2019 Education Conference
October 25-27 at the Albany Marriott

Building a Movement by
Learning Together,
Sharing Our Stories and
Strengthening Our Voice

Frank Shamrock
Stephan Wolfert
Matt Butler
Mauro Ranallo
David Dodell Feder
Ron Powers
Wil Wheaton

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Executive Director’s Message  By Wendy Burch

It’s been a busy Spring and Summer for NAMI-NYS and the NAMI affiliates in New York, as you’ll see from this edition of the NAMI-NYS newsletter.

Many NAMI-NYS members attended the national NAMI Convention in June where NAMI unveiled its 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, and as we update our own strategic plan, we were pleased to have the national headquarters produce such a simple yet comprehensive plan to use as a guide. We have already begun reaching out to our members and supporters for input, and our goal is to create a roadmap for the next few years that builds on so much of the progress we have made.

NAMI-NYS continues to increase its advocacy voice, and the efforts of our members throughout the state this year have increased awareness around mental health, what resources are available in the community and what services are still needed, as well as NAMI’s role in providing education and support through its programs and classes.

I’d like to recognize the members of the NAMI-NYS staff, who dedicate so much time and effort on outreach and advocacy, as well as support to the community, particularly the NAMI affiliates in New York. We want to serve as a resource, and I urge anyone looking for assistance to reach out to our staff. Christine, Jeanne, Matthew, Tina and Tammie demonstrate every day how committed they are to serving the NAMI-NYS mission and improving the lives of those living with a mental health condition and their families.

I continue to be impressed with the work of the NAMI affiliates in New York. Their staff and volunteers are tireless and routinely think outside the box. They also are wonderful about sharing ideas and collaborating to fulfill the NAMI mission. I noticed when compiling this newsletter edition that more than one affiliate has brought NAMI Sullivan’s Every Brilliant Thing, the one woman play performed by the affiliate’s executive director, Lori Schneider, to their areas. Last year, NAMI NYS featured the performance at the annual Education Conference, and so many recognized the impact it could have on the community. The annual Ribbon Awareness Campaign, first introduced by NAMI Westchester, continues to gain momentum throughout the state, and many affiliates are collaborating with their NAMIWalks events, as well as other fundraising and awareness activities. NAMI-NYS held a highly successful such event with Off The Mask in May, and we invite supporters and affiliates to become involved. We have several ways that our affiliates can share in our fundraising efforts, including in the proceeds for Off The Mask, as we plan for 2020.

I hope to see you at this year’s education conference, which is shaping up to be an outstanding event. Let’s keep the momentum going as we head into 2020. Hope starts with you!

Meet the Staff

Wendy Burch  
Executive Director

Jeanne Ryan  
Finance and Office Administrator

Matthew Shapiro  
Associate Director – Public Affairs

Tina Yun Lee  
Community Education and Outreach Manager

Tammie Paradis  
Affiliate Development Coordinator

Christine Rickeman  
Information and Resource Helpline Coordinator

Interns

Megan Knutson, who is a rising senior at Marist College, interned with NAMI-NYS at the end of her the spring semester. She worked on outreach initiatives and took part in legislative advocacy for the organization, primarily working on the HALT bill to limit solitary confinement.

Samantha Ivey interned with NAMI-NYS through the summer program coordinated by Girls Incorporated. Samantha worked on outreach projects during her internship and participated in community engagement activities. At the conclusion of her internship she produced a display/presentation as part of the Girls, Inc program. In the fall, she enters her senior year at Shenendehowa High School in Clifton Park, New York.
Greetings NAMI family,

I hope this newsletter finds you and your families in a place of recovery, strength and resilience. In 2019, NAMI NYS has done focused work on strengthening our organization through development, support and communication. Our board gives tremendous credit to our exceptionally passionate and dedicated staff for the two amazing events NAMI NYS has had so far this year. These events propelled our cause to new heights of awareness by bringing advocates, legislators and providers together in new and exciting ways. Building on our very successful legislative day and our Off The Mask fashion show, our organization has been invited to participate in shaping cutting edge legislation regarding hospital discharges and we have extended our reach into the community, creating new partnerships that expand access and awareness opportunities for our affiliates and members.

The work that NAMI NYS and our state affiliates do is always crucial but it is evident that now is a time for our voice to become stronger and more cohesive than ever before. As NAMI National’s acting CEO Angela Kimball states in her recent address to the National membership – “The reality is that in the U.S., it is easier to get a gun than it is to get mental health care. We need to flip the script and make sure all people get access to mental health care.”

During a time when negative messages are pervading the media, NAMI is pushing back with the truth and knowledge that recovery is possible and we will not allow our friends, family members and neighbors living with mental health conditions and neurobiological disorders to be scapegoated or used as pawns in politicized discussions. We know all too well that people with mental health conditions are more likely to be victims of violence in the community than perpetrators. This is backed up by research, and yet we continue to hear the same biased and uninformed opinions that degrade our families and set back progress that has been made.

NAMI’s challenging work is done by our courageous members with a vulnerability that combats misconceptions about what having a mental health condition means, and shows people the truth of the everyday lives of people and families living with and recovering from mental health conditions.

Thank you so much for what you do. We are looking forward to another year of progress, advocacy and community building and we look forward to seeing you all at our education conference where we will continue NAMI’s work to hold powerful people and companies accountable for their messages and policies, build the capacity of NY’s integrated mental health care system, and subsequently improve our own lives and the lives of our loved ones.

Social Media

Website: www.naminy.org  NAMINewYorkState  @NAMINEWYORK
The 2019 New York State Legislative Session concluded in June, and we are excited to share with you that the NAMI-NYS advocacy voice contributed to a major legislative victory and several positive advances.

The Non-Medical Switching bill, A2969/S2849, passed the Senate after once again passing the Assembly unanimously. Non-medical switching is when insurance providers discontinue covering a certain medication during a plan’s contract year. Any decisions regarding medication that are made for financial and not medical reasons pose a major barrier to person-centered care. Reforming this deceitful and dangerous practice has long been a priority for NAMI-NYS and something we have advocated on for several sessions and in multiple media outlets including on Capital Tonight.

The NAMI-NYS membership played a major role in this success. We want to thank all of you who made your voice heard during the session. NAMI-NYS members sent thousands of emails to NYS Legislators through our new Quorum software, including hundreds in the closing days of the session.

There were two other positive advancements from the end of session. Mental health housing remains one of NAMI-NYS’s leading priorities and Mental Health Chairs Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther and Senator David Carlucci passed a bill which would establish a temporary commission to assess the mental health housing issue, and make funding recommendations that could be considered in the context of next year’s state budget. The bill passed both houses unanimously.

The second positive development was that the long-acting injectable medical bill for which we have long advocated also passed the Senate.

Perhaps the most exciting development from this past session is the introduction of the first legislative bill constructed by NAMI-NYS. Towards the end of the session Senator Carlucci along with Health Chair, Senator Gustavo Rivera, held a special hearing on addressing suicide. As part of NAMI-NYS’s testimony, members Roy and Lucille Ettere told their story and detailed the system failures that contributed to the death of their daughter Nicole by suicide.

As Lucille explained in her testimony; “We have a daily void in our life. We request that you create a bill that will hold the hospitals accountable...Please consider calling it Nicole’s Law to help protect the mentally ill in all our communities and to prevent the loss of life by suicide...I want to collaborate with you, not to fill the void in my family, but to ensure Nicole’s experience will prevent other families from experiencing such a void, as no family should share such a loss. May we count on you to protect the most vulnerable of the mentally ill by establishing Nicole’s Law?”

We are grateful to Senator Carlucci for listening to our pleas and introducing a “Nicole’s Law” bill. The bill, S6629, is designed to improve person-centered care and enhance discharge planning for people who have been hospitalized due to a self-inflicted life-threatening injury (such as a suicide attempt, drug overdose or cutting). The bill would also provide more resources for their families. Also included in the bill is a measure that would improve communication for people who are disqualified from participating in a clinical trial due to a recent history of suicide attempts. Under the legislation, anyone disqualified for clinical trial because of a history of suicide must be provided with the Suicide Lifeline number along with another local resource such as a NAMI, MHA or AFSP affiliate.

