



NAMI Mercer

Families Meeting the Challenge of Mental Illness

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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

Apr. 17 (Tuesday) 7:30 to 9 p.m.

“Healing from Trauma: Using Dialectical Behavioral Therapy Skills to Create a Better Life for Those Suffering From Post-trauma Symptoms.”

Kerry DelMastro, Ed.S., LPC, NCC, is in private clinical practice and serves as a group therapist for Princeton House Women’s Programs. She has training in DBT, Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, and other counseling modalities.

May 15 (Tuesday) 7:30 to 9 p.m.

“In Our Own Voice” Presentation

In observance of Mental Health Awareness Month, NAMI Mercer will host a special In Our Own Voice presentation featuring two people living with mental illness who will share their stories of illness, recovery and hopes for the future.

SAVE THE DATE!

June 25 (Monday) 7:00 p.m.
Annual General Meeting

*This meeting will be held in
Conant Hall*

Educational Testing Service (ETS)
Rosedale Road, Princeton

*Vote for your choice of Board members,
honor our volunteers, and celebrate
NAMI Mercer’s accomplishments
in 2011.*

NAMI Mercer Walk, May 5



Madeline Monheit’s team at the 2009 Walk. L to R: Herschel and Andrea Rabitz with twin grandsons Alex and Max, Kathryn Tolin, Kathie Formoso, Maddy with her mother Gertrude Chwick, Alan Monheit, Jacki Chadwick, Erica and Aaron Silver with daughters Samantha and Jillian.

NAMI Mercer invites you to participate in our 5th annual walkathon – the NAMI Mercer Walk 2012 on Saturday, May 5 at Educational Testing Service (ETS), located at 660 Rosedale Road in Princeton. The Walk is our most important outreach event and our largest source of income. Join us to combat stigma and raise money to support our much-needed programs for individuals and families affected by mental illness.

Join thousands of concerned citizens in more than 84 communities around the nation who will walk this year to raise awareness and to improve lives. Thanks to you, NAMI Mercer surpassed its fundraising goals in 2007, 2009, 2010, and 2011, bringing in a total of \$426,000.

Help us achieve this year’s goal of 100 teams and \$150,000 so that we can do even more to achieve our mission.

This year, our 5K Walk will be held on the beautiful ETS campus, encompassing 370 acres of peaceful woodlands. Walkers will enjoy an on-site health and wellness expo, food, and entertainment. The event will begin with registration at 8:30 am and an invigorating warm-up led by Joan Brame and her Empower Fitness Team. The Walk will commence rain or shine at 10 a.m., followed by a complimentary picnic lunch and entertainment.

Now is the time to sign up, form teams, become a sponsor, or make a donation. You can register online at www.namimercer.org or mail in the registration form on Page 7.

Unite with more than 1,000 like-minded participants in strength, friendship, and purpose to support an organization dedicated to individuals and families on their journey to wellness and recovery.

Focusing public attention on our own cause

Earlier this year, we witnessed an extraordinary example of the power of non-profit advocacy in mobilizing the public and bringing about change.

Within two short days, the entire country was in an uproar over the announcement on Jan. 31 by the Susan B. Komen Foundation that it no longer would fund Planned Parenthood's breast cancer prevention screenings. Social media was aflame with the news, and thousands of women and men (loyal pink ribbon supporters of Komen's "Race for the Cure") felt betrayed.

As a result, Planned Parenthood raised a record sum of money within several days, and the Komen Foundation reversed its funding decision on Feb. 3.

NAMI Mercer is very encouraged by the public's fervent response and plans to learn from this recent experience as we develop our own local advocacy efforts.

What will it take for us to focus public attention on our own cause?

How can we generate and harness a similar degree of passion on behalf of individuals and families affected by mental illness?

How can we make a difference right here in Mercer County?

