



NAMI

Mercer

National Alliance on Mental Illness

April 2015

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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

NOTE NEW LOCATIONS

April 23 (Thursday)

6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

“Stress and Anxiety Management”

Dr. Allen Weg

Founder and Executive Director of Stress and Anxiety Services of New Jersey

RWJ Hamilton Center for Health and Wellness

3100 Quakerbridge Road, Hamilton, NJ 08690

May 19 (Tuesday)

6:30 p.m.

“Now Voyager!”

Screening of the classic 1942 film with Bette Davis about a young woman’s struggle with mental illness. Light refreshments; discussion.

NAMI Mercer Center

June 22 (Monday)

6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Annual Meeting

Conant Hall

*Educational Testing Service
Rosedale Road, Princeton*

NAMI Mercer Walk — May 2, 2015

“SOCK IT TO STIGMA” will be our rallying call when 1,000 or more supporters come together for the 8th Annual NAMI Mercer Walk on May 2 at 9:00 a.m. on the campus of Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton. NAMI Mercer hosts this event every May with the dual goals of fighting stigma and raising money to support our free programs for individuals and families affected by mental illness.

The spring walk-a-thon is our largest community outreach activity and our greatest fundraiser. Since our first walk in 2007, the event has brought in more than \$600,000 in individual and corporate donations. *The Times of Trenton* is this year’s “Gold” sponsor; other Walk sponsors include Janssen Pharmaceuticals, the Honorable Joseph and Nancy Irenas, Alexander Road Associates, Catholic Charities, Comcast, PRIDE Industries, Princeton House Behavioral Health, and Teva Select Brands. The goal for 2015 is to raise \$150,000.

The NAMI Mercer Walk on May 2 will feature a wellness fair, where local vendors will provide on-site health and wellness information and services to walk participants. Additionally, there will be an advocacy booth with information on mental health issues before the legislature and ways to advocate. Complimentary food and music will be available throughout the morning and into the early afternoon.

As in previous years, NAMI Mercer will hold a T-shirt contest. Design a bright and colorful shirt with the name of your team, and bring an extra on Walk Day to submit to the judges. In keeping with our “Sock It to



Past and current NAMI Mercer presidents Bill Hayes and Karen Marquis at the 2014 NAMI Mercer Walk on the grounds of ETS.

Stigma” theme, we also will conduct a sock puppet competition. Use your imagination and some simple embellishments to transform a sock into a unique and whimsical hand puppet.

For more information about the walk and opportunities for volunteers, vendors, and sponsors, contact NAMI Mercer Director of Development Christine Bakter at 609-799-8994 or cbakter@namimercer.org. Register to walk, form or join a team, or make a donation at www.namiwalks.org/mercercounty.

Executive Director's Message

Thank You and Goodbye

During the next month, NAMI Mercer and I will be going through some major life transitions. I will be retiring on May 8 and moving to my home state of North Carolina to help my daughter and her family with childcare. As you may guess, almost every aspect of my daily existence will change, especially running around with an 18-month-old. I am very excited about my new role and relish having the time to spend with my granddaughter. This time will be a blessing for both of us.

Time is a major gift we give to one another in life. I thank you for allowing me to spend more than seven years working with you and our wonderful organization. When I leave NAMI Mercer, I will miss all the people who give of themselves to our affiliate and its mission. I know that I have received as much as I have contributed, as we have worked together to reach more people with the message of hope and the offer of help. I have found inspiration from the more than 400 members who generously offer their time and talents to improve the lives of people who are affected by mental illness.

Now it is time for NAMI Mercer—its leaders and members — to prepare for transition and change. The Board and transition team are working hard to ensure that a very capable executive director is selected. Change often stirs up many feelings — fear of the unknown, sadness about separations, and even anger about upsetting the status quo. However, with every change comes promise and new opportunities that would never have been possible had things stayed the same. I am confident that my successor will bring new life and excitement to NAMI Mercer.

I want to acknowledge the amazing gifts and devotion of our other NAMI Mercer staff members, Danita Saunders-Davis and Christine Bakter. I am so thankful to have been able to share the leadership of NAMI Mercer with these gifted women. Both Danita, who has served for almost eight years, and Christine, who has served for one and a half years, bring energy, unique skills, and creativity to their work every day. In addition, they treat everyone with genuine respect, which our members and volunteers appreciate greatly. I ask you to show your appreciation by stepping up to support them during the transition.