The introduction of Nicole’s Law legislation demonstrates the impact NAMI-NYS members can have by telling their stories. We will continue to provide guidance and resources in order to help our members tell their stories effectively. The power of sharing our stories is a major theme of this year’s education conference. We are extremely grateful to the Ettere’s for using their tragedy as a means to try and help others. On the same day they testified at the hearing they also met with their Assemblymember Kevin Byrne and Senator Pete Harckham. We will be keeping you updated on the progress of Nicole’s Law.
While we are excited about the advancement made during the session, as is normally the case, the overall results were a bit of a mixed bag, and there are also disappointing elements to the session. Most disappointingly, the HALT bill to reform solitary confinement failed to be introduced on the floor, despite having enough votes for passage in both houses. Instead, the Governor and the legislative leadership reached an agreement to overhaul the use of solitary. These suggested reforms are not as far-reaching as those put forward by the advocacy coalition on this issue.

NAMI-NYS remained very active on this issue. Along with our own advocacy efforts, NAMI-NYS also helped organize a day to demonstrate the mental health perspective on this issue. During that advocacy day, NAMI-NYS Criminal Justice Committee Chair Jayette Lansbury spoke at a press conference to explain the impact solitary confinement has on entire families.

The session also found NAMI-NYS participating in several large-scale events which allowed us to interact with legislators. In February, we once again participated in the New York State Asian, Black and Puerto Rican Legislators Caucus weekend. NAMI-NYS was particularly active in a workshop focused on introducing mental health resources into multicultural and traditionally underserved communities. In May, NAMI-NYS had an exhibit table at the New York State Assembly’s annual Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day.

In July NAMI-NYS participated in the We Work for Health Summit and brought our advocacy voice to Washington D.C. NAMI-NYS met with the offices of Senators Schumer and Gillibrand as well as House Members Katko, Meng, Reed, Stefanik and Tonko. NAMI-NYS discussed several concerns regarding possible changes to Medicare (including measures that would hurt innovations such as utilizing an international price index and binding arbitration to set drug prices) and ensuring that out of pocket costs are limited under the program.

We also advocated for continued funding for Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers as well as discussing adapting a piece of Nicole’s Law on the federal level to ensure that clinical trials which receive federal funding would also provide resources for those disqualified due to a history of suicide.

The We Work for Health Summit also featured several workshops including one where NAMI’s Andrew Sperling participated. The highlight was a session on how as advocates we must cut through today’s divisive political climate to ensure our message is heard and resonates. This session featured former New York Congressman Joe Crowley and former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie. Governor Christie provided some excellent guidance based on what he thought the biggest mistake he sees advocates make. He said, “Don’t forget your expertise in advocacy. Let your passion inform your expertise, don’t let your passion mask your expertise.”

This is important advice as we as advocates are all experts in our own experiences, and we need to be able to use our expertise most effectively. NAMI-NYS looks forward to working with our advocates to ensure that we are using our expertise to increase access, improve services and save lives.
The 2019 NAMI-NYS Education Conference—Building a Movement by Learning Together, Sharing Our Stories and Strengthening Our Voice—will be taking place October 25-27 at the Albany Marriott. The conference will serve as a celebration of the NAMI-NYS community and our advocacy voice, as well as demonstrate the power of our stories and the importance of not only learning together, but from each other, in order to build a movement designed to end the discrimination that still surrounds people impacted by mental health issues and improve mental health services.

Once again, the NAMI-NYS Conference Committee has expanded and diversified the event’s agenda in order to provide attendees with education, inspiration and empowerment by featuring both national experts on the research and treatment of psychiatric disorders as well as NAMI-NYS members who will share their stories and experiences as experts in living with, or caring for, someone with a mental illness. Participants will also have the opportunity to learn the importance of their stories and how to effectively tell them in order to bring about positive change.

The highlight of the conference and the centerpiece for demonstrating the power of telling your story will be Friday night’s NAMI-NYS Honors Leaders of Mental Health Awareness dinner. NAMI-NYS is thrilled to welcome and recognize the commitment of actor Wil Wheaton (Stand by Me, Star Trek-The Next Generation, Big Bang Theory) who has become a leader of mental health awareness by sharing his experiences of living with depression and anxiety. We will also be celebrating Showtime Sports, who has provided a platform for sports personalities to tell their stories of mental health challenges through the acclaimed documentaries Bi-Polar Rock ‘N’ Roller and A Quiet Storm-The Ron Artest Story. Wil’s story and those told by Showtime Sports demonstrate that anyone can face serious mental health challenges, including media personalities and athletes, and the impact that can be had by telling these stories in order to help others realize they are not alone.

NAMI-NYS is also delighted welcome back 2018 Leader of Awareness honoree and the subject of Bi-Polar Rock ‘N’ Roller, Mauro Ranallo, to emcee this year’s dinner. Additional honorees will be announced shortly.

Friday’s emphasis on story telling will also be highlighted by a very special lunchtime plenary session featuring Stephan Wolfert giving a performance of his acclaimed one-person show Cry Havoc! This powerful show finds Mr. Wolfert, an army veteran, exploring his struggle with PTSD by intercutting his own memories with text borrowed from Shakespeare. As the New York Times detailed, “Decoupling those lines from their plays, Mr. Wolfert uses them to explore strength and duty, bravery and trauma, examining what it is to be in the military and what it is to carry that experience back into civilian life.” Following the performance, Mr. Wolfert will lead the audience in a discussion of the play and we will be presenting him with the 2019 NAMI-NYS Max Gabriel Veterans Mental Health Award.

Prior to Cry Havoc!, the afternoon plenary session will feature a Celebration of CIT in New York State which will highlight NAMI-NYS’s role in making New York State a leader in utilizing Crisis Intervention Teams and honor the multiple partners required to produce CIT programs. Among those honored will be New York State Senator David Carlucci, Chair of the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Committee. Don Kamin, PhD, Director of the Institute for Police, Mental Health & Community Collaboration and Tony Severoni of Sunovion along with a CIT trained officer and a family/consumer panel presenter, who will be announced shortly.

Friday will also see the introduction of a focus track exploring co-occurring psychiatric and addiction issues. This new track will coincide with Friday’s traditional focus tracks on children’s mental health issues, criminal justice issues and mental health among veterans and military families. All four focus-tracks will feature three workshops. Friday will also include two unique movie screenings and discussions. Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope will be screened followed by a discussion of adverse childhood experiences and trauma led by Tim Hathaway, executive director of Prevent Child Abuse New York State. Later in the afternoon the film Crazy will be screened followed by a discussion with producer Lise Zumwalt.

Saturday will include four exciting plenary sessions. The morning will begin with our annual update from NIMH; this year Dr. Nicholas Balderston will detail his work on using Trans Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) to treat Anxiety disorders. That will be followed by the presentation of the 2019 NAMI-NYS Excellence in Research Award. This year’s recipient, Dr. David Dodell-Feder of the University of Rochester, will explain his work aimed at addressing and improving social disconnects among people living with schizophrenia.

Saturday’s lunch session will feature an all-star panel discussing Taking the Steps Towards A More Effective Mental Health System. Panelists
include Pulitzer Prize winning author and 2017 NAMI-NYS Leader of Mental Health Awareness honoree Ron Powers, detailing the importance of ensuring mental health topics are discussed as part of the 2020 elections and Linda Salters, Director of Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America (SARDA), who will be explaining the movement to reclassify schizophrenia as a neurological disorder.

Saturday’s dinner session will be a powerful night of inspiration. First, legendary UFC champion and NAMI Ambassador Frank Shamrock will deliver a keynote speech on the meaning of courage. That will followed by a musical performance by 2017 NAMI-NYS Leader of Mental Health Awareness honoree, Matt Butler.

