



NAMI  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

# Mercer Messenger

January 2017

Published by NAMI Mercer NJ, Inc. [www.namimercer.org](http://www.namimercer.org)

Vol. 35, No. 1

## 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.*

## Time to Renew Your Membership

**J**oin or renew your membership in NAMI Mercer and strengthen the mental health movement! The higher the number of NAMI Mercer members, the greater our capacity for influence and impact in our community and beyond. Add your voice to the voices of all Americans advocating for a future of hope and recovery for individuals and families challenged by serious mental health conditions.

### Benefits include:

- Complimentary membership at national and state levels
- Subscription to the NAMI Mercer Messenger, NAMI New Jersey Alliance, and the NAMI National Advocate
- Access to valuable online resources, including the "Members Only" section at [nami.org](http://nami.org)
- Regular updates about NAMI Mercer programs and activities
- Voting privileges in NAMI elections
- Reduced cost of attendance for the NAMI National Convention and some discounts on promotional items/resource materials
- A sense of belonging to a supportive community.

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## Walk with NAMI Mercer on May 6, 2017!



**The PRIDE in Action local employee team at the 2016 NAMIWalks Mercer County at ETS.**

**K**udos to PRIDE Industries for becoming the first sponsor of our 10th annual NAMIWalks Mercer County, which will be held on May 6 at Education Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton.

PRIDE Industries, a major sponsor of the 2016 Walk, is a nonprofit organization, providing manufacturing and facilities services to business and government agencies nationwide, while creating jobs for people with disabilities.

PRIDE delivers base-wide facilities support services to the Joint Base-McGuire Dix Lakehurst (JB-MDL) military installation in New Jersey. The PRIDE at JB-MDL team helped NAMI Mercer raise more than \$130,000 last year. This revenue supports NAMI Mercer's programs and services offered at no cost to people with mental health issues and their supportive friends and family members.

Co-captains Kim Fosco and Samantha Gralla are already recruiting members for their 5th annual PRIDE at JB-MDL team. Kim is the site controller for the PRIDE contract, which employs about 150 persons with disabilities. Samantha is a vocational rehabilitation counselor. "I was familiar with NAMI Mercer

because I live with and support loved ones suffering from disorders," explained Kim. "I then introduced NAMI to PRIDE at JB-MDL, and with support from Sam, we created the walking team."

PRIDE assists persons with all types of disabilities—visual, hearing, physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioral disorders. Those affected by mental illness represent the largest percentage.

According to Samantha and Kim, there is a natural connection between the missions of NAMI Mercer and PRIDE at JB-MDL, which serves Burlington and Mercer Counties. Many opportunities exist for referrals to one another and for cross-training.

The two organizations even share common histories. "The story goes," explained Samantha that "PRIDE was born in a church basement in California in 1966 when a group of parents met to create an organization that would find meaningful work for their adult children with disabilities." NAMI Mercer had a similar grassroots origin almost twenty years later when parents began meeting in Lois Teegarden's living room to deal with inadequate community resources for their

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## Executive Director's Message

### Speak Up!

Recently, I read an article in which Demi Lovato points out the inaccuracy of the stereotypical image of mental illness-- "People with their heads in their hands and a bottle of pills nearby."

She notes that many individuals

dealing with a brain disease are successful, compassionate, and happy. She continues, "I am living my dream despite my diagnosis." This is true of a host of others, celebrities like Kerry Washington, Bruce Springsteen, the late Carrie Fisher, and many non-celebrities, including those who are part of our NAMI Mercer community.

Lovato credits access to proper treatment and a strong support network as keys to her well-being. "The people closest to me are understanding but also willing to call me out on things if they



Janet Haag

notice unhealthy behavior coming into play." She reports being very grateful for their honesty because she needs people in her life who can see what's happening when she can't. She further encourages everyone to be of service by speaking openly about mental illness instead of suffering in silence, to use their voices to break down stigma and discrimination. Glenn Close, a vocal mental health advocate on behalf of families, writes, "What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candor, more unashamed conversation."

Just the other day, NAMI Mercer volunteer Carol Kivler mentioned joining a new group of professionals called The Stability Network. Their goal — to be living proof that it is possible to thrive with a mental health condition in the workplace and in life.

They share their stories to offer insight and hope to those struggling with mental illness and to inspire confidence among employers who might hire them.

