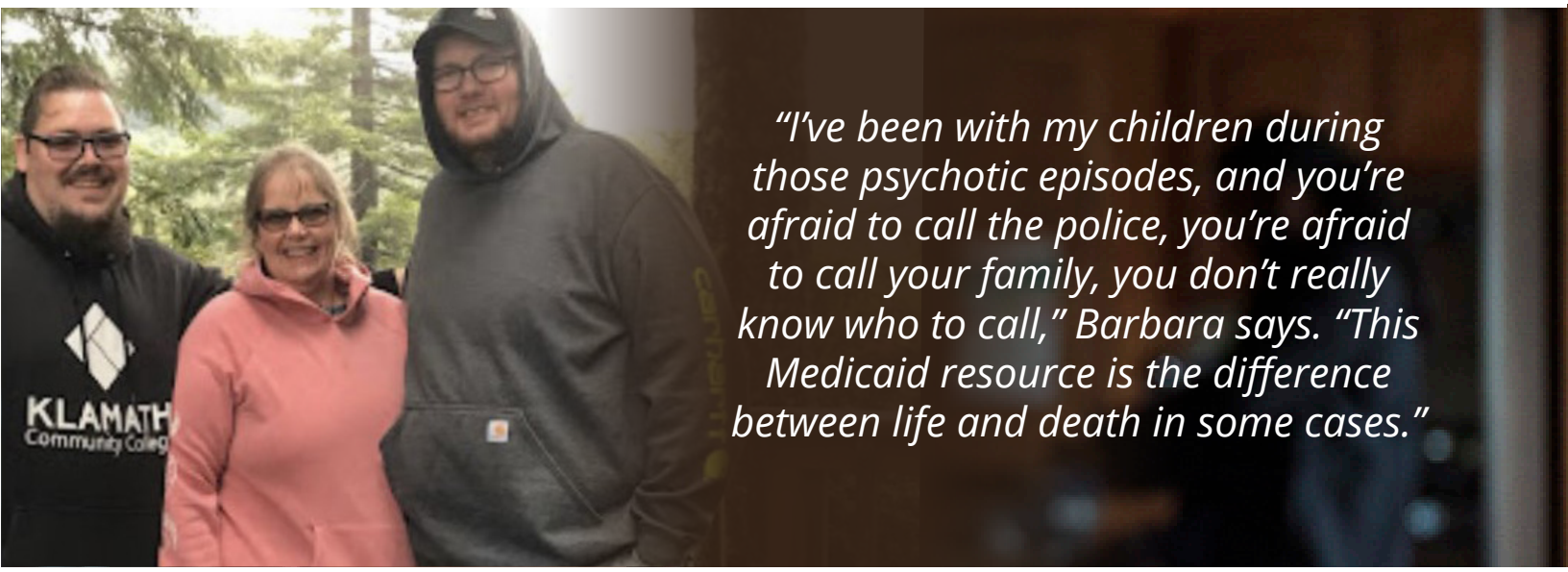
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

When Past Struggles Create Opportunities Help Others

Barbara F. - Bonanza, Oregon



"I've been with my children during those psychotic episodes, and you're afraid to call the police, you're afraid to call your family, you don't really know who to call," Barbara says. "This Medicaid resource is the difference between life and death in some cases."

Barbara has struggled with her mental health since she was a child, but she didn't receive proper mental health care until she was an adult.

It wasn't until she started researching her children's mental health that she could address her own. She was diagnosed with anxiety, bipolar disorder, and psychosis. She joined a support group through Medicaid and received medication management and therapy.

Her youngest son was diagnosed with bipolar and oppositional defiant disorder. Because of the severity of his diagnosis, he couldn't be left alone, and Barbara left her job to take care of him full-time. Barbara says Medicaid allowed her son to see mental health professionals regularly, get the proper medications, and receive at-home psychosocial rehabilitation.

"He was the child that could have been incarcerated or dead, but the services he received through Medicaid saved his life," Barbara says. "He's a functioning individual who has a job and is married. He wouldn't be where he is today without Medicaid, and I'm so grateful."

Oregon's health authority launched the Nation's First Medicaid Mobile Crisis Intervention Services Program, a community-based mobile crisis intervention service for individuals with Medicaid. This service provides those experiencing mental health or substance use crises with community-based stabilization and de-escalation. Barbara serves on the Crisis System Advisory Workgroup Steering Committee and is a peer support volunteer for the ambulance service in her community. She says she has seen the unit in action and believes it's already making a difference. She says she uses her personal experiences to help families in similar situations.