

1/29/13

Hi, my name is David Woodworth. Connecticut must continue to fund the expansion of school-based mental health programs, including School-Based Health Centers. "A stitch in time saves nine."

~~This is my most memorable take-away from my first counseling sessions with Tom Narducci at~~

Charlotte Hungerford Hospital's Center for Youth and Families, where I was treated for depression when I was 17. I consider myself lucky and blessed, despite the fact that I went through some rather troubling times emotionally. I had family and school staff that may not have been completely aware of the state of my mental health, were at least aware enough of my difficulties to direct me to proper care.

Tom offered admission to an inpatient program for treatment once or twice. I think my own prejudices and stigma surrounding mental hospitals led me to decline admission. I was already wary about taking anti-depressants, but after some initial adjustments to prescriptions and dosages, the combination of counseling and medication gave me an increased level of functioning. The choice to accept psychiatric meds was humbling yet empowering. I graduated high school with honors, a 3-sport, scholar athlete. During college, I reached a level of stability where I felt comfortable abstaining from meds and counseling. However, within a couple years, I started experiencing extreme emotional highs and lows. I did graduate in 2004 with a BS, but within a year of graduating, started treatment for bipolar disorder.

In 2008, I had a psychotic break that required two-weeks of inpatient care at Waterbury Hospital's Center for Behavioral Health. I was uninsured at the time, so luckily I was eligible for Medicaid insurance or the nearly \$20,000 hospital bill would have been an enormous burden on my family. After discharging from Waterbury Hospital, I began counseling again, at Charlotte Hungerford's Behavioral Health Center. I have that, God, and all of the people involved in caring for my mental health over the years to thank for sitting here today, as I am, working steadily as a Rehabilitation Counselor with Prime Time House, in Torrington, and emotionally well.

I was one of the four children statistically that will develop an emotional-behavioral disorder, and among the 20% of that 1 in 4 that received the help I needed. In order for every school to offer a positive climate for learning and social development, Connecticut must continue to fund the expansion of school-based mental health programs, including School-Based Health Centers. As my first counselor taught me, "a stitch in time saves nine." If we don't mend what needs to be fixed now, we'll all lose more than we can imagine sometime again when we least expect it. Thank you.