

Bev Campbell

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Hello, I'm Bev Campbell, welcome and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you.

Approximately a year ago I called the factory to see if they could help with a shut off notice. I made an appointment with the social worker and by the time I left I was in baffled! I never experienced or even heard of a social service that was not just interested in whatever issue that you inquired about, The Factory wanted your whole story. I went home and told my son that I just had the weirdest experience. We sat and talked about everything that was going on in my life and even completed a goal list. I told my son that social service agencies just don't do this; they let you know if they can help with your initial inquiry and send you on your way. I was excited and intrigued; I thought that it must be the powers that be, giving me this opportunity. I was given a list of upcoming classes and different programs that were being offered. The first class that I took was a parenting class, even though my youngest was 21 years old, I was taking care of my 2 grandsons. I knew that there had to be new information that I could learn that was more up to date. I loved it; I just wish this information were available when I was raising my 3 children. Well, I was hooked; I wanted to know what the next class that I could take was.

Unfortunately, I knew that I had time on my hands; I had lost my job of 6 years in December of 2011. Fortunately, shortly after my unemployment ran out, I found a position that would be able to support our needs. I was trying to ignore the medical issues that were consuming my everyday life. The day I went to the doctors, once home all I could do was cry. I wasn't concerned with the medical issues, I was upset because there it was in black and white; my doctor said that I was 'disabled & unable to work'. Therefore, I had to turn the job down.

Being referred to as 'disabled' bothered me more than the fact that I couldn't walk more than 10 to 15 feet without stopping due to the incredible pain throughout my legs. I was diagnosed with type II diabetes and peripheral vascular disease; I had lost most of the circulation in my legs. I was so scared about how we were going to live if I couldn't work. I was afraid that I might have to put my grandsons in foster care or move to a shelter, and we would lose everything we had, no matter how meager it might be. I started to become angry and depressed, so I pulled out my goal list that we made on my initial appointment at the factory. I knew that I had to change my attitude and try to make this better. I was told about a class called "Getting Ahead". I wasn't sure if this was the right class for me but I knew that I had to try anything. I thought how could they help me get ahead, unless they have a secret stash of job opportunities or some magic formula. Although the first 2 classes were very depressing as we took an honest in-depth look at just how far down on the poverty scale we were, I couldn't wait for our next class. Again, I put my medical issue on a back burner and was determined not to miss any classes. I was so impressed that it wasn't just a magic formula or a secret stash of job opportunities. We were learning the causes of poverty, the challenges involved, and we saw ways that it affected us that we never realized. We also learned that how other social classes have different issues than ours, they are still issues. Most importantly, we learned how we could work our way out of poverty and not repeat the experience. After all, you can't fix something if you don't understand it, but you CAN repeat it!

As I was being tested for the PVD surgery, they found a mass and the doctor said that the mass could be life threatening so that had to be dealt with first. All I could think of was the delay to my recovery; my family became so scared that it would be cancerous. I didn't think of that, I just wanted to recover and get back on my feet. Well I had a complete hysterectomy and fortunately no cancer was found. I had to recover from that surgery before

they would do the bypass for the PVD. Then just before the bypass surgery, well I guess they doctors thought I might be getting bored, so they said “hey, let’s rip your teeth out”, I imagine they thought that I could buff up my multitasking skills and recover from the bypass while my gums were healing.

Along with my worries of how we were going to survive and the medical issues, I am raising my 2 grandsons, with one having numerous schooling and emotional issues. I went to his first IEP (Individual Education Plan) meeting, in FULL armor, I had to protect my grandson against those professionals that were condescending and fully equipped with all the answers of how to deal with MY grandson. Of course I left the meeting angry, and dismayed. I spoke with Chuck about it and as usual he ‘gingerly’ pointed out just how wrong I was. He asked me if I trusted him, which I did, so he had volunteered to go to another meeting with the principal Sharon Ray. He told me that I had Sharon all wrong, but I really didn’t believe him. Well as usual, Chuck was right, I hadn’t met a principal that I liked this much since my high school principal, which was some time ago. While other Pequea Valley principals have impressed me, I felt something special about Sharon. I felt that I had a friend in Sharon and strangely enough a principal in a higher level than elementary that really cared about the kids! She looked at not just their academia but also their entire life. Then it hit me Sharon and Chuck are looking at the big picture, no wonder they are working so well with each other. You can’t really help in just one area of someone’s life because all faucets affect each other. However, I still had major problems to deal with, which I thought were insurmountable.

