



## President's Corner

By Bill Chew

GET INVOLVED! One thing that I found out through experience is that "the more you put into something, the more you will get out of it." I was only a participant at church until I became a youth group advisor. I found for the first time what fulfillment really is when watching our church's youth shine (both inside as well as outside). Amy and I found out how meaningful it is to truly touch someone's life when we gave our first Marriage Encounter weekend. We were surprised at the feelings of compassion and reward we had when we led our first NAMI Family-to-Family course. You too, can find fulfillment and contentment when your efforts truly help others. I encourage you to consider volunteering for one of our board committees. It is a great way to meet members of the community and some of our consumers. If you are interested, choose from the following Committee opportunities:

- **Finance:** (Joe Keweza, Chair) Tracks all expenses and drafts the budget.
  - *Rummage Sale Sub-Committee:* Primary source of income for NAMI Huntsville,
  - *Grant Proposal Sub-Committee:* Prepares grant proposals to supplement NAMIH's income.
- **Planning:** (Howard Fry, chair) The Board's Annual Planning Meeting usually held in January. Creativity wanted.
- **Education:** (Bill Chew, chair) oversees teacher training, Family-to-Family and Provider courses, library, brochures and education materials.
- **Mental Health Courts:** (Jack Little and Ruth Karr, Co-chairs) Support the courts and assures that NAMI Huntsville's existence is known at the two existing Mental Health Courts
- **Community Awareness:** (Mike Gallaher, Chair) A place for creativity and excitement. It oversees the NAMI Huntsville website, exhibits, displays and presentations as well as media ads.
- **African American Outreach Program,** (Jacqueline Wilson, Chair) African American community's participation in NAMIH program goals and education.

- **Membership:** (Jacqueline Wilson, Chair) Maintains computerized files and solicits new members, encourages ongoing membership.
- **Nominating:** (Pippa Abston, Chair) Develops a list of nominations for the Board of Directors annual election. Pippa also envisions having volunteers assist each NAMI Huntsville Officer to make transitions easier.
- **Bylaws and Resolutions:** (Howard Fry, Chair) Enforces compliance to by-laws and reviews and recommends amendments for consideration.

For you who have supported NAMI for a long time and to new members who are just finding NAMIH, we need your active participation in our programs. It doesn't have to take a lot of time, but what ever time you have available will bring feelings of satisfaction. If you have ideas for new programs, courses, activities or want a more detailed job description call our NAMIH office to speak with our Volunteer Coordinator: 256.534.2628

-Bill



## Family-to-Family (F2F) Education Program

Registration is open now for next F2F class.

The NAMI F2F Education Program is a 12-week course for families of individuals with mental illness. The course is taught by trained family members. All course materials are furnished at no cost to you. Attend with other family members just like you in a confidential setting.

To enroll, call the NAMIH office. Ask to be put on the waiting list. Enrolling reserves a space for you, but does not commit you to taking the class. Once the dates are set, the teachers call each person on the list to provide information, to answer questions and to find out if you want to be in the class. Classes fill up fast. Call today (256.534.2628).

# MARCH

## Events Calendar

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

### Tuesday, March 4

7:00pm – Support Group  
Facilitator: Wood DeLeuil

### Sunday March 9

Daylight Saving time begins  
Spring Forward!

### Tuesday, March 18

6:00pm – Board Meeting  
7:00pm – Education Program

Speaker: Nancy Jester, President, Wiregrass NAMI  
Topic: How to Start a CIT Program

### Sunday, March 23

Easter



### Tuesday, April 1

7:00pm – Support Group  
Facilitator: Howard Fry

### Tuesday, April 15

6:00pm – Board Meeting  
7:00pm – Education Program

### Every Thursday

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

Contact: David Hepler – 256.539.1411

\*Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance affiliate

*Open Your Mind*



*Mental illnesses  
are brain disorders*

## District Judge Presents Education Program

The February Education Meeting attendees were treated to an encouraging and informative talk by Judge Ruth Ann Hall, who presides over the District (county) Mental Health MH Court Program. She was appointed by Gov. Riley to replace Judge Susan Moquin who retired. Judge Hall works closely with the prosecutor, Shawn Weaver of the District Attorney's Office, Tammy Leeth representing the MH Center, and Jack Little who serves as our NAMIH Family Advocate.

There are a few minor differences in the way our local District MH Court and the Municipal MH Courts operate. But those who developed both programs wanted to have them customized to the specific needs of the clients diverted from incarceration into treatment. For instance, while the District Court meets monthly, the Municipal court has sessions every two weeks. District MH Court accepts a few felony cases where no crime of violence is involved. Because more misdemeanors occur within the city limits than the county, the city court has a greater case load than the County.

Judge Hall emphasized the value of families' experiential knowledge when coping with a serious mental illness (SMI) of a loved one, and of the value of support, education and advocacy. She asked NAMIH to work with her court staff in gaining the insight of families. To that end, NAMIH will provide our Professional Education Course to Judge Hall's staff.

Judge Hall spoke of her concerns about several "gray" areas that need to be more clearly defined and improved, such as how many behind bars may be mentally ill but undiagnosed, and whether mentally ill inmates are getting needed medications or how many in her program need reliable transportation. She impressed her audience as being very conscientious about diverting people from jail into treatment, and says the first thing she strives for is "to do no harm".

