



# nami

National Alliance on Mental Illness

# Mercer MESSENGER

October 2021 Published by NAMI Mercer NJ, Inc. www.namimercer.org Vol. 37, No. 2

## Harvest of Hope at Home 2.0 – From Pain to Purpose

Please join us online for our 13th annual wellness conference, which will begin on Sunday, October 3, and continue throughout the month of October.

Harvest of Hope’s mission is to provide an educational, inspirational, and communal experience for families affected by mental illness. As our gift to the community, this year’s event will be offered at no charge; however, registration is required.

To commemorate the beginning of National Mental Illness Awareness Week on October 3, NAMI Mercer is pleased to welcome Zak Williams as our keynote speaker. To honor his father, the late Robin Williams, and to

talk about his own journey of recovery, Zak has become a passionate global mental health advocate, professional speaker, and supporter of initiatives and campaigns that seek to remove the stigma and address the challenges

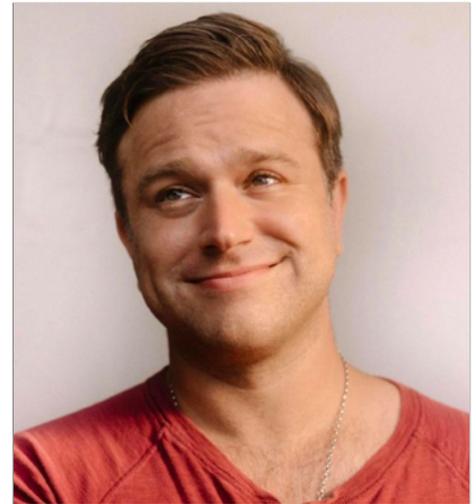
associated with mental health issues.

The keynote address and conference are brought to you in part by funding from the County of Mercer, NJ. Other conference supporters include Hampton Behavioral Health Center, Lawrence Township Community Foundation, Penn Medicine Princeton House Behavioral Health, High Focus Centers, Roma Bank, and RWJ Barnabas Health.

The conference also will comprise eight online workshops and one in-person workshop that will be presented during evenings in October. These

workshops cover a wide range of subjects, including obsessive compulsive disorder, Qi

Gong (an Eastern mind-body-spirit practice), Zentangle (a form of art therapy), resilience-building, trauma, happiness, supportive housing, and self-compassion. Dr. Mark Komrad



Zak Williams

will return for the 9th consecutive year to lead an “Ask the Doctor” session.

The conference brochure and online registration form are available on the NAMI Mercer website at <https://namimercer.org/learn-more/harvest-of-hope-wellness-conference/>.

If you have questions, please email [home@namimercer.org](mailto:home@namimercer.org) or call 609-799-8994.

***“As our gift to the community, this year’s event will be offered at no charge; however, registration is required.”***

## Shout Out from Governor Murphy

NAMI Mercer received a special “shout out” from New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy in his press briefing on March 29 at 1:00 pm. The Governor chose to focus on our affiliate as a recipient of a grant administered by the NJ Economic Development Authority.

In his briefing, the Governor said: “I am proud that (NAMI) received a grant from the NJEDA to protect staff and volunteers and to allow for support groups and educational programs to move online.”

Earlier in the year, NAMI Mercer was awarded \$3,000 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. This program is managed by the NJEDA. Governor Murphy’s shout out is available for viewing on the NAMI Mercer NJ YouTube channel. To access NAMI Mercer videos, click on the YouTube icon at the top of our home page at [namimercer.org](http://namimercer.org).



## Executive Director's Message

# CIT is More Than Just a Training

The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program, a community partnership of law enforcement, mental health and addiction professionals, as well as those affected by these challenges, returned to Mercer County the week of June 14-18. The initiative was originally launched in our area in 2007, and its current revival has followed several years of planning characterized by starts and stops for a host of different reasons.

