



NAMI Mercer

Families Meeting the Challenge of Mental Illness

March 2011

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Our Mission

NAMI Mercer is a nonprofit organization of individuals and families working to improve the lives of those affected by mental illness through education, advocacy and mutual support.

NAMI Mercer Calendar

For regular support meetings, see Page 8

PUBLIC EDUCATION MEETINGS

AT THE NAMI CENTER

Apr. 20 (Wednesday)
7:30 to 9 p.m.

**Help that Hurts,
Help that Helps**
Dr. Loren Crabtree
Project Transition
in Chalfont, PA

Learn how to communicate with your friend or relative with mental illness in a constructive, caring way.

WALK with NAMI Mercer on May 21

NAMI Mercer invites you to participate in our fourth NAMI-Walk to combat stigma and raise money to support our free education and support programs for families affected by mental illness. This year's theme is "Changing minds . . . one step at a time."

Join thousands of concerned citizens in more than 80 communities around the nation who will walk this year to raise awareness and to improve lives. Thanks to you, NAMI Mercer surpassed its fundraising goals in 2007, 2009 and 2010, bringing in a total of \$285,000. The walk has become our largest source of income, subsidizing the costs of one third of our programs. Help us achieve this year's goal of \$125,000 so that we can do even more.

The walk will be held at Rider University, where we will have access to

wonderful facilities. There is ample parking, and the new artificial turf field is the perfect place for us to assemble before the walk. There are bleachers and a state-of-the-art sound system.

After warming up with Joan Brame and her Empower Fitness Team, we will set out on our 5K walk on the university's cross-country course through a natural, wooded setting. After the walk, we will gather for a complimentary picnic lunch, entertainment by local bands, and games on the field.

Now is the time to sign up, form teams, become a sponsor, or make a donation. We welcome the participation of other affiliates around the state. Last year, Hudson, Hunterdon, Monmouth, Ocean, Sussex, and Union walked with us. You can register online at www.namimercer.org or mail in the registration form on Page 7.

The kick-off luncheon will be held on Thursday, March 31 at Janssen Pharmaceutica in Titusville. All team captains, sponsors and volunteers are invited to learn how to recruit walkers and to make this the best NAMIWalk ever.

You can reserve a place at the luncheon by writing to home@namimercer.org or calling 609-799-8994.



NAMI Mercer Walk 2011

**Saturday, May 21, Rider University
2083 Lawrenceville Rd. (Rte. 206)
Lawrenceville, New Jersey**

A Teachable Moment for the Nation

Dear NAMI Mercer Friends,

Ever since the heartbreaking shooting on January 8, the entire nation has focused on the issue of untreated mental illness. For NAMI, it has been a time of mixed feelings and responses.

The tragedy in Arizona has aroused sorrow, anger, empathy and new resolve among NAMI family members and mental health consumers:

- **Sorrow** that six people died, that Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and others were seriously injured. Sorrow that Jared Loughner had not received adequate treatment to prevent this tragedy. Sorrow that our country has so little understanding of mental illness, treatment, and the promise of recovery. Sorrow that more people will associate mental illness with violence.

- **Anger** that the needless tragedy occurred, that Jared had not received appropriate help from family, community, educators and other professionals who had observed his eccentric behaviors for a number of years. Anger at the impotent gun laws. Anger at the insensitive comments and uninformed generalizations made by newscasters, bloggers and radio show hosts in the past few months.

- **Empathy** toward all the victims, the shooter, and the Loughner family. Compassion for all who were immediately involved, knowing first-

hand the difficulties of getting treatment and the risks of untreated serious mental illness.

- **New resolve** to work even harder to educate our communities about mental illness, treatment and recovery so that early intervention will prevent future incidents. New resolve to carry out the mission of NAMI until all people will readily seek and receive the treatment they need.

The event is indeed a “teachable moment” for the nation, and NAMI is positioned to teach. All levels of the NAMI organization (national, state and local) have been fielding questions received by phone and email from the community and the press. NAMI has marshaled its educational resources, its support structure, and advocacy network to share our lived experiences about treating mental illness and about coping as families. Unfortunately, our efforts coincide with huge cuts in public spending.