Saturday will also feature a variety of unique workshops. Along with sessions offering information on the latest treatment and wellness strategies, there will also be sessions that incorporate music, poetry and story-telling. Once again, the conference will focus on one of the leading issues blocking access to care: insurance parity. NAMI-NYS is excited to welcome Stephanie Campbell, Director of New York’s Community Health Access to Addiction and Mental Healthcare Project (CHAMP) program, to detail the program and explain what to do if your insurance coverage denies mental health coverage. Multicultural issues will also be explored including a Stonewall at 50 session which will detail the progress being made to address mental health in the LGBTQI community. Saturday’s diverse agenda will also include young adult and ZERO Suicide sessions.

Sunday will feature two concurrent sessions on how to tell your story. The first option will be a NAMI Smarts for Advocacy session which will provide instructions on how to effectively tell your story as an advocacy tool and feature how NAMI-NYS members are using their stories to bring about positive change. The second option will be a screening of the film Vicarious Resilience, followed by a discussion led by Eva Tenuto, of the TMI project. The conference will conclude with a Town Hall session.

This is shaping up as the most memorable conference ever produced by NAMI-NYS and we will be announcing several exciting additions in the coming weeks. Registration in now open, you can find a paper registration sheet in this issue of the Newsletter and you can register online by visiting www.naminys.org. We look forward to seeing you and learning together in October.

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**Conference Agenda Highlights**

**Friday, October 25th**
- NAMI-NYS Leaders of Mental Health Celebration. Honoring actor Wil Wheaton and Showtime Sports, emceed by Mauro Ranallo. Other honorees TBA
- Celebration of CIT in New York State
- Performance of Cry Havoc by Stephan Wolfert
- Screening of Crazy and discussion with the film’s producer Lise Zumwalt
- Screening of Resilience-The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope
- Focus Tracks on: Children’s Mental Health, Criminal Justice, Mental Health among Veterans and Military Families and Co-Occurring Disorders.

**Saturday, October 26th**
- Keynote address on the meaning of courage by UFC Legend & NAMI Ambassador Frank Shamrock.
- Presentation by 2019 NAMI-NYS Excellence in Research award recipient David Dodell-Feder, Ph.D. University of Rochester
- Taking the Next Steps panel discussion featuring Pulitzer Prize Winning author and journalist, Ron Powers, Linda Stalters from the Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America, additional panelist to be announced
- NIMH Update – Using TMS to Treat Anxiety – Nicolas Balderston, Ph.D
- Understanding NYS’s Mental Health Parity Law – Stephanie Campbell, Director of NYS Ombudsmen Program
- Storytelling Session and Full Performance by acclaimed musician Matt Butler
- Workshops on the latest research and treatment of psychiatric disorders
- Stonewall at 50 Exploring Addressing Mental Health in the LGBTQI Community
- Zero Suicide Sessions
- Wellness and Self-Care Sessions
- Workshops on how to most effectively tell your story and talk to the media

**Sunday, October 27th**
- Screening of Vicarious Resilience film followed by discussion led by Eva Tenuto, TMI Project
- How to Tell Your Story to Bring About Change
- Town Hall
New York was well represented at the 2019 NAMI National Convention in Seattle in June, including several members of the NAMI-NYS Board of Directors and staff.

The convention was packed with information. NAMI unveiled the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan to participants, and you can find the plan, which focuses on advocating for people getting the best possible care as early as possible, on the NAMI website.

One highlight of the convention was the awarding of the Richard T. Greer Advocacy Award to NAMI-NYS’s Associate Director, Public Affairs, Matthew Shapiro.

NAMI-NYS also participated on a panel at the Convention entitled Leading Your Organization: How the Standards of Excellence Maps the Way, with Executive Director Wendy Burch and NAMI Capital Region Board member Mary Beth Honsinger both serving on the panel. Sessions were broken out into areas of personal change, systems change and societal change, giving attendees a choice of focus when attending workshops.

Next year’s convention is scheduled for July 15-18th in Atlanta.
The Saratoga Warhorse Experience  By NAMI-NYS Executive Director Wendy Burch

I recently had the opportunity to participate in the Saratoga Warhorse program, an interactive experience that connects veterans and retired thoroughbred racehorses through a mutual healing and bonding process.

The Saratoga Warhorse program takes place over a 3 day period with an average class size of 5 participants. There are currently three locations for the program, one in South Carolina, one outside Baltimore, Maryland, and one in East Greenbush, New York, just over the river from Albany.

Rerun Farm in East Greenbush rescues retired racehorses and rehabilitates and re-socializes them to prepare them for adoption, and they partner with Saratoga Warhorse to assist in this process. These horses have been trained for one purpose, and when they can no longer race, they return to a world that they are ill-equipped to meet. Often these horses have experienced trauma, and they are initially unprepared to trust their new environment and the people in it.

The veterans who participate in Saratoga Warhorse share many of the same issues as the horses used in the program. They have to adjust to a new reality, often dealing with trauma incurred during their service. Trust can be difficult, and they can experience debilitating physiological symptoms as a result of post-traumatic stress, as well as other factors.

On the first day, I met with the Saratoga Warhorse staff and my fellow veterans participating in the program. Since SW covers the cost of travel, lodging and meals in addition to the program expenses, veterans from anywhere in the country can take advantage of the program, and in my group we had veterans from as far away as San Antonio, Texas. We shared experiences and got to know each other over dinner.

On the second day, we met at the farm and learned a little about equine behavior, which proved beneficial later on that afternoon. As we prepared to go into the round pen with the horses, we role played with our human helpers to become more familiar with the routine and possible reactions from our assigned horses.

Finally, one by one, each class participant entered the ring with his or her respective horse. Our wonderful trainer Tim stood outside and patiently directed us through the motions towards bonding with these magnificent animals. It is impossible to describe how moving it was to watch my fellow veterans form a connection with their horses. When it was my turn, I was at first apprehensive, as I hadn’t had much experience around horses, and these retired thoroughbreds can be intimidating. When Howie, my equine partner for the exercise, bowed his head and bonded with me, I was overwhelmed. It was a truly freeing experience.

The veterans help the horses just as much as the horses are helping the veterans. Once they are ready, they will go on to be adopted and start on second careers. Those careers can vary, from occupations like ranching, to show competitions, to simply being adopted as a companion for people who just enjoy riding.

Participating in the Saratoga Warhorse program was a truly rewarding experience. I would encourage any veterans who have struggled with re-acclimating to civilian life, are dealing with trauma or feel that the program would benefit them, to explore the possibility in taking part. You can visit their website at www.saratogawarhorse.org for more information.
A Call to Healing: Mental Illness and The Role of Faith Based Leaders
By Tina Lee, Community Education and Outreach Manager

Faith based leaders are often the first point of contact when individuals and families face mental health problems, traumatic events, or substance use disorders. In fact, in times of crisis, many will reach out to their trusted spiritual leaders before they connect with a mental health professional.

Faith based leaders can be significant assets to the overall health system by educating individuals and families about mental health, increasing awareness of mental health issues, and making it easier for people to seek help. With no surprise, community connectedness and support, like that found in faith-based and other neighborhood organizations, are also important to the long-term recovery of people living with mental illnesses.

Furthermore, faith communities may also face individuals who have thoughts of suicide; and faith leaders, who are equipped to better understand the warning signs and how to respond, can serve as an additional safety net and gatekeepers for those who struggle with suicide.

This important relationship between clinicians and the faith based community is critical in information dissemination and resources. The American Psychiatric Association recognized the importance of this relationship and formed The Mental Health and Faith Community Partnership in 2014, a collaboration between psychiatrists and clergy to strengthen the dialogue between the two disciplines, reduce stigma, promote mental health and wellness, and to relay best science and evidence based information among faith leaders and those in their faith community.

The Mental Health and Faith Community Partnership developed educational tools such as The Mental Health Guide for Faith Leader to help faith leaders increase their mental health literacy which can be downloaded at: https://www.appi.org/Mental_Health.

In response to the start of the conversation, NAMI-NYS along with our partners Albany Medical College and the Capital Region American Psychiatric Association will be hosting a free community event on Tuesday, September 24th, 2019 from 6:00 pm – 9:30 pm at the Jewish Community Center, Albany New York. The event will include a mental health fair, a movie screening of Extra Innings, concluding with a panel discussion moderated by NAMI-NYS Associate Director, Public Affairs Matthew Shapiro. Our panelists include: Albert Dabah, LCSW and Director/Producer of Extra Innings, Rabbi Deborah S. Gordon with Congregation Berith Sholom, and Father Thomas E. Konopka, LCSW with The Albany Consultation Center Roman Catholic Diocese.

