

The Voice

The Newsletter of NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 12, Issue 4 Fall 2006

A Preventable Tragedy: Suicide in America

The suffering of the suicidal is private and inexpressible, leaving family members, friends, and colleagues to deal with an almost unfathomable kind of loss, as well as guilt. Suicide carries in its aftermath a level of confusion and devastation that is, for the most part, beyond description. ~ Kay Redfield Jamison

As the nation has just acknowledged National Suicide Prevention Week, September 10th through the 16th, the time seems right to utilize this edition of *The Voice* to raise awareness of the prevalence of suicide, the prevention efforts in place, and the resources available. NAMI members know that suicide is too often the unspoken fear that hovers over many individuals and families. For some suicide has become tragically interwoven into the family's story. As anyone who has been close to someone who has committed suicide knows there is no other pain quite like it.

Suicide is a public and private tragedy and a potentially preventable public health problem. According to studies conducted through the National Institute on Mental Health in 2000, suicide was the 11th leading cause of death in the U.S. Specifically, 10 out of every 100,000 persons died by suicide.

Suicide deaths outnumber homicide deaths by five to three. It has been estimated that there may be from 8 to 25 attempted suicides per every suicide death. Data from the Centers for Disease Control indicates that suicide is one of the leading causes of death for young people age 15-24.

17.5% of all suicide deaths according to the National Center for Health Statistics. Especially at risk are elderly white males, as men accounted for 85% of suicides among persons aged 65 years and older. These alarming numbers emphasize the need for placing a priority on carefully designed prevention efforts.

Research conducted through the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, has shown that more than 90% of people who kill themselves have depression or another diagnosable mental illness or substance abuse disorder, often in combination. Also, research indicates that alterations in neurotransmitters such as serotonin are associated with the risk for suicide. Diminished levels of this brain chemical have been found in individuals with depression, impulsive disorders, a history of violent suicide attempts, and in examinations after death.

Risk factors, although perhaps disputed in number or influence, are commonly known to exist. Less often however do people acknowledge the positive effects of protective factors in reducing the likelihood of suicide. Some protective factors include: effective and easily accessible clinical care, strong connections to friends, family and community supports, restricted access to highly lethal means of suicide, and cultural or religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self preservation.

Suicide Prevention: General Guidelines for Individual Response

Adapted from the Feeling Blue Suicide Prevention Council of Southeast Pennsylvania

What you should do if you suspect someone may be contemplating suicide:

continued on page 7

In This Issue

| | |
|---|---------|
| Children's Corner |2 |
| News Around the Region |4 |
| <i>Updates on Initiatives, Policy & Legislation Impacting the Mental Health Community</i> | |
| NAMI Support |8 |
| Upcoming Events |9 |
| Tribute to Betty Holder |11 |

In older adults, the risk factors for suicide increase substantially. Individuals 65 years of age and older comprised 12.3% of the U.S. population yet accounted for



Striking a Balance: Mental Health Services and Choosing a College

Mental illness in kids affects the whole family. Parents and their children have to balance medical treatments, therapy and the prevalence of stigma with the not-so-simple act of merely growing up and maintaining a “normal kind of guy or girl” persona. When you think of what happens when a teen goes off to college facing a very unique set of new stressors; leaving home, possibility of financial worries, meeting new friends and keeping up with the study demands all while experiencing sleep schedule changes, the hard fought balance can become askew. Most likely there’s a greater exposure to drugs and alcohol, and greater freedom to use them. When all of these stressors come together and suddenly at that, the combination is not so good.

The impact can be especially great on college students who arrive on campus with a prior diagnosis of depression or other mental illness.

As countless college students hailing from our region have recently arrived on campuses, and thousands of high school juniors and seniors are contemplating or actively engaged in college searches, this edition of the *Children's Corner* focuses on mental health services and choosing a college.

Must Do's Before Applying

- Research psychological and psychiatric services on campus.
- Most campus websites offer an overview of services.
- Be proactive and call or visit to make sure they offer adequate resources tailored to your situation.
- Ask whether the services are free to students or if they are available for a fee.
- Find out how many psychologists are on staff and make sure the school employs at least one licensed psychiatrist. In the case of larger universities, multiple psychiatrists should be on staff.
- Make sure the school keeps your records confidential from other entities, both within the college and outside of it.

Research Hospitals and Private Practices in the Community

- Nearly all school health or counseling centers only offer short term care, then the student must find a practice in the community.

- Find practices compatible with your insurance.
- If you don't have a car, look up information on public transportation in order to get to the clinic or practice.
- Ask if they offer discounted rates or a sliding scale for students.