Along with the ongoing coverage of Congresswoman Gifford’s recovery and Loughner’s legal battles, the media continues to report on more budget woes



Sally Osmer

across the country and in our state. Since 2009, states have cut more than \$2 billion from essential services for people with mental illness and eliminated more than 4,000 inpatient psychiatric hospital beds without investing in out-patient care. NAMI National has repeatedly warned about “the high cost of cutting mental health funding.” The tragedy in Tucson is one example of the great price paid. Arizona’s mental health system has been cut back to the extreme. Here in New Jersey, cuts to mental health are already impacting people affected by mental illness, and the situation could get worse!

Please take time to read and learn about the national and state budget issues that threaten Medicare, Medicaid, human services, energy assistance, housing subsidies as well as mental health care funding. All these areas directly impact people with mental illness who are struggling for quality of life and recovery in the community. Please say yes to NAMI Mercer when we ask you to sign letters to protect mental health treatment dollars or to share your personal stories with legislators.

Sincerely,

Sally Osmer

Executive Director

Renew your membership in February from now on!

February is our official membership month, and March is the time to make sure you remembered to join or renew your membership. Please check our website for membership updates. You can join or renew online. It’s very easy at www.namimercer.org.

THIS YEAR ONLY, we are asking you to renew NOW, even if it has not been a full year since you joined. Your next annual renewal will be February 2012.

A word about the importance of membership in NAMI. The recent tragedy in Arizona emphasizes the critical value of accurate information about mental illness. The shootings and their aftermath remind us of the dire need to expand

early intervention for teens and young adults and to reduce the stigma that too often prevents people from seeking help. It is time for a national conversation about mental illness, and NAMI is ready to lead this conversation. We are the largest grassroots mental health movement in the nation, with affiliates in every state. By joining NAMI Mercer, you also join NAMI New Jersey and NAMI National.

Why you should renew your membership

- You will receive education and support on mental health topics that promote recovery

Mental Illness at the Root of Jazz?

Guests at this year's Night Out with NAMI enjoyed a wonderful evening of jazz performed by the Bill Charlap Trio. Once again, the theme of the concert was tied to our mission of increasing awareness about mental illness and overcoming stigma. Charlap's musical program focused on jazz classics by American composers affected by depression, bipolar and other brain-based psychological disorders.

In connection with this year's program, I reviewed the assertion by British psychiatrist Dr. Sean Spence of the University of Sheffield that Charles "Buddy" Bolden's experience with schizophrenia may have led to his invention of jazz. Without his new improvisational style (a by-product of his illness), music might never have evolved from ragtime, blues, and gospel music into the jazz movement we know today.

Buddy was one of the most popular musicians in New Orleans from 1900 to 1907. Like most black artists in the South at that time, he reportedly learned music "by ear" and adapted it to his clarinet. In doing so, he and his band created an exciting and novel fusion of ragtime, blues, and gospel music. Unfortunately there are no known surviving recordings of his work. While there is substantial oral history about Buddy Bolden, facts about his life are blended with colorful myth.

Buddy suffered an episode of acute alcoholic psychosis in 1907 at the age of 30. He developed severe paranoia following episodes of drinking. After he assaulted his mother and mother-in-law, he was involuntarily committed to a mental institution in Jackson, Louisiana, where he remained until his death in 1931.

Buddy was diagnosed with "dementia praecox," later known as schizophrenia. He was buried in Holt Cemetery for paupers in New Orleans. In 1998, a monument to Bolden was erected there, but his exact gravesite remains unknown.

One of Bolden's most famous works is a song called "Funky Butt" (known later as "Buddy Bolden's Blues" by Jelly Roll Morton).

His sound influenced Louis Armstrong, and Bolden's life inspired the novel "Coming through Slaughter" by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Michael Ondaatje. It is a beautifully detailed story about the downtown New Orleans world of bars, prostitutes, and the life of Charles Buddy Bolden.



Bill Hayes Jr.

“... those who live in the world where creativity and madness meet are often the ones who give us truly visionary art.”

Jim Dulzo
music journalist

Dan Pritzker, son of Hyatt Hotels magnate Jay Pritzker, is soon to release the film "Bolden," a musical about the musician's life and legend. Anthony Mackie of "We Are Marshall" and "The Hurt Locker" will play Buddy Bolden.

Is there a connection between mental illness and jazz? Dr. Geoffrey Wills has done research. His study of 40 jazz musicians found that they were eight times more likely to suffer a drug dependency and four times more likely to have a mood disorder than the general population.

