



# nami

National Alliance on Mental Illness

# Mercer MESSENGER

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## 14th Annual NAMIWalks Is Coming on May 22

By Dawn Dannenbrink

What a trying year it has been for all of us. At this time last February, when I began working for NAMI Mercer, we were planning our usual walk-a-thon at ETS in Princeton. By mid-March, we had to pivot to a “virtual walk,” our only option due to the raging COVID-19 crisis. Despite the many challenges, we were able to raise more than \$110,000. What an amazing feat by all of us!

Now it's time to get fired up for NAMIWalks Mercer County 2021, the New Jersey Greater Capital Area's largest mental health aware-

ness-raising and fundraising event. Unfortunately, because of the ongoing pandemic, we will be “Virtually Walking Together” again this year.

Our goal for the May walk is \$130,000. Fundraising is more important now than ever with people feeling increasingly disconnected from one another. The incidence of depression, anxiety, and suicide is growing. Our community needs us to

keep our doors open even if these doors are virtual ones right now.

NAMI Mercer has not stopped working for #MentalHealthForAll during the pandemic, and we continue to assure people that they are #NotAlone.

Our Walk this year will take place on May 22, the same day as other spring NAMI events around the country. To “Walk Our Way” even virtually makes us #StrongerTogether!

We urge you to be creative on May 22.

You can take a nature hike with friends to log your 5K. Perhaps your team would enjoy a walk around the neighborhood

*“There is immense power when a group of people with similar interests get together to work toward the same goals.”*

*Idowu Koyenikan*

with signs to spread the #NAMIWalks-Mercer message of #MentalHealthForAll.

If you are unable to take a walk, try challenging yourself with a new recipe or reading for the time it would take to complete a 5K. We would love to see how you participate “your way” and invite you to share your pictures on our social media. You can find us on Facebook, In-



Jacob Franklin at NAMIWalks 2020

stagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

**REGISTER TODAY**  
[namiwalks.org/mercercounty](http://namiwalks.org/mercercounty)

Consider becoming a team captain this year and signing up all your friends to walk virtually with you. When you register, make sure to link your Walk fundraising page with your personal Facebook page. People who use social media to fundraise, bring in three times as much money.



## Attention Team Captains

Team captains will be invited to our Walk Kick-Off sponsored by Studio Hillier. It will take place outdoors on March 21 at 1 pm at Studio Hillier in Princeton.

We will be practicing safe social distancing and offering a fun lunch that you can take home to enjoy while watching the Walk Kick-Off presentation on your computer or phone. Invitations

with details to come. We HOPE that you will sign up to captain a team and join us on March 21!

Captains will be instructed on FUN ways to FUNdraise and encourage their teammates. And, as a captain, you will be invited to participate in some great contests for prizes.

## Executive Director's Message

# Somewhere over the Rainbow . . .

Images and phrases from the American classic, *The Wizard of Oz*, are quite pervasive in our cultural consciousness. I mention this because recently, while musing about how NAMI Mercer is navigating the pandemic, I was reminded of Dorothy's dog, Toto, pulling back the curtain near the end of their journey to reveal that all the amazing wizardry of Oz had been generated by a very ordinary human — albeit a talented one.

NAMI Mercer is very fortunate to have access to many such talented people in our community, enabling us to forge ahead amid the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19. It seems like a good time to take just a moment to peek behind the curtains to say "Bravo" and "Thank You"!

Since last March, our Helpline volunteers have been working remotely to respond to inquiries; admin volunteers have been retrieving office messages and assisting with various tasks from home; facilitators and teachers have been leading support groups and seminars online; Board and committee members have continued to meet and strategize. Our staff has never skipped a beat; our interns have put

their tech-savvy skills at our disposal, helping us pull off three very successful virtual events; and our many community partners and supporters have kept us going through their confidence and generosity. We needed the "brains, hearts, and courage" of all these people to accomplish what we have. It is AMAZING what can happen when we work together to meet a challenge!

To further my *The Wizard of Oz* analogy, I think we have reached the point in this pandemic journey when we would love to be able to click the heels of our ruby-red slippers together and magically restore life to normalcy. Of course, it won't happen that way, so in the meantime, like Dorothy and her traveling companions, we have to stay the course, follow the science, and do everything we can to keep connected and hopeful!



Janet Haag

## NJEDA GRANT

NAMI Mercer is pleased to announce that we have been awarded a \$3,000 grant from the Small Business Emergency Assistance Grant Program (Phase 2).

