

Mental Illness Awareness Week Oct. 4-10

In 1990 the U.S. Congress established the first week of October as Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) in recognition of NAMI's efforts to raise mental illness awareness. Since then, mental health advocates across the country have joined together during the first week of October to celebrate. As NAMI's premiere public awareness and public education campaign, MIAW links NAMI's 1,100+ local affiliates across the country.

MIAW has become a tradition for NAMI. It presents an opportunity for

all three levels of NAMI—national, state and local—to work together in communities across the country to achieve NAMI's mission of outreach, education, and advocacy.

Real recovery from mental illness requires community action, understanding, and teamwork. Recovery is possible because of improved science, better community supports, and reduced stigma. But significant barriers still exist. Services are at risk, insurance can be insufficient, and stigma, though less today than when MIAW

was founded, is still prevalent.

On Tuesday, September 22, Mayor Terry Bellamy and the City Council officially proclaimed October 4–10 as Mental Illness Awareness Week here in Asheville. Dr. Jim Pitts and Christine Smith, Co-Presidents of NAMI-WC, were there to accept the proclamation, which will be displayed in our new office. Dr. Pitts spoke to the Council about the importance and symbolism of this week and thanked them for recognizing NAMI.

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NAMI and the VA make history

On October 8, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 173B of the Charles George VA Medical Center in Asheville, mental health history was made in western North Carolina. Away from the bustling corridors of the mental health clinic, a new NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group met in a small conference room across from the Bistro. To this writer's knowledge, this was the first time that VA partnered with NAMI-WC to offer a support group facilitated by non-VA personnel. Charles Wooten and Ray Carter, both trained NAMI Connection facilitators and veterans themselves, facilitated the support

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Be sure to visit our new office!

NAMI-WC will be opening our new office in mid-October in the Western Highlands Building, 356 Biltmore Avenue, Suite 298, Asheville, NC 28801. We are pleased to be neighbors with Western Highlands LME, ARP/Phoenix, and the offices of Congressman Heath Shuler.

We will have a complete selection of brochures and information on NAMI's free educational programs, such as Family-to-Family, a 12-week class for caregivers of people with mental illness; NAMI Basics, a 6-week class for parents of children with a mental health diagnosis; and In Our Own Voice: Living with Mental Illness. In addition, the office will have meeting rooms for both Connection Consumer Recovery Support Groups for persons with any mental health diagnosis, and support groups for caregivers. A library/video room and job coaching are also planned.

Support groups for consumers and caregivers will continue to be held on the first Saturday of the month at 10 a.m. and the third Tuesday of the month at 8 p.m. after the 7 p.m. general meeting. Both of these meetings will still be held at Mountainhouse, 225 E. Chestnut Street near Charlotte Street, Asheville. Times for additional support groups to be held at the Biltmore Avenue location will be announced shortly.

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Awareness

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Here in western North Carolina, our affiliate spread the word about mental illness through presentations and events in several locations. Information tables were set up at the Asheville YWCA, the YMCA, UNCA, Warren Wilson College, A-B Tech, and the Veterans Administration (VA) throughout the week.

VA launched its week of celebration with a picnic lunch at the VA Medical Center from noon to 2 p.m. on Monday, October 5. This brown-bag event celebrated the VA Consumer Council and the importance of VA's Memorandum of Understanding with NAMI, which allows us to have NAMI programs such as Connection and Family-to-Family courses on VA campuses. Ray Carter and Charles Wooten also

began the first biweekly Connection Recovery Support Group (for veterans only) on Thursday, October 8 (see related article).

The collaboration of NAMI, Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC), CooperRiis, and Healthcare Solutions Network presented an all-day workshop, "Connecting Community Resources for Real Recovery," on Thursday, October 8, at MAHEC's Biltmore Avenue campus. (See separate article for details.)

Help promote public education and elimination of stigma, not just during Mental Illness Awareness Week, but every week. It is never too late to write a letter to the editor or spread the word about recovery to family, friends, and colleagues. Each of you makes a difference, and we thank you for your caring, openness, and participation.

