NAMI Monthly Meetings/Special Events

Family Education Meeting

2nd Thursday of each month, 7 p.m. social/library time. 7:30 presentation, various topics/presenters. St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 4007 Main St., Amherst, NY 14226

June 13 – Topic: Pro Bono Civil Legal Services for Mental Health Consumers. Speaker: Michael Kane, Director, Legal Services, Mental Health Advocates Michael Kane is Director of Legal Services at Mental Health Advocates of Western New York (formerly the Mental Health Association of Erie County). As Director of the Legal Services program, Mr. Kane oversees one of the only civil legal services programs in New York State that works exclusively with mental health consumers. Mr. Kane is a graduate of the University at Buffalo Law School.

July 11 – Topic: Dimensions of Recovery from Both Professional and Personal Experience. Presenter: Dr. Wendy Weinstein, psychiatrist

Aug 8 – Pending, check website calendar

Sept 12 - Topic: Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) from a Family Perspective. Speaker: Paula Baumer, RN and trained teacher for Family Connections, a class to support caregivers of those living with BPD.

Family Support Groups – monthly

3rd Wednesday, 7:00-8:30 p.m. St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, 4007 Main St., Amherst, NY 14226

June 19, July 17, Aug 21, Sept 18 …

3rd Thursday, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Watermark Wesleyan Church, 4999 McKinley Pkwy., enter off Bayview, Door 3, Room 124, Hamburg, NY 14075

June 20, July 18, Aug 15, Sept 19 …

Board of Directors Meeting

1st Tuesday of each month. Members welcome. Call for location.

President’s Corner

Did you know that NAMI Buffalo works every day to make positive change? In each Challenger newsletter, you’ll find one or more articles on legislative actions, advocacy efforts, or new or different approaches to improving the lives of people with mental illness. Almost every issue of the NAMI members’ newsletters from NAMI NYS and national NAMI also includes some call to action on a key issue.

You can help make important reforms simply by taking a minute from your day to scan through the emails or notices you receive from NAMI. Your helping is often as easy as clicking on a link to make your voice be heard. Our NAMI Buffalo Facebook page also posts links that allow you to respond to current legislative issues. Right now, you will find a link to your state senator requesting that he/she votes for the HALT BILL A.2500/S.1623 (“Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement”) to limit the use of solitary confinement and create alternative therapeutic and rehabilitative confinement options. Passing the HALT bill is one of NAMI NYS’s top agenda items on criminal justice. A full list of state legislative action items appears in this newsletter.

Other agenda items include enhancing discharge planning for individuals with mental illness, and supporting investment in Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) to generate better interactions with police and first responders. NAMI Buffalo is very involved with the CIT training program, coordinated by Crisis Services. This nationally recognized program trains law enforcement staff (police and corrections officers) to interact more effectively and safely with people with mental illness. NAMI Buffalo sends several family members to CIT classes to tell the stories of their loved ones from a family’s perspective. They provide a picture of someone with mental illness as a person, not an illness. We firmly believe our involvement helps the police and other law enforcement people better understand how to interact with our loved ones suffering from mental illness, generating better outcomes for all involved.

We know everyone’s life is busy! Even if you don’t

President’s Corner continued on pg. 2
Spotlight Volunteer

Terry Fleig

We will be featuring one of our many volunteers in each newsletter. We are so grateful for the time, effort and talent donated by our volunteers to NAMI, especially since we are a small, grass-roots organization that depends on them.

Terry has been a dedicated NAMI member who has volunteered in so many roles since joining us in 2015 that it is easiest just to list her activities here:

- Trained and for 3 years has served as a Support Group Facilitator in the Southtowns;
- Our Facebook co-administrator, regularly posting timely events and interesting articles;
- Speaker at multiple Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training presentations to police;
- Collects donations of clothing and toys from her friends for children and adolescent patients at ECMC during the holiday season;
- Donates baskets to our annual fundraiser;
- Attended NAMI National and NAMI NYS Conventions, as well as other educational events to keep up to date for her support groups;
- Represents NAMI at community outreach events;
- Participated in a panel for graduate social work students at a local college.

Spotlight Questions:

Terry, how did you hear about NAMI?

Not 100% sure. I think I saw a sign at what was then Lakeshore Behavioral Health about a support group meeting. Or I might have gotten info from a police officer or even seen a notice about the Family-to-Family class in the newspaper...those early months were so stressful and are such a blur.