Research Disability Resources

- Discover the breadth of resources the college offers for psychiatric disabilities, as they vary greatly from campus to campus.
- Inquire as to what specific accommodations are provided, i.e.: testing accommodations, priority registration, reduced course load, class substitution etc.
- Find out the confidentiality policies. Ask whether professors and instructors are informed of the student's disability or just the accommodations to be made for him or her.
- Inquire as to how and when parents will be notified of a crisis situation or need for more extensive treatment or supports.

Helpful Hints

Campus Counseling Centers

- Counseling centers on campus typically offer excellent services when dealing with typical “college” problems, such as: relationship conflicts, adjusting to college and academic problems. They also deal with anxious and depressed moods, substance abuse, and trauma recovery. Dealing with these problems is very important, as they produce added stress that may trigger the onset of an episode, or compound a current one.
- However, there are certain limitations to most counseling centers:
 - They usually only offer short term care; the student must then find another place for therapy, usually a private practice. The counseling services should typically assist in this.
 - Most campus counseling centers on campus are not equipped to effectively handle more serious

continued on next page

mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, anxiety disorders etc.

Psychiatric Care on Campus

- There is typically a long wait to see a psychiatrist on campus:
 - Make an appointment as soon as you can, possibly even in the summer, prior to arriving at school. This will allow you to see a doctor earlier and establish a set schedule.
- Nearly all psychiatrists on campuses take students upon referral only.
- Psychiatrists may also have a limit on the number of times a patient can be seen due to insurance restrictions.
- If you see a private doctor and your school's medical center has a pharmacy, check to see if they will fill prescriptions from outside practices.
- Know what to do in case of an emergency.
 - Ask about emergency procedures during business hours at the psychological services center as well as with a psychiatrist.
 - A few schools offer a 24-hour hotline to call; however, most don't, so be sure to have the number of a local hospital in case of an emergency during evening or weekend hours.
 - Pre-plan for authorization of parental notification

Campus Size

- Smaller campuses can feel less overwhelming than a large university. However, there tend to be fewer psychological services on smaller campuses.
- Large campuses generally offer a wider array of services. Nonetheless, even though more services are available, the wait is still usually long due to the size of the campus.
- If attending a large campus, try to join an organization, find a social group, and make friends, especially in the dorms. This will make the campus seem smaller and less overwhelming.

NAMI on Campus Affiliates

NAMI on Campus affiliates are student-run, student-led organizations that provide mental health support, education, and advocacy in a university or college setting. The mission is to improve the lives of students who are directly or indirectly affected by mental illness, increase the awareness and mental health services on campus, and to eliminate the stigma students with mental illness face.

Colleges and universities that currently have NAMI student affiliates on campus include:

- Bloomsburg University, PA
- Bowling Green State University, OH
- Centenary College, NJ
- Central College, IA
- Central Methodist University, MO
- Central Washington
- East Carolina University, NC
- Indiana University
- Louisiana State University
- Missouri Southern State University
- Martin Methodist College of Pulaski, TN
- Ohio State University
- Purdue University, IN
- University of Arizona
- University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign
- University of Iowa
- University of Northern Iowa
- University of Vermont
- Utah Valley State College
- Washburn University, KS
- Wayne College, OH
- West Virginia University
- Western Michigan University



Scholarship Information and Tips

In today's world there are numerous scholarships available to students. By utilizing online search engines, students can provide personal information and interests, and will then be provided with a list of scholarships for which they may be eligible. Many search engines provide the option of placing 'mental illness' or 'disability' in your profile, and they will provide scholarships specifically tailored to those with mental illness.

continued on page 6



Updates on Initiatives, Policy, and Legislation Impacting the Mental Health Community

Sharon A. Miller, Director of Education and Outreach, NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania

NAMI National Web Site Expands “Members-Only” Benefits

Dues paying members can access more support, information and advocacy opportunities online at www.nami.org. Once you’ve logged onto the homepage just follow these steps:

- Sign in using the Sign-In box in the upper right-hand corner. For your first time signing in, use your NAMI member # for *User name* and your last name for *Password*. (Don’t know your member number? Don’t worry! Simply click the “Help” link in the sign in box. On the left-hand side of the help page, click on “Member ID Lookup”).
- You will then be prompted to change your user name and password to something of your choice.

Benefits of Signing In:

myNAMI: A powerful, personalized tool for accessing the latest information on issues, programs, support, events and news related to mental illness directly from the customized page your control.

Contact Your Representatives: Your voice makes a difference! NAMI has made it easier to let your elected representatives hear your voice on issues that matter most.

Discussion Groups: Here’s your opportunity to read what others are talking about and to share your opinions and ask questions.

Member Community: Sharing information and support is the heart of NAMI membership, and this is the place to access the member’s only content.

Discounts in the NAMI store: Using the NAMI Store while signed in automatically gives you member-only discounts.

Advocate Online: Read the current issue as well as the opportunity to browse back to previous issues.

