Off The Mask

Ribbon Campaign

Find Help. Find Hope

A Publication of the National Alliance on Mental Illness | New York State
Executive Director’s Message  By Wendy Burch

I write this as we are gearing up for this year’s state legislative session. We have already had the opportunity to present testimony at the Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Mental Health and Developmental Disability Services and Supports and have participated in some of our colleagues’ legislative days, including two for the HALT campaign, where we are seeking a limitation on the use of solitary confinement for those incarcerated. We are excited about our own Legislative Advocacy Day scheduled for March 3rd. Having been snowed out for the past two years, I’m hoping the third time will be the charm! We really hope you can join us to make your advocacy voice heard. If not, I encourage you to advocate for improvements to the mental health system in your own district.

We are also busy preparing for our second annual Off the Mask Fashion Show scheduled for May 15th here in Albany. Last year’s event was a huge success, raising much needed funds for NAMI-NYS activities, as well as bringing awareness to mental health issues in a fun and unique way. There are many ways to get involved whether you can attend or not. In particular, we are looking for art pieces to serve as part of the silent auction. If you are an artist, or know someone who is, we would love to feature artwork by artists who have a connection to the NAMI cause. You can also help by donating to the model ambassadors’ efforts to raise funds, contributing silent auction items, identifying potential sponsors, and buying tickets to attend the event. Funds raised by Off the Mask go to support the local affiliates in various ways, and we do have an affiliate sharing agreement for involvement in the event.

I also want to encourage NAMI members and supporters to participate in the Ribbon Awareness Campaign. Started by NAMI Westchester almost 10 years ago and spread statewide soon after that, the Ribbon Campaign is a great way to raise awareness around mental health issues, while also building partnerships around the community. Asking businesses, schools, municipalities and other organizations to hang a ribbon during Mental Health Awareness Month helps to raise awareness, start discussions around mental health and connect people with resources through NAMI. Please contact the NAMI-NYS office if you have questions about participating in the campaign this May.

Finally, we continue to emphasize the impact of sharing your story. When you use your story to connect with and influence others to think about mental health issues, and how we can improve the services and resources for those who need them, we are driving recovery and helping people live their best lives.

Hope starts with you!
President’s Message By Ariel Coffman

Hello NAMI Members,

In a recent blog post by NAMI-NYC Board member Katherine Ponte, she discusses the stigma around mental health conditions and how it impacted her experience living with Bipolar Disorder. In regards to leading within the community she says “Only we know what it’s like to live with mental illness. We know our wants and needs best. Our mental health system would be much better if we were more involved...We need to speak more for ourselves. We need to assume our power and pursue our goals. We welcome and value the respectful guidance of our allies, but we need to increasingly lead the way in advocating for and supporting our community. We are at our most powerful when we’re standing together.” I want to thank Katherine for this piece and reflect for a moment with all of you on where we stand.

This year will continue NAMI-NYS’s development of new partnerships and achievements. As always, during the latter part of the year, NAMI-NYS will open up the election process for new applications for board members. This year we seek to build on our diversity and hear new voices in order to continue growing, especially strengthening the voices of people with lived experience. I urge affiliates to continue nurturing their members with a goal of recommending qualified individuals with applicable skill sets to apply for the NAMI-New York State Board. Additionally, NAMI-NYS is very interested in integrating the perspective of youth into the development of our goals and strategic plan. If you are under 30 and interested in coming together with other NAMI involved young people, we urge you to reach out to our Executive Director Wendy Burch or our Associate Director for Public Affairs, Matthew Shapiro, as we begin recruiting for our first ever Youth Advisory Board.

Over the past year and a half our New York State Office has been a place of innovation, thought provoking discussion, and forward momentum. We are fortunate to have a board that graciously volunteers their time to provide guidance, ideas and support for our NAMI-NYS staff. I cannot say enough about how hard our board and staff work to advocate for our membership and affiliates. Additionally, I want to extend my thanks to all NAMI Members for the outstanding work you do to really push boundaries and demand change in the Mental Health System.

The work of the state office and affiliates is bringing our organization to new levels of awareness, involvement and connectedness within the community. Our state level advocacy has become more aligned and focused, our events have raised more funds than ever before, and our programs are more accessible for people. This year we will continue the climb upward and we must ensure that people with lived experience are at the forefront of the expedition. This is one way that we can ensure that we are truly addressing stigma. We look forward to seeing you all and continuing this discussion at our Legislative Advocacy Day, our Off the Mask event and our yearly Education Conference.

Social Media

NAMI_NYS  NAMINewYorkState  NAMINewYork
NAMI News

NAMI-NYS is proud to introduce our New Staff Members:

Community Education & Outreach Coordinator, Kate Tortora
Kate Tortora is our new Community Education & Outreach Coordinator. Her focus will be to network and to make strong connections within the community to promote awareness of NAMI-NYS and its services. Kate’s most recent project has been coordinating our 2020 Off The Mask event, which will take place on May 15th at the Albany Marriott from 5:30-9:30pm.

Kate recently moved from Syracuse, New York. She has always had a strong passion for fundraising and making a strong impact within the community. Her most recent work has included Executive Assistant roles at a Law Firm and Child Advocacy Center in Syracuse. Kate states, “Although, I have only been with NAMI-NYS for just a short period of time, I truly feel a sense of warmth and compassion within the office. With mental illness being talked about more and more and seeing the passion that everyone has who stand behind NAMI-NYS, really inspires and empowers me to do the best job that I possibly can.”

Communication Specialist, Cassandra Farrugia
Cassandra Farrugia joined the NAMI-NYS team this past November as our Communication Specialist, a new position at NAMI-NYS. Her focus has been on publishing weekly e-newsletters and working on our bi-annual print newsletter to promote our and our affiliates’ programs, events and campaigns. Through social media channels and community outreach, she is working to make new community connections and improve accessibility for mental health resources statewide. In addition, Cassandra is our new point person for the NAMI Ribbon Campaign and NAMI on Campus. She has also been involved in research and the construction of our whitepaper and grant for the passage of Nicole’s law.

Cassandra is from the Bronx, NY, a recent graduate of SUNY New Paltz’s Psychology and Women’s Gender and Sexualities Studies Programs. She is currently a member of AmeriCorps VISTA program and her most recent project was in Puerto Rico, assisting with Disaster Recovery and Relief for those impacted by Hurricane Maria. Cassandra states, “As countless communities continue to be denied access to necessary mental health resources, I am so grateful for the opportunity to be a part of NAMI-NYS and our mission to provide free support, education and advocacy for individuals and families impacted by mental illness. I am excited to continue building capacity and sustainable solutions for our communities’ mental wellness.”

Introducing our NAMI-NYS Interns

Nicolle Ilizarov is from Brooklyn, NY and began her NAMI-NYS internship this past fall. She is a senior at UAlbany, studying Sociology with a minor in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and plans on pursuing her Masters in Social Work. Nicolle is assisting with our 2020 Off the Mask event and is also involved with NAMI on Campus at UAlbany. She hopes her time with NAMI-NYS will provide experience for her future plans of working as a mental health counselor.

Haley Peterson is from Glenmont, New York. She is a senior at University at Albany majoring in psychology and minoring in sociology. Haley is currently assisting with our 2020 Legislative Advocacy Day and was in attendance at our Off The Mask: Mask Making event at Hudson Valley Community College. After graduation, Haley plans to work in the mental health field.

Lisa Rice is from White Plains, NY, and is currently living in Saratoga Springs. Lisa is a senior at Hartwick College studying Public Health. She is assisting with our Ribbon Campaign, NAMI on Campus and 2020 Legislative Advocacy Day. “I am most excited to learn what it takes to make an event, such as the Ribbon Campaign, successful in spreading awareness of mental illnesses and just overall learning about NAMI-NYS and its impact statewide. Interning with NAMI-NYS is important to me as my field of study has centered on mental health. I aim to use the knowledge I have obtained from this amazing opportunity to help further me in my future career!”

Alicia Wattie is from Buffalo, NY and currently attending the University at Albany. She is a dual major in psychology and sociology and intends to pursue a PhD in social psychology starting in 2022. Alicia has been assisting with our 2020 Legislative Advocacy Day. “Working at NAMI-NYS has been a great experience thus far. I think it is great that I get to be a part of preparing for the 2020 Legislative Advocacy Day and I get a behind the scenes look at the set up process.”