Extra Innings is a coming of age story about a young man caught between pursuing his dream of playing baseball and staying devoted to his Syrian Jewish family that is impacted by mental illness. Seating is limited. For more information and to register, please visit our events page at www.naminys.org.
NIMH Outreach Partner Meeting

The annual NIMH Outreach Partner Meeting took place on July 31st-August 1st at the National Institutes of Health campus in Bethesda, Maryland. This year's meeting was bittersweet, as a few weeks prior it was announced that NIMH is refocusing their outreach efforts and will be discontinuing the Outreach Partner program. It has been NAMI-NYS’s honor to serve as the Outreach Partner for New York State and we will continue our relationship with NIMH beyond the end of the program in order to ensure our members are informed about the latest research developments as well as opportunities to participate in clinical trials.

While a cloud of sadness hung over the meeting, the rays of hope that research provides were still able to punch through once the presentations began. The final meeting turned out to be one of the most informative as it explored pressing topics such as best practices following a suicide attempt, diverting people with mental illness away from the criminal justice system, co-occurring disorders, and providing resources to traditionally underserved communities. Many of the presentations were especially beneficial to NAMI-NYS as they detailed issues we are working on. The knowledge gained at the meeting will allow us to refine our advocacy messages with the ability to point to research and successfully implement programs that validate many of the issues we are looking to advance. This is especially true in regards to New York’s newly introduced Nicole’s Law bill to improve discharge practices following a suicide attempt.

The meeting began with a presentation by NIMH Director, Dr. Joshua Gordon. Dr. Gordon began by detailing the updated vision and mission of the institute. He also explained how this is an exciting time for psychiatric research, and one of the reasons for this is a renewed interest in Congress on mental health issues. Dr. Gordon cited investments in the BRAIN initiative, increased research on Autism, concerns about the impact of social media on brain development, increased focus on the intersection of mental health and substance abuse (particularly opiates), pediatric mental health and suicide among veterans as examples of areas of interest among both houses of Congress. While Dr. Gordon did not state this, it is important to point out that this response by Congress demonstrates the importance of continuing to advocate for research investments.

Dr. Gordon also touched on the latest advances in coordinated specialty care and the developments with the monumental All of Us study. He emphasized the importance of people with psychiatric and co-occurring disorders to participate in the study, as they provide an important element to understanding overall health.

The highlight of the meeting from our perspective was the presentation by Dr. Michael Compton, the New York State Office of Mental Health Medical Director for Adult Services. Dr. Compton’s presentation, entitled Opening Doors to Recovery, discussed developing and testing a recovery-oriented model of community navigation for persons with serious mental illnesses and repeated hospitalizations and looked at the work he did while in Georgia and in partnership with NAMI Georgia. It was extremely encouraging to learn that some of Dr. Compton’s strategies are aligned with what NAMI-NYS is looking to achieve through Nicole’s Law and how Dr. Compton views NAMI as an important partner.

One of the aspects of his initiative that is very similar to what we are trying to create through Nicole’s Law is the use of what Dr. Compton calls Community Navigation Specialists (Navigators). The initiative utilized teams of three Navigators, a family member, a peer and a professional. The goal of the Navigators is to promote recovery and reduce recidivism by helping individuals and families navigate the mental health system and access services. This is very similar to NAMI-NYS’s goal of establishing family peer specialist offices in hospitals in order to provide resources and help connect people with services.

Navigators were also linked to police to assist them when coming into contact with people with mental illness. Using the Navigators aims to help with the fragmentation which exists within and across all of the human services sectors in the U.S., including mental health, medical, disability, housing, vocational, and criminal justice services. As we often discuss, the mental health-criminal justice fragmentation is especially problematic. Dr. Compton commented on how CIT has been one successful way to address the fractures of connectivity, however additional innovative, acceptable, and feasible pre-booking diversion approaches are needed, especially those accessible to all officers.
The **Opening Doors to Recovery** program developed a police–mental health linkage system which differs from other pre-booking jail diversion models (e.g., CIT), in that officers need not step outside of their usual professional role to assess someone’s mental health status. Instead, officers running a routine inquiry are invited to access information that might assist them. The way the mental health linkage systems worked is that Navigators would encourage people being discharged from hospitals to voluntarily sign-up to be a part of the system. If a police officer encounters someone who signed up, information would pop-up on the officer’s mobile data terminal (their in-car laptop) that would say the person has a mental illness and provides the officer with a direct number to a Navigator who would provide the officer with information about the person apprehended and what the most appropriate steps would be for that individual.

NAMI-NYS has been exploring various ways for police and first responders to better identify people with mental illness whom they may encounter in order to help divert those people away from jails and prisons. This linkage system is something that may be able to be replicated in New York. Following the presentation, NAMI-NYS’s Matthew Shapiro spoke with Dr. Compton to discuss some of the initiatives we are working on, and we look forward to continuing to develop a relationship with Dr. Compton and hopefully helping bring his innovations to New York.

Another especially relevant presentation was made by Dr. Lauren Weinstock of Brown University and Butler Hospital, on how to provide the most effective care during time of care transitions for people who have made a suicide attempt. Dr. Weinstock’s work is also looking to achieve many of the same goals as Nicole’s Law and provides a road-map to more comprehensive discharges from hospitals following a suicide attempt. Dr. Weinstock explained how “crisis stabilization, safety and a focus on rapid discharge are the critical components of the acute inpatient stay.” This model does not address the gaps in continuity of care across healthcare transitions for individuals at risk for suicide, and brief hospitalizations provide insufficient time to coordinate referrals and connect people to services.

To address the way hospitals handle vulnerable populations, Dr. Weinstock developed **Coping Long-Term with Active Suicide Program (CLASP)**. CLASP is designed to provide support across the transition from inpatient to outpatient treatment. It includes three in-person sessions before discharge (with specific focus on personal values and goals) and also incorporates one family meeting with an identified significant other (SO). CLASP culminates in six months of structured telephone “check-ins” with both the patient and the SO.

CLASP also utilizes “Treatment Advisers” which are similar to the Navigators detailed by Dr. Compton. Treatment Advisers differ from a psycho-therapist or a case manager. They are used to monitor those coming out of hospitals; facilitate values based problem solving; facilitate patient-SO interactions; to provide case management; and to provide specific psychotherapy interventions, as appropriate. Once again, this is a model similar to what NAMI-NYS is looking to establish to help advance recovery of people transitioning from hospitals into the community.

Dr. Weinstock also detailed her efforts to address the needs of those transitioning out of jail with the **Suicide Prevention Intervention for at-Risk Individuals in Transition (SPIRIT)** trial. SPIRIT views arrest and detention as acute stressors in an already vulnerable population; considers challenges in coordination of care for mental health and substance use problems between jail and the community; recognizes that individuals are returning to high risk environments marked by limited resources, social isolation, discrimination, violence, and instability; and aims to address the hopelessness and perceived sense of burdensomeness faced by many jail detainees.

Creating effective discharges from corrections settings is also a major concern for NAMI-NYS and it was encouraging to find a model that is addressing this need.

For this year’s partner sharing sessions, NAMI-NYS presented information on our **Off The Mask** event, which many partners found very intriguing. The partner sharing sessions also gave us an opportunity to learn from the success of other state NAMI initiatives.

While the Outreach Partner Program is coming to an end, NAMI-NYS is going to incorporate the information disseminated at this year’s meeting into our advocacy activities and work to ensure the legacy of the program will continue to guide us in creating a more mentally healthy New York State long after the program’s conclusion.
AFFILIATE NEWS

Westchester

Advocacy Town Hall

NAMI Westchester County held their annual Advocacy Town Hall on January 23. Matt Shapiro, Associate Director, Public Affairs for NAMI NYS, held an open discussion on the NAMI NYS legislature agenda. Michael Orth, Westchester County Commissioner of Department of Community Mental Health, spoke on the System of Care initiative for Westchester County.

