



# nami Mercer

## Families Meeting the Challenge of Mental Illness

September 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 Page 8

#### PUBLIC EDUCATION MEETINGS

Sept. 15 (Tuesday), 7:30 to 9 p.m.  
at the NAMI Center

#### Important Legal Documents: Why You Need Them and How to Get Them

Steve Leder, Esq. and Karly  
Grossman, Esq.

#### Community Health Law Project

*Two attorneys will review the importance of wills, powers of attorney, and advance care directives for people with disabilities. The presenters also will provide information and assistance in preparing these documents. Open to the public.*

Oct. 10 (Saturday), 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville  
**Harvest of Hope — Recovering  
from Mental Illness**

A One-Day Conference for Consumers  
and Their Families

*Keynoted by Dr. Sharon O'Brien, author of "The Family Silver: A Memoir of Depression and Inheritance." Small group sessions on relevant topics to follow. Registration required.*

Nov. 17 (Tuesday), 7:30 to 9 p.m.  
The NAMI Center

#### When Medicine Got it Wrong A Documentary by Katie Cadigan and Laura Murray

*When Medicine Got it Wrong is the story of loving parents who rocked the halls of psychiatry, changing how we understand schizophrenia. In the 1970s, a small group of parents rebelled against the prevailing theory that blamed schizophrenia on bad parenting. Their activism helped revolutionize treatment. 53-minute film with discussion to follow. Open to the public.*

## NAMI Education Conference

NAMI Mercer will host its first educational conference, Harvest of Hope: Recovering from Mental Illness, on Saturday, Oct. 10 from 9:00 am to 2:00 p.m. at the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville. A special event to commemorate NAMI Mercer's 25th anniversary, the conference will be open to consumers, their families and the general public.

The theme of the conference was inspired by "Transforming Mental Health Care in America" (2004), a report of the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), that names "recovery" as the single most important goal for the mental healthcare system.

NAMI Mercer's conference will embrace the report's definition of recovery and promote SAMHSA's ten fundamental components of recovery.

Dr. Sharon O'Brien, author of the award-winning book, "The Family Silver: A Memoir of Depression and Inheritance," will deliver the opening address.

She is the James Hope Caldwell Professor of American Cultures at Dickinson College, where she teaches

courses in American Studies, American literature, and creative writing. Currently she is working on a book about depression and stigma in American culture.



**Dr. Sharon O'Brien**

The conference then will offer attendees a choice of concurrent wellness workshops, with one session in the morning and another during the early afternoon. Lunch will be provided.

Michelle Zechner, MSW, LSW, CPRP, faculty member from UMDNJ-School of Health Related Professions, will end the conference with a message of hope. Zechner, who chairs the Conference Committee, also is a NAMI Mercer Family-to-Family teacher.

Call NAMI Mercer at 609-799-8994 or see our website at [www.namimercer.org](http://www.namimercer.org) for a detailed event program and registration instructions.



## SAVE THE DATE – Sunday Jan. 10, 2010

### 8th Annual NIGHT OUT WITH NAMI

Dr. Richard Kogan, psychiatrist and concert pianist, will perform the works of Frédéric Chopin and discuss the healing power of music in the composer's life. Concert at 3:00 p.m. at the Music Building, The College of New Jersey, Ewing.

Silent auction and gala reception at 5:30 p.m. at Eickhoff Hall. Proceeds will benefit NAMI Mercer's free education and support programs. Details to follow.

# Executive Director's Message

## A Year of Anniversaries

By Sally Osmer

This is a year of anniversaries in the NAMI family: the 25th for NAMI Mercer and the 30th for NAMI National. The anniversary was celebrated throughout the 2009 NAMI annual convention, which took place in San Francisco from July 6-9. I was one of a group of ten New Jerseyans who attended the event.

During the opening plenary session, the 3,000+ participants were reminded of our major legislative victory in October 2008 -- the passage of insurance parity for mental illness.

Throughout the convention, speakers stressed the importance of making our voices heard in the upcoming congressional debate on national healthcare reform. They urged us to contact our legislators to advocate for those affected by mental illness.

Here are some high points from the plenary and workshop sessions. See [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org) for full convention coverage:

- **When Medicine Got it Wrong**, a new documentary, will be broadcast in October by PBS and shown at NAMI Mercer's public education meeting on Nov. 17. The 53-minute film, set in the 1970s, tells the story of families rebelling against prevailing theories that blamed schizophrenia on bad parenting.