Haley Amering is from Rochester, NY, and is currently attending SUNY at Albany as a junior. She is majoring in psychology and minoring in leadership, and hopes to be able to give speeches around the country on the importance of mental health awareness. At NAMI-NYS, she takes joy in knowing that all of her actions contribute toward benefitting the welfare of others.
The 2019 NAMI-NYS Education Conference – Building a Movement by Learning Together, Sharing Our Stories and Strengthening Our Voice was an incredibly inspiring event and one that will long be remembered by those in attendance. Along with providing insights on the latest in breakthroughs in research and treatment, the conference was also a shining testament to the NAMI spirit and the accomplishments of our members.

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

The conference capped off what was an incredible year for NAMI-NYS, as 2019 found NAMI-NYS expanding our program offerings and engaging in new initiatives that have increased our ability to raise awareness, deliver services to traditionally underserved communities and project our advocacy voice louder than ever before. The conference’s Friday night NAMI-NYS Honors Dinner provided an opportunity to celebrate these accomplishments and those who made these new opportunities possible.

NAMI-NYS’s initial Off the Mask event, allowed NAMI-NYS to raise awareness and understanding of mental health issues in a new and exciting way. The conference’s theme of the power of sharing one’s story is epitomized by Roy and Lucille Ettere, who used the story of the tragic loss of their daughter Nicole by suicide to call for better treatment practices for people who have multiple suicide attempts. Roy and Lucille’s resilience in sharing their experiences led to the introduction of NYS legislative bill A.9535/ S6629 which would establish Nicole’s Law. This is the first bill written and introduced by NAMI-NYS. The Ettere’s were presented with the 2019 Muriel Shepherd Award (the highest honor NAMI-NYS can bestow on one of our members) in recognition of their commitment to use their experiences to help others. Using one’s personal painful experiences to help others is at the heart of NAMI-NYS’s mission and the Ettere’s efforts are the epitome of this concept.

Another accomplishment celebrated on Friday evening was NAMI-NYS’s efforts to introduce NAMI Signature Programs to the residents of Queensbridge, the nation’s largest public housing complex. This landmark initiative began when NAMI-NYS partnered with Showtime to hold a mental health and community fair in Queensbridge. Earlier in the year, Showtime released the documentary Quiet Storm about the mental health challenges faced by NBA legend Metta World Peace (formerly known as Ron Artest) as a result of the trauma he faced by growing up in Queensbridge. That event featured a basketball clinic as well as an outdoor screening of the movie. NAMI-NYS had a resource table to introduce ourselves to the community with the goal of offering programs in Queensbridge.

The dinner also highlighted another type of impact our stories can have. NAMI Mid-Hudson
December 2019

Member Richard Weideman was presented with a Leader of Mental Health Award for using his experiences of living with schizophrenia to ensure an accurate portrayal in the media. Richard had spent the previous months working with acclaimed actor Mark Ruffalo during the filming of the upcoming HBO mini-series *I Know This Much Is True*, where Mark is playing a character living with schizophrenia. Mark sent a powerful video detailing all he learned from Richard to cap off the emotional and inspiring evening.

Other new inroads and partnerships being made by NAMI-NYS were evident throughout the day on Friday. This year’s conference saw the introduction of the inaugural focus track on dual-diagnosis and co-occurring disorders. The track’s inclusion is the next step of NAMI-NYS goal to address the full range of mental health issues including addiction. NAMI-NYS has long been dedicated to improving the criminal justice-mental illness interface and this year along with our traditional focus track on criminal justice issues, the conference also saw the introduction of a focus track specifically for CIT trained officers and first responders. NAMI-NYS was thrilled to welcome more than 30 officers and first responders who participated in the event.

Friday’s lunch allowed NAMI-NYS the opportunity to showcase New York State’s position as a national leader in CIT and the wide-array of partners who have advanced our leadership position. Friday afternoon’s *Celebration of CIT* featured the first presentation of the NAMI-NYS Heroes of CIT Awards which highlighted all the types of partners needed to create robust and innovative CIT programs. Police officers, are of course at the heart of successful CIT and NAMI-NYS honored Officer Karen Zirbel of the Poughkeepsie Police Department for her outstanding work.

The awards were designed to highlight the other collaborators needed for a successful CIT implementation. New York State Senator David Carlucci was awarded for his outstanding advocacy on behalf of CIT and his constant work to ensure state funding of the program. Don Kamin, PhD, provided a road map towards a more effective mental health system. Linda Salters, Director of Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America (SARDAA) explained the benefits of reclassifying schizophrenia as a neurological disorder. Linda detailed the positive ramifications reclassification would have as it would improve how people with schizophrenia are treated in the criminal justice system, prevent parity violations, increase research funding and address the IMD exclusion which keeps people with serious mental illness from receiving long-term care. Dr. David Dodell-Feder of the University of Rochester provided a presentation on his revolutionary work aimed at addressing and improving social disconnects among people living with schizophrenia.

Director of the Institute for Police, Mental Health & Community Collaboration was awarded for his work directing New York’s CIT efforts. Tony Severoni of Sunovion was awarded for his work creating an advanced CIT training and involving NAMI-NYS as one of the four sites in the nation to implement the training. The importance of families and peers in CIT trainings was demonstrated by presenting NAMI Capital Region’s Christine Robinson Cooley with an award recognizing her achievements as a family presenter at Albany County CIT trainings.

Friday’s lunch session was punctuated by a rousing performance of *Cry Havoc* by Stephan Wolfert. The one man show depicted Wolfert’s journey of recovery from PTSD. The audience was on the edge of their seats as Stephan recounted his experiences in training and in battle and juxtaposed that with famous speeches from Shakespeare which helped him understand his trauma and guide him towards recovery. Following the captivating performance Mr. Wolfert was presented with the Max Gabriel Memorial Veterans Mental Health Award.

Saturday morning began with our annual update from NIMH, this year Dr. Nicholas Balderston detailed his pioneering work on using Trans Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) to treat Anxiety disorders. The importance of research and the hope that it provides was further demonstrated by presenting the 2019 NAMI-NYS Excellence in Research Award to Dr. David Dodell-Feder of the University of Rochester. Dr. Dodell-Feder presented on his revolutionary work aimed at addressing and improving social disconnects among people living with schizophrenia.
The Taking the Next Steps session also included more information about our Queensbridge initiative as the session began with Queensbridge resident Lashawn “Suga Ray” Marsten giving a powerful talk about hope and the importance of NAMI-NYS bringing hope to his community. That was followed by the presentation of the NAMI-NYS Multicultural Award to NAMI Queens/Nassau and NAMI NYC Metro for working collaboratively on the local level to introduce programs to Queensbridge. Of course a big part of taking the next steps includes incorporating the young adults of today who are helping lead the way to a better tomorrow. NAMI-NYS acknowledged the work of one such young leader, Annabel Banks of NAMI Mid-Hudson, who was presented with our Young Leader Award.

Saturday’s dinner was also a rousing affair as NAMI-NYS presented our Media Award to all-time mixed martial arts great and NAMI Ambassador, Frank “the Legend” Shamrock who also gave an incredible keynote speech on the meaning of courage. Frank told his story of growing up in an abusive household beset with mental health and addiction issues. He explained the tremendous impact this trauma had on him as he would go on to become a ward of the state and eventually end up in prison. He discussed the courage it took to not only rise above these challenges but to become one of the most celebrated champions in the history of MMA. He urged the audience to find the courage to rise above the challenges they face and how if they do, they too are champions. Frank also encouraged people to share their stories and support each other.

The evening also gave NAMI-NYS the opportunity to welcome back 2017 Leader of Mental Health Awareness honoree, musician Matt Butler. Matt ended the evening on a high emotional note as he performed his songs which chronicle his struggle with mental health and addiction as well as his recovery. Before his performance, a video was shown about Matt’s work bringing his message of hope and recovery into jails and prisons and included the work he has done at the Albany County Jail.

While Friday and Saturday’s agenda emphasized the importance of sharing our stories as a means to expand awareness, support and advocacy, Sunday provided attendees with sessions on how to most effectively tell our stories. NAMI-NYS President, Ariel Coffman and Associate Director, Public Affairs, Matthew Shapiro, led a NAMI Smarts for Advocacy session which provided instructions on how to effectively tell your story as an advocacy tool and how to connect and build relationships with elected officials. NAMI NYC-Metro’s Public Policy and Advocacy Manager, Jamil Hamilton, detailed how their NAMI Ambassador program is working to establish and sustain relationships with elected officials. As part of the training attendees used the lessons learned to write out their stories and share them with the group. Sunday also featured a screening of the film Vicarious Resilience followed by a discussion led by Eva Tenuto, of the TMI project.

