



nami Mercer

Families Meeting the Challenge of Mental Illness

March 2009

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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 back cover (Page 8)**

PUBLIC EDUCATION MEETINGS AT THE NAMI CENTER

Mar. 17 (Tuesday)

Social Security and SSI Issues
Steve Leder and/or Jackie Darby
Community Health Law Project

Apr. 28 (Tuesday)

My Journey of Recovery
Valerie Fox

May 19 (Tuesday)

Family Member Panel
John Monahan, Nick Weingarten,
Patricia McCoy, Abbie Katz
*Greater Trenton Behavioral
HealthCare*

Jun. 2 (Tuesday)

**Listen, Empathize,
Agree, Partner
LEAP Part 1**
Amy Layng
and Amandalyn Saltzman
*Intensive Family
Support Services (IFFS)*

Jun. 16 (Tuesday)

**Listen, Empathize,
Agree, Partner
LEAP Part 2**
Amy Layng
and Amandalyn Saltzman
*Intensive Family
Support Services (IFFS)*

Walk the WALK!



The 2009 NAMI Mercer 5K Walk is set for Saturday, May 30 at 9:00 a.m. at Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Lawrenceville. Team Wyeth is above, stepping out from the starting line during the 2007 Walk. Our inaugural NAMI Mercer Walk in October 2007 raised more than \$100,000 to improve the lives of families affected by mental illness. Our Walk web page is up on the NAMI National site at www.nami.org (select "NAMI Walks" and then NJ). Please sign up, form teams, become a sponsor, or make a donation. Please register online at www.nami.org/namiwalks2009.htm, or mail in the registration form on Page 5.

By Jeremy Mann

In 2007, we were successful in bringing more than 700 people together to support families affected by mental illness and in raising more than \$100,000 for the important programming that NAMI Mercer provides.

This year we seek to be even more successful in fighting the stigma that continues to challenge people affected by mental illness and acts as a barrier to their seeking help. This Walk aims to raise awareness for mental health issues and to raise the dollars that enable NAMI to continue to make a tremendous difference in the lives of the people we serve. When we stand together, we tell people who are hurting that there is a place they can turn for help.

Free kickoff luncheon

Our kickoff luncheon will be held on Monday, Apr. 6, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Janssen L.P., 1125 Trenton-Harbourton Road, Titusville. This is a free event at which you can get important Walk information, meet NAMI Mercer members, team captains and walkers and help to make the Walk successful. Please RSVP to Tom Tompkins or Danita Saunders at (609) 799-8994, or via e-mail at home@namimercer.org by Wednesday, Mar. 25.

Jeremy Mann is a member of NAMI Mercer's Board of Directors and co-chairman with Tom Tompkins of the 2009 Walk.

Executive Director's Message

By Sally Osmer

Now that our organization is passing its 25th birthday, NAMI Mercer's board of directors and staff have extensive plans for increasing and deepening our impact in 2009. I would like to share some of our goals, not in order to boast about what we think we can do, but to enlist your help. I invite you to consider these goals and think about where you fit in. Please contact me directly with your ideas and your offers to work with us.

Inclusive Community: As NAMI Mercer seeks to better reflect the total population of our area, we continue to reach out to our multicultural neighbors. In 2009, we will bring a new education and outreach program, *Sharing Hope*, to African American congregations in the county.

In order to reach Spanish-speaking families, we will initiate efforts to offer the *Family-to-Family* course in Spanish in the fall of 2009 or the spring of 2010.

Advocacy: NAMI Mercer will draw on NAMI New Jersey's new 30-minute video for educating law enforcement officers on interacting with persons affected by mental illness. We also will promote "Finding Our Way," a new NAMI NJ advocacy guidebook for con-

sumers and families navigating the criminal justice system.

With regard to state legislation, we will advocate for passage of the involuntary outpatient commitment bill that is being discussed in the Assembly as this newsletter goes to press.

Forty-two states already have similar laws mandating treatment outside institutional settings.

Another important component of our advocacy efforts will be the formation of a NAMI Mercer advocacy task force of concerned members.

Outreach and Awareness: NAMI Mercer plans to use many different forms of media to get our anti-stigma message to all populations in all areas of our county. Our new website, printed materials, presentations, and events will remind our community that NAMI Mercer is thriving at age 25 and remains committed to making life better for individuals and families affected by mental illness.

In *Our Own Voice* will continue to be a primary anti-stigma program, and we will tailor presentations to specific audiences. Outreach to college students will be a major emphasis in 2009.

