

	<p style="text-align: center;">“Sally’s” Story aka Amanda K Ferdon August 1, 1980 – March 28, 2024</p> <p>Below is the Mental Illness Monday Story draft that her family submitted. They chose to use the pseudonym “Sally.” Amanda died before we could get this published for Mental Illness Monday but we will make sure her story is told and that her life will continue to benefit others.</p>
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Sally is a thirty five year old woman who was diagnosed as bi-polar and seriously mentally ill (SMI) in her twenties. She lived in a small town in Arizona and over the years had two children with two fathers. Aware of her illness her family helped by paying her rent and utilities. Sally was very much in denial of her mental illness. One day she suddenly walked away from her home and two small children, stole a car, and headed toward California, where she was arrested for car theft. She tested negative for drugs and insisted that she was working undercover for the government. Suspecting mental illness, the court placed her in the jail's mental health unit. Her family got involved and by a court order she returned to Arizona where she was placed on probation and required to follow behavioral health treatments protocols, which she did for a few years.

The stress of being a single mother began to wear on her and she stopped taking her medication. She became delusional and started hearing voices and responding to them. Her family and provider's case manager began filing petitions to get her help. The emergency petition they filed first resulted in Sally being taken to the Crisis Response Center (CRC) where she was kept briefly and then discharged. She continued to spiral downward and the Crisis Team was called. With their help another emergency petition was filed along with a Persistent and Acutely Disabled (PAD) petition. The family later learned that the PAD petition was dropped because both petitions could not be filed together.

After four months, four emergency petitions, three PAD petitions, three arrests, and two brief hospital stays, Sally was finally court-ordered to a psychiatric hospital for treatment. But in the interim she had lost her children, trashed her apartment, allowed homeless people to live in the apartment, one of whom raped her, and been evicted.

At no time were family members called by those who received the petitions about Sally's history, even though the family filed the petitions. It is the family's understanding that it was the police who took her to the psychiatric hospital and filed the last petition that finally got her help.

Five months later after several step-down placements and another subsidized apartment she stopped taking her medication. She started having homeless people living in her apartment and was eventually evicted. Despite being on active court order, she was not closely monitored by her provider and had not been assigned an ACT team. This time she disappeared into the streets. Her provider placed her on MIA status and suspended her court ordered treatment.

It took another three months of calling the police, locating where she was living, and getting her court order treatment re-activated before she was once again picked up by the police and placed back in the hospital.

Sally remained on court ordered treatment for more than a year. This time she was assigned an ACT team, required to have a monthly shot of medication, and placed in staff supported housing. She commented that the monthly shot was the most important thing helping her remain stable.

Eighteen months later, after being removed from court ordered treatment and with an ACT team no longer involved, Sally had been moved into her own apartment, stopped getting the shot, and began de-compensating and having homeless people living with her. Again, she was secretly working for the government. The family began the petition process again. This time it took two emergency petitions and one PAD petition.

Again, Sally was sent to the CRC and immediately released. Within hours of the release the police were called because she had damaged her apartment. Another emergency petition was submitted. This time the CRC moved her to the psychiatric hospital where she remained only a short time. No family member was notified of her release and within a day she had destroyed property.

After filing the PAD petition the family tried to keep track of Sally's whereabouts until the petition was activated. But this time the police were called by the hotel where she was staying and they took her to the psychiatric hospital. A hearing was held and the court again placed her on court ordered treatment. She stayed less than a week in the hospital after the court ordered treatment was ordered and has been placed in a group home. The family has no idea how this will turn out but with such limited hospitalization they are not hopeful.

The long-term mental damage, not only to Sally but also to her children, caused by the long periods of no or minimal treatment remains to be seen. At a minimum, her children are growing up without a mother.

Amanda would not want to be remembered as someone who was nothing but her illness because she was so much more. Amanda was a loved daughter, sibling, niece, and friend. She was a mother who loved her kids more than anything, more than the "Mysterious Beyond", as she would say.

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Choose to be happy Amanda.

You are not simply a mentally ill human being.

You Amanda, are bright and at times brilliant in your ability to love and show kindness to others.

You will honor your loved ones by loving yourself; you have the right to be happy.

Amanda K Ferdon 3/19/2024

This was written in Amanda's personal journal only 9 days before she passed away.