



nAMI Orange County News & Views

National Alliance on Mental Illness

The Official Newsletter of NAMI Orange County, NC

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Events:

6/13, NAMI-OC Program on Dual Diagnosis: Substance Abuse and Mental Illness
 7/11, NAMI-OC Potluck
 5/2, NAMIWalks
 7/24-26, NAMI Connection Training
 8/8, Club Nova/NAMI-OC Potluck

See page 6 for details

Contact Us!

NAMI-Orange County
 PO Box 4201
 Chapel Hill NC 27515-4201
 namiorange.org
 Helpline: 919-929-7822

Stories of Success, for a Change

In the midst of bad budget news, NAMI-OC President Lisa Hamill has been looking for stories about people who've struggled with mental illnesses, yet feel that they can manage their illnesses and lead fulfilling lives. JoAnn Whetsell, a graduate student in UNC's School of Public Health, interviewed two such individuals and contributed their stories.

Blake's Story

by JoAnn Whetsell

Blake is a 26-year-old man who's studying to be an electrician at Wake Technical Community College. He enjoys fishing and having a good time with friends. On weekends, he works at the Caramore group home in Chapel Hill, making sure the residents take their medications as scheduled, eat healthy meals, and have entertainment such as watching movies, or walking around downtown together. Blake relates to Caramore's residents well because not long ago, he was one of them.

Blake exudes a positive attitude and a cheerful temperament. His classmates and others who don't know him well would probably be surprised to learn that he hasn't always had such an upbeat personality. In some ways, it's hard for Blake to understand too, because as he says, his "mind was somewhere else, so it's hard to recollect the past from about 19 'til now."

Seven years ago, at age 19, Blake started experiencing symptoms of schizophrenia. He began hearing voices—from the television, the walls, talking to and around him. Unable to relax, he began

using drugs and alcohol. He found himself in and out of Cherry Hospital, a psychiatric hospital in Goldsboro, and doing an eight-month stint at a rehab facility.

At 20, he went to college in Wilmington. Blake says his "mental illness really kicked in then." He often didn't want to go to class and would stay up for hours at night trying to sleep. One night, he took all his clothes, everything but the outfit he had on, to the Salvation Army. He began drinking again. At the end of the semester, his parents brought him home.

That's when the hallucinations flared up. As he says, "I was very mean and very cruel to my parents and my family because I was hearing voices, but I didn't realize that it was me. I thought it was my mom and dad making me do this, making me feel so bad." He went back to Cherry Hospital and stayed eight months.

It was during this hospitalization that Blake realized for the first time that he was hearing voices, that "it wasn't the wall, it wasn't the person sitting in front of [him], it was all in [his] mind." That realization was a turning point. "In Cherry is where it all changed. That's where I realized that it was my mind that was giving me problems and not everyone else, not to blame my parents for my problems. Alcohol couldn't fix it. Drugs couldn't fix it. Women couldn't fix it. It was all up here. I had to take my medicine if I wanted to have a stable mind."

When Blake was about to be discharged from Cherry, his social worker told him about Caramore. He stayed at their group

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home for a one-week visit and enjoyed it. After leaving the hospital he lived in the group home for three months and afterwards in the supervised apartments.

“I needed the structure of the group home just to relearn how to live, just to relearn how to handle things and take on responsibilities. ‘Cause when I was 19 up until now, I didn’t care about responsibilities. I didn’t realize what I had to do day to day just to be a productive member of society.” At Caramore, Blake worked on the lawn crew, then got a job at Marshall’s that Caramore helped him obtain. His social relationships improved. He visited his parents every other weekend and says that they and his sister and friends are very supportive.

This year, Blake is two years drug-free and three years smoke-free. He is proud of his accomplishments and supportive of the people undergoing the struggle he knows so well. The struggle continues for him as well. Every day he takes his medication, but occasionally his demons return. Still, he knows how to handle the hallucinations now, how to step back and understand that things are not right because he’s hearing voices, and do something distracting like taking a walk or playing a video game until he’s calm and settled again.

As for managing mental illness, Blake says, “Anybody can do it. You’ve got to take your medication, take care of yourself, and help take care of your peers, your friends. And you’ll prosper.”