- New Jersey native **Henry Acosta**, the executive director of the National Resource Center for Hispanic Mental Health and the deputy director of the New Jersey Mental Health Institute, was elected to the NAMI Board of Directors. Acosta has long been a pow-

erful advocate for improving mental health services to Latinos. NAMI continues to strive for cultural competence and diversity in its membership and mission.

- NAMI National seeks to make NAMI known to every American household by airing a series of **public service announcements**, partnering with major celebrities (Glenn Close, Goldie Hawn, the cast of the TV show *House*), and using web-based technologies to spread its anti-stigma message.

- A major theme of the convention was the connection between **physical and mental health**, in particular, the growing concern about "metabolic syndrome" (obesity, heart disease, and diabetes) for people with serious mental illness. Convention guests were invited to exercise and participate in stress-reduction activities each day.

- States and local communities have been very slow (often taking 10-20 years) to implement evidence-based practices for mental illnesses. This time lag does not occur for other common illnesses such as cancer or heart disease. Funding for brain research continues to be a major priority for NAMI.

- Two New Jerseyans presented workshops at the conventions. Alicia Stevenson taught **Collaborative Problem Solving** — Dr. Ross Greene's highly successful approach for working with challenging behaviors in children and adolescents. I co-lead a workshop on *Sharing Hope—Understanding Mental Health*, the new national education program for African American congregations.

- NAMI released **Double Trage-**

**dies**, a report that calls the death penalty "inappropriate and unwarranted" for people with severe mental disorders.

Families of murder victims have joined with families of persons with mental illness to speak out against the death penalty. The report calls for treatment and prevention, not execution.

- A major highlight of the convention was the film **"The Soloist"** and the chance to meet Steve Lopez (the writer), Nathaniel Ayers (the subject, a musician with schizophrenia), and Jennifer Ayers-Moore (Nathaniel's sister). NAMI presented Mr. Ayers with an award for his courage and spirit in sharing his story with the world.

I was very proud to represent our strong NAMI affiliate at the convention. It was a unique opportunity to learn from NAMI members across the nation and to hear about current research and best practices from medical professionals. Support from our strong national and state organizations enables NAMI Mercer to carry out our mission in our local area.

Sincerely,

**Sally Osmer**  
Executive Director



## NAMI Mercer Book Club

The NAMI Mercer Book Club welcomes all NAMI members to its meetings on the third Thursday of each month at noon. 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 September 17, the group will discuss "Gilead" by Marilynne Robinson, and "The Center Cannot Hold: My Journey through Madness" by Elyn R. Saks. Books under consideration for further meetings are "Running with Scissors" by Augusten Burroughs, and "Water for Elephants" by Sara Gruen.

**Please watch for the Annual Appeal letters later in September.**

**NAMI Mercer needs financial support from all of its members and friends in order to continue our FREE programs of education, advocacy and mutual support.**

**Please plan to give generously!**

### Healthy living promotes recovery

By Bill Hayes

In my last column, I provided a brief history of medication interventions for brain-based biological disorders known as mental illness. Although medication interventions have improved over the past 25 years, medication alone is not sufficient treatment for any mental illness.

Education and psychotherapy that help one replace negative thought processes with more realistic and positive ones (cognitive behavioral therapy) have proved highly effective in the treatment of many psychiatric illnesses.

In addition, family therapy is an important component of a treatment strategy, especially when there are high levels of stress or conflict in the family. Studies have shown that individuals suffering from psychiatric disorders who live in households that express emotion negatively (e.g., frequent yelling) require higher doses of medication and experience relapses and hospitalizations more frequently.

Conversely, individuals who live in families where emotions and issues are handled in a positive fashion succeed with lower doses of medication and experience fewer relapses. It is well

demonstrated that stress management strategies are an important part of treating any illness and maintaining wellness.

If your family doctor were to diagnose you with high blood pressure, he/she would likely recommend that you lose weight, exercise and practice stress management techniques prior to prescribing medication. In addition to improving cardiac function, being at your ideal healthy weight, eating nutritious foods, exercising 30-60 minutes five days a week, and practicing stress management techniques allow you to achieve optimal overall health.

