



NAMI Mercer

Families Meeting the Challenge of Mental Illness

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

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

“Men and Trauma: The Unique Needs of Men Suffering from Post-trauma Symptoms”

Kameron Cassella, LCSW, is Clinical Coordinator of the new Men's Outpatient Program at Princeton House Behavioral Healthcare.

Feb. 21 (Tuesday) 7:30 to 9 p.m.

“What is Trauma and What is Our Community's Response to Trauma?”

Dekia Smith is Care Manager Supervisor at Capital County Children's Collaborative and Traumatic Response Coordinator.

Mar. 20 (Tuesday) 7:30 to 9 p.m.

“Animal-Assisted Therapy”

Tricia Baker, CPDT-KA, is co-director of A.I.R. (Attitudes In Reverse), a nonprofit whose mission is to start conversations about mental health issues and to prevent student suicide.

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.

Night Out at the Theater

Please join us on Saturday, January 21 when NAMI Mercer hosts its 10th annual Night Out With NAMI benefit at McCarter Theatre in Princeton. The event includes a matinee performance of “The Convert” followed by an exclusive after-party in the Berlind Rehearsal Hall.

The after-party, catered by Main Street Fine Caterers of Princeton, will feature both silent and live auctions. During the reception, NAMI will honor Kay and Janet Lasley posthumously for their contributions to the Mercer County community.

“The Convert,” a powerful new play by Danai Gurira, is set during the colonial upheavals in southern Africa in 1895. The playwright, who was born in the U.S. and raised in Zimbabwe, tells the story of a young girl who escapes a forced marriage by converting to Christianity with the help of a zealous black African catechist.

“The Convert” explores the clash of cultures and religions with poignancy and humor.



Playwright Danai Gurira, born in the U.S. and raised in Zimbabwe.

“We are very excited to collaborate with McCarter for this world premiere,” states Night Out Co-chair Karen Marquis. The play, directed by Emily Mann and co-produced by the Goodman Theatre and the Centre Theatre Group, will travel to Chicago and Los Angeles after the Princeton engagement.

The cost for each seat, combined with admission to the after-party, is \$99 per person. To purchase tickets, return the response card, buy online at www.namimercer.org or call (609) 799-8994. Season's ticket holders can participate by calling NAMI Mercer to exchange their seats for the benefit performance. All tickets will be available for pickup at “will call” in the Berlind lobby immediately before the performance.

Individuals or families who sponsor the event with a donation of \$500 or more will receive two complimentary tickets. Corporate sponsorships also are available at multiple levels.

Contact Jenn Antinoro at jantinoro@namimercer.org for details.

SAVE THE DATES FOR 2012

Night Out With NAMI

Sat., Jan. 21, 3:00 pm., McCarter Theatre, Princeton NJ 08540. Attend the world premiere of the play “The Convert,” and join us for an after-party.

NAMI Mercer NAMIWalk

Sat. May 5, 8:30 a.m. Educational Testing Service 660 Rosedale Road, Princeton, NJ 08541. Help fight stigma and make our 5th walk the best ever.

Executive Director's Message

Better Together With NAMI

Dear NAMI Mercer Friends,

Over the past 20 years, social scientists have observed a decline in social connections. Fewer and fewer people are joining groups, and civic organizations have decreased in size and impact.

Reporting on large research studies of this phenomenon, Robert Putnam wrote in 2000 that people are much more likely to "bowl alone." Three years later, he published "Better Together," in which he shares more hopeful stories of people joining with one another and forming creative responses to social problems. In recent years, Putnam has continued to identify ways that people are connecting, building trust, and getting involved in improving their communities.

Unfortunately, as people face the challenges of mental illness in their lives, they sometimes suffer alone. We who participate in NAMI know from personal experience that we are better together. The education and support services that NAMI provides create a strong bond among the participants. Burdens that are shared feel lighter.

NAMI's work in promoting connections is especially important because of the extreme social isolation and stigma surrounding mental illness for individuals and families. NAMI is an alliance of people that facilitates links to local, state and national resources. At all lev-

els, NAMI gives us opportunities to be better together.

As we approach the end of 2011, I am reminded of some of the ways that NAMI Mercer's members and participants are better together.

NAMI's Family-to-Family course has been recognized as an evidence-based practice that significantly improves the



Sally Osmer

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coping and problem-solving abilities of family members of individuals living with mental illness (according to a 2011 study reported in *Psychiatric Services*, a journal of the American Psychiatric Association).