It is NAMI-NYS’s hope that attendees are able to use the education and inspiration they received at the conference to make a positive impact on their communities and create a more mentally healthy New York State.

SAVE THE DATE:
The 2020 education conference – Building Momentum: Coming Together to Create Our Future, will be taking place October 23-25 and we look forward to seeing you there and learning together.

2020 NAMI-NYS Education Conference
Building Momentum:
Coming Together to Create Our Future.
OCTOBER 23-25 ■ ALBANY MARRIOTT
The 2020 NAMI-NYS Action Agenda is our most ambitious to date and we need your help to help us address suicide, expand access to mental health services (including housing), support the mental health workforce and family caregivers, introduce criminal justice reforms, provide veterans with mental health supports and fight the potential austerity posed by the New York’s budget deficit. As you will see throughout this article, NAMI-NYS has been busy advocating for the specific issues that comprise the agenda, but your voice will be needed to help us advance our mission of creating a more mentally healthy New York State. Mark your calendars and plan to join us as we project our collective advocacy voice at the 2020 NAMI-NYS Legislative Action Day on March 3rd.

The centerpiece of our Action Agenda is Nicole’s Law (A.9535/S.6629). This landmark bill is the first piece of legislation introduced by NAMI-NYS and would create a red flag practice for vulnerable patients who need more specialized, intensive and potentially life-saving supports. Nicole’s Law has the power to advance suicide prevention by reforming hospital procedures involving the most vulnerable patients who have multiple episodes of self-inflicted life-threatening injuries (classified as a suicide-attempt, drug-overdose or self-injury). Nicole’s Law would hold hospitals accountable in delivering person-centered treatment for people with multiple episodes of self-inflicted life-threatening injuries as well as provide their families and caretakers with resources and direct much needed improvement in discharging patients.

Nicole’s Law also demonstrates the value of family insights and involvement in the recovery process by ensuring that in these cases all attempts would be made to talk to families and receive their insights on the person’s mental health history and their views on what did not work in previous treatment settings. It would also require enhanced discharge planning, including providing families and caretakers with resources on how to care and monitor someone with a tendency towards self-inflicted life-threatening injuries.

Families would have to receive 48 hours’ notice prior to a discharge; this would provide families with the ability to both meet with the staff to discuss an integration strategy as well as remove potentially dangerous elements from the home. Before being discharged the individual would have a detailed meeting (which would ideally include their families) to ensure they understand what is needed to recover. They would also be connected to a community-based service provider, receive priority to access services and receive a case-worker to monitor the progress for a specified time-period.

On November 6th, NYS Senate Mental Health Chair Senator David Carlucci held a hearing on Veterans Mental Health and Well Being. Senator Carlucci used the hearing to highlight three pieces of legislation he had recently introduced including Nicole’s Law.

NAMI-NYS Associate Director, Public Affairs Matthew Shapiro provided testimony at the hearing which detailed the veteran’s experiences which contribute to PTSD as well as the military culture that disapproves of seeking help for mental health issues. Matthew explained how this combination is contributing to the alarming number of suicide among active military members and veterans. Matthew also explained how an implemented Nicole’s Law would help address suicide among veterans. As one of the other bills highlighted at the hearing would expand the use of problem solving courts (such as veterans’ court and mental health court) our testimony also explained several measures needed to reform the way the criminal justice system handles veterans.

Along with advancing Nicole’s Law, NAMI-NYS other legislative priorities are focused on increasing access to mental health care. Access to care begins with having fully funded human service agencies which supply the mental health workforce. Human service agencies who provide these crucial services are struggling to hire and retain knowledgeable and caring staff to provide the type of continuity of care that best advances recovery. This is why NAMI-NYS is dedicated to helping support those who support us and care for those dedicated professional caregivers who are playing a major role in driving recovery. NAMI-NYS is part of the statewide #30for5 campaign that is calling for a three percent increase in funding for not for profits in the human services sector every year for the next five years. This campaign is unprecedented in its scope through the inclusion of every major Statewide not for profit agency in the mental health, addiction disorder, developmental disabilities, child welfare, foster care and aging community.

On November 25th NAMI-NYS Executive Director Wendy Burch joined campaign partners in meeting with representatives from the Governor’s office to detail the campaign’s ask. On December 18th, Wendy participated in a press conference at the Capitol explaining the work of human service agencies and why this investment is so crucial.

Wendy detailed all of NAMI-NYS’s budget concerns at the New York State Joint Legislative Hearing on the Mental Hygiene Budget which took place on February 3rd. In her testimony Wendy stated: “While NAMI-NYS understands that New York State is facing a difficult budget cycle, we still urge you to act proactively in investing in the full spectrum of necessary psychiatric services. Doing so will save money by preventing costly outcomes such as reliance on emergency rooms, homelessness, long-term hospitalizations and criminal justice expenses. Proactively funding the mental health system is a sound investment and will pay immediate dividends by saving the state from having to spend reactively on the costly alternatives mentioned above. More importantly, it will improve and save lives and ease the burden for the one in four New York families who sacrifice a great deal to give their loved ones the best life possible.”
As NAMI-NYS is fighting on behalf of the professional mental health workforce, we are also advocating to help support family caregivers. As Wendy’s testimony above mentions, many families sacrifice a great deal to care for their loved ones living with a mental illness. This includes dealing with the financial impact of sustaining their loved one’s recovery. This is why NAMI-NYS is working to pass bill A.7209/S.5100 which would provide a much needed tax-credit for families and caregivers.

NAMI-NYS continues to fight for access to and support of mental health housing programs. A safe and supportive place to call home is a vital part of recovery and mental health housing programs have received flat-funding from the state for thirty years leaving them operating at 43% of where they should be due to inflation over the last three decades. NAMI-NYS is a part of the Bring it Home NYS campaign which is calling for an investment of $37 million a year for the next five years, to generate the $185 million needed to return housing programs to the appropriate operating level.

The Bring it Home campaign has been holding weekly rallies around the state to highlight the need for funding mental health housing programs. NAMI-NYS members have been participating in these rallies and the rally on March 3rd has been incorporated into NAMI-NYS Legislative Action Day and will be taking place at noon. NAMI-NYS’s Matthew Shapiro was also interviewed on Capital Tonight to discuss the family perspective on the importance of housing.

NAMI-NYS is also supporting the following bills that would help expand access:

- A.3830/S.4848 Expanding a pharmacy to administer injectable medications.
- A.3074/S3834-Allowing camps to employ mental health professionals
- A.4383-Providing mental health practitioners authority to give diagnosis.
- A.8563 Providing excused absence of a public employee for mental health purposes
- A.8543/S.6687 Providing an excused absence from school for the mental or behavioral health of a minor.

NAMI-NYS has also long fought against parity violations by insurance providers which also play a major role in New Yorkers’ inability to access psychiatric care. This is why NAMI-NYS applauds Governor Cuomo’s proposed budget inclusion of $1.5 million in funding to support the behavioral health ombudsman program, which helps individuals and their families navigate the behavioral health care system to ensure people have access to necessary care and services, and helps resolve issues when care has been delayed or denied. The Executive Budget also provides authority to utilize up to $1.5 million in funds received in the newly established Behavioral Health Parity Compliance Fund.

NAMI-NYS also remains committed to improving the criminal justice-mental illness interface. This begins by ensuring police are equipped to best intervene in cases involving people living with a mental illness. NAMI-NYS continues to advocate for the continued funding of Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) programs. CIT programs aim to transform crisis response systems so that police are not the first responders to individuals in emotional distress. We believe that mental health-related crises should have a mental health response. CIT programs also train law enforcement officers to better recognize and respond to individuals in crisis so that when they are the first responders they can safely de-escalate situations and divert individuals from the criminal justice system, when possible.

Another component of our criminal justice agenda is reforming the use of solitary confinement. NAMI-NYS continues to advocate for the passage of A.2500/S.1623, the HALT bill, which caps the amount of time someone serves in solitary at 15 days and ensures people with mental illness are not subjected to solitary confinement. 2020 has already seen NAMI-NYS heavily engaged in this issue. On Tuesday, January 21st, more than 1,000 people came together for the New York State Campaign Against Isolated Confinement’s first HALT Solitary advocacy day of the session.

