

NAMI Mercer 2019 Visionary Partner Award Winner
The Honorable Brian M. Hughes

At “Night Out with NAMI” on November 1 at the Boathouse at Mercer Lake, NAMI Mercer will pay tribute to the Honorable Brian M. Hughes. He will receive the organization’s 2019 Visionary Partner Award in recognition of his long-standing commitment to improving the lives of those affected by mental illness. Since taking office as County Executive in 2004, Mr. Hughes has supported NAMI Mercer’s mission through his leadership, advocacy, and vision for a stigma-free community.

On May 1, 2018, Mr. Hughes launched a year-long Stigma Free Mercer campaign to combat stigma associated with mental illness and addiction and to support those who are impacted. NAMI Mercer was honored to partner with the County Division of Mental Health in achieving the goals of this initiative. Together, we successfully lobbied all 12 Mercer municipal governments to join the cause by adopting stigma-free resolutions and urged citizens to sign a pledge to work to eliminate stigma and discrimination within the greater Mercer County community. Now, in the second year of the campaign, NAMI Mercer will join forces with the County in focusing efforts on youth mental health.

Since our inaugural NAMIWalks Mercer County in 2007, Mr. Hughes has served as an honorary chairperson each year, addressing the participants with a message of encouragement and inspiration. “It is my pleasure to once again serve as honorary chairman,” he said in 2014. “NAMI offers hope and works hard to lift the veil of stigma...I urge everyone to support NAMI Mercer’s effort by joining the Walk and exploring the many other ways in which you can become involved.”

Mr. Hughes has been an honorary speaker at other important NAMI Mercer events, including the 10th anniversary celebration of Harvest of Hope, our annual wellness conference. As the keynoter at the Night Out with NAMI gala in 2009, he thanked the organization for helping families to be the major source of support for their loved ones and credited his own family for sustaining him during difficult times. Mr. Hughes also pledged to advocate for public policies that ensure the best treatments for mental illness.

“There isn’t a family in New Jersey that hasn’t been affected in some way by mental illness,” he told NAMI Mercer in an interview on May 5, 2014. “One of the most important reasons that I support NAMI is because NAMI doesn’t merely offer immediate help for a family in crisis; you provide help all along the way.”

Since assuming office in January 2004, Mr. Hughes has led an ambitious effort to improve mental health. Thanks to his leadership, Mercer County has funded addiction treatment and support services for tens of thousands of adults and youth in all communities. Additionally, recognizing that homelessness is often a symptom of underlying mental illness and addiction, Mr. Hughes has prioritized solving homelessness by implementing a Coordinated Entry system that wraps various mental health and social services around individuals and families who find themselves without a home. This

initiative has resulted in a greater than 50 percent reduction in chronic homelessness since 2012.

Prior to becoming County Executive, Mr. Hughes served as Deputy Executive Director of the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse. Mr. Hughes is the son of former Governor and Supreme Court Chief Justice Richard J. Hughes. He and his wife, Pamela Rago Hughes, reside in Princeton with their son.

Thank you, Mr. Hughes, for working with us to make our county a place where everyone belongs and everyone can thrive, including those with mental health challenges. Like you, we are eager to eliminate the shame and blame associated with mental illness so those in need will seek treatment and be able to live healthy, happy, and productive lives. We are very grateful for your support of our mission over many years and pleased to honor you as our 2019 Visionary Partner.