VA

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group, which will be held every other week.

NAMI Connection is a recovery support group program offered free of charge using a flexible structure format where participants meet for 90 minutes. No registration is required. The group is open to all adults with mental illness, regardless of diagnosis. Veterans are encouraged to attend and share their feelings, difficulties, or successes.

"Talk to someone who understands, someone just like you," best describes what the recovery support group is all about. Veterans helping veterans find the path to recovery on their own time, at their own pace. NAMI Connection Recovery Support Groups are confidential—



you can share as much or as little personal information as you wish.

Dr. Elizabeth Huddleston, the Local Recovery Coordinator for the Charles George Medical Center's mental health clinic and a NAMI member, and Dr. Carol Rivers, Chief of Mental Health Services at Charles George, have been instrumental in getting the necessary approvals for this historic event.

For more information, please contact Ray Carter at 828-337-0515 or ray-carter2001@yahoo.com

Bridge meds now available

Do you know someone who needs medication for his or her mental illness symptoms? The Western North Carolina Community Health Service Program (WNCCHS) can help. Often people seeking treatment for their mental illness can't schedule their first appointment with a provider for at least a month. They can't get needed prescriptions until that appointment, but they need the meds now! WNCCHS's bridge program helps participants get medications during the period before that first appointment.

To qualify for the program, a person must be:

- a Buncombe County resident for at least 90 days,
- uninsured,
- a Medicaid or Medicare recipient,
- transitioning from either a mental health hospital or jail, and
- willing to receive services from a mental health provider.

To participate in the WNCCHS Medication Bridge Program, call Western Highlands Network at 828-255-2800 or 1-800-951-3792 (24-hr line). Do not call WNCCHS directly; you must seek a referral through the Western Highlands access process.

NAMI Western Carolina Wants You

Advocacy
Education
Support

See Page 7 or visit
NAMIWNC.org for details

New jail screening procedures to benefit inmate services

Hopefully, come November, Buncombe County Detention Facility will implement new screening procedures that will benefit services to inmates.

Presently, three screens (questionnaires) are used for medical, mental health, and classification purposes. (These screens are in addition to a pre-trial release screening.) The first is done by a nurse in private, while the last two are done by uniformed officers, often within earshot of other people. For this reason and others, honest answers are often lacking, leading to inmates not getting linkage assistance to outside programs for mental health and/or substance abuse problems or other needed services like housing. Nor are they identified for inclusion in psycho-educational

groups facilitated by the mental health and substance abuse case managers.

Starting soon, inmates will be screened in private by non-uniformed, civilian personnel. While the system isn't perfect largely due to inmate responses based upon their perception of the purpose for which the information will be used, greater accuracy for statistical purposes and for rendering aid to those who desire it is anticipated. Needless to say, the objective of rehabilitation efforts in the jail is to give arrestees linkage to programs and information that can teach them tools to use in the hopes of getting their lives together and avoiding future arrests. This clearly benefits them, their loved ones, and the community at large.

NAMI-WC will soon offer job coaching for consumers

In the near future, NAMI-WC will be offering employment coaching to a limited number of consumers who are ready to enter or reenter the job market. The assistance will be provided by Mort Stein, who has been successfully providing similar services for some time through the local Jewish Family Services. Mort, who retired after a long career in human resources management, will provide advice on resume preparation, interviewing techniques, and job search strategies. We hope to get this program up and running in the next couple of months. We will be seeking recommendations from mental health providers for individuals considered good candidates for employment.

Western Highland Network Contact Numbers

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.

Weight management program planned

Starting in early November, NAMI-WC is partnering with Mission Hospitals' Weight Management Center to begin a pilot program for people in recovery from mental illness. Many of the medications that stabilize people with brain disorders also cause significant weight gains, along with a host of obesity-related diseases. The goals of the weight management program are to help people develop healthy eating habits and maintain a healthy lifestyle and, in the process, lose weight. The initial program will have five participants.

