

# Share Why We Care

## Acadia Hospital: *Project Inspiration*



### Susan Staples, RN/BC – Nurse on 3South

I have worked in the nursing field since 1974. I worked as an OB nurse in a small hospital for 10 years then did case management with the 60+ population in northern Penobscot county for 15 years. After my children all graduated from high school and left home I decided to return to college and further my nursing education.

When it came time for me to do a rotation in a psychiatric facility I was lucky enough to have had Acadia Hospital chosen for me and I spent time on 3S. I was not sure what to expect. I had never worked in a psychiatric hospital nor had I worked with individuals living with severe mental illness. What I discovered I never would have imagined I would find.

The staff was wonderful. They helped me understand what life with this diagnosis means not only to the patient but also their families. I watched how they interacted with the patients and showed that through conversations tempered with compassion and empathy patients heal and progress so they can return to their lives in the community.

I worked with patients that opened my eyes to what life truly is for them and how they daily deal with the stigma and judgments. I came to understand that any one of us at any time can come up against a life event and need a place like Acadia. With the assistance of clinicians, doctors and nursing staff people can learn how to cope and heal from that event that shook their world. I was truly impressed with this hospital and the work done here and made the decision to work here when I completed my education. That was the best decision of my life.

Acadia gave me opportunities to grow as a psychiatric nurse. I went on to become certified through the program Acadia offered.

I grew in understanding about substance abuse and the battle on a daily basis our clients contend with. I learned that through therapeutic conversations, tempers can be calmed and fear can be extinguished.

I learned that mental illness crosses all boundaries. I learned the true joy of seeing someone who did not want to live any longer with their burdens learn skills to be able to go on another day.

I left to work at another psychiatric facility for a few years but always felt that I wanted to return to Acadia because of the dedication to excellence and professional growth opportunities that are offered here.

We are very lucky to have a place like Acadia Hospital in our community and I feel personally very lucky to have had the chance, those many years ago as a student, to spend time as a student nurse at Acadia and begin my professional psychiatric career.

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



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