



NAMI

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Mercer MESSENGER

February 2019 Published by NAMI Mercer NJ, Inc. www.namimercer.org

Vol. 37, No. 1

12th Annual NAMIWalks Mercer County, May 5

By Christine Bakter

Director of Development

Get ready for the 12th annual NAMIWalks Mercer County! Planning is well underway, and with your assistance, let's make this another great event. We will be returning to Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton for the 5K Walkathon on Sunday, May 5, and hope to raise \$150,000 to support the programs and services that we offer at no cost to people with mental health issues and their supportive friends and families. NAMIWalks Mercer County is one of 96 similar events scheduled around the country in 2019.

The nationwide theme for the 2019 NAMIWalks events is "Not All Heroes Wear Capes." Participants are encouraged to become a "NAMIWalks Hero" by raising \$100 to earn a hero-branded T-shirt on Walk Day. Our affiliate will participate again in the Walk Recognition Program, in which participants who raise \$250 to \$2,000 are eligible to receive other NAMIWalks-branded items.

NAMI Mercer Board Members Dan Schubert and Jerilyn Angotti, serving as co-chairs for the event, continue to lead by example. Dan, who led our largest community-based team in Robbinsville, is focusing his efforts on team recruitment and retention. Jerilyn captains a family-based team in memory of her cousin, Judy Baranowski, and will be assisting in the effort to bring in new corporate sponsors. Our committee meets monthly, and we are looking for new members. Our next meeting is on February 4.

To kick off the NAMIWalks event, NAMI Mercer held its first NAMIWalks Rally on January 26 at TacoRito Restau-



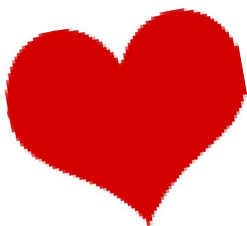
NAMI Mercer inaugurated its 2019 NAMIWalks campaign with a Walk Rally at TacoRito Restaurant in Robbinsville on January 26.

rant in Robbinsville. The rally enabled the community to learn more about NAMIWalks, with the expectation of attracting new team captains, committee members, supporters, and sponsors.

Team captains will once again be invited to a kickoff dinner at Janssen Pharmaceuticals on Thursday, March 7. This event is designed to give both new and returning team captains all the information they need to run a successful Walk team. The complimentary dinner is open to anyone interested in learning more about the Walk.

We hope you can join us in support of NAMIWalks Mercer County! Our website is open for team registration at www.namiwalks.org/mercercounty. Please note that if you bookmarked this site last year, the bookmark will point to last year's closed event until you update your bookmark.

For more information, contact Christine Bakter at walk@namimercer.org.



SAVE-THE-DATE

We Love Our Volunteers Celebration

Monday, February 11, 5–7 pm

NAMI Mercer Center. RSVP to home@namimercer.org



Organizational Planning in a Changing World

The goal-driven tradition of making New Year's resolutions dates back more than 4,000 years. It is centered in the wisdom that wanting good things to happen is not enough; we have to be committed to doing what it takes to make them happen. At an organizational level, this is why we engage in strategic planning, and I am excited to share with you the innovative strategic planning process in which NAMI Mercer's board and staff has been engaged over the last several months.

Recognizing that we live and work in a world where unexpected, chance events are the norm, strategic planning has evolved to be more flexible and spontaneous, responding to opportunities and challenges as they present themselves. Under this model, the idea is to identify priorities and then create a framework for making decisions, allocating resources, and measuring impact, acknowledging there can be many different ways to achieve the same goal. This is a departure from traditional strategic plans in which goals and objectives were very specific and fixed, not so easily adapted to changing circumstances.

In September, the board and staff gathered with Kacy O'Brien, a nonprofit facilitator, to identify strategic priorities for NAMI Mercer over the next three years. These deliberations were informed, in part, by the results of a brief survey completed by members, program participants, and

community partners.

We subsequently identified four main areas of concentration: community assessment; responsive and accessible programming; financial stability; and advocacy both to effect change in our local community and help individuals better advocate for themselves.