The goal of CIT is two-fold: to provide access to mental health/addiction services for those who need treatment instead of placing them in the criminal justice system and to promote safety for all those involved when a mental health crisis requires community intervention.

NAMI's official position is that "individuals in mental health crisis deserve help not handcuffs." The criminalization of mental illness is harmful for everyone involved and contributes to a broader social problem of mass incarceration. Rebecca Lopez, a graduate student intern with NAMI Mercer, prepared an excellent policy brief on this topic, highlighting current policies for crisis response and pre-arrest diversion, prison reform and re-entry services in New Jersey. You can access this document through the homepage on our website.

CIT provides a forum for effective problem-solving between the criminal justice and mental health care systems, creating context for sustainable change. Thirty-five police officers and mental health leaders gathered at the Lawrence Township Police Department for the training in June, which included presentations, videos, role-playing, dialogue, and informal interactions. I attended as a member of the Planning Task Force, representing NAMI Mercer.

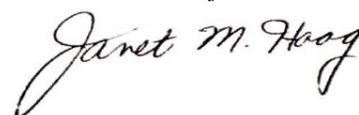
During sessions dedicated to personal testimony, Andrew Gordon, one of our interns, and Teresa Turk, a longtime NAMI Mercer member, shared their stories in which caring officers had figured prominently. Attendees commented on how compelling and important this part of the program was for them. We can be very proud of NAMI Mercer's contributions to this initiative over many years.

Perhaps, one of the most simple and profound observations was made by a young officer who pointed out that every one of us in the room had decided to do what we are

doing professionally because we "want to help people and make our communities better." This was a powerful reminder that first and foremost, we are

all on the same team and we need to understand and respect each other's different roles.

Additional CIT trainings will be held in Mercer County in the coming months. You might also like to know that NAMI Mercer has prepared a card of "CIT Calling Tips" for distribution at wellness fairs and other community events. If you are ever involved in a mental health crisis that requires police intervention, remember to let the dispatcher know it is a mental health emergency and request a CIT officer if one is available. The success of CIT depends on good education and collaboration. We are certainly headed in that direction right now here in Mercer County.



Janet Haag

---

***"Individuals in mental health crisis deserve help, not handcuffs."***

---

## NAMI salutes Congress for Suicide Hotline Designation Act

NAMI Mercer joins NAMI National and other mental health advocacy groups across the nation in commending Congress for passing the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 (PL 116-172).

This law, which establishes 988 as the national 3-digit phone number for mental health crises, requires phone service providers to direct all 988 calls to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by July 16, 2022.

Reporting psychiatric emergencies to 988 is a better alternative than 911.

"Far too often, people in a mental



health crisis receive an inadequate and even harmful response, which frequently involves law enforcement," said NAMI CEO Daniel H. Gillison, Jr.

One in four fatal police shootings involves a person with a mental illness;

and people with mental health conditions are booked into jails two million times each year.

For the 988 system to be effective, policymakers at all levels must ensure that necessary resources are in place before next July. These resources include mobile crisis teams and crisis stabilization programs.

To learn how to influence your legislators to approve funds for this purpose, see the NAMI National webpage <https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Crisis-Intervention/988-Reimagining-Crisis-Response>.

# Farewell to Leslie Handler

By Madeline Monheit

With great sadness, we say goodbye to Leslie Handler, who passed away on August 20 after a long battle with cancer. Dedicated to NAMI Mercer and its mission, she made an important contribution to every aspect of our work in educating, supporting, and advocating for those affected by mental illness.

Born in Dallas, Leslie spent much of her childhood in the Cayman Islands. After earning her bachelor's degree in journalism and public relations from the University of Texas, she worked in hotel management until, about ten years ago, she was forced to retire on disability because of oral cancer. She then began to focus on writing, and seven years ago, sent a story to WHYY that earned her a contract.

