

**Testimony before the Mental Health Subcommittee**  
**January 29, 2013**  
**Susan Searles**

My name is Susan Searles. This year I'll be 58 years of age. I lived in an abusive marriage for 25 years. There were numerous times I left and came back, police were called, my husband was arrested and let go. We tried a number of services including domestic violence services, counseling and group therapy, none of which worked.

It all came to an end in November 1995, when my husband woke me up and shot me 4-5 times with a hunting rifle, then shot himself taking his own life. I survived, physically that is.

Since then through services I've received at Bridges in Milford and BHCare in Branford I've changed from an isolated, depressed housebound woman to someone able to attend the OPTIONS social club at BHCare on a daily basis. I attend groups such as emotion support, wellness and Zumba and also run my own groups. In addition to this I am president of the OPTIONS Advisory Kouncil (OAK) a client run organization that helps to make decisions about how the social club will run.

I've received excellent therapy from my therapist and psychiatrist. It was BHCare and my primary doctor working together to find the correct treatment for me. It's been a long road and I'm still on this road called recovery. I feel that the services I receive from BHCare have saved my life and given me the opportunity to give back to my community as part of my recovery. Thank you for your time.