The staff then met for two additional sessions with the same facilitator to create a roadmap to guide us in achieving our goals. The result is a dynamic, adaptable strategic approach to growing NAMI Mercer. We are looking forward to seeing where our new plan will take all of us. We know the achievement of our goals will take time, and there will be some course corrections along the way.

An adaptive approach invites us to wake up every morning and say, "Today, I am going to be alert and responsive to whatever comes along with a view to accomplishing one thing that will move me closer to achieving my goals." It's really great strategy!

Then, in the words of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, "We can welcome each new day, each new year, full of things that have never been."



Janet Haag

NAMI MERCER STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2019-2021

- Community Assessment
- Responsive and Accessible Programming
- Advocacy at County and Individual Levels
- Financial Stability

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet M. Haag".

NAMI Mercer and the Youth Mental Health Project Launch The Parent Support Network of Central New Jersey

On October 29, 2018, NAMI Mercer held the first meeting of The Parent Support Network of Central New Jersey, a peer-led support group for caregivers of youth (under age 24) who are struggling with anxiety, depression, or emotional dysregulation. The program is being offered in partnership with the Youth Mental Health Project (YMHP), a non-profit, charitable organization that educates and empowers families to support the social, emotional, mental, and behavioral health of youth.

"We have a wonderful collaboration with the YMHP that has been several years in the making," commented NAMI Mercer Executive Director Janet Haag. Randi Silverman, co-founder of YMHP and producer of the film, *No Letting Go*, first came to NAMI Mercer in 2016 to facilitate a

question and answer session following a screening of her film. *No Letting Go* reflects the real-life struggles of Randi's family after her middle son began to manifest early symptoms of bipolar disorder. She returned this past October to lead a community education session, "Understanding Youth Mental Health." Of the 57 family members who attended this event, held at Notre Dame High School, a number have joined the Parent Support Network.

Longstanding NAMI Mercer members and volunteers Barbara Eget and Mary Hayes are facilitating the group, which meets monthly and provides a confidential, informal forum for parents to share their experiences and resources. NAMI Mercer was fortunate to benefit from a \$10,000 grant, solicited by YMHP and delivered to us in the form of

President's Message

Adopting a New Community-Based Outreach Model

I continue to be grateful for the opportunity to serve as president of an organization that has made a tremendous impact in the lives of so many in our community over the past 30+ years. I want to thank our dedicated and capable Executive Director Janet Haag, her full-time team of Christine Bakter and Danita Saunders-Davis, our Board of Directors, and our army of volunteers for the work they put in every day to ensure NAMI will continue to thrive and grow its impact over the next 30 years.

NAMI Mercer began as a support group for several families coping with loved ones' mental illness. Gradually over time, our organization grew to become a robust local affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness and began to offer a wide range of volunteer-driven programs and services. We've increased the number of lives we impact each year from the dozens to the hundreds since our humble beginnings.

In 2019, NAMI Mercer will continue its long and methodical journey to grow our impact from the hundreds to the thousands that need our support in Mercer County. Board Member and 2017 Pillar Awardee Maddy Monheit and Board Member Leslie Handler stepped up to chair the newly formed Public Awareness Committee. Their main focus will be to spread awareness about NAMI Mercer's programs and services community-to-community within Mercer County, with the goal of making NAMI the trusted, go-to resource for individuals and families seeking support.

Maddy and Leslie have chosen Lawrence Township as their future "first success story" for a new community organizing model. Members of their committee are connecting with healthcare providers, educators, religious leaders, and government officials in Lawrence to develop referral sources, identify opportunities for public education, and forge partnerships with other community-based organizations. We expect that these efforts will bring a new wave of families into the NAMI Mercer Community, and we hope the "Lawrence Township Model" becomes one we can replicate in the other eleven communities in Mercer County.

If you are interested in supporting the Lawrence Model or are eager to start something similar in your own community, reach out to Executive Director Janet Haag at jhaag@namimercer.org.