This research confirms what more than 250,000 family members, including over 700 from Mercer County, have experienced for 20 years. Better togeth-

er with NAMI.

Our third annual Harvest of Hope Conference on October 1 gathered more than 150 people for a full day of wellness presentations and workshops. A few quotes from participants stand out: "When you work together, miracles happen — keep up the fantastic work!"

"I learned to hope, meet friends and get a supportive system." Better together with NAMI.

This year, NAMI Mercer recruited five new volunteers to serve as family monitors at Trenton Psychiatric Hospital (TPH). The monitors are now visiting the hospital regularly and providing valuable feedback to improve the conditions of the patients, our loved ones, at TPH. Better together with NAMI.

A recent caller to our Helpline shared that she is so grateful to NAMI for giving her the tools to communicate better with her loved one. She asked us to please continue to spread our message of hope and healing that has turned her family around. Better together with NAMI.

Thank you all for your part in helping NAMI Mercer to be better together in 2011!

Sincerely,

Sally Osmer

Executive Director

NAMI Mercer WALK 2012

NAMI Mercer WALK 2012 is less than five months away! We will host our 5th annual walk on Saturday, May 5, 2012 at Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton.

Right now, we are working with team captains and forming walk teams.

Joining NAMI Mercer's WALK 2012 is very easy. Just visit www.namimercer.org for more information and to register today to form your own team, join a team, or walk as an individual.

Together we can raise awareness and connect families who face the challenge of mental illness with the resources they need. Together, we will reduce the stigma that

remains an obstacle to recovery and wellness. We look forward to seeing you on May 5.

A major way to combat stigma is through one-on-one conversations in our daily lives — at the grocery store, the hairdresser, our places of worship, schools, athletic events, medical offices . . .

Act as a personal ambassador for NAMI Mercer. Please start the conversations NOW so that we will have the best walk ever.

For more information, please contact NAMI Mercer Walk Manager **Jenn Antinoro** at 609-799-8994, or janti-noro@namimercer.org.

Mental Illness: Nature Versus Nurture

There has been a long-standing controversy regarding the causes of mental illness. Is it primarily related to environmental or genetic factors? Experts now agree that mental illness is due to a complex interaction of both genetic and environmental factors. Today, I would like to focus on emerging new scientific evidence regarding the environmental contribution to mental illness.

The first finding involves an association between organophosphate pesticides and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It has been observed for decades that the children of farmers who use organophosphate pesticide have higher rates of ADHD.

Organophosphate pesticides are neurotoxins.

In the June 2010 issue of *Pediatrics*, a study was published that checked the urine of 1139 children to determine if there was an association between organophosphate pesticide residue in their urine and the diagnosis of ADHD. One hundred percent of the children had organophosphate residue detected in their urine, and, for every tenfold increase in the residue, there was a doubling of the ADHD diagnosis rate.

Another study published in August 2010 in *Environmental Health Perspectives* investigated a possible association between organophosphate exposure in pregnant women and ADHD symptoms in their children. This study showed that a tenfold increase in the prenatal urine level of organophosphate pesticide residue correlated with a 500 percent increase in the diagnosis of ADHD in five-year-olds. Therefore, if you are at risk for mental illness, it does seem wise to

heed the advice of nutritionists who advocate purchasing organic foods, which are free of known neurotoxins.

For the past several decades, there has been concern about the plasticizer Bisphenol-A (BPA).

BPA is used in clear plastic water bottles and the linings of food and beverage cans. Until recently, BPA was a major component of plastic baby bottles. Tiny amounts of the chemical are known to leach from these products. BPA is a proven "endocrine disrupter"



Bill Hayes Jr.

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for its ability to interfere with ordinary hormonal signaling in the body. Such signaling is crucial to normal brain development and normal brain function. Unfortunately, we frequently are exposed to BPA.

The Centers for Disease Control, based on a recent National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, suggested that more than 90 percent of people in the United States have detectable amounts of BPA in their urine. Since the late 1990s, animal

studies on BPA have generally found the kinds of effects one would expect from an estrogen-signaling disrupter, including abnormalities of the brain, breast, prostate, and genitals. BPA has been linked to inhibition of estrogen-induced formation of neurons in the brain's hippocampus region and prefrontal cortex. These are brain regions associated with mood regulation, attention, memory, and impulse control.

In the October 2011 *Journal of Pediatrics*, new research suggests an association between gestational exposure to BPA and increased anxious, depressive, and hyperactive behaviors at age three years, particularly in girls. Tests of 244 mothers and their three-year-old girls detected BPA in more than 97 percent of the gestational women and childhood urine samples. A tenfold increase in gestational BPA concentration was associated with more anxious and depressed behavior. Investigators at the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine have reported that gestational BPA exposure is associated with atypical social behaviors seen in ADHD and autism.