The rise of more people willing to be public advocates, giving voice to what it means to live successfully with bipolar

disorder or anxiety or recurring depression or schizophrenia — whatever the diagnosis — is a strong indication we are on our way to a better future. We are incredibly proud of all those at NAMI Mercer who share their stories to motivate others on their journeys of recovery.

Beginning a new year is a wonderful time to take stock of where we are and where we're headed. Think about the accomplishments of which you are most proud, the people in your life who lend support and keep you honest, and the dreams you are working to achieve. An illness does not comprise someone's entire identity.

Start a conversation in which you share your struggles certainly, but perhaps, more importantly, share your triumphs.

Remind the world that we all, no matter what our challenges, deserve to live a happy, healthy life!

*Janet Haag*  
Executive Director

## NAMI WALK

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loved ones with mental illness.

PRIDE Industries is a nonprofit social enterprise operating in 14 states and the nation's capital that employs more than 3,200 people with disabilities. For more than 50 years, PRIDE Industries has been successfully preparing people with disabilities for employment and more independent lives. To learn more about PRIDE, visit: [www.prideindustries.com](http://www.prideindustries.com).

Planning is well underway for this year's walk under the leadership of Christine Bakter (Director of Development) and Robbinsville Councilman Dan Schuberth, a member of the NAMI Mercer Board. The first public walk information meeting was held on November 1 at Robbinsville High School in conjunction with the showing of "No Letting Go," a documentary about one family's struggle to help their son with mental illness. Randi Silverman, the writer and producer of the film, led a discussion with the audience. The

theme for 2017 is STRIKE OUT STIGMA. In addition to the annual team T-shirt contest, we will have baseball cap contest. So start thinking about spring training and designing a cap for your team. Learn more about the walk's theme-related activities at the kickoff event in March. Details about the kickoff will be coming soon.

The corporate sponsorship drive is underway, and everyone can help with this effort. Please consider your business contacts — your bank, attorney, insurance agent, doctor or contractor — as potential walk sponsors. Most of the organizations that support our Walk have done so because they serve NAMI Mercer members in a professional capacity, and they were asked!

Online registration is now open at [namiwalks.org/mercercounty](http://namiwalks.org/mercercounty) to create or join a team or to sign up as an individual walker.

Please reach out to Walk Manager Christine Bakter at [cbakter@namimercer.org](mailto:cbakter@namimercer.org) or 609-799-8994 for more information on sponsorship or how to form a team.

## Membership

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An annual household membership for 2017 is \$35; open door membership (for those with limited income) is just \$3.

You can quickly and easily join or renew online at [namimercer.org/support/join.shtml](http://namimercer.org/support/join.shtml). You can download and print the registration form from our website or call 609-799-8994 to request a mailing.

Membership dues are one way to demonstrate support for our critical mission — heartfelt thanks to all our current members!

Please help us broaden our membership circle by reaching out to family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues with a personal invitation to join NAMI Mercer.

February is Membership Month—let's make it our best membership drive ever (imagine what would be possible if we doubled or tripled our membership!)

# President's Message

## Making a Difficult Decision

In the last Messenger, I welcomed the adventure of becoming president of the NAMI Mercer Board of Trustees. At the same time, I pondered the challenge of handling the presidency along with my new job as executive director of the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK). In my usual positive fashion, I thought I could manage it all.

I have to say that TASK has been a god-send in my life, providing me with a place not only to work, but also to carry out my belief in the dignity of all human beings, nurturing my body, mind, and soul. There are many challenges at TASK, ones that require time and energy, but challenges that I am excited to tackle. When I accepted the presidency, I anticipated having the time and energy to be successful leading both NAMI Mercer and TASK. I did not expect or plan on the volume of meetings that have been needed to move NAMI Mercer along. And, I did not know that my mother would become gravely ill and pass away, leaving me as the only family member to ensure my dad's wellbeing.

At the Board of Trustees meeting on November 28, 2016, I submitted a letter of resignation from the presidency. In that letter, I wrote: "It's really not the type of thing I normally do at all...I don't consider myself a quitter..." Please know this was one of the most difficult decisions I have had to make. I will remain on the Board as my passion for our mission continues strong. However, my job, my family, and my health come first, reflecting the same values that NAMI Mercer espouses.

Thank you for the honor of serving as your president for the last five months. I hope that in the future I will be entrusted with such an honor again. Until we hold elections in June, Karen Marquis, the current vice president, will serve as acting president. I am very confident that Karen will lead the organization as competently as she has done in the past.