What have you found most helpful about NAMI?

Everything. Found the info I needed to help my loved one. Still gain knowledge and support at every meeting and event. Discovered OnTrackNY [program for teens and young adults with first-time psychosis] through NAMI and that was a godsend.

Why do you volunteer for NAMI?

I like to give back. I also think that NAMI forms a strong, cohesive community that is key to securing improvements in our broken mental health care system. I believe NAMI’s lobbying efforts are essential.

What is a favorite uplifting quote, song, book, movie, person?

I think Dr. E. Fuller Torrey’s ‘Surviving Schizophrenia: A Family Manual’ is the most helpful and insightful book I’ve come across.

When not volunteering for NAMI, what do you like to do?

Gardening, glass and mosaic art, standup comedy, teaching myself machine knitting, writing parodies and fiction...though the writing and standup comedy have been much neglected since mental illness has made demands on my time.

Thank you, Terry, for helping NAMI in so many ways. We could not do the work we do without dedicated volunteers such as yourself.

Congratulations for being our first Spotlight Volunteer!

Thank you!

Please consider naming NAMI Buffalo & Erie County in your will.

Your gift ensures that your support for our mission will continue into the future.

Thank you.

In Memoriam

Our thoughts are with the family of Dr. Nicholas Bona, former chief of psychiatry at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center, and also a staff psychiatrist and deputy clinical director at the Buffalo Psychiatric Center. As excerpted from The Buffalo News on 2/26/19, he also assisted at the West Seneca Development Center into the late 1990s and had a private practice for 40 years on Buffalo’s West Side and in the Town of Tonawanda. He was a past president of the WNY Psychiatric Society and the WNY branch of the American Psychiatric Association.

An adjunct professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Buffalo who supervised students in clinical settings, Dr. Bona received the Distinguished Service Award from the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill in 1992. The Buffalo News notes: “Dr. Bona was a leader nationally in promoting innovation in mental health treatment as focus shifted from institutional care to community-based programs and outpatient services.”

Sincerest sympathies to the family of Marilyn L. Gagner of Niagara Falls who passed away in late December. We are also deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Nancy Lobaugh, a devoted participant for many years in our annual Christmas is for Kids’ holiday project. As well, we offer our condolences to Rev. F. Bruce Volante and family in the recent loss of his mother, Suzanne Volante.
2019 Annual Awards Dinner Keynote speaker Dr. Adam K. Ashton encourages patients and families to consider – with their provider – an option to “augment” treatment with an antipsychotic when antidepressants alone aren’t helping enough. Ashton emphasized that Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) treatment and medication should help a patient feel better, not just “less terrible”.

Dr. Ashton’s presentation at the 2019 dinner was lively, engaging, and provided interesting information for families and individuals working toward recovery from Major Depressive Disorder. He noted, when the FDA approved the very first medicine to augment MDD treatment, it suggested an atypical antipsychotic. Now, several years later, 3 of 4 approved products are atypical antipsychotics, “yet only 10% of depression patients are given this option which the FDA says is the standard of care. That means 90% of those who should be exposed to this advised treatment do not have it prescribed.”

Furthermore, antidepressant treatment alone fails most patients, placing them at higher risk for relapse or catastrophic outcomes. Dr. Ashton makes a compelling case for a changing approach in treating major depression. He contends that a much higher level of success in treatment is within reach if prescribers treat patients in a way that is FDA approved, on label, if certain atypical antipsychotics are included in treatment much more frequently.

Note: NAMI does not endorse any particular providers or treatment plans, but encourages families and loved ones with a diagnosis to be aware of options they may wish to discuss in recovery planning with their qualified provider.

Adam Keller Ashton, M.D., M.S., DFAPA is a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry with the State University of New York at Buffalo, distinguished fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, and works full time in private practice with Suburban Psychiatric Associates of WNY. He is certified by both the National Football League and Major League Baseball as an ADHD evaluator. He has over 100 published book chapters, abstracts, posters and articles and has written extensively for psychiatric journals. He has lectured widely, given over 2200 presentations and has been an invited guest lecturer at numerous national symposia. He was also awarded the 2007 State University of New York at Buffalo Department of Psychiatry teaching award for outstanding contributions to medical student education. Dr. Ashton has been named to America’s Top Doctors 12 times.
The “Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement” Act (the HALT Solitary Confinement Act) is a bill in the NY State Assembly (A.2500) and NY Senate (S.1623). The HALT bill is supported by over 200 organizations in NY State, including NAMI, who demand a more humane and effective alternative to solitary confinement which, if longer than 15 days, is defined as torture by the United Nations. This legislation ends segregated confinement of vulnerable people including persons with disabilities, pregnant women, new moms and individuals who are either 21 years or younger or 55 years or older. In addition, it limits the time that any inmate can spend in solitary to 15 days maximum.