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Cindy’s Story

by JoAnn Whetsell

Cindy enjoys her job as an administrative assistant at Caramore, a structured support program for adults with mental illness. It is a place where she feels comfortable. “They care about you here,” she says. “They want you to succeed, and they’re there to help you succeed.”

Cindy knows from personal experience because she is not just a Caramore employee but also an alumna. Cindy began experiencing symptoms of mental illness at 22. She was paranoid. Her lack of trust of others was like “a cloud over [her] head all the time.” She had tactile hallucinations and felt that people were grabbing her. She was prescribed antidepressants and antipsychotic medications, which helped, but she would stop taking them when she started feeling better.

Cindy was hospitalized in 2005. She was dissociating, doing things that didn’t make any sense. At 33, Cindy spent three months in Dorothea Dix Hospital. There, she received a diagnosis of schizoaffective disorder and began to get better. The diagnosis was a relief, and it changed her life. Finally people knew what was wrong and could help her. That’s not to say that accepting the diagnosis has been easy. Cindy

says it is particularly difficult to accept a lifelong need to take medication, and she worries about long-term side effects, but she doesn’t want to be sick again. Cindy says she has to remind herself how ill she once was so that she’s not tempted to stop taking her medications again.

Cindy has worked hard to get better. After leaving Dorothea Dix, she went directly to Caramore. She lived in one of the program’s group homes for three months and worked on a cleaning crew for a while. She continues therapy in addition to medication. Putting her life back together has allowed her to repair relationships with family and friends. A sister has said she was glad to have her sister back; an old friend said it was nice to be able to have a normal conversation with her instead of one in which she jumped from subject to subject. Talking to family and friends is part of Cindy’s strategy for maintaining her health. Now, more than a year after first moving to Caramore, she is looking ahead to the future. She would like to go back to school, perhaps for an MBA, and eventually buy a house. In the meantime, she plans to continue working at Caramore and being a part of others’ getting the support that helped turn her life around.

Unprecedented Cuts to Health and Human Services

North Carolina's budget must be decreased by over \$4 billion dollars due to projected revenue shortfalls next year. Although Health and Human Services costs constitute 23% of the total budget, the cuts to DHHS budgets make up 50% of the total budget cuts. Is NC balancing their budget on the backs of the children, families, older adults and the disabled?

Specific cuts to next year's services will severely impact people with mental illnesses:

- \$4.5 million in state-operated services such as hospitals
- \$4 million in community service reductions
- \$1.15 million reduction in rental subsidies
- Reductions to community support by \$59 million
- 5.5% rate reductions for providers, which can destabilize the service system
- Restrictions of access to medications using a preferred drug list to save \$40 million
- Reductions to dental coverage Medicaid service by \$16 million
- Increases of co-pays on services to save \$3 million
- Eliminations of PT/OT/speech therapy to save \$2.7 million
- Eliminations of MH residential services and therapeutic camps for kids for \$1.5 million savings
- Reductions to state/county special assistance rates to save \$3 million
- Reductions to personal care services in Adult Care homes (\$10 million) and modifications to reduce utilization (\$49 million)

Additional cuts, often larger, are planned for 2011.

What Can You Do?

During the week of June 15, the budget will proceed to the full house. It is critical for as many people as possible to take action and encourage their elected officials to consider increasing taxes for those who

can afford to pay more. You can contact Representative Verla Insko at 919-733-7208 or Verla.Insko@ncleg.net, and urge your friends and neighbors to contact her as well.

Sign an Online Petition

Sign the online petition, "Maintain Funding Supports for Mental Health, Developmental Disability and Substance Abuse Services in North Carolina." To read the petition, point your browser to www.PetitionOnline.com/MHDDSA/petition.html. To sign the petition, click the "Sign the Online Petition" link.

Contact the Appropriations Committee

Contact the Full House Appropriations leadership or a Vice Chair, including Verla Insko, or one of the HHS Subcommittee on Appropriations chairs or members.

Speak Out with Talking Points

- We simply can't balance the budget with service cuts alone. It is critical that the House raise some new revenues to help plug the shortfall.
 - These cuts are a precursor to prison, poverty, and patient deaths.
 - People will be harmed, and some will die.
 - People and programs may need decades to recover.
 - These cuts bring hidden costs: when the local services are lacking, patients resort to emergency rooms, jails, and institutions, all of which cost far more than preventative services.
 - Our hospitals will decline again through staffing cuts, risking of losing accreditation and federal funding.
 - Economic stressors lead to an increased demand for help and services: *this is not the time to cut those very things people need more now than ever.*
- More information is available at www.namiorange.org under "Advocacy/Action Alerts."

