



nAMI Orange County News & Views

National Alliance on Mental Illness

The Official Newsletter of NAMI Orange County, NC

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Events:

- July 15, 3:00, NAMI-OC Board Meeting
 - July 21, 6:30, NAMI-OC Potluck
 - August 11, 5:00 NAMI-OC/ Club Nova Potluck
 - September 8, NAMI-OC Meeting
 - September 9, 3:00 to 5:00 NAMI-OC
 - September 21, Peer Support Program
 - September 22, 5:00 Family-to-Family Reunion
- See page 4 for more info!*

Contact Us!

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Is Chapel Hill Safer than Blacksburg?

By Gary D. Gaddy

A version of this column was published in the Chapel Hill Herald on April 26, 2007

“In the wake of the shootings at Virginia Tech, do you think the UNC campus is safe?” When this question was posed to five students during Chapel Hill Herald “Community Speakout,” they all said “yes.” They must also think the Blacksburg campus was safe the day before the killings happened there. Virginia Tech had a person on their campus who was clearly and obviously mentally ill, and chronically angry, isolated and dangerous as well: Cho Seung-Hui. For the record, Virginia Tech was not safe.

Apparently these UNC students didn't notice alumnus Mohammad Taheri-Azar driving an SUV through the heart of UNC's campus last March. Taheri-Azar was charged with nine counts of attempted first-degree murder. Only his incompetence as a mass murderer kept him from rivaling the total in Blacksburg. Taheri-Azar said he did this to avenge the deaths of Muslims around the world. He likely had a brain disorder as well. At last report, he was at Dorothea Dix Hospital undergoing a psychiatric evaluation. His lawyer says his client “has a severe mental illness.”

We should also remember January 26, 1995, when Wendell Williamson, then a third-year law student at UNC, killed two people during a shooting spree on Chapel Hill's Henderson Street. Williamson also shot and wounded two others. A jury found Williamson not guilty by reason of

insanity. Williamson had 600 rounds of ammunition in his knapsack when he was arrested. He later said that he originally planned on going up on the hill above the Smith Center at game time for his killing spree -- but he didn't. If he had, dozens, if not hundreds, could have died. No one can make any place else really safe from individuals who are willing to die in order to kill. There are not enough gun control laws, armed guards or metal detectors in the world to make it truly physically safe.

I can promise you that the task force established in Virginia to evaluate their tragedy will recommend improvements in the campus and the state mental health systems. They should.

Recently, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) graded the state mental health systems. North Carolina got a D+. Virginia got a D. Our mental health treatment systems do not have minor flaws or gaps; they have gaping crevasses that make the Grand Canyon look like a hairline crack.

We can make things substantially safer, starting by providing significantly better and more aggressive treatment for people who have serious mental illnesses, especially those who are a potential danger to themselves or others. We know how to do this. This does not mean locking up every person who mutters to himself or looks strange. Most people with mental illness are not dangerous to anyone -- not if their illness is properly treated and they are incorporated

“Shunning, isolating and marginalizing those with mental illness will not make anyone in this world any safer.”

Blacksburg, from page 1

into a close and caring community. Kicking those with mental illnesses out of school, or the workplace, will only move the problem. A valid and up-to-date student ID is not what allowed Cho and Williamson to kill, nor what kept Taheri-Azar from trying.

Shunning, isolating and marginalizing those with mental illness will not make anyone in this world any safer. Rather, fear and neglect will only make it more dangerous. Appropriate treatment and communities that care about those with mental illness will make things better and safer. Such treatment does exist -- but there is far too little of it and there are too many barriers to receiving it for those in need. And such communities do exist -- but they are too few and too far between.

Sometimes treatment may involve involuntary commitment in locked ward in a mental hospital. (And this should not be only after tragic acts of violence against themselves or others.) But when it does, it should also include appropriate placement

in supportive transitional housing after hospitalization, and appropriate community support after that. (Some of which is just what North Carolina is cutting right now, believe it or not.)

Laws to allow for involuntary out-patient treatment would also keep us all safer. Someone hospitalized as dangerous then made safe by medical treatment should not leave the hospital without support and monitoring to assure that they stay on that treatment lest they return to their previous condition unobserved.

We can do this. We must demand this. If we don't, when the next horror happens, we won't have to look for someone else to blame, we can just look for a mirror.

