the challenger

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

vol. 5 - Number 3
July 2013

Mark Your Calendar

All educational and family support meetings are held at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 4007 Main Street, Amherst (near the intersection of Main and Eggert Rd.) Educational meetings are held on the second floor (main entrance at the back of the church). Support meetings are held on the first floor (church entrance at ground level at left rear of the building.) All Board meetings are held at 636 Starin Ave., Buffalo, 1st floor and members are welcome.

July

NAMI Board Meeting, Tuesday, *July , 9th, 7 p.m. (note change)*

NAMI Educational Meeting, *Thursday, July 11th*
Library and Coffee Hour: 7 p.m. Program: 7:30 p.m. Guest: Jenny Laney, Director, Child & Family Support Program; Mental Health Association of Erie County

NAMI Family Support Meeting, *Wednesday, July 17th, 7 p.m.*

August

NAMI Board Meeting, *Thursday, August 1st, 7 p.m.*

NAMI Educational Meeting, *Thursday, August 8th*
Library and Coffee Hour: 7 p.m. Program, 7:30 p.m. Guest: Nan Haynes, Esq., and faculty at SUNY Buffalo Law School; on mental illness and the Erie County Holding Center

NAMI Family Support Meeting, *Wednesday, August 14th, 7 p.m.*

September

NEW *Family-to-Family class begins Tuesdays, September3 through November. See details on pg. 3--pre-registration is required.*

NAMI Board Meeting, *Thursday, September 5th, 7 p.m.*

NAMI Educational Meeting, *Thursday, September 12th*
Library and Coffee Hour: 7 p.m. Program, 7:30 p.m. Guest: Bob Cohen, Esq., Citizen Action/Public Policy & Education Fund; on "How the Affordable Care Act Will Affect the Mentally Ill"

NAMI Family Support Meeting, *Wednesday, August 18th, 7 p.m.*

October

NAMI Board Meeting, *Thursday, October 3rd, 7 p.m.*

NAMI Monthly Educational Meeting, *Thursday, October 10th*
Library and Coffee Hour: 7 p.m. Program, 7:30 p.m. Guest: Leslie Saunders, Peer Counselor at ECMC Inpatient Units.

NAMI Family Support Meeting, *Wednesday, October 16th, 7 p.m.*

Dr. E. Fuller Torrey and NAMI President, Marcy Rose, at annual NAMI dinner, 4-3-13

President's Corner: NAMI Chapter Happenings

Spring for our NAMI began with the successful 29th NAMI Annual Dinner on April 3. Dr. E. Fuller Torrey was our speaker in honor of Lynne Shuster. His presentation led us through the history of the mental health system starting with the 1950's to the present. His conclusion was that our mental health system is dysfunctional and ineffective, and only getting worse, with more mentally ill people incarcerated and homeless than hospitalized. The message was loud and clear that mentally ill people do not belong in jail. He called on NAMI to hold our legislators responsible and become vocal about stigma, unjust imprisonment, and a system which is not working. Before he attended our dinner, Dr. Torrey toured the Erie county Holding Center with Sheriff Howard.

Lynne Shuster and **Mary Kirkland** were presented with lifetime NAMI memberships to commemorate their years of service to NAMI Buffalo & Erie County.

Awards given at the dinner were: Peter L. Heggs Memorial Award, **Julie Chirico, RN, Buffalo Psychiatric Center**; Nancy D. Smith Memorial Award, **Carolyn Young, MD, Lake Shore Behavioral Health, ACT Program**; 2013 President's Award, **Chris Syracuse, Executive Vice President, Living Opportunities of DePaul, Inc.**; 2013 Volunteer of the Year Award, **Judy Capodicasa, Recording Secretary for NAMI Buffalo board.**

• A summer and fall of crisis is predicted due to the abrupt closing of Buffalo General Hospital's Psych-

*(**President's Corner,** cont'd. on pg. 2)*

Mailing Address • P.O. Box 146 • Buffalo, NY 14223 • 716.226.6264 (NAMI)
www.NAMIBuffaloNY.org E-mail: namibuffalony@gmail.com

(President's Corner, from Pg. 1)

-iatric Treatment Units and Emergency Psychiatric Room. An agreement between ECMC and Buffalo General Hospital to combine psychiatric treatment units and psychiatric emergency rooms in January 2014, when the new renovations were completed, was ignored at the expense of patients who rely on treatment there. No prior notice or planning occurred. Doctors are now left scrambling for someplace to send patients who need hospitalization. Families are left stunned and incredulous once again at such indifference to the plight of their loved ones. Hospital staff is without jobs. Other hospitals are trying to fill the void. We at NAMI are letting our opinions be known through letters and news communication. Please send letters or emails to your representatives to let them know what this will mean to you.