The human body is designed to achieve a state of balance known as homeostasis. When you are optimally healthy, your homeostatic mechanisms are better equipped to perform self-repair, helping you to recover from both mental and physical illnesses. Of course, medication often is needed to supplement healthy living practices.

Individuals who suffer from psychiatric illness are at increased risk for multiple physical illnesses. Statistically, they demonstrate higher rates of obesity than the general population. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that some medications for psychiatric

illnesses such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, mood stabilizers, and antipsychotic medications contribute to weight gain. It is important that everyone develop a lifestyle that includes daily exercise, healthy eating, and stress management.

There are new theories of chronic disease that suggest that the current American diet is pro-inflammatory and may be contributing to increasing rates of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and psychiatric disorders. I will talk more about this theory in my next column.

Sincerely,

*William P. Hayes*

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

President



**Bill Hayes**

### DHS and Disability Rights NJ settle Olmstead Lawsuit: Agreement calls for expansion of community housing for psychiatric patients

The NJ Department of Human Services (DHS) and Disability Rights New Jersey (DRNJ) reached an agreement on July 29 to expand community housing opportunities, enabling many people with mental illness to live in settings that are less restrictive than state psychiatric hospitals.

"Today's success is possible because of Governor Corzine's continued commitment to those living with mental illness and his financial support during these challenging fiscal times," said NJ DHS Commissioner Jennifer Velez.

The settlement establishes a five-year plan for the timely discharge of state hospital patients with a status known as CEPP (Conditional Extension Pending Placement), meaning they have been determined ready for discharge but remain hospitalized because of a lack of available supportive housing.

The timeline calls for the phased discharge of the 297 patients with CEPP status and establishes an outer timeframe that newly admitted patients can be on CEPP going forward. In the FY 2010 state budget, \$5 million has been included to develop new supportive housing for the first year of the plan.

It has been 10 years since the Supreme Court rendered its landmark Olmstead decision, providing assurance for years to come that people with mental illness who may temporarily require inpatient care can continue their recovery in the community when they are ready.

In 2005, Disability Rights New Jersey, joined by the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, filed a lawsuit challenging the state's progress toward implementing Olmstead.

"People with mental illness can not only live successfully in the community, but they work, go to college, and volunteer," said Kevin Martone, deputy DHS commissioner.

"Every day, people are recovering in New Jersey's mental health system. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but together we are heading in the right direction," Martone continued.



## Friends at the annual NAMI Mercer picnic, July 25



**Above: Anne Buckley.  
Left: Juliette Saltz, Anastasia  
Lambros and Scott Macfarlane.**



Photos by Pat Demers

**Center of page: Karen Schotland, Libby Bartholomew, picnic hostess Kay Lasley and Liz Bartholomew.  
Above left: picnic host John Lasley with daughter, Karen. Above right: Erika Reading and Evelyn Macfarlane.**



# Bill and Phyllis Wilmot Honored for Advocacy and Service

**N**AMI Mercer heartily congratulates Phyllis and Bill Wilmot on receiving the 2009 Mary Jo Codey Award sponsored by Family Guidance Center/Family and Children's Services (FGC/FACS). This award recognizes members of the community who have steadfastly advocated for the rights of individuals challenged by mental health problems.

Mary Jo Codey presented the award to the Wilmots on Apr. 30 at "An Evening with Dr. Michael Fowlin," an FGC/FACS benefit performance at Janssen Pharmaceutica in Titusville. FGC/FACS provides outpatient mental health services, substance abuse treatment, financial counseling, and family preservation services to individuals and families in Mercer and Middlesex Counties.

Bill Wilmot accepted the award with humility by expressing his gratitude to his wife, daughter Elise, Tom and Chomey Garces, and to NAMI Mercer, "a godsend to us and many others for being the channel for everything we've done."

Bill also acknowledged the significant contribution of the Codeys: former Governor Richard Codey, for allocating more funds for mental illness; and Mrs. Codey, for openly sharing her own experiences with postpartum depression to persuade legislators to fund research and provide equitable health insurance coverage. FGC/FACS established the Mary Jo Codey Award in her honor.