Avoiding exposure to known endocrine disruptors, which have been shown to contribute to abnormalities in neural development, appears wise if you have a strong family history of mental illness. Keep in mind that further research is needed to confirm a causal relationship between exposure to organophosphate pesticides and BPA and ADHD, depression and anxiety.

Sincerely,

Bill Hayes

President

Quotes from Carol Kivler's keynote address, Harvest of Hope, Oct. 1

An attitude of gratitude makes you a happier person inside. It makes you a more peaceful person. Above all, it makes you a more attractive person.

Gratitude is something that you develop. It's something that you embrace, and it's something that you learn to work with and enhance as you become more grateful every day.

When we live one day at a time, we get to appreciate what today has to offer.

You have a choice. You can get bitter or better when it comes to having an incurable disease.

Letting go of the past and learning to be in the here and now allows you to enjoy

and be grateful for all the wonderful things around you.

Small steps over time lead to big results.

Do not let your illnesses define who you are. Stand up and be the beautiful person you were meant to be because each of us brings gifts to this world. Page 3

Harvest of Hope, October 1



Top left: Ann Renee Hansard with Mark Smith. Top right, Art Therapist Jean Joslin. Left: Sue Methot enjoys a foot soak. Above, quilt-making project. Below left: NAMI Mercer President Bill Hayes with Board Secretary Madeline Monheit, keynote speaker Carol Kivler and Executive Director Sally Osmer. Below right: Laurie Frangione, and her therapy dog, Lexi.



CIT: Implementing the Memphis Model in Mercer County

By Madeline Monheit

In the fall of 1987, during a period of strained race relations, Memphis police officers responded to a 911 call about a young black male threatening to kill himself with a knife. When the officers ordered the young man to drop his weapon, he became more agitated and ran threateningly toward them. Unfortunately, but in accordance with standard procedure, the police used deadly force. The outraged community demanded a response from the city.

Out of this tragedy, the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program was born in Memphis in 1988. Since then, hundreds of teams in more than 35 states around the nation have formed and adopted the Memphis Model. These teams comprise mental health providers, law enforcement officers, criminal justice professionals, NAMI affiliate representatives, consumer advocates, and family members who work together to develop strategies for improving interactions between the police and persons with mental illness.

In 2007, largely through the efforts of Police Chief Thomas Garrity of Collingswood and an active multi-disciplinary team, Camden County became the first to pilot CIT in New Jersey. Mercer County formed a CIT Steering Committee in 2009. Since its inception, NAMI Mercer Executive Director Sally Osmer, John Monahan, CEO of Greater Trenton Behavioral Healthcare, and Jill Claudio, Coordinator of the Psychiatric Screening Center of Capital Health, have been an integral part of the Steering Committee.

Memphis Training Model

A key component of the Memphis Model is a 40-hour training program for law enforcement officers that includes basic information about mental illnesses and how to recognize them; information about the local mental health system and local laws;

first-hand accounts by consumers and family members, and de-escalation training. Sally and John attended training in Camden in late 2009.

After a year-long hiatus, due in large part to changes in the leadership of the Trenton Police Department, CIT in Mercer County is back on track. A training class is scheduled for Dec. 5-9 at the Police Department on North Clinton Street in Trenton.

“Police officers are often the first responders to psychiatric and emotional crises . . . We owe it to them and the public they serve and protect to provide them with the highest quality of training and the collaboration of mental health service delivery systems. CIT has demonstrated an ability to make the streets of America safer for people with serious mental illnesses and to provide them with kindness and help instead of arrest and incarceration.”

Joel A. Dvoskin, Ph.D

Keynote Address

CIT International Conference

Virginia Beach, Sep. 2011

“We are moving forward towards our ideal plan for training officers in Mercer County by conducting the first, of what we hope will be many, CIT training sessions right here in Mercer,” commented Hopewell Police Chief George Meyer, president of the Mercer County Chiefs of Police Association and a leader of the Steering Committee.

“Up until now, officers have had to go to Camden or Burlington counties for their training. We expect to have mental health professionals and law enforcement personnel here in Mercer that will be able to take over and conduct local training on a regular basis.”

Chief Meyer also hopes to develop a training course for police dispatchers. Emergency communications personnel are crucial to the success of a CIT program, enabling calls to be appropriately identified and routed.

