other people help patients."

**5. What is most special for you about the [Psych Ward Greeting Cards Program](#)?** "Sometimes, I receive cards back from patients, which can be very moving. One of the most meaningful moments for me was when patients at one hospital were writing cards for psych patients at a different hospital. I am also currently partnering with Fountain House's Silver Center for elders age 55 and older living with serious mental illness. Greeting cards create this very personal human connection that lets patients know that they are not forgotten. Many of the cards donated come from former inpatients and people with mental illnesses living in recovery. They are uniquely positioned to inspire hope because they've had similar experiences. They can relate, and they offer living proof that recovery is possible. Other times, cards come from people whose lives have been impacted by loved ones diagnosed with serious mental illness."

*Katherine Ponte has fought hard for her recovery. She is both fierce and exceptionally kind in her commitment to sharing her story and supporting others as they chart their own journeys of recovery. She is sidelining stigma and putting hope and possibility front and center. Katherine was recently appointed to the [Faculty](#) at the Program for Recovery and Community Health in the Department of Psychiatry at Yale's School of Medicine. It is only fitting given how much she has to teach all of us.*