

NAMIWalks in Asheville! Join us May 1 *Music, food, art and fun for a good cause!*

Our First Annual NAMIWalks in Asheville will take place on Saturday, May 1 from 9 am – noon at beautiful Carrier Park next to the French Broad River. Registration/sign-in starts at 9 am. Our NAMI-Western Carolina team, the Asheville Stargazers, is forming now.

We will be holding our Walk at the same time as NAMI North Carolina will be holding theirs in Raleigh. Many Western Carolina NAMI-WC members and supporters have been unable to drive to Raleigh to participate in the Walk.



Now you won't have to. This NAMIWalks in Asheville will help us to raise awareness in the community and the funds necessary to expand our educational programs, Family to Family and NAMI Basics. We also hope to draw trainings for In Our Own Voice, and facilitator trainings for Peer



to Peer, Family Support Groups, and NAMI Connection, our weekly support group for consumers out here to Western Carolina.

State Senator Martin L. Nesbitt, a longtime NAMI supporter and mental health advocate, has agreed to be our Honorary Chairman. Mission Hospital (silver) and CooperRiis (bronze) have signed on as Sponsors. We are actively looking for other Sponsors before the Walk. Laurey's Catering is donating two of their gorgeous gift baskets for our raffle and Sugar Momma's Cookies will donate their wonderful, giant cookies. Asheville Tea and Spice Exchange is also donating gift baskets. Richard Sackett and Friends will perform a variety of music as

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A salute to our our area's CIT officers

A few months ago our family found ourselves in the midst of a crisis that required us to call for help from the police.

We called the CIT officers in our neighborhood. Deputy Lemons and Corporal Ice came to our home and quickly defused a situation that had gotten out of control, speaking with each of our family members with respect and empathy. They de-escalated the crisis, told us what the consequences could be if anyone physically assaulted someone, and

encouraged us to go to the ER at Mission Hospital.

I was in tears and they comforted me regarding all of my concerns about the hospital evaluation and potential involuntary commitment to the hospital. The officers were kind, realistic and very well informed about the mental health system in Asheville. They encouraged us to go to Mission and ask for a "voluntary commitment" evaluation. They told our loved one exactly what



would occur during the evaluation and the probable outcome. They explained the difference between having them transport our loved one to the ER vs. going to the ER as a family. They were supremely professional and transformed a weekend that could have been a nightmare into an experience where we were protected and advocated for by the police.

I encourage other families in a crisis

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NAMIWalks

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a preview to their own May Hope Concert on May 22 at All Souls Episcopal Church. All of the Friends are local mountain area musicians.

Mary, of Mercury Creative Group, generously gave her time and immense talent to the beautiful design of our Walks flyer enclosed in this newsletter. A color poster will be on display throughout the area. Her moving design has truly overwhelmed us.

Silk irises and daisies, usually sold only at our Celebration of Courage festival, will be available. Western Highlands Network is forming its own team of walkers and will have an information booth, all thanks to the great enthusiasm, support, and energy of Andrea Morris. We are reaching out to other mental health service providers, advocates, and organizations to either form their own teams, join the Asheville Stargazers, or to walk independently.

We invite other Western Carolina NAMI affiliates to form their own teams at www.naminc.org and join us. By forming your own teams you will share in the money raised by the Walk. Your teams will be attached to your affiliates and the money raised

CIT officers

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to reach out for help from the CIT team. We are so grateful for the many officers who have received this training that is so important for helping our loved ones avoid unnecessary incarceration and to receive the treatment they need. We salute Deputy Lemons, Corporal Ice and the entire CIT team for their excellent work.

by your team will be shared 50-50 with NAMI North Carolina. Proceeds from the Walk go to expanding the number of free classes, groups, trainings and programs that NAMI offers.

Now, more than ever, access to these free programs is critically needed.

This act of advocacy will allow Western Carolina to show our state representatives that much more action is needed to improve mental health services, that we have a voice here in the mountains, and that we are willing to act locally to advocate for these services. This is a tremendous opportunity for the mental health community to work together.

Please join us in this Walk and ask your family and friends to support you! To register for the Asheville Stargazers, please call the Western

**Changing
Minds One
Step At
A Time –
Help Beat
The Stigma**

Carolina office at (828) 505-7353, email us at: cijp1860@yahoo.com (specify “Walks” in subject line), or register on our website, www.namiwnc.org.