Medicare Update: Answers are Just a Click Away

People are always looking for more information about Medicare, the federal health insurance program for older adults and people with disabilities. Now, NAMI members will no longer have to search further than the NAMI national website at www.medicareinteractive.org/nami.

The one-stop website is designed to provide seniors and individuals with disabilities, caregivers and professionals user-friendly consumer information about health care benefits, rights and options for people with Medicare. Members need only to log on to the NAMI homepage, enter your user name (membership ID#) and password (last name) then click on the Medicare Interactive link.

Medicare Interactive boasts a variety of options

MI Counselor: a virtual encyclopedia of Medicare, with a variety of search options. The web tool contains information on both federal and state-specific resources.

MI Community: click on this and you can sign up for a variety of Medicare e-mail updates, from policy alerts to Medicare Watch.

MI Help: find Medicare Interactive confusing? Click on this link and learn how to use the information-packed website, so you can start informing yourself.

Medicare Interactive provides answers to many questions and is updated regularly as new information becomes available. Whether you need to know if you’re eligible for extra help to pay for the new Medicare Part D drug benefit or if you have the right to buy supplemental insurance in your state, Medicare Interactive can help.

Free workshops on Mental Health Advance Directives continue to be held throughout our region

This education series is provided by Disabilities Law Project, NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania and within Allegheny County locations additional partnership of the MHA of Allegheny County through grant support of the Staunton Farm Foundation.

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania in partnership with the Disabilities Law Project, through grant support from the Staunton Farm Foundation continues to provide free Mental Health Advance Directives Workshops in each of the nine outlying counties beginning this past June in Greene County and continuing through November.

continued on next page

Upcoming Workshops:

Washington County

October 17 and 18, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Washington Hospital Wellness Center

Armstrong County

October 25th and 26th, 10:00 – 2:00 pm
St Paul Episcopal Church, Kittanning

These two-day trainings include a discussion on the benefits of completing your personal Mental Health Advance Directives document and a detailed explanation of the actual documents. Audience questions and concerns are encouraged and will be addressed throughout the presentation. Consumer participants are encouraged to invite their agents to attend if they plan on designating an agent within their advance directive document. (An agent is a person you designate in advance, in writing, to make decisions upon your direction, only when you are deemed incapacitated and legally unable to voice your choices/wishes on your own).

It is important to note that a person CAN complete a Mental Health Advance Directives document without naming an agent, however it is highly recommended to do so. Participants will have the opportunity to actually complete their personal Mental Health Advance Directive document during workshop day two or by appointment on a future date.

Call the NAMI office to determine when these workshops will be offered in each of the counties throughout our region. Workshop schedules are also posted on our website. Visit www.namiswa.org and click onto the MH Advance Directives Training link on our homepage. Pre-Registration is required for these free workshops and a continental breakfast and lunch will be provided. People interested in attending are advised to register early as class size is limited.

Voter Registration Deadline Approaches-

October 10, 2006

Ensure your Voice is heard: Exercise your Right to Vote.

Time is running out to register to vote in the November 7, 2006 election. For detailed information on voter registration, county contacts and other information related to voting in Pennsylvania visit the website of the PA Department of State at: www.votespa.com or call the PA Voter Information toll-free telephone line: 1-877-868-3772.

NAMI's *In Our Own Voice* Initiative Underway in Allegheny County

In Our Own Voice (IOOV) is an interactive mental illness recovery education presentation providing real life examples of recovery from people who have been there. Each personal story of recovery is translated into the truths and insights that will connect with audiences of all facets of the community.

This past July, thirteen individuals completed the NAMI *In Our Own Voice* presenter training, made possible through the support of Community Care Behavioral Health Organization in partnership with Allegheny County Coalition for Recovery and NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania.



"In Our Own Voice" presenters trained this past July.

Much appreciation and thanks is due each member of the Allegheny County presenter team for their efforts to educate the community and counter the misconceptions concerning mental illness and recovery. The presenter team is comprised of the following individuals: JR Brenner, Diann Ferrick, Roy Floskey, Catherine Hewitt, Sandra Johnson, Sandra Kogut, Saya Krebs, Dwight Lenzner, Donna McCurdy, Joe Morris, Laura Thomas, Robin Thompson and Chris Weis.

As NAMI members know, mental illnesses affect "everyday people": people we work with, people we're friends with and people we love. Through the *In Our Own Voice* presentations a human face is put on mental illness and this changes the way people living with these illnesses are perceived-one community at a time.