The day began with a press conference at the NYS Capitol’s “Million Dollar Staircase,” featuring advocates and many legislators. Activities then moved to the Empire State Plaza Concourse where advocates lined the concourse path leading to where legislators and state officials entered to attend Governor Cuomo’s budget address.
NAMI-NYS, NYC-Metro and Queens/Nassau Partner with Metta World Peace and Showtime Sports for QUIET STORM event at Queensbridge Public Housing Facility Leading to Landmark Introduction of NAMI Programming in Queensbridge

On Saturday, September 21st, NAMI-NYS along with NAMI NYC-Metro and NAMI Queens/Nassau partnered with NBA Legend Metta World Peace and our 2019 Leaders of Mental Health Awareness honoree Showtime Sports to host a large-scale community event at the Queensbridge public housing facility.

NAMI NYS, NYC-Metro and Queens Nassau were on hand throughout the day raising mental health awareness and connecting with community leaders as we plan to introduce NAMI programs into Queensbridge, which is the largest public housing facility in the country.

The centerpiece of the event was the evening’s outdoor screening of the acclaimed Showtime Sports documentary QUIET STORM in Queensbridge park. The film chronicles how Metta’s childhood marked by violence and drugs in the Queensbridge housing projects impacted his mental well-being throughout his life and led to a contentious stint at St. John’s University and a turbulent career in the NBA. The film also details the work that Meta has done with his psychiatrist to sustain his recovery and how he is raising mental health awareness and helping to provide mental health services to traditionally under-served communities.

Prior to the screening NAMI-NYS’s Associate Director, Public Affairs Matthew Shapiro was among those offering opening remarks. After being introduced by Metta, Matthew thanked Metta for telling his story and discussed all the positives that have come out of it. Matthew thanked Showtime Sports for their commitment to raising awareness through their films such as QUIET STORM and Bipolar Rock-n-Roller. Matthew also discussed what an honor it has been to be so warmly welcomed into the Queensbridge community. Most importantly he expressed how no one should experience storms quietly or suffer in silence and how NAMI will be bringing our brand of help and hope into the community. Matthew also introduced New York State Senate Mental Health Chair, David Carlucci.

Senator Carlucci participated in the festivities as he presented a proclamation from the New York State Legislature proclaiming September 21st, 2019 as Metta World Peace Day in New York State. Prior to the screening Senator Carlucci spoke to many of the attendees to learn about the mental health challenges in the community. Senator Carlucci recently had a bill passed that aims to address suicide among African-American young men.

Prior to the evening’s screening there was a community fair at the new basketball courts at the Jacob Riis Settlement section of the Queensbridge complex. Daytime activities included a basketball clinic for youth run by Metta, his father Ron Artest, Sr. and his brother Daniel Artest, there were also back to school backpack giveaways and a barbecue.

Julius Randle of the New York Knicks was on-hand to talk to the kids about the importance of taking care of their mental health. He explained how Metta is like a big brother and how Metta has helped him when he experiences mental health issues. Julius said he can call Metta at any time of the day or night as he knows he will be there for him and we all need to be here for each other. Julius also discussed how he has a degree from Harvard Business School and how the kids can’t count on a career in sports which is why education is so important. Julius took questions from the kids and led them through a few drills.
Learn How to Start a NAMI on Campus!

What is NAMI on Campus?
NoC are student-led, student-run mental health organizations for college campuses

NoC Purpose:
- Raise Mental Health awareness with events, programs & campaigns
- Educate campus community with presentations, guest speakers and student panels
- Advocate for improved mental health services and policies on campus
- Support peers with signature NAMI programs and training

To start the process contact your local NAMI Affiliate or contact Cassandra Farrugia, NAMI-NYS Communication Specialist, at (518) 462-2000 x109 and/or Cassandra@naminys.org.

NAMI-NYS Welcomed New Community Partner: STRIDE Adaptive Sports and Vets to 2020 Off The Mask’s Catwalk

This past December, NAMI-NYS met with Mary Ellen Whitney, CEO and President of STRIDE Adaptive Sports located in West Sand, New York. STRIDE Adaptive Sports provides over 8,000 adaptive sport and recreation lessons each year to individuals with disabilities, focusing on youth, and Wounded Warriors.

NAMI-NYS and STRIDE will be working together to offer NAMI Homefront, a NAMI signature program that supports families of active military and veterans impacted by mental illness.

STRIDE will also be participating in NAMI-NYS’s upcoming 2020 Off The Mask event. Don Tallman, a veteran and volunteer with STRIDE, will walk the catwalk to end the silence and stigma and to support Mental Health Awareness among the veteran community.
Improving the criminal justice-mental illness interface has long been a leading priority for NAMI-NYS and that begins with building a strong relationship with police and first responders and educating them on how to generate the best outcomes when intervening with people living with mental illness. NAMI-NYS is dedicated to help advance Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) throughout the state and demonstrate to police the benefits of partnering with NAMI-NYS and our local affiliates. NAMI-NYS is grateful to be a part of this important team.

The 2019 CIT International Conference took place August 25-28 in Seattle, Washington. NAMI-NYS Associate Director, Public Policy Matthew Shapiro presented at the conference during the session **Communities That Care: Working With Our NAMI Partners.** The session was moderated by Shannon Scully, NAMI’s Senior Manager, Criminal Justice Policy and also featured NAMI members from Louisiana and Washington. Matthew detailed the different ways NAMI-NYS has partnered with police and how we can assist each other in our advocacy activities.

One of the things Matthew discussed at the conference was how NAMI-NYS would be holding a Celebration of CIT session and how NAMI-NYS was working with Don Kamin, PhD, Director of (New York’s) Institute for Police, Mental Health & Community Collaboration and Vice-President on CIT International on implementing a Law Enforcement Appreciation Day and a focus track specifically for CIT trained officers at our 2019 Education Conference.

Matthew also described how Law Enforcement Appreciation Day was curated by officers and designed to not only educate officers on the experiences of people impacted by mental illness but also emphasize the importance of first-responders taking care of their own mental health and how to engage in self-care strategies.

While at the conference, Matthew was also asked to provide the family and consumer perspective for a video produced for the International Association of Chiefs of Police and designed to encourage police departments around the world to incorporate CIT. The video premiered at the IACP’s conference in October and was also screened at the 2019 NAMI-NYS Education Conference.

NAMI-NYS has also worked with our affiliates on projects involving police. On September 13th NAMI Rochester held a special event in conjunction with Partners in Suicide, focused on Means Reduction in Suicide Prevention. This event detailed the roles of various community partners in reducing suicide including the role police play in this crucial endeavor. At the event Matthew Shapiro presented on why NAMI-NYS supports Emergency Risk Protection Orders, detailed the newly introduced Nicole’s Law bill and explained how it will contribute to the reduction of suicide. Also presenting at the event were Sgt. Steve Boily, Crisis Intervention Team Commander, Rochester Police Department and Kelly Mohrman-Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Veterans Health Administration. Sgt. Boily discussed his own struggles with mental health issues and the importance of instilling suicide awareness and de-escalation strategies in the officers under his command.

On November 13th, Matthew joined Robin Cole, Director of NAMI-Capital Region, and Christine Robinson-Cooley, NAMI volunteer and recipient of the inaugural NAMI-NYS CIT Family Presenter Award, presented at East Greenbush Fire Department to the entire East Greenbush Police force to educate them on NAMI’s work as well as how to generate the best outcomes when intervening with someone living with a mental illness.
Through their own personal stories and experiences with law enforcement and mental health, they engaged officers in a dialogue on creating and sustaining more effective interactions among law enforcement, mental health care providers, individuals with mental illnesses, their families and communities.

The most remarkable part of the training was that both Christine and Robin had loved ones who came into contact with the East Greenbush police. In the early session one of the officers who intervened with Christine’s loved one was present and in the later session the officer who arrested Robin’s loved one was present. Both officers shared what they learned from the experiences and expressed how happy to hear that in both cases the loved ones are doing well and maintaining their recovery.

Along with these endeavors Matthew and Christine also participate in the two CIT trainings held by the Albany Police Department and Albany County as well as present to cadets at the Albany Police Academy.

