

## HELPING HANDS

## INVER GROVE HEIGHTS

# Man grateful for support leading to stable life

◆ **Jaycees, family helped deal with his mental illness**

TIM CAREY STAFF WRITER

A few years ago Keith Wunder-Joyce went through periods of deep depression and had thoughts of suicide. These bouts were followed by bursts of energy, elations and excitability — symptoms associated with bipolar disorder.

Wunder-Joyce, 34, Inver Grove Heights was homeless twice after his military duty ended. He was diagnosed with the disorder, commonly known as manic depression. He recovered thanks to the support of his two families — including the extended one he found in the Jaycees. Keith is now working to start a new branch of this family in South St. Paul.

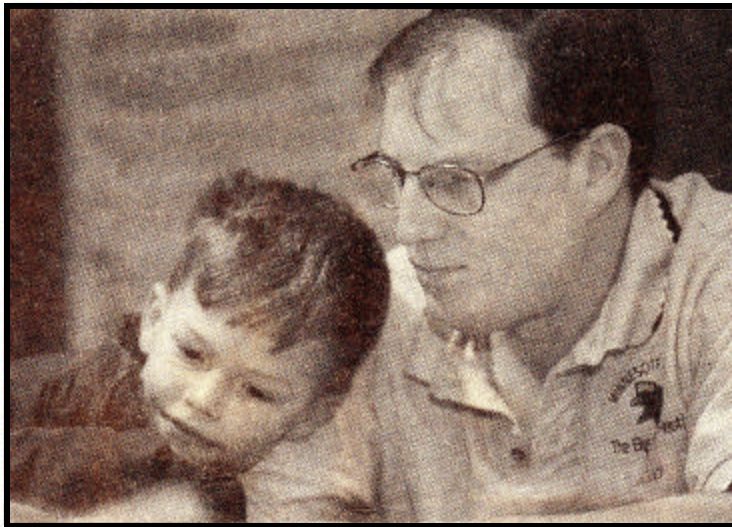
"I'm pretty open about my mental health issues," Keith said. "When I got home after I was discharged from the Air Force in 1986, most of my friends had moved on with their lives. None of them were around anymore, and my social opportunities had changes."

"I was working near the Rosemount Chamber of Commerce," he said. "and I began to stop by there over lunch to talk. They suggested that I join their Jaycees group."

He joined, and the bond may have actually saved his life. In 1990 he went into a deep depression and thought of ending his life. He lived for six weeks on Twin Cities streets.

"The reason I was living on the streets was that there were no shelters in Dakota County that I knew of at the time," Keith said. "I would go into these deep bouts of depression, not knowing where to turn."

A few years later Keith was again homeless, this time living two months in a shelter until mov-



DAWN VILLELLA/PIONEER PRESS

**Keith Wunder-Joyce runs a meeting with the Inver Grove Heights Jaycees at Drkula's Bowl, with his son, Danny, 6, at his side. Wunder-Joyce has been involved with the Jaycees for 14 years and is starting a new chapter in St. Paul. Wunder-Joyce, who suffers from manic depression and was homeless twice in his life, credits the Jaycees group with helping him get back on his feet. He is married with two children.**

ing into one of the Salvation Army's transitional housing units in Minneapolis.

Bipolar illness or manic depression, is described as a mood disorder by the Society for Manic Depression. It is a medical illness that affects mood, and is not a psychological disorder. With diagnosis it is treatable.

Sufferers may swing into a manic state in the extreme, displaying delusions like paranoia and hallucinations. This mania typically includes lack of appetite, poor judgment, sleeplessness and rapid speech. Sufferers often have trouble with the normal pace of life.

A clinical depression — or emotional crash — follows. Symptoms of this state may include painfully depressed feelings, catatonic relief or numbness, feelings that you're all alone in a crowd or the desire to curl into a fetal position and sleep.

"I'd get depressed and end up hopeless and homeless," Keith said. "Then the manic phase

would come. And that, combined with the support I got from my family and the Jaycees, would get me home again. The support I got from the Jaycees really helped me to get the help I needed."

The United States Junior Chamber or Commerce — the Jaycees — provide personal and professional development for men and women, ages 21 through 39. And, as Keith found out, it also serves as an advocate for its members.

"Typically, this problem gets worse as you get older," said Keith. "There is also a high rate of suicide, and I came very close a couple of times."

One of the ideas the group is founded on that Keith is also thankful for is its idea that "service to humanity is the best work of life."

Wunder-Joyce is healthy now. He is married with two sons and works part time in plant maintenance at Gallagher-Hanson VFW Post 295 in South St. Paul. He also receives mental health coun-

## If you go

Organizational meetings for the new South St. Paul Jaycees group will be at 7:30 p.m. abs March 21 at Gallagher-Hanson VFW Post 295, 111 S. Concord Exchange, South St. Paul.

For more information on the Jaycees including membership fees, requirements and available programs, call (651) 457-9647. Additional information on manic depression and bipolar disorder are available on the Society for Manic Depression Web Site. [Http://www.societymd.org](http://www.societymd.org) or by calling the Mental Health Association of Minnesota, (612) 331-6840.

celing and medication.

"I don't know where I'd be today if not for the Jaycees," he said. "They encouraged me to get help, and helped me to get back to where I am today. That's the idea of our group — community involvement and support — and that's important to both our members and the community."

That is the main reason Wunder-Joyce, who belongs to both the Rosemount and Inver Grove Heights groups, is intent on starting the new chapter in South St. Paul. There are 2,000 Jaycee chapters in America, with 160 Minnesota groups.

Wunder-Joyce also is the manager of the Jaycee's Minnesota Youth Sports Program. His wife, Angela Wunder-Joyce, is president of the Inver Grove Heights group.

"Besides the Jaycees," Keith said, "a lot of credit needs to go to my wife in helping me keep healthy. It is hard not to get a sense of family from the Jaycees. We share a lot."

"I think every person in every community should be given the opportunity that the Jaycees can bring to a community," Keith said. "It is those opportunities that I want to bring to South St. Paul."