Best regards,



Dan Schubert

Meet a Student Intern

By Emma Preslar

I have been an intern with NAMI Mercer since September 2018 and will be with the organization in this capacity through this spring. I am a graduate student at Rutgers University, working on my Masters in Social Work. As an intern, I serve as a Helpline volunteer, Ending the Silence presenter, and a jack-of-all-trades around the office. Sometimes, this means decorating the office for the holidays; other times it means designing new marketing materials. It's definitely a varied work environment!

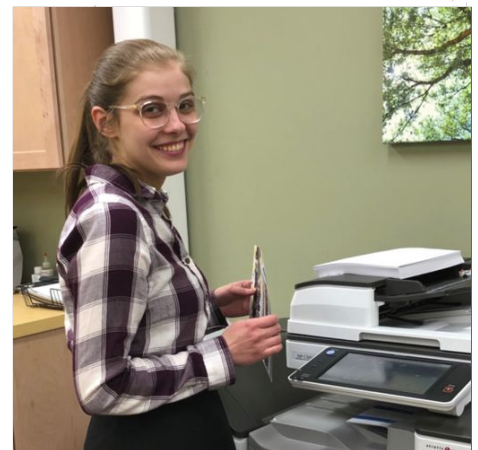
I was drawn to NAMI Mercer due to both my personal and professional interest in mental health. Professionally, once I complete my degree, I hope to work in the mental health field, perhaps in a partial hospitalization program.

The reason that I have chosen this

field is that I have personal experience with mental health. I have Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) and Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD).

Struggling with mental illness is like being lost deep in the woods without a map. It's dark, confusing, and sometimes really scary. But when you find other people who have been there, it's like being given a compass, a water bottle, or a flashlight. Getting support or advice doesn't actually get you out of the forest, but it helps you find your way a little sooner and makes the journey a little less miserable.

Even after you've made your way out of the forest, you're still going to walk into a tree occasionally, but you'll have people around to help you up. (This metaphor may have gotten away from me.) My point is that mental illness makes life harder,



Emma Preslar at the copy machine in the NAMI Mercer office.

and, unfortunately, there is no magic yoga pose to make it go away. What you can do is reach out to the community around you for resources and support. This is what NAMI Mercer provides and why I am so proud to be involved. Our staff, members, and volunteers have created a wonderful community where there is always someone ready and willing to help.

Fall into Funding

By Christine Bakter

Director of Development

Last autumn, NAMI Mercer formed a number of partnerships with new grant funders and organizations while continuing to strengthen existing funding partnerships with longer-term supporters.

Hopewell Presbyterian Church made a generous contribution of \$2,900 to NAMI Mercer from money raised at its Pumpkin Palooza (a festival with a pumpkin sale, silent auction, crafts, food, and children's activities) held on Saturday, October 6. Libby Bartholomew and John Haag represented NAMI Mercer at this event, sharing information about NAMI Mercer's programs and services.

The following Sunday, Janet Haag and Gianna Santoro (a newly trained Ending the Silence young adult presenter) provided a mental health presentation for the parish's adult education program.



Libby Bartholomew (on left) of NAMI Mercer with visitor at the Hopewell Presbyterian Church Pumpkin Palooza.



Investors Check Presentation (l to r) – Jason LaViscount (of Investors Bank), Maddy Monheit, Christine Bakter, Janet Haag, Danita Saunders-Davis, Lauren Agoratus.

We are grateful for all the support NAMI Mercer receives from our faith community partners across Mercer County.

Lawrence Township Community Foundation celebrated a benchmark in December when it reached \$1,000,000 in grants to nonprofits working to improve life for Lawrence residents. Along with staff, NAMI Mercer Board President Dan Schuberth and Just Friends leader Dianne Pingatore accepted a grant award of \$2,500 for Just Friends, our peer-led social support program.

The awards ceremony and community networking event included presentations from other grantees, including Lawrence Road Presbyterian Church, People and Stories, and local Dress for Success and Meals on Wheels chapters.