New York State jails and prisons confine thousands of people in solitary every day, adding up to tens of thousands each year. New York lags behind other states in eliminating this policy. These inmates, disproportionately Black and Latina people, languish in a cell 22 to 24 hours a day without any meaningful human contact or programs. Some prisoners spend years – or even decades – in these inhumane conditions. NAMI is particularly concerned about how often persons with a serious mental illness are subjected to this intervention.

We are on the brink of having the bill passed in the Senate – but we need a big push NOW or it won’t happen. Please call your Senator TODAY.

1. Go to https://www.nysenate.gov/find-my-senator to find the name of your State Senator.
2. Call the Senate at 518-455-2800, ask for your Senator’s office and leave the following message with their staff:
   “Hi, my name is ______ and I’m a registered voter calling from (your locality) to urge the Senator pass the HALT Solitary Confinement Act as is without watering down any of its protections. We are counting on the Senate Democrats to end the torture of solitary confinement.”

Our 12-week Family-to-Family classes are booming!
An Amherst class started June 3rd and is full. We have just confirmed two more classes for fall of this year. If you couldn’t take the June class, you may be interested in one of these:
   Amherst – Wednesday evenings, starting September 11th
   West Seneca – Monday evenings, starting September 16th

Topics include:
   • illnesses; incl. schizophrenia, major depression, bipolar disorder, panic/anxiety disorder, obsessive
   • compulsive disorder, borderline personality disorder, PTSD
   • coping skills such as handling crisis and relapse
   • basic info about medications and working with treatment professionals
   • listening and communication techniques
   • problem-solving techniques
   • recover and rehabilitation
   • caregiver self-care around worry and stress

Mark your calendar, and remember pre-registration is required. Classes fill quickly and space is limited.
Call 716-226-6264 for more details and to register.
Every year, NAMI New York State and members from across the state go to Albany at state budget time to advocate for needed changes in legislation that can help our loved ones and families through improved care, resources and programs for those who suffer from mental illness. Have you thought about being part of such advocacy? Do you want your experience to help make positive changes? NAMI NYS annually offers an excellent Advocacy Guide, and the 2019 version can be found here:
https://files.constantcontact.com/9d08e137201/eac08dcb-d9df-4f7f-bec0-8bf2694b368c.pdf

In very brief summary, our state legislative priorities for the 2019 budget year are:

- **Access to Appropriate Services and Medication**, including prescriber prevails language for Medicaid, funding the Departments of Finance and Health to monitor insurance parity violations, ensure that inpatient hospital beds are available for those with serious mental illness and crisis needs.

- **Continued Investments in Community Services and the Mental Health Workforce**, for wider access to quality care with staff continuity, including Assertive Community Teams (ACT), Mobile Intervention Teams, Respite Centers, Crisis Centers, Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs), Telepsychiatry, First Episode Psychosis Programs, Integrated psychiatric services in the primary care setting and mental health clinics in schools.

- **Mental Health Housing with Wraparound Support Services**, including recovery support services and housing in community settings, which the state has not kept its promise to fund adequately. Housing providers are forced to operate 43% below where their funding would be had the state done so. Currently, 40,000 community-based housing units are affected by 25 years of flat-funding.

- **Improve the Criminal Justice-Mental Health Interface.** NAMI-NYS reports that more than 60% of those who are incarcerated have a diagnosable mental illness. To better divert those who are ill from jails into treatment, and improve police interactions for those who are ill, we support funding and legislation for Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) expansion, passage of the HALT Bill, and improved discharge planning when people are leaving jail, including Medicaid and other needed services.

- **Enact Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO) Law** which would remove guns from the homes of people with mental illness during vulnerable times of crisis.

- **Expand Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran’s Mental Health Program** to bring veteran’s peer support programs to more counties.