Thank you for sharing of yourselves to help realize our common dream.

Blessings,



Sally Osmer

Sally Osmer

Executive Director

NAMI Mercer Night at the Movies

Please join us for a NAMI Mercer Night at the Movies on Tuesday May 19th for a screening of the classic movie “Now Voyager!” This 1942 movie stars Bette Davis, Claude Rains, and Paul Henreid. Showtime is 7 p.m. at NAMI Mercer. The evening will begin with light refreshments at 6:30 p.m., and will end with a discussion after the movie.

There is no charge for this event. However, we need to know the number of attendees in order to provide refreshments and appropriate seating. Please call NAMI Mercer at 908-799-8994 to make your reservation.

Bette Davis plays a young woman who struggles with mental illness. We follow her through her breakdown, treatment and successful recovery. Along the way she learns to deal with romantic and family situations in a healthy and positive way. This movie was made at a time when psychiatric medications were almost nonexistent.

The Bette Davis character learns to overcome her behavioral health challenges solely through the skills taught by her psychiatrist, played by Claude Rains.

Directed by Irving Rapper, “Now Voyager!” was nominated for three Oscars and won one. During the movie, Paul Henreid originates the classic scene of lighting two cigarettes for himself and Bette Davis.

Please plan to enjoy this classic movie with us on Tuesday, May 19th. Call NAMI Mercer at 609-799-8994 to confirm your attendance.

HONORARY CHAIRS OF 2015 NAMI MERCER WALK

NJ Governor **Chris Christie**
US Senator **Robert Menendez**
US Senator **Cory Booker**
US Representative **Bonnie Watson Coleman**
(Congressional District 12)
State Senator **Linda Greenstein** (LD14)
State Senator **Shirley K. Turner** (LD15)
State Senator **Christopher Bateman** (LD 16)
Assemblyman **Daniel Benson** (LD14)
Assemblyman **Wayne DeAngelo** (LD14)

Assemblyman **Reed Gusciora** (LD15)
Assemblywoman **Elizabeth Maher Muoio** (LD15)
Assemblyman **Jack Ciattarelli** (LD16)
Assemblywoman **Donna Simon** (LD16)
Mercer County Executive **Brian M. Hughes**
Mercer County Freeholders: **Ann Cannon, John Cimino, Pasquale Colavita, Jr. and Andrew Koontz**
Lawrence Township Mayor **Cathleen M. Lewis**
Lawrence Township Councilman **Stephen Brame**

We Know Where We Want to Go

My very first column for The Messenger referenced a conversation between Alice and the ever-insightful Cheshire Cat in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland:

Alice: Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?

Cheshire Cat: That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.

Alice: I don't much care where.

Cheshire Cat: Then it doesn't matter which way you go.

Fortunately, NAMI Mercer does know where it wants to go. As we enter a period of change after our Executive Director Sally Osmer retires this spring, our important mission will help us choose our paths into the future. When our Alice peers into her looking glass, she will see a compassionate community where people with mental illness live fulfilling lives without stigma or discrimination.

Clearly, we are very happy for Sally as she prepares for a new chapter in her life. We are especially thankful for all her hard work and dedication during her seven-year tenure. For many of us, it is hard to imagine a NAMI Mercer without Sally Osmer.

However, I am reminded that there

was a strong and vibrant NAMI Mercer in 2008 that provided a wonderful foundation for Sally to build on. And, NAMI Mercer stands even stronger today, thanks to Sally's leadership and the hard work of our staff and dedicated volunteers. Rest assured, we are going to be here for many years to come to meet the needs of people who are living with mental illness.

The NAMI Mercer Board has formed a search and transition team comprising Dr. Bill Hayes, Madeline Monheit and Joyce Campbell who, along with Sally Osmer, are reviewing resumes and screening candidates for our next executive director.

We are seeing some very impressive submissions, testimony to the excellent reputation that we have built together. Qualified candidates want to be a part of leading us into the future.

We are also working on plans to guide us through the transition and to successfully engage and orient a new executive director in the coming months. If you haven't already visited our website, please do so to learn about our activities and progress.

You too can help in the search by spreading the word about our execu-

tive director opportunity to those in your network.

Before our dear Sally leaves us on May 8, we want to celebrate her achievements and contributions. So with this in mind, we are planning a social gathering for Tuesday, May 5 from 5 to 7 p.m.