More than 22,000 small businesses and non-profits have been approved for grants worth more than \$64.9 million since Phase 1 was begun in April 2020. The average grant award is roughly \$3,000, which indicates that the organization has three full-time equivalent employees. The maximum award is \$10,000.

"From the very beginning of the pandemic, we have focused on providing small business owners with the financial resources they need to weather the COVID-19 outbreak," said U.S. Senator Robert Menendez.

The grant program is administered by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), the State's principal agency for driving economic growth. The NJEDA creates public/private partnerships to bridge financing gaps and to increase access to capital by the State's business community with an emphasis on small and mid-size businesses and not-for-profit organizations.

## Grab-N-Go Lunch on Friday, February 12

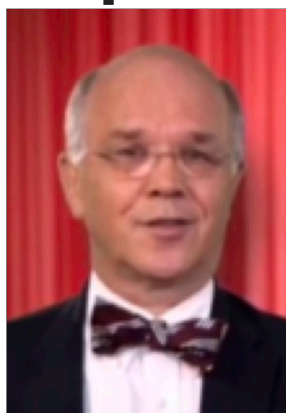
Like so many events during the pandemic, NAMI Mercer's Volunteer Appreciation celebration has morphed into something new: a Grab-N-Go Lunch on Friday, February 12 from 1-2 pm. Volunteers came by the gazebo just down the walkway from the office, where they received a boxed lunch from Heavenly Ham and a sweet treat — complete with a socially distanced thank-you and virtual hug from the ever-grateful NAMI Mercer staff!



**Did you know? Total hours for approximately 200 volunteers average 7,000 per year. Go to <https://namimercer.org/getinvolved/volunteer/> to learn how you can make a difference.**

## President's Message

# Helpline Plus



Tom Pyle

**D**ear Friends,  
As we begin the new year, I am thinking again of all we've endured. Good riddance to 2020!

To begin 2021 on a positive note, I'd like to tell you about some of our recent Helpline success stories. Like many of you with loved ones affected by mental illness, I have navigated nearly every corner of the mental health system. Because of my "street smarts," I'm often called for advice with some of

our most complex requests for assistance. I've coined a name for these impactful intercessions — "Helpline Plus".

Not long ago, a Helpline volunteer called me about the missing adult son of a local Indian immigrant family that owned a small business in Mercer County. A quantitative wizard, the son could play the stock market with great success. However, he also suffered huge flights of irrationality and would disappear for days on end. These disappearances were highly stressful to his earnest, hard-working parents.

This time, their son had been gone for more than a week. The father thought he might be in New York City (NYC), where he had traveled before and been previously hospitalized. Without promising anything, I told the father that I would make a few calls.

Thankfully, I had only to make one call—to NAMI NYC. I've learned that the NAMI community comprises a very special breed of intuitive, empathetic, and re-

sourceful people. An affiliate staff member returned my call quickly, and we hypothesized that the son was hospitalized again. Since he previously had received care in Brooklyn, my NAMI NYC contact notified her colleague at NAMI Brooklyn. After deftly maneuvering through HIPAA restrictions, the colleague located the son on the ward of a local hospital. Despite the vastness of NYC, our NAMI networks helped a family find their son and return him to care closer to home. That's "Helpline Plus"!

Here's another case. A social worker called our Helpline on behalf of a law firm about a client's 30-something son who was AWOL from a Memphis rehab facility. How to find him? I called NAMI Memphis who called the facility and determined that the son had previously traveled to Little Rock. Remembering the Brooklyn case, I called NAMI Arkansas whose executive director made a discreet call to the Little Rock Police and learned that the son had been taken to the main city hospital. And so, with a scant lead, the diligence of three NAMI affiliates, and God's grace, the family was reunited and the son transferred to a Mercer County residential treatment facility.

Would you believe a third such case? A Mercer County man needed help for his ex-wife in Alabama. Their daughter had not reported for her meds for over a week at her outpatient program about 100 miles outside Montgomery. There was reason to think the girl had run away to Montgomery, so I called NAMI Alabama in Montgomery and spoke to its president, who was previously the city's Mental Health administrator. Capitalizing on her many connections, she called around and discovered a police report indicating that the missing girl had been located and the outpatient clinic re-engaged. Lost and found!