**NAMI-NYS Presented at ACLAIM Conference**

On November 6th, NAMI-NYS Board members Ariel Coffman and Lynda Regan, along with Executive Director Wendy Burch, presented at the Association for Community Living for New York State’s (ACLNYS) annual ACLAIM Conference at the Sagamore Resort in Bolton Landing.

The presentation, entitled Families Working With Providers for the Most Positive Recovery, included information about NAMI and its programs, as well as personal stories about family members and their partnership with housing providers to help their loved ones living in mental health housing have fulfilling lives while pursuing recovery.

**NAMI-NYS Board Member Presented at Clergy United for Community Empowerment Intervention**

On November 6th, NAMI NYS Board Member, NAMI Queens/Nassau member, Ellen Ritz was a guest speaker at the Clergy United for Community Empowerment Intervention (CUCE) in Jamaica, Queens.

Ellen spoke about mental health disorders and how to support individuals and families who are struggling. Ellen is also partnering with the FaithNet group and their leaders to work to include the topic of mental health and mental health awareness in their sermons.
NAMI-NYS Partners with NYCPG

On November 21st and 22nd, Wendy Burch, NAMI-NYS Executive Director, and Cassandra Farrugia, NAMI-NYS’s new Communication Specialist, attended the New York Council on Problem Gambling’s (NYCPG) annual conference. The NYCPG Annual Conference is the only problem gambling conference in NYS and is one of the most well attended problem gambling conferences nationwide.

NAMI-NYS and affiliates often receive calls about mental health and addiction, with the support of NYCPG, we can connect individuals and family members to the support and resources they need.

We are excited to welcome NYCPG as a partner! Together, we can provide helpful resources regarding problem gambling for individuals, family members, probation officers, school counselors, and other human services professionals.

Next Up: March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month

During the month of March, New York Council on Problem Gambling is joining NAMI-NYS to raise awareness of problem gambling as a mental health disorder and the connection between problem gambling and other mental illnesses.

Contact Cassandra@naminys.org to learn how to participate.

What is problem gambling?

When you think of the term “problem gambling,” you probably don’t equate that with a mental illness. Problem gambling is simply defined as gambling behavior that is causing problems in someone’s life. These problems can range from financial problems to relationship problems and even other mental health conditions.

Gambling disorder is the actual diagnosis for someone struggling with problems related to their gambling. Gambling disorder IS a mental illness. In fact, in 2013, gambling disorder was added to the newest version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the fifth edition of the manual. Gambling disorder is now included in the Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders category and is the only addictive behavior currently diagnosable in the category.

Why partner with NAMI-NYS?
The New York Council on Problem Gambling recognizes that problem gambling is not a standalone condition. More often than not, individuals and families struggling with gambling problems are also struggling with other mental illnesses. Partnering with NAMI-NYS enables both agencies to reach new audiences with new information about mental illness and the associated stigma, and to help more people in need.

Two-thirds of gamblers surveyed reported that their mental health suffered as a result of their gambling. (Nash et al, 2018). In fact, the majority of those experiencing disordered gambling have a lifetime history of a psychiatric disorder. In addition to struggling with gambling:

- Over 60% also have a personality disorder.
- Over 49% also have a mood disorder.
- Over 41% also have an anxiety disorder (Petry et al, 2005).
- Nearly 37% of those experiencing a gambling problem and 50% of those with disordered gambling have had suicidal thoughts. Over 17% of these individuals have attempted suicide (Moghaddam et al, 2015).

Problem gambling does not just affect the individual who is gambling, but also his or her loved ones. In one study over 90% of those affected by someone else’s gambling behavior reported emotional distress (Nash et al, 2018).

What’s the good news?
The good news is that, like the majority of mental illnesses, problem gambling is treatable. With adequate treatment and support, individuals and families struggling with problem gambling can enter recovery and lead healthy lives.

During the month of March, NYCPG and NAMI-NYS will be partnering to bring information, training, resources and support to individuals and families across New York State.

Here’s a glimpse at what we have planned:

- Information and materials will be disseminated to NAMI-NYS affiliates and Problem Gambling Resource Centers about gambling disorder as a mental illness.
- March 10th is Gambling Disorder Screening Day.
- NYCPG and NAMI-NYS will be cohosting a webinar about problem gambling as a mental illness.
- NYCPG will be hosting a webinar about how problem gambling affects families.
- Social media accounts will be buzzing!

Keep an eye out for more information about these and other events as Problem Gambling Awareness Month draws near.

*If you are in need of support related to gambling, please visit NYProblemGamblingHelp.org to connect with resources in your community.*
NAMI-NYS Participated in CNS Summit and Receives STARR Coalition STARR of Excellence Advocate of the Year Award

The annual CNS Summit took place October 31st-November 3rd in Boca Raton, Florida. NAMI-NYS was honored to once again participate in the summit as a member of the STARR Coalition. NAMI-NYS’s Associate Director, Public Affairs Matthew Shapiro presented as part of the STARR Coalition’s session on *Ethics in Person-Centered CNS Research: Closing the Circle of Care* and discussed the crossroads of research and advocacy and how to properly communicate the need for research and research participation.

At the end of the session the STARR Coalition presented Matthew and NAMI-NYS with their STARR of Excellence Advocate of the Year Award. The award acknowledged how NAMI-NYS took a STARR Coalition initiative STARR 911 (which aims to reform communication to people disqualified from research trials due to suicidality) and included it in our proposed Nicole’s Law.

Matthew also participated in a STARR Coalition think tank session along with STARR Coalition Executive Director Luke Kramer, STARR Coalition President Carol Witham, NAMI Board Member Carlos Larrauri, MHA Vice-President Patrick Hendry and Students with Psychosis’ Cecilia McHough along with research and pharma leaders to develop ways to reshape the message of research and deepen the relationship between advocates and researchers.

NAMI-NYS continues to work with the stakeholders from this session in the STARR Coalition’s steering committee on advancing the partnership between research and advocacy.

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NAMI-NYS Presented at the Capital Region Chamber of Commerce’s Leadership Tech Valley Community Health Day this past December

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Include NAMI at one of your Upcoming Events!

NAMI has presentations suitable for all sorts of audiences including schools, camps, businesses, community and faith-based organizations and other social justice events.

Here is a sample of presentations topics:

- NAMI 101
- Advocacy and the importance of finding your voice
- Mental health and children
- Mental health in schools
- Mental health in college communities
- Mental health in the workplace
- The need to improve the criminal justice-mental illness interface
Off the Mask: A celebration of Mental Wellness

On Friday, May 15th, NAMI-NYS will be holding the second annual Off the Mask Fashion and Art Show to help raise awareness and much needed funding for our programs, support and advocacy. Last year’s event was a great success and we hope to improve upon it this year.

Off the Mask showcases over 25 model ambassadors taking the catwalk in clothes donated by area designers and shops. The models share their connection to mental health issues and to promoting overall mental wellness through their model profiles on the website, small community fund-raising events and, of course, on the runway the evening of Off the Mask. Each model is asked to raise a minimum of $2,500 in support of NAMI-NYS, and they do this through the Off the Mask website, where each model has a posted biography accompanied by a “donate” button, as well as small fundraisers leading up to the event. The fundraising activities are a fun way to raise awareness by supporting a great cause. Some examples are restaurant nights, yoga sessions, paint and sip parties, bowling—the possibilities are endless and are only limited by the model ambassadors’ imaginations!

The art component of the evening is linked to the silent auction. NAMI-NYS solicits donated artwork for display and adds the pieces to the silent auction. The Off the Mask Committee is in the process of selecting art and is particularly interested in pieces that have a connection to our cause.

How can you become involved in Off the Mask?

There are several ways that both NAMI affiliates and individuals can support the event. Contributing to one or more of the model ambassadors, whether through a straight monetary donation or by attending one of their fundraising events, is one option for showing your support. If you are an artist (or know someone who is), consider donating a piece to the art show. Any assistance with sponsorships for the event is also greatly appreciated. We are also accepting items for the silent auction, and we would be grateful to include any contributions you may have. And, finally, we need people to attend the show! Tickets are $75 per person, $150 for VIP tickets. The evening includes a sit down dinner in addition to the fashion show, art and silent auction.

