

GRASSROOTS

Newsletter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness — Huntsville AL

President's Corner

Advocacy

We'll take it any way we can!

The September 22, 2008 issue of Newsweek magazine has a major (5 pages) article entitled "Sad Brain, Happy Brain." If you have attended a Family-to-Family class, you might recognize some "friends," on the page titled "Neurotransmitters 101"! This article talks about neurons, signal transmitters, acetylcholine, dopamine, GABA, Serotonin, etc. It also talks about different parts of the brain being the focus of different functions, especially feelings. It particularly discusses Fear and Anger management. One of my favorite quotes is: "Your heart, lungs, kidneys and digestive tract keep you alive. But your brain is where you live." It also quotes Eric Kandel from 1998: "All mental processes, even the most complex psychological processes, derive from operations of the brain."

In reading the article, it seemed to me that Newsweek thinks that this is great new stuff! For those of us who have been affected by mental illness, however, this is old hat. ***My hope is that those not affected by mental illness will read this article and learn something about brain chemistry and how it operates so that they may be more tolerant and understanding of those whose brains don't function as most of the population.*** I'm amazed at how our society gets surprised by things that have been going on for some time and, suddenly, it surfaces and becomes a big thing. People knew smokers had more health issues than non-smokers, but suddenly, smoking is bad for your health. For years, people have been talking on their cell phones while driving; recently a college student was killed in Huntsville and two trains collided in California – real newsmakers! For years, some people lost their jobs and, recently, their homes; however it didn't become a crisis until the problem hit the mortgage bankers! I'm sure that you can add many other examples of how a small segment of the population was very much involved and/or affected by something for years, but suddenly it becomes news. In this particular case, the Newsweek article is not nearly as dramatic as the examples above, but, I think, they are variations of the same theme. My view of this article, however, is not at all critical: I welcome any and all information that becomes public related to mental health. I will take advocacy any way I can get it!

-Bill

CTOBER Events Calendar

All NAMI Huntsville Meetings are held in
The United Way Building
701 Andrew Jackson Way, Huntsville,
Unless otherwise announced.

Wednesday October 1

7:30pm - Jazz Concert
By The Euphonics
NAMIH Benefit
Details on pg. 3

October 5 – 11

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK
(MIAW)

Tuesday, October 7

7:00 pm—Support Group
Facilitator: Ruth Karr

Tuesday, October 21

6:00pm—Board meeting
7:00pm—Education Program
Speaker: Dr. Tarak Vasavada, M.D.

November 4

7:00pm – Support Group
Facilitator: Howard Fry

November 7 – 8

RunnagE Sale

Save your stuff!
See details on pg. 3

November 18

6:00pm – Board Meets
7:00pm - Education Program

Every Thursday

6:00pm - Bipolar DBSA* Support Group
In the United Way Bldg.

*Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance affiliate

Family Day at MHC Day Programs

-Ruth Karr

I was honored to be asked to speak at the Triana Life Center Day Treatments and the main MH Center Day Treatment programs during the week of September 15. I have found this to be one of my favorite speaking engagements for the past 3 or 4 years. We used an interactive format, for it is important to give voice to consumers, and families.

I gave a brief talk about NAMI, and handed-out brochures to attending families. Then we spoke of the “R’s of Mental Illness” based on the 3 R’s of the tune “School Days”, “Reading & ‘Righting and ‘Rithmetic”...

The first: “**Recovery**”— what is Recovery (as compared to a cure). We discussed the meaning “getting better”. Then “**Responsibility**”— the family’s to become informed on SMI issues so as to support and encourage the consumer, and the consumer’s to follow treatment and household plans: “*If it is to be, it’s up to me.* Finally, another- twin R’s: **Relapse** and **Resilience**, demonstrating with a rubber band a meaning of resilience: the ability to “bounce back” after a relapse of disabling symptoms.

We then thanked non-profit treatment providers with an updated reading of Dickens, “To lighten the pain of mental illness...”

In a future *Grassroots* we will describe the different levels of the Day Treatment Programs operating under Director (and AAFOP Associate) Josalyn Lucas.

Autism Asperger Syndrome NAMIH Ed Topic for September 16

Our guest speaker was Angela Collier, M. Ed, N. Alabama Consultant for the Autism Society of Alabama. She discussed the educational difficulties autism asperger presents in all levels of education for those with this disability. Problems are apparent with preschool children, then on to early elementary school and upper grades and finally college and adulthood.

Preschoolers present the following symptoms. These symptoms remain with them through their school years and beyond. As the person matures so do their problems:

- Avoidance of spontaneous interaction and preference for set routines
- Difficulty with transitions
- Hyper-focus on particular subjects
- Difficulty regulating social/emotional responses involving anger aggression or anxiety
- Problems sustaining simple conversation
- Use of unusual verbal responses.

As the student ages and matures his/her problems also become more mature and stretch into difficulties with intimacy, sustaining friendships, cooperatively working with others, interviewing for employment and more.

