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FEATURED

In the Spotlight | Counselor opens practice to help people overcome losing sight

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Karen Cummings-Wedding, Resilient Clinical Counseling.
Submitted Photo



JOHNSTOWN, Pa. – Losing sight is a traumatic experience for people, said Karen Cummings-Wedding, a mental health professional.

She knows the trauma not only from her clinical work – she is legally blind and will eventually lose all of her vision.

Cummings-Wedding opened Resilient Clinical Counseling in March to provide therapy to other people experiencing low vision or complete blindness throughout Pennsylvania.

As a licensed associate professional counselor in Pennsylvania, she can provide virtual counseling services to people statewide from her home office in Johnstown.

"The process of losing sight is terrifying," she said. "It impacts more than your physical body. It impacts you, body, mind and heart."

However, for a lot of people in the blind community, accessing therapy and mental health services is difficult due to transportation barriers, she said.

"And on top of that, it's hard to find mental health professionals who have lived experience as a member of the blind community," she said. "I started Resilient as a way to bridge that gap."

Originally from Allegheny County, Cummings-Wedding was born with congenital cataracts and glaucoma.

The cataracts were surgically removed when she was 2 days old. More surgeries would follow through her childhood and adult life, but her vision continued to degenerate.

She had five surgeries in 2020 alone, and became legally blind that year. At the time, she was a nursing student, working at Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh.

"If I couldn't be at the bedside, then I didn't want to do it," she said.

With a bachelor's degree in social work, a career transition to mental health counseling was natural.

"I knew I was really passionate about helping other people," she said, "and therapy is something I really value and has helped me live my life to the fullest, so I decided to pursue a master's degree in clinical health counseling."

She married her husband, Sean Wedding, in 2021. The couple subsequently moved to Johnstown, Sean Wedding's hometown.

For the past few years, Karen Cummings-Wedding has been employed as a trauma therapist at Victim Services Inc., 307 Vine St., downtown Johnstown.

Natasha Fox, Victim Services clinical supervisor, said Cummings-Wedding helps people grow by treating them with empathy, but also holding them accountable for taking steps to overcome trauma.

"She has this amazing personality that makes you feel good," she said. "If people are hoping to manage the way trauma is impacting them, through managing depression levels or their social network or sleep schedule, she finds a way to

meet them and help them change. She is super-impactful."

Fox said Cummings-Wedding has started a medical trauma group at Victim Services for people like her with traumatic medical experiences.

"That's been a huge need," Fox said. "No matter what she is going through, different surgeries and setbacks, she is always so positive and able to be so resilient. The name of her practice is so fitting for her. When she gets knocked down, she jumps back up and helps everyone she works with. She teaches people not to stay down too long."

For more information about Resilient Clinical Counseling, visit resilientclinicalcounseling.com or email Cummings-Wedding at hello@resilientclinicalcounseling.com.