

A Safe Place To Be

Hello, my name is Jane, John Doe.
I am male and I am female.
I am black and I am white; I am Indian and Hispanic.
I am old and I am young.
I am Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Agnostic.
I am rich and I am poor, and I am middle class.
I am educated and I am uneducated.
I am a professional and I am a blue collar worker.
I am a father, a mother, a sister, a brother, a son, a daughter,
a wife and a husband.
I am me and I am you; I am one of millions of Americans.
I have been diagnosed with an illness; my illness is not of
the body, but of the mind.
I am no longer who I once was and I don't understand why.
I am a danger to myself and even to others.
Sometimes I am high and then I am low.
I am anxious, frightened and sometimes
I panic.
And sometimes I hear voices and I see things
that are not there.
I am sad and feel unworthy and I am often
without hope.
I know people look at me and treat me
differently — even my friends, colleagues
and family.
I don't understand why people think I am
the way I am because I want to be
— these same people do not think
that someone with a physical
illness such as heart disease or
cancer are sick because they
want to be.
I cannot speak for myself and even if I
did, no one would listen — so
I ask you to speak for me.
Please provide me a safe place to be and give
me your kindness and understanding and
treat me with the privacy and dignity
I believe I still have a right to.

— BY J. LUCKEY WELSH, JR.

*Director, North Carolina Division of State-Operated Health Care Facilities
(Adapted from Mountain Area Hospice)*