

# Share Why We Care

## Acadia Hospital: *Project Inspiration*



### **Diana McKenney, RN Infection Control**

#### **Acadia Values: Respect, Honesty**

This is an amazing story of recovery and perseverance. It was the middle of fall, over 10 years ago, with winter fast approaching. My 16 year-old stepdaughter was homeless in southern Maine, heavily addicted to drugs and the risky behaviors that allowed her to feed her addiction. Her relationship with her mother had become so strained that returning to her mom's home was not an option. I'd met her when she was a precocious eight year-old and we fell head over heels for each other! Amazingly, even during these turbulent times, she kept in close contact with us and stubbornly refused any offer of help.

As the weather got colder and the nights longer, her calls to us increased. She now admits she was getting scared and started begging to come live with us. At first she would not concede to any of our stipulations yet continued to call and threaten us with statements such as "you don't care if I freeze to death, or get murdered, etc." She'd been arrested and we even hoped they would keep her for a while but she had contacts that bailed her out.

Amazingly her father held fast, [I would have given in, I fear], she WAS NOT moving here, coming and going as she pleased, and putting us and our home in jeopardy. We were honest with her, we did not trust her. She'd stolen, lied, and prostituted herself and those behaviors would not be acceptable in our home.

Out of desperation she finally agreed to our ultimatum: she could come live with us as long as she agreed to attend Acadia's Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment Program and finish high school. After completing her first program she did well for a while; although she'd agreed to finish high school she refused to attend our local high school choosing instead to get her GED. She claimed she had nothing in common with high school 'kids' and since she attended classes and excelled, we agreed.

As often happens, she relapsed. Our home was vandalized by some of her 'friends' and in retrospect, I think this was the catalyst for her road to recovery. She was horrified at what happened, perhaps realizing for the first time the consequences of her actions and their potential to hurt those she loved and so she enrolled in another outpatient session here at Acadia.

She is now married. In December 2010, at seven months pregnant with her third daughter, she graduated with high honors from college with a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice; and this past December she met her goal: working in the criminal justice system in the city where she resides!

I know firsthand the difference Acadia can make in the life of a promising young girl who needed education, support and direction to find her way back. A program that helped her realize her potential and recognize that she can be stronger than the bonds of her addiction and in many ways, understand the positive side to addictive behavior and how to channel it along a more positive course. I may fight the bugs that none of us can physically see but compared to unseen demons that propels one to addiction, my role pales in comparison to the work done here. I am humbled to be part of such an extraordinary family; together we ARE stronger.

**Want to Share Why YOU Care? Email your essay to Alan Comeau at [acomeau@emhs.org](mailto:acomeau@emhs.org).**

TOGETHER We're Stronger