Serious psychotic disorders were found in three musicians — Bud Powell, Miles Davis, and Frank Rosolino. Saxophonist Art Pepper suffered from obsessive compulsive disorder; Charlie Parker, one of the co-founders of bebop, was institutionalized many times; and the odd behavior of Thelonious Monk was finally diagnosed

as manic depression.

In 1995, Arnold M. Ludwig gathered biographical data on 1004 famous men and women and wrote: "My findings show consistently that members of the artistic professions or creative arts as a whole suffer from more types of mental difficulties and do so over longer periods of their lives than members of the other professions."

Jim Dulzo, music journalist wrote in Jazz Times (2002): "One of the great, ironic tragedies of creativity is that some sort of madness frequently accompanies it. Not everyone who is highly creative is bipolar or paranoid or horribly depressed or addicted or schizophrenic, and most people who suffer such severe illnesses are not artists. But those who live in the world where creativity and madness meet are often the ones who give us truly visionary art."

It is my impression that creative genius emanates from an artist's ability to express a strong emotion with which we all can identify. It is this communal experience that defines great art.

Many artists, who have been touched by a mental illness, are able to communicate their personal experience with intense emotions such as despair, panic, depression or manic excitement through their work.

As you know, NAMI is the acronym for the National Alliance on Mental Illness. NAMI also is the Swahili and Zulu word for "me too," which very much describes our core message — you are not alone.

At some time in our lives, we or someone we love may be affected by a biological disorder of the brain. By promoting understanding and empathy, we fight the hurtful stigma that prevents many people from seeking help.

Sincerely,

Bill Hayes

President

Night Out With NAMI, 2011



Photos by Betty McRoberts

**Top left: Liz Bartholomew, Karen Schotland and Kay Lasley (seated).
Top right: Bill Wolfe, Laurie Russell and Betty Wolfe.**

**Middle left: Erica Silver and her mother, Maddy Monheit.
Middle right: Jeremy Mann, Denice Torres and Karen Marquis.**

Above: Danita Saunders, Teresa Pride, Mitra Kelly and Carlene Green.

**Left, back row: Laurie Russell and Tom Pyle, front row:
Tom Tompkins, John and Carol Marsland.**

Teaching Family-to-Family

Tom Pyle, current NAMI Mercer Board member and founder of PsychOdyssey.net, a website with news and opinion on mental health issues, has recently begun teaching his third 12-week Family-to-Family (FTF) program. His companion teacher this spring is Kimme Carlos, former NAMI Mercer outreach coordinator.

Deeply influenced by his experience both as an FTF participant and teacher, Tom hopes to carry his work a step further by starting a series of support groups for FTF graduates who would like to stay in touch with one another.

Harris Adams, in partnership with Michelle Zechner, also has also taught FTF several times. Students in his fall 2010 class have been meeting monthly to renew their learning and their friendships. Tom likes this idea for future classes that he teaches.

FTF is a highly structured, scripted course, taught by graduates who have completed an intensive three-day teacher training workshop. The course has had several outcome studies, and now is considered an evidence-based practice. Harris really enjoys teaching FTF and understands why it is so structured. "It has to be, he said, "or people will interject their own opinions. You're learning every time you do it."

Family-to-Family, first developed by NAMI Vermont in 1990, was designed

and written by Joyce Burland, Ph.D., a family member and clinical psychologist. Dr. Burland has directed the peer family education project since it began in 1990. She will be honored at the NAMI Convention in July for her 20 years of service, the anniversary of Family-to-Family, and her retirement. FTF has benefited more than 115,000 family members nationwide, and NAMI Mercer has offered FTF 39 times over the past 15 years.

Initially, several major challenges face FTF teachers. One is helping family members to step outside the confines of their own family situation to become receptive to the content-rich course. (The FTF manual has more than 600 pages of information.)

"People may not 'get' all the information at first," said Tom, "It's a gradual process."

Another obstacle is that families in the maelstrom of mental illness are often traumatized and overwhelmed. "We teach them to get their distance from the situation and secure themselves. It's analogous to putting on your own oxygen mask first," said Tom.

After providing a biological/medical foundation for mental illness, the FTF curriculum covers what it is like to suffer from mental illness and how to live with affected people. The class offers the knowledge and skills that family

members need to cope more effectively.

