



nami

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Mercer

Celebrating 30 years

April 2014

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Our Mission

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

NAMI Mercer Calendar

For regular support meetings, see Page 8

PUBLIC EDUCATION MEETINGS

AT THE NAMI CENTER

April 15 (Tuesday)

7:30 to 9 p.m.

Schizophrenia — Diagnosis and Treatment of This Often Misunderstood Condition

*David Nathan, MD, DFAPA
Clinical Associate Professor,
Dept. of Psychiatry,*

*Robert Wood Johnson Medical School,
Piscataway*

May 20 (Tuesday)

7:30 to 9 p.m.

Borderline Personality Disorder

*Rikki Bobchin, LCSW,
Executive Director,
DBT Center of NJ,
Lawrenceville*

June 17 (Tuesday)

7:30 to 9 p.m.

Special Needs Trusts and Estate Planning

*Eileen Seigeltuch, Esq.,
Hinkle, Fingles
& Prior, Attorneys at Law,
Lawrenceville*

IT'S TIME to Walk for Mental Health

SATURDAY, MAY 17, 2014

NAMI Mercer officially launched its fundraising campaign for the 2014 NAMIWalk at a kickoff luncheon on Mar. 13. Generously sponsored each year by Janssen Pharmaceuticals at their Titusville campus, the event was attended by approximately 70 NAMI

Mercer team captains, members, sponsors, and supporters. The luncheon provided attendees with an opportunity to learn more about NAMI Mercer's mission and the tools needed to build a successful Walk team.

Group Product Director Rob Miller welcomed NAMI Mercer on behalf of Janssen and Honorary Walk Chair Michelle Kramer (Vice President, US Neuroscience Medical Affairs). "Supporting NAMI is one way that Janssen expresses its commitment to the local community," said Miller. "We are pleased to provide a facility for you to gather."

NAMI Mercer Director of Development Christine Bakter welcomed Lori Jacobi, who represented premiere sponsor Otsuka America Pharmaceuticals. Christine also thanked other sponsors who already have contributed \$1,000 or more to the 2014 Walk: Janssen Pharmaceuticals; The Times of Trenton; Alexander Road Associates; Catholic Charities (Diocese of Trenton);

Investors Bank; Mercer County Woman; the Honorable Joseph and Nancy Irenas, and Pride Industries. Our fundraising goal this year is \$150,000.

Captains who registered their teams online and made a donation prior to the

kickoff lunch were entered into a drawing for free vacation accommodations in the Caribbean donated by Elite Island Resorts. Josie Reyes and Danita Saunders-Davis were the lucky prize



winners. Additional fundraising incentives are in place. Any supporter who secures a new corporate sponsor at \$250 or higher will be entered into a sweepstakes for a \$500 gift certificate for airfare courtesy of Frontier Airlines. The captain whose team raises the most money will receive a gold watch, donated by Dave's Jewelers of Hamilton Square.

For the third consecutive year, our NAMIWalk will be hosted by ETS in Princeton. Walkers will enjoy an on-site wellness fair, music, entertainment, food, and the company of more than 1,000 like-minded participants who share the mission of reducing the hurtful stigma so often associated with mental illness. The NAMI Mercer Walk is a unique opportunity to join together in strength,

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Happy Anniversary to Us!

Turning thirty is a major milestone for each of us. What do you associate with this birthday? Achieving full independence? Settling into a stable lifestyle? Knowing who you are? Being comfortable in your own skin? Approaching middle age?

There are many words of wisdom and humor on this subject, but here are just a few:

C.S. Lewis said: "Thirty was so strange for me. I've really had to come to terms with the fact that I am now a walking and talking adult."

Bette Midler observed: "After thirty, a body has a mind of its own."

The Talmud asserts: "At age thirty, one receives strength."

What does it mean for an organization like NAMI Mercer to turn 30? First of all, this significant anniversary offers us the opportunity to reflect on our past accomplishments with pride. NAMI Mercer has been there when individuals and families needed us—answering their calls, listening with empathy, providing support and education about mental illness and recovery,

and sharing hope.

