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### **Cheektowaga Resident Honored for 40 Years at Agency**

Cheektowaga resident Donna Gill was recently recognized by Spectrum Health and Human Services for her 40 years of service at the agency. She is currently the Supervising Recovery Specialist in Spectrum Health's South Buffalo location.

Gill knew early on that she was meant to help people in need. "My mom used to tell me that I attract people who needed care and attention," she said. "I used to take the bus to work and whoever sat next to me told me their life story."

Gill was an assistant manager at Waldenbooks in the Main Place Mall in downtown Buffalo while attending Canisius College for her undergraduate degree in psychology and religion. Instead of pursuing a career in retail management, she became one of 20 students accepted into the new rehab counseling graduate program at the University at Buffalo. The rest, as they say, is history.

After earning her master's degree, she was hired at Spectrum Health as a case manager in Springville. While it was a great point of entry, the drive to the southern portion of the county from her home in North Buffalo (while driving her well-loved Pinto), was less than ideal, so she transferred to the case management program in West Seneca. Years later, she became the head of the continuing day treatment program. "I loved it. I loved working with that population," she said. From there she moved to the psych rehab program to serve as the team leader. "It was a step-by-step way of helping people achieve their goals, a small program, but fun."

Gill has watched Spectrum Health grow, and she also been part of some important changes within her profession. "The whole attitude is different, how we treat people and involve them in their own recovery," she said. "There was a time when people didn't know their diagnosis or what their medications did. Everyone is the main person in their own recovery."

She loves her work, particularly the areas of trauma and borderline personality disorders, and she's grateful to the Spectrum Health colleagues that helped shape her career, "Many years ago we had a clinical director named John Mercurio. He used to say that it's a privilege to work in this area. That stuck with me. We are privileged to work with people and guide them to achieve positive goals."

In addition to her work in PROS and South Buffalo, Donna is also one of the facilitators in Spectrum Health's Community of Care where she leads Mindfulness sessions three times a week. "I love doing the Community of Caring and I really like practicing mindfulness. I find it really fascinating and I try to practice it and take deep breaths to clear the mind. I use it in my work with DBT and personality skills, too."

Gill married her college sweetheart, Charlie, and she has two grown children.

Reflecting on her career at Spectrum Health, she said, “We are privileged to work with people and see their positive goals realized. It’s not us doing it for them; they are the driving force. We’re just here to encourage.”

*Spectrum Health and Human Services is a Certified Community Behavioral Health Center (CCBHC) providing mental health, addiction, and crisis services. Spectrum Health promotes hope, empowerment and self-defined improvements to adults, children, and families as they recover from behavioral and/or substance use-related disorders. Visit [www.shswny.org](http://www.shswny.org) for more information.*

**Photo Caption – Donna Gill**