

Laurie: Laurie Capito, age 46.

UHC: So, tell us your story. Where did it start?

Laurie: About, well, honestly, I had a very unfortunate event happen eight years ago. In September of 2000, I lost my daughter in a car wreck, and I think it spiraled from there. I'm a Licensed Practical Nurse. I've been one for 15 years. Raised them, brought them down here [got started different?], and we weren't even here a year, I think, it wasn't quite a year when she was killed. And I think it just fell apart. My life fell apart. My life as I knew it started falling apart from there. Depression. I started abusing alcohol. My son started abusing pills. I have a 27-year-old son as well. Probably and then seven months after I lost her, I nursed my stepfather through cancer, and he died seven months after her. And then my own dad a year later, my biological dad a year later. So all of that transpired, you know, the deaths were one right after the other, and I just, four years into it I just I did some things that I regret. My license was suspended. I was on probation for two years. Because of legal I'm really rather not get into the legal aspects. Everything is settled and done, but I'd really rather not get into the details of the legal end of it. And it involved my son, and he did some things that affected me. And, you know, I lost my nursing license. I mean it was, I it was suspended, reinstated, and then I had to turn it back in because of some of the legal matters weren't resolved here in court. So that was four years ago. And I was hospitalized numerous times for emotional issues. Honestly, I attempted suicide twice. Still here. After the last time, I was hospitalized in Patrick B. Harris and just to stay there was enough to...I did the 30 day stint. I did the two weeks in the psychiatric area, and then I did the other two weeks in drug and alcohol. And then after I was released from there was when I moved back home with my mom, and that was another very bad, very, not a very healthy atmosphere. I have a brother who has a really bad addiction to crack cocaine, and he was abusive. And I wasn't working. I lost my car. I lost my license was suspended. I had nothing or nobody, and that's when I contacted Glenda's program because I had...after one of my hospital stays, I was in a homeless shelter for women for one of the local churches.

UHC: What was the church?

Laurie: It was Restoration. And it was the Angels of Hope house, which is no longer. That's when the church was still on this end of town, off of 85. And the Hope House was there in Commerce. And that's where I heard about her [Glenda's] program. But then my mom invited me to go back home, and I thought everything would be okay. And it didn't work out there, and I knew nowhere else to turn or nowhere else to go. So that's when I contacted Glenda's program, and that was like three years ago. You know, but I was used to a specific lifestyle. I had a car. My children had the best, you know. I'd lost everything and fell flat on my face, and it was nobody there to help me pick it back up. And I realized that after I tried to do myself in, a lot of counseling. But there was nobody, I was all alone in the world. All alone in the world. And I just didn't want to sit there and flounder. I needed a program like this to jumpstart me. I needed a jumpstart. Not that I needed to be pushed. It was not easy for me. I had to swallow my pride, you know? I had to work in this town as a waitress, and I'm not saying those jobs are bad for anybody. I did it while I was waiting to go to nursing school. I'm not saying that. But here I am, I have this license, and I've work 15 years in long-term care. And it's time for me to start enjoying myself. I've raised my babies. I lost one. It was not easy for me to see my peers

and run into nurses that I worked with and supervisors and administrators and people that I knew who knew that I was ashamed. I'd have to walk out of the room or make up a lie. I've literally told lies about why I was waitressing and not nursing. I really, I did. Because I was so ashamed and embarrassed, and it was not an easy adjustment period. Not having a vehicle, having to rely on public transportation, walking, resources, you know, food stamps, and they're there. You know, the resources are there, and I had to learn that they're not going to come to me. I had to go out there and get them, and I was not used to, wasn't used to any of it.

UHC: Tell us a little bit more about that. Maybe give us a sense of the timeline, you said 4 years ago.

Laurie: Yeah. That's when everything really...that's when the last suicide attempt was four years ago, and that's when I lost my license.

UHC: Okay.

Laurie: And that's...my driver's license, my nursing license.

UHC: That's when you had to lose to your car?