We have advocated for improved services in hospitals and the community and fought for supportive housing and a better quality of life for all who are affected by mental illness. The mission that guided our founders in 1984 continues to inspire and direct us today. Our anniversary is a special time to honor those who have worked so diligently and achieved so much in the past 30 years.

Turning thirty also means we now have the experience and hopefully the wisdom to take stock of ourselves in order to set a direction for the future. Perspective is what helps us to make sense of the world around us, judge what is important, and understand the strategies that work. At age thirty, NAMI Mercer has the historical context to set goals for the coming year(s) based on a mature awareness of current challenges in Mercer County, the state, and the nation.

Finally, our accomplishments over the past 30 years give us power and strengthen our resolve to continue the fight on behalf of our community.

It is **TIME**—now, more than ever—for an honest discussion about mental illness, mental health, and recovery.

It is **TIME** to eradicate stigma through education and understanding.

It is **TIME** for people to receive the treatment and consideration they deserve. Our mission to improve the lives of people who are affected by mental illness is as important as it has ever been.

We at NAMI Mercer are in it for the long haul. We have an incredibly dedicated and gifted membership and new people are joining us all the time. As you consider your involvement in NAMI Mercer for 2014 and beyond, be assured that there is important and challenging work for all of us to do, friends to share the load, and rich rewards for our efforts. Thank you for your part in our making history together. You are **NOT** alone.

Best regards,

Sally Osmer

Executive Director



Sally Osmer



Photo by Elfin Johanson

WALK *continued from Page 1*

friendship, and purpose to support an organization dedicated to individuals and families on their journey to wellness and recovery.

The Walk is a very important event that raises the much needed funding to sustain NAMI's free education, support, outreach and advocacy services that benefit those in greater Mercer County who face the challenges of mental illness every day.

For more information about the NAMI Mercer Walk, please contact Christine Bakter by phone (609) 799-8994 or via email at cbakter@namimercer.org.

Learn more about registration, team formation, volunteering, and sponsorship at <http://www.namimercer.org>.

It's a BIG Year!

You must have been hibernating this winter if you haven't heard that NAMI Mercer is celebrating our 30th anniversary in 2014. Just to be sure, we're kicking it up a notch. Soon you'll begin seeing special messages on our website and receiving e-blasts about plans for anniversary celebrations at our customary gatherings, including the annual meeting in June and Night Out with NAMI in November. This will be a truly BIG year for NAMI Mercer to rejoice.

There is another important reason for branding our 30th anniversary as a BIG year. During the summer, I attended a seminar where the group used BIG as an acronym for the keys to promoting organizational growth and positive change. We must Believe, Inspire, and Give.

The BIG strategy has been very successful for NAMI Mercer over the years and remains very pertinent as we enter our fourth decade.

Believe

In the beginning, a seminal group of visionary family members believed that they could make a difference in the lives of individuals and their families living with mental illness. Their belief germinated into an organization that grew from just four families to a membership of nearly 450 households today.

In the beginning, gatherings took place in homes and sometimes in churches or libraries. Today NAMI Mercer has a permanent center in

Lawrence Commons and a professional staff to coordinate our 250 volunteers and keep us moving forward.

Beginning with a single class called "Journey of Hope," we now offer a growing list of educational programs. Our support services, outreach initiatives, and social groups are impacting a wider population each year, and our local advocacy efforts, which began in the 1980's with the issue of inadequate housing, today address multiple areas of concern.

Inspire

The dedication of our founders to their beliefs inspired others to become involved in NAMI Mercer's mission. Over the years, the hard work of many people has shown what we can accomplish together. Our consumers are a great source of inspiration as they go out into the community to tell their story, assume leadership roles in our support and social groups, and re-enter the world of work.

Family members, who become certified to teach our classes, also are great motivators. They inspire others to take action by joining a support group; seeking treatment, volunteering, lending a sympathetic ear, talking openly about mental illness, forming a Walk team.

The success of our advocates in influencing elected officials to legislate against discrimination and for improved services inspires us to future activism on behalf of our worthy cause.