On December 19, **Investors Bank** Hamilton Assistant Vice President and Branch Manager Jason LaViscount toured NAMI Mercer offices and presented a \$2,500 Investors Foundation grant supporting Harvest of Hope 2018.

Along with staff, the grant award was accepted by Maddy Monheit, chair of Harvest of Hope and Board Member Lauren Agoratus. Lauren was responsible for connecting NAMI Mercer to the Nonprofit Community

Banking Division of Investors.

Through this connection, NAMI Mercer was able to secure an additional \$2,500 through the Roma Bank Foundation, administered by Investors. The grant from Roma Bank will support Ending the Silence in 2019.

NAMI Mercer is also pleased to recognize the following grant awards received during the second half of 2018:

- **Curtis W. McGraw Foundation:** \$10,000 for general operating support
- **Janssen Pharmaceuticals:** \$10,000 for education and support programming
- **Fred C. Rummel Foundation:** \$8,000 for education and support programming
- **Otsuka America Pharmaceuticals, Inc:** \$5,000 for education and support programming

These generous contributions enable NAMI Mercer to continue to provide education, advocacy, and support to Greater Mercer County at no cost to recipients.

For more information about grants funding or to inform us of other funding opportunities, please contact Christine Bakter, director of Development, at cbakter@namimercer.org

Night Out With NAMI raises \$84,000

On Nov. 17, NAMI Mercer supporters enjoyed an evening of “Disco Fever” at the Royale Windsor Club in West Windsor. Dressed in the fashions of the 1970s, participants dined and boogied to the music of the era. We had a surprise visit from Brian Bergdoll, a John Travolta impersonator, who entertained the crowd with his disco dance moves. The fundraiser brought in more than \$84,000 in support of NAMI Mercer’s programs and services.



Top left: Christine Bakter and Keith Moran of Janssen accepting the NAMI Mercer Visionary Partner Award.
 Center: Bill Wilmot and Danita Saunders-Davis.
 Right: Pillar Awardees Betty and Bill Wolfe.
 Middle left: Alan Monheit with Erica and Aaron Silver.
 Center: Brian Bergdoll, John Travolta impersonator.
 Right: Betsy and Mike Kuhns.
 Bottom left: Getting ready to do the Hustle.

Ending the Silence

By Leslie Handler

NAMI Mercer is pleased to announce that we have scheduled eight Ending the Silence (ETS) presentations for the first quarter of 2019 in response to the community's growing interest in this new early intervention program. Last year, our trained volunteers presented ETS to 10 groups including teens, staff, and parents at Lawrence Middle School and the County's school superintendents and assistant superintendents.

First developed by NAMI DuPage, IL, ETS was adopted as a signature program by NAMI National five years ago. However, a \$1 million gift by former Second Lady Tipper Gore, greatly facilitated the program's nationwide expansion.

NAMI Mercer was among the first NAMI affiliates to have volunteers train for and present the new ETS Program. This program includes an engaging slide presentation that helps audience members recognize the warning signs of mental health conditions and take appropriate steps if they observe symptoms in themselves or a loved one.

During the ETS presentation, a lead presenter provides this information and a young adult with a mental health condition shares his/her personal journey of recovery. Audience members can ask questions and gain understanding of an

often-misunderstood topic.

Through this dialogue, we strive to end stigma and encourage more people to seek treatment.

There is no charge for the program, which is generally presented in three forms:

- A 50-minute presentation designed for middle and high school students that includes warning signs, facts and statistics, and how to get help for themselves or a friend or family member.
- A 60-minute presentation for school staff that includes information about warning signs, facts, statistics, and how to approach students and work with families.
- A 60-minute presentation for parents and primary caregivers that includes warning signs, facts and statistics, how to talk with their child, and how to work with school staff.

One of our young adult presenters, Emily McClain, says "My experience with Ending the Silence has made me feel capable of making a difference in people's lives. It brings me so much joy to share my story with others and to show them that it's okay to struggle with mental health. So many people out there just need to hear other people's sto-

ries in order to start making sense of their own mental health journey."