The program will include four classes with a Center dietician who will discuss menu planning, shopping tips, and habits for successful weight loss, among other things. In addition, NAMI-WC will oversee 8 weeks of weigh-ins/weight loss support groups. During this period, we hope to have several guest speakers from organizations, such as the YM/WCA and Copestone.

Office

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Please call 828-687-6901 for updated information, the opening date, and new support group days and times. Office hours will be Monday–Thursday from 11 a.m.–4 p.m.

Furniture, computers, a copier/printer, and other office equipment can be pricey, even though we are trying to find them used. If you would like to make a donation to help us to equip our new office, we would greatly appreciate it. Please send donations to: NAMI-WC, P.O. Box 8046, Asheville, NC 28814, specifying that it is for the office.

Recognition for a “genius” who happens to have schizophrenia

The MacArthur Fellowship grants (nicknamed the Genius Award) were announced on September 22. These grants are given out each year to 20 to 40 U.S. residents, of any age and working in any profession, who “show exceptional merit and promise for continued and enhanced creativity.” The grants are seen as an investment in the recipient’s originality, insight, and potential. This year, 24 grants were awarded for \$500,000 each, paid in quarterly installments over 5 years.

Among the winners was Elyn Saks, 53, a law professor at the University of Southern California. Since adolescence, Saks has battled schizophrenia and acute psychoses. She excelled at her academic studies (valedictorian at Vanderbilt University, Oxford scholar, law degree from Yale University). For most of her adult life, she kept her illness hidden from all but a few close friends. She controls her illness with daily medication and therapy.

She was in her 40’s before she could admit to herself that her illness was not going away and that medication and therapy would be necessary for her entire life. She published a memoir in 2007, *The Center Cannot Hold: My Journey Through Madness*, which describes her struggles and successes.

In addition to being a law professor, she is an adjunct professor of psychiatry at UC San Diego, where she does research on society’s rejection of the mentally ill and how high-functioning schizophrenics cope.

Second class of peer specialists complete training

Western Highlands Network recently sponsored the second training for peer specialists, with a graduation ceremony held on Wednesday, September 2. The keynote speaker was Christine Kudlate of Patton Counseling, who gave a rousing welcome to the new graduates.

The 40-hour class was led by Andrea Morris, Western Highlands Peer Specialist Trainer, and Robert J. Cox, Recovery Educator and Peer Specialist Trainer. To qualify as a Certified Peer Specialist, graduates must have paid, supervised employment in the field for six months and attend 20 hours of additional training.

Graduates are: Willie Baskerville, Nicholas Eric Freeman, Elizabeth Setzer, Donna Lesser, Gregory Haley, Shane Raffle, Christine Smith, Jennifer Howard, Debra Jensen, Alvin Long, Sharman Clark, Terrence Streeter, William Toney Guage, Jr., Mallory Chambliss, Jesse Coffeen, Melissa Newcomb, Elizabeth LaBar, Scarlett Falk, Martin Dickerson, Erin Cavasini, Nanette Banner, Brian Ringler, Debra Jensen, and Tim Branche.

Recovery support program held

NAMI-WC, Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC), CooperRiis, and Healthcare Solutions Network co-sponsored “Connecting Community Resources for Real Recovery,” held on Thursday, October 8, at MAHEC at 501 Biltmore Avenue in Asheville.

This program was held in recognition of Mental Illness Awareness Week, which ran October 4–10. The conference featured key components on how to build effective and collaborative systems to support recovery from mental illness.

Presentations included information about local integrated care and recovery programs, recovery services offered by the Veterans Administration and at the Buncombe County Detention Center, as well as an overview of The Enhanced Recovery Model used at CooperRiis Healing Farm.

Discussions with consumers about real recovery were also part of the program.