Education and Support: Our core programs including the Helpline, *Family-to-Family* and *NAMI Basics*

will continue to be key resources for educating and supporting families affected by mental illness.

This spring, we will train consumer leaders for NAMI Connections, a new model for support groups beginning in the fall.

Our three social groups — *Just Friends*, *Becoming Friends* and *Just Kids* — will continue to be our signature NAMI Mercer support programs for all age levels. In October 2009, we plan to host an educational conference to celebrate our anniversary. We will share details as we progress with conference planning.

As a volunteer organization, we cannot achieve our goals without the participation of a broad representation of our constituency. If your interest has been piqued by one or more of these goals, PLEASE let me know. There is both the need and the room for you to contribute to these endeavors.

Sincerely,



Sally Osmer

Sally Osmer
Executive Director

Housing needed for people with MI

We desperately need more affordable, independent, permanent, supportive housing and subsidies for persons disabled by mental illness. The shortage of suitable housing is a crisis that affects many of our loved ones.

NAMI Mercer member **Tom Pyle** is exploring an innovative, private-public approach that combines families as investors with Federal, state, local and private funders to create more local supportive housing. He is planning a

meeting to discuss ideas, determine interest, and build strategies. This initiative is independent of NAMI and will focus on project development more than on policy advocacy.

Please join us in creating more local supportive housing for our loved ones and others in need. Register your interest in the "Supportive Housing Project Concept" by calling NAMI Mercer at (609) 799-8994. We will contact you with the date of our first meeting.

New WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) Class

WRAP is a method to help persons with chronic mental or physical illness stay on the path to wellness by focusing on positive supports and recognizing triggers and symptoms that could cause them to become ill again.

WRAP meets the first Monday of each month. The current session began in January, but new students are welcome. WRAP is free, but registration is required. Contact the NAMI Mercer office for more information.

Much Has Changed, Part 2

By Bill Hayes

To commemorate NAMI Mercer's 25 years of providing education, support and advocacy to individuals and families affected by mental illness, I am writing a series of Messenger articles about advancements in treatment during the same quarter century.

In the fall 2008 issue, I explained how the deinstitutionalization and managed care movements made it possible to treat those suffering from psychiatric disorders in the least restrictive setting—the home or the community.

Since 1984, the availability of new drugs also has dramatically improved the lives of individuals and families.

This column will provide a brief overview of the major developments in medication for serious mental illnesses.

Schizophrenia and Schizoaffective Disorder

Illnesses like schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder were initially treated with first generation (a.k.a. “typical”) antipsychotic medications such as Thorazine, Stelazine, Mellaril, Haldol and Prolixin.

Patients using these medications often had adverse side effects including excessive sedation and Parkinson's-like symptoms. With the development of second-generation (a.k.a. “atypical”) antipsychotic drugs, these side effects markedly diminished.

The first atypical antipsychotic medication was Clozaril. It was effective in treating resistant schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorders. Thus, many patients who had suffered for decades found relief for the first time in their lives and were able to return home. Clozaril was followed by Risperdal, Zyprexa, Seroquel, Abilify, Geodon, and Invega.

Over time, these medications became associated with serious side effects known as metabolic syndrome—elevated cholesterol, triglycerides, serum blood sugar, and often serious weight gain. Physicians now monitor these indicators very closely to reduce the patient's risk of heart disease and diabetes. Currently, scientists are develop-

ing new medications with very different mechanisms of action and fewer adverse side effects.

Bipolar Disorder

Twenty-five years ago, bipolar disorder was known as manic depressive illness. Lithium was, and remains, the gold standard treatment for this disorder. However there has been significant progress in the development of new treatments for bipolar disorder including anti-seizure medications such as Depakote, Tegretol, Trileptal, and Lamictal. Atypical antipsychotics also proved effective. We are now fortunate to have a broad range of agents available for the treatment of bipolar disorder.

Major Depression and Anxiety Disorders

At the time of the founding of NAMI Mercer, there were two groups of medication for the treatment of major depression. The first agents, available since the 1950's, were the monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOI's) such as Nardil and Parnate. These drugs required strict avoidance of certain foods and medications to prevent severe hypertensive crises. (We now have a MAOI patch with an improved safety profile that, at low dose, does not require a special diet.) MAOI's were followed by tricyclic antidepressants such as Elavil and Pamelor.

The past 25 years have seen an explosion of new agents for the treatment of depression. The first was Prozac, which has had an excellent safety profile. While overdoses of MAOI's and tricyclic antidepressants are extremely dangerous, Prozac and subsequent selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI's) such as Paxil, Zoloft, Luvox, Celexa, and Lexapro are much safer compounds.

