

# A Feeling of Hopelessness Overturned

**Agency:** Southeastern Behavioral HealthCare

**Program:** Employment Connection

**Service:** Assists individuals with mental illness in obtaining and maintaining employment. Services include job development and placement, job training, and trial work experience.

**Need:** Statistics suggest that there are 3 million adults in the United States who experience severe mental illness and, of these, 70-90% are unemployed. Research also shows that 50% of individuals with severe mental illness are able to be successful in the workforce if provided assistance.

**Impact:** Over 140 individuals receive employment assistance annually through Employment Connection. 70% of individuals who are placed in jobs with assistance from Employment Connection maintain employment for at least 3 months and 67% maintain employment for at least 6 months.

If you pick up your lunch from a well-known local café, you may be greeted by the welcoming face of Nadine.

“I’ve struggled with depression, OCD, and anxiety since I was 8,” explains Nadine. “My mother says that I was a happy-go-lucky child and one night I went to bed and it was like a switch had flipped, I woke up a completely different child.”

For Nadine, mental illness was a simple fact of life. She grew up in Sioux Falls, graduated from high school, married, and raised two children, all while handling her illness.

“It’s just a feeling of hopelessness,” continues Nadine. “I would think that I had hit rock bottom.”

With the help of Southeastern Behavioral HealthCare, Nadine lives with her mental illness with assistance from medication and therapy. She had been unemployed for 4 years before learning about Employment Connection.

“I had never worked successfully before,” continues Nadine. “But they helped me with my resume and gave pointers on my interviewing skills. I received employment skills training and completed a trial employment using a register.”

After completing her training, Nadine completed her job interview with her current employer, was hired on the spot, and has now been employed for over 4 years.

“My boss is terrific, my co-workers are so nice,” states Nadine. “I’m even able to work enough that I have health insurance through my job now.”

And the success of employment is made possible to over 140 other individuals that struggle with mental illness daily thanks to funding from Sioux Empire United Way. Employment Connection is providing these individuals with skills for today’s workplace, and helping them find stable employment.

“I have self-confidence now,” ends Nadine. “When people walk in the door, I can look them in the eye and welcome them to the café.”