It is quite natural that participants begin to bond during their three-month FTF course. With trusting relationships already established and a common foundation of knowledge under their belts, classmates are perfect candidates for an effective caregiver support group with long-term benefits, including:

- Maintaining connections in a safe, welcoming and compassionate environment
- Improving coping skills by drawing on collective experiences, swapping information, and brainstorming new ideas
- Maintaining motivation to seek treatment, services and solutions for loved ones
- Keeping abreast of medical developments, new resources and services, and advocacy issues
- Finding hope and inspiration through association with others.



Tom Pyle

Renew NOW!

continued from Page 2

- You will receive up-to-date information on policy, research, and news affecting people with mental illness and their families
- You will enhance your capacity to handle difficult situations through the NAMI connection
- You will be linked to all levels of NAMI and receive the following publications: *The NAMI National Advocate*; *The NAMI New Jersey Alliance*; and the *NAMI Mercer Messenger*
- You will have the right to vote to elect the NAMI Mercer Board of Directors
- We need people to work together to realize our goal of improving the

lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness

- We are more likely to receive funding if our membership rolls remain high
- We need your voice as we advocate to legislators. Our message is more powerful with more people.

NAMI Mercer is a membership organization that relies on the collective influence of our membership to carry out our mission.

Your voice, added to hundreds of others, makes a huge difference as we advocate for better services and policies for people with mental illness.

We thank you for your membership in past years, and we encourage you to renew your commitment to the values of the NAMI movement.

NAMI NJ Conference in Spanish

In Search of Our Well Being, a conference on mental health in the Latino community, presented by NAMI NJ en Español, will be held on April 9, 2011 in New Brunswick.

Registration is now open!
See www.naminj.org for more information.

NAMI National Conference - Chicago

NAMI returns to the heartland for its 2011 convention, July 6-9 at the Chicago Hilton.

Register early and save money.
See www.nami.org for more information.

What's new at the Helpline?

by Madeline Monheit

NAMI Mercer is very pleased to have Board member Karen Marquis as our new Helpline coordinator. Dr. Marquis brings great enthusiasm and years of project management experience to her volunteer position. She is a former director of Schizophrenia and Bipolar Disorders Research at Wyeth.

Karen follows in the footsteps of Ellen Heath, past president of the Board, who formed the first formal Helpline team ten years ago and has nurtured it since then. NAMI Mercer is thankful to Ellen for developing and documenting procedures, recruiting and mentoring volunteers, and for modeling the attributes we so value—attentiveness, patience, empathy, and commitment.

“The Helpline mission is to empower people to solve problems,” explains Karen. She stresses the importance of listening with “an empathetic ear” and establishing caring relationships. “We’re not counselors, but we can share our personal or family experience and let callers know they are not alone, help is available, and there is hope.”

In preparation for joining the Helpline, volunteer trainees have completed orientation to NAMI Mercer and the Helpline Training Manual. The volunteers are Jacquese Armstrong, Marge Battisti, Louise Beste, Robert Hedden, Mary Ann Knutson, Susan Mulhern and Caroline Tompkins.

New training manual

The new Helpline volunteers have been the first to use our new, self-paced learning guide that Karen adapted from a NAMI National manual. “The tutorials enable learners to read and study the material at home or during quiet moments at the Helpline,” Karen

explains. “The response to the new manual has been very positive.”

Another training strategy is to schedule beginners to work with veterans, including Jack Conley, Maggie Hill, Victoria Leyton, Karen Marquis, Betty McRoberts, Sakiko Ono, Pat Sayles, Barbara Schutt, Ruth Vitale, Phyllis Wilmot and Betty Wolfe.

New volunteers do not take calls for their first month on the job. Instead, they listen in as experienced volunteers interact with callers. When beginners do “go live,” they have a knowledgeable partner nearby.

In her new role, Karen convenes monthly meetings for the continuing

New data-base tools

Karen also has taken the lead in providing Helpline workers with electronic tools to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. In the past, volun-



Karen Marquis

Profile of a New Helpline Volunteer

Susan Mulhern already has begun working regularly on the Helpline on Tuesday afternoons. Susan comes from a family with widespread mental illness including depression, bipolar and obsessive compulsive disorders, and alcoholism. She found NAMI Mercer when her younger daughter's behavior worsened after she sustained a head injury in a car accident.