Gary D. Gaddy serves on the board of NAMI Orange County. Call 929-7822 to see what you can do to help make life safer and better in our community.

“CLA will assume responsibilities on July 2, 2007 . . . and will be exclusively responsible for advocating for people with disabilities in North Carolina.”

Carolina Legal Assistance Designated as North Carolina's Protection and Advocacy System

North Carolina's Protection and Advocacy System has been redesignated to Carolina Legal Assistance (CLA). CLA will assume the protection and advocacy responsibilities on July 2, 2007. These services are currently provided by the Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities (GACPD), a division of the N.C. Department of Administration.

This action was taken at the request of the disability community and after consulting with the GACPD governing board. Feedback determined that advocacy services can be provided more efficiently and effectively in an independent agency. CLA will be exclusively responsible for advocating for people with disabilities in North Carolina. There will be no charge for P&A services.

CLA meets all of the requirements of a statewide Protection and Advocacy (P&A) System. P&As have the authority to pursue legal, administrative, and other appropriate remedies or approaches to ensure the protection of, and advocacy for, the rights of individual who are or who may be eligible for treatment, services, or habilitation, or who are being considered for a change in living arrangements, with particular attention to members of ethnic and racial minority groups. P&As provide information on and referral to programs and services addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. P&As have the authority to investigate incidents of abuse and neglect of individuals with disabilities. For more information, see www.cladisabilitylaw.org.

President's Letter

As we go to print with this issue, we're on the verge of an historic step forward towards equitable coverage for mental health. The Equitable Coverage Bill (H973), a mental health parity bill, passed the NC House and is working its way through the NC Senate. This is a good step towards stopping the discriminatory practice of insurance companies failing to provide equal coverage for mental health related illnesses. I am happy to report that our Orange County Representatives Verla Insko, Joe Hackney, and Bill Faison, in addition to Senator Ellie Kinnaird, are supportive of this bill.

For over 15 years, a MH parity bill has been introduced each session. With the exception of 1997, when a MH parity bill managed to pass in the Senate, these bills have never made it out of committees, due to strong, well-funded opposition from insurance and business interests, such as Blue Cross, and NC Citizen's for Business and Industry.

The original version of the Equitable Coverage Bill, sponsored by Rep. Martha Alexander, required insurance companies to cover all mental illnesses, including chemical dependency, the same way they cover physical illnesses. Under pressure from industry lobbyists, substance abuse was removed from equal coverage. In addition, National Federal of Independent Business convinced a majority of House members to support an amendment to exempt businesses with 25 or fewer employees from being covered. Workers should not be denied adequate coverage because of the number of employees in their workplace.

Let's hope that soon, we'll be celebrating the passage of this critical legislation without any additional weakening amendments. The fight for MH equity will continue in upcoming sessions as mental health advocates work to require all businesses to cover their employees and to include substance abuse coverage.

I recently had the honor of representing NAMI-OC at Club Nova's

Employment Program employer appreciation event. I spoke from various perspectives, as the mother of a son who has benefited greatly from Club Nova's Employment Program, as a former employer in our community, and as the President of NAMI-Orange County. Club Nova's program offers a range of employment opportunities in the community.

Getting a job is a special event or benchmark in someone's life. It improves their self-confidence, enhances their sense of identity, and can give them hope and greater goals for their future. Participants in the employment program have said that it has helped them to learn valuable job skills, gain self-esteem and pride in addition to earning wages and making new friends.

When employers invest in employees from Club Nova's Employment Program, by giving them the opportunity a job offers, they give the gift of hope to those who struggle with mental illness. *What a powerful and valuable investment: to make a difference in someone's life and on behalf of their future.*

Here are some ways that you can help support Club Nova's Employment Program:

- Encourage employers to provide jobs or connections for program participants.
- Contribute funds for scholarships to help members go back to school or take classes at local facilities.
- Donate in-house learning resources, such as dictionaries, computer software, computer components or office equipment, for the Transitional Employment room.

For more information, contact Nancy Crute, at 968-6682, or go to www.clubnovashop.org/cnova.aspx Hope to see you soon at our upcoming events,

Lisa

Lisa Hamill
President, NAMI-OC

"The Equitable Coverage Bill (H973), a mental health parity bill, passed the NC House and is working its way through the NC Senate."

"Let's hope that soon, we'll be celebrating the passage of this critical legislation . . ."