Off the Mask will take place on May 15th at the Albany Marriott on Wolf Road, 5:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

We are also holding a kick-off event at Glennpeter Jewelers, 1544 Central Avenue in Colonie, on April 3rd, 5 p.m. – 7 p.m. This event is free and will feature music, raffle items, introductions of our sponsors and model ambassadors and a chance to shop for the beautiful jewelry on display at Glennpeter!

Please consider supporting this year’s Off the Mask—proceeds benefit NAMI programs and training, the annual Education Conference and Legislative Advocacy Day, outreach efforts, including production and distribution of NAMI-NYS brochures, pamphlets and other literature and general support for the local NAMI affiliates throughout New York.

To learn more, visit www.OfftheMask.org or call the NAMI-NYS office at 518-462-2000.

NAMI-NYS Held an Off the Mask: Mask Making Workshop at Hudson Valley Community College

On Wednesday, January 29th, NAMI-NYS and HVCC’s Counseling Center cohosted a Mask Making Workshop at Hudson Valley Community College.

Wendy Burch, NAMI-NYS Executive Director, presented NAMI’s mission, resources and upcoming events. She also introduced Gwendolyn Hayles and Nia Cromartie-Flick, our Off the Mask Committee’s Co-Chairs. Nia shared her personal mental health journey and expressed how appreciative she is of NAMI-NYS’s work. Christine Rickeman, NAMI-NYS Helpline Coordinator, Kate Tortora, NAMI-NYS Community Education and Outreach Coordinator, Cassandra Farrugia, NAMI-NYS Communication Specialist, and Haley Peterson NAMI-NYS intern, also provided support during the event.

We offer a special thanks to HVCC and their Counseling Center for their help in hosting this event, to our Off the Mask Chairs and Models for attending, and to all the HVCC students for their participation! With their help, we were able to design over 20 masks for our Off the Mask Models.
Meet our Off the Mask Models
What is the NAMI Ribbon Campaign?

The Ribbon Campaign is a NAMI-NYS mental health awareness initiative that's mission is to takes mental health out of the shadows and let people know that NAMI is a place to find help and find hope for both individuals and families impacted by mental illness.

The Ribbon Campaign is critical as the stigma around mental health is still so prevalent in our communities. So many people continue to suffer because of the stigma around and the barriers for those seeking mental health support.

NAMI-NYS and our affiliates understand that it takes a community to help raise awareness and demonstrate acceptance and understanding. The Ribbon Campaign allows us to form partnerships with our communities - local governments, police and fire departments, businesses, community organizations, universities, high schools and middle schools to let our neighbors know that they are not alone, and we are here to support each other.

Contact Cassandra at Cassandra@naminys.org to learn how to get involved.

NAMI-NYS Ribbon Campaign Kickoff with Siena College

On January 25th, NAMI-NYS kicked off the Ribbon Campaign by hosting Siena’s students and VISTA* Fellows.

Wendy Burch, NAMI-NYS Executive Director, and Cassandra Farrugia, NAMI-NYS Communication Specialist, introduced the participants to NAMI’s mission, resources and upcoming events, as Christine Rickeman, NAMI-NYS Helpline Coordinator, demonstrated how to make our ribbons.

In just a few hours, we were able to complete over 20 ribbons, an amazing feat when you consider that each bow has the potential to connect someone to desperately need mental health support.

The group also took the CureStigma quiz, discussed how the stigma around mental health impacts our communities and how they can help change the way their communities view mental health. After returning to Siena’s campus, the group presented on and led a discussion on NAMI-NYS with the greater Siena community.

We offer a special thanks to Siena College’s ACE staff, students and VISTA* Fellows for their participation!

Hartwick College Welcomes NAMI-NYS for Mental Health Awareness Presentation

On Wednesday, January 8th NAMI-NYS Associate Director, Public Affairs, presented to the faculty and staff of Hartwick College in Oneonta. Matthew presented on how to recognize potential mental health issues among students and how to help them address these issues. The audience was comprised of administration, professors, coaches, residential advisors, food service staff and members of the counseling center. Following the presentation there was a discussion exploring how to create a college community centered on mental wellness.

We thank NAMI on Campus leader Cilina Jagrup for inviting us and for her efforts to advance mental health in the Hartwick Community!

Learn how to start a NAMI on Campus club at your university! Contact info@naminys.org for more information.
### Save the Dates & Walk with Us

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>May 2</strong></td>
<td>NAMI Rochester</td>
<td>Village Gate Square Rochester</td>
<td>check-in: 8:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Alyssa Belasco</td>
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<td>NAMI Rochester Development and Marketing Manager</td>
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<td><strong>May 9</strong></td>
<td>NAMI NYC Metro</td>
<td>South Street Seaport Manhattan</td>
<td>check-in: 9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Sarah Sheahan</td>
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<td>NAMI NYC Metro Director of Events &amp; Operation</td>
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<td><strong>May 16</strong></td>
<td>NAMI Westchester</td>
<td>Rye Town Park 95 Dearborn Avenue Rye</td>
<td>check-in: 8:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Marie Considine</td>
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<td>NAMI Westchester Director of Development</td>
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In 2020, we are celebrating 18 years of **NAMIWalks**, the nation’s largest series of mental health awareness and fundraising events. We invite you to join us for any of our community walks. NAMIWalks is a fun, family-friendly event and there is no cost to register.

There are many ways you can make a difference via **NAMIWalks**: as a sponsor, committee member, team captain or team member, individual walker, virtual walker, or walk day volunteer!

However you participate in **NAMIWalks**, you will be joining NAMI’s national movement!
NAMI Westchester Celebrated the Holidays with Art Expressions

On December 4th, NAMI-Westchester held their Annual Holiday Celebration: Arts Expressions at St. Vincent’s Hospital in Harrison, NY. The event showcased the talented minds of people in recovery. Participants read their poetry and essays, exhibited their artwork and photography and provided musical performances.
NAMI Westchester Attended Psychiatric Society of Westchester Legislative Brunch

On January 26, NAMI-NYS and Westchester Board Members, Martin Gromulat, Louise Ellis and Robert Latiman attended the Annual Psychiatric Society of Westchester Legislative Brunch at St. Vincent’s Hospital in Harrison. Robert Latiman spoke at the event stressing the need for better mental health services.

NAMI Westchester Held an Advocacy Town Hall with NAMI-NYS

NAMI Westchester met with NAMI on Campus at Bard College. NAMI on Campus student leaders, Genesis and Katie, met every two weeks to discuss their upcoming event, “Spring Fling.” They plan to provide NAMI bags filled with goodies and mental health resources for all their attendees.

NAMI Westchester on Campus at Bard

NAMI Westchester Held 4th Annual Education Event

On October 16, NAMI Westchester held its Annual Education Event at St. Vincent’s Hospital in Harrison. More than 70 people, including over 15 representatives of various community organizations in Westchester County, braved the wind and rain to attend. The event focused on the topic They Accept It, and That Makes Me Healthier.

Micheal Orth, Commissioner of the Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health, opened the program and praised NAMI Westchester for their continuing to host this event to help educate the families and providers on how to help individuals towards recovery.

During the event Nyna Giles, author of the book, The Bridesmaid’s Daughter, shared her and her mother’s story and how mental illness affected their lives. Kimrita Hill, a peer living with Schizophrenia, shared her struggles and journey to acceptance and her success in living in recovery. Ailena Hill, Kimrita’s daughter, also shared her experiences as the daughter of someone living with mental illness and her own journey to acceptance. Jennifer Amar, Licensed Clinical Social Worker at New York Presbyterian Hospital - Westchester discussed and reminded everyone how important it is for families to adjust expectations and learn acceptance. In addition, during and after the event, community organization representatives discussed the services and programs available in Westchester County.
Queens/Nassau

NAMI Queens/Nassau Congratulated their Family-to-Family Graduates

NAMI Queens/Nassau’s Family-to-Family celebrated their recent Family-to-Family graduates.

We offer special congratulations to the participants and their teachers!

NAMI Queens/Nassau Partnered With the New York Mets to Offer Mental Health Night at City Field

This past August, NAMI Queens/Nassau partnered with the New York Mets to hold a mental health awareness night at Citi Field. Members of the affiliate were on the field for a pregame ceremony calling attention to mental health. The affiliate also provided a resource and information table during the game where they were able to communicate directly with fans.

NAMI Queens/Nassau Introduced a New Support Group at Oceanside Library

The Long Island Herald ran a feature spotlighting NAMI Queens/Nassau new support group at the Oceanside Library.