Laurie: Right. And I was still living at my mother's, living in a slum, not being able to find work because I was overqualified. Didn't have transportation, and I found myself...I don't even remember what it was. And because I didn't have a license, and my mom would get in a mood, and she'd say, "I'm not taking you. Find yourself another ride." And that went on for over a year. And, like I said, I was involved in, it was a very abusive, and my brother was abusive, physically, you know, mentally. My son was addicted to pills. I almost saw him destroy himself, you know, right in front of my eyes, and I couldn't do...I wasn't burying another child. I was not. I wasn't. Couldn't do it. And, like I said, I had no family support whatsoever. None.

UHC: You didn't have family support, but were there people in town were there people around...?

Laurie: I wasn't aware...I didn't have friends here, you know? I wasn't aware of any other resources. I really didn't have to [?]. You know, I knew from when I was at Patrick B. Harris, you know, you get a social worker, and they tell you a list of this where you have to go and to do this you follow up here follow up there. But here I was just too determined to just try to do this on my own. I didn't want to have to do...take advantage of the system. I didn't...it wasn't until that last time that my brother slammed me around the house a little bit and...I mean just...they were all...they ganged up on me. They did. They ganged up on me. They did.

UHC: Who's "they"?

Laurie: The lynch mob.

UHC: The lynch mob?

Laurie: My mom, my brother, my own son, my brother's wife, my son's girlfriend. Because I was the one drinking, and I was the one that could not deal with the grief. I could not deal with the loss of my daughter. And none of them wanted to hear it. They all told me to be quiet. Stop crying. Get on with it. And this was, that's all I ever heard. I

locked myself in my room. I didn't know where to go, who to turn to, but I always remembered the name of the program. And I said let me see, maybe they'll help me.

UHC: Tell us again, when was it that you...was there a particular moment that you said, "Oh, I remember that" or had you been thinking of it for a while or how did you...what brought you to finally call the program?

Laurie: I couldn't live in that situation anymore, and homeless shelters were not an option for me. You know, some of them are short-term. You have to, you have to, that one I was in was only for three months. And then like the mission and the ones downtown, you have to like be out of there at a certain time in the morning, and you can't come back until a certain time. I was scared. I didn't know anything about public transportation at that point. Where am I going to go? I don't want to be walking around downtown Spartanburg or go into no soup kitchen, and it's not a good area. I was scared. I was scared to venture out to try to find the resources that I needed. I was panicked. You know?

UHC: So where were you living?

Laurie: I was living at my mother's when I had my, started having my meetings with Glenda, and she started interviewing me for the process, the intake process and all that.

UHC2: What does the intake process entail, like for Boiling Springs?

Laurie: She set up...I'm trying to remember. A lot of it is very hazy for me. I called her. She set up an appointment, filled out an application, I believe. She interviewed me. Drug alcohol testing. Background check. She laid it right out on the line, and she had, you know, she pulled up that [SLED?]. And I knew it wasn't going to be a pretty sight, and I thought that I wouldn't have been able to get into this program with that [SLED?]. And I cried the entire time. I was a basket case. I was not myself. I hadn't been out of Patrick B. Harris long, you know, for the binge drinking and everything, and here I was I had to just pull myself and say you got to do something here, Laurie. You got to do something. I was scared. I was intimidated. You know?

UHC: By Glenda?

Laurie: No, not her. Just the whole, the whole thing. I mean, here they were checking me out to see if I was doing drugs and doing alcohol. And I understand that. You have to, you know, you have to be, I just...

UHC: Were you clean at the time?

Laurie: Yes.

UHC: Okay. You had been?

Laurie: I had been. Uh-hmm. I don't remember exactly. It was at least...it was almost a year. Because it took time to get into that, to get into the program, you know.

UHC: What was it like between getting out of rehab and then getting back in a house? What was that year like?

Laurie: It was terrible. Because there was no...there was no...I don't know why...I didn't want to go back there. I went and stayed with a gentleman friend of mine for about a

week before I actually went back to my mother's, you know. And it was just right back into the same old thing, but I held off. I didn't drink. I went to meetings. I went to meetings in the beginning. I really did.

UHC: The Al Anon downtown?