Please mark your calendars today! I sincerely hope that you will plan to come by the NAMI Mercer Office to communicate your personal gratitude, tell Sally about the impact of her leadership on your life, and let her know how much we will all miss her.

Yes, it's the end of a chapter in NAMI Mercer's history. But I think the reflection in the looking glass is pretty good, and the future is bright.

Karen Marquis

President



NAMI Mercer and the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville – An Enduring Partnership

NAMI Mercer and the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville (PCOL) have enjoyed a close relationship for many years. The connection has grown even stronger since the Rev. Dr. Jeffrey A. Vamos arrived to lead the congregation ten years ago.

"I believe that church members facilitated the partnership," said Rev. Dr. Vamos, who prefers to be called "Jeff." Two former NAMI Mercer presidents, Bill Wilmot and Ellen Heath, are long-time congregants. NAMI Mercer Executive Director Sally Osmer and her family also belong.

Over the years, the PCOL has hosted many NAMI Mercer events, includ-

ing "In Our Own Voice" presentations and our annual "Harvest of Hope" wellness conference. "Church staff and members have gone out of their way to assist us," commented Madeline Monheit, who has chaired the conference for six years. "Special thanks go to Beverly Mills, Andrea Rabitz, and the reverend himself, who has done everything from adjusting the microphones to leading a workshop."

The church also has been a strong supporter of the NAMI Mercer Walk. A few years back, the PCOL team, led by Lori Pawar, was the highest donor group. Jill Cifelli, the associate for Pastoral Care Ministry, is the 2015 team captain.

Rev. Vamos believes that the PCOL-NAMI alliance has been mutually beneficial. "We rely on NAMI as a resource for our members' needs around mental illness." He takes advantage of his position to fight stigma from the pulpit.

"Mental illness does not come from weakness or a moral failure," preaches Jeff. Like St. Augustine, he believes



Rev. Jeffrey Vamos

Continued on Page 4

Miss New Jersey Sweetheart Stephanie Brown

Just days after being crowned Miss New Jersey Sweetheart at the Majesty Loft in Montclair, reigning Miss Trenton Stephanie Brown gave an inspiring speech at the NAMI Mercer kickoff dinner on March 17.

She spoke openly about her personal struggle with anxiety and about her passionate support for NAMI's work.

Stephanee, now 23, began participating in pageants at the age of 18, which she said is unusually late. Although her competing involved modeling (but not swimsuits), poise, knowledge and the ability to communicate were important criteria as well.

Stephanee needed to present herself with confidence on stage even though she was suffering from general anxiety disorder, diagnosed during her first year of college.

"In high school, I was challenged with symptoms every day—headaches, hot flashes, shaking, and dizziness," she recalls. "I didn't play sports because I thought I had asthma."

Stephanee learned about NAMI Mercer through her neighbor Jane

Kammer, whose son is Stephanie's friend. Together, they will participate in the Walk on the Kammer Hammers team.

"I plan to take advantage of being Miss NJ Sweetheart to help increase awareness and fight stigma," explains Stephanie.

"People stop, look, and listen when a person with a title tells her own story about coping with a mental disorder."

She advises young people to love who they are and be proud of themselves. "Tell someone," she urges. "Recovery starts with a conversation."

When asked how her parents regard her mission, Stephanie said that they



At the Walk Kickoff, Christine Bakter with Miss Trenton and Miss NJ Sweetheart Stephanie Brown.

still are learning but clearly showed their support by attending the kickoff dinner at their daughter's side.

Stephanee is a graduate of The College of New Jersey with a degree in business management. Currently, she works at the NJ State Museum. Like her parents, she hopes to pursue a career in state government.

Partnership, continued from Page 3

that the church is not a sanitarium for saints. It is a place for the sick to get well. "People have the illusion that they need to come to church looking like they 'have it all together,'" he adds. "We encourage our congregation to admit when they are in need."

Rev. Vamos knows first-hand the pain and challenges of having a loved one with mental illness. His father, who also was a minister, suffered from bipolar disorder. Nevertheless, Jeff's father regarded his illness in the same way that the Apostle Paul bore the metaphorical thorn in his flesh. His

pain increased his compassion and helped to shape his theology of grace.

