

2018 HONOREES



**EVERY FIGHT
NEEDS A
VOICE**



This year's honorees are leading voices in the fight against the stigma of mental illness and key NAMI-NYS priority issues including incorporating families in the recovery process, mental health housing, mental health parity and criminal justice reform.

Join us in celebrating their work and thanking them for their commitment to creating a more mentally healthy New York State.

Leader of Mental Health Awareness Award: Mauro Ranallo

NAMI-NYS is thrilled to recognize the commitment of [Mauro Ranallo](#) to raising awareness of what it means to live with a mental illness. Since 2007, Mauro has been a part of the CBS Broadcasting family as Lead Announcer for the Strikeforce MMA promotion, and in 2012, was chosen as the play-by-play announcer for Championship Boxing on Showtime. The next year, Mauro's wit and booming voice earned him the Boxing Announcer of the Year Award from Yahoo sports. Mauro has also made history as the only sports broadcaster ever to call every major combat sport on national television: Boxing, Kickboxing, MMA, and Professional Wrestling.

Mauro has bi-polar disorder and is the subject of the Showtime documentary [Bipolar Rock "N" Roller](#), which is one of the most honest and gripping films ever made on the experience of living with a serious mental illness. Since the film's release in the Spring of 2018, Mauro has continued to be a leading voice on mental health awareness and will be expanding these efforts through more media, including the upcoming *Stigma Smasher* comic books.

Leader of Mental Health Awareness Award: Edward Hallowell, MD

Dr. Edward "Ned" Hallowell is one of the foremost experts on ADHD. He is the co-author of *Driven to Distraction*, and *Answers to Distraction*, which have sold more than a million copies. Dr. Hallowell also discusses his own struggles with ADHD as well as how mental illness has impacted his family in his new memoir, *Because I Come From A Crazy Family The Making of a Psychiatrist*. It chronicles the often strange story of a childhood marked by what he calls the "WASP triad" of alcoholism, mental illness, and politeness, and explores the wild wish, surging beneath his incredible ambition, that he could have saved his own family of drunk, crazy, and well-intentioned eccentrics, and himself.

Dr. Hallowell is also the host of *DISTRACTION* a weekly podcast series created to explore how we are driven to distraction and offers coping strategies to turn modern problems into new-found strengths.

Leader of Mental Health Awareness Award: Toni Lasicki, JD

Toni Lasicki is the executive director of the Association for Community Living. Housing with wrap-around mental health services has long been NAMI-NYS's leading advocacy issue and this award acknowledges Toni's work as New York's leading crusader for awareness about the importance of mental health housing. In late 2016, Toni launched the Bring It Home-Better Funding for Better Care campaign. Bring It Home is a coalition of community-based mental health housing providers, mental health advocates, faith leaders, and consumers and their families, urging New York State to adequately fund community-based housing programs for individuals with

psychiatric disabilities. Bring It Home has raised increased awareness of why mental health housing is crucial to recovery.

Parity@10 Award: United States Representative Paul Tonko

Congressman Paul Tonko (NY-20) has long been a champion in advocating for mental health parity. During his service in the New York State Assembly, Congressman Tonko was the sponsor and a passionate advocate for Timothy's Law, the country's first parity law. Congressman Tonko has continued to be a leading mental health champion in Washington where he is fighting for tougher parity, mental health housing and investments in NIMH. In the Summer of 2017, during the fight to keep the Affordable Care Act, Congressman Tonko recorded an informational video with NAMI-NYS to discuss the importance of the ACA to mental health care. Congressman Tonko has also been a guest on the NAMI-NYS produced TV show, *Mental Health Now*.

Parity@10 Award: Tom O'Clair

Tom O'Clair's family's experience in struggling to find mental health services for his son Timothy that would accept his insurance inspired New York's parity law. Tom and his family are the ultimate example of how NAMI-NYS families use their own painful and in Tom's case, tragic, experience to help others. Tom continues to help individuals and families impacted by mental illness every day in his role as an advocacy specialist for the New York State Office of Mental Health.

Parity@10 Award: Andrew Malekoff

Andrew Malekoff, Executive Director of the North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center in Long Island, has been a leader of raising awareness of the parity issues and obstacles people are facing to get the mental health recovery services they desperately need. In December of 2017, North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center released the *Project Access Report* which chronicled just how difficult it is for Long Islanders to access mental health services which are covered by insurance providers.

Parity@10 Award: Karla Lopez

This award recognizes the tremendous work Karla Lopez is undertaking to ensure New Yorkers are aware of their Parity rights, During Karla's time at the Legal Action Center, she was the initial leader of New York State's Parity@10 campaign. Karla is now at the Community Service Society where she will have a more hands-on role overseeing parity implementation by leading new mental health and substance use disorder health insurance ombuds program network

Media Award: Alisa Roth

This year's Media Award acknowledges the extraordinary efforts of Alisa Roth in revealing one of the greatest tragedies of our time: the criminalization of mental illness. Alisa is the author of the acclaimed book *Insane: America's Criminal Treatment of Mental Illness*. The book is an urgent exposé of the mental health crisis in our courts, jails, and prisons. Alisa's reporting goes

deep inside the criminal justice system to reveal how America's tough-on-crime policies have transformed it into a warehouse for people with mental illness, one where prisoners are denied proper treatment, abused, and punished in ways that make them sicker.

