



## Alexis Wilson (Lexi)

### Wellness and Advocacy Center Program Success Story

Alexis Wilson (Lexi) has been a member of the Wellness and Advocacy Center since 2008. She defines herself as a human, an artist, an activist, a family member, and a person with integrity, good morals, who practices tolerance. Lexi credits her family, the Wellness Center for providing a community, Buckelew for providing housing, her art, and maintaining a positive perspective as aiding in her recovery. Lexi considers herself to be a misfit with a nonconventional identity which may not be valued in mainstream society because she hasn't checked off the standard boxes for success, i.e. degrees and kids. Lexi finds herself valued within the peer community. In the nonjudgmental and supportive community, she feels empowered even though she may have a nonlinear life and through her art and speaking she is able to contribute in a meaningful way.

As a result of being provided with housing, Lexi was able to become independent. She accessed resources such as the Wellness Center and has experienced significant growth. She has done portraits of many members and loves the connection formed when someone poses for her. She learned to sew at the center and applied that to making puppets and mixed media projects which she has used in experimental films. Through her art and connection to members at the center, her quality of life has dramatically improved. Lexi states, "Providing a productive and inclusive sanctuary improves a community on multiple levels and shows recovery can be attained."

Lexi was introduced to public speaking at 23 years old and became involved in NAMI's In Our Own Voice presentations. She found she had a passion for speaking. Public speaking is another art form for her that enables her to be creative and express herself. She has spoken to college students, people who were homeless, people in recovery, and at the District Attorney's office.

Lexi is currently involved in the Wellness Speaker's Panel. She identifies herself as part of a revolution in how people see mental health struggles. She wants people to know that mental health struggles are commonplace and the majority of people who struggle are creative, sensitive, nonviolent, and really good people. She wants to dispel the myth of dangerousness. She also hopes that her story will promote early intervention to save some kids from going through what she went through. She speaks because of her deep love of people. Through her courage, she knows that her struggle can help others and prevent unnecessary suffering. Lexi states, "I would not repeat my path, though I like the result."

By Sean Bolan