For the future, the PCOL is looking at ways to expand its partnership with NAMI Mercer. The congregation is in the midst of strategic planning and has identified support for people affected by mental illness as an unmet need of the community.

Rev. Vamos invited representatives of NAMI Mercer to attend an all-congregation planning meeting on Sunday, April 26 to provide input.

Please contact Madeline Monheit at monheimt@comcast.net if you are interested in attending.

Candidates Needed for Three Board Vacancies

The NAMI Mercer Executive Committee is seeking candidates for election to the Board of Directors and invites members to submit nominations. We will need to fill at least three vacancies. Elections will be held at the Annual Meeting on Monday, June 22 at ETS in Princeton. In particular, we are looking for individuals with financial skills and an interest in development. Please send nominations to president@namimercer.org by May 1.

Support the NAMI Mercer Fund for the Future

"Ensuring Help — Sustaining Hope"

There is still time to become an inaugural donor to NAMI Mercer's Fund for the Future. Join a forward-looking group of NAMI leaders who have invested in our new strategic opportunity fund, established in partnership with the Princeton Area Community Foundation.

Ensure that NAMI Mercer remains resilient, responsive to community needs, and able to take advantage of opportunities.

The inaugural donation period ends on June 1. For more information on how you can participate, contact Director of Development Christine Bakter at 609-799-8994 or cbakter@namimercer.org.

NAMI Walk Kickoff, March 2015



Top left, from left: Danita Saunders-Davis, Christine Bakter, Phillipa Chaplin, Carol Sidberry, Sharon Green, Chrissy Thornton, Alicia Malone and Sally Osmer. Carol, Sharon and Phillipa are members of the Zeta Sigma Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA). Chrissy is the NAMI National Regional Walk Chairperson. Alicia is a member of Epsilon Upsilon Omega Alumni Chapter of AKA.



Above, l to r: Danita, Julie Maddocks, Robert Hedden, Michelle Lee. Above: Parents Jeffrey and Denise Papp with Miss Trenton Stephanie Brown (standing), who was also crowned Miss NJ Sweetheart on March 13.



Top l to r: Karen Marquis and Maddy Monheit wearing their Sock It to Stigma stockings. Middle: Sue Anderson and Louise Beste. Above: Jennifer Gonzalez and Sam Gralla.

Family-to-Family Course: A Safe Place to Share

Harris Adams and Irene Hosszu are teaching the current Family-to-Family course at NAMI Mercer. Thirteen people are enrolled.

Harris has been a member of NAMI for about 12 years. He retired 15 years ago from the New Jersey State Treasury Department and lives in Lawrenceville and in his house in Ocean City MD, where he keeps a small sailboat.

Harris is an experienced Family-to-Family teacher with a track record of nine or ten courses. He trained in 2005 under the auspices of NAMI NJ.

“Every time I teach, I learn something new,” he says. “The most significant moment in any class is when people start to tell their own stories. My heart goes out to them.”

Harris makes a point of urging people to enjoy the course and has noticed that many of them hate to see it end. They form friendships and relationships and start to feel that they are not alone in their situations.

“The only people who truly understand are those who have had the same experiences,” he says, pointing out that this doesn’t always include family members. He hopes class members continue to come together after the course is over.

Harris did a lot of public speaking during his career, often addressing groups of three or four hundred. “I’m OK with being in front of people,” he says. Most Family-to-Family groups are about 12 or 14 people.

Harris considers the Family-to-Family program very important as a way to bring people into NAMI as volunteers and advocates. Having received education and encouragement, they appreciate the opportunity to give back and get more deeply



lto r: Irene Hosszu and Harris Adams, Family-to-Family teachers.

involved. The course helps to build a basis of volunteers to work on the Helpline and NAMI’s other services and projects.

Irene Hosszu works at HomeFront and has been a member of NAMI Mercer for three years. She took the Family-to-Family training in Princeton in 2013 and taught her first course in the fall. The current course is her second.

Like her co-teacher, she says “I learn more each time I teach. And there’s so much to learn.”

The interaction with people who are suffering and anxious to learn keeps her going. Like Harris, she is moved when people tell their own stories. The fact that she also has a family member affected by mental illness makes communication more comfortable for them.

“People need to share their experiences,” she says.

Irene knows her class members are ready and anxious to learn. They

have been seriously shaken up and need to understand that their family members are really ill and should have informed help and treatment.