In addition to filling in "gray areas", she is planning a similar court program of diversion for youth of our area who are moving in to troublesome behavior because there may be psychiatric problems beneath their behavior, or even children of adults may have undiagnosed SMI but not in treatment. She hopes to get funding for such a child/adolescent court (Continued top next page.)

(Continued)

program through the AL Department of Youth Services, and insists the funding be long term. She said she will need the Department of Human Resources and other human service agencies, - including NAMIH, to help get this court up and running and to have resources the court can use in resolving many C & A issues.

A follow up meeting on Wednesday noon, February 20, held in Judge Hall's chambers was attended by the prosecutor, Shawn Weaver, Judge Sybil Cleveland, Tammy Leeth, Ray Dixon and me. Judge Hall served lunch and we discussed various matters that may help make our Mental Health Court Programs even better than they already are.

--Ruth Karr



## Who should be Diagnosing Mental Illness?

Excerpted from: *The Medicated Americans* by Charles Barber, *Scientific American Mind*, Feb/March 2008

Reprinted from "Changing Minds", February, 2008 by Joe Cobb, DVM, Past President of NAMI Shoals

When I first saw the title of this article I thought it was just another anti-psychiatry rant but then I saw that the author is a psychiatry lecturer at Yale University School of Medicine. The author notes that the rate of pharmacological treatment of depression has decreased. A study cited reveals that, after starting antidepressants, three quarters of adults and fifty percent of children do not see a doctor or therapist for mental health care. Another study reported that only twenty percent of people taking antidepressants receive any follow up care.

The author believes that part of the problem is that many relatively minor emotional problems are classified as disorders requiring medication rather than reactions to life stresses. Barber also notes that serious mental illnesses are not being treated adequately. In developed countries thirty-five to fifty percent of people with serious mental illnesses received no treatment in the past year while in developing countries the figure is eighty percent. Serious mental illness also receives less research money.

The author does not discount depression. He states that there is depression, a temporary reaction to

many outside influences and then there is *Depression*, a serious, potentially life-threatening condition requiring careful psychiatric treatment. The problem, as Barber sees it, is that life problems are treated (by non-psychiatric doctors) as illnesses requiring medication rather than temporary reactions that could be handled with therapy and counseling. Medication should be left for the serious problems that really need them and the diagnosis of mental illness should be left to psychiatrists.

## LIBRARY NEWS



Get the Latest Information on Mental Illnesses

In the February issue of *Grassroots*, Bill Chew recommended *BP Magazine* as a useful resource for current information on bipolar disorder. If you would like to learn more about this publication, visit BP's Web site at [www.bphope.com](http://www.bphope.com). In addition to *BP Magazine*, some other publications that offer up-to-date information on severe mental illnesses are listed below.

*Choices in Recovery* is a quarterly newsletter that contains articles related to schizophrenia. The feature article of the latest issue, *Good Communication: A Foundation of Recovery*, includes 7 steps for Better Communication with a Loved One. If you are interested in receiving this newsletter, their e-mail address is [editors@choicesinrecovery.com](mailto:editors@choicesinrecovery.com) or call 1-800-641-4023.

*SZ: Schizophrenia Digest* is a quarterly magazine for both consumers and their family members. One of its regular contributors is Xavier Amador, the author of *I Am Not Sick, I Don't Need Help*. Its online newsletter is available at [www.szdigest.com](http://www.szdigest.com).

*The Harvard Mental Health Letter* is a monthly newsletter published by Harvard Medical School. Its Web site is [www.health.harvard.edu](http://www.health.harvard.edu). This newsletter provides a yearly index, which is helpful for locating articles on specific topics of interest.

All of these publications are available at the NAMIH library. Visit our library or go to the Web sites mentioned above to get the latest information on mental illness. The NAMI Huntsville Library is open 9:00am – 3:00pm M-F.

- Eileen Sessions, NAMIH Librarian



## Art Contest

For Mental Health Awareness Week 2008  
**Our Place is sponsoring a Poster Contest**

To promote Mental Health Awareness

The exhibit will be at the  
Huntsville Public Library (Main)  
April 18 – May 18

Eligible Contestants are Artists  
Middle School Age - Adulthood and Includes  
People who have Mental Illness  
Deadline for Entries is April 18

Art may be no larger than 11" X 14" and  
Must promote education about Mental Illness

Computer generated Art accepted

Prizes will be awarded

**For Rules and Entry Information**

Contact Jan Neighbors: 256.746.4145 or

[jan.neighbors@comcast.net](mailto:jan.neighbors@comcast.net)



## Join NAMI Huntsville

Become a partner. Help NAMIH realize our goals  
to support, educate and advocate on behalf of  
individuals with mental illness and their families.

### MEMBERSHIP FORM

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

\$20 individual

\$25 family

New

Renewal

Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mail check to: NAMIH, 701 Andrew Jackson Way  
Huntsville, AL 35801

## G R A S S R O O T S

### Official Newsletter of NAMI Huntsville

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**Editor:** Nancy Dudney

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