Obstacles to CIT in Mercer County

According to Chief Meyer, manpower is the most pressing obstacle to the success of the training program. “Due to cutbacks, it is hard for a chief to pull an officer from his/her duties to attend a week of discretionary training. We need to convince chiefs that CIT is a valuable program that will actually pay them dividends in the end by bringing about successful conclusions to mental health consumer encounters.”

A recent decision by N.J. Attorney General Paula T. Dow approving police use of specified electronic control devices (tasers) may induce more chiefs to support CIT. Completion of a mental health training/recognition course is a prerequisite for carrying a taser. “If CIT is designated as the standard for [the mental health] component, more chiefs will send officers for training if they want to deploy these devices,” predicts Meyer.

NAMI's Role

NAMI Mercer members will play an important part in the December training. Two families will share their personal stories of interactions with law enforcement. “Our goal is to enhance empathy between the police and families and their loved ones,” explains Sally Osmer.

During the session, NAMI also will play the video “Documenting Our Presence,” which was prepared by NAMI NJ as part of its cultural outreach initiative. This film is a compassionate, hopeful look at the experiences of people of diverse backgrounds affected by serious mental illness. The documentary traces their lives through a cultural lens, focusing on the onset of mental illness, the process of coping and acceptance, and finally, their journey to recovery.

The December training also includes the NAMI NJ video “The Community I

Continued on Page 6

NAMI Mercer to offer “De Familia a Familia en Español” in Spring 2012

By Ann Renee Hansard

It is a known fact that the stigma surrounding individuals and families living with mental illness is huge, and that different cultures experience this challenge in unique ways. The stigma faced by members of the Hispanic and Latino families in Mercer County is overwhelming, and the need for services to heighten awareness, acceptance, and understanding is immense.

In September, a group of Hispanic community leaders met at NAMI Mercer to discuss mental health support for Spanish-speaking individuals and families in this area. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, nearly 25 percent of Mercer County residents reported English as a second language, and out of this group, more than half listed Spanish as their primary language.

The decided task of the meeting was to examine NAMI Mercer programs, to select the one with the most promise of making a positive impact, and to implement the program in the Hispanic community within the next six months.

Among those present at the meeting was Henry Acosta, NAMI National board member, executive director of the

National Resource Center for Hispanic Mental Health, and a leading expert on mental health in the Hispanic population. Acosta was instrumental in developing NAMI's signature Family to Family course in Spanish (De Familia a Familia en Español), which has not yet been taught in Mercer County.

According to Acosta, “Hispanic families are no different than any others in that they too need support and education about issues that impact their lives. Providing such a valuable program in Spanish . . . is a tremendous asset and contribution to the Hispanic community.”

The group concluded that De Familia a Familia was the program with the most promise. They then identified the necessary steps to implement the program. Two willing bilingual teachers must take the training in Spanish offered by NAMI NJ, all program materials must be made available in Spanish, and a training site must be found that is accessible to the Hispanic community.

Completing these tasks by spring 2012 seemed daunting, but miraculously, the pieces began to fall into place. Potential teacher candidates were iden-

tified. Martha Silva of NAMI NJ announced a possible training opportunity, and then, the weekend of the “Great Halloween Snow,” Jennie Negrón and Liliana Attar headed to Elizabeth, NJ for training.

Jennie Negrón, who participated in the September meeting as a representative of the Mercer County Family Support Organization (FSO), has been instrumental in making De Familia a Familia happen. Although new to NAMI Mercer, at FSO, Negrón serves as a parent partner and parent facilitator. Liliana is the director of the award-winning Creativebridges for Language Learning Institute. She and her husband Ricardo are 2009 NAMI Mercer Family to Family graduates, and their daughter Malena is an active volunteer.

Liliana and Jennie both returned from the training full of excitement. The details of when and where are in the works, but rest assured, De Familia a Familia en Español will take place this coming spring. There is still a lot of work to be done, and most importantly, we need to get the word out to Mercer County families. If you or someone you know is interested in this class, contact me at ahansard@namimercer.org.

CIT, *continued from Page 5*

Serve,” which won Best of Competition in the Educational/Instructional category at the Broadcast Education Association (BEA) Festival of Media Arts. By portraying the experiences of both law enforcement officers and mental health consumers, the film presents real-life scenarios to illustrate information and skills that officers need in a crisis.

At the conclusion of training week, a role-playing session will enable participants to see the techniques they learned in the classroom put into practice. The “cast” for these exercises includes a professional actor, police officers, investigators and prosecutors from Burlington Township, Hunterdon

County, the William Paterson, Linden and Trenton Police Departments, as well as mental health professionals.