*In July and August,
we have potlucks
instead of monthly
meetings. Come
join the fun!*

Calendar of Events

Sunday, July 15, 3:00 to 5:00

NAMI-OC Board Meeting at Carol Woods

Saturday, July 21, 6:30

NAMI-OC Potluck instead of regular monthly meeting, hosted by Gary Gaddy, 5921 Treetop Ridge, Durham, NC 27705. Call 919-403-9520 for more information.

Directions: From West Durham or East Chapel Hill: Take Erwin Road to the stoplight at Mt. Sinai Road at Forest View Elementary School. Turn onto Mt. Sinai Road. Go 1 mile. Turn right onto Treetop Ridge. The Gaddy's house is the first on the left.

Saturday, August 11, 5:00 to 8:00

NAMI-OC/Club Nova Potluck instead of regular monthly meeting at Club Nova, 103 D West Main Street, Carrboro.

Saturday, September 8

NAMI meeting. Church of Reconciliation, 110 Elliot Rd., Chapel Hill. 9:30, Fellowship & refreshments in the Meeting Room or Sharing Time in the Lounge. 10:30, "Developing a Personal Anti-Stigma Campaign." Bring an example of stigma to share.

Sunday, September 9, 3:00 to 5:00

NAMI-OC Board meeting at Carol Woods

Friday, September 21

Peer Support Program. For more information, contact Jay Zaragoza at 732-7719.

Saturday, September 22

Family-to-Family Reunion at the United Church of Christ, Martin Luther King Jr./Historic Airport Road, Chapel Hill, NC. Annual member meeting at 4:30, refreshments and fun from 5:00 to 7:00. Contact Julia Trimmer at 933-1979 or julia.trimmer@gmail.com.



- *Taking Zyprexa, Risperdal, or Seroquel?*
- *Have a diagnosis of schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder?*
- *Experienced weight gain, high cholesterol, or other health problems?*

Persons who answer YES to all of these questions might be eligible for the CAMP study. The CAMP clinical trial will provide all of the following:

- **Clinical care from a psychiatrist and treatment team specializing in schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorders.**
- **An individual behavioral intervention designed to help with weight loss.**
- **Free study medications and free study-related care.**
- **Compensation for time.**

If you have any questions or to discuss if you or someone you know might be eligible for the CAMP study, please contact:

**Marianne Livingston, LCSW in Chapel Hill (919) 966-9587,
or Victoria DeVeaugh-Geiss, MS in Raleigh (919) 733-5227**



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NAMIwalks Hits \$1 Million!

The national NAMI website at www.nami.org reports that over a million dollars have already been donated using the online donation system, and the affiliate NAMIwalks have not yet closed their books. NAMIwalks has received more donations online so far in 2007 than it received for all of 2006.

Thousands of people are participating in NAMIwalks held in over 60 communities nationwide. NAMI's Campaign for the Mind of America raises money for treatment and recovery systems for people with mental illness, not to mention raising awareness and bringing hope to consumers and family members.

Although North Carolina's NAMIwalks was held on May 5, 2007, it's not too late to donate. To donate online, browse to nami.org and click the NAMIwalks icon. You can contribute towards North Carolina's goal by clicking on the map.

Our own NAMI-OC board member Barbara Elder participated in the local NAMIwalk and has this report: "Gove and I did it! with help from so many sponsors. Together with Lisa Hamill, Ian Slade and Diane Whitney, we walked 2.5 miles in a beautiful park in Kernersville and exceeded our goal of \$3000. Lisa Hamill was our captain, and our team's name was the "Courageous Stigma Busters."

Gove and I had a lot of fun connecting with sponsors before the walk and then walking with approximately 130 volunteers from around NC.

Yes, there was a little drizzle, but that didn't dampen our spirits or stop the third NAMI North Carolina NAMIwalks for the Mind of America from being a huge success. We're already planning to walk next year and we hope that you will join us." Thanks, Barbara, for walking and successful fundraising for NAMIwalks.

"NAMIwalks has received more donations online so far in 2007 than it received for all of 2006."