For more information you can visit their web site at:

www.asperger.org

If you would like to reach Angela Collier, her email is:

acollier@aascg.com

Judge Ruth Ann Hall and our District Mental Health Court

- Jack Little

I am the family advocate in Judge Hall’s Mental Court. For her own better understanding, Judge Hall from the outset investigated and became informed on mental illness issues, joined NAMIH as a member and talked to knowledgeable people. She addresses clients of the program with compassion, tolerance, and concern, and makes sure they are keeping treatment appointments, and taking their meds as prescribed. She inquires about their living conditions, finances and family relationships. She looks to the Mental Health Center for any available resources.

The court sessions are monthly, on the first Friday, with an average of ten cases. I meet with new families and provide them with an information packet, tell them all about NAMI, the two monthly meetings, and our Family to Family course.

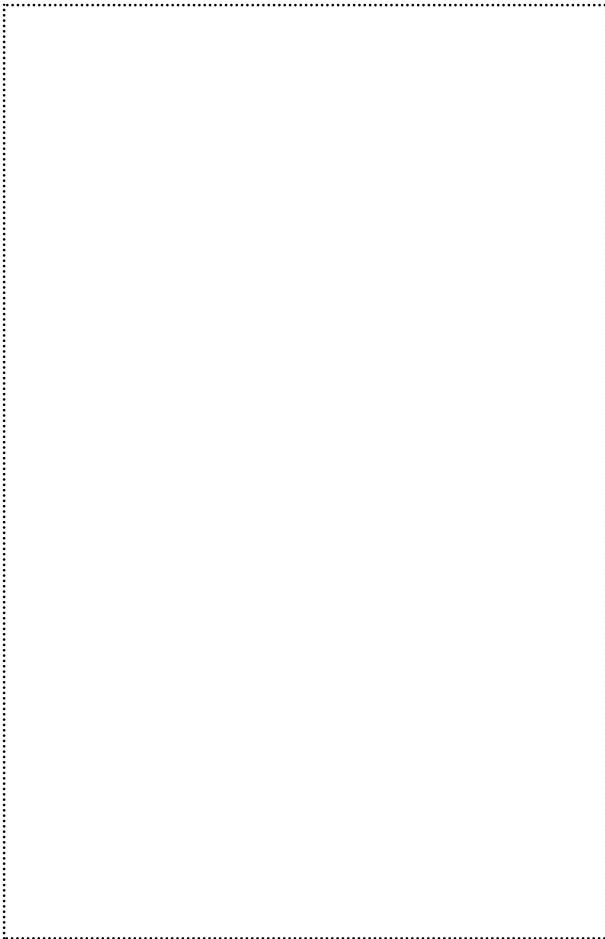
When Judge Hall spoke at our NAMIH education meeting, she revealed her plan to start a juvenile court patterned on the Mental Health Court. One difference is confidentiality. She sees the juvenile offender, the family or custodian privately, while others in the program wait outside the courtroom. She must get the parents’ permission for me to be there. It is heart-breaking to see so many youth who likely have mental illness get into trouble with the law so young. I see the great need for NAMI for these younger families, and quickly ran out of information packets when I was there.

Judge Hall now is in the formative stage of starting a program targeting school children with serious mental illness in our education system.

I hope I can count on everyone reading *Grassroots* to join me in giving this magnificent judge, the Honorable Ruth Ann Hall all the support, help and encouragement she needs to make these programs a rousing success.

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NAMIH will recognize MIAW 2008

with less activity than usual due to limits pressed upon us by the UW Building renovation. We are without our usual access to meeting space. Parking is limited. Access to the Building is difficult.

We are limiting our MIAW activities to the AAFOP Conference (see your flyer in this issue of *Grassroots*).

And we will have a window display about NAMIH in the Main Library for the month of October. Be sure to stop by to see it.

NAMI Huntsville

Fall Rummage Sale

Friday & Saturday

8:00am

November 7 & 8

Young Nak Presbyterian Church

7904 S. Whitesburg Drive

(Just North of Lily Flagg Rd.)

NAMIH is a Tax
Deductible
501c (3) non-profit
organization.



Rummage pick-up at your home Wednesday and Thursday before the sale. Call the NAMI office for pick-up: 256.534.2628

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How to Find NAMIH

With the United Way Building under renovation, you will find things just don't look the same when you arrive here.

Parking in the back lot near our entrance is likely to be impossible. You will have to come in the front door. **But the front entrance has been moved!** Don't despair. It has moved to the south end of the building. Read the signs and you find your way. Once in the temporary lobby, you will need to use the telephone on the desk to call our office to tell us you are here. Either Nancy or one of our office volunteers will come fetch you.

When it is over we will have a non-leaking work room, a new storage room, and built-in library shelves. If you need to go upstairs there will be an elevator to take you there.

G R A S S R O O T S

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cation. Submit news, announcements, and articles. Arti-

cle word-limit 250.

Submit to: hsvanami@hiwaaay.net

More about the Rummage Sale

Please hang on to your rummage for the 2008 Fall Sale.

We cannot store your rummage donations before the sale. Our old storage room is no longer available to us. When our new rooms are completed we will again be able to provide that service. But, we still desperately need your rummage. Please hang on to your "stuff" a little longer. We will come to your home for pick-up, by appointment, Wednesday November 5th or Thursday November 6th .

To arrange for rummage pick-up call the office at: 256.534.2628.

Open Your Mind



Mental illnesses are brain disorders