Give

Inspiration infuses us with the energy for creative action. When we are inspired, it's only natural for us to give of ourselves in a variety of ways — contributing our time, expertise, and financial support. In 2013, our volunteers gave us more than 10,000 hours of their time; our donors contributed more than \$300,000.

So, in honor of our 30th anniversary at NAMI Mercer, think BIG. Believe that recovery is possible and that individuals with a mental illness diagnosis deserve a life of dignity and respect. Inspire others to act by seeking treatment, supporting friends and family, and sharing your personal story. And give of yourself in whatever way you find meaningful — as a volunteer, donor, or advocate — for as long and as frequently as you can. Your belief, inspiration and generosity will help to sustain NAMI Mercer into the future. There are so many opportunities to make a BIG difference.



Karen Marquis

Karen Marquis

President

Honorary WALK chairs, 2014

A number of prominent public leaders who are committed to NAMI's mission have graciously agreed to serve as Honorary Chairs for the NAMI Walk 2014:

Senator Shirley Turner
Legislative District 15

Assemblyman Reed Gusciora
Legislative District 15

Assemblywoman Bonnie Watson Coleman
Legislative District 15

Cathleen Lewis
Mayor of Lawrence Township

Assemblywoman Donna Simon
Legislative District 16

Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli
Legislative District 16

Senator Christopher "Kip" Bateman
Legislative District 16

Assemblyman Dan Benson
Legislative District 14

Michelle Kramer
*VP US Neuroscience Medical Affairs
Janssen Pharmaceuticals*



Bonnie Watson Coleman

An interview with Assemblyman Dan Benson is on Page 4.

My Story

By Chomy Garces

Looking back thirty years is hard, but in many ways, it feels that it were yesterday when we went to our first meeting at Gloria Blumenthal's home. There, among the very small group of parents, we found that we were not alone. It was the first time that Tom and I were able to express our fears. By doing this, we felt a connection that we had never felt before, and we knew that by joining this group (which didn't have a name at that time), we were among family. Gloria, who was the soul of this group and a very practical person, asked us about our backgrounds. She immediately made Tom the treasurer and me the head of publicity. That was the beginning of a very long road of learning.

Somehow, our group moved to the Lawrence Library and became the Mercer Alliance for the Mentally Ill (MAMI). I met so many heroes in this group and learned so much from them. I wish I could remember all of the names, but their faces I do remember, and they will always be in my heart.

Learning that we are not alone and that we all feel the pain of seeing a loved one suffering from mental illness, was the glue that kept us together. We shared our experiences and learned from each other. Sometimes we could not help our family member but found that we could help others. Support was the magnet that brought more people to our group.

I think that one of the most important things that happened to NAMI Mercer was the Family to Family class. Many of us took the course at NAMI NJ, and it prepared us to teach others, but also gave us the tools to deal more effectively with our own loved ones.

As I write about the past, I want also to share an update on my daughter Rebecca. Rebecca has gone to almost every program in the county, and she has failed in each one. I was told many times by medical professionals that she was



Photo by Ron Schotland

Chomy Garces at Night Out With NAMI, January 2012

one of the most difficult patients they had encountered. Rebecca spent many years between Trenton Psychiatric Hospital, Ancora Psychiatric Hospital, Carrier Clinic, Princeton House, and St. Francis.

In my wildest dreams, I never expected to hear that Rebecca was ready to move to a new apartment with the help of Residential Intensive Support Team (RIST) of Greater Trenton Mental HealthCare. She has been with this program for five years and, at the beginning, I know she gave them a run for their money; however, recently, I was told that she is one of the bright stars in the program. If I didn't believe in miracles, I do now.

When I look back, I feel so proud of what Gloria Blumenthal's small group grew to be. I also am so proud of my daughter Rebecca.

Happy 30th Anniversary NAMI Mercer!

Chomy Garces was president of NAMI Mercer from 1992-1994.

Interview with NJ Assemblyman Dan Benson

Legislative District 14, Honorary WALK chair, 2014

By Madeline Monheit

Since the age of 27, you have been serving your community as an elected official. What initially inspired you to choose the path of public service? What has sustained your dedication over the past 12 years?

