

April 6, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to describe our family's experience with Jane Cartmell when severe mental illness was diagnosed in our adult son.

There is nothing to describe the feelings of a parent when you hear the words schizophrenia for the first time in relation to your child. The absolute panic and chaos that comes from that is horrific. Luckily for us, though, we had gone thru training with Jane Cartmell before those words were spoken.

Our first experience with Jane was thru a one day class she taught on patient advocacy. That class helped organize my husband and me to be more effective in our communication with professional healthcare providers. We learned how to present his case in a succinct manner on paper and in verbal communication as well. Jane was so forthcoming about her own journey. She immediately instilled trust and calm.

Our next experience with Jane involved a family crisis. During that first critical 36 hours when I was absolutely worn to a frazzle, Jane took control and told me what I must do at that moment for our son. Her encouragement helped me to gain an inner strength and forge ahead, with my notebook in hand. I had never been in a mental hospital. I had never had a relative with mental illness. The system does not take family members by the hand and guide them in how to help their loved ones in crisis. Jane did all that and more.

Next, my husband and I took the Family to Family course that Jane team teaches. That course was an opportunity for us to realize how far we had come in processing our son's illness and where we fit into his journey. We were able to help others thru our experience, just as Jane had done for us. It was during this class as well that many of our unanswered questions were resolved.

In short, we believe that Jane Cartmell deserves all the grant money, awards and any other accolades and support that she can get, because her knowledge is life saving and without heroics. Her humanity is worn on her sleeve. Her work is life changing. And, most important, her belief is based on hope. As she has often says, "I have seen miracles."

Please do not hesitate to let me know if I can be of further assistance or give clarify the above testimony.

Susan E. Levy, President
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