Effectiveness of CIT Training

From the perspective of students, the response has been very positive. In Hopewell, officers must volunteer for CIT training. “It is not something that you can force someone to do, and then expect them to do it well,” believes Chief Meyer. “To my surprise, I had many officers volunteer, and to a man/woman, every one that has attended the training has come back with high praise for it.”

From an empirical perspective, CIT has shown to be effective in perceived preparedness, quality of response to persons with mental illness, diversion from jail, officer time spent on these

calls, and community safety. Studies report higher response rates and fewer arrests. (Tucker, Abigail, et. al., “Responding to Persons with Mental Illness,” FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, Oct. 2011.)

Hopefully, CIT will lead to even more collaboration among law enforcement, the criminal justice, and mental health community. The Sequential Intercept Model identifies points of intersection of these systems (e.g., emergency services, initial detention and hearings, jails, courts) that present opportunities to help persons with mental illness get appropriate medical care.

Without intervention at these junctures, there are likely to be more crises, more calls to police, and more incarcerations.

NAMI Mercer

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EDITORS

Madeline Monheit

Elisabeth Hagen

Board Retreat, October 22



At the annual NAMI Mercer board retreat, Oct. 22: Seated l-r: Joe Irenas, Laurie Russell, John Marsland. Standing, row 1: Lauren Agoratus, Madeline Monheit, Bill Hayes, Ivy Minely, Sally Osmer, Caryl Chambers. Back row: Kurt Baker, Andrew Hendry, Jeremy Mann, Damon Vigiano, Tom Pyle, Karen Marquis. Liz Leach and Carol Kivler were unable to attend.

Just Kids: a Mother's Story

By Katie Mulligan

This afternoon, the children and I attended a program through NAMI Mercer called Just Kids. NAMI Mercer is a chapter of the national organization, NAMI, which stands for National Alliance on Mental Illness. I have been meaning to take the children for a few years now, but it seems like something always comes up.

A friend had recently started working there and reached out to me a few weeks ago to get our family involved.

The thing about living with people with mental illness is that being out with other people can be a real challenge — especially other family groups. Playgroups are all well and good until you tell that story of the stupendous tantrum your kid threw last week — or worse, your kid throws that tantrum right there on the playground for all to see.

People offer parenting tips as if your child is neurotypical, as if you haven't tried every darn thing you can think

of, as if you weren't wishing the ground would swallow you up this minute.

So it was delightful today to be with other families who can accept my family for where we are at. We had George the Magician in to dazzle the children, and the parents met to talk about activities for the year.

We swapped some stories about local school districts and managing IEP's (individualized education plans). We fretted a bit about the future and tried to stay focused on the moment. Two of the kids tried to sneak behind the magician's screen to peek at his secrets. The kids and I talked about family pets. It was a lovely afternoon, and I'm glad I went.

So thanks to my friend. And thanks to NAMI Mercer and George, the Master of Illusion. It was nice to ignore the stigma of mental illness for a while and just have fun.

NAMI Mercer can be reached at 609-799-8994, www.namimercer.org or home@namimercer.org.

THE NAMI CENTER

of Mercer County

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NAMI Mercer Support Groups

NAMI Connection Support Group: Recovery support group program for people living with mental illness. Mondays, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. 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.

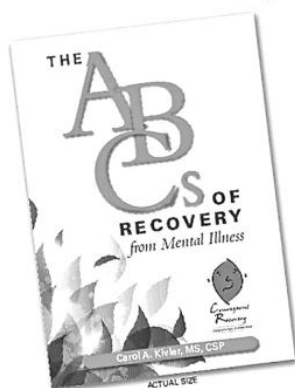
Support Group in Spanish: Every other Thursday, 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m., Kingsbury Towers, 1 Kingsbury Sq., Trenton. Call us for dates and information.

WRAP: A wellness/recovery action plan workshop for individuals maintaining mental health. New classes starting in January. Call for registration information.

Family to Family: 12-week education course for families and friends of adults living with mental illness. New classes starting in the spring. Call us for registration information.

Call 609-799-8994 for more information.

Mini Book
The ABCs of Recovery from Mental Illness
by Carol Kivler, MS, CSP



Carol's new book will be released in November 2011!

NAMI, Mercer, NJ receives 15% of the proceeds from the sale of this book.

Courageous Recovery:
*Raising Awareness
Instilling Hope
Combating Stigma*

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