In addition to SSRI's, Wellbutrin and other agents that act on norepinephrine were introduced followed by the dual agents Effexor, Pristiq, Cymbalta, and Remeron that address both the serotonin and norepinephrine systems. In addition to these primary antidepressants, there are numerous strategies

for augmenting antidepressants with other agents, giving us a broad spectrum of medication interventions to treat patients who suffer from depressive illness.

Persons suffering from anxiety disorders also have responded to SSRIs and newer antidepressant agents.



Bill Hayes

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

In the 1970's, ADHD primarily was treated with the short-acting stimulant medications Dexedrine and Ritalin. The 1990s saw the development of long-acting (up to 12 hours) agents that helped children throughout school and after-school hours.

Short-acting Dexedrine has been replaced by Adderall XR and Vyvanse, and short-acting Ritalin has been replaced by Ritalin LA, Concerta, Focalin XR, and the Daytrana patch. Strattera, a non-stimulant compound, and other agents have also proved effective in the treatment of ADHD, further expanding treatment options for children and adults.

Destigmatization

Over the years, the pharmaceutical companies have widely promoted their new (and more expensive) medications through advertising. The positive side of their media campaign has been a tremendous decrease in the stigma associated with mental illness. Each time a new drug is advertised, the public receives education about the signs and symptoms of a serious psychiatric disorder.

In the future, we will continue to see advances in the development of more effective medications that have improved side-effect profiles. Drug

Continued on Page 4

Codey bill

continued from Page 5

Currently, 42 other states have laws for assisted outpatient treatment. The bill would use the following uniform standard for determining the need for involuntary commitment:

- a) an adult with mental illness;
- b) whose mental illness causes the person to be dangerous to self or to others or property;
- c) who is unwilling to accept appropriate treatment voluntarily after it has been offered; and
- d) needs outpatient treatment or inpatient care at a short-term care or psychiatric facility or special psychiatric hospital because other services are not appropriate or available.

The bill now heads to the Senate for approval.

See http://naminj.org/advocacy/advocacy_alerts.html, which includes a sample letter and contact information for representatives.

Changed, part 2

continued from Page 3

interventions, however, are only one component of a comprehensive treatment program for serious psychiatric illnesses. Exercise, nutrition, relaxation techniques, a healthy spiritual and family life and career all are vital to the healthy functioning of every individual, with or without a psychiatric disorder. In my next column, I will focus on the importance of exercise and nutrition in the recovery process from mental illness.

Sincerely,

William P. Hayes

M.D., F.A.A.C.A.P.

President

Just Kids—A New Volunteer's Perspective

**By Irv Newman
a.k.a. Uncle Whacky**

On the third Saturday in December, I attended Just Kids for the first time as a new volunteer. I didn't know what to expect, but I certainly did not expect what I found—a lovely group of bright, lively and engaging kids.

Most hardly showed that they are challenged by one or more disabilities, presumably because the children are learning to deal with their problems in quite positive ways.

Nor did I have any idea that the kids would be putting on a talent show, much less that they would be so talented and entertaining. I would estimate their age range to be between 10 and 15 years old.

The first to perform was a stand-up comedian who really had it together. He was funny and entertaining. I'm a bit of a punster myself, but I don't think I'd

want to have a contest with him. He was followed by a magician and then an accomplished card trickster.

Next came the most unexpected performance of all: a presentation by a youngster who is an expert on the Civil War.

His "bag of tricks" was full of relics that he had collected on visits to various Civil War battlegrounds. And, he told us the story behind each and every one.

One meeting was enough to hook me on Just Kids. Not only do I look forward to being with the group on the third Saturday of each month, but also on the last Saturday of each month for our new program, "Uncle Whacky's Story Hour," which I hope will be entertaining for all of us.

The story hour will coincide with the Parent's Support Group held at the NAMI Center of Mercer County.

Please contact the office at (609) 799-8994 for more information.

NAMI Basics course starts again in Fall

Do you have a child with emotional/behavioral challenges?

NAMI Basics is a free class for parents or primary caregivers of children or adolescents (ages 2-18) with challenging behaviors. This can include mental health issues, ADHD, autism, Tourette's, etc.

Come learn about helping your child, coping, working with schools and health providers, and more. Classes are taught by trained volunteer par-

ents who've been there and would like to share their knowledge and support other families.

