

Kathy's story features more than its fair share of tragedy and sorrow, but when she reflects on it, she sees her life as a gradual declaration of empowerment rather than a cause for pity.

"I believe all the events of my life were stepping stones that led me to the path I was meant to take," Kathy said.

Growing up in Connecticut, Kathy was the middle child of a paranoid schizophrenic mother who remained addicted to prescription drugs till the day she died. Kathy's father adored her mother, but 57 years ago mental illness was not talked about freely. "My father was such a kind-hearted man, but his life was difficult," Kathy recalled. "He eventually turned to alcohol and spent most of his time at the bars. I remember cleaning the house and cooking dinners when I was 10. My older brother and I would take turns on a Friday or Saturday night watching my mom and baby sister; my mom made us feel guilty if we went out. I was always the peacemaker."

Six years after Kathy and her husband married in 1983, the couple moved to Cochran, Pennsylvania, where they opened an auto repair service business. They had two young sons, but life was not a bed of roses. Kathy's husband was mentally, verbally and physically abusive.

Still in her troubled marriage, Kathy was involved in a car accident in 1997. Two years later she required surgery as a result of the crash; after another year, her body rejected the rods and screws that had been inserted during the procedure. Kathy endured years of physical therapy.

As Kathy went through the recovery process, her sister began working as a nurse's aide and eventually became a massage therapist. "I envied Diane. She had a job helping people, something I always longed for," Kathy said. Determined to turn her life around and someday escape her abusive marriage, Kathy knew that her faith would get her through.

Following her sister's lead, Kathy registered to start classes for massage therapy in 2002, but her plans were unexpectedly interrupted when her sister committed suicide at the age of 32. Adding to the grief,



Photo by Fallon's Photography Studio

Faces Behind Your MMC

Kathy Fidanza Holman

Diane's death came just a year after Kathy's sister-in-law had been murdered. As she returned home to take care of arrangements for her sister, it seemed that life just kept dealing Kathy one blow after another.

Despite the setbacks, Kathy still dreamed of becoming a massage therapist and the following year she signed up for classes again. As life would have it, she was again forced to cancel when her mother passed. For the second time in as many years, she had to return home. This time however, the instructor was so moved by Kathy's persistence that

she rescheduled the classes so Kathy could attend. Eventually, Kathy's dream came true as she became the only massage therapist in the area practicing the modality of medical massage.

On a snowy, blustery day in February of 2007, God spoke to Kathy. She gathered her things and left the abusive life she had known.

Fortunately, Kathy married the man of her dreams and just celebrated her second anniversary. She has two sons that she adores and a grandson that is the apple of her eye. She has spent the last ten years as

a licensed massage therapist and a certified medical massage therapist.

"I am truly happy and cherish my life," Kathy said beaming. "I have a career that I love. All the craziness of my life empowered me to follow my dreams."

**We are proud to introduce our
September Faces Behind Your MMC,
Kathy Fidanza-Holman, LMT, CMMT.**