

# the challenger

A Publication of the NATIONAL ALLIANCE on Mental Illness in Buffalo & Erie County

vol. 6 -  
Number 3  
Summer 2014

## Mark Your Calendar

Family education meetings are held at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 4007 Main St., Amherst 14226 (near Eggert Rd.) on the 2nd floor (main entrance at the back of the church), on the second Thursday of the month. There are two family support meetings on the 3rd Wednesday of the month: one at St. Paul's, on the 1st floor (church entrance at ground level at left rear of the building) and the other, at Lake Shore Behavioral Health, 3176 Abbott Rd., Orchard Park, 14127. Board meetings are at 636 Starin Ave. (1st floor), Buffalo, 14216; members welcome.

### August

**NAMI Board Meeting**, Thursday, August 7th, 7 p.m.

**NAMI Education Meeting**, Thursday, August 14th  
Library and Coffee Hour, 7 p.m.

Program, 7:30 p.m.: "Compelling" film on improving treatment for our most seriously ill (PBS, 2009) Minds on the Edge/Facing Mental Illness; community discussion follows.

**NAMI Family Support Meetings**, Wednesday, August 20th, 7p.m.



### September

**NAMI Board Meeting**, Thursday, September 4th, 7 p.m.

**NAMI Education Meeting**, Thursday, September 11th  
Library and Coffee Hour, 7 p.m. Program, 7:30 p.m.: Meet the legislators night; Assemblyman Ray Walters and others, TBA. "Mental Health Legislation in the NYS Assembly"

**NAMI Family Support Meetings**, Wednesday, September 17th, 7 p.m.

### October

**NAMI Board Meeting**, Thursday, October 2nd, 7 p.m.

**NAMI Education Meeting**, Thursday, October 9th  
Library and Coffee Hour, 7 p.m. Program, 7:30 p.m.: Dr. Caroline Young, ACT Team (Assertive Community Treatment) Lake Shore Behavioral Health on "Everything You Need to Know about the ACT Team"

**NAMI Family Support Meetings**, Wednesday, October 15th, 7 p.m.

### November

**NAMI Board Meeting**, Tuesday, November 6th, 7 p.m.

**NAMI Education Meeting**, Thursday, November 13th  
Library and Coffee Hour, 7 p.m. Program, 7:30 p.m. Speaker, Ellery Reaves, MPA, Commissioner of Mental Health/Erie County - The Impact of Fewer Inpatient Care Beds at BPC  
**NAMI Family Support Meetings**, Wednesday, November 19th, 7 p.m.



WISHING YOU A  
HAPPY, SAFE SUMMER.

## President's Corner: Important Legislative Alert

Recently, if you've given NAMI your email address or been to our family meetings, you've learned about proposed federal legislation which will prioritize treatment of the most seriously mentally ill. Please write Senators Gillibrand and Schumer, and your Representative in Congress to let them know you expect their support for the "Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act" (HR3717), introduced by Representative Tim Murphy. This act requires the federal government to start focusing on the most seriously ill. While mental disorders are common in the United States, the burden of disability is concentrated mostly in those with serious mental illness such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

Another proposed bill, "Strengthening Mental Illness in Our Communities Act" (HR4574), does NOT adequately address this need for treating the seriously mentally ill. Rep. Murphy's HR3717 does address this need.

Some seriously ill people do not recognize that they are mentally ill because the part of their brain that would recognize that, is affected by their illness. It is not denial; it is not stubbornness; it is not criminality. It is the reason we have had so many tragedies in recent years. People who need treatment are not getting it! Severe shortages of psychiatrists, lack of adequate housing facilities, closing of hospital beds, lack of funding for research to find appropriate medications and treatments are reasons for tragic loss of life. Even where therapies such as Cognitive Enhancement Therapy exist, too few people can access them because of the shortage of trained personnel and a system that cannot keep pace with need.