NAMI NC Annual
Conference

October 16-17, 2009
- Raleigh

See Story Page 7

Conference info, registration
at NAMINC.org

F2F teachers reminded they are “emotional guides”

NAMI Family-to-Family class participants are unique because of their level of stress. “This is not a group you reach through conventional adult education,” claims Joyce Burland, Ph.D., author of the course curriculum. The “trauma lecture” she added to the weekend teacher training was emphasized at a Teacher Training Reprise held on August 22 in Rutherfordton.

Teacher-trainers Leslie Huntley, Liz Smith, and Florence Rowe led the one-day update. The F2F teachers from Western NC attending were reminded to be sensitive to and understanding of the pain and trauma present in the life of each class member. The 12-week course strives to guide families to emotional understanding, healing, insight, and action.



The “hot potato” review was well received. Evaluations included such positive comments as “it was a great networking experience,” and “I received a lot of good ideas from other teachers. Hearing different experiences and how family members were helped by F2F encouraged me to stay committed to teaching the class. I especially liked being reminded we are emotional guides helping families through dilemmas.”

NAMI Western Carolina and NAMI Four Seasons co-sponsored the event at space provided by St. Francis Episcopal Church.

Schizophrenia simulation wows F2F class participants

Janssen Pharmaceutical’s Senior Area Specialist Tom Rigsby brought the firm’s special VH unit to this fall’s Family-to-Family class. The super video plus helped participants “get into the mind” of someone diagnosed with schizophrenia, as the participants heard, saw, smelled, and felt the world around them. One participant said in amazement “Now I see what he means when he talks about ‘the voices.’” To get on the waiting list for the next F2F class (unscheduled at the moment), call (828) 299-9596. People on the list get first shot at filling class slots.

F2F webpage features moving new video

Help someone you know by referring them to an insightful new 10-minute promotional video for the Family-to-Family Class. Access it by going to www.NAMI.org and clicking on the Family-to-Family button under “Programs.”

NAMI national gala to be held in D.C.

“Unmasking Mental Illness,” the 5th Annual Gala Dinner and Presentation of The Mind of America Scientific Research Award, will be held on Wednesday, October 14, at the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium, 1301 Constitution Avenue, NW, in Washington, DC. The honoree will be Dr. William Carpenter, a specialist in the study of mental illness, with a concentration on schizophrenia. For more information, please call NAMI at 202-833-4456, Ext. 101. Proceeds from this event will benefit NAMI programs and trainings.

“One Community in Recovery” conference

Jim and Sharon Pitts represented NAMI Western Carolina at “North Carolina: One Community in Recovery,” held on September 11 in Winston Salem. This one-day statewide conference, announced as a “first annual,” was designed to promote the principles and applications of

recovery in mental health. The program brought together mental health providers and individuals in recovery. Nationally known recovery pioneers Dr. Daniel Fisher and Dr. Dori Hutchinson were keynote speakers. A very upbeat gathering, “One Community in Recovery” high-

lighted the emerging leadership role of peer support specialists in mental health, addictions, and other areas of treatment and recovery. NAMI NC, CooperRiis Healing Farm, and Western Highlands Network were among the numerous organizations represented.

Allegra Print & Imaging awards grant to NAMI-WC

Allegra Print & Imaging, located at 191 Charlotte Street in Asheville, has presented a \$500 FootPRINT Fund Award to NAMI-WC. Each year this locally owned family firm awards print services to selected nonprofit organizations to help enhance their image, expand their services, and extend their printing budgets. This fund annually awards a total of \$10,000.

The award states that "we are honored to provide you with print services in support of your community outreach and promotional efforts. In this way, you are leaving a footprint on our community and helping to make it a better place to live and work, one step at a time."

With several new programs underway and opening a new office, NAMI-WC will use its award funds to produce rack cards with updated information. Thank you, Allegra!