Excellence in Psychiatric Research Award-Ragy Girgis, MD

Ragy Girgis, MD, is the Director of the Center of Prevention and Evaluation: COPE at the New York State Psychiatric Institute. He also serves as an Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. Under Dr. Girgis' leadership, COPE is providing a setting for the evaluation and treatment of *prodromal symptoms*. He recently published the landmark study *A Longitudinal Study of Violent Behavior in a Psychosis-Risk Cohort*. Dr. Girgis is the previous recipient of the National Institutes of Health's Clinical and Translational Science Award and has received numerous government and private grants to investigate psychosis and schizophrenia.

NAMI Exemplary Psychiatrist Award-Tarun Kumar, MD

We are thrilled to be joined by and acknowledge the tremendous work of Tarun Kumar, MD, one of the recipients of the 2018 NAMI Exemplary Psychiatrist Award. The Exemplary Psychiatrist Awards program allows NAMI members, NAMI State Organizations and NAMI Affiliates throughout the country to honor the exceptional contributions that many psychiatrists make to improve the lives of people living with mental health conditions. NAMI Syracuse nominated Dr. Kumar both for the extraordinary care he provides patients at the Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program at St. Joseph's hospital in Syracuse as well as his commitment as serving a partner and a resource to the affiliate. NAMI Syracuse President, Marla Byrnes, says that Dr. Kumar's support has been invaluable to the affiliate.

Criminal Justice Award: The Honorable Matthew D'Emic, Administrative Judge, 2nd Judicial District

NAMI-NYS is thrilled to present our 2018 Criminal Justice Award to the Honorable Matthew J. D'Emic, Administrative Judge, 2nd Judicial District in Brooklyn. Judge D'Emic presides over the King's County Mental Health Court and has been a true advocate for connecting those with a mental illness with appropriate recovery oriented services. Judge D'Emic is constantly striving to identify ways that criminal justice initiatives such as mental health courts can help further eliminate the stigma attached to mental illness and creating a society where we treat persons suffering from mental illness like we do those suffering from physical illness - with kindness.

Multicultural Award: Rev. Kyndra Frazier, LMSW, M.Div

This year's Multicultural Award will be presented to Rev. Kyndra Frazier, LMSW, M.Div, in celebration of her leadership of the HOPE (Healing On Purpose and Evolving) Center. The HOPE Center is the manifestation of Senior Pastor Michael A. Walrond's vision, to effectively support the vast mental health needs of the parishioners of First Corinthian Baptist Church and the Harlem community at large.

The center seeks to minimize the stigma shrouded around communities of color when seeking mental health services. It prides itself in having licensed clinicians who utilize evidenced based therapeutic modalities to support a variety of daily living challenges ranging from depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, trauma, sexual abuse and domestic violence, as well as bereavement and marriage/family guidance.

Max Gabriel Veterans Mental Health Award: New York State Senator Robert Ortt

This award, named in memory of NAMI-NYS's longtime Veterans Chair, will be presented to New York State Senator Ortt, chair of the Senate Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Committee. Senator Ortt enlisted in the New York Army National Guard in October 2001 in direct response to the attacks on September 11th. He is a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, where he served from March 2008 until December of the same year. His mission was to serve as a combat mentor/advisor to the Afghan National Police in Kandahar City, the second largest city in Afghanistan. He is the recipient of the Bronze Star, the Army Commendation Medal, the Afghan Campaign Medal and the Combat Infantryman's Badge in recognition of his service.

Since entering public office, Senator Ortt has been a constant champion fighting for mental health services for veterans and military family members. He is responsible for sustaining funding for the Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer Support Program, which is featured on this year's military family track.

Lewis Opler Memorial Award: Lisa Dixon, MD, MPH

This year's conference will be bittersweet as it will be the first in more than 30 years not to include Dr. Lew Opler, who passed away earlier this year. To honor Dr. Opler's memory and commitment to NAMI-NYS, we have created the Dr. Lewis Opler Memorial Award, which will be presented to psychiatric providers who share Dr. Opler's dedication to partnering with NAMI-NYS and/or our affiliates.

There is no better candidate to receive this award than Lisa Dixon, MD, MPH, Director of the Center for Practice Innovations at the New York State Psychiatric Institute. Dr. Dixon's work on the importance of engaging families and exposing the struggles of care-givers is truly legendary, as is her consistent support of NAMI, NAMI-NYS and NAMI NYC-Metro. She headed the research study that led to the Family-to-Family program being deemed an evidence based practice by SAMHSA. She has also been a constant source of support and guidance to NAMI-NYS on a myriad of issues. We are privileged to thank Dr. Dixon for her constant friendship and recognize her devotion to NAMI-NYS and our members.