I am very proud of the progress of NAMI Mercer's Advocacy Committee in helping us to campaign effectively at the county level. In the past few months, the Committee has defined

five task areas and enlisted volunteers to work in each area:

Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) Teams, participating in the training of Mercer County law enforcement officers. CIT has proved effective in de-escalating crises for consumers with law enforcement officers, in divert-



Sally Osmer

What will it take for us to focus public attention on our own cause, generate and harness a similar degree of passion on behalf of individuals and families affected by mental illness?

ing people from jails, and in connecting people to treatment.

Transitions and Transfers — advocating for quality, continuous treatment by our local providers to ensure the best outcomes for our loved ones. Smooth, timely, and informed transitions and transfers from one treatment level or provider to another are critically important for successful recoveries.

Trenton Psychiatric Family Monitors — regularly scheduled mon-

itoring visits by trained volunteers to our local state psychiatric hospital. The family monitors provide valuable feedback and suggest actionable improvements to the environment and quality of care.

Prisons Task Group — fact-finding about conditions and treatment for people with mental illness who are incarcerated. The group will partner with other advocacy groups for improved mental health treatment in Mercer County correctional facilities.

Relationships with Legislators — establishing and maintaining relationships with county, state and federal legislators. NAMI Mercer members will educate legislators about our mental health concerns and will promote bills that lead to the best possible outcomes for people living with mental illness.

In the coming months, the Advocacy Committee will be turning to NAMI Mercer's members for input based on your own experiences and for your support in advocating for action and change.

Please watch your emails and our publications for advocacy alerts that identify opportunities for you to influence elected officials and corporate leaders. We need your voice to add to others to make a difference in the lives of those affected by mental illness.

Sincerely,

Sally Osmer

Executive Director

From the Membership Chair

Our 2012 annual membership drive is off to a good start with 180 individuals and families joining or renewing during February. We still have a long way to go to realize our goal of 440 memberships this year.

NAMI Mercer is a grassroots membership organization that emphasizes community building and opportunities

to connect with others. We rely on the collective influence of our membership to carry out our mission.

Your voice, added to hundreds of others, makes a huge difference as we advocate for better services and policies for people with mental illness. Help us work for a more compassionate society that promotes wellness and recovery.

Annual membership is \$35 for an individual/family or \$3 if you have limited income.

Please join today at www.nami-mercer.org or by calling 609-799-8994 to request a membership application.

Thank you.

Carol Kivler
Membership Chair

NJ youth suicide-prevention bill signed

On Jan. 9, Governor Chris Christie signed important legislation requiring the Commissioner of Children and Families, in consultation with the Department of Human Services and the New Jersey Youth Suicide Prevention Advisory Council, to develop and adopt a NJ youth suicide-prevention plan within 180 days.

The youth suicide-prevention bill was sponsored jointly by Representatives Mary Pat Angelini and Dave Rible and Senator Sean T. Kean of Monmouth County, where eight teenagers completed suicide between Jan. 2008 and May 2010. In Mercer County as well, we witness all too often the tragic loss of teenagers due to suicide.

NAMI Mercer strongly supports the new law that will raise awareness and hopefully increase access to care, which currently is inadequate in our state.

Specifically, the new law calls for the identification of existing state and local sources of data concerning youth suicide deaths, attempts, and self-inflicted injuries; coordination and sharing of this data; promotion of greater public awareness about youth suicide-prevention services and resources; identification of barriers to accessing mental health and substance abuse services and opportunities to enhance access; and promotion of evidenced-based and best-practice programs.

The factors that predispose teenagers to complete suicide are many and include pre-existing psychiatric disorders as well as biological, social, and psychological contributors. Greater than 90 percent of adolescents who commit suicide suffer from an associated psychiatric disorder at the time of their death. The major risks for attempted suicide in adolescents are depression, alcohol and other drug-use disorders, and aggressive or disruptive behaviors.

Preliminary research by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) shows that hotlines do not reduce the incidence of suicide. In addition, traditional suicide-prevention programs frequently mini-

mize the role of mental illness and, although designed to encourage self-disclosure by students, these programs have not been effective against suicidal behavior.