Phyllis and Bill have been actively involved with NAMI Mercer since 1995,



**From left, Bill and Phyllis Wilmot with Mary Jo Codey at "An Evening With Dr. Michael Fowlin," April 30, at Janssen Pharmaceutica. The Wilmots were honored with the 2009 Mary Jo Codey Award, sponsored by Family Guidance Center/Family and Child Services.**

when they took Family-to-Family, NAMI's 12-week education course. Bill became a teacher in 1996, and the two joined the NAMI Mercer Board, Phyllis for four years and Bill for ten.

During Bill's tenure as president of the Board from 1998-2002, NAMI Mercer grew by more than 50 percent, increased its program offerings, hired staff, and initiated the ongoing statewide campaign for involuntary outpatient commitment. NAMI Mercer was named "Affiliate of the Year" by NAMI National in 2001.

Borrowing from her experience with Planned Parenthood and CONTACT, Phyllis continues to serve as a Helpline volunteer and coordinates Just Friends, a unique social program for

NAMI members who have mental illness.

Bill is a seven-year member of the Board of Greater Trenton Behavioral Healthcare and speaks actively in the community on the impact of mental illness. He continues to serve on NAMI Mercer executive committees.

Throughout his acceptance speech, Bill expressed his strong belief in the possibility of recovery and the need to provide optimal care to every person with mental illness.

He said, "We are strong proponents of speaking out to increase understanding and empathy, to fight stigma, to emphasize recovery, not maintenance, as the goal, and to stress the necessity of best practices for all."



## Auction prize: and a fine day too!

**At left: Dr. Linda Gochfeld, psychiatrist with SERV and her husband Dr. Robert Mehlman, Professor Emeritus of English at The College of New Jersey, enjoy a fine, sunny day of sailing and dining aboard Carol and John Marsland's 34-foot sailboat "Chela" on Barnegat Bay, July 22, 2009.**

**The Melhmans and the Marslands enjoyed their time together. We are very grateful to Linda and Bob Mehlman for their support of our Night Out with NAMI silent auction this past January.**

# NAMIWalk 2009: a 25th anniversary celebration



**Above: Carol Kivler's team.**



**Above: NAMI Mercer President Bill Hayes and Jeremy Mann (Walk co-chair).**



**Left: Mercer County Executive Brian Hughes.**

**Right: Darlene Cronin, NAMI National Walk staffer.**



## By Tom Tompkins

**O**n the morning of May 30, the weather was perfect, the ETS course well-marked, volunteers at the ready, and spirits high for the second NAMI Mercer Walk for the Mind of America. More than 600 walkers came out, some from as far north as Montclair and as far south as Camden, to take a stand against stigma and help us exceed our fund-raising goal of \$75,000.

The event made a definite statement about the commitment of New Jerseyans to the mental health of their community. In addition to NAMI Mercer, we had teams representing nine other NAMI affiliates whose efforts raised more than \$6,000 of our gross income of \$84,682. Surpassing

our goal in this difficult economic time demonstrates the value the community places on the work that we do.

We had 49 registered teams, bringing in \$52,000 in online and walk-day donations. Our sponsors—Bristol-Myers Squibb, Wyeth, PhRMA, Janssen, Roma Bank, The Hon. & Mrs. Joseph Irenas, Value Options, Capital Health Systems, Carrier Clinic, Catholic Charities, East Mountain Hospital, Greater Trenton Behavioral Health Care, Princeton House Behavioral Health, HACBM Architects, Engineers and Planners, Hopewell Valley Community Bank, Optimal Health & Wellness Solutions — generously contributed \$32,640.

We congratulate the following individuals and teams that won 2009 walk awards:

*Bicycle Raffle:* Nicole Johnson  
*T-Shirt Contest:* Courageous Recovery Crusaders  
*Farthest Travelers:* Active Minds Montclair  
*Largest Team:* NAMI 4 Kids  
*Top Adult Fundraiser:* Tricia Baker  
*Top Junior Fundraiser:* Stephanie Agoratus  
*Top Affiliate:* Somerset County

We are very grateful to ETS for allowing us to use their beautiful campus for the Walk. A special thank-you to Laurie Russell for making this happen. Of course, we appreciate the many wonderful volunteers who contributed to the success of this year's Walk: NAMI Mercer members and their children; ETS staff; students from Princeton High School; and employees of Mercer County.



## NAMI Mercer

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## Laurie Russell, Volunteer of the Quarter

NAMI Mercer is pleased to name Laurie Russell as Volunteer of the Quarter for her significant contributions in leadership, fundraising, and anti-stigma activism. Laurie currently serves as vice president of the Board, member of the Development Committee, and chair of the Night



Out with NAMI benefit concert and dinner.