Details of these items and bills attached to them can be found in the guide at the link above.

An analysis of concerns about the governor’s proposed budget for the health care and mental health community can be found at:

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**Celebration of NAMI’s 35th Year**

Viola Palmer, Neighborhood Legal Services, and Susan Bavisotto

Jeanne Lodinsky and Board President Liz Carone

Caren Higgins and Tracie Bussi, Crisis Services
NAMI Buffalo & Erie County strongly supports legislation sponsored by April N.M. Baskin, Majority Leader of the Erie County Legislature and chair of its Public Safety Committee, to provide advice to and oversight of the Erie County Sheriff’s Office’s Jail Management Division by creating an Erie County Corrections Specialist Advisory Board. The Jail Management Division office administers the Erie County Holding Center - “the jail” - and the Erie County Correctional Facility in Alden.

In 2010, following the federal lawsuit against Erie County by the federal Department of Justice, our county legislature instituted the Erie County Community Corrections Board to provide oversight and improve conditions for inmates at the jail. However, the Board was dissolved by the legislature in 2014.

Since 2006, twenty-four inmates have died in the jail: 13 suicides, 7 medical events, and 4 homicides. (Buffalo News; August 20, 2017) Another death, an apparent overdose, occurred in May and is under investigation. The risk for injury or mortality in a jail or prison to a person with a mental illness is significantly higher than the general population. Some of our families have endured the nightmare of having their loved ones incarcerated in the jail. It is nothing short of a national disgrace that we callously imprison people with psychiatric illness, including addictions, who are in need of urgent treatment. For that reason, at very least, we need to reinstate a Community Board to fulfill the role of watchdog.

The complete proposed bill, sponsored by Leg. April N.M. Baskin (Chair of the Public Safety Committee), LL Intro. 8-1, dated 9/6/18 can be found at: https://bit.ly/2zr3Rih

Map of Erie County legislative districts: http://www2.erie.gov/legislature/index.php?q=node/1

County legislators district offices contact page: http://www2.erie.gov/legislature/index.php?q=legislators

If you were unable to attend the public hearing on reinstituting the advisory board on May 29th, please reach out to your County Legislator and let them know that you are a NAMI member and that you support this measure.

Activists, Volunteers & Supporters
New Strategic Plan Now in Place through Tower Foundation Support

A generous grant from the Tower Foundation enabled NAMI Buffalo & Erie County to have a consultant lead the Board of Directors through the development of a comprehensive new strategic plan this spring.

The board and staff contributed many hours and were fully engaged as a result of the structured, directed approach to evaluating our mission and goals. Many additional hours were invested by our “Core Group” which consisted of Board Members Liz Carone, Cambria Daniels, Linda Mallia, Johnathon Miles, Lynda Regan, Christopher Syracuse, Jackie Thompson and our executive director, Michele Brooks, to pull all of the ideas together and organize them into priorities. Their work helped finalize a powerful tool to guide us through the next three years.

The plan has already begun assisting us in making critical decisions and focusing on our most relevant work. The grant and new plan will continue making a significant difference in fulfilling our mission to help families with loved ones who have mental illness.

Mission Statement
Families compassionately helping families of loved ones challenged by mental illness.

Vision Statement
A meaningful life for people with mental illness achieved through effective systems and knowledgeable families.

Core Values
Empathy
Meeting people where they are through shared lived experience.

Inspiring Hope
Belief that the challenges of our lives and our community can be overcome.

Tenacity
Through persistence and respect we make a difference no matter how long it takes.

Thank you to everyone who pledged donations to NAMI Buffalo & Erie County in this year’s SEFA and United Way campaigns. We appreciate your gifts.
Annual 2018 Giving Summary – Thank you!

With sincerest thanks to our donors for new and continuing support.
Your donations make it possible to provide crucial education, support, and advocacy for families and individuals whose live are seriously challenged by mental illness.
Without you, we could not assure them: You Are Not Alone

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Dr. Albert & Francis Menno
We also extend our sincerest appreciation to all of our renewing and new members, those who patronize our annual awards dinner, as well as our yearly Christmas is for Kids! project, and sponsors of “The Mind Matters: Guide to Services for People Living with Mental Illness in the Erie-Niagara Region”.