NAMI's website among America's top non-profit sites

NAMI's national website (www.NAMI.org) is among the top eight nonprofit sites in terms of the number of "hits" it receives. Have you visited the website lately? Log on to discover how user friendly and informative the website is. Don't forget to click on the captivating video presentations—they are a real treat!

Caring for Susan: creative long-term strategies for disability housing

No matter the nature of a significant disability, we all have a responsibility to prepare for an uncertain future. We frequently worry about how to provide suitable long-term housing (and services) for a relative or friend whose daily life is impaired by a significant disability and low income. For several decades the federal government has been cutting back on funds for public subsidy programs, such as Section 8. That long-term trend is likely to continue. How can a family prepare for the continuation of housing and needed disability support services when older generations die?

Christine Smith and Jim and Sharon Pitts met recently with Roxanne Colwell (Family Support Network of WNC), representatives of ARC, other disability groups, and Diana Johnston, a respected disability attorney. This grassroots gathering of citizens has prepared public meetings for families to share knowledge about private sector and government resources and models available for this long-term challenge for disabled populations. The two public meetings will be held on November 18 and December 2, from 6 to 8 p.m., at the Mission Reuter Children's Outpatient Center.

"Creative Hearts and Healing Minds"—NAMI NC celebrates 25 years

"Creative Hearts and Healing Minds," provides a unifying theme for the NAMI annual state conference, to be held on



October 16-17 at the McKimmon Center in at N.C. State University in Raleigh. Pharmaceutical drugs have displaced Freud in mental health understanding and treatment. The healing power of family, art, and the human spirit is often underestimated. You owe it to yourself and the persons you love to come to the 25th NAMI NC annual meeting. Registration prices have been greatly reduced for consumers and families. There are many reasonably priced motels in Raleigh, but there is plenty of competition for rooms near the university. Call to reserve your room now.

Several sessions will highlight the emerging reality of consumer recovery and opportunities for mentally ill consumers to participate in NAMI's signature training programs, Peer-to-Peer and In Our Own Voice. The program includes a special welcome from founding member Elaine Purple. Jim Pitts will introduce keynote speakers, David Anderson Brown and his daughter, Emily M. Egan. Their family's journey through Emily's onset of bipolar disorder during her teenage years is described in the touching and instructive book, Duct Tape and WD-40. The state annual conference offers sessions that deal with topics as diverse as violence, religious faith, peer support specialists, recent scientific research, and the role of NAMI in the national movement for improved health care.

Help needed with rideshare

NAMI is attempting to coordinate rides to our meetings and support for those without transportation. If you need a ride, or are able to provide a ride to another NAMI member, please call 828-687-6901.

At this time we have more people needing rides than we have drivers. Please help! We try to match riders and drivers within their own neighborhoods. Thank you!



Memberships accepted now for 2010

We're looking to break another record next year and to exceed our 2009 membership of 146. Several people already have renewed, and others have signed up for the first time. Dues received now activate your membership throughout 2010. By joining NAMI, you empower our mission to improve the lives of individuals with mental illness and their families through support, education, and advocacy.

NAMI-WC is a 501(c)3 organization, so all contributions are tax deductible. Dues are shared with NAMI national and NAMI-NC and entitle you to receive informative local, state, and national publications.

Contributors

Contributing Writers

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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 _____

Home Telephone _____

E-Mail _____

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.

NAMI Launches new PSA campaign

Arlington, VA— The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) has released “Puzzle Pieces,” a new public service announcement (PSA) initiative that encourages people to connect with each other through NAMI to help themselves, their families and their friends who live with mental illness.

The “Puzzle Pieces” campaign includes four 60-second and three 30-second radio PSAs featuring testimonials from individuals and families that describe their experiences with mental illness and the role NAMI played in their recovery.

To view and listen to the NAMI PSA spots, visit www.nami.org/psa.



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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 at 10 am the first Saturday of the month at

Mountainhouse. Facilitators: Marlene Wooten, 505-0438 marlenas333@charter.net and Christine Smith, 258-1832 cijp1860@yahoo.com

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.