



# Wellness City Voice



## Meet the Staff at Durham Wellness City

*Today we are interviewing Cindy Lunsford, who is a NC Certified peer Support Specialist and the Administrative Assistant at Durham Wellness City.*

### *Hi Cindy. Can you tell me what is your favorite thing about working at Wellness City?*

My relationships with the citizens. It's like they are complete strangers when they walk in, and a lot of them are very shy and withdrawn, and if you just love on them for a little while they open up and are just wonderful. My office is situated across from the community room and I always have my door open. Every morning as the citizens come in they walk by my office and we greet each other and say "Today's going to be a good day". It's a ritual – it's how I start my day.

### *How did you first hear about Wellness City?*

I was seeing a therapist and she suggested I come here. I came here and really enjoyed going to classes. I heard that there was an open position for an administrative assistant. I was working with Vocational Rehabilitation at the time and I spoke with my VR worker and she told me that they offer internships through VR. They had never had an intern at Wellness City before, but I was very determined that I would get this job. I was very scared and anxious and not at all confident that I could do the job. But I didn't let that stop me. I wanted this so much, that wanting it overrode my fears.

### *Why did you want this job so badly?*

I felt safe at Wellness City. I was so unwell prior to my recovery that I needed to be in recovery 100% of the time. You hear people talk about "hitting bottom" – well my bottom was in the basement and I was digging myself deeper. My journey to recovery was so unbelievably bad, that it was so refreshing to find a place where I felt like I fit in.

### *Can you tell me a bit about your recovery story?*

I lost two family members to suicide and one to murder. I never received any help or counseling to understand or deal with what happened. I just knew that if things got bad, suicide could be a way out for me because that's what I had seen in my family.

For a long time drugs and alcohol seemed to work for me – I was supermom – raising my kids alone after leaving a string of abusive marriages. The drugs helped me to cope with it all. But, they finally turned on me and I found myself addicted to prescription drugs and alcohol. Things finally got so bad that I didn't leave my bed – complete isolation. The only human contact I had was my 16 year old son who would knock on my door and say "Momma, don't you need to eat something?" I didn't bathe, didn't eat. I lost so much weight I was a skeleton. I just sat in my bed watching TV all day until one day I found myself taking all of my medications and overdosing. My son found me and called 911 and EMS told him he needed to leave the room because there was no hope for me. They took me to the hospital where I stayed in intensive care and machines were keeping me alive because my organs were all messed up.

I don't remember a lot of that time. I remember waking up and seeing my daughter by my bedside and then going right back to sleep because I just couldn't deal with the situation. Eventually I was transferred to a psychiatric hospital. My brain quit working and I could not talk or walk or feed myself. They discharged me to my aunt's home and she cared for me like a baby – washing me, feeding me, dressing me. Eventually I moved out and into an Oxford House. That's where I was when I heard about Wellness City.

I completed the four month internship and started feeling better and better about myself because I had all these incredible people around me, supporting me. I started to feel more confident and I realized that I could do what I thought I couldn't possibly do. I was offered a regular position here and have worked here for over 4 years. The journey has been absolutely incredibly wonderful and it would have never been possible without the support and love that I received here at WC.