• The "Listening Tour" of Acting New York State OMH Commissioner, Kristin Woodlock, came to Buffalo Psychiatric Center on April 24. Family NAMI representatives gave testimony about the needs in the Buffalo area for psychiatric care. A big thank you to Irene Turski for her petition and letter to Acting Commissioner Woodlock and to Sister Jeremy from St. Joseph's Parish for gathering 600 names for the petition. On July 10, it was announced that Buffalo Psychiatric Center has been named the new Great Lakes Regional Center for Excellence. We are hopeful that it will attract psychiatrists, new therapies, and stateof-the-art treatment. It is too soon to decipher exactly what it will mean as the 59 page document needs to be interpreted. We will keep you posted.

• Three new teachers for the Family-to-Family course were trained this May by NAMI New York State. Daryl Bennett and Bob Cochran hope to begin classes in Niagara County and Lynn Cehanczuk will begin in Erie County. Classes will begin in the fall with registration through the NAMI office at 226-6264 or online at namibuffalony@gmail.com. We welcome them to a family-saving program!

• Another Family to Family course of 20 members was completed on June 24, in collaboration with "Josh's Journey" in Niagara County.

• We welcome two new NAMI Buffalo board members: **Dr. Herman Szymanski** and **Jim Seifert**.

Wishing you a pleasant Summer--

Marcy Rose,
President

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Obama/Biden Mental Health Conference: Irrelevant at Best and Likely Harmful

By D. J. Jaffe

President Obama and Vice President Biden gathered the usual suspects for a White House mental-health conference today focused on "stigma." While ostensibly called in reaction to tragedies such as Newtown, it ignores the elephant in the room: people with serious mental illnesses.

Obama simply does not understand the difference between poor mental health and serious mental illness and the "experts" he is relying on are happy to keep it that way. Everyone can have their mental health improved, but only 5 to 9 percent of people have serious mental illnesses. Obama keeps focusing on the former and ignoring the later.

Yet it is people with untreated serious mental illness who are responsible for headline-grabbing acts of psychotic-fueled violence. It is people with serious mental illnesses, not low self-esteem, who have increased incidence of homelessness, suicide, arrest, incarceration, and hospitalization. It is people with serious mental illness who we as a kind and compassionate society should be helping.

After Obama's last mental-health conference in April, mental "health" advocates convinced the president to spend $140 million more to identify people with mental illness. As I wrote after that conference:

Jared Loughner, who shot Gabrielle Giffords; James Holmes, who shot up a movie theater in Aurora, Colo.; John Hinckley Jr., who shot President Reagan; Aaron Bassler, who shot a former mayor of Fort Bragg, Calif.; Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber, who mailed explosive packages around the country; Ian Stawicki, who shot five others and then himself in Seattle; Eduardo Sencion, who shot five National Guardsmen at a Nevada IHOP restaurant; Russell Weston,who shot two guards at the U.S. Capitol building; and Adam Lanza, who shot his mother, 26 others, and himself in Newtown, Conn.— all were known to be ill before they became headlines. The problem wasn't lack of identification. It was lack of treatment.

*(**Conference,** cont'd. on pg. 5)*

NAMI-NYS President responds to Office of Mental Health Listening Tour and Centers of Excellence

May 28, 2013

Kristin M. Woodlock
Acting Commissioner
New York State Office of Mental Health
44 Holland Avenue
Albany, New York 12229

Dear Commissioner Woodlock,

NAMI-NYS would like to thank you for conducting your recently completed Listening Tour across New York State. Many of our members were able to attend these community meetings and express their concerns regarding New York's mental health system.