NAMIWalks Kick Off was held on March 6 at the Westchester Arts. Marie Considine presented Kathy Pandekakes, CEO of Human Development Services Westchester, with the Community Spirit Award for their continued partnership with NAMI Westchester County, not only with the Walk, but with other events we hold throughout the year. We also had many individuals sign up to be team captains at that evening.

May was an extremely busy time honoring Mental Health Awareness month.

- Ribbons were on display throughout the County.
- The City of Mt. Vernon and Greenburgh displayed the NAMI Westchester County banner.
- The City of Yonkers held its Annual Ribbon Cutting Ceremony with Mayor Spano.
- George Latimer, Westchester County Executive, had a press conference where Sharon McCarthy, NAMI Westchester’s Executive Director, was invited to speak. The County also displayed the affiliate’s banner in their office building and placed it on their digital sign at the County Center in White Plains.
- New York Presbyterian Hospital, St. Vincent’s Hospital and J Hart Library in Shrub Oak sponsored In Our Own Voice presentations for the community.
- The sun came out and we held our 7th annual NAMIWalks – Westchester to an attendance of over 700 people. As of June 19, we met our goal of $175,000.
Advocacy Group:
Joe Glazer (Deputy Commissioner for the Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health), Matthew Shapiro (Associate Director of Public Affairs for NAMI NYS), Robert Laitman (NAMI Westchester Advocacy Chair), Sharon McCarthy (NAMI Westchester Executive Director and Louise Ellis (NAMI Westchester Board President) and Michale Otho, (Commissioner for Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health.

Yonkers Recognition:
Yonker’s Mayor Spano, Sharon McCarthy (ED for NAMI Westchester) and Marie Considine (Director of Development for NAMI Westchester)

KOE Event:
Top Row: Westchester County Executive George Latimer, Kathy Pandekakes with HDSW, NAMI Westchester President Louise Ellis, Mary O’Neil Schlageter, Daniele Vazquez, Marie Considine, Robert Laitman

County Press Conference:
George Latiman, Westchester County Executive, Sharon McCarthy (ED NAMI Westchester), Michael Otho (Commissioner Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health
UNITES
By David Sills, Co-President, NAMI Queens/Nassau

UNITES, NAMI Queens/Nassau’s socialization program, got off to a great start with a well-attended picnic at a local park last August. In addition to the delicious food, we had sports activities, arts activities, and plenty of time to sit and chat.

During the year, we were involved in arts activities, karaoke sessions, creative writing, bowling, tennis, movie nights, a Thanksgiving feast, a Halloween party, a Holiday party in December, dinner and fun at Dave and Buster’s game venue, and many other exciting events. UNITES is about connection, making friends and having fun for people from Nassau and Queens who are struggling with a mental health condition.

The goal of UNITES is to help alleviate the feelings of isolation and loneliness that members experience. Many of our members have met new people and have begun to develop friendships. Most feel free to be themselves because of shared experiences and mutual understanding.

For information, visit the NAMI Queens/Nassau affiliate website: namiqn.org or call (516) 326-0797.

NAMI Ending the Silence in Queens and Nassau
By David Sills, Co-President, NAMI Queens/Nassau and Ending the Silence, Jake Meehan, Peer/Instructor

Ending the Silence is NAMI’s evidence-based signature program for middle and high school classrooms and auditoriums. NAMI Queens/Nassau has been very busy this year presenting to large and small groups throughout Nassau and Queens.

The program features first-hand reflections of experiences from a person living with a mental health condition, as well as from an adult facilitator. The program stresses recognizing the signs of mental health conditions and suicide warning signs and what to do if a person recognizes this in him/herself or a friend or classmate.

Helpline/crisis pocket cards and a school-specific trusted adult list are given to each student.

The program is also geared to teachers, staff, and parents.

For information, visit the NAMI Queens/Nassau affiliate website: namiqn.org or call (516) 326-0797.
NAMI Queens/Nassau BeachFest 2019

David Sill, Senator Brooks and Ellen Ritz

Members of Northwell Zucker Hillside and NAMI Queens/Nassau Board members

Angela Babaev and Robert Keller

Team

Team Options

One of the many NAMI Queens/Nassau Family-to-Family classes
NAMI Capital Region Outreach Activities

NAMI Capital Region participated in many outreach activities throughout the spring and summer.

NAMI Capital Region once again participated in the annual Dustin Mele Memorial Concert. The affiliate partnered with NAMI-NYS and had an information and resource table at the event. Following the event Dustin’s father and sister, Joe and Lindsay Mele, presented NAMI-NYS and NAMI Capital Region with very generous donations from the proceeds from the event.

NAMI Capital Region again collaborated with NAMI-NYS to present a “Lunch & Learn” at Honest Weight, the area’s local food co-op. Tina Lee, NAMI-NYS Community Education and Outreach Manager and Shane Shulz, NAMI Capital Region Board of Directors member spoke during May is Mental Health Awareness Month with a goal of increasing mental health literacy in the community. Deanna Beyer, Education Coordinator at Honest Weight, recognized the importance of mental health among their employees as well as the community they serve. Honest Weight also participated in the ribbon awareness campaign by tying NAMI-NYS Ribbons at each of the checkout registers as well as posting flyers in their store about NAMI Capital Region’s programs and supports. Robin Cole, President of NAMI Capital Region and Pamela Slotsky, former Capital Region Board member, tabled and offered resources at the event.

Also, in commemoration of Mental Health Awareness Month, on May 15th NAMI Capital Region President Robin Cole, Vice President Paul McGrevey and Board member Shane Schulz attended the Town of East Greenbush board meeting for the proclamation of May 2019 being Mental Health Awareness and Trauma Informed Care Month.

NAMI Capital Region also spent an evening presenting FaithNet – Bridges of Hope to members of St Pius-X congregation. Bridges of Hope presents ideas for how communities of faith can reach out to, include and support individuals living with a mental health condition and their families. The affiliate was so grateful to St Pius for being such a caring and compassionate congregation. Mary Beth Honsinger, Robin Cole, Mary Crowley and Susan Ungerer all dedicated their time and dedication to this event.

On May 20th and May 21st members of NAMI Capital Region presented 5 presentations of Ending the Silence at Saratoga Springs High School to Holly K. Louis’s Health Education Class. Presenters included Mandee Guzzo, Sheri Valenti, Leia Nardacci and Robin Cole.
On June 1st, Mary Beth Honsinger and Christine Rickeman attended the Capital Region West Indian Association’s “Just for The Health of It,” a Health and Wellness Festival held at Jennings Landing in Albany. It was a great day of music, wellness and sharing.

And on June 8th Christine and Mary Beth enjoyed a day at the Health and Wellness Expo//Black and Latino Gay Pride at Washington Park in Albany. The event drew a great crowd with a lot of interest in what NAMI offers.

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**Delaware and Otsego**

**NAMI Delaware and Otsego Counties is proud to share an overview of the past year’s activities**

By Shari Stallone

The affiliate considers the completion of the merger of the NAMI Delaware County and NAMI Otsego County affiliates as a key accomplishment. The affiliate formed a combined Steering Committee and priority actions were identified, with public awareness and advocacy the major focus.

NAMI members attended numerous community events in both counties, where tables with information were set up and NAMI Delaware & Otsego Counties members were available to speak with attendees. Public Awareness and Education Outreach events included: Stamford Veterans Events; Children’s Mental Health Awareness Fair in Oneonta; the Otsego County Public Health Fair at the Foothills Theatre; the BOCES Outreach and Transitions Fair in Oneonta; the Delaware Mental Health Fair in Delhi, and the Sportsman’s Resource event at the Delaware County Fairgrounds.

NAMI Delaware & Otsego Counties’ advocates participated in ongoing community committees: Delaware County Suicide Prevention Network; the Margaretville Hospital Wellness Committee; the Otsego County Community Services Board; and the Delaware County Community Services Board.