After taking Family-to-Family, Susan sought ways to become more involved in NAMI. A former volunteer at a battered women's shelter in Oregon and an active member of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) in California, Susan thought the Helpline would be a good fit.

Susan loves working at the Helpline because she finds person-to-person contact the most rewarding. “When people first enter the world of mental illness, as a consumer or family member, they are bewildered, upset, and frightened,” observes Susan. “It's a time when we really can make a difference.” Susan admits that answering the phone is sometimes scary for her; however, she feels very fortunate that Karen Marquis is her partner on the same shift.

Susan finds the AA slogan (“Our secrets are our sickness”) very applicable to mental illness, where social stigma still prevents people from discussing their problem and seeking help.

education of Helpline volunteers and for improving processes. The typical agenda includes a review of selected calls with a focus on promoting best practices.

A section of the Helpline manual also is discussed at each meeting. Volunteers have been sharing the responsibility of keeping the manual current by verifying existing information, adding new information, and improving clarity. Sometimes, the agenda includes a guest speaker.

teers documented calls (contact name, reason for call, NAMI referrals, etc.) on paper. Although the data was subsequently entered into our online database for tracking purposes, the Helpline could not retrieve stored information.

With the assistance of volunteer Nancy Behrendt, who designed user-friendly data input forms and information retrieval capabilities, the Helpline soon will benefit more fully from database resources. Volunteers will be able to look up a caller's history, which not only increases efficiency but demonstrates to callers that we remember them. The database also will generate a list of action items for the Helpline (e.g., follow-up needed). Over time, more functionality will be added.

If you are interested in serving on the Helpline one half-day per week, contact Tom Tompkins, volunteer coordinator, at 609-799-8994 or ttompkins@namimercer.org. Helpline hours are Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. We have openings for four additional volunteers. Bilingual (Spanish/English) candidates are urgently needed.

NAMI Mercer

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NAMI Mercer Annual General Meeting

Monday evening, June 27,
location to be determined.
Please save the date for this
important gathering.

Vote for your choice of Board
members, honor our volunteers
and celebrate another success-
ful year of service to families.

Walk Registration Form

*Please complete and mail
or register online at www.namimercer.org.*

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, state, zip: _____

Phone: _____

I wish to form a team.

Team name: _____

Captain's name: _____

I wish to join a team.

Team name: _____

Captain's name: _____

I wish to walk as an individual.

I cannot walk, but my donation to NAMI Mercer is enclosed.
*(Mail check to NAMI Mercer, 3371 Brunswick Pike, Suite 124,
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648)*

WAIVER

I hereby waive all claims against NAMI, NAMI Mercer NJ,
sponsors, or any personnel for injury that I might suffer in
this event.

I attest that I am physically fit and prepared for this event.
I grant full permission for organizations to use photographs
of me and quotations in legitimate accounts and promo-
tions of this event.

Signature of participant /parent/guardian:

Date: _____

HOW TO REACH US

THE NAMI CENTER *of Mercer County*

Lawrence Commons
3371 Brunswick Pike
Suite 124
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

(609) 799-8994

fax (609) 799-8996

home@namimercer.org

www.namimercer.org

Directions: From southbound Rte. 1, pass Province Line Road and make a right at the Office Depot sign. Lawrence Commons is a white building, second on your left. Drive to the rear of the building. The NAMI Center is in Suite 124 on the ground floor.

NAMI Mercer Support Groups

- NAMI Connection** For adult consumers, run by consumers
1st, 2nd and 3rd Mondays, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
No registration required.
NAMI Center of Mercer County.
- WRAP** A wellness/recovery action program for consumers
Spring and fall classes. Contact our office to register.
NAMI Center of Mercer County.
- DBSA** Mood disorder self-help group for consumers and families
Tuesdays, 7:30 – 9:15 p.m.; Wednesdays 7:30 – 9:15 p.m.
Lambert House, University Medical Center of Princeton.
- IFSS/NAMI** Support for families of adults with mental illness
– Mondays, 5:15 – 6:45 p.m. Lawrence Rd. Presbyterian Church
– Every other Tuesday, 5:15 – 6:45 p.m., NAMI Center
– Thursdays, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., 1 Kingsbury Sq., Trenton
- Support group in Spanish**
– Every other Thursday, 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m., 1 Kingsbury Sq., Trenton

(Contact NAMI at 609-799-8994 for Tuesday and Thursday dates.)

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