Obviously, extraordinarily good luck played a huge role in the successful outcomes of these three cases, but so did our catalytic intercessions. Such happy outcomes suggest the possibilities — and power — of the NAMI network with its dedicated, persistent, informed, caring, tactical, and discreet staff and volunteers. Can we develop this outreach idea further? I'm giving it some thought. If you would like to discuss this possibility, I'd love to hear from you.

Cheers,

**Our Helpline: 609-799-8994 x 17**  
**helpline@namimercer.org**

**During the COVID-19 Pandemic  
your mental health is vital.**

**For Free Emotional Support  
from Trained Staff**

**Call 866-202-HELP (4357)**

(Multilingual Service Available)

**OR Text NJHOPE to 51684**

**7 Days/Week, 8 a.m. — 8 p.m.**



This program is brought to you through NJ Hope and Healing Crisis Counseling Program (CCP). The Mental Health Association in New Jersey in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Human Services' Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services is offering this CCP through a (FEMA/SAMHSA) grant.

# Recap of 2020 Benefit Gala

NAMI Mercer's 20th annual benefit gala on December 17 was unlike any in the past. Instead of joining with friends and supporters for dinner and a concert, theater production or costume party, guests remained at home and logged into an online fundraiser for about an hour. Appropriately, we called the event Night IN with NAMI.

Although we were hopeful, we really had no idea how a virtual benefit on a Thursday night in the midst of a pandemic would fare. Our format was new; tickets were not required; no auctions were planned; and we were com-

binning the gala and the annual appeal into one ask. Furthermore, it was our first experience using Qgive online software and our first time blending pre-recorded with live broadcasts. And a snowstorm was predicted for the day of the event.

Thankfully, Night IN went smoothly, and your generosity was greater than ever.

**We exceeded our goal,  
raising \$61,000.**

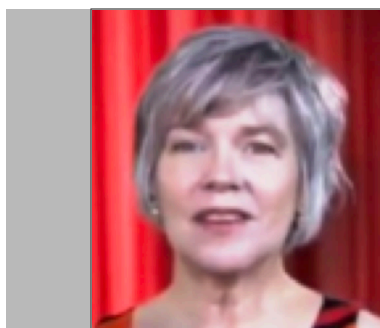
Thirty-four donors responded to our new incentive by contributing \$500 or

more to earn an engraved stone on our Giving Tree display, and there were 248 log-ins to our Night IN site.

In lieu of our annual in-person reception for the Patron Society, 2019 members received a "Reception in a Bag" delivered to their homes.

Thank you to Dr. George DiFerdinando and Dr. Elizabeth Marshall for sponsoring the Patron gifts and to Tomasello Winery for serving as reception partners.

If you missed Night IN on December 17, you can view a recording of the entire event on the NAMI Mercer NJ YouTube channel.



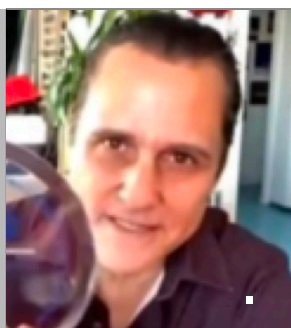
**Karen Marquis**  
Pillar Award Winner

**For extraordinary, long-term contribution to the organization's mission through volunteerism, leadership, advocacy, and charitable giving.**

**Karen Marquis, Board Secretary**

I have to say honestly that I feel that being a part of NAMI Mercer has been as beneficial to me as I feel and hope that I have been to it. My eyes were opened to the impact of mental illness in my own family that was truly never spoken about, and I was given an opportunity to lend a sympathetic ear to others.

So, while my scientifically trained brain might be constantly wondering how to unravel the mysteries of mental illness and find better treatments for it, I learned through these [my NAMI] experiences that there's no treatment that is as important as a supportive community. And that is what NAMI Mercer offers.



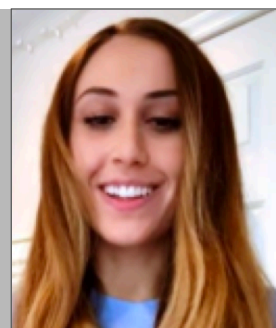
**Maurice Benard**  
Visionary Award Winner

**For using his position of leadership to set an example for promoting understanding, and improving the lives of people affected by mental illness.**

**Maurice Benard, Actor**

Anytime I get an award for mental health, it means more to me than anything else because it's bigger than me. I thank God that I've been able to speak about it for 30 years now . . . NAMI is a great organization. They believed in me from the beginning.

I think NAMI was the first organization to acknowledge what I was trying to do . . . mental health means the world to me.