The AACAP suggests that a safer approach might be to focus on the clinical signs of depression and other mental illnesses that predispose to suicidality. To receive endorsement



Bill Hayes Jr.

“I learn that families have been aware of depression in their children and that their treatment has been delayed due to excessively long waiting lists for in-network psychotherapists and psychiatrists.”

by the AACAP, suicide-education programs for teens must include procedures to evaluate and refer identified ideators or attempters. There is ample evidence that teens in mid-to-late adolescence, the group at greatest risk for suicide, will reveal intent if asked directly. This practice is recommended to family practitioners, pediatricians, school counselors, juvenile-justice professionals, and psychologists who wish to survey their populations for teens at high risk for suicide. Those identified should be referred for further evaluation and treatment.

The AACAP has stated that the best suicide-prevention program is a well-designed and comprehensive mental health care system that ensures easy access to evaluation, education, treatment, and support.

Many individuals who eventually develop serious psychiatric illnesses become symptomatic while attending school. Therefore, comprehensive, early

assessment of children evidencing behavioral or emotional difficulties in our schools is an essential part of a suicide-prevention intervention.

I consider the most crucial portion of the Angelini/Rible law to be the identification of barriers to accessing mental health and substance abuse services and the identification opportunities to enhance access. As a consultant to school districts in Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Somerset, Hunterdon and Burlington counties, I frequently evaluate children and adolescents who have made suicidal statements at school.

All too frequently during the evaluation process, I learn that families have been aware of depression in their children and that their treatment has been delayed due to excessively long waiting lists for in-network psychotherapists and psychiatrists. It is not uncommon for families to be told that they will need to wait three or more months before an initial appointment.

This issue becomes increasingly important with strategies to address the uninsured population by placing hundreds of thousands of individuals in NJ into the Medicare and Medicaid systems.

Without a significant increase in the number of programs providing mandated mental health care treatment through Medicare and Medicaid, more and more citizens who require immediate mental health treatment will be unable to access care. Under these circumstances, one would anticipate that suicides will increase.

I currently propose that the NAMI Mercer Advocacy Committee begin tracking through the Helpline the problems of Mercer County residents in accessing mental health care treatment. This information will enable us to communicate with state and local officials about real-life difficulties in accessing the care that is key to suicide prevention for both teenagers and adults.

Sincerely,

Bill Hayes

President

A Night Out to Remember

On Jan. 21, 180 NAMI Mercer supporters gathered at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton for our 10th annual Night Out with NAMI fundraiser. This event, which included the matinee performance of “The Convert” and an after-party in the Berlind Rehearsal Hall, raised more than \$57,000 to fund NAMI Mercer’s free programs for individuals and families affected by mental illness in our county.

During the evening, NAMI Mercer honored Kay and Janet Lasley posthumously for their pioneer spirit, leadership, and philanthropy. Former NAMI Mercer President Chomy Garces read aloud the New Jersey Joint Legislative Resolution that pays tribute to the Lasleys.

Thank you to the Night Out Committee for another successful and enjoyable event—Co-chairs Karen



From left: Michael Davila, Caylin Elizabeth Lasley Brahaney, Sally Osmer, Marc Brahaney, John Lasley, Charlie Thomas Lasley Brahaney, Chomy Garces, William Hayes.

Marquis and Laurie Russell as well as Jennifer Antinoro, Sue Frost, June Lapidow, Madeline Monheit, Sally T. Osmer, Cathy Pike, Danita Saunders-Davis, Karen Schotland, and Betty Wolfe.

In addition, we give thanks to Night Out’s sponsors, especially to our major donors Joseph and Nancy Irenas, Brian and Linda McGrath, PhRMA,

Bristol-Myers Squibb, and Lasley Brahaney Architecture and Construction. We also would like to acknowledge the 85 individuals and businesses who contributed items and services to our silent auction. Finally, we acknowledge the generosity of the members of the NAMI Mercer 2012 Patron Society.