Leslie went on to become an international syndicated columnist with Senior Wire News Service and a frequent contributor to WHYY and CityWide Stories. A Society of Newspaper Columnists award winner, she freelanced for The Philadelphia Inquirer, ZestNow, and Boomercafe and blogged for HuffPost. In 2018, Leslie published a collection of her works entitled "Rats, Mice and Other Things You Can't Take to the Bank" and designated NAMI Mercer to receive the book's revenue.

When Leslie found herself with time on her hands, she volunteered to help out at the NAMI Mercer office. As is the case with most of our volunteers, several members of the Handler family have been affected by mental illness. At first, she did clerical work, but as she learned the ropes, she began to contribute in areas that matched her interests—writing, public speaking, and teaching.

In 2018, Executive Director Janet Haag nominated Leslie for the NAMI Mercer Board. When asked in an interview by Liz Hagen why she agreed, Leslie said: "I chose to serve because Janet asked me, and I couldn't say no to her. As for what I hope to accomplish, well that one is easy. I just hope to make at least a tiny drop of a difference that leaves NAMI Mercer a smidge better than how I found it."

During the next three years as a Board member and volunteer, Leslie more than accomplished her goal. Among her many activities, she was a writer for the NAMI Mercer Messenger, a workshop teacher at the 2018 "Harvest of



Marty and Leslie Handler

Hope" conference, co-chair of the Community Awareness Committee, our Trenton liaison to the Stigma Free Mercer campaign, a lead presenter in the Ending the Silence program, and a member of the access and equity in mental healthcare panel at the Lawrenceville School's "Minding the American Dream" symposium. Leslie also shared her talent for arts and crafts by making buttons for Night Out with NAMI guests and centerpieces for the Just Friends holiday party.

Leslie and her husband Marty also donated generously as members of the Patron Society and Star Walker supporters. In spite of her illness, Leslie was the top virtual walker at the 2020 NAMI Walks Mercer County.

Reflecting on Leslie's passing, Janet Haag remarked: "In addition to sharing generously of her talents and skills, Leslie had a delightful sense of humor which made her a pleasure to be around. Even in her final months, she displayed a brave and positive attitude toward life."

Leslie was an inspiration to all of us. She will be missed.

## Where Old Me Meets New Me (2019)

By Leslie Handler  
Reprinted from The Beacon

As I say goodbye to 2018, I say goodbye much like all the years of farewells I've said before. I say thanks for the good times. I say I'm glad the bad times have passed.

In 2019, I'm going to try to look into that mirror just a little bit more. I'm not going to look there for vanity. I really don't care what you think about my looks.

I'm going to look there to find new wrinkles because every time I do, I'll know I've lived one more day to see one more thing, and I'll remind myself that I don't want the naïveté of my twenty-something self.

I want to hold on to the wisdom I hope I have gained so that I can see those wrinkles and know I've lived a good life.

So when that old wrinkled face lays down on that pillow at night, it will have the clear conscience of a life well lived.

# Interns in Action

**N**AMI Mercer is very grateful to the 17 interns who worked with us this summer. They included 14 undergraduate and three graduate students.

## Julia Ibara

Under the mentorship of Associate Professor Brenda Seals of The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) and NAMI Mercer Executive Director Janet Haag, graduate student Julia partnered with the Mercer County Division of Mental Health to conduct a Mental Health Needs and Barriers Assessment.

Previous studies indicated that Mercer County has the second highest rate of mental distress in the state and the highest rate of diagnosed depression.

More than 140 Mercer County residents responded to the online survey in July and August. Study results reveal that:

- More than 25% of respondents have experienced more isolation, anxiety, loneliness, stress, depression, and/or fear because of the COVID pandemic.
- Peer support services rate highest in importance by respondents.
- Among the most significant barriers to care are waiting lists for outpatient, partial-day, case management, and office-based trauma treatment services.



