

NAME:
Michelle Lease

OCCUPATION:
Resident Services
Coordinator

COMMUNITY:
Mountainview Tower
Apartments
Cumberland, MD
114 Homes

AFFORDABILITY:
- 100% Project-Based
Section 8
- 60% AMI Income-
Restricted, Low-Income
Housing Tax Credits

*Last updated in 2019

VOICES OUT LOUD

Michelle



LEASE

You have to be able to eat, have a phone for emergency purposes, that is going to be hard.

Michelle Lease was born in Texas, by a Texan mother and a father from Cumberland, Maryland. As a toddler, she moved closer to her father's family and she was raised in Cumberland.

Michelle has seen Cumberland change a lot over the last few decades. When she was growing up, there was a lot of industry in the town but by the time she was a senior in high school, a number of big companies started closing and moving elsewhere. It was very detrimental to the city. A lot of people had to move elsewhere, and others tried to stay and find work. There were limited jobs that afforded residents a real living wage. In the last few of years, a couple of prisons have been built, bringing a limited number of jobs. Michelle has also seen that, along with much of the nation, there is a growing heroin and opioid problem in Cumberland. She believes that this problem has truly become a crisis in the last five years, having lost two of her own children to the heroin epidemic.

Before working at Mountainview, Michelle used to work at a restaurant and janitorial supply company in Cumberland for about 10 years. She knew that she wanted to work with seniors, but not as a nurse. She applied for the role of Assistant Property Manager at Mountainview Senior Apartments and got the job. However, in 2015, the role of Resident Services Coordinator opened up and Michelle decided to transition into a more hands-on role with helping residents.

Still in the role as Resident Services Coordinator, Michelle says most residents who move to Mountain View are retired and rely solely on Social Security for income. Some are widowed or recently disabled. The residents are also not immune to the heroin epidemic, having lost children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews themselves. Michelle says she enjoys helping residents where she can and connecting them to resources in the area. She shares that when residents are on a fixed income in a low-income area, that these resources are harder to come by and more expensive.

“They [the residents] are so happy, they are able to afford Christmas and birthdays.”