I was fortunate to grow up in Hamilton, which is a very close-knit community. During my high school years, I first began participating in community activities. After graduating from Georgetown University, I decided to return to my hometown to continue my education and build a life

with my wife Hande. I earned my Master's degree here in NJ at the Bloustein School of Rutgers University. Since my family and community have nurtured me and provided me with so much opportunity, I have had a strong desire to give back. I joined the Kiwanis Club of Hamilton whose volunteers work to build community and serve children. My introduction to politics was helping local candidates during their campaigns. When my friends and colleagues



encouraged me to seek election, I ran for a seat on the Hamilton Town Council, where I served from 2002 to 2005. I have been involved in public life ever since.

I came back [to Hamilton] to give back.

Given that you serve as vice chair of the Assembly Health and Senior Services Committee and as a board member of the Henry J. Austin Health Center, I assume that you have a special interest in the area of health. What opportunities do you foresee in either of these roles to advocate for persons

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WALK kickoff luncheon, March 13



Far left: NAMI Mercer Director of Development Christine Bakter.
 Left: former President and Walk Co-chair Bill Hayes, MD with Crystal Bradford.
 Below left: Board Secretary Maddy Monheit and her sister, Jacki Chadwick.
 Middle: Amini Sababu, member of the NAMI Mercer Walk Committee and captain of two teams (MCBOSS and her church).
 Below: Randy Palme and Josie Reyes of GTBHC.



Photos by Elfin Johanson



Far left: Debbie Grauer and NAMI Mercer Director of Operations Danita Saunders-Davis.

Left: NAMI Mercer Executive Director Sally Osmer and Bill Hayes, MD.

A Victory for Advocacy!

Medicare to Preserve Access to Antidepressants and Antipsychotics

By Joyce Campbell

The decision by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to withdraw its proposal to restrict access to psychiatric medications is proof that advocacy makes a difference. Less than one working day after the three-month public comment period ended on Mar. 7, CMS responded to the outcries of people affected by mental illness. The proposal to eliminate three protected drug classifications under Medicare Part D is dead.

"For now, for people living with mental illness, the crisis has been averted," stated NAMI National Executive Director Mary Giliberti in a press release issued on Mar. 10. "We . . . both thank and congratulate the thousands of individuals who responded to NAMI's call by submitting official comments or signing NAMI's online petition in opposition to the proposed rule change."

We all are concerned about the rising costs of Medicare. Given the aging of our population, it's not a bad idea to look at ways to cut costs. However,

when proposed cuts threaten vulnerable people such as those with mental illness, costs can outweigh the savings very quickly.

On January 6, 2014, CMS proposed a rule change for "six protected classes" of drugs. The protected classes include antidepressants, antipsychotics and anticonvulsants, all used in the treatment of mental illness.

Protected status means that, under law, Medicare must cover "substantially all" FDA-approved medicines in these classes. Thus, Medicare beneficiaries coping with serious, chronic illness have access to all the medications that work best for them.

This policy, in effect since the implementation of Medicare Part D in 2006, was strengthened by the Affordable Care Act, and has had strong bi-partisan support.

Adopting the CMS proposal would result in antidepressants and antipsychotics losing their protected status. The consequence would be a significant reduction in the number of covered medications. For antidepressants, only nine generic drugs would remain

on the Medicare formulary.

The CMS proposal showed a lack of understanding of mental illness and its treatment, especially among the elderly. Clearly, we know that one size does not fit all. Neuropsychiatrist Dr. Joseph Calabrese wrote on careforourmind.org, "When it comes to the treatment of mental illness, the clinical management of real world patients often involves 'trial and error' . . . Not allowing patients to be treated with FDA-approved treatments for their illness, and requiring that they first fail a less expensive generic medication because of cost is cruel." Furthermore, there undoubtedly would be more cost when failures result in hospitalization.

Renowned anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Please join NAMI Mercer in advocating for a better life for people affected by mental illness.

Joyce Campbell is a member of the NAMI Mercer Board of Directors.

Benson *continued from Page 4* affected by mental illness, increase access to care and reduce stigma?