Our families are desperate to find help for their loved ones whose young lives have so heinously been affected by a cruel disorder that makes them unable to continue college, hold jobs, or have families of their own. Closing of hospital

("President's Corner" cont's., pg. 2)

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www.NAMIBuffaloNY.org E-mail: namibuffalony@gmail.com

*“President’s Corner” from pg. 1*

beds makes it impossible for many patients to become stabilized long enough on medications to be discharged and remain in care as outpatients. Often they refuse to fill the prescriptions they are given in the hospital; they don’t keep their outpatient appointments, and the cycle keeps repeating. In the past, longer hospital stays or transfer to a state psychiatric facility enabled patients to adjust to medication, to receive counseling and programs which promote recovery, then to be discharged. Today, with severe limits being imposed by state regulations and insurance requirements, those who need additional time to recover, are not getting it.

New York State’s Kendra’s Law has been instrumental in providing much needed comprehensive outpatient care in the least restricting environment. It assists seriously ill people to achieve a quality of life that would be impossible for them otherwise. HR3717 provides additional improvements in this law, which is evidenced-based, successful, and saves money and lives. Many who have been helped cite Kendra’s Law as the reason they are successful in recovery.

As NAMI families know, the people involved in the tragedies we read about in the news every few weeks need treatment. Their families need to be heard when they try to help them. Improved outpatient care is critical, but first those who have relapsed need an appropriate amount of time to recover under supervision in order to be successful. Your letters (contact us if you need a sample letter) and calls to legislators can help end these preventable tragedies and provide care that is so much needed for those who are the most seriously ill. Thank you.

*Marcy Rose,  
President*



## Thank you, Dr. Torrey—

A letter from the Treatment Advocacy Center arrived recently with news of Dr. E. Fuller Torrey’s continuous fight on behalf of those who suffer from serious mental illness. Notes the letter:



*“Outraged by the lives lost or forever changed because of untreated mental illness in Tucson, Aurora, Newtown and elsewhere, the Treatment Advocacy Center’s founder assembled the case for treating mental illness before tragedy, drove to Capitol Hill while Washington was asleep, and slid the evidence through the mail slots of 100 Congressional doors...Members of Congress wanted to know more. Rep. Tim Murphy called a series of hearings to examine the many issues you and I know are significant barriers to treatment. Does HIPAA help or hinder patient care? What has resulted from closing so many public psychiatric beds? Why is the lead federal agency for mental illness treatment, SAMHSA, so ineffective?”*

*“Dr. Torrey testified. Public officials were grilled...The result was historic. In December, Rep. Murphy introduced the “Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act”—the most comprehensive piece of mental health legislation in half a century.”*

**Bill HR 3717 needs your voice of support!**  
**For more information, go to [www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org](http://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org)**  
**A sample letter to your congressperson can be found there.**

+ + +



### **Some Key Provisions of (HR3717), the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act:**

- 1) Exceptions to HIPAA privacy laws so parents of those who are seriously ill are not kept in the dark about their loved one’s diagnosis, prescriptions, and pending appointments.
- 2) Begins to address hospital bed shortages that prevent the seriously ill from getting needed care for appropriate amount of time.
- 3) Provides funds for Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) pilot programs to prevent incarceration and the “revolving door” of relapse.
- 4) Gives states incentive to implement *need for treatment* standard so relatives are **not required to be danger to selves or others before getting hospital care.**
- 5) Inhibits SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services) from giving grants to non-evidence-based programs.
- 6) Cuts funding of programs that are not working.
- 7) Reforms FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act) so that parents of students over 18 years old can get information about mental health issues. This is especially important for college students who live away from home.
- 8) Requires prioritization of the most seriously ill.

NAMI is making passage of The Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act (HR3717), a priority. **Please write or call your federal legislators** to vote for it. Keep in mind that some professional and consumer groups are supporting the opposing bill which does **not** meet the needs of our most seriously mentally ill. **They need us** to fight for their chance to recover!



## With a tip o' the hat:

...to Liz Carone for a great job coordinating the Barnes & Noble gift wrapping for Mother's Day weekend to help make us visible in the community as part of May's National Mental Health Awareness Month. Also, to Lorraine Lopez of our local NAMI board, as well as Anita Leon, a staffer at Lake Shore Behavioral Health, our office coordinator Sherry Byrnes, and kids and family of Liz and Sherry who all gave several hours on the Friday and Saturday of Mother's Day weekend at the Niagara Falls Blvd. store to distribute NAMI literature and information, and tell people about NAMI while wrapping gifts for free-will donations. Thanks to Kim Snyder, Community Relations Manager of the store, too, for a great experience.

