



SOCIAL WORKERS ARE ESSENTIAL

JULIE DRINKARD

How long have you been a social worker?

I have been a social worker for 5 years.

Please list any degrees, licenses, etc.

Bachelor of Social Work from Northern Arizona University May 2016

Master of Social Work from Northern Arizona University May 2020

Why/How did you get into social work?

I chose social work because of my sister. She was fighting a tough battle with Adult Acute Myeloid Leukemia. When she was first diagnosed, I was asked to be tested to see if I would be a bone marrow match to be a donor. With God's good grace, I was a perfect match: 10 out of 10. We were unsure at that time if she would ever need a transplant, but if she did, I would be her donor. Seven years later, our worst nightmare came true. She came out of remission and we were told without the transplant she would only have six months to live. Two months later, I was arriving at the Seattle Cancer Center where the transplant was going to take place. She was living in Tucson and went to Seattle for the treatment. We did a stem cell transplant instead of the bone marrow. While I was going through the donor program, a social worker was assigned to me. This social worker went everywhere I did. She attended every blood draw, every x-ray appointment, every doctor appointment, every nutritional appointment for five days. My husband was unable to make this trip with me so having this social worker by my side was a BLESSING. I do not know how I would have made it through that difficult time in my life. Eighteen months later my sister called me one day while I was at work; I was a dispatcher in a concrete plant. She was in the hospital with a bad infection and she was crying asking me to come visit her over the weekend. She told me she was scared and did not think she would be coming home this time. I explained to her that she always scared us, and she got better and went home. She disagreed this time. I could tell in her voice that she was tired. I told her I would come down on Friday morning to see her. Before we hung up, she asked me to promise her that I would take a couple of college classes. I agreed with her just to get her to quit nagging me. That was the last conversation I had with her. She passed away four days later with me by her side. This was November 2008. In January 2011, I finally kept my promise to my sister and enrolled in Coconino Community College. I took a couple of general classes, math and English. Actually, it was not that bad and I decided to keep going. I remembered that social worker years earlier and thought what an amazing career to get into. I enrolled in the pre-social work program at Coconino Community College and graduated from there in 2014. I was a little nervous since I was in my late forties and I graduated high school in 1980. But my family and friends knew how important it was for me to do this for me and my sister. When I graduated with my Bachelor's degree in Social Work, I had a picture of my sister and I on my mortar board that said "As Promised Sister."

What motivates you to do social work?

I am motivated by my love and compassion for helping people. When I worked for the concrete plant, it was just a job. As a social worker, I feel complete. If I can make a difference in at least one person's life, then I have done what I set out to do.

What advice would you give someone considering social work?

Find what population you love to work with and give it your all. I would also say to remember the good will outweigh the bad. Some days you will feel broken and defeated. You must pick yourself up and start again. Practicing self-care is just as important as the time you give to your clients.