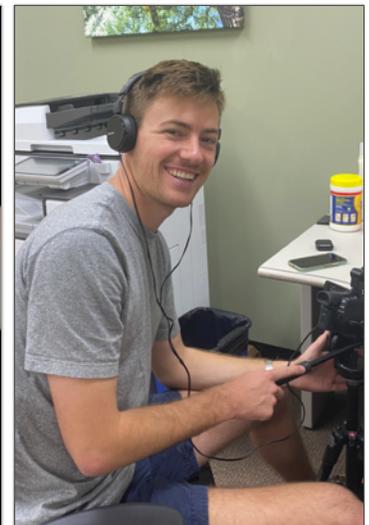
## Sophia Rodriguez

An undergraduate at TCNJ majoring in psychology, Sophia presented on mental health stigma in marginalized communities to the Stigma Free Mercer Advisory Planning Council. This group, under the leadership of the Mercer County Division of Mental Health, is composed of representatives of service providers and non-profit organizations, including NAMI Mercer. The council serves to continue the work of the Stigma Free Mercer Campaign, launched by County Executive Brian Hughes in 2018.

Sophia covered a wide range of marginalized communities, including Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, Asian American and Pacific Islander, LGBTQ, and persons with disabilities. She concluded that stigma negatively impacts all of these groups at all levels, i.e., self, public, and institutional. One way to reduce stigma is for providers to practice cultural humility.

**Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI)**

- 6.1% of the U.S. population identifies as Asian American or Pacific Islander. Of those, nearly 15% reported having a mental illness in the past year.
- That is over 2.9 million people. MORE than the number of dentists, postsecondary teachers and lawyers in the United States COMBINED.
- AAPIs have the lowest rate of seeking help for mental health services compared to other ethnic/racial groups
- Stigma as a barrier to Mental Health Care
  - Desire for privacy
  - Source of shame for self and family
  - Labelling
  - Acculturation
  - Rise in racism and hate crimes



Soren Johnson



Interns at an appreciation lunch in the NAMI office, from left: Maureen Guilbot, Sari Reiter, Jennifer Cortez, Corrine Harrington, and Chloe Esterly.

# Interns in Action

## Rebecca Lopez

Rebecca, who first interned with us as an undergraduate, returned this summer as a graduate student studying public policy at the University of Pennsylvania. The product of her internship is an important policy brief, “Beyond Criminalization: A Summary of NJ Policy Initiatives to Enhance Criminal Justice Diversion.”



Rebecca Lopez

Rebecca offers some very disturbing statistics about the interaction between persons affected by mental illness and the criminal justice system:

- Between 2015 and 2020, one quarter of persons killed by police had a mental health condition.
- Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training is offered only by 15-17 percent of police agencies around the nation.
- Thirty-two percent of the inmates of NJ State prisons have a history of mental illness.

Rebecca provides links to 2020-2021 bills in the NJ legislature that propose measures for improving crisis response and pre-arrest diversion, prison reform, and more re-entry services. Her brief facilitates advocacy for these bills by concerned citizens. For the full brief, see the slider at [namimercer.org](http://namimercer.org).

## Camryn Legra

Camryn is an undergraduate at TCNJ majoring in psychology and elementary education. She found a perfect way to blend her two interests by creating a mental health awareness coloring/activity book for children starring “Ingo the Flamingo,” the mascot of the 2021 NAMI Walks Mercer County. This book is available for download on the NAMI Mercer website.



## Corinne Harrington and Chloe Esterly

Two undergraduates in psychology, Corinne Harrington at Albright College and Chloe Esterly at the University of Delaware, led a group discussion as part of NAMI Mercer’s Onward Outdoors Summer Wellness Series. Participants enjoyed breakfast as they shared their impressions of *The Good Egg*, a children’s book by Jory John. This beautifully illustrated book, which touches on the mental health themes of self-care, perfectionism, and acceptance, has relevance for children of all ages.