**Gianna Santoro**  
WOW Award Winner

**For her extraordinary contribution to increasing awareness, reducing stigma, and promoting youth mental health.**

**Gianna Santoro, Volunteer**

During my junior and senior years (of high school), we lost three students to suicide within eight months . . .

When I was going through depression and anxiety, I thought I was the only one. That is why I am so passionate about what NAMI Mercer does. They facilitate the tough conversations that other people are afraid to start, and these conversations save lives . . .

At 17 years old, I felt really hopeless, but now at 22, I really couldn't be more hopeful about the future.

## LEAD SPONSOR

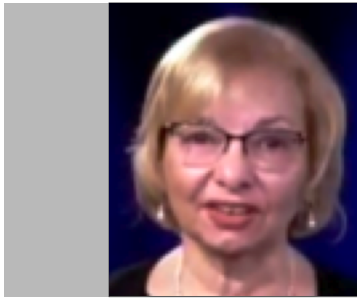
**\$10,000 Matching Gift**



## OTHER SPONSORS

Hinkle, Prior & Fischer Attorneys at Law  
Lear & Panepacker Certified Public Accountants  
Princeton Center for Dental Aesthetics  
Stark & Stark Attorneys at Law

# More Night In with NAMI Celebrities



**Janet Haag**  
Executive Director

## Janet Haag

We build resilience. That's the heart of what we do at NAMI Mercer. We change people's lives for the better. Together, we provide a critical lifeline for people when they don't know where to turn.

We create a safe space where they can ask for help, share challenges and triumphs, develop effective coping strategies, and achieve a better quality of life. This is why we do what we do.

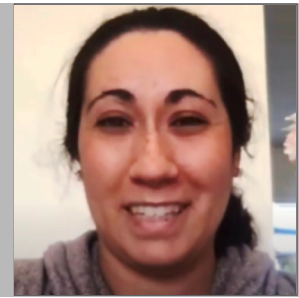


**Courtney Billington**  
President of Janssen Neuroscience

## Courtney Billington

We recognize the value that organizations like NAMI Mercer bring to the marketplace and the critical role that NAMI plays as part of the whole patient support system and care team.

We're (Janssen) super-competitive . . . We want to be your top contributor. We want to encourage others to bring it on . . . We are competing for a great thing—to further expand the great work that you provide.



**Mindy Hoffman**  
Volunteer, Guest Speaker

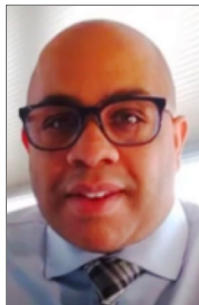
## Mindy Hoffman

[In 2015], I was so ill that I was hospitalized twice and ultimately unable to complete my residency in psychiatry. NAMI took me in with open arms and made me feel comfortable when I was at my sickest . . . NAMI changed my life, facilitated my growth, and helped me to become the person I am today. NAMI made me realize that my mental illness cannot stop me from being successful and happy.

## Interviewers

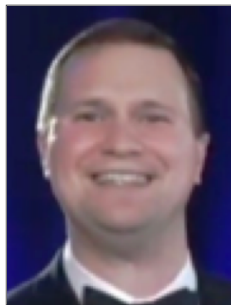


**David Lee White**

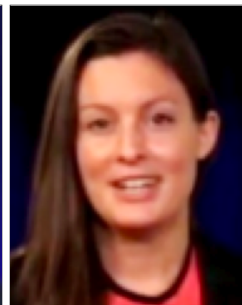


**Jay Redd**

## Event co-hosts



**Dan Schuberth**



**Stephanie Neumann**

## Award presenters



**Tom Pyle**



**Jerilyn Angotti**



Night In with NAMI would not be possible without the behind-the-scenes expertise of our technical team. Special thanks to George McCullough (above left), executive director of Princeton Community TV, for producing our video and to Brian Taylor, our talented intern from Boise State University, for supporting our online gala platform.



