



## **Bridgehaven Success Story –Cherish’s Story**

### **Why Health?**

Metro United Way is working to advance the common good by focusing on education, income and health. These are the building blocks for a good life—a quality education that leads to a stable job, enough income to support a family through retirement, and good health.

Metro United Way works to ensure everyone in our community enjoys lifelong health and independence by:

- Increasing the availability of quality health care information.
- Providing health support services through agency programs.
- Helping seniors and people with disabilities envision and achieve maximum independence and a high quality of life.

### **Measuring results...2018 Goals and Indicators:**

#### MUW Goal

1. People get needed physical and mental health care.
2. People are practicing healthier living.

#### Indicators (Why this is important):

- Mental illness affects 1 in 5 Americans, meaning that 20% will experience a mental illness or behavioral health problem in this lifetime.
- 11% of Americans have severe mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, schizoaffective disorder and severe recurring depression.
- In the Louisville Metro Area, as many as 75,000 people are living with a severe mental illness. Of those 75,000, at least 30,000 are not eligible for Medical Assistance and have no health insurance to pay for the services they need.

**When people in our community are safe, practice healthy living, and get needed physical and mental health care, they will live longer with a higher quality of life.**

## **Bridgehaven Success Story –Cherish’s Story**

On January 15th of 1996 I had a job; a new car, and was renting a lovely three bedroom house. By April 15th of that same year, I lost my job, my car, and my house, because I was suffering from an illness that had complete control of my life. As a result of the extreme abuse I experienced until age 17, I was severely depressed and suffered from panic & anxiety attacks, post traumatic stress disorder, and dissociative identity disorder. Every day tasks, such as going to work, going to the store, dealing with my children's teachers or friends, and even something as simple as talking to my sister on the phone were very difficult for me to do.

I finally reached my breaking point while driving home from Lexington after taking my oldest daughter back to school at UK. I was overcome with the urge to drive my car into the rocky hillsides that run along I-64. The only thing that stopped me was the thought that I might hurt or kill someone else in the process. I spent the next eight weeks in the hospital and three more weeks at a crisis center. After almost three months I was stabilized enough to be able to go home. Even though I was able to go home I was still not doing very well-I was very afraid to go anywhere. I was quickly becoming a total shut-in. I knew this was not good for me but didn't know what I could do about it. A friend of mine was attending Bridgehaven and she told me about the things she did there.

On September 16th, 1996 I became a member of Bridgehaven and have been attending ever since. I was excited to get started but was extremely nervous-it was not unusual to find me hiding under tables at first. But the wonderful thing about Bridgehaven was that it was okay for me to hide under those tables if I needed to. The total acceptance I received was just what I needed. Instead of pretending that things were okay I could finally start working on making things okay. I attended groups but was never forced to talk, but I found myself talking anyway. I needed to talk! I needed to be heard!

After a while I started coming out of my shell. I started giving talks to people who wanted to learn what Bridgehaven was all about I also did a lot of advocacy work in Frankfort on behalf of all disabled people and as a result of this I was given an award and invited to have breakfast with my state legislators. This involved spending the night in a hotel in Frankfort some of my old fears started to resurface. I had never spent the night in a hotel before. I discovered that what I had become afraid of was being afraid. I finally realized that I was no longer that frightened little girl.

This realization has opened many doors for me. In 2004 I applied for a job at Kroger. They offered me a job as a cashier but I was afraid I would not be able to do this as I would have to interact with many people. I remembered that wonderful trip to Frankfort and decided to take the job and I discovered that I am

a people person! My co-workers just could not understand why I love my job so much!

As a result of having a job, I am pleased to tell you that I was able to buy a car and I am a home owner for the first time in my life! Bridgehaven took a frightened, depressed, and lonely 40-year-old "little girl" and helped turn her into a productive, well-adjusted and happy woman.

### **Here's how you can help:**

- Become an advocate. For more information, please call (502) 292-6142.
- Give. A donation of \$200.00 per week provides a year of services to a person with severe mental illness at *Bridgehaven*, reducing hospitalizations and allowing them to live independently.

### **Suggested Props/Visuals**

- Cherish's Autobiographical Poem:

#### *Does Anybody Care?*

*The fist hit her face, again and again.  
The little cries, but nobody care.  
Bruises are there and hunger bums too.  
The little girl cries, but nobody cares.  
More bruises are there and she is cold and lonely.  
The little girl cries, but nobody cares.  
Asleep at the hospital so warm and so clean.  
Still, the little girl cries, but nobody cares.  
Her mother is leaving. She never returns.  
The little girl cries, but nobody cares.  
Her sisters have gone, her brother too.  
The little girl cries, but nobody cares.  
She dreams of a family but none comes her way.  
The little girl cries, but nobody cares.  
Asleep at the orphanage so warm and so clean.  
Still, the little girl cries, but nobody cares.*

*Her dream has come true, or so she thought.  
The little girl cries, but nobody cares.  
Their words are so harsh. Is she really that bad?  
The little girl cries, but nobody cares.  
Their touches are bad. Her innocence is lost.*

*The little girl cries, but nobody cares.  
Asleep at her home so warm and so clean.  
Still, the little girl cries, but nobody cares.  
Now an adult with children at hand.  
But listen real close and you will hear.  
The little girl still cries.  
Does anybody care?*

**To live united is to understand that we are all interconnected. Metro United Way is working to advance the common good by creating opportunities for a better life for all. For more information, volunteer opportunities or to make a donation, please visit us at [metrounitedway.org](http://metrounitedway.org) or call 502.583.2821.**