A subcommittee of NAMI Delaware & Otsego Counties, the Mental Health Justice Project, has convened meetings with the Delaware County Sheriff and his senior officers to discuss ways of improving training for corrections officers, road patrol deputies, and first responders who may need to respond to situations with a mental health component. In addition, the Justice Project is exploring collaborative enhancement of inmate and family supports, and post-release follow up services.

Finally, NAMI Delaware & Otsego Counties established a support group in each county, and plan a Family to Family Education Program to start on September 5th. Three NAMI members have completed the NAMI Basics training, and this, too, will be offered locally.

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**Columbia**

**Columbia County Family to Family**

NAMI Columbia County held a Family to Family class this summer for 8 participants. Several of the participants are shown above. In addition, NAMI Columbia County has had educational meetings, the most recent being a presentation on NYS CHAMP – a program that helps people with mental health issues and/or addiction get the insurance assistance they deserve. NAMI Columbia County also enjoyed a summer picnic in July at Nutten Hook on the Hudson River.
NYC Metro

Walk Day was awesome! Our walkers brought the sun, spirit, and stomped out the stigma!

On May 11th, NAMI Walks NYC Metro celebrated our 13th anniversary. Thousands of caring and compassionate walkers from across the tri-state area gathered at the South Street Seaport Promenade to cross the Brooklyn Bridge, with co-hosts, Alex Boniello, star of Dear Evan Hansen, and Patti Murin, star of Frozen on Broadway. Thanks to the tremendous support and outreach from our NAMI-NYC Walkers, we surpassed the $650,000 goal! This year, we added the Wall of Hope—people wrote messages about their experience with mental illness and why NAMI NYC Metro is important to them. The Wall of Hope is mounted in our office and it’s the perfect reminder of the rich community that surrounds us. This was our most successful Walk yet and we couldn’t have asked for anything better!

5th Annual NAMI C.A.R.E.S. Fair

Five years ago, in recognition of Bebe Campbell Moore Minority Mental Health Month, we started our community mental health fair—NAMI C.A.R.E.S. NAMI C.A.R.E.S. highlights mental health issues which specifically face communities of color. Through storytelling and presentations, we show you help is available, and recovery for people living with mental health challenges is possible. We connect you to local resources that specialize in serving diverse populations and are available in your neighborhood.

Each year, we look for neighborhood organizations to partner with. This deepens our connection to these neighborhoods and allows us to introduce our audience to those organizations who they may not know. There are medical and mental health screenings, presentations on information relevant to the neighborhood community, family-friendly activities, and of course, free swag. This year we’re going to Harlem to work in partnership with the Emma L. Bowen Community Service Center.

Workshops include: In Our Own Voice; Self-Care and Self-Compassion; and Mothers of Color and Their Mental Health—Advocating for Ourselves.

Our Ambassador program is off to a roaring start!

In March 2019, we launched the NAMI NYC Metro Advocacy Ambassador program. Our Ambassador program provides families and individuals impacted by mental illness with the skills and training needed to meet with elected officials and create change in their communities. Since the launch, over 50 people have joined the program and applications are rolling in every day. Ambassadors participate in a training series that teaches best practices for meeting with elected officials and building the relationships required to achieve policy wins. Ambassadors have started using their new skills and are meeting their elected officials and building important relationships. One Ambassador went to Albany and shared his story with lawmakers during a suicide prevention hearing. We know from participating in NAMI NYS’s Advocacy Day what a difference these meetings make. By developing our program, we are making sure elected officials in NYC hear directly from people impacted by mental health.
For Like Minds
By Katherine Ponte, NAMI NYC Metro Board Member

I had been living with severe bipolar I disorder with psychosis, including suicidal depression, three involuntary hospitalizations and an arrest. As I stepped out of isolation, I reengaged with my community. NAMI played an important role in my recovery journey. My involvement with NAMI began as a Peer-to-Peer and Family-to-Family class participant. I eventually became a Board Member of NAMI NYC. I’ve been moved by how warmly NAMI NYC accepted me and my role as a very active board member. They have helped me build self-confidence and validated my contributions to the mental health community. Over the past six months, I’ve also been sharing my lived experience with the broader NAMI community as a regular contributor to the NAMI blog. I’ve now been in recovery for three years. Through my recovery experiences, especially my involvement with NAMI, I have realized the tremendous impact of peer support and a family approach to mental illness.

Inspired by my recovery journey and my spouse’s commitment to my recovery, I started ForLikeMinds.com, an online community for people affected by mental illness. We are especially interested in helping families through online peer support as a value complement to person-to-person peer support. We feel the greatest contribution we can make to people living with mental illness is to bring families closer together. On our website, supporters can connect with other supporters caring for someone in like circumstances. For example, the parent of a child with bipolar can connect with other parents caring for a child with bipolar. A NAMI affiliate can also create a group for its members on our platform. Through ForLikeMinds.com, I am sharing my hope through the power of peer support, which was so critical to my recovery. I will never be cured of bipolar, but now I am living a fuller and more meaningful life than before my diagnosis. My family and I have a lot of hope to share.

You can sign up at ForLikeMinds.com. It’s free, and takes five minutes to sign up, find a group, or create a group. You can read our Family Newsletter here: https://bit.ly/2WAalsN. Please join ForLikeMinds.com to find and share hope.

New Family Support Programs at NAMI NYC Metro

Based on the success of our Parent Match program, we have launched our latest phone-based support program. Family Match provides one-on-one emotional support from one family member to another by telephone. This is for anyone who is a sibling, partner, spouse, or daughter or son of someone with a mental illness.

NAMI Family & Friends is our newest NAMI signature program. This 90-minute seminar is an introduction to NAMI NYC Metro, and an overview of the NAMI way: how we educate and support families so they in turn are better able to advocate and support their relative or loved one. This short program is a great way to introduce people to the tremendous benefits of peer-support through NAMI.

Partners for Suicide Prevention Joins NAMI Rochester

NAMI Rochester is thrilled to announce the addition of Partners for Suicide Prevention (P4SP) to the catalog of programs offered to the community. Partners for Suicide Prevention is a community coalition that promotes awareness and use of resources for all people of Monroe County to build hope and resilience. This group is committed to address suicide prevention across the lifespan and diverse populations, promote awareness of suicide as a public health concern and be a centralized hub of resources that exist throughout Monroe County.

P4SP formed in 2016 when a group of concerned citizens gathered to address the rising number of reported attempts and lives lost to suicide in Monroe County. Since then, P4SP has partnered with leading organizations dedicated to providing mental health and addiction services in our community.

Founding P4SP Members include: Monroe County Office of Mental Health, 211/Lifeline, Mental Health Association, Stop the Stigma ROC, East House, Delphi Rise, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention WNY, Lifespan and Hillside Family of Agencies. All have joined forces with NAMI Rochester to shed light on this crisis and prevent future tragedies.

On September 13th, P4SP will host a Means Reduction Conference to inform the public on means reduction efforts in suicide prevention, discuss current laws and advocacy initiatives and share general information on suicide prevention. To learn more and get involved, visit www.namiroc.org.

For more information on Partners for Suicide Prevention please call the NAMI Rochester office at (585)423-1593 or visit www-suicidepreventioncoalition.org.
Cayuga

**Every Brilliant Thing**

NAMI Cayuga County brought NAMI Sullivan County’s Executive Director Lori Schneider to their locale where Lori presented her one act play, *Every Brilliant Thing* at the Cayuga Community College. The play was well received by the community members who attended. NAMI Cayuga County’s board member, Teri Misiaszek, associate professor and chair of the criminal justice curriculum and a few of her Criminal Justice Club members facilitated the use of the college as a venue and helped with the set-up, registration process and clean up after the event. Picture taken at the Wasilenko residence in the gardens.

Christopher O'Sullivan, technical advisor, NAMI Sullivan County, Lori Schneider, Executive Director for NAMI Sullivan County, Bart & Terri Wasilenko, Co-Founders/Presidents for NAMI Cayuga County.

NAMI Cayuga County completed its first NAMI Basics class on July 1st at Cayuga Counseling Services in Auburn. Graduates are pictured with their families before graduation and a celebration followed.