Emma Preslar, another young adult presenter comments "I have loved being an ETS presenter. I have been able to meet so many different people, and it has been wonderful to share my story in a way that might be helpful to others. For young people who may have a mental illness, and for those who care about them, I think the most important thing to hear is, 'Hey, I've been there. You're not alone. I'm okay now, and you can be too.'"

Currently, NAMI Mercer has five lead presenters: Leslie Handler, Amanda Buchner, Kathy McLaughlin, Sharon Nemeth, Janet Haag; and four young adult presenters: Mindy Hoffman, Emily McClain, Emma Preslar, Gianna Santoro, and Danielle Desantis. More volunteers are currently in training. Feedback has been excellent. In particular, school counselors report that students, who have never felt confident enough to discuss their issues before, have begun opening up to them.

NAMI Mercer continues to expand this well-received program. Volunteers interested in training to become presenters and school officials interested in scheduling a presentation should contact Executive Director Janet Haag at jhaag@namimercer.org.

Parent Support Network

continued from Page 2

training and materials for this program. We are thrilled to have this new offering to meet the needs of younger families, helping them to break through the crisis and fear of mental health challenges and to implement early intervention and treatment that will make a positive difference in their children's lives.

For more information and to register for the February 18 and/or March 18 meeting, go to namimercer.org/find-support/parent-support-network or call 609-799-8994.



Randi Silverman leading a community education program on understanding youth mental health, a precursor to The Parent Support Network.

NAMI Mercer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dan Schuberth M.S., M.P.A.

President

Coleen Burrus M.A.

Vice President

Stephane Kammer B.S.

Secretary

Jerilyn Angotti C.P.A.

Treasurer

Lauren Agoratus M.A.

Kathi Barringer B.S.

George DiFerdinando M.D.

Dave Doran B.S.

Leslie Handler B.A.

Robert Hedden B.S.

Jeremy Mann M.S.H.P.

Karen L. Marquis Ph.D.

Catherine McTigue J.D., M.B.A.

Madeline Monheit M.S.

Tom Pyle M.B.A, M.S, C.P.R.P.

Jason Redd Esq.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Janet Haag M.A.

DIRECTOR of OPERATIONS

Danita L. Saunders-Davis B.S.

DIRECTOR of DEVELOPMENT

Christine Bakter B.A.

EDITORS

Madeline Monheit

Elisabeth Hagen

THE NAMI CENTER *of Mercer County*

Whitehorse Executive Center
1235 Whitehorse Mercerville Rd.
Building C, Suite 303
Hamilton NJ 08619

609.799.8994

namimercer.org

NAMI MERCER PROGRAMS

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Family-to-Family

12-session program for family members of adults living with mental illness. Thursdays, Feb. 21 – May 16, 6:30–9 pm (no class on April 18). NAMI Mercer Center.

In Our Own Voice and Ending the Silence

Presentations to promote awareness and instill a message of hope through personal stories of recovery. Call to book a presentation.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Chasing Away the Blues, Doreen Miri, MA, NCC, LPC, July 25, 6:30–8:00 pm, RWJ Fitness and Wellness Center, Hamilton. Check the website for additional community education programs currently in the process of being confirmed.

SUPPORT GROUPS

NAMI Connection

Recovery support group for adults living with mental illness. First and third Wednesdays, 2–3:30 pm. Second and fourth Thursdays, 7–8:30 pm. NAMI Mercer Center. Walk-ins welcome.

IFSS/NAMI Support Groups

For families of adults living with mental illness. Mondays, 5:15–6:45 pm at Lawrence Road Presbyterian Church. Tuesdays, 5:15–6:45 pm at the NAMI Mercer Center.

The Parent Support Network of Central New Jersey

For parents/caregivers of children and adolescents. Monthly, February 18, March 18. Offered in partnership with The Youth Mental Health Project.

Hearing Voices Support Group

For adults who hear voices or have other unusual sensory experiences. Mondays, 2–3 pm at the NAMI Mercer Center.