We would like to take this opportunity to outline the position of the NAMI-NYS Board of Directors regarding the Centers of Excellence proposal:

- While we recognize that the rapid changes being implemented in the mental health care system, in combination with the state's ongoing fiscal problems, have resulted in the consideration of a significant transformation process, we are concerned about possible plans to close psychiatric centers and reduce the number of in-patient beds available in New York State. NAMI-NYS believes in the need for a continuum of care that can address the needs of all New Yorkers living with mental illness, and that includes the availability of appropriate, accessible in-patient services on a short or long-term basis.

- Family support is a critical component for recovery from mental illness. We believe that families should be part of the treatment plan, and there is evidence that family involvement aids in recovery. Elimination of in-patient psychiatric beds in local communities will result in the need for families to travel longer distances to visit loved ones, which may result in reduced support for mentally ill family members.

- Investment is necessary to develop adequate community-based mental health services throughout the state. Many New Yorkers, particularly in rural areas, have limited access to clinics, day programs and psychiatrists and this has resulted in delays in diagnosis and treatment.

We are available to discuss these points in greater detail if you wish. Thank you for your consideration of our position on this important issue.

Sincerely,
Thomas Easterly
President

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Family-to-Family Class Forming in Niagara County --Register Now!

The Family-to-Family class can help you learn more about mental illness, treatment and recovery, medications, the systems you will need to navigate on behalf of your ill loved one, resources, legal matters that may affect your ill family member and your family, and how to be a strong support and advocate. In this nationally recognized class, taught by local trainers with personal family experience of their own, you will feel welcome and finish knowing you are not alone--help is available.

Location:
St. James United Methodist Church
4661 Porter Rd., Niagara Falls 14305
Phone: 716-297-6421

Facilitators:
Daryl Bennett and Bob Cochran

When: Tuesdays, 6:30-9:00 p.m.

Dates (participants are expected to be present for all sessions):

September 3, 10, 17, 24

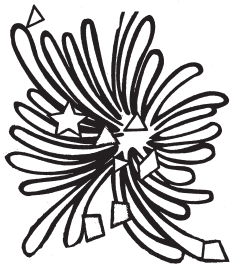
October 1, 8, 22, 29
(No class on October 15)

November 5, 12, 19, 26

Pre-registration is required!

Contact:
For more information, or to register, please call Rev. Daryl Bennett at 716-297-6421 or 716-380-6706.

(This class is provided at no cost by NAMI in Buffalo & Erie County.)



NAMI Acknowledgements

Thanks to...

Dennis Harkawik, Chairman of NAMI Buffalo's 29th Dinner Celebration, which was a huge success.

Mary Kirkland for taking last-minute reservations and setting up table placements and centerpieces for our dinner.

Rosemary Donnelly and **Pat Watkins** for their assistance with anniversary dinner decorations and table markings.

Jackie Thompson and **Ann Venuto** for facilitating 20 inner-city girl scouts to receive mental health badges.

Jackie Thompson and **Marcy Rose** for completing another Family-to-Family program in Niagara County in partnership with "Josh's Journey".

Welcome and thank you to:

- **Dr. Herman Szymanski** and **Jim Seifert**, elected to the NAMI Buffalo Board

- Newly trained Family-to-Family teachers: **Rev. Daryl Bennett, Bob Cochran**, and **Lynn Cehanczuk**

We offer our deep condolences to...

- **Deborah Gabriel** on the loss of her husband, **Max,** who also was our veteran's representative on the board.

- **Dennis Harkawik,** who lost his mother.

Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

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NAMI Member Contacts NYS Office of Mental Health on Area Bed Crisis, Concerns

NY State Office of Mental Health
Office of the Commissioner
Acting Commissioner Kristin M. Woodlock, RN, MPA
44 Holland Ave.
Albany, N.Y. 12229

Dear Commissioner Woodlock:

I am writing to you because of my concern about the crisis situation that the abrupt closure of Buffalo General Hospital's psychiatric emergency department and all of their inpatient units has brought to our city. In addition, many people believe that it's only a matter of time until the well regarded facility at Buffalo Psychiatric Center (BPC) is closed as well.

