

# Arlene

## A Journey of Transformation and Hope

*Talkin' to myself and feelin' old  
Sometimes I'd like to quit  
Nothin' ever seems to fit  
Hangin' around  
Nothin' to do but frown  
Rainy days and Mondays always get me down*  
The Carpenters, 1971



**Sea and Sky, Brian Marks**

Serene, content and proud. Characteristics that define Arlene. Her strength and inner peace are such a natural foundation of her personality that they appear to have been a part of her life forever.

But for many years Arlene's feelings were anything but peaceful, positive and serene. She had a dramatic inner struggle that brought her to considering a permanent and terminal solution to her hopelessness and despair. She wanted to stop her emotional pain by ending her life.

Arlene knew something was wrong for a very long time. She experienced such despair, confusion and hopelessness that she had given up. Her children witnessed her constant sadness and her

desire to be alone and off to herself. But most people she knew did not notice the clues to the turmoil she experienced within. She lived two lives – one “outside” and the other inside and private. *“I couldn't put my feelings into words, so I kept them to myself. I just knew I felt bad, stayed sad and cried a lot. I felt very suicidal. I knew that I needed help.”*

One day while she was getting a physical exam at New Horizons in Greenville, Arlene told a nurse practitioner about her resolve to commit suicide. And from that moment her life changed. The nurse asked her to walk with her across the parking lot to the Greenville Mental Health Center. She agreed to what she describes as *“the longest walk of my life”*.

At the Center she saw a counselor who diagnosed her with depression – a diagnosis that gave her a strange sense of relief. Her feelings were actually ordinary enough to be given a name! She wasn't alone or unique and there was help available. Her gratitude to Dr. Karen Stacher is apparent for her treatment of depression and especially in helping determine the medications that have dramatically improved her mental health.

*“It took a couple of years to figure out the medication adjustments that would help. But they work. When I think I don’t need them anymore, Dr. Stacher reminds me that the meds are making the difference. It’s like the depression is dormant. I know if I stop, the depression will peak its head up.*

Today, Arlene’s smiles and welcoming presence in our Snack Shack at the Mental Health Center, is a testament to her commitment to mental health wellness, her years of hard work in treatment and her determination to feel good every day.

*“It used to take a tremendous effort to keep my house up, even pick up a cup, or take care of myself. Now, I pop up with energy. I get ready for my day and can handle obstacles. I love watching my children become adults and I love living vicariously through them and their successes. I found out I really like my life and am glad I didn’t take my life years ago!*

As evidence of her new enthusiasm for life, just ask Arlene about her two grown children, and Arlene’s smile will indeed, light up the room. This beaming mother will be only too happy to share her pride in their accomplishments.

Arlene’s co-workers and friends at the Center are also very glad that she took that “long” walk across the parking lot ten years ago. Her quiet strength and determination to continue on her journey of recovery is a gift she brings the Center, our staff and our clients.

*“Rainy days don’t bother me as badly. I can focus. I know how to “stay in the moment.” And I know what that really means. Which is feeling good and trying to keep that feeling all day. – All we have is the moment. We need to try to hold on to it.”*

*(Note: The Greenville Mental Health Center received written permission from Arlene to write and publish this article on this website).*