The current series has already started, but a new series of classes will run on Fridays, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., in fall. Please watch your local newspapers and the NAMI Messenger.

Classes are held at the NAMI Mercer office, 3371 Brunswick Pike, Suite 124, Lawrenceville, NJ (conveniently located next to the Mercer Mall).

NAMI Mercer Book Club

The NAMI Mercer Book Club welcomes all NAMI members to its meetings on the third Thursday of each month at 12:30 pm. Bring your own lunch and participate in stimulating discussions about relevant literature and works of non-fiction.

The club generally meets in the NAMI Mercer education room. Call the office at (609) 799-8994 for the specific location of the next meeting.

On March 19, the group will discuss "The Knitting Circle" by Ann Hood. The schedule of spring meetings is as follows: Apr. 16, May 21, and Jun. 18.

Books under consideration for these meetings are "The Center Cannot Hold: My Journey through Madness" by Elyn R. Saks, "Running with Scissors" by Augusten Burroughs, and "Water for Elephants" by Sara Gruen.

Senate Panel Approves Codey Bill to Close Gap in Mental Health Services

By Sciortino

Excerpted by permission from *Politicker NJ*, Feb. 26.

A bill sponsored by Senate President Richard J. Codey (D-Essex) that would create an Involuntary Outpatient Commitment (IOC) program in the State of New Jersey was approved by the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee February 26.

Bill S735 would amend the state's civil commitment law to allow involuntary commitment to treatment in an outpatient setting as an alternative to current law which allows for involuntary inpatient commitment for people who are established to be dangerous in the reasonably foreseeable future to themselves, others, or property.

Sen. Codey noted that two recent homicides have renewed the urgency for this bill. One incident occurred in August of 2008, when a schizophrenic man from Galloway Township who had refused treatment, attacked and killed his mother and one of his 12 year-old twin nieces and seriously injured his other twin niece. A separate incident occurred in September of 2008 when a schizophrenic man from Jersey City, whose parents had been fighting for years to get him treatment, fatally stabbed a commuter at the light rail train station in Jersey City.

"Without the option of outpatient commitment, those that go untreated are likely to pose a serious danger to themselves or others," added Sen. Codey. "At the very least, they will be utilizing other state resources such as the hospital or jail, which end up costing taxpayers far more money. With our mental health infrastructure ranking fourth in the nation, it makes far more sense to try and get patients the treatment they need in an outpatient setting."

Studies have shown that IOC has been highly successful in helping patients comply with their medication needs, reducing their hospital stays and helping patients along on the path to recovery and productivity. Sen. Codey's bill is modeled after Kendra's Law which was passed in New York in 1999. A study published by the State of New York five years after Kendra's Law was implemented showed that among individuals in the program:

- 74 percent fewer experienced homelessness;
- 77 percent fewer experienced psychiatric hospitalization;
- 83 percent fewer experienced arrest; and
- 87 percent fewer experienced incarceration

The legislation would provide for involuntary outpatient treatment, sometimes known as Assisted Outpatient Treatment, for people who refuse mental health treatment despite their need for it, as long as they would not pose a threat to themselves or others in an outpatient setting.

Register to WALK!

Registration Form

COMPLETE, DETACH, AND MAIL

OR... REGISTER ONLINE AT

www.namimercer.org/namiwalks2009.htm

Walker Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

County _____

Phone _____

☐ **1. I WISH TO FORM A TEAM**

Team Name _____

☐ **2. I WISH TO JOIN A TEAM**

Team Name _____

Captain Name _____

☐ **3. I WISH TO WALK AS AN INDIVIDUAL**

☐ **4. I CANNOT WALK, BUT HERE IS MY DONATION TO NAMI MERCER**

Mail form (and check if applicable) 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 any 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 organizers to use photographs of me and quotations from me in legitimate accounts and promotions of this event.

Signature of Participant/Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: _____

Night Out With NAMI, a night to remember!



Left, l-r: Past NAMI Mercer presidents Bill Wilmot, Ellen Heath, Chomy Garces and Pat Demers, with current president Bill Hayes.

Below left: Carol Kivler, Madeline Monheit and Caroline Tompkins.

Below that: Bill Hayes, Sally Osmer and Eleanor Horne of ETS.



Bottom left: June and Galen Valley.

Below right: Dr. Margaret Lancefield and Representative Rush Holt.

Bottom right: the Kogan family, Rebecca, Laura, Richard, David and Rachel.



Photos by Christy Garrison

NAMI Mercer

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Madeline Monheit

Elisabeth Hagen

Night Out With NAMI, a huge success!