## THANK YOU TO OUR 2020 PATRON SOCIETY

Terry Adams  
All Saints Church  
Meena Bakhshi  
Be The Li9ht Foundation  
Central Jersey Code Officials Assoc.  
Michael & Jane Chwick  
Jack & Kathie Cohen  
Pat Demers  
George DiFerdinando  
& Elizabeth Marshall  
Frank & Lisa Dorigo  
Juliette Dresdner  
Jim & Denise Houghton  
Kirk & Colleen Huckel  
Nancy Irenas  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Lipson  
Karen & Mike Marquis  
John & Carol Marsland

Linda & Brian McGrath  
Madeline & Alan Monheit  
Thomas & Carol Nied  
Ann & Rich Novak  
Amy O'Donnell & Robert Hindes  
Larry & Kitty Pinder  
Marvin & Candace Preston  
Thomas & Molly Pyle  
Herschel & Andrea Rabitz  
Jason Redd  
Dan & Nathalie Schuberth  
Roger Schwab  
Michael Stewart  
Fred & Bay Weber  
Wendi Weber  
Bill & Phyllis Wilmot  
Bill & Betty Wolfe

# Welcome to New Board Members

**N**AMI Mercer welcomed two new Board members—**Stephanie Neumann** and **Wendi Weber**—at its Annual Meeting on September 28, 2020. The meeting, normally conducted in June, was delayed and rescheduled, and held remotely. Prior to the September meeting, a quorum of our affiliate's membership had ratified the slate of Board nominees by mail/online.

## STEPHANIE NEUMANN

Stephanie joins the Board straight from graduate school where she is earning her MBA from Villanova University. Graduation requirements included a social enterprise consulting practicum with a nonprofit organization, and Stephanie was among a team of talented young professionals that selected NAMI Mercer. With her fellow Villanova students, she partnered with us on a 14-week project to develop strategic solutions for improving areas such as branding, funding, logistics, and membership retention.

"I am excited to fulfill my calling to the community and continue what I have started with NAMI by becoming a Board Member," said Stephanie.

Stephanie currently is employed as an associate director of Business Development at Physicians' Education Resource (PER), a provider of Continuing Medical Education (CME) educational activities to maintain and increase the knowledge, skills, and professional performance of physicians. At PER, Stephanie is responsible for driving revenue and business opportunities, as well as improving processes for the company's programs. Her management, marketing, budgeting/forecasting, sales, and presentation skills will be great assets to NAMI Mercer.

An advocate for work-life balance, Stephanie enjoys yoga, running, cooking, shopping, and spending time with those she loves. Her favorite quote is: "Every ending is a new beginning."



## WENDI WEBER

With a PhD in chemical engineering and an MBA, Wendi Weber brings more than twenty years of executive expertise in business development, marketing, and communications to our Board. Before her retirement, she served as the Global Vice President for Elements, PLC, Senior Director of Corporate Performance Improvement at Alvarez and Marsal, Chief Operating Officer at CDI Corporation, Senior Vice President of Technology at Lummus, Global Asset Director at Solvay, and Global Business Manager for BASF Corporation. Wendi recently founded Janus Advisors, which provides consultant services for industrial business-to-business (B2B) applications.

Despite her years of experience solving corporate problems, Wendi felt her world turn upside down as she observed a loved one spiral downward into despair. "I felt helpless and had no idea what to do, whom to call, or even how I could help. It wasn't too long ago, I would have asked 'what is NAMI?'"

She began searching the internet and finally found the NAMI National website. "What a source of information!" Coincidentally, that same week, her neighbor Bob Demers passed away, and his family asked for contributions to NAMI Mercer. She visited our affiliate's website and was excited by all the local resources and programs.

"I truly believe that this confluence of events was a sign for me to get involved with NAMI Mercer," commented Wendi. Since then, she helped with last winter's NAMI-Walks kickoff and with planning our first virtual Harvest of Hope wellness conference.

Wendi finds inspiration in the following quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "The time is always right to do the right thing."



## How to Protect Your Mental Health during the Coronavirus Outbreak

By Lynne S. Gots, Ph.D.

*Excerpted from*

<https://www.nami.org/Blogs/>

Here are several steps you can take to prevent this stressful time from derailing your mental health.

### 1) Maintain a work routine

Creating a new teleworking routine will help you get into the right mindset, feel more productive and keep the boundaries between work and home from blurring.

Page 6

Stick to a regular bedtime and waking schedule. Shower and dress in the morning, and keep normal working hours if you are not required to be on call.

Wearing casual Friday work clothing instead of sweats will serve as a cue to start the work day.

Designate a [distraction-free] work area even if you are quarantined in a tiny studio apartment.

### 2) Take reasonable precautions, but don't go overboard

Use only reliable sources of information, such as the CDC or Johns Hopkins University, to inform and make a plan for your health habits. As hard as it is, it's important not to give in to compulsive behaviors. This is especially important if you have OCD or health anxiety. If 20 seconds of hand-washing is the accepted guideline, don't wash for 40 or 60 seconds "just to be safe."