As a psychiatric nurse practitioner and nurse educator, I have seen evidence that we have a deficit in not only the number of psychiatric inpatient units in our city for acute care but the quality of care provided as well. The closure of these 2 institutions will create a great deal of hardship and suffering for patients and their families.

What makes the situation even more outrageous is the fact that no notice was given to ECMC nor even to outpatient staff at Buffalo General. The administrators at Kaleida who chose to act this secretively demonstrated a serious lack of professionalism and ethical decision-making.

What is required now is leadership from Office of Mental Health in solving the multitude of problems that this closure will cause. Please do not add to our city's burden by closing BPC.

I urge you to reflect on this matter with compassion and good judgment and to act quickly to prevent chaos in the delivery of psychiatric services in Buffalo.

Sincerely,
Ann M. Venuto RN, MS, PMHNP-BC
Williamsville, NY

cc. Buffalo Evening News
Gov. Andrew Cuomo
Mayor Byron Brown
Artvoice

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Mental Health Unimportant to Kaleida

(submitted by Marcy Rose, NAMI President, to Buffalo News, Everybody's Column)

On June 6, Buffalo General Hospital disproved its interest in being a "Center for Excellence". Contrary to a commitment to Erie County Medical Center and therefore to the mental health needs of our community, the emergency psychiatric services and psychiatric units were systematically closed for admissions, and on June 14, all psychiatric patients were discharged. No notice, no plans, and to the complete shock of families of patients being treated there. Doctors and staff were equally surprised. The story didn't hit the Buffalo News until June 14, and then it was on page D-10. Another disappointment. Doesn't anyone care?

There was an agreement between Buffalo General and ECMC that BGH would transfer 48 inpatient beds to ECMC in January when the new facility to house these beds was completed.

BGH decided to close those beds six months early without any thought of the consequences for patients. There were no provisions made for the patients who now have to scramble for care and be put on waiting lists to be admitted to Brylin or wait days at ECMC's psychiatric emergency room to be evaluated.

Other hospitals and professionals are working overtime to fill the void created by Kaleida. It is an abandonment of patients needing help, and an insult to the community --a travesty perpetrated by a facility that is going to claim ownership of the Medical Corridor and "State of the Art" treatment facilities. We need to call out this cavalier dismissal of those who need mental health treatment. We need to remember this when we are asked to support a facility that does not deserve our trust!

Marcy Rose, President
National Alliance on Mental Illness in Buffalo & Erie County

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(Conference, cont'd. from Pg. 2)

If Obama wants to get serious about serious mental illness, he should invite criminal-justice experts to the White House. The mental-health system "treats" the worried well and offloads the seriously ill to shelters, jails prisons and morgues. There are now three times as many mentally ill incarcerated as hospitalized. Police, sheriffs, district attorneys, correction officers, parole officers, and forensic hospital workers go where the mental-health system won't: to the aide of people with serious mental illness. No sane mental illness policy can be contemplated without their perspective.

There are five steps President Obama can take to help people with serious mental illness, keep patients and the public safer, and save money.

1) Fund Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) laws so rather than requiring people with serious mental illness to become a "danger to self or others" we can prevent people from becoming a danger to self or others.

2) Change HIPPA privacy laws so parents of seriously mentally ill individuals can get the information they need to help their loved ones get care.

3) End federally sanctioned Medicaid discrimination against the seriously mentally ill incorporated in the "IMD Exclusion." It allows the federal government to refuse to reimburse for inpatient hospital care for persons with serious mental illness. While Obama is correctly adamant that private insurers end discrimination against the mentally ill, he has been silent on federal discrimination.

4) Send those with serious mental illness to the front of the line for services rather than to the back as is current practice.

5) Eliminate SAMHSA (the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration) which is funding nationwide activities designed to prevent the most seriously ill from receiving treatment. Any useful programs can be transferred to NIMH, CDC, and other agencies with better focus.

Obama promised to "listen to good ideas no matter where they come from." So he should listen to Representative Tim Murphy (R., Pa.), a former psychologist. He has done a brilliant job in Energy and Commerce subcommittee hearings of looking at what real solutions might be to prevent the arrest, incarceration, violence, suicide, homelessness, and hospitalization of the most seriously ill. And he does it by making government smaller, not bigger.