Are you interested in becoming a NAMI Mercer volunteer?

We have many opportunities to do interesting and rewarding work, including:

- Assisting in the office with mailings and other administrative tasks
- Answering our Helpline
- Serving on committees and assist-

ing with special events

- Fighting stigma at outreach events
- Advocating for people with mental illness by joining our Advocacy Committee and working to improve Mercer County’s mental health system

- Maintaining our resource library
- Teaching a class or making a presentation.

We hold orientations on the first Wednesday of each month at 5:00 p.m. at the NAMI Mercer Center. Call us at 609-799-8994 for more information.

NAMI Mercer Book Corner

Dear Members,

Our involvement with NAMI began a year and a half ago when Susan took Family to Family and was first introduced to NAMI Mercer’s wonderful library. We have found it to be a treasure trove of information for both consumers and their families

After a conversation about the DNA implications of mental disorders among the Irish, Susan borrowed her first book (using the very simple sign-out honor system) at the suggestion of a long-time member. That book was “Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics – Mental Illness in Rural Ireland,” a study of the high prevalence of generational schizophrenia in a

rural area in Western Ireland.

At the same time, we were reading Elyn Saks’ account of her own successful journey through schizophrenia in “The Center Cannot Hold — My Journey through Mental Illness.” This book gives an alternately harrowing and enlightening description of the schizophrenic’s experience. Both of these books helped us to understand our own family issues.

As our understanding of mental disorders grew, we began to look for solution-focused books. Xavier Amador’s “I Am Not Sick, I Don’t Need Help” is a must read for family members. It is a detailed account of the evolution of a psychologist’s relationship with his schizophrenic brother. What emerges

is a concrete, compassionate, and constructive approach to a mentally ill family member.

We are interested in reviving the NAMI Mercer Book Club, which became inactive after the death of Nora Kales. We plan to hold our first meeting on Thursday evening, May 10 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm at the NAMI Mercer Center. The first book we will discuss is “I Am Not Sick, I Don’t Need Help,” by Xavier Amador. For your convenience, there are three copies in the NAMI Mercer library. If you are interested in attending, please e-mail us at scottmulhern@gmail.com.

*Susan Mulhern
Scott Mulhern*

Meet Miki at the Walk

By Madeline Monheit

There will be a four-legged celebrity walking with the Attitudes in Reverse (A.I.R.) Team at the NAMI Mercer Walk on May 5. Miki, a three-year-old Pomeranian owned by NAMI Mercer members Tricia and Kurt Baker, won the 2011 American Kennel Club (AKC) Humane Fund Award for Canine Excellence (ACE) in honor of his exemplary achievement as a therapy dog.

The ACE, which is awarded in five different categories “celebrates what dogs contribute to our lives, and these five exceptional recipients exemplify the selfless service canines perform for us every day,” said spokesperson Lisa Peterson in the AKC press release issued on Sept. 12, 2011.

Miki received his award at the AKC/Eukanuba National Championship on Dec. 17 in Orlando, FL. The ceremony aired on ABC on Feb. 4.

Miki has been working tirelessly as the “spokesdog” for A.I.R., a non-profit organization founded by the Bakers after their teenage son Kenny took his own life in 2009. The mission of A.I.R. is to fight stigma and to educate young people about mental health. Miki has spent countless hours assisting the Bakers with their suicide-prevention campaign.

A.I.R.’s slogan is “Mental illness is like air. Just because you don’t see it, doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist. It’s all around us.”

According to the American Association of Suicidology, suicides comprise 12.3 percent of all deaths among 15-24 year olds. Every day, there are approximately 12 youth suicides in the U.S. There are more than 1,000 suicides by college students annually. And, for every completed suicide by youth, it is estimated that 100 to 200 attempts are made.

“Who would think that a little dog could bring such a very important topic to national attention?” commented Tricia.

Miki accompanies the Bakers when they go into the community to talk openly about mental health and suicide prevention. He attracts attention and puts people at ease. Strangers ask to pet him and hold him. Miki is very good at encouraging communication.

