

# Today Might be the Day

I don't look at the people that don't quite make it as failures. They're not ready. When they are ready, we'll be right here.



Jeanette Loudermilk, The Pittard Clinic, Toccoa, Georgia

Jeanette Loudermilk has been at Pittard, a medication assisted treatment (MAT) clinic in Toccoa, Georgia for 10 years. "When I first came through those doors I thought, 'There is no way I'm going to work in this place with this clientele.' But I realized the clinic hours would give me time to finish school so I took the job of dosing nurse - planning to quit as soon as I got out of school."

At that point says Jeanette she was "just like the general public." She regarded substance use as a failure of character. "But as patients came to my window to get their medication, I listened to their stories. And it did not take me long to realize that substance use is a disease. They wanted to be well; they just didn't know how to stop using - they needed help."

"I could see that the people that we were serving were parents, they were somebody's daughter, or somebody's son. I saw patients who came in with track marks and within two or three months, those were healing and there were no fresh marks. I could see them changing, right before my eyes. They got a job, they got their children back, and they re-built relationships with family members. They were healing, and the healing was not limited to that one person - broken families were healing."

"I know what those families have been through," says Jeanette. "I know first hand what addiction can do to a family; how destructive it can be - especially to children who do not understand where their mom has gone, and why don't they see her. With every success I feel like it's another life saved and another family spared."

"Each patient's success story belongs to them, but we do a lot to support their recovery. We have an excellent counseling staff that will take their calls day or night. We have a fantastic medical director who is interested in treating the person as a whole. And our nurses are all willing to go the extra mile."

"It's an interesting job; it's a difficult job. Emotionally it's very stressful. Sometimes you do all you can and a patient still relapses. But I don't look at the people that don't quite make it as failures. They're not ready. When they are ready, we'll be right here."

"We keep moving forward every day. Today might be the day. We take every day as it comes. We do the best we can for everybody we see that day, and then we start over the next day." ■

**HIV** testing at Pittard this quarter is nearly 5 times what it was during the same quarter last year - largely because it is now a routine part of admission and all annual physicals. The clinic has also seen an increase in the census in the wake of the focus on the opioid epidemic. Prescription opioids are a lot less available says Pittard's administrator Jeanette Loudermilk. As a result, more people are in withdrawal. Some enter treatment and some turn to heroin.

"Up until about a year ago, we rarely saw heroin in north Georgia," says Jeanette. "But in the past year, that has changed drastically."