"Laurie gets a lot done with a minimum of fuss," comments Betty Wolfe, who worked closely with Laurie on NAMI Mercer's major fundraiser in 2008. "She's on the quiet side at committee meetings, but knows when to weigh in on important matters and when to take charge. Her positive and encouraging outlook is always helpful to her fellow volunteers."

Laurie was born in New Haven, CT, one of five children. After graduating from Sacred Heart Academy, she spent a year at Syracuse University, but left school after her freshman year to work in New Haven and then Washington, DC. In the late 1980s, Laurie fulfilled her dream of moving to France, where she lived for nearly five years and earned a degree in Comparative Literature from the American University in Paris.

Returning home in 1992, Laurie found employment a year later as a test editor for Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton. She later became a manager of communications and now serves as director of Community Service for the ETS Social Investment Fund.

Laurie's work for NAMI is a natural extension of her work for ETS, where she encourages and supports staff volunteerism and other activities that assist local nonprofit organizations. She also served on the Mercer County Head Start Program Advisory Committee for three years.

At both ETS and NAMI, Laurie is challenged and motivated to guide the organization toward a better future.

"I enjoy working with talented people to develop and implement ideas that make a difference in the organization's ability to deliver services to the community," she said.

Laurie supports NAMI's mission by bringing ETS's resources to the table. She recently facilitated NAMI Mercer's use of the ETS campus for the spring NAMIWalk.

With so many worthy non-profits, why did Laurie choose NAMI? "I've always believed that the stigma surrounding mental illness is unfair and I've always supported organizations that focus on the issues surrounding mental health." Laurie became aware of NAMI Mercer in 2006 when Board President Pat Demers and Executive Director Jerry Lindauer visited ETS to make a presentation.

"I was pleased to learn about a local organization that focuses on the families of those with mental illness," said Laurie. "Many organizations support consumers, which is necessary and important, but NAMI's emphasis on supporting families is somewhat unique. People need a place to turn when they don't understand what's happening to someone they love."

"It was Eleanor Horne, vice president of the ETS Social Investment Fund, who recommended Laurie for the NAMI Mercer Board," remembers Pat Demers. "It turned out to be a perfect match."

Laurie also has a personal connection to NAMI's work. "For many years I have had extended bouts of depression, mostly as a result of grief from losing my sister when I was 13; my parents when I was in my late 20s; and two of my brothers. Also, one of my closest friends had untreated bipolar disorder. He passed away in 2005."

Laurie would like NAMI to reach more people with its education and support programs. "I would like to see NAMI become much better known in Mercer County so that people can take advantage of our services, particularly in minority communities." Page 7

## New board members

At the June 22 AGM, four new board members were elected: Lauren Agoratus, Inge Eriks, Tiffany Malloy and Tom Pyle. Lauren is a NAMI Basics teacher who has worked for 11 years as NJ State Coordinator of Family Voices with Special Child Health Services and the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network. Inge is a veterinarian and microbiologist, an In Our Own Voice speaker, and currently working for Catholic Charities on its PACT team. Tiffany is a certified psychiatric clinical nurse specialist serving as an APN at Greater Trenton Behavioral HealthCare. Tom is an international project, finance and development professional, executive director of Strathmore University Foundation, Nairobi, Kenya, and senior vice president of United Way of Southeast Pennsylvania.

## 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, ground floor, on your right.

## NAMI Mercer Support Groups

### NAMI Connections

For adult consumers, run by consumers  
2nd, 3rd and 4th Mondays, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.  
Registration required. NAMI Center of Mercer County.

### NEW WRAP

A wellness/recovery action program for consumers  
This program finishes in September and will restart in January. Registration required. NAMI Center.

### Parents Support Group

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

### Weight Management

For adult consumers and families  
4th Wednesdays, 6:00 p.m.  
NAMI Center.

### IFSS/NAMI

For families of adults with mental illness  
Mondays, 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.  
Lawrence Road Presbyterian Church *and*  
2nd and 4th Tuesdays, 5:30 – 7:00 p.m., NAMI Center.  
Starting Sept. 1.



### The NAMI Center of Mercer County

Lawrence Commons  
3371 Brunswick Pike  
Suite 124  
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

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