Laurie: Uh-hmm. Yeah.

UHC2: Now I understand if you don't want to answer this, but have you been able to, like, mend the relationship with your family members, you mom?

Laurie: Actually, once I moved back out into this program, things slowly but surely gradually built back up a bit. And my brother is still has an addiction problem. It's still a problem, and I know...I didn't have any substance abuse...I, it was the alcohol was my thing.

UHC2: Right.

Laurie: You know? I mean, I dabbled back and then, but it was not a, it wasn't an issue of addiction with any of that. It was the alcohol. I mean, I used to live to just leave the house and get away from all that mess and go drink, sit at the bar and drink and then actually drive back home. You know, because I could not wait to just numb. Shut them out, numb this broken heart, numb the grief...I knew, I knew that it wasn't ever going to go away. But that was the only thing I had was to drink a bottle of wine a day until I fell asleep. Get up, go to, you know, get up, do what I had to do. That was before I lost my license. I was drinking then, too. I'd go home, drink a bottle of wine, pass out, get up, go to work, come home, and do the same thing over and over again. And I looked forward to that. I looked, that was all I had because it stopped the pain. You know?

UHC: Going back to the year that you lost your license before you went to, what was the name of the center?

Laurie: When I was working and I had insurance...I went to three different...I went to Charter.

UHC: Okay.

Laurie: I was there for a while. And then I did two stints at Patrick B. Harris because I had no insurance. They were like within a year apart or a little over a year apart, the visits to Patrick B. Harris.

UHC: And you had already lost your license?

Laurie: My nursing license?

UHC: Uh-hmm.

Laurie: It was...I was up to, you know, a lot of that is very black because like I said, I was drinking very, very heavily, and a lot of my dates and my times are really co-mingled. So I, really, I'm still, when they ask me, I'm still, I have a hard time remembering specific dates. But yes, I had lost it. They reinstated it, but the court issues were still pending. And then all of a sudden, like, it was like they knew this. Then when I went before the board, I went to Columbia, and I sat before the board, and I pled my case, and they reinstated it. And then they sent me a letter like six months later saying that I

was non-compliant, and due to the situation I need to wait until the...I'm off probation, you know, the legal end of it, and then I could reapply. That took two years. So I just, all of that just resolved. I've been off probation two years, and I waiting on my nursing license as we speak.

UHC: Are you excited to go back?

Laurie: Very. Can't wait. It's been a long process. I mean, that was my number one goal. You know, my driver's license is one thing, but I have to...here I was working for minimum wage and trying to, you know, what do I do first? What do I with that? I mean, how do I...I wasn't used to that either, you know?

UHC: Working for minimum wage?

Laurie: I couldn't, I mean, I owe fines, I owe reinstatement fees to the state of South Carolina that are astronomical, and I have to take a DUI class. So my main thing...

UHC: What are reinstatement fees?

Laurie: For the driver's license. Reinstatement fees. Yeah, for suspension. For being...yeah, because I got the DUI and the DUS...

UHC: Driving under...?

Laurie: Suspension.

UHC: Okay. Were you, did you get that while you during that year that you didn't...

Laurie: Yeah, same one. Uh-hmm.

UHC: One of the things you mentioned earlier was public transportation as being a, something that was tough to navigate. Could you talk a little bit about that?

Laurie: I was scared. I was afraid of being stranded somewhere. I was afraid I wouldn't get off the bus. I was afraid that the times that I needed that bus, the buses for me to get to work, like Applebee's and whatever, I was just, I was afraid. I just wasn't, you know, I used it in Jersey, I mean, but you take, you know, you take the tubes into the city, and then you, and then you just...you take, you know...you know what I'm saying? It was different for me. I never had to rely on it for day in and day out. And I felt better taking a cab. It was the fear of it all. I was afraid of being alone, and then my first year here, it wasn't even here. I got into this program in September. In the end of September, January, February, March, April, I get assaulted in this apartment. Because somebody...I was working at Applebee's, I think, somebody saw me walking, getting on the bus, knew the uniform, knew I had tip money or something. I don't know if it was somebody in this complex. I don't know who it was. I still to this day don't know who it was, but I was assaulted in this apartment.

