

Opening the Door to a Better Life

Andrea Coyne has seen the Alexian Brothers Center for Mental Health (ABMCH) from two sides — as a client and a donor. ABCMH offers counseling, medication management and a variety of other outpatient therapy services to those with emotional problems or chronic mental illness.

From a personal point of view, Andrea says ABCMH has changed her life. “With their help, I’ve made tremendous progress over the past few years,” says Andrea. “I feel like I’m a complete person and I’m more comfortable in my own skin.”

That hasn’t always been the case. For many years, Andrea was being treated for anxiety by a psychiatrist, but she felt like she was not improving. She stopped taking any medications and going to therapy. “I just felt like something was missing,” she says.

That started Andrea on a downward spiral. “After a couple of months, I hit rock bottom,” says Andrea. “I didn’t want to talk to anyone. I just wanted to stay in all the time. I was miserable.” Her dad, boyfriend and other people in her life were concerned about her.

One day, Andrea went online and began doing research about mental health programs, when she discovered the Alexian Brothers Center for Mental Health. She knew she needed to talk to someone, so she called the Center. “From the very first time I called, I felt like they truly, genuinely cared,” says Andrea.

Andrea began seeing a staff therapist and psychiatrist. She also attended the Overcoming Anxiety group, a 10-week educational group that teaches coping skills for dealing with anxiety and panic. “It was really beneficial to go and share stories with people from all walks of life who were also experiencing anxiety,” says Andrea.

Andrea continues to see her therapist and psychiatrist. “They have really helped me

through a lot,” says Andrea. “Everybody is so caring. They’re like an extended family, and I feel a real sense of connectedness. Without Alexian, I can’t even imagine where I’d be.”

Andrea also attends a new anxiety alumni group, which was created with funds she and her family’s business, American Taxi Dispatch, Inc., have donated. The alumni group meets bi-weekly and is open to anyone who participated in the initial group. “Andrea’s gift has enabled us to establish this group so that people can come back for follow-up support as needed,” says Lori Aitken, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor. “The biggest benefit of the group is that it allows people to see that they are not alone and that there are others, like them, who are living with anxiety disorders, which are the most common mental illness in the United States today.”

The Center for Mental Health increasingly depends on donations like Andrea’s because, while there is a growing demand for the services it provides for the

community, there is less funding available from state, local and federal sources and insurance companies. “It’s becoming harder and harder for people to afford the treatment they need,” says Lori. “We’re one of the few places left that provides mental health services for people who are unfunded or under-funded and we also offer a sliding fee scale based on ability to pay.” Of the more than 3,000 clients the Center serves annually, 85 percent live at or below the poverty level.

Andrea and her family plan on continuing to help ABCMH with their donations. “Life is getting harder and harder, especially with the economy the way it is, and people need the support the Center for Mental Health provides more than ever,” says Andrea.

For more information about how you can make a donation to support the Alexian Brothers Center for Mental Health, call Christina Puleo at (847) 385-7309 or write to Christina at christina.puleo@alexian.net.

Over \$1.1 million dollars was donated for behavioral health programs and services at the Alexian Brothers Center for Mental Health in 2010. Thank You!

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— Andrea Coyne