

Pride in her work makes Corbin a perfect 'calendar girl'
Monday, January 11, 2016

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BJC BEHAVIORAL HEALTH | Wanda Corbin, a client at BJC Behavioral Health, can now add "calendar model" to her list of accomplishments.

Corbin is pictured for the month of March in a 2016 calendar produced by Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center. The calendar features photos of successful clients of the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) program.

The IPS program is an evidence-based model of supported employment for people with severe mental illness developed at Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center at the Dartmouth College School of Medicine. BJC Behavioral Health implemented IPS in 2010, along with the rest of Missouri, and it is now practiced in 18 other states and three European countries.

Wendy Dallas, lead vocational services specialist at BJC Behavioral Health-North, has been working with Corbin. "Wendy is a very hard worker," says Corbin. "Very supportive. She didn't give up on me. She's my friend."

Employed as a cashier by Walmart through the IPS program, Corbin says working makes her feel good. "I'm not at home. I'm out with the people and that's life," she says.

Each year, BJC Behavioral Health helps about 350 people such as Corbin work toward the goal of competitive employment. Many have gone on to work in areas such as bioscience, pharmacy, nursing, home health, food service, retail, clerical, custodial and other fields. Research conducted at Dartmouth shows that work can be an integral part of a person's recovery. Two out of three individuals with a mental illness say they want to work, and yet the reality is that only one out of 10 are currently employed.

Among the many benefits of employment are increased income, improved self-esteem, improved quality of life, reduced symptoms and reduced mental health utilization. Work can be part of a meaningful, integrated life.

Corbin would agree. "I can pay my bills. I'm very involved in church and if there's a family in crisis we donate, and I'm able to do that," she says. "I'm able to help my grandkids, who are in college, and I'm able to give back to my community."

IPS Supported Employment Practice principles:

- Employment specialists help people find regular jobs in the community (competitive employment).
- Every person who is interested in work is eligible for services regardless of symptoms, substance use disorders, treatment decisions or any other issue.
- Employment services are integrated with mental health treatment.
- Personalized benefits planning is provided.
- The job search begins soon after a person expresses interest in working.
- Employment specialists develop relationships with employers by learning about their business needs.
- Individualized job supports are time unlimited.
- Client preferences for jobs, and preferences for service delivery, are honored.