...and sincere appreciation to Living Opportunities of DePaul for their support of our annual dinner. We appreciate, too, DePaul's dedication to providing housing for people who have a mental illness and for their advocacy for people in need of supportive care. While we weren't able to list them in the dinner program due to time constraints, our gratitude is heartfelt.

...as he steps down from the board, to Jim Seifert for much help in updating our website.

...and a warm welcome to new NAMI board members, Barbara Hoekstra and Robert Cole.



### Best wishes

...to Mary Kirkland as she continues her recovery from recent surgery.

...and our thoughts also extend to Gerrie Cruz who has been ill.



## WE NEED VOLUNTEERS: Here's looking at you!

As NAMI in Buffalo & Erie County expands our horizons and introduces programs to better serve the mental health needs of our community, we have an increasing need for volunteers. We would like to provide NAMI Buffalo more exposure through the use of **social media**, particularly Facebook. This will require a volunteer who could regularly update approved information and respond to Facebook communication. We have excellent resources on how to manage social communications and NAMI "branding" if you have the basic savvy, internet access, and interest.

**Short-term office project help** (such as mailings) needs volunteers. The amount of time is flexible. There is work enough to go around for whatever a volunteer can offer in terms of skills and time. Work on updating the Mind Matters is continuing, too. An ability to come to the office (North Buffalo) during the daytime is most helpful for these.



Our **website** renovation is continuing: we need volunteers with the necessary skills to work with our webmaster to update page content. Knowledge of Joomla web formatting helpful, but not necessary.

We need **support group facilitator** volunteers and **Family-to-Family teachers** who will be offered training in the fall through NAMI New York State. Support group facilitators commit to one day a month, year round; and Family-to-Family facilitators commit to one day a week over 12 weeks once or twice a year. We need **set-up and greeting volunteers** for our monthly **Family Education meeting**, too.

To volunteer please call our office at 226-6264 and leave a message with your contact information, general interests, and availability. Thank you.

## CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM (CIT) TRAINING UPDATE

Trainings completed include:

May, 2013—Cheektowaga Police Department, 24 officers  
February, 2014—City of Tonawanda Police Department, 5 officers  
May, 2014--Town of Evans Police Department, 5 officers

Departments that have expressed interest and sent initial officers to "shadow" the training:

West Seneca Police Department, 3 officers  
State University Police Department, 2 officers  
SPCA (Peace Officers/Animal Rescue), 2 peace officers  
Lancaster Police Department, 2 officers  
Orchard Park Police Department, 2 officers

In September, the Town of Tonawanda Police Department will partner with NAMI's CIT program to train approximately 15 additional officers.

It is very gratifying and so exciting, to see interest grow in CIT training for area police departments. We are hopeful that those who are trained will demonstrate to others how helpful this program is to law enforcement, to people affected by mental illness, and to the community at large.

# Promising Findings in Research on **Brain Plasticity**

## **What is neurogenesis and brain plasticity?**

The formation of new nerve cells is a process called neurogenesis—the birth of neurons. Brain plasticity (also called neuroplasticity) is the ability of the brain to respond to stimuli and stresses by remodeling its structure, function and connections. In the past, scientists believed that once a person reached adulthood, the brain remained static. But we now know that the brain has an extraordinary ability to adapt to new challenges. Research shows that the brain's plasticity can be increased, even in sedentary older people, if they exercise five days a week. Regular socializing also slows down normal cognitive decline. Researchers have also found that when people recover from depression or anxiety with the help of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor antidepressants and other treatments, new neurons form in the hippocampus (an area of the brain important to memory, learning and mood). This in turn promotes neuroplasticity.

## **Can brain cells be regenerated?**

Scientists have believed that primate brains, including humans, do not restore or add new neurons after maturity. But in recent years scientists have made exciting new discoveries about the ongoing ability of the adult human brain to regenerate neurons and to restore healthy function following so-called “damage” to the brain from various kinds of stresses. In 1998, Brain & Behavior Research Foundation NARSAD Grantee Bruce S. McEwen, Ph.D., demonstrated that the brain has a great deal of “plasticity”—that is, it can remodel its architecture and adapt to experience in an ongoing manner. Scientific Council Member Fred H. Gage, Ph.D., and colleagues also showed in 1998 that neurogenesis occurs in the human hippocampus—a brain area that is key to memory and learning and one that can play a role in the development of depression.