If the definition of insanity is trying the same thing over and over and expecting different results, then Obama qualifies. He should reach out to those who want to change the status quo, not those invested in maintaining it.

D. J. Jaffe is executive director of Mental Illness Policy Org.
June 3, 2013
Published on-line at www.national review.com

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Your membership goes a long way!

In one membership "join", you become part of NAMI in Buffalo & Erie County and in NAMI-NYS, as well as NAMI National. Mailings come to you from all three branches unless you opt to be an Associate with us, rather than a member. As an Associate, you still receive our local newsletter. Our local mailings are always marked with our return address, so you can tell which are from our local office. Notices to renew your membership come only from our office address: P.O. Box 146, Buffalo, NY 14223.

Health Homes: A Strategy to Improve Care

What is a "health home"? Despite its name, a health home is not a physical place. Instead, it's a strategy for helping people with multiple chronic conditions manage those conditions better.

Adults and children with several chronic conditions typically see multiple specialists or require services from multiple providers, and those providers often do not know what the others are doing. With health homes, a single health-care provider or team becomes responsible for coordinating all the care an individual receives.

Because health homes have the potential to improve people's health and save money, learning more about the health home concept is one goal of the Affordable Care Act.

The Affordable Care Act gives states the option of creating health homes for Medicaid beneficiaries with at least two chronic conditions, such as a mental health condition, substance use disorder, asthma, diabetes, heart disease, or overweight; one chronic condition and high risk of developing another; or a serious, persistent mental health condition. Focused on the highest-need, highest-cost adults and children, health homes exemplify "person-centered" care by integrating and coordinating primary, behavioral, and acute care and providing long-term services and support. "Behavioral health conditions can exacerbate existing physical health conditions," said Suzanne C. Fields, M.S.W., L.I.C.S.W., SAMHSA's Senior Advisor to the Administrator for Health Care Financing. "If someone is actively using substances or experiencing mental health problems, it can make it difficult for them to take care of their own health." In addition, said Ms. Fields, having a chronic physical condition increases the likelihood of depression, anxiety, and self-medication with substances. Plus, she said, chronic conditions typically require coordination with social and other community supports--something that's especially important for children with complex behavioral health needs.

Excerpted from "SAMHSA News", Spring 2013, Volume 21, Number 2

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Members, New and Renewing

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Rita Alviti
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Nancy Berger
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Future Fund - ensuring hope, going forward

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Jane Penvose

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Harry & Marie Guildford, in honor of Marcy Rose

Please remember *NAMI in Buffalo & Erie County* in your will and estate planning:
your gift will help us serve generations to come.

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Margaret Schwinger, *in memory of Kathryn Schwinger*
Irene Seegars
James & Carol Seifert
Michele Speach

Christmas is for Kids is grateful for your support ...all year 'round--right into July!

Christmas Angels ($500-999)	**Circle of Light ($ 250-499)**	**Friends ($1-99)**
Per Niente Club	Cynthia Connine	Jane Urbanski
West Seneca Woman's Club		

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

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

Name_____

Address_____

City_____State____Zip_____

Phone_____

E-Mail _____

❑ Membership $35

No one will be denied membership due to financial hardship. For those in financial need:

❑ "Open Door" Membership - $3 (for those in financial need, or to add a spouse/partner)

NAMI in Buffalo & Erie County Associates or Other Donation

❑ Benefactor - $100 -$250
❑ Patron $75 - $99
❑ Sustainer - $50 - $74
❑ Advocate - $26-$49
❑ Friend - $1-$25

Donation is for:
❑ Future Fund ❑ General or ❑ Other:
Specify _____

❑ In Memory of -OR- ❑ In Honor of:

_____

❑ **Please keep my membership/ contribution anonymous.**

I'd like to help with the following:
❑ Fund/friend Raising ❑ Office & Clerical
❑ Phone Tree ❑ 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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Memberships, contributions, and donations are tax deductible.

NAMI in Buffalo & Erie County
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Buffalo, NY 14223

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Freedom lies in being bold.
~ Robert Frost