

For as long as she can remember, Kelly's passion was to work in the medical field. When she attended college, she pursued a degree in nursing and worked on campus as a personal-care attendant for disabled students. During her sophomore year, however, she left college to get married and start a family.

In 1995, following the birth of her second child, Kelly began battling depression. The condition was so debilitating that she had difficulty getting out of bed. Trying to make ends meet on her husband's minimum-wage job while parenting two small children, under the age of three, was overwhelming. Once Kelly pursued a career of her own, life began to settle down, giving her a feeling of normalcy.

Then, during an emergency room visit with her one-year old daughter, Abbigail, Kelly's world began to spin out of control. "I was totally shocked when the ED physician asked me what my pediatrician's thoughts were concerning my daughter's scoliosis," Kelly remarked. "It was totally unrelated to our visit, and I had no idea what he was talking about. For my own piece of mind, I scheduled an appointment for her to be seen."

Shriners Hospital for Children diagnosed Abbigail with Idiopathic Scoliosis. Suddenly, Kelly's life was consumed with numerous appointments to physicians, therapies, and fittings for orthopedic devices. Unable to juggle work with her personal commitments, Kelly was forced to quit her job. For seven years, life was a cycle of surgeries, body casts and back braces. "I would cry myself to sleep asking God why. Could I have prevented this? I would pore over books in the hospital's medical library while my daughter slept upstairs," Kelly remarked.

"I kept going through the motions, but it was like an out-of-body experience. I was becoming increasingly withdrawn. Heartbroken, I watched as my daughter was in 24-hour halo traction for three months. I was completely shattered when I saw that frail little 8-year-old body that had just endured a 12-hour surgery," Kelly said as she held back tears.

Faces Behind Your MMC

Kelly Drake

Photo by Fallon's Photography Studio

When Abbigail's surgery proved successful, Kelly could finally breathe a sigh of relief, but something was still terribly amiss. She felt such a sense of emptiness. With her children now school age and her husband working third shift, she found herself feeling so isolated. Once again, sadness took over. "It was a challenge to change into something besides my pajamas. I had no desire to leave the house. I was miserable," Kelly recalled.

"Had I known that adopting two rescue dogs would bring me such happiness, I would have

done it sooner," Kelly commented. "Dogs are like children: they need to be taken care of and they are excellent listeners. I enrolled in obedience classes. The routine and structure gave me such a sense of accomplishment and purpose. It wasn't long before I became involved with dog obedience competitions; it was a win-win situation. It opened my eyes to a new world and allowed our family the opportunity to travel together and meet new people."

"I am so thankful for my family; both human and canine," Kelly joked. "My kids have taught me patience,

courage and strength while my husband, Neil, taught me tenacity. He was the glue that held us together. I discovered a release that has brought new-found joy to my life."

**We are proud to introduce you
to our November 2017
"Faces Behind YOUR MMC"
representative, Kelly Drake,
Quality Improvement Specialist.**