UHC: In this...

Laurie: Yes, in this apartment. Yeah. So, I was...it was...I was scared. I hadn't been on my own. I was always used to being around people. I had my children. I had steady boyfriends. I didn't have to...or I was around my family, good or bad or indifferent. I was not used to being totally alone, and that was a very big hurdle for me to get over. You know, I'm a very, very, extremely emotional, sensitive person. And I just...it was

rough. It was rough. But I made a lot of friends over there. And I felt good, and finally when that independence thing kicked in, I was like, “Oh, I can do this. I can get on that bus.”

UHC: Tell us where you made a lot of friends.

Laurie: Applebee’s.

UHC: Applebee’s. That’s a great place.

Laurie: I was there for almost a year, and I left to take another position that fell through. And Applebee’s took me back.

UHC2: Oh, wow.

Laurie: So, yeah.

UHC2: Are you working now?

Laurie: I am not working now. I was working up at Blimpie’s making subs, and I really kind of, I got into it, you know, I was...I just...the gentleman boss and I just, you know. He likes to belittle you and make fun of you and yell at you and cuss you out in front of customers. And it was very hard for me to swallow that, too. You know? I was very hard, I worked very hard for them. I gave them a lot of time on my free time, on my time, because I wouldn’t start my shift until 11:00. The bus picks you up at 10:00. Has me there 45 minutes before I even needed to be there. I would go in and start working. I didn’t care if I was on the clock or not. It gave me something to do and a lot of nervous energy, and I would do it, you know? All I asked was, please let me leave at 10 minutes before the hour, so I could catch the bus to come back down here, if it wasn’t a nice day, because I started walking. I really started getting into it, because I put on a lot of weight, and I was off all meds. I had been off all meds, you know, anti-depressants and all that stuff since the program, and I didn’t think I was going to need it. So I started walking, eating better, you know, I had made some friends around here that I kept in touch with from Applebee’s, so I started feeling a little bit, you know, better about things. But I couldn’t get along with him, and he knew that my license was going to be coming through, and he was getting ready to...he was going to have to replace me anyway. And I forgot what...he was just...he...he yelled at me. He yelled at me.

UHC: How recently was that?

Laurie: After Thanksgiving, before Christmas, right in between the two.

UHC: Oh, so not too long ago? About a month.

Laurie: No. And then I...there was a lady that came up to the window at Blimpie’s one time that I waited on and made a sub for her. She owns a local catering business, and...not the one that got busted...no. It was another one. [Laughs.] And she came to the window...

UHC: The one on Main Street, right?

Laurie: Yeah. [Laughs.] They were serving the alcohol. [Laughs.] And she said, “You seem very overqualified to be working here. Why don’t you give me a call?” And she handed me her business card. So through the holidays, I made 10 bucks an hour working

banquets and catering and all kinds of events for some of the big businesses in town. And it was cash and, no problem, and that got me through the holidays, but, you know, it helped, and got me to catch up on things, you know. And she, over the...after Christmas there was something...she had a death in the family. She's from Greece, and she was out of state for a while. And then they usually don't have any kind of bookings this time of year. They don't pick anything back up until April. So I knew it was going to be dead for a while. You know, so I'm...really...right, I'm not doing anything right now. I'm just waiting for my nursing license.

UHC2: Is there a specific area in healthcare that you want to work in?

Laurie: I've been working, I've worked long-term care Alzheimer's.

UHC2: Uh-huh.

Laurie: For 15 years. I've been working with old people for 30...almost 30.

UHC2: Oh, Wow.

UHC: Doing hospice work...?

Laurie: I worked in the nursing home. I worked hospice, too. I worked...

UHC2: Would you say there are a lot of resources out there for homeless folks that they take advantage of?

Laurie: If they take advantage of them, and they really want them, yes there are. There are a lot. I remember when Glenda gave me a list of, like, three pages long of resources for all kinds of things. You know, whether it be food or, you know, the churches, and DSS, and, you know, whatever. She gave me a list, so...