### Summer Interns, 2021 Graduate Students

Julia Ibara, TCNJ (Public Health)  
Soren Johnson, PTS (MDiv)  
Rebecca Lopez, University of Pennsylvania

### Undergraduate Students

Jennifer Cortes, TCNJ (Psychology)  
Chloe Esterly, University of Delaware (Neuroscience & Sociology)  
Maureen Guilbot, Rider University (Psychology)  
Corrine Harrington, Albright College (Psychology)  
Madison Knight, University of Lynchburg (Health Promotions)  
Olivia Kochis, Dickenson College (Psychology)  
Camryn Legra, TCNJ (Psychology)  
Angelica Manieri, Seton Hall (Psychology)  
Anusha Rangu, TCNJ (Psychology)  
Sari Reiter, University of Rochester (Health Policy)  
Morgan Rhodes, Stockton University (Psychology)  
Sophia Rodriguez, TCNJ (Public Health)  
Autumn Slocum, TCNJ (Public Health)  
Jessica Smith, TCNJ (Public Health)

# NAMIWalks 2021 at a glance



The McCann Health New Jersey (MHNJ) team.

## We are so grateful!

By Julia Dare  
Director of Development

I am so grateful to each and every one of you for your support of this year's Walk. I joined NAMI Mercer at the height of Walk season, and it was so refreshing and rewarding to be welcomed to this wonderful organization in the midst of such an exciting and positive event.

Our community has struggled through a year of uncertainties, COVID fatigue, limited social interaction, and an increase in mental health struggles. Before the start of the pandemic, one in five adults reported experiencing symptoms of a mental illness. During the pandemic, that number jumped to one in three. This year's Walk theme was "Get a Leg up on Mental Health for All," and I think we can all agree that we succeeded!

Throughout Walk Day, I received photos and videos of families walking in solidarity, of dogs wearing NAMI gear, of individuals performing drastically different acts of self-care. Honestly, it was amazing. My heart swelled seeing all of you take care of your mental health in your own way.

Amazingly, we hit our goal two days before the Walk! This year's Walk raised more than \$178,000, exceeding our goal of \$130,000. All of these funds will support NAMI Mercer's programs and services for individuals and families affected by mental illness.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for making such a big difference for your community and for showing that even in the face of mental health challenges, you are not alone.



137% of goal reached  
\$178,015 out of \$130,000

422 participants



104 returning participants

318 new participants



We saw participants walk, hike, run, go fishing, and even cross-stitch to participate this year. Spending time outdoors has been proven to reduce cortisol (a stress marker), thus improving mood and reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression.



Percent of participants who have made a self-donation. Self-donating supports us directly through the donation trail, and inspires others to donate to your fundraising page!

1,714 donations



55 teams



### Top Teams

Janssen Neuroscience	\$31,452.00
Team MHNJ	26,606.46
Monheits on a Mission	6,844.00
The Amazing Team	6,656.36
Otsuka Cares Mercer County	5,545.00

### Top Fundraisers

Jay Redd	\$6,656.36
Robyn Hand	5,400.00
Gina, Jess, Kayleigh + Marissa	4,787.82
Courtney Billington	4,350.00
Patricia Demers	4,150.00

### Top Team Captain

Carol & John Marsland of Team Chela	\$3,710.00
-------------------------------------	------------



# Thank you for your support!



Stephanee Kammer (on left with a pink flamingo headband), captain of Kammers Hammers, won three of our four creative captain contests, friendly competitions to build team spirit. When asked why she walks, Stephanee replied: “I walk because I live with mental illness. I walk for my family. I walk for my friends, and I walk to end the stigma. I also walk in honor of my best friend Christian who passed away in 2015. Last, I walk because I want mental health to be normalized like all other forms of health. You are not alone, and I am stigma free!”



*“I walk to spread the message that mental health is for all and that a world that doesn't stigmatize mental illness is a better world for everyone.”*  
*Karen Marquis*

A flock of flamingoes visited 15 people in 10 towns during Walk season. Each week, our flock took flight to spread Walk cheer and encourage our participants to “Get a Leg up on Mental Health for All.” The Flockees: Maddy Monheit, Kim Fosco, Sandra Wolverton, Studio Hillier, Jay Redd, Rob and Lori Dolnick (shown at left), Stephanee Kammer, Stephanie Neumann, Karen Marquis, Jared and Lyssa Oberweis, Jerilyn Angotti, Pat Demers & Wendi Weber.