David Sills, President of the NAMI Queens/Nassau and an Oceanside resident, stated, “We want parents to be more aware of the needs of their children... We emphasize that [a mental health condition] is an illness, not something they did wrong. It’s a medical problem, but they also must be active in assisting children.” Sills and his wife, Gail, a NAMI Queens/Nassau volunteer, will co-facilitate the sessions and help participants gain support from one another.

The support group provides parents and loved ones with ways to cope with adolescent children and younger loved ones living with mental health issues. The first meeting was held on January 21st, from 12:30 to 2 p.m. and will continue to meet every other week.

NAMI Queens/Nassau Welcomed Miss Teen New York

On January 21st, Arinna Lekharj, Miss Teen New York, presented for NAMI Queen/Nassau’s Family-to-Family and Peer-to-Peer group. Lekharj shared her journey with depression and her decision to choose Mental Health as her topic when she competed for Miss Teen New York. Her passion, experiences and resiliency are a great example of how seeking help, family support and utilizing coping tools can be life changing. We offer Arinna a special thank you for her commitment to spreading mental health awareness.
NAMI-NYS and NAMI NYC Metro Participated in NYS School Psychologist Appreciation Day Conference

This past November, NAMI-NYS and NAMI Metro NYC were invited to the 2019 NYS School Psychologist Appreciation Day Conference at the American Federation of Teachers in NYC with over 500 clinicians in attendance. Tina Lee, NAMI-NYS Community Education and Outreach Manager, offered an overview of NAMI programs. NAMI-NYC Metro Family Coordinator, Almarie Tulloch and NAMI-NYC Metro Young Adult Ending the Silence Presenter, Nina Rondon, provided an Ending the Silence presentation for students.

NAMI NYC-Metro Hosted Regional Trainings

This past December, NAMI NYC Metro hosted regional trainings for Family Support Group and Connections facilitators. Facilitators from NAMI NYC-Metro, NAMI Westchester, and NAMI Huntington attended and became certified. Special thanks to our state trainers, Almarie Tulloch, our FSG trainer, and Deniece Chi, our Connections trainer.

NAMI NYC Staten Island Held 29th Annual Award Celebration

This past November, NAMI NYC Staten Island held their 29th Annual Awards Celebration.

Pete Shiffman, RN, of NAMI NYC Staten Island stated, “It was truly a family reunion, a gathering of individuals connected by their desire to improve the lives of those who live with mental illness.”

NAMI NYC Staten Island and NAMI-NYS would like to congratulate Behavioral Health Nurses, Dr. Joel Idowu, Dr. Constance Salhany and Howard Weiner for their outstanding work and commitment to their community!
NAMI Rockland Held Annual 5K Run/Walk for Wellness

On September 19th, NAMI Rockland held its first annual 5K Run/Walk for Wellness. NAMI Rockland Community Relations Manager, Heidi Vandiver reported that, “The event was a huge success and we are so grateful to have surpassed our goals with 322 participants coming out to support NAMI Rockland on that beautiful September morning.”

Please save the date for NAMI Rockland’s 2020 5K Run/Walk for Wellness on September 13th.

NAMI Rockland Celebrated the Holidays at the Rockland Psychiatric Center

This past December, NAMI Rockland held a holiday party for the residents of the Rockland Psychiatric Center. Special thanks to NAMI Rockland’s Board President, Sandra Wolf, and NAMI Rockland’s Community Outreach Coordinator, Heidi Vandiver, for organizing the event and special thanks to everyone who participated!

NAMI Rockland Held Annual Breaking the Silence Public Forum

On October 23rd, NAMI Rockland held its Annual Breaking the Silence Public Forum at Rockland Community College. The topic this year was Suicide Awareness and Resilience: Finding Hope, Healing & Health.

Dr. Marianne Goodman, a professor of Psychiatry at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, spoke on her research focusing on novel treatment development, including psychotherapy, medication and tele-health approaches, in conjunction with biomarker studies. Colleen Casey Johnson gave her personal story of surviving suicide, intense psychotherapy, medication and TMS along with her remission from major depressive disorder and almost total elimination of suicidal ideation that began in childhood.

NAMI Rockland would like to thank the presenters and volunteers who made this event such a success!
NAMI Rockland Held an Advocacy Town Hall with NAMI-NYS

On January 28th, NAMI Rockland hosted an Advocacy Town Hall at the Finkelstein Memorial Library in Spring Valley, NY. Brigid Pigott and Mariel Piña, with the Rockland County Department of Mental Health, gave an update on Mental Health Services available to both adults and children in Rockland County. NAMI-NYS Associate Director, Public Affairs, Matthew Shapiro joined and followed with a passionate and informative discussion of the NAMI-NYS Legislative Agenda and information on the 2020 Legislative Advocacy Day being held March 3rd in Albany. Matthew inspired the audience to be informed and take action! The presentation was followed by a lively discussion and Q&A. NAMI Rockland had a full house and were very happy to so many residents come out to show their support for Mental Health Advocacy!

NAMI Orange County

NAMI Orange County Celebrated the Graduates of their Family-to-Family Class

NAMI Orange County offered a big congratulation to their November Family to Family Graduates. Special thanks to NAMI-NYS Board Member and NAMI Orange County member, Dhanu Sannesy and NAMI Orange County member, Patricia Seaton who taught the Family-to-Family class.

Buffalo & Erie County

NAMI Buffalo & Erie County Introduced New Family Support Group and Plans to Expand to Niagara County

On January 25th and 26th, NAMI Buffalo & Erie County and NAMI Rochester trainers Pat Sine and Jodie Terhune, held a Family Support Group training at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center, bringing on eight new facilitators. The groups will be co-facilitating this new Family Support Group twice a month at the Medical Center.

NAMI Buffalo & Erie County also plans to expand access to Family Support Groups in the city of Buffalo and Niagara County’s Lockport area in the coming year. Executive Director of NAMI Buffalo & Erie County, Michele Brooks, stated, “These new facilitators and groups will significantly increase access to family support for Western New York families that depend on public transportation in our cities and in the more rural, eastern areas of Niagara County. This is an important step in helping many more families that need support to effectively address the challenges of a loved one’s mental illness.”
Cayuga

NAMI Cayuga County Participated in Auburn Holiday Parade

NAMI Cayuga Presidents and Literacy Volunteers, Bart and Terri Wasilenko, participated in Auburn's Holiday Parade. They rode on the Holiday Pirate ship float and served as Santa's helpers by handing out books to the children in an effort to spread mental health awareness and literacy. Bart and Terri stated, "Wherever we go we represent our NAMI affiliate."

Schenectady

NAMI Schenectady Visited SUNY Schenectady County Community College

This past November, Cynthia Seacord of NAMI Schenectady tabled at SUNY Schenectady County Community College's Health Fair. Cynthia provided students and staff with NAMI information and resources.

Chemung County

NAMI-NYS Welcomes NAMI Chemung County

On September 24, at the Steele Memorial Library, community members in Chemung County held a meeting for those interested in starting up a NAMI Chemung County affiliate. The room was full of eager people ready to learn more about NAMI's mission. In the past, there had been a small NAMI affiliate called NAMI Chemung & Steuben Counties, which unfortunately dissolved a few years ago.

As of 2020, NAMI Chemung County is an official NAMI affiliate. NAMI Chemung continues to recruit members and volunteers. If you would like to be a part of NAMI Chemung County please contact August Troccia at (607) 267-2335. NAMI-NYS would like to welcome and congratulate our newest addition to the NAMI family!
NAMI Rochester Held Suicide Means Reduction Event

On September 13th, NAMI Rochester held a special event in conjunction with Partners in Suicide on Means Reduction in Suicide Prevention. NAMI-NYS Associate Director, Public Affairs, Matthew Shapiro presented on why NAMI-NYS supports Emergency Risk Protection Orders and detailed the newly introduced Nicole’s Law bill and how it will contribute to the reduction of suicide. Crisis Intervention Team Commander and Rochester Police Department Sgt., Steve Boily and Suicide Prevention Coordinator and Veterans Health Administrator, Kelly Mohrman also presented at the event.