If you or your organization would like to be a Sponsor or donate in-kind products or services, please call or email the contacts above. You will be acknowledged in our advertising, our next newsletter, on our website and on signage at the Walk.

To form your own team, go to www.naminc.org, and click on NAMIWalks. Be sure to enter “Western Carolina” as the designated NAMI affiliate for the funds you raise.

Are you an aspiring filmmaker?

We are looking for someone with a digital video camera or camcorder to document our Walk. No electrical outlets will be available. If you can help, please call (828) 505-7353. Thank you!

Support group schedule changes

Our family support groups and Connection consumer support groups normally held on Saturday, May 1 at 10 am at MountainHouse have been moved to Saturday, May 8, 10 am due to NAMIWalks in Asheville. Our Saturday, July 3, 10 am groups will be held on Saturday, July 10 due to the 4th of July holiday weekend.

Please check our website, www.namiwnc.org, Calendar page, for schedule updates.

Thank you volunteers

January – March 2010

A salute to our volunteers: Matt, Shane, Ray, Paulette, Carla, Doran, Jenny, Nina, Leslie, Tim, Kelvin, Dawn, Lisa, Karen, Jonathan, Karim, Mary, Marlene, and Cindy. Thanks for your time and dedication!

NAMIWalks Volunteers Needed

Additional volunteers will be needed to prepare for NAMIWalks on May 1. We are now forming committees for Decorating, Banners and Signs, Registration/Sign-in, Assisting the Walkers (give out water, etc.) and General Organization and Setup. Please call (828) 505-7353 now to help make this a big success!

Proposed bylaws revisions to be voted on April 20

The Board of Directors of NAMI Western Carolina, Inc. recommends that several revisions be made to the affiliate's bylaws. Copies of these proposals were mailed to the membership who will vote on these changes at the 7 p.m. April 20 general meeting at Mountainhouse. 225 East Chestnut St. A two-thirds vote of members present is required for ratification.

The proposed changes and additions address NAMI WC's ever-expanding efforts to carry out its mission to support, educate and advocate on

behalf of all those affected by mental illness. These include:

- Expanding the Board to 10 members that would include the president, vice president, secretary and treasurer, five at-large members, and the past president.
- Opening the Board to others dedicated to the affiliate's mission, while maintaining the majority shall consist of consumers and family members.
- Establishing a professional membership category.
- Adding the authority to hire an executive director.
- Adding a non-discrimination

clause.

- Limiting the amount of funds that can be spent without Board approval.
- Reducing the number of committees.
- Adding a preamble/mission statement.
- Eliminating legalism and excess verbiage.

Organized in 1985 as The Western Carolina Alliance for the Mentally Ill, the affiliate was chartered in 1987 as a 501©3 non-profit corporation. The Bylaws were amended in 1990, 1997 and 1999.

Nominations invited for expanded Board

It's time to expand the official size of the NAMI Western Carolina Board of Directors. The current board of directors has completed a draft of the bylaws that expands the size of the board from four officers to ten positions, including officers. The bylaws have now been sent to you for a membership vote at the April 20 general meeting. Please plan to attend the meeting to vote on these changes.

Our NAMI affiliate membership is increasing in size and vitality. We have expanded the number of NAMI trained support group facilitators for both consumers and families. Consumers now serve in board leadership and in the role of Executive Director. We are a NAMI affiliate that embraces leadership from families and peers. Expanding the number of board positions will enrich the participatory culture of our affiliate and increase the depth of our NAMI leadership.

Self-nominations are encouraged. Give your name, your contact information, your relationship to mental illness (self or family), the ways that you participate in NAMI, and why you want to serve on the governing board that makes our policy and financial decisions. Send your nominations for the board to Jim Pitts at jimpitts1@mac.com or Christine Smith at NAMI-WC, P.O. Box 8046, Asheville, NC 28814.

Weight loss program

If you have weight gain due to psychiatric medications (metabolic syndrome) and would be interested in attending a weight loss program, please call 828-505-7353 or email cijp1860@yahoo.com. Please specify "Weight program" in subject line.

What is recovery?

Hello. I'm Audrey and I am in recovery from mental illness. I'm also a proud member of NAMI-Western Carolina, becoming more involved in our affiliate, and am currently working toward certification as a peer support specialist. But, like all of us, that's only part of who I am.

