



# NAMI

# Cape Cod

The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness

November, 2007

## Message from the President

*Severe mental illnesses can affect any family. Family members can be at risk whether they are rich or poor, educated or uneducated, of any ethnicity, culture, or functioning well or not functioning well as a family. And, currently, there is no way to predict who will develop an illness.*

*The onset of a severe mental illness triggers a major crisis in family members, which is not unlike that experienced by family members of people with other major disabilities. They experience shock, disbelief, frustration, anger, and helplessness. Few family members are prepared to deal with such a traumatic crisis, especially one that frequently continues for many years.*

*For most of the past century people with severe mental illnesses were thought to have a disability that increased over time. There was no hope for recovery, that is, for building or rebuilding a satisfying, fulfilling, and contributing life in the community. And of course, people were treated as if there was no hope. They were often hospitalized for long periods of time and provided only maintenance medication and maintenance activities. They were offered no hope of recovery. Most often families were considered to be the cause of the severe mental illnesses, especially mothers. And of course, families were discouraged from being involved in the treatment of their family member because they were thought to be the source of the problem. Sometimes they were inappropriately provided therapy to eradicate assumed causes of the severe mental illness within the family.*

*However, research over the past 40 years, in six different countries, has shown that most people with severe mental illnesses do recover, and that recovery is more common than it is rare. Recovery can be expected.*

*Also, there is no evidence that families cause severe mental illnesses. While we do not have complete information on the causes of severe mental illnesses, the research evidence points toward a neurobiological disorder that can be exacerbated by stress and modulated by the person's coping abilities.*

*The implications of this new view of severe mental illnesses and families have resulted in major shifts in mental health legislation, policy, and practice. We are in the midst of this paradigm shift at this very moment. However, mental health professionals, and people in general, are at different levels of understanding*

**...research over the past 40 years, in six different countries, has shown that most people with severe mental illnesses do recover, and that recovery is more common than it is rare. Recovery can be expected.**

### NAMI Cape Cod Board of Directors

- LeRoy Spaniol, President
- Charles Bacher, Treasurer
- Paul Foraste, Vice President
- Stella Thomson, Secretary
- Members-at-Large
  - Chris Ebel
  - Bob McClenahan
  - Steve Scannell
  - Paul Foraste
  - Annette Foraste
  - Charlie Manning
  - Janet Kinnally
  - Suzanne Sullivan
- Joan Wilds, Counselor to the Board
- Nancy Bacher, Advisor to the Board

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONT.)

*and implementing this new paradigm. The current transition is leaving some people confused and frustrated. NAMI has been a strong advocate in educating professionals and the public, advocating for necessary state and federal funding, and moving this paradigm forward.*

*Since we know that people can recover, we need to provide them with more than hospitalization, maintenance medication, and maintenance activities. People need hope, and the knowledge, skills, and support required to have a satisfying, fulfilling, and contributing life. Also, since families do not cause mental illnesses then we need to take a look at how families have and can be a significant resource in the recovery of their family member.*

*The National Institute for Mental Health, the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, and National and state NAMI have all adopted this new vision of recovery and are gradually understanding and implementing its implications for mental health service programs. But we still are in the midst of this change. Our own Cape Cod NAMI must keep this vision alive and active in our own community. The "good news" is that people can recover and families do not cause mental illnesses. NAMI must spread this "good news" and work in a collaborative recovery alliance with the mental health system, people with mental illnesses, and the community to see this new vision fulfilled on the Cape.*

*By LeRoy Spaniol*

### *Volunteers Needed*

***The office at 5 Mark Lane continues in its progress . Updating data via computer is a main goal as well as better coverage for the office.***

***We are looking for people who would be interested in volunteering time in the NAMI Cape Cod office . A training session would be offered for computer work and all other office procedures.***

***It is also possible that some work could be done from home.***

***Please call or email the office with your availability. We look forward to***

#### Useful Websites:

NAMI.org/sites/capecod    Our Affiliate website, which we are striving to update

NAMIMASS.org                Our state website

NAMI.org                        Our national website

lhaa.org                         Barnstable County website for human services

#### NAMI for Veterans and Their Families

To access further information go to [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org). In upper right hand search block enter veterans, then click on the item in which you are interested .

**Remember: NAMI Walks for the Mind of America    May 31, 2008**

## NAMI Cape Cod Responds to Veterans

On September 27, the Falmouth Military Support Group invited NAMI Cape Cod to participate in their Family Awareness Night at Mashpee High School. We were able to present to their guests and other participants NAMI's program for Veterans. We demonstrated what we can offer families through our Family-to-Family program and our NAMI CARE program for consumers. We also distributed literature about NAMI for Vets and information on

specific illnesses and other problems our soldiers acquire while over seas.

We have offered to attend one of their meetings on a Monday night to present ways in which they can join us and become trained in our programs to reach out to Military personnel and their families.

By Charlie Manning

---

## FAMILY-TO-FAMILY EDUCATION COURSE

NAMI of Cape Cod has successfully begun the NAMI Family-to-Family Education Program specifically for families of persons diagnosed with a serious mental illness in Wellfleet, Massachusetts. This 12-week series of classes started on Thursday, September 6, 2007 from 6:30-9:00pm at the Wellfleet Council on the Aging. Twenty family members from throughout the Lower Cape are attending the course. We have had excellent attendance and active participation. Most of those in attendance had never heard of NAMI and were recruited by our mailings, advertisements in local papers, and word of mouth.

The course provides information about schizophrenia, the mood disorders (bipolar disorder and major depression), panic disorder and obsessive compulsive disorder; coping skills such as handling crises and relapse; basic information about medications; listening and communication techniques; problem-solving skills; recovery and rehabilitation; and self-care around worry and stress. The curriculum was written by an experienced family member mental health professional.

The course is taught by NAMI Cape Cod family member volunteers who have undergone intensive training as course instructors. The co-teachers are LeRoy Spaniol and Jim Roberts. We hope to teach it again next fall and hope that more families with relatives who have a serious mental illness will take advantage of this unique opportunity.

This course is designed specifically for parents, siblings, spouses, teen-aged and adult children and significant others of persons with severe and persistent mental illness. It is not appropriate for individuals who themselves suffer from one of the major mental illnesses.

***The Family-to-Family Education program will also be taught this spring in the Mid-Cape area. For more information about starting date and location, call the office at 508-778-4277.***



The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness

**NAMI Cape Cod**

**5 Mark Lane**

**Hyannis, MA 02601**

On September 18, 2007, the US Senate passed the **Mental Health Parity Bill, S 558**, which provides for equitable insurance coverage for mental health.

NAMI National Executive Director, Mike Fitzpatrick said, "This is a victory for millions of Americans living with mental illnesses who face unfair discrimination in co-payments, doctor's visits, and hospital stays."

The passage of Mental Health Parity after ten years of gridlock was the result of many grass roots members advocating for its passage. Senator Kennedy made a personal phone call to me to ask that his thanks be extended to all our members. The sincerity and compassion he has for our cause was clearly evident in his voice and message to our membership.

The battle isn't over. The parity bill now moves to the House for consideration. **Contact your member of Congress and urge him to support immediate House passage of S 558 so that the bill can be sent to the President for signature.** Please send a letter to your Senator thanking them for supporting mental illness parity. Contact your Senators and Representatives now using the NAMI Legislative Action Center.

**MISSION**

NAMI Cape Cod serves to advocate for improved services and laws governing the care of people with mental illness, to support and educate families and individuals on their path to recovery, to educate all people on the nature of mental illness.

NONPROFIT  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
NAMI CAPE COD