Jay Redd, captain of the Amazing Team, wowed us with his creativity once again by dressing as Alexander Hamilton and going on a historic tour of New Jersey with his dog Jackson. The two even stopped by our Honorary Walk Chair Governor Phil Murphy's office for a photo. Jay has certainly earned his team's moniker, as this was truly amazing.

# Lauren Agoratus Named Advocate Hero by EP Magazine

Congratulations to Lauren Agoratus, member of the NAMI Mercer Board since 2009, on being named an EP (Exceptional Parent) Magazine “Advocate Hero.” Celebrating its 50th anniversary as an award-winning forum for the disability community, EP will feature Lauren’s achievements in one of its issues this year.



NAMI Mercer also wishes Lauren good luck in her new position as the product development coordinator for RAISE (National Resources for Advocacy, Independence, Self-Determination and Employment), funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. The RAISE mission is to develop and disseminate information and resources that increase the capacity of its training centers to serve youth and young adults with dis-

abilities and their families.

Lauren also works as the Family Voices coordinator of the NJ SPAN Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN).

Lauren has a wealth of experience in advocating for the disabled community. Appointed by the Governor, she served on the State Interagency Coordinating Council and the State Special Education Advisory Council. She co-led her district’s Special Education Parent Advisory Group for ten years. Recently, Lauren developed the curriculum for the Special Education Volunteer Advocates Project and webinars on inclusion for the START project.

In addition, Lauren is a member of the local Progressive Center for Independent Living (CIL) Board Performance Parent Leader Workgroup and the SERV Behavioral Health Family Executive Council. She also serves on the National Center for Dignity in Healthcare for People with Disabilities Organ Transplant Subcommittee and is a reviewer for the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials.

Lauren has written blogs and articles for magazines and academic journals nationally and in NJ. She is the parent of a young adult with medical complexity.

## Nerds for NAMI

For the fifth successive year, Andrew Agress organized a “Nerds for NAMI” telethon in memory of his mother Kathie Formoso, who was a NAMI Mercer volunteer for many years. Twenty-seven donors contributed a total of \$1,100, making this year’s event the most successful Nerds for NAMI so far.

The online fundraiser was held for 24 consecutive hours, from Saturday, August 21, at 9 pm EDT to Sunday, August 22 at 9 pm EDT. The production team comprised fourteen graduate students from cities around the country and Canada including New York, Chicago, San Diego, Washington DC, Miami, Providence, and Winnipeg. Andrew and four of the team attend Columbia University.

Nerds for NAMI V had an Olympic theme. In fact, its subtitle was “The Tokyo Olympics After Party.” Online activities included “Best Answer Wins” (a trivia contest), Bunny Olympics, an interactive murder mystery, improv-



sation performances, costume-making, Lego-building, a Garfield talk, a reptile and amphibian presentation, an “Introduction to Feline Authoritarianism” Lion King lecture, and several video games.

Andrew conceived of the fundraising idea when he was a senior at Brandeis University majoring in theater arts and history. The subsequent year, the event was broadcast from Chicago, where Andrew was interning at Windy City Playhouse. Andrew currently is working toward a graduate degree in dramaturgy.

## Teens Organize Four Seasons Tribute Concert

NAMI Mercer will be a beneficiary of ticket revenue from “A Tribute Concert to the Four Seasons,” performed by a talented group of local young adults. The concert was presented three times in late June at the Villagers Theatre in Somerset.

Conceived and organized by graduating seniors at Hunterdon Central High School Mya Corby, Emily Schneider, and Fabianna Rincon, the teens were inspired by the Broadway musical, “Jersey Boys.”

