

# Where are they NOW?

ESPERANZA CATCHES UP WITH SOME OLD FRIENDS

By Maureen Salamon



## Keris Myrick

Spring 2008

In the past five years, Keris Myrick received a second graduate degree, took the helm of a mental health nonprofit in California, and joined the governing board of a major advocacy organization.

Oddly enough, the constant juggling required for her high-profile roles is one of Myrick's most important coping mechanisms.

"If you look at my calendar, there's always something on it, because that helps me remember I have an obligation to someone else," says Myrick, 52.

After her first hospitalization for clinical depression in 1999, Myrick began volunteering with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Her involvement grew, and last year she was elected to a second term as president of the NAMI Board of Directors.

Her day job is CEO and president of Project Return Peer Support Network, a peer-run organization in Los Angeles County that's affiliated with Mental Health America.

"The reason I've kept doing this is, it's very fulfilling," says Myrick, who previously was in higher education administration.

Myrick periodically still feels a "oneness with my bed," as she describes her low points. She stays well overall through self-care strategies and psychiatric treatment, which hasn't changed significantly although her diagnosis is now schizoaffective disorder. That better reflects the presence of psychotic symptoms—what she calls "dark voices"—layered on her depression.

Reflecting on her achievements, she says, "I guess if I've learned anything, it's to open yourself up to the possibility of doing really great things, and maybe stop being surprised when they happen.

"Indeed, we can use the pain and triumph of what we've been through to inform things we do every day."

## Daniel Lukasik

Fall 2008

A documentary. A coaching practice. A book project.

Already immersed in a high-energy law career in Buffalo, New York, Dan Lukasik has expanded his outreach to others in his profession who have depression.

Lukasik, 52, spent years feeling ashamed and hiding depressive symptoms. Finally his exhaustion, inability to concentrate, and physical aches got so bad he had to take a leave of absence, which meant explaining what was going on to his wife and partners.

Lukasik says medication and coping techniques like mindfulness meditation keep his depression stabilized, though "like most people who have been through it, I go through peaks and valleys.... I find it's a continuing thing I have to work at and will for the rest of my life."

After learning that the disorder strikes lawyers at a rate twice that of the general public, Lukasik made reaching out to peers his mission. He started the web site [LawyersWithDepression.com](http://LawyersWithDepression.com) and founded the nonprofit [Lawyers Overcoming Depression](http://LawyersOvercomingDepression.com).

"Depression is such an isolating, lonely condition that's especially hard for lawyers," he says. "When I was diagnosed, I wish there had been (help available) like this for me."

Lukasik produced the 2010 documentary *A Terrible Melancholy: Depression in the Legal Profession*, which was shown at the national conventions of the American Psychiatric Association and the American Association of Justice, among other venues.

His new coaching practice is geared to law students, lawyers and judges with depression. And the American Bar Association will publish the book he is writing on depression in the law.

"I'm trying to reach others because it gives me a sense of purpose," he says. "I get a lot more out of it than I put into it."







Annie

Glenn

Calen

Jessie

Mattie

## PEOPLE TOLD GLENN SHE WAS CRAZY TO DO THIS AD.

**SHE SAID, "DEFINE CRAZY."**

Glenn Close's sister Jessie and Jessie's son Calen have a disease. And even though their story is their own, it's far from unusual. The fact is, one in six adults has a mental illness. The harder reality is that the ignorance that fuels the stigma associated with mental illness can often be the most painful part of managing the disease.

Glenn and her family chose to be national voices for the first campaign dedicated to fighting the stigma that accompanies mental illness. Because having a disease is difficult enough. Being blamed, or ostracized for having it, well that's just crazy.

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