Adapted from NAMI-OC's Action Alert and NAMI-NC's Heard in the Halls

"These cuts bring hidden costs: when the local services are lacking, patients resort to emergency rooms, jails, and institutions, all of which cost far more than preventative services."

Volunteers needed for the NAMI-OC Board of Directors

NAMI-OC is staffed and operated completely by volunteers. When our board has vacancies, opportunities are lost and our affiliate cannot function effectively. Without a Membership Chair, our affiliate does not grow. Without a Publicity Chair, the community is not notified of our programs. Without a Consumer Representative, not all of our voices may be heard. The following positions are vacant and need to be filled.

Membership Chair

Sends meeting notices by postcard and email. Works with board members, committee chairs and coordinators to increase the membership. Mails affiliate materials to new members. Mails annual membership appeals and renewal reminders to members who don't respond to the annual membership appeal.

Consumer Representative

Represents interests/ perspective of consumers. Liason with consumers in the affiliate. Serves on NAMI NC Consumer Council or recruits a volunteer.

Publicity and Development

(Susan Spalt, our current publicity chair, has requested we seek a new chair for this position). Leads MIAW and similar projects in the community. Arranges for notices of affiliate events and Family to Family information to appear in newspaper calendars. Manages distribution of brochures, flyers etc to local clinicians, UNC Neuroscience Hospital and John Umstead Hospital. Maintains and updates affiliate brochure. Coordinates with website manager to keep website current. Coordinates annual NAMI-OC awards to direct care givers at UNC Neurosciences Hospital and John Umstead Hospital (Mary Margaret Flamer Award). Works to develop new funding sources for the affiliate.

For further details about these positions, contact Lisa Hamill at LisaHamill@earthlink.net or call 919-933-8941.

Our affiliate is growing, and we need more help. Please consider volunteering your time and talents.

Interested in a NAMI-OC Monthly Support Group?

NAMI-OC members are being asked to weigh in on a new monthly support group. Meetings would be an hour and a half long, with a structured format and more time available for addressing specific concerns. In contrast, the

monthly sharing group before the NAMI-OC monthly program is more open and informal. With enough interest, we will find a location, as a facilitator has already volunteered. If you are interested, please contact Lisa Hamill at 919-933-8941 or lisahamill@earthlink.net.

NAMI-OC Board of Directors

President: Lisa Hamill

Vice President: Gary Gaddy

Secretary: Mary Lynn Piven

Treasurer: Robert Weimer

Consumer Representative: Open

Family-To-Family Class Coordinators:
Gove and Barbara Elder

Membership: Open

Newsletter: Julia Trimmer

Programs: Virginia Hill

Professional Representative:
John Gilmore, MD

Publicity & Development: Susan Spalt

Protect Free Access and Choice for Medication

Help protect the rights of individuals and doctors to prescribe non-generic medications for mental health diagnoses to patients on Medicaid.

Language may be removed from Section 10.58.(d) of Senate Bill 202, The Appropriations Act of 2009, that could give the NC Department of Health and Human Services authority to require prior authorization for psychiatric medication, and establish a preferred drug list program for Medicaid recipients. The goal is to save money by requiring Medicaid patients to try generic medications or those on a preferred drug list first.

Such a policy wrongly assumes that all generics work just as effectively on all patients as more expensive medications. But those of us who rely on the right combination of specific medications know that generics don't always work the same, and taking away critical medications can have disastrous consequences on our own or our loved ones' mental health.

Contact your NC legislator as soon as possible to recommend against removing the language from this bill and restricting

medication choices for Medicaid subscribers.

Orange County is represented in the House by Bill Faison, District 50, at 919-715-3019 or Bill.Faison@ncleg.net; Joe Hackney, District 54, at 919-733-3451 or Joe.Hackney@ncleg.net; Verla Insko, District 56, at 919-733-7208 or Verla.Insko@ncleg.net, and in the Senate by Eleanor Kinnaired, District 23, at 919-733-5804 or Ellie.Kinnaired@ncleg.net.