NARSAD Grantee Kirsty Spalding, Ph.D., and team demonstrated that new neurons are formed in the adult human brain

throughout life. They discovered that more than one-third of neurons are regularly renewed throughout life

—about 1,400 are added each day during adulthood. This rate declines only modestly with age. Hippocampus neurons also die each day, so the overall number remains in balance.



## **Can brain plasticity help relieve psychiatric or degenerative brain disorders?**

It has been established that stress can “damage” the brain, cause shrinkage in the hippocampus region and lead to the development of stress-related disorders, including depression. NARSAD Grant-funded researcher Ronald S. Duman, Ph.D., of Yale University has also demonstrated that in order for antidepressant treatment to be effective, the treatment must spur neurogenesis. In addition to antidepressant medication, regular exercise and social engagement have been found to promote the birth of new neurons.

Another NARSAD Grant-funded researcher at Columbia University, René Hen, Ph.D., demonstrated that antidepressant medications recruit new neurons to improve “resilience” (the response to stress), an indication of how the new cells enhance brain function. Other NARSAD Grant-funded researchers are exploring the development of new treatments that can promote neuronal cell survival and synaptic plasticity for a broad range of psychiatric illnesses.

Recent research at McLean Hospital and Harvard University Medical School show a very promising possibility for the future treatment of the “negative” symptoms and cognitive impairment of schizophrenia by improving neuroplasticity. Negative symptoms in schizophrenia include decrease in motivation, lack of attention and affect, memory loss and social withdrawal.

--Brain & Behavior Research Foundation  
The Quarterly  
Fall 2013



Please consider naming  
*NAMI in Buffalo & Erie County*  
in your will.  
Your estate bequest helps  
to forward NAMI's work and legacy to  
all the families we serve--  
today, and into the future.

**2014 KIDS DAY OFFER**

Special offer through the Buffalo Bills and the UNITED WAY of Buffalo and Erie County

Tickets will be made available to you at the cost of only \$25-\$45 per ticket with \$5 per ticket going to NAMI Buffalo & Erie County

**GAME INFORMATION**

SATURDAY, AUGUST 23<sup>RD</sup>  
RALPH WILSON STADIUM

VS

ACTIVITIES: 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM  
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OUR TIME

Tickets must be bought on line using the discount code.  
If you haven't received the flyer in your email and would like to take advantage of this offer, contact the office at 226-6264 and we'll forward it to you.  
*Thank you for your support!*

## NAMI Family-to-Family and Homefront Education Series Begin this Fall

**Family-to-Family** will be offered at two locations:

1 - Monday evenings (full), Sept. 8 - Nov. 24; at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 4007 Main St., Amherst; or (choose only one series, attend all sessions)

2 - Thursday evenings, Sept. 4 - Nov. 20; at Baker Memorial United Methodist Church, Main and Center Roads, East Aurora

**Project Homefront**, a new six-week NAMI education series based on NAMI's national best-practice Family-to-Family program, is tailored expressly to the needs of veteran/military families. Buffalo will begin its first Project Homefront group in the NYS pilot in September.

*Space is limited! Pre-registration is required for all Family-to-Family and Project Homefront workshop series. For more information, or to register, contact the NAMI Buffalo & Erie County office at 226-6264.*

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Preview, August 14th Family Education meeting:



is described by one reviewer as a "multi-platform media project that explores severe mental illness in America ...a national initiative that includes an extensive web site and an ambitious strategy to engage citizens, professionals in many fields, and policy makers at all levels of government. The goal is to advance consensus about how to improve the kinds of support and treatment available for people with mental illness."

### Paul White

**July Education Meeting Speaker/Poet/Nurse receives NYS Writers Institute "Poetry Unites" award for essay on poem about mental illness**

Paul White recently won a prize, was published (again) in the local news for his accomplishments in the literary field, and, on July 10th, shared his very personal, candid story of surviving life with schizophrenia at our family education meeting.

About the poem, "Sunday and the State Hospital" by David Ignatow that inspired White's prize-winning essay, White said: "The poetry of David Ignatow helped to save my life...like a talisman...In general, people do not want to know about schizophrenia. When I would try to tell people about my experience, it was as if a brick had fallen out of my mouth and landed on their foot. I learned to keep my mouth shut...[and] Even though I never met him, David Ignatow became like a spiritual father to me."