Muriel Shepherd Award: Roy Neville

The Muriel Shepherd Award is the highest honor NAMI-NYS can present to one of our members. This year's award celebrates Roy Neville's decades long distinguished service to both NAMI Schenectady and NAMI-NYS. Roy served as the president of NAMI-NYS along with his long-time presidency of NAMI Schenectady, from which he retired earlier this year. For many years Roy published the monthly NAMI Schenectady Newsletter, which contained information on local and national happenings along with Roy's always insightful commentary on the news of the day. Roy continues to work tirelessly to improve the lives of individuals with a mental illness organizing summer outings to baseball games, concerts, hiking trips and the affiliate's annual barbeque for residents in mental health facilities. Roy also continues to educate and support families and caretakers throughout the Capital Region. Finally, NAMI-NYS can

always count on Roy to project his advocacy voice. Earlier this year, he spoke at a rally on the Capitol steps urging for increased funding for mental health housing.

Signature Program Award: Ann Canastra

NAMI-NYS is proud to present this year's Signature Program Award to Ann Canastra of NAMI Syracuse. Ann is currently a NAMI-NYS board member and a former board member for NAMI Syracuse. She now volunteers as a consultant for the affiliate, responsible for overseeing their Signature Programs. Ann has completed numerous state trainings as both a Family-to-Family and Homefront trainer. She is also a dedicated therapist and a strong advocate for consumers and families. Ann is also working to strengthen the relationships between NAMI-NYS and organizations that support veterans and military families.

Young Leader Award: Zak Sandler

This year's Young Leader Award recognizes the talents, and one of the most unique voices of the NAMI-NYS Young Adult Network, Zak Sandler. Zak is using his vast talents to help raise awareness of the realities of living with a mental illness. Zak plays piano on Broadway for WICKED, and has played on Broadway for MOTOWN and THE COLOR PURPLE. He was a composer at the Johnny Mercer Songwriters Project at Northwestern, and won the Fenno Heath Award for writing a new Yale song. His work has appeared at Lincoln Center, Joe's Pub, and Signature Theater in Washington DC. He has the stage rights to create a musical adaptation of the dystopian young adult novel, THE CITY OF EMBER, along with Adele Powers and Ali Keller. Zak's and Adele's previous show, ANTHEM, ran at the 2014 New York Fringe Festival and at the Chicago Musical Theater Festival.

His newest musical, INSIDE MY HEAD, about a young man confronting a mental condition that drives both his creativity and his psychosis, will be presented at NY Theatre Barn in Fall 2018. He is also creating a docu-series that highlights the link between creativity and mental conditions, called "Insanely Talented." Zak is an avid speaker about his own bipolar disorder, having presented at the 2017 NAMI National Convention in Washington, D.C. and at the 2017 NAMI New York State Education Conference in Albany. He believes that being open about his own condition is the best way to destigmatize it.

Affiliate of the Year: NAMI Buffalo and Erie County

NAMI-NYS is proud to present the 2018 Affiliate of the Year Award to NAMI Buffalo and Erie County in honor of the tremendous work they are doing to support individuals and families in the city of Buffalo and throughout Western NY as well as consistently projecting an impactful advocacy voice. NAMI Buffalo and Erie County is finding innovative ways to communicate and educate the community including the publication of *The Mind Matters*, a practical guide to professional services in Erie and Niagara County, for use by families and professionals addressing the needs of people with serious mental illness as well as putting out their quarterly newsletter *Challenger*. They have demonstrated themselves to be a valuable community partner by consistently participating in Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) trainings for law enforcement professionals. They also collaborate with community agencies and hospitals across the region to improve treatment for mental illness and have become a go to source for speakers, for inservices, informational

meetings, and seminars in the community to educate about mental illness and eradicate the stigma of mental illness. The affiliate also organizes an annual holiday gift project which provides gifts for several hundred children and adolescents in mental health treatment and care facilities.

They also deliver a wide-range of NAMI Signature Programs including Family-to-Family, Family Support Group and NAMI Homefront.

Small Affiliate of the Year: NAMI Sullivan County, NY

NAMI Sullivan County, NY is a shining example of the tremendous impact a small affiliate can have on their community. For more than 35 years the affiliate has brought mental health education and support to a rural region of New York with a severe shortage of psychiatric services. Along with offering a plethora of NAMI Signature Programs including, In Our Own Voice, Family-to-Family and NAMI Connection, they also provide a *Sharing and Caring* Family Support Groups and a suicide bereavement support group.

They have also found new and unique ways to raise awareness of mental health issues, including producing the acclaimed production of the play *Every Brilliant Thing* throughout the region (NAMI-NYS is excited to feature a performance of the play at this weekend's conference) as well as contributing guest editorials to local publications and participating in many community events. They have also hosted their annual *Tee It Up for Mental Health Golf Tournament* for more than ten years. NAMI Sullivan County NY is also participant in the annual Ribbon Campaign. Perhaps most importantly, NAMI Sullivan County, NY can always be counted on when advocacy is needed and always attends our annual Legislative Action Day in large numbers.