May your journeys in 2017 be filled with peace and joy.



Joyce Campbell

With gratitude,

*Joyce Campbell*

### NAMI Mercer Calendar

For regular support meetings, see Page 8

#### PUBLIC EDUCATION MEETING

April 20 (Thursday)

6:30 – 8 p.m.

**"From Private Worries to Common Stories"**

*Sarah Vander Schaaff*

*Writer and mental health advocate, Sarah has devoted much of her time to looking at mental health issues shared by high-achieving women and families. In this discussion, she will speak frankly about her own journey, as well as the stories of families she's heard from all over the country.*

At the RWJ Fitness & Wellness Center, Clover Square,  
Hamilton Twp.

## Für Elise

By Bill Wilmot, in memory of  
Russ Atchley, a member of Just Friends

*Bill Wilmot has been a NAMI Mercer volunteer for more than 20 years. He was on the Board from 1996 to 2006, serving as president from 1998 to 2002. During his term in office, NAMI Mercer held its first "Night Out with NAMI" fundraiser, enabling the organization to hire its first executive director. Bill and his wife Phyllis were honored with the NAMI Mercer Pillar Award in 2013.*

Russ died, by suicide. We honor him today,  
Save slaves to scripture who quote, judge, and stay away.  
The Catholic Church changed; a priest blessed his ashes.  
In faith, diversity and obvious clashes.  
For guidance, Paul, with both wisdom and acumen,  
Stresses love above all, kindness absent full ken.  
What might Christ do? Cite laws? Shun in condemnation?  
Is He not God's lamb and the soul of compassion?  
With lepers He took risks to mingle, love, and bless.  
Those with mental illness, for them would He do less?  
Christ can divine mindsets. Clarity, delusion;  
Emotions, frustrations; sensory distortion.  
The full chaotic mix: shared truth and fantasy.  
Who could doubt the depth of His love and empathy?  
Mortals can imagine. The illness's onset,  
The mind misfiring and the frightening upset.  
Naught said, hope for relief. Instead a deepening.  
Silence locks the course on awareness-deadening.  
Now rapture of the deep and nothing seems amiss.  
Oblivion beckons, down into the abyss.  
Self alone, no return, never a reversal.  
Outside help, the sole hope, is clearly critical.

What awaits on return, clarity, awareness.  
Damage so evident, a scene of stark bleakness.  
No fast recovery from the base-wrenching quake.  
No full rehab from the rubble in the jolt's wake.  
Time to inventory, what retained, changed, or lost.  
Accounting determines the large and painful cost.  
Will missteps cause relapse, can side effects be borne?  
Can they self-know and — like, face their losses, and mourn?  
Can they quash urges to escape pain by descent  
And find, with what remains, purpose and fulfillment?  
Some succeed but will not make the cover of Time,  
Though their first-rank triumph is nonetheless sublime.  
Fleeing pain thwarts success. For some, death ends their strife.  
Russ, we love and miss you and vow to work for life.  
Slow successes we note. Four score, women's suffrage.  
Two score plus from Stonewall to legal gay marriage.  
History provides hope. Stigma yields to respect.  
Best practices prevail. Rot in hell past neglect!

## Turba Contento submits winning Harvest of Hope photo

Brothers and Best Friends Working Together Got to the Other Side,” submitted by NAMI Mercer member Turba Contento, is the winner of the 2016 Harvest of Hope Photo Contest. The photo was selected from among six finalists by conference participants.

According to Turba and her husband Anthony, the picture is about their two sons collaborating with one another to traverse an extremely difficult trail. The Contento brothers have enjoyed camping and hiking together from middle school to college, when the elder began to suffer from mental illness and depression.

“Getting out of bed was more daunting for him than a black diamond trail,” explained Turba. His younger brother gave him love and support throughout his struggle.”

The photo was taken by Turba’s older son as his younger brother navigated the rock scramble. Together, they made it across. “Symbolically,” added Turba, “they worked as a team to get to the other side of mental illness.”

“Keeping hope alive,” was the theme of the 2016 photo contest, which was open to the public. Photographers were asked to submit shots that depict symbols, expressions, objects or scenes that inspire and offer hope for recovery.