As we left that meeting Chuck and Kendra, the old social worker stopped me and told me about Matt and the Hersey Mennonite Church. They told me that Matt and his congregation wanted to walk with my family and I as we go through the next few months. He told me they wanted to bring meals over to help my son take care of my grandsons and myself as I recovered from my surgeries. Moreover, I thought that I would jump to the clouds when he

also told me that they wanted to help pay my rent as we went through this phase. I cried all the way home as I said out loud Thank You, Thank you, at least a thousand times. I ran (which wasn't something I could easily do) into the house, my son asked me to stop jumping up and down so I could tell him what was going on. When I told him about the help the church was giving us, he cried, and we both started jumping up and down. Nevertheless, that wasn't all they did, they were there whenever I needed someone to talk to and in my heart I know that I have been blessed with some very wonderful friends. I don't think they know but even the little things they did moved me so much. Like with sheer joy on my grandson's face, when he ran upstairs a few days before Christmas and said "Me-mom, you HAVE to get out of bed and go look at what's happening out front". At that point depression had set in and although I was able to physically get out of bed, I had no desire to do so. Well Matt and some of the most wonderful people in the world had gathered at our front door to sing Christmas carols to us. Again with the crying, but these were tears of joy, I felt so loved. They could only spend a few minutes at our door but they gave me the strength to get out of bed that whole week and I saw the delight in my family as they appreciated my renewed Christmas spirit.

Needless to say, this doesn't even come close to fully explaining our gratitude, I'm not sure if I even know the words to express it fully. It hasn't stopped either; my new wonderful friend Yvonne treated me to a trip to the hair salon, so I don't hate looking in the mirror every day. Thanks to Denise McBride, I am taking a Microsoft & QuickBooks course at home and helping her at the Factory's computer class. Every few weeks a group of us gathers for a 'Bev's New Now' meeting to help me reach my current goals. In addition, I can't tell you the strength and fortitude I have been given knowing that all these wonderful people are at my side.

As I look back at my life I still can't believe how much stress has been relieved by Chuck Holt and The Factory, Matt and Hershey Mennonite Church, Sharon Ray the principal at the middle school, and many new friends. Because life continues on, as the old adage states, "When life

hands you lemons make lemonade” I have become an authority on lemonade. Well, the day the surgeon gave me the ‘no restrictions’ clearance, that same day my son started having seizures again and had to leave his job but he continues to push through his classes at HACC. Fortunately we pretty much have that under control again. Even with all of my challenges of the past few months, within the past 2 weeks I had to face the biggest and most heart wrenching. My oldest grandson had been acting out since we were first told of my illnesses, but even after he saw that I was recovering, he continued to make bad choices. I knew that I had to do something drastic before he was hurt, he hurt someone, or that he worked himself into juvenile detention. I was filled with emotions and the stress was life altering. Only with the support of the factory, the church and the school, was I able to find the strength to call Children and Youth and ask for their help. It was heart wrenching and frustrating, so they would see they urgency, I had to tell them that I couldn’t keep him under these conditions. Chuck, Matt, Yvonne and Sharon were all there to get me threw one of the toughest ordeals that I have ever had; I know that I would have not been able to do it without their love, support and prayers. As my son and I left the court house, I was crying, it was so hard; my grandson was angry and hurting so badly. Josh, my sometimes TOO wise 22 year old son turned to me with a great analogy; he said, “Mom, you’re curing his cancer but you’re crying because you can’t put a band-aid on his scraped knee”.

Therefore, in closing I would like to borrow his analogy, my family and I will be forever grateful, more than I can express. Each and every one of you ARE curing cancer, not just putting a band-aid on the community, you are not enabling us, you are empowering us. My plans are to find full time employment, send my son off to Chicago to study Urban Planning and Development, of course get my grandson back home, somehow become a home owner, remove myself from the Factory’s recipient list, and move to the donor list. Again thank you so so much!