Up to now, I've been a very private person, reluctant to go public about my mental health diagnosis because of the stigma attached to being, or having been, mentally ill. But over time, I began to realize that stigma can only hurt me if I act as though my illness is something I should hide. I'm tired of wasting my energy in attempting to hide a very important part of my own personal growth, as though my illness is something shameful, rather than a common condition that affects millions of Americans. So, it is time for me to stop cringing in fear and take a stand against stigma if I am going to be an effective advocate. Nevertheless, it is nerve racking to "come out" publicly.

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BiPolar

black mood born
from the abyss
of unconsciousness

raw mood formed
in a cascade
of neuronal chemistry

fey mood hurled
into the heights
of cosmic unity

oh you mood...
you mood descending and rising
in bewildering waves

bowing my head
bending my body
like tall prairie grass

that hisses in submissive protest
undulating in the embrace
of its unseen lover

oh you mood...
you mood descending and rising
in bewildering waves

you come in your time,
too soon, not soon enough
as a bane and a boon

– S.K. Daw
Composed 5/2002, revised 4/2005, revised
5/2009

Contributors

David Cornwell
S.K. Daw
Charmaine Kirsch
Eddie LeShure
Audrey Mercer
Mercury Creative Group
Jim Pitts
Sharon Pitts
Florence Rowe
Richard Sackett
Christine Smith

May Hope Benefit Concert

The 4th annual May Hope Mental Health Benefit Concert takes place on Saturday evening, May 22nd, at 7pm. Again we'll have the inspiring surroundings of the All Souls Cathedral, in Biltmore Village for the fund raiser.

Our featured entertainer this year is nationally known and locally-based composer, performer and producer, Chris Rosser. He has opened for John Mayer and for Nickel Creek and won songwriting contests at the Rocky Mountain Folk Festival and the Meryl Watson Festival. Complimenting Chris's performance will be Annie Lalley and Joe Ebel. Annie is known for her superb, versatile vocals and her humor and emotional honesty as a composer

and performer. Her husband, Joe is a renowned 5-string violinist and vocalist. Then, homegrown singer/songwriter Aaron Burdett, "Brings It All Back to the Heart" with a rich, familiar style and adept instrumentals. Perennial favorites Richard Sackett and Friends will offer some original and traditional tunes. And, Susan Ward, a seasoned musician whose songs address some of the struggles of mental illness will perform two of her original songs. Susan is an advocate for the mentally ill and is the founder of this musical fund-raiser.

Along with entertainment in the Cathedral, a Silent Auction and

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Recovery

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One of the questions on the peer support specialist application is "What does recovery mean to me?" In answering that question for myself and in listening to my peers' comments on the first morning of class, what I had felt about recovery was confirmed. First, recovery is a process. Second, it takes as much time as it takes, with detours, setbacks and self-doubt slowly giving way, with good treatment and maybe a little luck. Third, and probably most important, it is very individualized.

To me, recovery means feeling "normal" most of the time. It means the ability to recognize and manage symptoms, develop and maintain healthy relationships, and produce good work with confidence, using my experience and skills, while learning new skills to keep life interesting. It's freedom to try new things, make new

friends, and enjoy leisure activities with friends or alone. It's also handling difficulties without falling apart. My life is no longer controlled by my illness. I'm responsible and in charge of my choices, just as any other individual is. Is life perfect? Certainly not! But, it is manageable. And it is good.

I would like to suggest that my introduction be seen as an introduction, as well, to a new column about Recovery for our NAMI newsletter. What does recovery mean to you? What issues are you confronting in your own recovery that you might like to share? How does stigma affect your recovery? Incidentally, considering the effects of stigma and very real need by many for self-protection, articles for this column may be written using "pen names" or published anonymously.

I will look forward to reading your stories.

May Hope

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a Snack Bar will be offered in the Parish Hall.

Proceeds from the May Hope Concert will be divided among our recipient agencies - All Souls Counseling Center, which provides individual, couples, family and group therapy for the uninsured; A Hope Hospitality House, a day program for the homeless of downtown Asheville; Copestone Inpatient and Outpatient Psychiatric Services of Mission Hospitals; and NAMI of Western Carolina, the local affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness which offers education, support, and advocacy for the mentally ill and their families. Tickets are \$15 each.

We hope you'll join us for this evening of fine entertainment and/or consider a contribution to help sustain quality, affordable mental health services in our community. For more information contact Richard Sackett at (828) 777-0783 or Rnotesackett@charter.net .