NAMI Family-to-Family Education Program

for family members of close relatives with

Major Depression

Bipolar Disorder (Manic Depression)

Schizophrenia and Schizoaffective Disorder

Panic Disorder and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Borderline Personality Disorder

*Classes this fall
will be held in
Chapel Hill,
Durham and
Hillsborough.*

The Family-to-Family Education Program is a series of 12 weekly classes that helps family members understand and support their ill relatives while maintaining their own well-being. The course is taught by a team of trained volunteers who know what it's like to have a family member with a serious mental illness. There is no cost to participate. Over 150,000 family members in the U.S. and Canada have been benefitted from the insight, support and education that this program provides.

Please call for more information.

Hillsborough Classes Start Sunday, September 9, 2007, 3:00 – 5:30 pm
Ebenezer Baptist Church, 1210 Pleasant Green Road,
Hillsborough
Contact: Bill/Sandy Moyer (919-382-7408)
For confidential inquiries, email f2forangecounty@yahoo.com

Chapel Hill Classes Start Tuesday, September 4, 2007, 6:30 – 9:00 pm
Seymour Center, 2551 Homestead Rd, Chapel Hill, NC
Contact: Gary Gaddy (919-403-9520)
For confidential inquiries, email f2forangecounty@yahoo.com

Durham Classes Start Thursday, Aug. 30, 2007, 7:00 – 9:30 pm
Westminster Presbyterian Church
3639 Old Chapel Hill Road, Durham, NC
Contact: Violette Blumenthal (919-490-5236)
For confidential inquiries, email f2fdurham@yahoo.com

Registration required. Classes limited to 25 persons
Program sponsored by NAMI-NC

Volunteer Spotlight: Barbara Nettles-Carlson

Like all affiliates, NAMI-OC is run by dedicated volunteers. *News & Views* asks Barbara Nettles-Carlson how she does it.

How long have you been a NAMI-OC volunteer?

BN-C: Since 1990. As soon as I started going to meetings, I got recruited for the state NAMI board of board of directors. I was on the board from 1995 to 2001 and served on a number of committees. It gave me a better picture of what NAMI does at the state and national levels. The role of the board member is to represent the membership and prioritize issues and set the agenda for the state in terms of what issues we will focus on. Being on the board also helped me understand how the state office supports the affiliates. The affiliates are NAMI's grass roots and that's where the energy bubbles up.

And after you left the state board?

After the state board, I got on the local board and started editing the newsletter in about 2000. I've been producing the newsletter since then. I served a term as president in 2003, when we transferred our membership database to a new computer program. Also, I was program chair, so I met a lot of people scheduling meetings. Since being president, as newsletter editors, I've attended a lot of events and interviewed people. I've seen a lot stigma associated with mental illness.

What changes have you witnessed in our affiliate over the years?

BN-C: Our membership has grown tremendously. In 1995, our local membership was about 30 people with about 10 people, maybe, at meetings. Now we have over 100 households, so the whole operation has grown. Family-to-Family has grown too and now we give two classes a year.

What has being NAMI volunteer meant for your life?

BN-C: I feel like I can make a contribution even though I may not always be able to help my son, which is frustrating sometimes. Volunteering for NAMI is a way to channel my energy in a positive way -- to solve problems instead of agonizing over problems. Being a NAMI volunteer means you "come out of the closet" and show that you have a loved one with mental illness -- it can be a bit risky. But it's been worth it to me. The relationships I have formed, and seeing the membership grow, has been very satisfying. It's amazing what we can do with only volunteers! I think it's pretty impressive.

Thank you, Barbara, for everything you do for NAMI-OC!

Editor's note: Barbara Nettles-Carlson is transitioning the newsletter editorship to Julia Trimmer. The new layout is courtesy of NAMI's Identity Guide for Affiliates.

"Volunteering for NAMI is a way to channel my energy in a positive way -- to solve problems instead of agonizing over problems."

Volunteers Needed

The following opportunities are available to contribute a little time and energy:

- Bring refreshments to NAMI-OC monthly meetings.
- Join a team for two hours to label and organize the newsletters for mailing.
- Monitor Orange County Board of Commissioner meetings and

other meetings that address mental health related housing, funding, or other issues (not time-intensive, just a few meetings during a year).

- Write an article for NAMI-OC News & Views newsletter.

Contact Lisa Hamill at 933-8941 or lisahamill@earthlink.net if you can help.



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 (\$5.00) 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 \$5.00 open door)

___ Donation (tax deductible)

___ Please remove my name from your mailing list

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



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**Open Your Mind:
Mental Illnesses are
Brain Disorders**