

ADVOCACY UNLIMITED

(Karen A. Kangas, Executive Director – voiceover)

Advocacy Unlimited (AU) is an organization that really helps people find themselves in recovery, it helps them with their own recovery, it helps them change the system, it also helps build confidence. Today is a really special day for AU because this is our 40th graduation of this whole organization and we're really proud to have people who have gone through this 14 week course which actually is really quite intensive.

(Martin Burke, AU Graduate)

Yes, it has been quite a challenge. After the second or third class I remember thinking "Are you kidding me?" It gave me confidence to speak about my illness. I'm proud of who I am as a person as an individual. I'm first and my illness is second.

(Michael Patrick Kelly, AU Graduate)

From not being a public speaker at all and having avoided it through college, I can't believe that I got through it, but nevertheless I gained confidence.

(Tammy Dillard, AU Graduate)

It has helped me in my personal life, in my personal employment, in every area.....and in some areas that I never even thought of. I'm just amazed at how many things I've learned.

(Jennifer Garrison, AU Graduate)

Learning so much, as I said before, about the different systems in CT and how I can help someone in getting housing, how I can help someone get their disability, how I can help someone fight for their rights.

(Karen A. Kangas, Executive Director)

Today the graduates of the AU class from Manchester are going to receive their diplomas but more importantly than that they are each going to give us a three minute speech. And their speeches are going to be filled with emotion, motivation, inspiration, dreams, and actually their speeches encourage all of us to continue on and give us so much hope to encourage our fight to make it possible for people to live their lives.

(Martin Burke, AU Graduate)

Today I have my family and my life back. Today I can ignore the stigmas and look forward to influencing legislation and volunteering my time to bring change to the mental health system on many levels.

(James M. Emmerling, AU Graduate)

We became reacquainted with an old friend of ours – somebody we knew from a long time ago which is hope. We were called the "mentally disabled" but we're the "hope disabled" is what we are.

(Jennifer Garrison, AU Graduate)

In the beginning I very much was a “head in the sand” kind of gal. I took my pills, I went to the doctor’s and that was it. I’ve never really been around other people in recovery and learning that support from others that had “walked the walk” and understood what I was talking about, really made a huge difference for me.

(James M. Emmerling, AU Graduate)

To finally be able to meet other people with mental disabilities, people that I could talk to, people who I had a common language with.

(Jeanne Nodine, AU Graduate)

And now I know that I’m not the only one out there suffering with all this stuff. And there’s other people out there and these people have rights also and it’s time to fight for people to get them what they need.

(Martin Burke, AU Graduate)

We want to move ahead, not backwards. Today with much pride and gratitude I am four and half years clean. In closing I would like to leave you with a quote from Socrates – “Let him who would move the world, first move himself”. Thank you.