*Continued on Page 8*

# Interview with Andrew Gordon

By Madeline Monheit

**O**n January 19, I had the opportunity to conduct an interview with one of our outstanding interns—Andrew Gordon, a 25-year-old Master of Social Work (MSW) student at Rutgers University.

Born and raised in New Jersey, Andrew graduated from Rider University with a double major in Marketing and Entrepreneurship and a minor in Public Relations. While at Rider, he was a Division I athlete, participating in both cross country and track and field teams. He worked in sales prior to enrolling in graduate school.

According to Andrew, his friends and family would describe him as “very outgoing, hardworking, thoughtful, and sarcastic.” My experience interviewing Andrew confirms these attributes except for his being sarcastic. I look forward to getting to know him better to see if this is true.



**MONHEIT:** Do you have a personal or family connection to NAMI's mission?

**GORDON:** To understand my connection with NAMI, you will have to first understand why I chose to leave my unfulfilling sales career to pursue social work. In 2019, I had a number of things in my life that took a turn for the worse. As a result, I fell into a severe depression which didn't take long to escalate to suicidal ideation.

In May of 2019, I was hospitalized, and this was by far the lowest I have ever been. My experience with depression (and my recovery from serious lows) is what has motivated me to pursue a career in social work/mental health. I also have several family members who suffer from mental illness. This subject area is deeply personal, and I am very passionate about learning as much about the mental health arena as possible.

**MONHEIT:** Social workers assist many different populations. Which do you plan to serve?

**GORDON:** Building on my last answer, I was drawn to social work as a result of my battle with depression. However, since a very young age, I have always participated in “social work” by helping out at local soup kitchens and food pantries through my church and other organizations.

I plan to pursue the clinical social work route as I want to directly work with people affected by mental illness. My plan is to train to become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) which will enable me to practice therapy, especially for depression and anxiety.

**MONHEIT:** What factors influenced you to seek an internship with NAMI Mercer?

**GORDON:** I wanted to get involved in my community, and I live in Lawrence so NAMI Mercer was an excellent fit.

I was really hoping to get involved with an organization that was well known, and NAMI's reputation is very strong across the country. I wanted to immerse myself in an environment that enabled me to get direct experience working with people affected by mental illness. NAMI is closely aligned with helping those who are struggling with a variety of mental illnesses through a multitude of support options.

**MONHEIT:** Describe your duties/experiences as an intern.

**GORDON:** I have been helping to facilitate the weekly Connection Support Group. It's a peer-led group held on the first and third Wednesdays and the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. We meet for 90 minutes each session.

To prepare for these groups, I am responsible for updating the NAMI Mercer website, sending out emails to relevant contacts, and scheduling social media posts. Outside of running the group, I have been working on contacting organizations in the community to increase Connections attendance via marketing tactics that I learned during my undergraduate education. Working with the Connection Support Group involves a variety of skills including:

- a) Problem-solving techniques
- b) Steering group discussion
- c) Distinguishing between support and therapy groups
- d) Creating a sense of safety
- e) Handling trauma
- f) Dealing with disruptive group members
- g) Discussing faith
- h) Evaluating the effectiveness of input, and
- i) Creating an environment that enables proper group dynamics.

I also have an interest in sharing my own personal experiences with mental illness via a NAMI speaker program. I am in the process of working through training and education that will help me share my story in a way that keeps audiences captivated and engaged. My hope is that I will have the opportunity to speak at a few different high schools this spring.

**MONHEIT:** How has your internship contributed to your professional development?

**GORDON:** My internship has allowed me to develop more empathy and passion for those who are affected by mental illness. Getting to work closely with people who are from a variety of backgrounds and financial statuses has really helped me to get a better understanding of the challenges people face. Working as an intern has enabled me to expand my professional network by developing new relationships and connections to people in the mental health space. This

*Continued on Page 8*

## Gordon, *continued from Page 7*

internship has also allowed me to attend conferences and events (virtually) where I have been able to learn a great deal from psychiatrists, psychologists, doctors, social workers, and those who live with mental illness.

**MONHEIT:** Has your internship benefitted you on a personal level?

**GORDON:** The work that I have been doing at NAMI has brought me an incredible amount of personal fulfillment as I work directly with people who can use a helping hand. I am very proud and grateful for this opportunity. This internship has helped me learn more about myself and identify my strengths.