Explain to your elected officials that:

- Requiring prior authorization for medications for schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and other serious mental illnesses is a bad idea.
- This policy will substantially increase paperwork for already-overworked providers.
- Scrimping on mental health care access and making it harder to get medications doesn't save money, but increases costs through emergency room visits and hospital stays.
- Let's use generics only when they're effective, not just because they're cheaper.

“Those of us who rely on the right combination of specific medications know that generics don't always work the same, and taking away critical medications can have disastrous consequences on our own or our loved ones' mental health.”

NAMI Connection Facilitators Needed

NAMI NC is looking to train facilitators for NAMI's new recovery support group program, NAMI Connection. Participants should be individuals who are living with a mental illness, currently in recovery, and have a good self-knowledge of their illness and their recovery process and interested in facilitating the new NAMI Connection recovery support group program in their community for at least a year. This new program will be available to people with mental illness in North Carolina as part of a national introduction of the successful grassroots educational program.

NAMI Connection is a recovery support group for adults with mental illness regardless of their diagnosis. Every group is offered free of charge and meets weekly for 90 minutes. All are led by trained individuals who are also in recovery.

“More than anything, this program is about hope and recovery. It provides encouragement, insight and self-help skills,” adds Brenda Piper, NAMI NC Programs Director.

“Mental illness is a medical condition – like diabetes or arthritis,” said Deby Dihoff, Executive Director, NAMI NC. “People with mental illness can successfully achieve recovery. What makes NAMI Connection unique is that it mobilizes people with mental illness to engage others in a dialogue about achieving and maintaining wellness.”

For more information about NAMI Connection, please visit www.naminc.org. To register for the NAMI Connection training or for additional information, please contact Brenda Piper, Programs Director at 800-451-9682 or bpiper@naminc.org.

*Get to know others
in your community.
You can find ideas,
advice and support
from informed, local
sources.*

Calendar of Events

Saturday, June 13

NAMI-OC monthly meeting at the Church of Reconciliation, 110 Elliot Rd., Chapel Hill. At 9:30, Fellowship and refreshments in the Meeting Room or support group in the Lounge (newcomers welcome). At 10:30, Matthew Owen Howard, Ph.D., Frank A. Daniels, Jr. Distinguished Professor of Human Services Policy Information, at UNC Chapel Hill School of Social Work, will present information on dual diagnosis. Dual diagnosis refers to patients with both a mental health disorder and substance abuse disorder. Substance abuse is the most common and significant co-occurring disorder among adults with mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or bipolar illness. For more information, contact Lisa Hamill at 933-8941 or lisahamill@earthlink.net.

Saturday, July 11

NAMI Orange County July potluck at the home of Sandra and Gary Gaddy. RSVP (appreciated, but not required) to Gary at (919) 403-9520 or garygaddy@mindspring.com This event replaces our usual second Saturday Educational program. There will not be a confidential sharing group on July 11th.

Directions to the Gaddy's house at 5921 Treetop Ridge in Durham:

- From 15-501, turn onto Erwin Road, north of Chapel Hill across from the Sheraton on 15-501. Go four miles on Erwin. Turn left on Mt. Sinai Road at the stoplight at Forest View Elementary. Go almost exactly one mile on Mt. Sinai. As you wind up the hill, turn right on Treetop Ridge. The Gaddy's is the first house on the left. (If you pass Mt. Sinai church on the left you've gone too far.)
- Coming from Hwy. 86, turn onto Mt. Sinai near the railroad crossing at Allen & Sons BBQ. Go four miles. The Gaddy's is the first house on the left after the red brick church on the left.

Friday, July 24 to Sunday, July 26

NAMI Connection Training will be held in Raleigh at a location to be determined. NAMI Connection is a recovery support group program for adults living with mental illness. NAMI Connection groups offer a casual and relaxed approach to sharing the challenges and successes of coping with mental illness. Each group is run by two trained facilitators and meets for 90 minutes a week for no charge. The groups follow a flexible structure without an educational format. Facilitators do not recommend or endorse any medications or other medical therapies. The group is confidential; participants can share as much or as little personal information as they like. For more information about becoming a facilitator, see the accompanying article on becoming a NAMI Connection facilitator.

Saturday, August 8

Club Nova/NAMI potluck, 6:00 pm at Club Nova, 103D West Main St. Carrboro. Call 919-968-6682 or see www.clubnova.org for more information.