“Miki provides comfort as we fight to get the message out that mental illness is a biological illness, no different than cancer or heart disease,” Tricia



Katelyn Baker and Anna LeProvost with Miki.

says. “He has been the catalyst for many conversations that help break down barriers. Many teens struggle in silence. Miki is helping them find their voice.”

Last year, the Bakers delivered their message to more than 2,000 students at local high schools. In April, their daughter Katelyn addressed several hundred juniors at her own school, West Windsor-Plainsboro High North, where Kenny also had attended. After the presentation, a counselor reported that 18 students requested help.

Miki also has provided great solace as the Bakers cope with the loss of their child. “After Kenny died, the place I missed him most was in the car,” Tricia told a reporter from her local paper. “There was such an emptiness in the car. The silence was deafening . . . I decided to bring my little

Miki with me. He has been my constant companion ever since, going almost everywhere I go.”

Tricia, who always has loved dogs and currently owns five, left a 20-year corporate career in marketing to become a dog trainer. She is a Certified Professional Dog Trainer – Knowledge Assessed (CPDT-KA) and the owner of 20 Paws Services of Plainsboro, helping dog owners to enrich their lives with their pets. Miki also has credentials. He earned his Canine Good Citizen and Pet Therapy Certification through Bright & Beautiful, NJ.

Miki’s award has inspired Tricia to begin a new endeavor. She hopes to match shelter dogs with people in need of psychiatric service dogs.

“I am hoping that we can use NAMI as a resource to connect people who might benefit from this type of service,” wrote Tricia. She is in the process of developing a request form and working out the logistics.

Psychiatric therapy dogs can learn specific behaviors to assist persons affected by major mental illness. For example, dogs can remind their owners to take medication, interrupt harmful behaviors such as self-mutilation, guide handlers to safety, alert them of incipient anxiety attacks, and provide tactile and deep pressure stimulation.

The Bakers already have their first A.I.R. dog-in-training. He is a little, 8-month-old Pomeranian named Oliver that was found in a shelter. Oliver currently is being fostered and evaluated to start training to become a psychiatric service dog.

A.I.R. will host a “Dogs Are Good for Our Mental Health” event on Saturday, May 19 at the Mercer County Park East Picnic Area from 8:30 am to 2:00 pm. The doggie walk/run will include canine good citizen evaluations, meet the breeds, demos, blessing of the animals, and more. To learn more about the event and about therapy dogs, contact Miki at miki@attitudesinreverse.org.

Experiencing the NAMI Walk – some comments

Tricia and Kurt Baker, and their daughter **Katelyn**, have participated in every past NAMI Mercer Walk. In 2009, they walked only ten days after their teenage son Kenny completed suicide.

Since then, the Bakers have devoted their lives to fighting stigma and reaching teens through their organization Attitudes in Reverse (A.I.R.).

“The A.I.R. Team encourages high schools to participate in health aware-

Joan Brame first joined the NAMI Walk in 2009, in Washington Crossing Park. Joan is the owner of Empower Fitness, where several of her customers are connected to NAMI Mercer. At the 2009 NAMI Walk in Washington Crossing State Park, she led a series of warm-up exercises and has done so ever since.

“The Walk is an opportunity to say thank you. Last year, we had posters, signs, and conversations for a few

weeks beforehand at the gym. We were not just looking for walkers, but for people to commit to NAMI’s mission. Our 20-member Empower Fitness team raised more than \$2,000 through a group raffle and individual donations. We plan to do better this year.”



Singer Amy Kuney entertains the crowd after the 2011 Walk at Rider University.

ness and suicide prevention. Teens don’t bring in much money, but they learn empathy. This generation really wants to make a difference. The Walk is a vehicle to help them feel useful and purposeful.”

