

November 2008

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November Ed. Meeting

Join us Tuesday, November 11, at 6 pm at Trenholm Road United Methodist Church. Our speaker will be Harvey Miller, LISW-CP, the Acting Chief Operating Officer for the Division of Inpatient Services of the South Carolina Department of Mental Health (DMH). During the prior 20 years, he had been the Administrative Director for two Departments of Psychiatry in New York City. He has been a practicing clinician for 30 years. Mr. Miller will speak about the inpatient services offered by DMH, how they operate, and what they offer. As someone who has experience with a variety of mental health delivery systems, he will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of how services are delivered.

Partnership for Elementary School Students

Mental Health America of South Carolina's *Don't Duck Mental Health* program will have a partner in the midlands area: NAMI's *Breaking the Silence* program. *Don't Duck Mental Health* targets kindergarten to third graders, enabling them to learn about mental illness. *Breaking the Silence* will target fifth graders and teach them how to recognize the warning signs of mental illnesses, as well as how to overcome the stigma that is associated with mental illness. The two organizations will represent both programs when going into schools.

President's Letter

by Buddy Wier

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness..." Charles Dickens. Sound like today's newspaper?

It is exciting that insurance parity for mental illness has now been signed into law by President Bush (see story page 2). NAMI and many partners worked for two decades to bring this legislation to reality. Mental health coverage is the best it has been.

We know the economy is difficult. Tragically, it appears the SC Department of Mental Health will lose over 10% (\$20,000,000) of their state funding. During adverse times, the need for mental health services increases. Worst of times comes to mind. As advocates, it is essential that we let our elected representatives know that mental health is important to us.

Over 30% of the homeless have a mental illness. Thus your Board of Directors has agreed to pledge \$5,000 toward the Midlands Homeless Alliance's effort to get a \$5,000,000 matching grant from the Knight Foundation to develop an integrated service for the homeless. Our constituency will benefit immensely.

I believe you will be amazed by the number of events related to mental health since last month's BrainStorm. Mental Health America had 225 attend their "Heroes in the Fight" dinner, FAVOR had over 200 attend their Dry Run and Rally, the Out of the Darkness Walk had nearly 500 walkers, the Dorn VA Hospital sponsored two Mental Illness Awareness Week events, the American Legion Post 6 is distributing information on depression to 1200 people, and NAMI SC's State Conference had over 200 attend. NAMI Mid-Carolina participated in all these events.

NAMI continues to work to improve the lives of those with mental illness. We are planning and are working diligently to expand support groups, educational courses, and stigma busting programs. Please help spread the word that NAMI's programs are free and are open to the public.



Linda Gill (center), founder of Columbia's Joy in the Mourning Center for Life Losses, poses with Kevin O'Connell and Cheryl Krumholz. Gill was last month's speaker at NAMI Mid-Carolina's Education Meeting. During her presentation, "The Unique Grief of Mental Illness," Gill shared the significant losses associated with mental illness and the description of both the grieving process and the tasks of mourning.



Victory on Parity

On October 3, 2008, President Bush signed the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 as part of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act (HR 1424).

This is a huge victory for mental health consumers. It ends a nearly 20 year effort to require group health plans to cover treatment for mental illness on the same terms and conditions as all other illnesses. NAMI is extremely grateful for the tireless work of advocates from all over the nation who contacted their Senators and House Members to push for this landmark legislation. The advocacy voice of people living with mental illness and their families made a tremendous difference in securing this long-sought victory. The parity law becomes effective one year after enactment of the bill. In the coming weeks, NAMI will be developing educational materials and guidelines on how parity will impact insurance coverage for consumers and families.

The 2008 Election: Questions for the Candidates

The NAMI National Office sent a list of questions to each candidate for President of the United States.

Excerpts from Sen. Barack Obama's response:

My national health plan will guarantee affordable, comprehensive and portable health coverage for every American through partnerships among employers, private health plans, the federal government, and the states. In addition, my plan will include coverage of all essential medical services, including preventive, maternity and mental health care. I strongly support mental health fairness. In Illinois, I passed the state's mental parity law. In the U.S. Senate, I co-sponsored the Mental Health Parity Act of 2007 and have been a strong supporter of the bipartisan Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act. I believe we should prohibit group health plans from imposing treatment or financial limitations on mental health and substance-related disorder benefits that are different from those applied to medical or surgical services. I also support

ending discrimination against people suffering from mental illness and addiction.

I am committed to ensuring that Americans with disabilities or mental illness receive Medicaid and Medicare benefits in a low-cost, effective and timely manner. I have worked with Senator Ken Salazar (D-CO) to urge the Department of Health and Human Services to provide clear and reliable information on the Medicare prescription drug benefit and to ensure that Medicare recipients are protected from fraudulent claims by marketers and drug plan agents. I also support efforts to improve coordination between Medicaid and Medicare so that individuals with disabilities who are enrolled in both programs do not face additional administrative barriers when seeking prescription drug benefits.

Excerpts from Senator John McCain's Mental Health Statement:

The next President will face a great challenge due to the rising cost of health care of all types. America has the finest doctors and medical science, and the treatment of mental health has shared in these advances. However, as with other aspects of our health care system, spending on mental and behavioral health treatments is rising rapidly. The challenge is to ensure high quality care, establish incentives to control the growth of costs, and thereby permit greater affordable choices.

Mental health is a necessary complement to physical health in all aspects of our daily lives. Fortunately, the path to greater quality and lower costs is to recognize this fact and where possible provide incentives to treat physical and behavioral health together. Chronic disease is a dominant component of the growth in spending on health care and many of our citizens with chronic illnesses have a behavioral health problem as well. For example, untreated depression raises dramatically the cost of treating the physical ailments of a diabetic. A sensible goal is to design reimbursement for taking care of the whole patient, whatever ails them, and recognize the essential role mental health treatment plays in the overall health of the patient and the reduction in physical health needs.

