

June 17, 2012, Paula Brent

Personal Story and Call for a New Mission Group

First, I would like to tell you how grateful I am that I found this community where I am among friends who I feel safe enough and will allow me to tell something of my story.

It was the Junior year of my college career at Lynchburg College. It was not but a few weeks left of the Spring semester. Only one more year of college and I would take the CPA exam and everything would start to fall into place. A good job, marriage, kids, a nice home – the American dream.

However, after trying to give a speech that semester I realized a college professor seemed to be concerned about me which seemed to confuse me due to the fact this is the first person, other than my mother, who seemed to care about me. Mainly because I did not talk much and didn't let people get too close due to being painfully shy.

All of sudden it seemed to take a turn for the worst and all of Lynchburg College seemed to know me, everything about me and every thought or conversation I had had even those at home. I talked with my Mom about this but she seemed as confused about this as I was. People in the classes watched me teachers were saying I was cheating and accusing me of stealing. One professor even said he was going to write a book about me to another classmate. Outside, security guards kept an eye on me.

My Mom finally convinced me to go to the Dean to talk with him but he denied everything . And stated he didn't know what I was talking about. Finally I saw a counselor then a Dean who seemed to confirm what I was thinking. Then it hit me my Mom and her sister were in on it too.

Even my preacher seemed to be a part of this. Continually preaching about going to hell and mentioning things I had done.

Finally I agreed to go to Richmond to see a psychiatrist my aunt had set up an appointment with. On the way there I saw license plates referring to me and songs about me on the radio. While at my aunt's house I got messages off the TV especially for me.

Finally, I went to the psychiatrist hoping he would explain what was going on and it would stop. Then it would all be over. However, the psychiatrist convinces my mother to have me locked up With my aunt's persuasion she signed the papers to have me admitted to a psych ward. My mom was the only person I had ever trusted and this just proved she was in on it. I was so scared and terrified to be all alone.

In the ward I saw people I was convinced were my neighbors made to look like psych patients to make a stage for the psych ward. I was given Thorazine and then Stellazine in the ward. It was all I could do to keep my eyes open and my skin felt like crawly things were in it and my legs kept twitching.

Finally after nine day of hell I was released to my mother who was told to provide a safe place for me b/c I would never live on my own.

All I could do was sleep when I got home so I took myself off the meds. Within six months the same scenario was played only with the counselor being the initiator this time. I signed myself into VBH with a better outcome this time but still not convinced I was schizophrenic or needed meds.

During this were periods of depression where I stayed in bed for weeks at a time and did not care about anything or anyone. I just wanted to sleep forever.

The thoughts and depression continue to this day even on medication taken as prescribed. But with friends, a caring church and good health care professionals I am able to live on my own and enjoy most of my life. I worked for nine years at the CSB until I had many losses including my Mom and dog where I fell backwards but am beginning to climb back now.

I tell you my story today to encourage your support and prayers for a new mission I would like to get started with your help. Mental and emotional recovery group for empowerment (MERGE) is a group I would like to get started for people beginning recovery to merge back into society. I currently do a short WRAP Wellness Recovery Action Plan group at Mundy III at VBH which helps people learn their triggers, symptoms and when things are breaking down so they can make an action plan before it happens so they will remain in recovery.

I plan to use my own personal experience to help a need in the community (1 in 4 people struggle with emotional issues each year) and I hope this community of friends will be helpful and receptive to such a mission.

I would like to end with a quote from Rosalyn Carter and John Suritan.

“If we ignore ... cries for help, we will be continuing to participate in the anguish from which those cries of help come. A problem of this magnitude will not go away. Because it will not go away and because of our spiritual commitments, we are compelled to take action.”

--Rosalynn Carter

John Swinton: " in the Kingdom of God there is neither Jew nor Greek, people with schizophrenia nor dementia-only people loved equally by God and called to live humanly."