NAMI Rochester’s Kristina Mossgraber Featured in Time Magazine Feature on Suicide

This past October, NAMI Rochester’s Kristina Mossgraber was included in Time Magazine’s feature on suicide. Kristina’s story is used as an introduction to the topic as she details how she began having suicidal thoughts at a young age and as she put it, how “I was so good at hiding it and kind of normalizing it.”

The article details Kristina’s two suicide attempts and highlights doctors’ failures during her first attempt, as she explains, “They didn’t think I was suicidal enough.” It also includes the beneficial treatment she received in the community setting after her second attempt and her recovery journey. Kristina stated, “I had a lot of great people who encouraged me to keep going, and get better, and go home and start this hard work of recovery. People listened to me and treated me like a human being.”

In addition, the article details her work with NAMI Rochester and her work as a member of an advisory board at the same hospital that had once turned her away following her first attempt.

NAMI Sullivan

NAMI Sullivan Hosted a Performance of Zak Sandler’s Inside My Head

This past summer, NAMI Sullivan County offered a special presentation of 2018 NAMI-NYS Young Leader Award winner Zak Sandler’s show Inside My Head at the Tavern at Forestburgh Playhouse. This was a perfect setting as they offered a lovely buffet dinner before the show and the intimate playing space lent itself beautifully for the performance. There was a great crowd that rose to its feet for a thunderous standing ovation. The event also generated a lot of meaningful dialogue in the talkback session. Assembly Mental Health Chair Aileen Gunther was among the attendees. Zak and his troupe of talented actor/singers were so gracious and stayed and spoke to all the participants after the talkback.
NAMI Mid-Hudson Visited Marist College

On December 3rd, NAMI Mid-Hudson President Sam Finnerman, Executive Director, George Czomyj, Board Member and Membership Chair, Renee Tancin, and Program Director, Jo Ann Brown visited Marist College and attended Dr. Jennifer Robinette’s class. The NAMI Mid-Hudson team was invited to view students’ final presentations on their NAMI affiliate.

We offer a special thank you to Dr. Robinette and the Marist students, for learning about and supporting NAMI Mid-Hudson and mental health support, education and advocacy.

NAMI Mid-Hudson Celebrated their Family-to-Family Graduates

Congratulations to NAMI Mid-Hudson’s 27 December Family-to-Family graduates.

The graduates offered NAMI Mid-Hudson and their teachers, Judy and Kevin Walker, a special thank you:

“We have enjoyed our time together. Thank you for sharing your stories and everything you have done to help each and every one of us in the class. It’s been such a wonderful journey, and we feel so much better equipped and supported. Thank you! Thank you and thank you again!”

NAMI Mid-Hudson Presented Ending the Silence at Dover High School

On November 6th and 7th, NAMI Mid-Hudson New Young Adult Presenter, Avannah Torok and Annabel Banks shared an Ending the Silence presentation with the staff and students at Dover High School.

We offer a special thank you to Emily Krieger Dover’s Health Teacher for arranging the visit.

NAMI-NYS and NAMI Mid-Hudson Trained SUNY Ulster Staff in Mental Health First Aid

This past September, NAMI-NYS Community Education and Outreach Manager, Tina Lee and NAMI Mid-Hudson Program Director, Jo Ann Brown trained SUNY Ulster Faculty in Mental Health First Aid.

With SUNY Ulster’s participation, Tina and Jo Ann were able to provide SUNY Ulster’s staff with mental health education and resources to better support their students.

NAMI Mid-Hudson Presented at New Paltz High School

On January 13th and 14th, NAMI Mid-Hudson held two days of Ending the Silence presentations at New Paltz High School.

Jo Ann Brown, NAMI MH Program Coordinator, arranged the presentations and presented with Heather Pitcher, NAMI MH Young Adult Presenter, on the first day. Sherrill Murray-Lazarus, NAMI MH’s newest Lead Presenter, gave her very first NAMI presentation on the second day. Jennifer Tancin, a NAMI MH Volunteer, put together all the student packets for the events. Over the course of the two days, the NAMI MH team presented to over 90 students.

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NAMI Columbia County Provided Holiday Support

This past December, NAMI Columbia County provided Holiday cards to residents living with mental health issues and delivered holiday platters to various mental health agencies in their county. The platters were tokens of appreciation for agencies’ staffs, whose commitment to serving members of their community is greatly appreciated.

NAMI-NYS and NAMI Huntington Rallied to Bring It Home

On December 12th, Ariel Coffman, NAMI NYS’s Board President, and Jayette Lansbury, NAMI Huntington’s President, joined Bring It Home’s statewide rallies to urge Governor Cuomo to increase reimbursement rates for mental health housing programs.

Along with investing in human services, supporting mental health housing programs is also a leading priority of NAMI-NYS’s 2020 Action Agenda.

NAMI Huntington Held Annual Holiday Drive at Kirby Forensic Psychiatric Center

This past December, NAMI Huntington held their Annual Holiday Drive for residents of Kirby Forensic Psychiatric Center. With the generous donations of their community members, they were able to beat their goal and collect 350 pairs of new socks, 350 Holiday cards, 350 puzzle books and 350 candy canes.

Jayette Lansbury, President of NAMI Huntington, reported that the residents and staff were very grateful. And she reminded us, that no one should be forgotten, especially around the holidays.
Establish a NAMI Affiliate Near You!

Please contact NAMI-NYS if you have interest in establishing a NAMI Affiliate for your community.

NAMI-NYS is excited about expanding NAMI’s reach throughout our state. We are committed to providing all of our counties and communities with resources to assist you throughout this process.

There are essentially three major steps involved when forming a new NAMI Affiliate. These steps gradually increase your NAMI Affiliate’s capacity to support itself, as well as the members of your community who would like to benefit from your services.

Currently there are 24 NAMI Affiliates that cover 40 Counties in New York State. Meaning, there are still 22 counties that do not have a NAMI presence. Help us create a NAMI presence in all the counties in New York State!

Please contact Tammie Paradis, Affiliate Development Coordinator at (518) 462-2000 x104 and/or tammie@naminys.org.

Capital Region

NAMI Capital Region Celebrated the Graduates of their Family-to-Family Class!

Congratulations to the graduates of the NAMI Capital Region NY’s Family-to-Family program on December 16th. And we offer a special thank you to the teaching team, Jeff Kellert, Bonnie Nasca, and Pam Slotsky.

NAMI-NYS and NAMI Capital Region Participated in Legislative Disability Awareness Day

On Wednesday, January 29th, NAMI-NYS and NAMI Capital Region participated in the annual Legislative Disability Awareness Day at the Legislative Office Building in Albany. The day brought together organizations and lawmakers to discuss the issues that affect those with disabilities and ways to address them to improve the lives of all those who live with disabilities and their caregivers.

NAMI exhibited at the event allowing us to educate legislators, their staff and the public on mental health issues and our 2020 Action Agenda.

NAMI Capital Region NY President Robin Cole Participated in Congressman Paul Tonko’s “Faces of Healthcare” Conversation

NAMI Capital Region NY President, Robin Cole, participated in Congressman Paul Tonko’s (D-NY-20) “Faces of Healthcare” meeting in Albany. Congressman Tonko hosted a series of conversations around the Capital Region to get more information on how healthcare impacts his constituents.

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We are Most Grateful to Those Who Made Financial Donations To NAMI-NYS During The 3rd and 4th Quarter 2019

**Up to $99**
Susan Bucher, Meg Carroll, Jessica Chamis, Margaret Connors, Janet & Jim Comell, Peter & Mary Cureau, Gloria Gallagher, Rachel Ainslie-Hamblin, Sonia Haney, Barbara Hilke, Susan Hoffman, Joanne Honeywell, Kevin Judge, Joel Kullas, Jeannine Laverty, Jeanne Liney, Margaret Marker, Gregg Modell, National Grid, Mary Reed, Debbie Rhatigan, Rina Riba, Gina Santorelli, Kim Sprague, Alexander Toth, Ann White, Sally Wisnoski, Ira Wolfe

**$100 to $199**
Fred Anders, Steven Armer, Rosemarie Ciallini, Miriam Davis-Doem, Louis and Cherie Gold, Carla Hogan, Lawrence Karp & Elizabeth Susman Karp, Diane McCarron, Gabrielle McClinton, Mark Neustadt, Margot Razziano

**$200-$499**
IUOE Local 542, Lavelle & Finn, LLP, Murray Lambert

**$500 to $999**

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Trustco Bank, Dr. Charles Walowitz

**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.
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