Cayuga News Briefs

1. On April 30th, Auburn’s newspaper reporter from *The Citizen*, Megan Erhart, interviewed NAMI Cayuga County’s co-presidents, Bart & Terri Wasilenko, regarding the planned fundraising one act play entitled *Every Brilliant Thing*. Also discussed was the need for increased awareness and education for the public who has little or no knowledge of the devastating effects of stigma surrounding mental illness. The article was featured in *The Citizen’s Lake Life* Section.

2. In keeping with May is Mental Health Awareness Month, NAMI Cayuga County started the month off participating in NAMI NYS’s Ribbon Campaign by hanging NAMI ribbons in various parts of Cayuga County. Auburn’s City Hall had one ribbon on each pillar at the entrance. Auburn’s Mayor, Michael Quill and the city council members issued a proclamation declaring May as Mental Health Awareness month. NAMI Cayuga Co.’s co-presidents, Bart and Terri Wasilenko, were there to accept the proclamation. Bart took the opportunity to explain to the chamber filled with people the significance of mental health awareness and the need to erase the stigma associated with mental illness.

3. On May 1st, NAMI Cayuga County’s co-presidents Bart and Terri Wasilenko were invited to an interview at the local TV Channel 9 station. They were featured on the channels’ Bridge Street segment. This segment highlights positive, human related activities that are occurring in Syracuse and the surrounding areas. The co-presidents gifted the Channel 9 news station with a NAMI NYS bow and asked them to display it as a participation in the NAMI NYS’s Ribbon Campaign during the month of May.
NAMI Schenectady participated heavily in Mental Health Awareness Month activities in May. Kudos to all participants!

**Mental Health Awareness Health Fair**

On Monday May 6th Ann Ashley and friend Linda creatively dressed a stuffed bear in a colorful “what is a NAMI” t-shirt and made him their mascot and focal point of their NAMI Schenectady information table at Schenectady Public School District’s second annual mental health wellness fair, held at the Mont Pleasant Middle School. While some NAMI literature made its way into the hands of attendees, many of the youngsters went for the Fruit Snacks, as well as the “squeezable” brains, courtesy of NAMI NYS. The more serious of attendees went for the pamphlets and cards with information about Suicide Prevention. Also popular were the colorful daily affirmation cards from OMH. Everything but the bear was free for the taking!

**NISKA-Day**

This year’s NISKA-Day on May 18th was super warm and sunny. Once again, “brains” were a big hit. We fervently hope that NAMI literature, about NAMI Signature Programs, and topics about various serious mental illnesses and related concerns, like staying healthy, and fighting stigma, made it into the hands of people who will greatly benefit from it.

**Schenectady County Office of Community Services Stories of Recovery**

NAMI Schenectady and Mohawk Opportunities helped the Schenectady County Office of Community Services by supplying refreshments for its Stories of Recovery program held at the McChesney Room of the Karen B. Johnson Public Library on Clinton Street on May 23rd.

Over 60 people attended the program, including several peers who were especially affected by the personal testimony of Sara Feldman, a young woman in recovery who just years ago nearly succeeded at suicide.

Her recovery from a deadly overdose she attributes to the persistent and compassionate care given to her while in intensive care by a dedicated, non-judgmental team of nurses, and her new lease on life she attributes to her experience with a peer support program that she became involved in out of Troy, called The Empowerment Exchange.

Now thriving, Feldman has just completed nurses’ training, and has found herself a “niche” in performing as a stand-up comedienne. As an active member of the Empowerment Exchange organization, she went on to describe its impact on her life.

In addition to the main speaker, an Ellis Hospital spokesperson discussed the many types of treatment and medication advances that have been made in recent days, and their eventual implementation through Ellis Medicine, while a third presenter discussed the mindfulness component of self-care that has been making significant impacts upon the lives of clinicians, staff and clients alike in both mental health and substance abuse treatment arenas.

**And Plans for the Summer**

One of the most fun things we try to do each summer is to share a meal at Jumpin’ Jacks in Scotia with people in recovery, followed by a free concert at adjacent Freedom Park.

This year we had set two dates.

- On July 24th, rock band The Refrigerators “partied” under the Freedom Park amphitheater.
- We also sponsored people on August 21st when Grand Central Station, another “party rock” band, performed.
NAMI Mid-Hudson

By Jo Ann Brown

NAMI Mid-Hudson has had a productive first half of 2019 executing on our Mission to provide evidence based education, support and advocacy for individuals living with mental health challenges and their families in Dutchess and Ulster Counties.

Walk at Stringham Park

In May NAMI Mid-Hudson held a walk at Stringham Park in Lagrangeville. Many came out to support it which included Senator Sue Serino, Dutchess County Clerk Brad Kendall and Commissioner of Department of Behavioral Community Health Anil K. Vaidan.

Table and Wellness Events, Walks and Fundraisers

Steppin’ Out Radio invited NAMI Mid-Hudson to have a table of information at Marist College Event “A Conversation About Addiction and Mental Health Among College Students,” and Young Adult Allison Barclay presented “her story” to an audience of students and local community.

ETS

We have had a tremendous response from the local schools asking for presentations on Ending the Silence to High School Health Classes. By the numbers we have presented to over two thousand students (688 students in Ulster County and 1,564 students in Dutchess County) and demand continues to increase.

Family to Family

NAMI Mid-Hudson completed one of three Family-to-Family classes in Dutchess County. Congratulations to the graduates who feel better equipped to “keep on helping their Loved One.” A class is currently in progress in Millbrook (Eastern Dutchess) and the September Poughkeepsie class is registered and waiting.

Peer Support

Peer to Peer in Ulster County is under way. It is being held at the Mental Health Association in Ulster County and registration has begun for the September Dutchess County Peer to Peer class in Poughkeepsie starting Monday, September 30th, 2019.
NAMI Mid-Hudson Organization

NAMI Mid-Hudson thanks Al Coley for his leadership contributions over the last three years as President and welcomes Samuel Finneman who has accepted nomination as President. George Czornyj has been appointed Executive Director of NAMI Mid-Hudson.

The Ribbon Campaign and Other Fundraisers

- Many towns and villages in Dutchess and Ulster participated in the Ribbon Campaign this year
- Many fundraisers were held for NAMI Mid-Hudson
- Judy Walker from Community Nursery School had a bake sale
- Pinot’s Palate in Fishkill held a sip and paint
- Adam Albin sold ice cream from his truck and donated some proceeds for the walk day to NAMI Mid-Hudson
- Norma Guerra-Albin sold T-shirts and
- Margaret Holzberger bought gift cards to local stores and raised money through a raffle

We appreciate everyone’s creative ideas and efforts.

Dutchess Community College Counselor and Wellness Fair Coordinator Ted Goehring invited NAMI Mid-Hudson to table at their event.

Elena Fine invited NAMI Mid-Hudson to table at the Mind, Body and Spirit Health Fair at Castle Point Campus.

This summer NAMI Mid-Hudson again partnered with the National Night Out event on August 6th, 2019 from 5-8 pm.

Rock Out 4 Mental Health

To complement Mental Health Awareness Month Rock Out 4 Mental Health was held in Beacon on June 1st at Riverfront Park and attended by 3 local politicians. The event was a huge success, providing information on mental health resources at one location all day through the collaboration of the agencies in Dutchess County.
EVERY BRILLIANT THING  By Evan Wechman

Friends of NAMI Rockland were offered a great show on April 29th at Dominican College. The play “Every Brilliant Thing,” which has been performed worldwide was carried out by Lori Schneider, both a community theatre actress and executive director of NAMI Sullivan County, NY.

The show which deals with such dark subjects as depression and suicide still ironically put a smile on my face at times. This was due largely to the interactive back and forth between members of the audience and Schneider.

Schneider, who lost a cousin to suicide over 25 years ago, impressed upon the audience that the subject of suicide needs to be brought out into the light. This really got me thinking about my own connection to suicide which took place nearly a decade ago.

At that time, a close friend of mine attempted suicide but fortunately, was not successful and has since recovered due to a great network of family, friends, and mental health professionals.

