

GLENN KOONS CERTIFIED PEER SPECIALIST SCHOLARSHIP

WINNER: 2019

The Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers' Association and the Mental Health Association in Pennsylvania are pleased to announce **Theresa Ann Sever** as the recipient of the *2019 Glenn Koons Scholarship*. The funds associated with this scholarship will cover the registration cost for her Certified Peer Specialist training.

Thank you to the Mental Health Association in Pennsylvania for the following article.

Meet Artist Theresa Ann Sever, 2019 Glenn Koon Scholarship Recipient

Pennsylvanian Theresa Ann Sever was 17 when diagnosed with Schizoaffective Disorder. Over the next 19 years, she was admitted to approximately 30 hospitals, struggled with medication changes, and spent time in jail (successfully completing Mental Health Court).

Recently, art and peer support have played a central role in Theresa's health and recovery. The recipient of the 2019 Glenn Koons Scholarship for Certified Peer Specialists (CPS), Theresa hopes to put both together while working with peers in a forensic setting after completing her training at WellSpan Philhaven. We asked Theresa to share some of her recovery story and journey.

Finding a path to recovery after life-altering experiences

I had my first psychotic break at 17, which is when I was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder, and began taking medication. This was a big life change, and I felt socially isolated despite support from my family. Ultimately, manic episodes and struggles with my medication caused legal troubles for me on multiple occasions from 2005 to 2012.

2012 was a life changing year. This was when I started using art as a coping skill. Art, specifically painting, became my tool for recovery. In creating art, I learned to make constructive use of my time, and it also calms me when I have trouble focusing. It has been central to my recovery, and I hope to help others in the same way.



Part of the 12 Women Series

WellSpan Philhaven really encouraged me as an artist. This encouragement and support helped me grow into being an active local artist. For the past five years, I've exhibited paintings in galleries in Lancaster and York, and I also have an exhibition up at Philhaven's Grace M. Pollock Training and Community Center.

Hello Yellow!

How peer support gave her friendship and a new purpose



I was connected to peer support in 2018. Honestly, I didn't think it would be as helpful as it is, so in many ways peer support was an unexpected experience. It has given me the chance to see new perspectives and ways of thinking about problems.

Through peer support, I've found a friend. My peer gives great advice and helps me through anything from paperwork to social problems. Peer support means having a person in my corner, and when you're isolated that means a lot. Peer support has been a wonderful experience for me, and I would like to be "that person" for others.

Paying it forward and helping others find their path



Because of my experiences with incarceration, I know how difficult it is to reintegrate into the community, and I want to help others that have been in my situation.

Out To Dinner

For many years I have been a member of both NAMI and the PA Prisoner Society. Going forward, I want to be a Forensic Peer Support

Specialist and work with others as they transition back into their communities.

I've experienced how disrupting hospitalization and jail time can be. I also know what it feels like to be stigmatized over not just having a mental health issue, but also legal problems. I've really been there, and I can provide moral support for those who are experiencing the criminal justice system. Whether working in local jails or rehabilitation centers, I'm looking to help women (and men) and show them hope.



The Revelers

I am really excited about becoming a CPS, and I will be using this scholarship to continue my training. I am excited to share how art and peer support can be used as tools for recovery.

See more of Theresa's art on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).