## Kevin Hallam, the Man With the Golden Voice

by Liz Hagen

Kevin Hallam lives in Hamilton Township and volunteers for NAMI Mercer. He met Danita Saunders-Davis, NAMI Mercer Director of Operations, at work, and she invited him to the 2011 Night Out with NAMI fundraising event at McCarter Theater. The play was “The Convert.” As a result, he became a NAMI Mercer member and volunteer.

Four years ago, Kevin heard about the Just Friends social group, participated in a Meet & Greet session, and became a regular member.

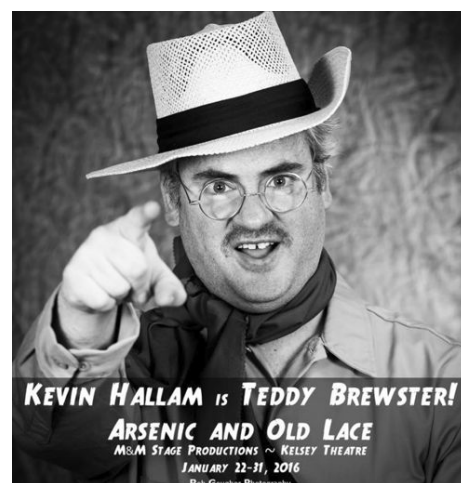
Kevin has a talent for acting and has taken part in many stage productions, most recently “Roebling,” presented by Theater To Go and based on the story of the Roebling family. He twice played the part of Dr. Andrew Smith in productions at the New Jersey State Museum and the Kelsey Theatre at Mercer County Community College. Mark Violi, author of “Roebling,” is also a Hamilton resident.

Most of Kevin’s high school education and his first stage experiences

took place at the East Mountain School, a private, non-profit, special education school operated by Carrier Clinic. “Theater was a good way to get out of the classroom,” he said. “I got the acting bug and it was a great boost to my confidence and self-esteem.”

In his senior year, at Spotswood High School, Kevin played the character role of the gun-toting Andrew Carnes, farmer, judge and father of Ado Annie, in “Oklahoma.” In January 2016, he played Teddy Brewster in “Arsenic and Old Lace” at the Kelsey Theater. “My favorite part is probably Teddy Brewster. I’ve played him twice already, and I love to blow that horn! I also have a dream to one day star in a film by Quentin Tarantino. I even have an entry on IMDb,” he says.

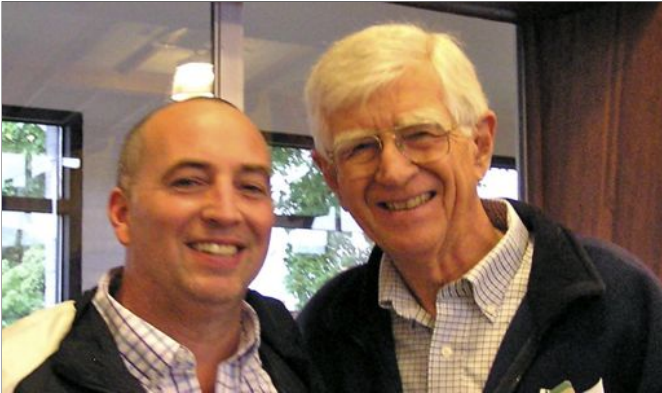
Kevin works at the Amazon fulfillment center in Robbinsville. His routine is four days a week from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. He started as a temporary employee but is now full time, entitled to medical benefits that include vision and dental coverage, and also to stock options. He also works two days a week at the RITE Self-Help Center in



Lumberton NJ, as a facilitator, and has volunteered at Learning Ally, recording audio books for the blind and dyslexic.

Kevin is trying to get more acting and voice-over opportunities through his website: [www.kevinhallam.com](http://www.kevinhallam.com). It’s called “Kevin Hallam’s Vault of Voices,” and offers several demos of his speaking style. His PSA recording on mental illness is very moving: “Friends can play a beneficial role in the recovery process. I am a friend. Are you a friend?”

## Harvest of Hope, Oct. 1



Top, l to r: Susan Mulhern and Carol Rickard. Top right: Kevin Hines (keynote speaker) and Tricia Baker (A.I.R. founder). Middle left: Paul Marsland with father John Marsland. Middle right: Lauren Nacht and Christine Bakter.

## Night Out with NAMI, Nov. 6



NAMI Mercer Board members in ragtime costume: seated, Joyce Campbell. Standing (l to r) Coleen Burrus, Janet Haag, Lori Jacobi, Michelle Santoro, Robert Hedden, Madeline Monheit, Tom Nied, Karen Marquis.