Yes, the area of health is important to me. It enables me to combine my educational background and work experience in both science/technology and public policy. My involvement on the health side of things builds on and expands my knowledge of science.

From a public policy perspective, I can be part of the dialogue to improve lives. Working with the Austin Health Center gives me the chance to see "where the rubber meets the road." I have firsthand experience with the health needs of the community and the importance of expanding access to services. As a member of Austin's Board of Directors, I get down to the "nuts and bolts" of providing care. As a member

of the Assembly, I can influence high-level state policy to improve access to care. When the legislature looks at the budget, I can advocate for policies that do more than "talk the talk." We need to "walk the walk" of creating incentives for doctors to fill shortages in certain specialties and offer services to all who require them. Each of my jobs informs the other.

Were you aware of NAMI Mercer prior to our recent correspondence? If so, in what context?

Yes, I have been aware of NAMI Mercer for a long time. In working with constituents as a Mercer County Freeholder and in the State Assembly, I have seen the need for partnerships between government and non-profit organizations such as NAMI Mercer.

Over the years, my office has referred consumers and their families to NAMI Mercer with great results.

NAMI Mercer is very grateful that you will serve as an honorary Walk chair this year. What influenced your decision to accept our invitation? How do you regard your role?

Serving as an honorary Walk chair, as well as an elected official, enhances my capacity to bring NAMI's message to the community. I can promote understanding, help to fight stigma, and make people aware of NAMI as a resource for support and education.

I will be there on May 17 to support you.

There are many who believe that stigma remains the greatest barrier to improving the lives of persons affected by mental illness. One of the most effective ways to fight stigma is to speak openly about personal experiences with

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NAMI Mercer

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WALK CONTESTS



Team T-Shirts — Design a bright and colorful shirt with the name of your team. Remember that team T-shirts serve as walking billboards. Bring an extra on Walk Day to submit to the contest.

Sneakers — Decorate real or ceramic shoes in a unique, colorful way. The stigma-stomping shoes will serve as conversation starters before, during, and after the Walk. Unpainted ceramic sneakers are available at the NAMI Mercer office while the supply lasts. Bring your creation on Walk Day to submit to the contest.



Benson *continued from Page 6*
mental illness. When prominent public figures tell their stories, the stigma-busting potential is even greater. Do you have a story to tell that will help us “Stomp out Stigma?”

My mother has lived with mental illness for most of her adult life and still receives medical care. Nevertheless, she is a wonderful mother who has always been there for me and remains my biggest cheerleader. Sharing my story promotes understanding, and understanding goes a long way.

SAVE THE DATES!

NAMI Mercer WALK May 17, 2014

Register for the WALK at
namiwalks.org/mercercounty

(609) 799-8994



Annual Meeting Jun. 23

Harvest of Hope Wellness
Conference Oct. 11

Night Out with NAMI Nov. 9

NAMI Mercer Groups

Support Groups:

NAMI Connection Support Group: Recovery support group program for people living with mental illness. Second and fourth Tuesdays, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. This group is open to anyone with a mental illness, no registration required. NAMI Center. Call us for more information.

IFSS/NAMI: Support for families of adults with mental illness. Mondays, 5:15 – 6:45 p.m., at Lawrence Rd. Presbyterian Church. Tuesdays, 5:15 – 6:45 p.m. at NAMI Mercer, and Thursdays, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Kingsbury Towers, 1 Kingsbury Sq., Trenton.

Education Classes:

WRAP: An eight-session Wellness and Recovery Action Plan program for people living with mental illness. New classes started in March at the NAMI Mercer Center. Call NAMI Mercer about the next session.

Family to Family: Two Family to Family classes began in February. This is a 12-week class for family members of adults who have mental illness. Contact NAMI Mercer about the next session.

NAMI Basics, a six-week class for parents or caregivers of children and adolescents with behavioral or emotional challenges. The spring semester starts on April 30 at the NAMI Mercer Center.

All NAMI Mercer support groups and classes are free, but registration is required for classes. Contact us by phone or email to inquire about the classes.

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