I have become friends with some of my colleagues at NAMI, and my experience with the organization has made me much more comfortable with sharing my personal story. Life is a long journey of giving and receiving. There are times when you need to receive more than you give to others and vice versa.

I'm glad that NAMI affords me the opportunity to give my support, compassion, and knowledge to those who are in very difficult circumstances. In turn, I have been able to build up a lot more confidence in myself and my abilities to create positive change in those around me.

**MONHEIT:** Do you plan to continue your affiliation with NAMI as a supporter/volunteer?

**GORDON:** Absolutely. I'm in the process of training to speak about my personal battle with depression at schools. I certainly hope to continue this beyond my current internship at NAMI.

Volunteering with the Connection Support Group has been very rewarding for me on a personal and professional level, so it's something that I certainly see myself continuing. NAMI has touched so many people (and continues to do so).

I have been really impressed with the resources and knowledge that I have been able to acquire since starting my internship last September.

## I Dream a World

by Langston Hughes, 1941

I dream a world where man  
No other man will scorn,  
Where love will bless the earth  
And peace its paths adorn  
I dream a world where all  
Will know sweet freedom's way,  
Where greed no longer saps the soul  
Nor avarice blights our day.  
A world I dream where black or white,  
Whatever race you be,  
Will share the bounties of the earth  
And every man is free,  
Where wretchedness will hang its head  
And joy, like a pearl,  
Attends the needs of all mankind  
Of such I dream, my world!



*Excerpted from A Proclamation on National Black History Month, 2021  
Signed by President Joseph R. Biden, 2/3/21*

*"We have never fully lived up to the founding principles of this Nation — that all people are created equal and have the right to be treated equally throughout their lives. But in the BidenHarris Administration, we are committed to fulfilling that promise for all Americans."*

## Mental Health,

*continued from Page 6*

### 3) Find ways to "get going"

If you are prone to depression, you might be finding it harder to get out of bed in the morning, motivate yourself to accomplish chores, or get started on a work project. "Behavioral activation"—the technical term for "getting going"—is a research-proven antidote.

Exercise is an excellent stress-reliever and mood-booster. The gym may be closed, but you can go out for a brisk walk as long as you keep your distance from others. You can also practice yoga at home and even work out virtually with a personal trainer.

### 4) Try not to fixate on sleep

Changes in your usual schedule, coupled with anxiety, can wreak havoc on your sleep. If you're resting, try not to

stew about not sleeping — staring at the ceiling at 2 a.m. will just create a cycle of worry and insomnia.

If you find yourself lying in bed wide awake for more than 15 minutes, get up and change the mental channel by watching TV, reading a book, or listening to music.

You can also listen to a guided meditation available on YouTube or one of the many meditation apps, such as 10% Happier, Headspace or the UCLA Center for Mindfulness. Keep in mind, however, that you are not meditating to try to fall asleep; instead, observe your thoughts rather than getting caught up in them.

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*Lynne S. Gots Ph.D. is a licensed psychologist in private practice in Washington DC and assistant clinical professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science at the George Washington University School of Medicine.*

# Let's Discuss The Good Egg

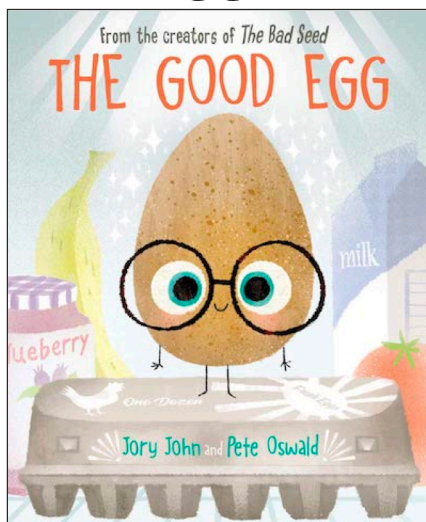
Many simple stories have valuable lessons. *The Good Egg* by Jory John (Harper-Collins, 2019) is a delightful children's book with a positive message about self-care and acceptance with relevance for everyone. A New York Times bestseller and Amazon best book selection for 2019, *The Good Egg* was illustrated by Pete Oswald who portrays the virtuous protagonist and his eleven mischievous egg companions in a funny and heart-warming way.

NAMI Mercer would like to form a **monthly online group** to discuss *The Good Egg* and other short readings (like poems, op-ed columns, and feature stories) with the theme of mental health.

