

THE RECORD

TROY Faced with a growing number of people from Albany County looking to take advantages of its services, the Rensselaer County chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness is expanding its free Family Support Group and course offerings to include that side of the Hudson River.

Beginning Jan. 24, NAMI will host a Family Support Group from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 420 New Scotland Ave. in Albany. The group is a nondenominational, confidential, peer-led support group for family members, caregivers and loved ones of individuals living with mental illness who can gain insight from the challenges and successes of others facing similar circumstances.

Meanwhile, a free, 12-week Family-to-Family course will begin Jan. 30 and be held each Monday through April 24 from 6-8:30 p.m. at NAMI's state office in Suite 105 at 99 Pine St. in Albany. Family-to-Family is an educational program for relatives, significant others and friends of people living with mental illness taught by NAMI-trained family members who have been in similar circumstances and includes presentations, discussions and interactive exercises.

"We have been getting a lot of families from Albany County attending our programs in Rensselaer County, so we are reaching out to be closer to their needs," Sandra DiNoto, vice president of NAMI Rensselaer County, said in a news release. "Our entire chapter is run by volunteers, so it's been quite a lift, but there are many unmet needs and we continue to serve Rensselaer County,"

NAMI already hosts a pair of Family Support Groups in Rensselaer County, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month at the University at Albany School of Public Health, 1 University Place, Rensselaer, and from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at First United Methodist, 1 Gilligan Road, East Greenbush.

Advance registration is not required for the Family Support Groups, but more information is available by contacting Jeff Kellert at 527-5669 or by email at jmk82652@aol.com or Christine Rickeman at 462-2000 or by email at christine@naminys.org. Advance registration is required for the Family-to-Family program, however, and can be done by contacting Rickeman or emailing Mary Beth Nelligan at mbnelligan@gmail.com.