After losing one of their friends to suicide, the girls decided to use their passion for theater to promote mental

health awareness in their community.

“NAMI is an incredible charity that works to promote mental health and stability for youth like us, and we are honored to donate to them.”

Mario Rizzo, a sophomore at Montclair State University, played the part of Frankie Valli; Matt Woodward, a rising senior at Hunterdon Central High was cast as Tommy DeVito; Ronan Green, a musical theater major at the Boston Conservatory was Bob Gaudio; and Hudson Walker, a junior at The College of NJ performed the role of Nick Massi.

# A Summer of Wellness Activities



Alicia Bruney and Tom Pyle enjoyed a dance at the Just Friends picnic on August 21.



Artist Jean Joslin led an art class at Pastels in the Park on August 17.



On July 17, Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space and Romy Toussaint led a relaxing hike and yoga class at Fiddler's Creek Preserve.



The past year was challenging for everyone because of social isolation, so NAMI Mercer decided to offer creative activities outside as fun way to bridge the transition back to being together. Thirty-eight persons participated in our "Onward Outdoors Program." NAMI Mercer also hosted a Just Friends "Everything BUT the Beach Party" for 28 attendees, complete with food truck, DJ, and even some dancing. Just Friends is a peer-led social group for adults that offers good times, acceptance, and camaraderie. For more information, email [helpline@namimercer.org](mailto:helpline@namimercer.org).



Mindy Hoffman and Max Rosenheck organized the Just Friends Picnic in Hamilton. Below: NAMI Mercer President Tom Pyle presented a guided tour of historic Princeton Battlefield Park on July 22.



# Patricia Korsak, NAMI NJ Poetry Contest Winner

**K**udos to NAMI Mercer volunteer Patricia Korsak for placing 6th in the 2021 NAMI NJ Dara Axelrod Expressive Arts Mental Health Poetry Contest.

In accordance with this year's theme of fond memories of a favorite food, Patricia's poem is named "Homemade Soup."

This is Patricia's third time as a contest winner. In 2016, she placed 7th for her poem "Untitled," and in 2019, she placed 7th for "A Need to Breathe."

There were 39 participating poets in the 2021 contest, and 128 votes submitted. The top poets were honored at NAMI NJ's Annual Meeting and Conference, held virtually on June 18.

NAMI NJ founded the Dara Axelrod Expressive Arts Network in 1993, spearheaded by the late Dara Axelrod, to encourage self-expression, personal growth, networking, advocacy and the understanding of how artists affected by mental illness have contributed to enriching society. The annual poetry contest was introduced in April 2021.

## Homemade Soup

By Patricia Urban Korsak

Cooking was not her area of expertise  
And she knew that.  
She didn't hand down any secret family recipes.  
But she knew how to feed a family of seven.  
And she had a lot of handwritten recipe cards.

Living through the great depression,  
She'd learned that soup could go far.  
Add Dad's homemade bread  
And you had a great meal.  
Add a sandwich and the kids were full.

Homemade soup started with broth and a bone.  
We'd fight over the marrow  
And spread it on buttered bread,  
A memory that makes my sister cringe.

Throw in some homegrown veggies  
And have the kids prep them.  
Peel, dice, slice, watch it cook.  
A memory of that homemade soup smell.

Go across the street to auntie's general store  
And see what greens she has this week.  
Maybe buy some penny candy.  
A memory of small treats.

Auntie's farm belongs to someone else now.  
Mom's home belongs to someone else now.  
The house that Dad built died with him,  
And I don't mean just the house.



They are all are gone,  
But the memories remain  
And the longing will fade someday.  
I'll have to let you know when.

For now, I can watch my grandson  
Who loves to pick veggies from the garden.  
Loves to peel, dice, and slice.  
Loves to make soup.

I take him to another farm  
To pick up our veggie share  
And photograph the baby chicks  
And find peace at the pond.  
New memories.

And I never miss a chance to tell him  
That I love him.