Stress: What to Do?

Whether measured by the unemployment rate, reaction to the economic bailout, rationing money to buy medications or food, or the effects of the high home foreclosure rate, the current economic situation has Americans experiencing more psychological distress than ever before.

Here are ten tips for people with mental illness who are stressed by the news of the current economic crisis.

- Engage with your social networks or friends. If you have a recovery group available, plan to attend.
- Maintain your medication and treatment plan. Schedule appointments with providers if needed to assist during challenging times.
- Be mindful of your diet. Caffeine, alcohol, and sugar all contribute to increased anxiety.
- Avoid short-term “self-medication” that involves using drugs or alcohol. Alcohol, in particular, is a depressant and compounds suffering over time.
- Play with your pet. Research shows that pets help combat loneliness, reduce blood pressure, organize your day, and are a source of solace.
- Maintain a structured routine. Many people with mental illness report that structure is motivational and supports a feeling of accomplishment, which can help offset feelings of worry or anxiety.
- Participate in spiritual and relaxation practices.
- Exercise. Positive feelings enhanced by the release of endorphins are only part of the benefits of exercise. Improved self-esteem and enhanced self-worth are other advantages.
- Laugh. Watch an old movie, watch a cartoon or comedy sketch on TV to elevate your spirits.
- Avoid negative media, including television and radio, if it proves to be agitating.

Do U Facebook?
Join the NAMI Mid-Carolina Group!

What if ...? The Power of the

Positive Question from an article by Stephen Propst in *bp magazine*

What if you learned of a cure for your illness?

Would you move on with your life or claim that something else was holding you back?

What if you started taking the lead in your treatment? Would you make progress in your recovery?

What if you no longer faced any stigma? Would you still find someone or something to blame?

What if your insurance company no longer discriminated against you? Would you seek out the best care you could find and stick to it?

What if you left the past behind and were hopeful about tomorrow? Would you start making the most of today?

What if you realized that it's okay not to be perfect? Would you be willing to make a mistake?

What if you stopped setting unreasonable expectations? Would you set realistic, yet challenging goals?

What if you started standing up and speaking for yourself? Would you improve mental health care for everyone?

New and Renewing Members

Ivy Brown	Robert & Brenda Coker
Mary Gasque	William & Eleanor Foiles
Debbie Horton	Cristina Isenhower
Marilynn Knight	L.O. Medlock
Marion Muscillo	Frank & Mary Norris
Michael Stockdell	Sarah Weaver
Sissy Weaver	Reginald & Paula Wilson
Mary Wong	Robert & Virginia Rheintgen

Donations

William & Eleanor Foiles
Donald & Carol Harper (In memory of daughter, Angela Hair)
Frank & Mary Norris
Robert & Virginia Rheintgen
Reginald & Paula Wilson
Mary Wong (In memory of brother, Richard Ng)



You can also view the Brain Storm
at www.namimidcarolina.org

Mondays 11/3, 11/10, 11/17,
11/24 3 pm NAMI Connections,
Dorn VA Bldg. 106, Room A-237

Tuesdays 11/4, 11/18, 11/25,
6 pm NAMI Connections
and Family Support Group,
Trenholm Road United Methodist
Church (TRUMC), 3401 Trenholm
Rd.

Thursdays 11/6, 11/13, 11/20
6 pm NAMI Connections, TRUMC

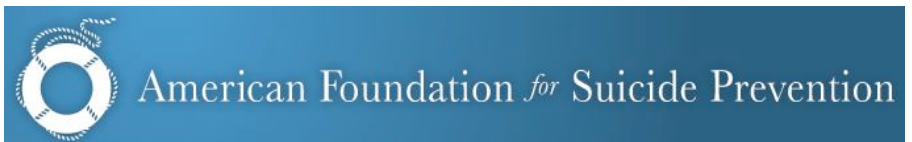
Tuesday 11/11 6 pm Education
Meeting, TRUMC (see story pg. 1)

Saturday, 11/22, 12 noon, Survivors
of Suicide Day (see story at right)

December 5 - 7
NAMI SC Training, White Oak

Tuesday, 12/9, 6 pm
Annual Holiday Party/NAMIWalks
Information Meeting, TRUMC
Leisure Ministries Bldg.

Saturday, April 25, 2009
NAMIWALKS for the Mind of
America, West Columbia Riverwalk



NOVEMBER 22 is NATIONAL SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE DAY

Each year, more than 32,000 people in the U.S. die by suicide, making it the 11th leading cause of death in the country. Each of these people leaves behind a wake of loved ones who struggle to make sense out of a terrible tragedy. If you have lost someone to suicide, you are not alone.

On November 22, survivors from all over the country will come together in an effort to comfort, support, heal and inform. Local healing conferences held in over 100 communities across the nation will be linked to a national program via satellite and webcast, and shown live on the AFSP website.

The Columbia conference will take place on Saturday, November 22 from 12:00 pm until 3:00 pm at the AFSP SC Chapter office (nicknamed The Raft), 1532-A Sunset Boulevard (Hwy. 378). We will start gathering at noon and lunch will be provided at no charge. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Helen Pridgen at hpridgen@sc.rr.com (803-206-8214) or Eileen Schell at Eileen.Schell@PalmettoHealth.org (803-296-5621) so we will know how many lunches to order. The webcast will begin at 1:00 pm and end at 2:30 pm, followed by discussion.

Sponsored by: AFSP South Carolina Chapter, 2008 Out of the Darkness Walk Committee, and Palmetto Health Behavioral Care.