Support Group Facilitators Trained

NAMI-WC members Jim Pitts, Eddie LeShure, Charmaine Kirsch, and Leslie Gaidi attended an intensive three-day training for Support Group Facilitators in February. Congratulations!

NAMI – Western Carolina Board of Directors 2010

James Pitts, PhD., President

Bob Carey, Vice President

Audrey Mercer, Secretary

Karen D. Hoffman, Treasurer

Christine Smith, Executive Director

Sign up for upcoming F2F classes

Wait lists are already starting for upcoming Family to Family classes. To assure your slot, get on the wait list now. When a class is offered you will be contacted to see if you are still interested. Below are four NAMI affiliates that you can contact:

NAMI-WC (Asheville): Florence Rowe (828) 299-9596

NAMI Appalachian South (Murphy, Cherokee, NC): Ann Nandrea (828) 369-7385

NAMI Transylvania Advocates (Pisgah Forest): Kay Speckman (828)883-4603

NAMI 4 Seasons (Hendersonville, NC): (828)458-4359 or Leslie Huntley (828)894-3507

Starting date for Basics changed

Due to our unusual weather the NAMI BASICS Class, for primary care givers of children with emotional and/or behavioral challenges, is now scheduled for April 20 – May 6 on Tuesday & Thursday evenings 6:30 – 9 pm. To register, call Donna at (828) 684-5477 or Jeannie at (828) 664-1146.

Western Highlands Network, 356 Biltmore Ave., Asheville, NC 28801, www.westernhighlands.org manages mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse services in Yancey, Transylvania, Rutherford, Polk, Mitchell, Madison, Henderson and Buncombe counties.

For routine needs or daytime emergency, call 828-225-2800
or 1-800-951-3792 (toll free).

For emergencies after hours & weekends, call 828-252-4357
or 1-800-951-3792.

Join or Renew Your Membership

I would like to be a member of NAMI-WC and am enclosing my check for membership and/or contribution.

Please check if: new or renewal

\$35.00 One-year Membership (Individual and Family)

\$3.00 Open Door Membership for those with limited means

\$ _____ Additional Contribution

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ EMail _____

Mail checks payable to NAMI WC:, P.O. Box 8046, Asheville, NC 28814 NAMI Western Carolina is a 501(c)3 non profit corporation. All contributions are tax-deductible.



P.O. Box 8046
Asheville, NC 28814

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Asheville, NC

Return Service Requested

Support – Education – Advocacy

NAMI WESTERN CAROLINA is an affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness. Members are families, friends and people living with mental illnesses such as major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and borderline personality disorder.

NAMI WESTERN CAROLINA welcomes families, friends and people with a mental illness to meetings at 10 am the first Saturday and 7 pm the third Tuesday of the month at Mountainhouse, 225 E. Chestnut St., Asheville. (Parking in the rear, use the side entrance) Call 687-6901 for information www.namiwnc.org.

NAMI CONNECTION is a recovery support group for adults with mental illness, regardless of diagnosis. Trained individuals, who also are in recovery and understand the daily challenges, offer encouragement and support. Group meets the first Saturday at 10 am and third Tuesday at 8

pm at Mountainhouse, 225 East Chestnut St., Asheville, and the 2nd and 4th Mondays at 11 am at 356 Biltmore Ave, #298. For information, call 828-505-7353.

NAMI BASICS is a new education program for parents/caregivers of children and adolescents living with mental illness. Trained teachers or other caregivers with similar experiences with their own children teach this free six-week class. Facilitator: Sharon Pitts, 258-5359 sharonpitts1@gmail.com

NAMI FAMILY-to-FAMILY EDUCATION is a free 12-week course of facts and support for families/caregivers of persons with a diagnosed mental illness. Trained family members teach the 2½-hour class. Early re-registration is required. Coordinator: Florence Rowe, 299-9596 rohaus@charter.net

IN OUR OWN VOICE offers free presentations by people with mental illness in recovery to dispel stigma; includes video, personal testimony and discussion. Coordinator: Tracy Mixson, 232-0438, psychodog@charter.net.

*NAMI gives peer-to-peer support, not led by mental health professionals
All meetings are held at Mountainhouse, 225 E. Chestnut Street, Asheville, unless otherwise indicated.*