Lori Ruddle is the mother of four children, ages 10-16, whose father passed away in October, 2011. Her 14-year old son was diagnosed with bipolar disorder two years ago. The 2011 NAMI Mercer Walk at Rider University was her first. She led a team of 15 people, raised more than \$4,000, and won a prize for best T-shirt design.

“All four of my kids walked last year and will walk again this year. I am really proud of them. They talked about the event at school and, just by talking about it, helped to fight stigma. Mental illness is not something to hide. It’s something to deal with.”

Pat Demers, president of NAMI Mercer from 2005 to 2008, participated in the initial NAMI NJ Walks in Westampton and Liberty Park, NJ. In 2007, NAMI Mercer hosted its inaugural walk, with Pat as co-chair. Along with co-chairs Tom Tompkins and Jeremy Mann, she paved the way for future walks.

Since then, Pat has participated every year. Although her teams have been small, she raises awareness and asks for donations by e-mail. Last year, she was the largest individual fundraiser, bringing in a total of \$2,350.

“NAMI Mercer continues to be a charity that touches my life and my heart. The first Walk was the toughest. We had some adventures. Luckily, it was a lovely day. Even counting the money was stressful. We quickly learned and set up a system.

“The Walk turned out to be a huge money-maker. Best of all though, we spread our message of anti-stigma and recovery to a whole new community group.”



Kimme Carlos wears her official NAMI Mercer apron at the 2011 NAMI Mercer Walk.

Kimme Carlos, a former outreach coordinator for NAMI Mercer, first walked in 2010 in Washington Crossing Park, where she led a team from the Galilee Baptist Church in Trenton. Kimme’s mother died by suicide, and Kimme works hard to combat stigma, which she calls “the vicious cycle of misinformation.”

“I enjoy the day. It’s a chance to get reacquainted with the NAMI family. There’s so much energy and support, and the day brings everyone together on one platform, regardless of gender, race and socio-economic factors. I really feel at home, and I am always amazed at the number of people who show up. I hope to recruit at least ten people for my team this year.”

NAMI Mercer

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home@namimercer.org
www.namimercer.org

Walk Registration Form

*Please complete and mail
or register online at www.namimercer.org.*

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, state, zip: _____

Phone: _____

I wish to form a team.

Team name: _____

Captain's name: _____

I wish to join a team.

Team name: _____

Captain's name: _____

I wish to walk as an individual.

I cannot walk, but my donation to NAMI Mercer is enclosed.

**(Mail check to NAMI Mercer, 3371 Brunswick Pike, Suite 124,
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648)**

WAIVER

**I hereby waive all claims against NAMI, NAMI Mercer NJ,
sponsors, or any personnel for injury that I might suffer in
this event.**

I attest that I am physically fit and prepared for this event.

**I grant full permission for organizations to use photographs
of me and quotations in legitimate accounts and promo-
tions of this event.**

Signature of participant /parent/guardian:

Date: _____

NAMI Mercer's Patron Society, a new level of commitment

NAMI Mercer has created a new level of commitment for our benefactors. Our Patron Society is a giving circle founded to ensure long-term stability for our organization, and reliable funding for our free programs.

According to Development Director Jenn Antinoro, NAMI Mercer has inducted an inaugural group comprising 26 families, a total of 44 individuals. The total Patron Society contribution for 2012 now stands at \$21,500.

A reception for the 2012 Patron Society will be held on Saturday, June 2, at the home of Maddy and Alan Monheit in Lawrenceville.

The enrollment period for the Patron Society in 2013 will be August to December 2012.

Qualifying donations for membership will be a single gift of \$500 or more to NAMI Mercer within the enrollment period.

For more information, please contact Jenn at jantinoro@namimercer.org, or (609) 799-8994, Ext 17.

NAMI Mercer 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. 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.

WRAP: A wellness/recovery action plan workshop for individuals maintaining mental health. Offered twice a year, spring and fall. Call for registration information.

Family to Family: 12-week education course for families and friends of adults living with mental illness. Offered twice a year, spring and fall. Call us for registration information.

Call 609-799-8994 for more information.

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