Just Friends Social Support Group

Peer-led group that meets regularly for fun activities and good times. (NAMI Mercer membership is required along with attendance at a Meet and Greet, held the first Wednesday of the month, 3-4 pm). NAMI Mercer Center. Call in advance to confirm attendance.

Overcoming Social Anxiety Workshop

For adults who experience fear in social situations. Wednesdays, March 13 – May 1, 6-8 pm. Offered in partnership with Find Your Voice.

ASK THE SOCIAL WORKER TELECONFERENCE

First Mondays, 7:00–8:30 pm

Phone: 773.231.9226

Call ID: 148 068 8345 when prompted.

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

First Wednesdays, 5:00–6:00 pm
NAMI Mercer Center. Call in advance to attend.

□

All NAMI Mercer support groups, workshops and classes are offered at no cost to participants. Registration is required for education classes, Family to Family, and the Overcoming Social Anxiety Workshop.

**The NAMI Center
of Mercer County**

1235 Whitehorse Mercerville Rd.
Bldg. C, Suite 303
Hamilton Township, NJ 08619



NON-PROFIT
U.S.
POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #257
TRENTON NJ

ADDRESS LABEL GOES HERE



#JOINTHEMOVEMENT

SAVE THE DATE: Thurs., Mar. 7, Team Captain Kickoff Dinner at Janssen. Details soon.



NAMIWalks Mercer County NJ

Sunday, May 5, 2019, 12:00 pm
Educational Testing Service (ETS)
Princeton, NJ

Register at
www.namiwalks.org/mercercounty

February is Membership Month

We are who we are because you are who you are! When we join together, we exert a collective influence that makes the quality of life in Mercer County and beyond significantly better for the many individuals and families living with mental illness. As we launch our 2019 membership campaign, can we count on you to renew your membership or join us for the first time, making NAMI Mercer and our community “stronger than stigma” and an undeniable force for good?

As a member, you...

- **Have access** to programs and services that promote recovery and mental wellbeing.
- **Obtain up-to-date information** on policy, research, and news affecting all those who are impacted by

mental illness.

- **Build relationships** and enhance your capacity to handle difficult situations through the NAMI Connection.

- **Receive the following publications:** The NAMI National Advocate; The NAMI New Jersey Alliance; and The NAMI Mercer Messenger.

- **Vote** to elect the NAMI Mercer Board of Directors, as well as representatives on the state and national boards.

The annual membership fee is:

- **\$40 for Regular** membership for an individual
- **\$60 for Household** membership (all members living at same address)

- **\$5 for Open Door** membership for an individual with limited financial resources

Joining or renewing your membership online is quick and easy at <https://namimercer.org/get-involved/join/>. Or, complete and mail the form below.

At NAMI Mercer, we are all about community, emphasizing caring relationships and inviting people to share their gifts and talents, to add their voices to hundreds of others in advocating for better policies and services for individuals and families affected by mental illness.

Help us tip the balance in favor of a more compassionate society that promotes mental health. Do your part and become a member of NAMI Mercer today!



JOIN/RENEW ONLINE at:
www.namimercer.org

NAMI Mercer NJ Inc.
1235 Whitehorse Mercerville Road, Bldg C, St. 303
Hamilton NJ 08619

Yes, I want to join NAMI Mercer, or renew membership and volunteer
_____ \$60 Household, _____ \$ 40 Individual, _____ \$5 Open Door (limited income)
(I/we also wish to make a tax deductible contribution of \$ _____)

Name(s): _____
Street: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____

**Optional information: Ask your employer about a matching gift. NAMI Tax Exempt ID #22-2587453
NAMI Mercer United Way Donor Choice ID 01712**

Employer: _____
Street: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____

Race/ethnicity (please check) American Indian or Alaska native African American Caucasian Hispanic/Latino Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Other

Payment Information: check or cash enclosed

Credit card payment: charge my VISA Master Card or American Express

Name as it appears on card: _____ Account # _____ Expiration: _____

Validation code: _____ Signature: _____