Paul's journey to recovery was uplifting to hear about. Today he is married, works as a registered nurse caring for critically ill children, as well as a talented and recognized author and poet. Paul's chapbook is available in our members' lending library.

### Psychiatry Grand Rounds are held monthly and are open to the public

For more information on speakers and location, or to be put on an info listserv, contact:

Beverly Battista by e-mail at  
beverlie@buffalo.edu

- or- visit the university website at

<http://medicine.buffalo.edu/departments/psychiatry/education/grand-rounds.html>

## Members, New and Renewing

Mary Ann Blackowicz  
 Mary Brauer  
 Sherry Byrnes  
 Judy Capodicasa  
 Richard Carota  
 Julie Chirico  
 Ellen Todd Cooper  
 Monica Crawford  
 Gail Donaghue  
 Rosemary Donnelly  
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 Michelle Granieri  
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 Mary Herbst  
 Patricia Howell  
 Dr. & Mrs. Jeffrey Kashin  
 Harriet Kirsch  
 Cathy Laughlan  
 Elizabeth Madden  
 Giulio Mannino  
 Jeanne Manyon  
 Lynn Matthews  
 Paul McGrath, *in memory of  
 my beautiful mother, Julia*  
 Tom McNulty  
 Gail Michaels  
 Brian Moore  
 Patty Moran  
 Barbara O'Bannon  
 Norma Panahon  
 Jill Pariso  
 Paul Piotrowski  
 Laurie Ramirez-Magyar, *in  
 honor of my children*  
 Mary Regula  
 John Rex  
 Lisa Rosati  
 Rose Marie Rose  
 Irene Seegars  
 Leslie Stewart  
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 our 30th anniversary  
 awards and dinner celebration**

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Randye Kaye's book sale proceeds from  
 friends of NAMI Buffalo & Erie County

*(Dinner Thanks - cont.'s on Pg. 7)*



**NAMI in Buffalo &  
 Erie County  
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Jackie Thompson

Barbara Utter

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**NAMI's 30th anniversary and  
 awards celebration  
 was an inspiring event with  
 guest speaker, author  
 Randye Kaye.**

**Copies of Randye's book,  
 "Ben Behind His Voices"  
 are available until August  
 15th at the specially  
 discounted price of \$20.**

**Call (226-6264) or e-mail  
 (namibuffalony@gmail.com)  
 the office if you'd like to  
 order a copy or two.**

*Thank you, donors and supporters,  
for your generous, continuing support!*

**President's Circle (+\$1,000)**

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**NOTE:** Privacy concerns on the internet have caused us to change our acknowledgment publishing practices. Without a specific request to publish an “in honor of” donation *from the person named*, we will list only the initials of a tribute name “in honor of”. We will continue to print “in memory of” tributes unless instructed, in writing, otherwise. Feel free to send your acknowledgment wishes to us at the time of your donation.

**Future Fund - Benefactor (\$100-249) Anne Bird**

**Dinner Thanks - cont'd. from Pg. 6**

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*We invite you to join  
NAMI Buffalo & Erie County  
in helping us make a difference for people  
with mental illness and their families*

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NAMI in Buffalo & Erie County  
P.O. Box 146, Buffalo, NY 14223

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- Membership \$35**
- “Open Door” Membership - \$3 (for those in financial need, or to add a spouse/partner)

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I'd like to help with the following:

- Fund/Friend Raising
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- Legislative Advocacy
- Support Letters
- Speakers Bureau

Other \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like to be put on the phone tree/e-mail list to receive legislative or other alerts.

- Yes  No

**Please send a copy of the newsletter to:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
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*"You can't stop the waves,  
but you can learn to surf."*

*~ Jon Kabat Zinn*



**NAMI is teaming up with United Way  
and the Buffalo Bills  
for a win for everyone!**

**Buffalo Bills vs. Tampa Buccaneers  
on KIDS DAY (and kids at heart)  
Saturday, Aug. 23rd, 2014 - game time 4:30  
Ticket cost only \$25-45 ea.,  
with \$5 benefiting NAMI Buffalo & Erie County**