However, ten years ago, when I learned of my friend’s attempt, I was shocked. A person that I respected, loved, looked up to, and thought was happy was experiencing something very different. I was left to wonder how his family and I thought he was so happy when he was obviously in so much pain?

When I spoke with Schneider recently, she said that there is nothing wrong with people having serious conversations with those closest to them about the subject of suicide. She contends that the “shame is in not having an open dialogue about it.”

I agree with her opinion completely. Now, years after my friend’s battle with suicide, I am still left pondering whether if suicide was a less taboo conversation piece, would my friend have felt safe enough to confide in me or his family. Unfortunately, I don’t have the answer, but I do think the encouragement of an “open dialogue” is healthy.

Schneider, a passionate mental health advocate, wants people to know that she would love to perform her one person show to other civic and nonprofit groups. She can be reached at her NAMI office via email at namiofSullivan@gmail.com.

I guarantee that the show will make you think about your own relationship to this dark area and will most importantly, create a conversation with those around you. Schneider, a full time NAMI Executive Director has the unique ability to create an intimate atmosphere about an often unspoken matter.
Gay Pride Festival in Syracuse

NAMI Syracuse participated for the first time at the Gay Pride Festival in Syracuse. It was a wonderful opportunity to share information on supports and resources. Board members Carol Notar and Lacey Roy and family gave out smiles, hugs, and information.
AFFILIATE NEWS

Orange County

Great American Weekend in Goshen

On July 6th and 7th, participated with a table at the Great American weekend in Goshen. Both days were 9-5 with approximately 150 vendors and great networking. The affiliate members had a great time at the Outreach table. Senator Jen Metzger stopped by to say hello.

NAMI Orange County Board president Dhanu Sannesy had the opportunity to connect with a group representing the South Asian community at this year’s NAMI National Convention. She was able to bring many great ideas back to the affiliate as a result of the exchanges among the group.

NAMI Orange County hosted a Panel discussion in May at the monthly educational meeting on NAMI Ending the Silence. Kimberly Walsh facilitated the panel with ETS presenters Alisha Kohn, Colleen Otto, and Landon McNee participating.

NAMI Orange County held a successful Family-to-Family class in May. Congratulations to all the graduates.

Left – Mark Glasse (F2F class of Fall 2018), Jen Metzger, Dhanu Sannesy, NAMI Orange County President, and Rhoda Collins, NAMI Orange County office manager.

NAMI Orange Board members Carmen Watkins and Linda Sager

NAMI Orange County Outreach information table at BOCES.
NAMI NYS Homeless Forum

On July 23, NAMI-NYS and NAMI Capital Region participated in a community forum held to discuss ways to address the recent rash of incidents taking place around the Lark Street area of Albany involving homeless people who appear to have mental illness and addiction issues. This community collaboration was the brain-child of Jason Pierce, owner of the Savoy Taproom on Lark Street who began working for a solution to this issue after watching a man with substance abuse problems become more aggressive towards customers and residents in the past few months.

The forum featured government officials discussing ways to address the issue including Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan, Albany County Executive Daniel McCoy, Albany County Department of Mental Health Director Stephen Giordano, as well as representatives from the Albany Police Department. There was a second panel for community leaders where NAMI-NYS’s Matthew Shapiro explained that the homelessness issue and its relation to mental health are not exclusive to the Capital Region.

As Matthew said at the forum, “Homelessness is just one of the by-products of the failure to provide adequate mental health services which address the needs of people on all points of the broad spectrum of psychiatric disorders, especially people with serious mental illness. This issue is not isolated to the Capital Region as many major cities have failed to help these people. The difference here is that the community is coming together as one to explore ways to solve this problem.

The forum also demonstrated that NAMI is a valuable voice in finding solutions to complicated problems surrounding people living with a mental illness. Along with discussing our successful collaborations with Albany city and county including CIT trainings, Matthew also discussed how, “One of the biggest problems in the Capital Region is that programs which have been successful in other parts of the state have yet to be introduced here, and NAMI is urging for the implementation of some of these resources, which have demonstrated the ability to guide people towards recovery,” Matthew added, “In our work with the Albany Police Department, we have frequently heard about how there are no places to divert people to; this deficiency must be addressed in order to solve this problem.”

NAMI-NYS suggested several ways to enhance psychiatric supports in the Capital Region. Two major recommendations were made. The first was the need to create a crisis stabilization center similar to the successful model in nearby Dutchess County. Matthew pointed out that the other cities in the Capital Region are facing similar issues and recommended that Albany, Troy and Schenectady and the region’s counties come together to form a Capital Region crisis stabilization center. Partnering would not only help offset the costs but also ensure the availability of this valuable resource to people from throughout the region.

The second recommendation was to establish an Albany County Mental Health Court. As NAMI explained how specialty courts or boutique courts have played a major role as an entry point for recovery services and how a successful model of such a court can be found in Schenectady.

NAMI-NYS also made recommendations to improve communication among community partners and ways to patrol the area. Matthew concluded by stating how NAMI-NYS firmly believes in not giving up on people or the hope of recovery, as we know if the proper supports and services are in place, people can recover. NAMI-NYS looks forward to working with our community partners to help introduce such recovery oriented services.
Save the Date for May 15th 2020...

Be inspired through art, fashion, and stories of recovery at our NAMI-NYS’ annual fundraiser, Off The Mask. Off The Mask 2020 is an innovative fashion show, art exhibit, and silent auction to raise awareness of the importance of ending the silence and stigma surrounding mental illness and to change attitudes and save lives. The evening agenda will include a cocktail hour, dinner, fashion show, a silent auction, and a juried art show with pieces created by artists who have been impacted by mental health/addiction issues.

You can be one of the NAMI-NYS Mental Health Ambassador-Models walking the catwalk in the Off The Mask fashion show! Models will be wearing symbolic masks created by community artists and are individuals and family members that have been impacted by mental health/addiction and represent the power of resiliency and hope. You can donate a piece of artwork for our art installation or silent auction item. The monies raised will be used to increase our outreach in schools and in our communities and provide support for our Free “life-changing” and “life-saving” educational programs that help families and individuals impacted by mental health conditions lead better lives.

Off The Mask 2020 will be on Friday, May 15th, 2020 at the Marriott Hotel, Albany NY from 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm.

If you are interested in walking the catwalk, donating a piece of art work/silent auction item and or sponsorship information, please contact: Tina: tina@naminys.org or call: (518) 462-2000 x 106.

Stay tuned for more information!
We are Most Grateful to Those Who Made Financial Donations To NAMI-NYS During The 1st and 2nd Quarter 2019

**Up to $100**

**$100 to $200**
Erin Boggan, Margaret Connors, Joseph Coppolo, Daniel Crapanzano, Jean Day, Kira Marchenese, David Quist, Denise Sepe, William Shelp

**$200-$300**
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**$500 to $1,000**
The Martin Family Charitable Fund, Joshua Paradiso, Matthew Schainker

**Over $1,000**
Brian O'Connor

**$2,500**
Dustin Mele Memorial Fund, Lisa Kandel-Heiden

Donations Acknowledgement
NAMI-NYS is so grateful to those who donate their time, talents and money to supporting the mission of providing support, education and advocacy to people living with mental health conditions and their families. We continue to hold successful awareness events and activities made possible through your contributions.

We have dedicated volunteers throughout the state who lead programs, provide outreach, connect people with resources and advocate for change. NAMI-NYS’s role is to support their efforts through providing training and materials for programs, leading legislative and community advocacy, connecting people with resources through the Helpline and providing outreach and awareness literature to the community. The annual NAMI-NYS Education Conference also continues to provide information on the latest treatments and research, as well as successful models for services.

We’d like to acknowledge the donors who help to make all of this possible by contributing to NAMI-NYS. Know that you are making a difference in the lives of countless people who are affected by a mental health condition, and you are helping to create a more mentally healthy New York.
September 24: Extra Innings Screening and Wellness Fair

October 25-27: NAMI-NYS Education Conference

TBD: Legislative Advocacy Day

May 15, 2020: 2nd Annual Off The Mask