Green Japanese Maples on Sale at Club Nova

This Spring, Club Nova Community's Thrift Shop is selling Green Japanese Maple trees (\$20 and up). Enhance your garden while supporting the psychosocial rehabilitation program that serves over 100 members in Orange County. One hundred percent of proceeds benefit Club Nova Community, Inc. The Thrift Shop is at 103 West Main Street in Carrboro, behind Wendy's, 919-967-6985. For more information, visit the Club Nova website at www.clubnova.org.

Community Resources

NAMI-Orange County Monthly Meetings

Held on the second Saturday at 10:30 at the Church of Reconciliation, 110 N Elliot Road in Chapel Hill (see Calendar of Events).

Confidential Sharing Group

Most second Saturdays from 9:30 to 10:30 am at the Church of Reconciliation, before the NAMI Orange program. Family members and consumers are welcome. Call 929-7822 for more information.

Mental Health Association of Orange County

MHA/OC administers programs to promote mental health and improve the lives of residents living with mental illness. The **Family Advocacy Network (FAN)** provides individual and group support for parents and caregivers of children with emotional, behavioral or mental health challenges. The **Peer Parent Program** is a confidential support network for families of children with emotional, behavioral or mental health challenges. **Compeer** matches volunteers one-to-one with a person who is in treatment for a mental illness. **Community Backyard** helps provide youth with mental health and substance abuse treatment needs access to services. For more information, call 942-8083.

Call Center

Consumer-run call center. Monday to Friday a.m. to 6 p.m.. Focus on providing accurate information to consumers, families, professionals, and providers regarding access and other issues surrounding mental health reform as well as general mental health information and referrals. Call 1-800-897-7494 or email callctr@mha-nc.org.

Family-to-Family Class

NAMI educational program for families of persons with serious mental illness. Helps family members to better understand and support their ill relative while maintaining their own well being. Free 12 weekly classes. In Orange County contact Gove Elder (967-5403), in Durham Selde (225-0808) or Cheryl (531-7683).

Caramore Community, Inc.

Rehabilitation program for NC citizens over age 17 with severe mental illnesses. Provides employment and independent living training services. 550 Smith Level Rd. Chapel Hill. Call 919- 967-3402 or see www.caramore.org.

Club Nova

Providing Orange County residents with “a place to come for a sense of belonging, acceptance, friendships and opportunities.” Access to housing, meals, and a transitional employment program. Located at 103D West Main St. Carrboro. Call 919-968-6682 or see www.clubnova.org.

Resources on the Web

NAMI Orange County at www.namiorange.org

NAMI North Carolina at www.naminc.org and NAMI National at www.nami.org.

North Carolina Mental Health Association of Orange County at www.mhaorangeco.org

More resources can be found on the NAMI-OC website.

Monthly support and program meetings on the second Saturday of every month except July, August and December are held at the Church of Reconciliation at 110 North Elliot Road in Chapel Hill. Our Open Support Group meets from 9:30-10:15 in a private room. From 10:30-11:30, our program is educational in nature, and most often features a speaker.



National Alliance on Mental Illness

*Join or donate
to NAMI-Orange
County today!*

Membership dues are \$35.00 for the calendar year (January-December). "Open Door" membership (\$3.00) is available for those with limited incomes. Your dues give you membership and newsletters from local, state and national NAMI organizations. Your additional donations are used to fund local programs. Make check payable to NAMI Orange County. Mail to NAMI Orange County, PO Box 4201, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-4201. Thank you for your support!

NAME _____ PHONE: _____ EMAIL _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

- Annual membership (\$35.00 regular or \$3.00 Open Door)
- Donation (tax deductible)
- # household members served by this membership
- I approve sharing my email address with NAMI-NC and National
- Contact me about volunteer opportunities
- Please remove my name from your mailing list
- YES! I want to help conserve paper, energy, and NAMI-OC postage dollars by receiving the NAMI-OC newsletter via email (Include your name and preferred email address and forward to namioclistserv@gmail.com or mail it to PO Box 4201, Chapel Hill, NC 27515.

NAMI Orange County is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your donation is tax deductible.



An Affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness
PO Box 4201, Chapel Hill NC 27515-4201
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**Open Your Mind:
Mental Illnesses are
Brain Disorders**

