

## **FEBRUARY PEER PERSPECTIVE**

My name is Mariann Hansen and I live every day with some of my own mental health challenges as well as support loved ones who face some challenges themselves. I never thought I was “smart enough, good enough or qualified enough” to attend school or work in the mental health world, until I stumbled across an opening within this agency. I have been a part of CMMHC since May of 2022 when I interviewed with someone who saw potential in me and wanted to see me succeed. I went through my certification class to become a Certified Peer/Family Support Specialist so I could finally live out my dream of encouraging others in their journey and giving them hope through my story.

Some days I have the challenge of getting enough mental and physical strength to get out of bed to face the day and all it entails. Some days the thought of taking a breath can be a challenge. Some days I don’t want to be the caretaker for my children. Some days I just simply want to toss the covers over my head and sleep or cry the day away and hope tomorrow is a better day; especially in these dreary, cold winter months. I understand the feelings of an overwhelmed mind that simply cannot stop spinning, no matter how many tools I use in my toolbox.

But the hope I want to show you, is that those “somedays”, have become less and less over the years. Years of working with my Mental Health Practitioner. Years of allowing someone to come by my side and relate with me at my level. Years of learning to put one foot in front of the other. Years of learning to give myself grace, just as I give others, when I stumble. Learning selfcare. Learning putting my oxygen mask on first, isn’t selfish, it’s vital. If I am suffocating, how can I help someone else breathe?

Growing up, my mother and siblings also had their own challenges they faced. I attended many support groups with them and alone, to better understand how I could support them. I also sit on the same side of the table as some other parents out there, supporting my own child in her mental health journey. A place I never thought I’d be, being I have acquired so many tools and have open lines of communication with her. The constant blaming myself, the worry and wonder of what did I do wrong overwhelms me at times. Learning still now, that mental health challenges are no one’s fault, these things happen for many reasons, and accepting things for what they are and finding the strength to face them head on. Learning that it is okay to admit I do not have all the answers or tools and leaning on others to support me, is okay to do. I do not have to face this alone, nor does my child.

It doesn’t happen overnight and it isn’t easy, but it’s not impossible to get in front of a mental health challenge. Afterall, the word impossible, spells out: **I’M POSSIBLE!**

I am human, just like you. I see you. I hear you. I feel you.