## Appreciation

By Ayesha Karim

The relative ease of my life makes me appreciate  
opportunities I have had as an older woman.  
I thank the Lord that he's not done with me.

Even at forty I remind myself to try to see the positive  
aspects of my situation.  
At forty, I can view myself in a way that was impossible  
as a little-bullied-hurt nine-year-old girl.

I have a mother, a nurse who  
worked to give me a good life.  
I appreciate her sacrifices  
and those of my grandmother.

I respect my mom and my  
grandma.  
I'll help them as they grow older.  
My aging parents get nothing but gratitude.



**Congratulations on learning to drive, Ayesha.  
From your friends at NAMI Mercer.**

# NAMI Mercer

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tom Pyle, MBA, MS, CPRP  
President

Madeline Monheit, MS  
Vice President

Karen L. Marquis, PhD  
Secretary

Jason LaViscount, BA  
Treasurer

Lauren Agoratus, MA  
Emily Antenucci, MBA  
Courtney Davis, CPA  
George DiFerdinando, MD  
Robert Hedden, BS  
Mary Michael, BS  
Stephanie Neumann, BS  
Jared Oberweis, JD  
Michelle Santoro, MBA  
Umang Trivedi, PhD  
Wendi Weber, PhD

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
Janet Haag, MA

DIRECTOR of OPERATIONS  
Danita L. Saunders-Davis, BS

DIRECTOR of DEVELOPMENT  
Julia Dare, BS

EDITORS  
Madeline Monheit, MS  
Elisabeth Hagen, BA

## 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

## NAMI Mercer NJ Programs & Services

Up-to-date information can be found on the NAMI Mercer website at [namimercer.org](http://namimercer.org). Program sliders on the homepage are hyperlinked to meeting platforms and/or registration.

### 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. Groups are meeting on Mondays and Tuesdays, 5:15-6:45 pm via Zoom. Hybrid option to be launched soon.

### 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 scheduled to meet in-person at the NAMI Mercer Center beginning in October.

**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.**

## Welcome to Julia Dare

Last March, only two months before our NAMIWalk, Julia Dare joined the NAMI Mercer Management Team as our new director of development. She proved herself quickly by leading us to the second most successful walk in our history.

Julia shares our passion for NAMI's mission, and is excited to put her talents to work. Her most recent employment experience was as development associate at Bowman's Hill Wildflower

## Family to Family

Will be held in person, beginning Sept. 23. Registration limited. Family & Friends, a short seminar intended to help those who have loved ones with a mental illness and understand how best to support them is periodically offered online.

## Connection Recovery Support Group

Meetings for individuals living with mental health conditions are being offered as scheduled via video or audio conferencing. Hybrid option to be launched soon.

## Just Friends

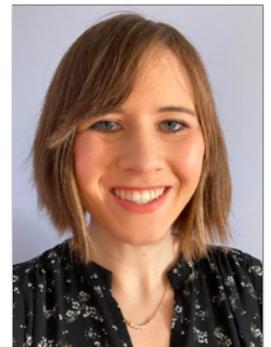
Members are meeting twice a month via audio or video call. One in-person gathering per month is being scheduled.

## Harvest of Hope at Home

Begins with a livestreamed presentation by Zak Williams on Sunday, Oct. 3. Workshops will be held throughout the month.

## Community Education Webinars

Check the NAMI Mercer website for details.



Preserve. She has also worked as a communications manager, web developer, and nonprofit consultant.

A graduate of Rutgers University, Julia lives in Ringoes, NJ, with her husband and four pets.

**The NAMI Center  
of Mercer County**  
1235 Whitehorse Mercerville Rd.  
Bldg. C, Suite 303  
Hamilton Township, NJ 08619  
**(609) 799-8994**  
<https://namimercer.org>



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

**This year all you'll need to buy  
for N\_WN is a vowel...**



**[and maybe  
some slippers]**



**COMING**

**SOON**