Appearing for the seventh time at Night Out with NAMI, Dr. Richard Kogan, distinguished psychiatrist and concert pianist, was honored with four standing ovations during his performance "The Music and the Mind: George Gershwin" on Jan. 11. Once again, Night Out was a huge success, raising nearly \$69,000 to support NAMI Mercer's free programs for individuals and families affected by mental illness. Many thanks go to event chair Dr. Elizabeth Pilliod and to our many volunteers, guests, and sponsors.

Two hundred people gathered at The College of New Jersey for Kogan's lecture/concert, the inaugural event of NAMI Mercer's 25th anniversary year. In his keynote address, County Executive Brian Hughes said, "Loving care can make the difference between a life of intense suffering and a life of healing and hope," stated Hughes, who shared his personal story of recovery from substance abuse. He pledged to advocate for public policies that ensure the best treatments for mental illness.

Hughes was followed by Galen Valley, a former drug addict who turned his life around after being treated for bipolar disorder. In a very moving presentation, Valley thanked his mother, who never lost faith in him and was an unwavering source of support.

After the concert, guests enjoyed a gala benefit dinner at Eickhoff Hall. In her message of appreciation to volunteers, Executive Director Sally Osmer praised the "breath-taking décor, well-conceived table assignments, sophisticated food, and inviting, clearly exhibited silent auction."



Event chair and board member Dr. Elizabeth Pilliod said, "It was an inspired and inspiring evening! A tremendous amount of thought and planning before the event plus terrific cooperation and work produced maximum results. In these hard times, NAMI's mission is more crucial than ever. People who came to NOWN demonstrated just how keenly they saw the need for our services and support. I send them, and all who helped, my heartfelt appreciation."

The auction, chaired by Board member Laurie Russell, brought in more than \$6,600 for the organization.

NAMI Mercer gratefully acknowledges Night Out's major sponsors: Wyeth Pharmaceuticals, the PhRMA Group, Bristol-Meyers Squibb, Ortho-McNeil-Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Alexander Road Associates, Courageous Recovery, Greater Trenton Behavioral HealthCare, Princeton House Behavioral Health, PNC Bank, and Roma Bank.

Getting the Word Out

In keeping with his newspaper's commitment to improving the quality of life in Mercer County, The Times of Trenton's publisher and editor Brian Malone has agreed to run a series of articles commemorating NAMI Mercer's 25th anniversary. The articles, written by NAMI Mercer volunteers, will appear one Sunday each month through December, in the Opinion section.

"NAMI Mercer Helping Area Families for 25 Years," was published Feb. 22 on Page A11. Written by Madeline Monheit and Elisabeth Hagen, it describes NAMI's free Family-to-Family (FTF) program. Our thanks to FTF teachers Linda McGrath, Wendy Most, Tom Pyle and Michelle Zechner for sharing their experience and insight. The March article will be devoted to In Our Own Voice, NAMI's core anti-stigma program.



L-r: William P. Hayes Sr., Gloria Hayes, Mary Hayes and NAMI Mercer President Bill Hayes. Hayes Sr. is a retired Battalion Chief of the Jersey City Fire Department. Gloria is a retired teacher and Mary a school counselor.

HOW TO REACH US

THE NAMI CENTER

of Mercer County

Lawrence Commons
3371 Brunswick Pike
Suite 124

Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

(609) 799-8994

fax (609) 799-8996

home@namimercer.org

www.namimercer.org

Directions: From southbound Rte. 1, make a right at Denny's Restaurant in the Mercer Mall. Lawrence Commons is a white building, the second on your left. The NAMI Center is in Suite 124, on the ground floor.

NAMI Mercer Support Groups

NAMI CARES

For adult consumers, run by consumers
2nd and 3rd Mondays, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
Registration required. NAMI Center.

NEW WRAP

A wellness/recovery action program for consumers
First Mondays, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
Registration required. NAMI Center.

Parents Support Group

For parents of kids (under 18) with brain disorders
4th Saturdays, 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.
Contact NAMI Mercer office for dates and times.
Registration required. NAMI Center.

Weight Management

For adults on medication
4th Wednesday, 6:00 p.m.
NAMI Center.

IFSS/NAMI

For families of mentally ill adults
Mondays, 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.
Lawrence Road Presbyterian Church *and*
Tuesdays, 5:30 – 7:00 p.m., NAMI Center.



The NAMI Center of Mercer County

Lawrence Commons
3371 Brunswick Pike
Suite 124
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

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