# Former NAMI Mercer Board Members Star in WebMD Training Modules

Former NAMI Mercer Board members Carol Kivler and Akavar Dylutra had the chance to be movie stars for a day last August, when they were invited to WebMD's Manhattan studio for the taping of two mental health education videos. Carol was featured in "Why Depression Keeps Coming Back: What You Can Do about It" and Akavar in "Side Effects from Depression Medicine: What They Are and How to Cope."

The opportunity presented itself when Lisa Calderwood, associate scientific director of WebMD Patient Education, decided to go back to her roots in Lawrenceville to find qualified interviewees. She contacted NAMI Mercer, and Janet Haag referred her to Carol and Akavar.

"From the start, WebMD was a first-class act," remarked Carol. Everyone treated me and my assistant Karen Meltzer like royalty — the administrators, the make-up artist, the director, the cameraman. They even sent a car to pick us up." Both her parts and Akavar's were completed in one take.

Akavar also was impressed by WebMD's professionalism. "I was permitted to express myself without influence, and they did not use my statements out of context."

Both Akavar and Carol were pleased that WebMD chose to give voice to consumers. "Consumer stories have power. I made it. So can you," said Carol. Akavar further believes that consumers who have insight into their own recovery can change the system.

Carol, NAMI Mercer's 2015 Pillar Award winner, has had an amazing journey from a person paralyzed by clinical depression to a compelling spokesperson for recovery. First diagnosed with mental illness in 1990, she has had four acute episodes, each time requiring hospitalization and multiple electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) treatments. During her recovery, Carol has dedicated herself to fighting stigma, raising awareness, fundraising for

NAMI, and spreading hope. Several years ago, Carol founded Courageous Recovery, a non-profit organization, to dispel the myths and stigma surrounding mental illness. An accomplished author, Carol generously contributes 15 percent of the revenue from her sales to NAMI Mercer. She recently donated the \$250 compensation from WebMD to Courageous Recovery

Akavar worked for more than 30 years as a project manager in the corporate world while suffering from undiagnosed severe depression and anxiety. Now he is sharing his work experience combined with what he has learned in recovery to assist others in finding their way to happy and productive lives. Currently employed as a peer specialist in a psychiatric emergency facility, he also is a certified WRAP® facilitator with experience in leading evidence-based-practice WRAP® workshops, NAMI Connection, and other peer-support activities. In 2014, he was recognized by NAMI NJ as an "In Our Own Voice Star" for doing more than 100 presentations.

In the making of his WebMD training video, Akavar had three speaking segments. In the first, he advised viewers to continue taking their meds even if they experience negative reactions but to speak to their physicians about alternatives.

Regarding weight gain, Akavar confided that his weight has always been a challenge but that his meds did not contribute to the problem. Concerning daytime sleepiness, he overcame this issue by taking his meds at night. He advised viewers to establish good sleep hygiene.

Carol had the opportunity to speak four times. First, she listed the warning signs that her depression was returning—sleep deprivation, racing thoughts, loss of appetite, withdrawal from people, sense of being in a compression helmet, aches and pains,



**Akavar Dylutra**



**Carol Kivler**

inability to make decisions, and inability to concentrate. "I begin losing Carol," she explained.

She then suggested tools for recovery including keeping two journals: one to track symptoms and another to record what you are grateful for each day. In addressing medication therapy, she urged viewers to accept their illness and understand that drugs are only one part of recovery.

She acknowledged fears about starting a new medication. Will it work? How long will it take to kick in? Carol's last bit of wisdom was about the importance of hope in recovery.

Carol and Akavar's education videos went online in October. You can view them at:

- <http://education.webmd.com/depression-that-comes-back>, and
- <http://education.webmd.com/depression-medicine-side-effects>

According to WebMD Education, their objective is to "provide easy-to-understand, commercial-free coursework, tools, and resources...that help patients and their care partners better understand their condition and treatment options."

Thus far, more than 500,000 learners have accessed more than 100 WebMD education modules.

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## NAMI Gets \$3K Grant From LTCF

On December 8, NAMI Mercer received a \$3,000 grant award from the Lawrence Township Community Foundation (LTCF). The funds will be used in support of NAMI Mercer's WRAP® (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) program for adults and a new pilot WRAP® program for kids.

