

## Struggling to Pay for Treatment

by Anne in Tennessee

I was brought up in a broken home and ended up in an orphanage. I started having blackouts in junior high. There was little or no care for me, so I quit school and got a job in a small dress shop. I ended up having a teenage pregnancy. I did the best I could to raise my daughter, but around 1972, I started having psychotic breaks. I ended up in the state hospital several times. I was put on medication, and was able to get on disability.

I have gotten treatment in the past by day programs, but they no longer exist. They don't have the kind of mental health care that they used to have, so now I just go to a therapist once a month which I have to pay for myself. I see a psychiatrist for meds, but the meds that I have been on have caused me to gain over 100 pounds. I have basically become a recluse. Before this, I did community theater, advocacy theater, and also continually painted visual art. I still paint, but not as often. I still put my art in the public's view.

I have three grandchildren, and I am about to become a great-grandmother. I find that mental illness causes a lot of social isolation, and also find that the health care I get is very poor. In some instances, it's not even there for me. In the last year or so, I have been refused payment of so much medication, including my psychiatric meds, that if I had not had help from friends I would be dead.

We are moving in a dangerous direction in this country when it comes to care for the disabled. My daughter and grandchildren live in Louisiana, and I reside in Tennessee, so I don't get to see them as often as I would like. I do stay in contact with them by phone, and my daughter has come to visit me a couple of times. I find as I have gotten older that the more meaningful parts of my life have to do with my relationships with my family and close friends.