“One couple did not know where their child was,” she said. “Dealing with a 25-year-old family member with mental illness is not as simple as tough love.”

She also believes in the importance of self-care. “The course teaches you to care for yourself and not get too anxious or depressed.”

Advice from well-meaning friends and family members without specific training is not always helpful. Irene also has had some experience with support groups, but basically, she tries to teach people how to be independent.

One of her chief concerns is to make it possible for people to take steps to protect themselves and their family members without feeling guilty. “People need permission to call the cops in an emergency,” she says. “That can only happen when they have access to others with the same experience.”

Say It Out Loud

“Say It Out Loud” is a new NAMI National program designed to get teens talking about mental health. NAMI has created a toolkit for adult leaders of community and faith-based youth groups. Go to <http://www.nami.org/sayitoutloud> to download a short film, presentation and discussion materials.



#sayitoutloud

OK2TALK-ORG

NAMI Mercer

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Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Partners with NAMI

On March 17, NAMI National and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (AKA), Inc.® announced a new, four-year partnership to expand mental health education, awareness, and support activities in the community and on the campuses of colleges and universities throughout the country.

The very same day, four local AKA members, Alicia Malone (Epsilon Upsilon Omega Alumni Chapter) and Carol Sidberry, Sharon Green, and Phillipa Chaplain (Zeta Sigma Chapter at The College of New Jersey) attended the NAMI Mercer Walk kick-off dinner* to show their support for our affiliate.

US Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman, one of the Walk's honorary chairs, is a member of Epsilon Upsilon Omega.

AKA is the oldest African American sorority in the country. Founded at Howard University in Washington, DC in 1908, AKA has had more than 283,000 members in 987 graduate and undergraduate chapters. Its motto is "service to all mankind."

"Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority is

proud to stand with NAMI in the fight for mental health and wellness," said Dorothy Buckhanan Wilson, the sorority's international president.

"Our members will work to bring attention to mental illness among diverse populations with historically low utilization of mental health services."

Over the next four years, local NAMI affiliates and local AKA chapters will collaborate to achieve common goals. This year, the joint efforts will focus on four areas:

1. Mutual participation in each organization's national meetings. The NAMI National Convention is scheduled for July 6-9 in San Francisco. The AKA Leadership Seminar will be held in Chicago, July 15-19.

2. An AKA/NAMI awareness event this spring. Our event will be the Walk.

3. Commemoration of Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month (July).

4. Commemoration of Mental Illness Awareness Week (October 4-11).

* See photo on Page 5.

Have you considered volunteering for NAMI Mercer?

We have many volunteer positions. Here are some specific current needs:

EVENT PLANNING: Committee members are needed for the NAMI Mercer Walk and Night Out with NAMI planning committees. People who have event or fundraising experience are needed as well as people who are willing to ask for donations and sponsorships.

PROGRAM LEADERS: Work with the Program and Services Committee to coordinate our education, support and outreach programs.

JUST KIDS SOCIAL GROUP LEADERS: Help to plan and staff the monthly event for our children's social group. People who have experience with children are needed.

GRAPHIC DESIGN or COMMUNICATIONS expertise needed: Help to design print or electronic communications for NAMI Mercer, using Adobe Creative Suite.

NEXT VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION SESSION is Wednesday May 6, from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. Email us to inquire and sign up: home@namimercer.org.

SAVE THE DATES!

**NAMI Mercer Walk, May 2
ETS**

**Farewell party for Sally Osmer,
May 5, NAMI Mercer Center**

Annual Meeting, June 22, ETS

**Harvest of Hope Conference,
October 3
Presbyterian Church of
Lawrenceville**

**Night Out with NAMI,
November TBD
Stuart Country Day School**

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 to 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 to 6:45 p.m., at Lawrence Rd. Presbyterian Church. Tuesdays, 5:15 to 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. Fall classes start Wednesday Sept 30, 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the NAMI Mercer Center. Call NAMI Mercer about the next session.

FAMILY-TO-FAMILY: A Family-to-Family class starts in fall and runs for 12 consecutive Thursdays from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. This class is for family members of adults who have mental illness. Contact NAMI Mercer to join the next session.

NAMI Basics, a six-week class for parents or caregivers of children and adolescents with behavioral or emotional challenges. The fall season will be co-sponsored by the Mercer Family Support organization: dates and times to be determined, running from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

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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