Akavar Dylutra, a certified WRAP® facilitator, accepted the award on behalf of NAMI Mercer at the presentation ceremony held at the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville. Our affiliate is one of 16 local non-profit organizations to receive funding from the LTCF for 2017.

WRAP®, an evidence-based practice, provides tools to adults with behavioral health challenges that help them understand and manage their illness. The program is proven to reduce or eliminate negative feelings and behaviors, increase personal empowerment, improve quality of life, and help practitioners to achieve their goals and dreams.

WRAP® recently has been adapted for use with children and adolescents. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 20 percent of youth ages 13-18 suffer with a mental health condition. With funding from the LTCF, NAMI Mercer plans to collaborate with the local Family Support Organization (FSO) to introduce WRAP® as an after-school program in Mercer County schools.



From left, Liz Read of LTCF with Akavar Dylutra.

Since forming in 2002, LTCF has distributed more than one million dollars in grants to organizations that benefit Lawrence residents of all ages. Last year, NAMI Mercer received a \$2,000 grant in support of the annual Harvest of Hope Wellness Conference.

The other 2017 LTCF grant recipients include Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Big Red Race, Dress for Success, the English School at Lawrence Road Presbyterian Church, Greater Eldridge Park Neighborhood Association, Homefront, Interfaith Caregivers, Lawrence Historical Society, Lawrence Lacrosse Club, Meals on Wheels, Lawrenceville Main Street, People & Stories, PEI Kids, Project Freedom/Heart to Hearts, and Womanspace.

LTCF is supported by three major funders—Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, Educational Testing Service, and the Lawrenceville School—and from donations from Lawrence citizens and businesses.

## Call for Volunteers — Please Join Us!

NAMI National Executive Director Mary Giliberti recently stated that she never wanted to hear NAMI referred to again as one of our nation's best kept secrets. Although NAMI is the largest grassroots mental health organization in the United States, many are unaware of our organization and its resources for supporting families.

NAMI Mercer has accepted Ms. Giliberti's challenge. Our goal is for every resident of our county to recognize what NAMI stands for, in the same way that they recognize the American Cancer

Society and the American Heart Association. To increase our name recognition and better inform the public about our programs, services and events, NAMI Mercer is expanding the scope and effort of our communications and public awareness strategies. We are seeking committed volunteers with the following skills and interests: writing and editing, graphic design, photography and videography, and marketing. If you are interested, please contact Director of Operations Danita Saunders-Davis at 799-8994, ext 10, or [dsaunders@namimercer.org](mailto:dsaunders@namimercer.org).

## NAMI Mercer Groups

### Support

#### NAMI Connection:

Recovery support group for adults living with mental illness. Second and fourth Tuesdays, 7–8:30 p.m.

Registration is not required.

#### IFSS/NAMI:

Support group for families of adults living with mental illness. Mondays, 5:15–6:45 p.m. at Lawrence Rd. Presbyterian Church. Tuesdays, 5:15–6:45 p.m. at the NAMI Mercer Center. Thursdays, 11:30 a.m.–1 p.m. at Kingsbury Towers, 1 Kingsbury Sq., Trenton (facilitated in English and Spanish).

### Education

#### Family-to-Family:

A free, 12-session class for family

members of adults living with mental illness. Starts Thursday Feb. 2, ends April 27 (no class April 13), 6:30–9 p.m. at the NAMI Mercer Center. Registration is required.

#### WRAP®:

An eight-session Wellness and Recovery Action Plan program for people living with mental illness. Wednesdays, 6–8:30 p.m., March 8–April 26 at the NAMI Mercer Center.

### Social

Just Friends Meet & Greet (Age 30+): First Wednesdays, 3–4 p.m., at the NAMI Mercer Center. Call to confirm attendance. Participation in Meet & Greet is required prior to participation in Just Friends social activities.

### In Our Own Voice:

Booked presentations to promote awareness through personal stories of recovery.

### Parents and Teachers as Allies:

Booked presentations for educators, parents, and school personnel.

### Volunteer Orientation:

First Wednesdays, 5-6 p.m. at the NAMI Mercer Center. Please call to confirm your attendance.

### Note:

All NAMI Mercer support groups, workshops and classes are provided free of charge to participants. Registration is required for education classes (Family-to-Family and WRAP®).

ADDRESS LABEL GOES HERE

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