We received donations this year in memory of:

- Curtis
- Julia, my mother
- Tom, my brother
- Peter Andersen
- Bernard & Mary Ann Blackowicz
- Helen Charek & Lois Dubin
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- Robert Crowe
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- Thomas J. Santa Lucia
- Judi Scanlon
- Sara Shryver
- Nancy D. Smith
- Dr. Mary Spinks
- Robert T.S.N.
- Geoffrey J. Thompson
- Ermine John Venuto
- Vito Zambelli

and 17 children and teachers killed by an AR-15 assault weapon in Parkland, FL
We received donations this year in honor of:

Joe, our son  
Lynne and Mary  
Senator Egleston  
Episodes the Movie  
Patsy Foster and Michael Frederick  
On behalf of our daughter  
Richard & Marcy Rose  
(11) families’ loved ones

*Privacy note: Names of those being honored (a private, living individual, e.g., not a public figure) in a donation to us will only be published with the express permission of the named individual.

We are happy to acknowledge gifts in honor or memory of someone you may wish to designate. Please provide acknowledgement mailing information if you wish the person or their family to be notified. Please provide how you would like your or your organization’s name to appear in our annual thank you list. “Anonymous” may be specified as an option.

We do not share or use personal donor information outside of providing your donation acknowledgement (as you specify) and a complimentary issue of our “Challenger” newsletter.

Thank you to our generous 2019 organization and corporate donors and event sponsors:

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Gamma Phi Omega Chapter  
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Xi Epsilon Omega Chapter  
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BryLin Hospitals  
BryLin Hospitals Medical Staff  
Child & Family Services  
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Endeavor Health Services  
Erie County Medical Center (ECMC)  
First Presbyterian Church of Clarence  
Genesee BOCES HOSA  
Horizon Human Services  
Independent Health Association  
J&L Premier Landscape  
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Spectrum Human Services  
Suburban Psychiatric Associates  
Friends through Thrivent  
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Friends through United Way of Buffalo & Erie County  
Friends through United Way of Central Indiana  
University Psychiatry Practice  
Friends at WNY Combined Federal Campaign  
Friends at Wegmans Food Markets  
West Seneca Woman’s Club
We invite you to join

NAMI Buffalo & Erie County

in helping us make a difference for people living with mental illness and their families

Mail to:
NAMI Buffalo & Erie County
PO Box 146, Buffalo, NY 14223

Name ____________________________
Address __________________________
City __________________ State ______ Zip ______
Phone ____________________________
Email ____________________________

____ $40 Individual Membership
____ $5 Open Door Membership, for those in financial need
____ $60 Household Membership; please include all household member names when joining in order for members’ benefits to apply. (Attach a separate sheet if needed.)

Names: ____________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

Membership includes local, state, and national NAMI.

— OR —

□ Donation; amount $ ____________________________
□ Include Membership (check category line above):
  ❖ ❖ ❖
□ in memory – or – □ in honor of
Name: ____________________________________________

□ NAMI has my permission to publish this gift/membership.

I’d like to help with the following (check your interest/s):

□ Fund/friend raising
□ Support letters
□ Office/Clerical
□ Legislative Advocacy
□ Outreach/event tabling
□ Other (explain) ________________________________
□ I’d like to be on the email list for legislative or other action alerts.

______________

Please send a copy of the Challenger newsletter to:

______________________________

You can also join us or donate securely online at www.namibuffalony.org

NAMI Buffalo & Erie County is a 501-C-3 not-for-profit.
A copy of our latest annual report may be obtained upon request from our office and the Charities Bureau, 28 Liberty St., 15th flr., NY, NY 10005

Board Members
Bryan Taylor,
Cambria Daniels, Liz Carone
and Chris Syracuse

Suburban Psychiatric Associates with
Dr. Adam K. Ashton, Keynote Speaker

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Dr. Michael Hallett, Suburban Psychiatric Associates

NAMi Buffalo & Erie County
Address Service Requested

Turn your demons into art, your shadow into a friend, your fear into fuel, your failures into teachers, your weaknesses into reasons to keep fighting. Don’t waste your pain. Recycle your heart.

~ Andrea Balt

NAMI Thanks the Sponsors, Guests, and Donors of Our Very Successful 35th Annual Awards Dinner

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FAMILY–TO–FAMILY 12-WEEK CLASSES
Starting in September
SAVE THE DATE & SHARE THE WORD
Amherst – Wednesday Evenings
West Seneca – Monday Evenings