If you are interested in participating, planning, or facilitating this group, please email Executive Director Janet Haag at [jhaag@namimercer.org](mailto:jhaag@namimercer.org).

## Accessing The Good Egg

You can listen to a reading of the book on YouTube by searching for "The Good Egg Read Along Shon's Stories". If you chose to buy the book from Amazon,



please remember that the Amazon Smile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the price of your purchases to the charity of your choice.

Because many of our supporters have selected NAMI Mercer as their Amazon Smile beneficiary, we already have received approximately \$760 in donations from the foundation.

## How to designate NAMI Mercer as your Amazon Smile beneficiary

1. Using your Internet browser, visit [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) on your computer, phone or tablet.
2. Sign in using your amazon.com account email and password.
3. On your first visit to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), you will be prompted to select a charitable organization to receive donations.
4. Amazon will confirm your selection by email and automatically make a donation on all your future eligible purchases. You will be able to see how much NAMI Mercer has benefited from your own purchases and how much NAMI Mercer has received overall.



The circumstances of the COVID pandemic provided a good opportunity for NAMI Mercer to begin offering a relatively new NAMI National seminar called Family & Friends. Presented in two formats (a 90-minute or four-hour seminar), Family & Friends informs people who have loved ones with a mental health condition how to best support them. It's also a chance to meet other people (virtually at present) in similar situations and gain community support.

Led by Sharon Nemeth and Anne Marie Pasculli, the seminar covers:

- Understanding diagnoses, treatment, and recovery
- Effective communication strategies
- The importance of self-care
- Crisis preparation strategies
- NAMI and community resources.

NAMI Mercer already has held two Family & Friends sessions: a four-class, four-hour seminar that began on November 5 with 12 participants; and a single 90-minute seminar on January 28 with eight participants.

Sharon and Anne Marie received very positive feedback. They heard from the participants that the shared personal stories mean the most to them. They can identify with the experiences of classmates, making them feel less isolated.

Family & Friends is offered at no charge, but you are invited to support NAMI Mercer's mission with a contribution. We have scheduled a two-session, four-hour seminar on April 15 and 22. Check the NAMI Mercer website for registration details.

# February Is Membership Month

**W**e 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 2021 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 Individual** membership.
- **\$60 for Household** membership (all members living at the 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!



# Mercer

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

**JOIN/RENEW  
ONLINE at:**  
[www.namimercer.org](https://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:** \_\_\_\_\_

# NAMI Mercer

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# NAMI MERCER PROGRAMS

## NAMI Mercer NJ Programs & Services

Offered online during the Coronavirus outbreak. Information can be found on the NAMI Mercer website at [namimercer.org](http://namimercer.org). Program sliders on homepage are hyperlinked to the meeting platforms.

## The NAMI Mercer Helpline

(A warm-line for compassionate listening, information, and resources) remains "open" for responding to inquiries. **609.799.8994 x17** or email [helpline@namimercer.org](mailto:helpline@namimercer.org)

## The Family Support Groups

For caregivers of adults (over age 18), offered in partnership with IFSS (Intensive Family Support Services) of Oaks Integrated Care are meeting on Mondays and Tuesdays, 5:15-6:45 pm via Zoom.

## The Parent Support Network

For parents/caregivers of youth (under age 24), both the Hamilton and Hightstown groups, offered in partnership with the Youth Mental Health Project, are meeting virtually each month as

scheduled, as well as a nationwide virtual group led by YMH.

## Family to Family

Hopefully will convene in-person in the fall. **Family & Friends**, a short seminar intended to help those who have loved ones with a mental illness understand how best to support them, will be offered online on April 15, with the possibility of additional webinars.

## Connection Recovery Support Group

Meetings for individuals living with mental health conditions are being offered as scheduled via video or audio conferencing.

## Just Friends

Members are meeting weekly via audio or video call.

## Harvest of Hope

Will be held in the fall in a format yet to be determined.

## Community Education Webinars

Check the NAMI Mercer website for details.

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

## Special Incentive

Renew your membership in February and earn a chance to win one of four \$15 gift certificates to a Darden Restaurant, including Seasons 52, Olive Garden, Bahama Breeze and others. See Page 10.

## 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](http://namimercer.org)



**The NAMI Center  
of Mercer County**

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

**(609) 799-8994**

<https://namimercer.org>



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**NAMIWalks Mercer County NJ**

**Saturday, May 22, 2021**

**Register at [www.namiwalks.org/mercercounty](http://www.namiwalks.org/mercercounty)**