For more information on the *In Our Own Voice* initiative in Allegheny County, inquiries related to expanding the initiative in the outlying counties of our region, or to schedule a presentation, please contact the NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania office. ☎



A few of the many search engines available are:

- **FastWeb** - www.fastweb.com
- **GoCollege**- www.gocollege.com
- **FastAid**- www.fastaid.com

However, the majority of scholarships related to mental illness can be found at the state and local levels. Be sure to research local scholarship opportunities through your high school, library, and community. Find out what scholarships are available at the college of your choice. Search in many areas including; the financial aid office, your specific college within the university (if you're attending a large university), and by major. Many colleges offer scholarships for those with disabilities. Contact your college and ask if mental illness is included before applying for the scholarship. Again, be sure to conduct your own search online, as the results will be more tailored to your specific needs and interests.

Through an active NAMI membership, research into the availability and wealth of scholarships awarded to young adults living with a mental illness is only a mouse click away. Merely go to www.nami.org and by entering in your user name (member ID #) and password (last name) in the upper right hand box you will access the "members only" section of the website. Click on to the Support tab and within the drop-down box, the NAMI on Campus link. If you are unsure of your membership number, contact the NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania office at 412-366-3788 or your local affiliate. ☺

NAMI National Teen Advisory Group's Recommendation's for "Cool" Links for Teens About Mental Illness

www.lampdirect.org.uk/forum

Forum with discussions about famous people who have mental illness.

www.namisc.org/newsletters

This is about the experience of celebrities with mental illness and fighting stigma.

www.mentalhealthadvocacy.com/html/famous.html

List of famous people and their illness and many links to more famous people with mental illness.

<http://teenagerstoday.com/resources/articles/teenschizophrenia.htm>

Good website about teenage schizophrenia, what it is, hereditary, and their symptoms compared to adult schizophrenia and a lot of other useful information.

www.mentalhelp.net

Good resource, it describes many mental illnesses and has other interesting articles and links.

www.bbc.co.uk/health/mental/index.shtml

Topics like emotional health, understanding drugs, and coping skills.

<http://education.indiana.edu/cas/adol/mental.html>

Lots of links to sites concerning adolescent mental health.

www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/suicideprevention/fivews.asp

Links to sites of suicide, there is a whole section on youth

Designate your United Way payroll deduction to NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania!

Through the United Way Contributor Choice Program, you can direct your gift to NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania! Your gift supports our advocacy activities which now more than ever are essential to the continuation of quality behavioral health services.

To donate:

- request a Contributor Choice Pledge Form from your employer,
- fill out the form and assign the NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania's agency code, (885586) in the section labeled "designate to a Specific Agency",
- ask if your employer will match your charitable contribution.

Thank you for considering NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania as a recipient of your United Way Pledge Dollars.

A copy of the official registration and financial information of NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania may be obtained from the PA Dept. of State by calling 800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

A Preventable Tragedy: Suicide in America continued from page one

- TAKE YOUR CONCERNS SERIOUSLY as 75% of all people who commit suicide gave prior warning of their intentions to others.
- All suicide threats (both verbal and physical) and attempts ought to be taken seriously, even among teenagers for whom such threats are more common.
- Listening is a healing art as truly listening to someone suicidal can save a life.
- Trust your instincts-do not keep your concerns to yourself in an ill-advised attempt to keep a confidence.
- Don't be afraid that asking someone about suicide will prompt the idea of suicide, talking about suicide does not increase the risk, but rather decreases it.
- Individuals attempting suicide are not trying to end their lives...they're trying to end their pain.
- Actively encourage the person to seek professional help; if the person is not agreeable, do so on their behalf.

Pennsylvania Youth Suicide Prevention Efforts

The history of Pennsylvania's public health approach to suicide prevention has primarily focused on the development of a comprehensive youth suicide prevention plan. Youth suicide statistics reinforce the need for such efforts. Data from the Centers for Disease Control indicates that suicide is one of the leading causes of death for young people age 15-24. Suicide rates for those 15-19 have tripled since 1960. The American Association of Suicidology found that 4-8% of adolescents report an attempted suicide within the prior 12 months. Nationally, approximately 500,000 teens attempt suicide each year (CDC).

Pennsylvania has focused efforts toward the prevention of youth suicide beginning in the 1980's through programs such as the Student Assistance Program (SAP), Services for Teens at Risk (STAR-Center), Yellow Ribbon Program and a variety of other approaches in local areas.

1985- The Departments of Education, Health, and Public Welfare establish the Commonwealth Student Assistance Program (SAP); SAP, which is implemented in all 501 school districts, is designed to assist school personnel in identifying issues including alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and mental health issues, which pose a barrier to student success:

- Every secondary school building is required to have a student assistance program. Approved trainers provide training for all school core teams and ten Regional SAP Coordinators provide technical

assistance to the state's nine regions. The core teams in each secondary building, comprised of teachers, principals, school counselors, school nurses, psychologists, social workers, and liaisons from community mental health and drug and alcohol agencies, assist in identifying students at risk for suicide or other behavioral health problems.

1986- Services for Teens at Risk (STAR-Center) Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, a comprehensive research, treatment, and training center begins providing services:

- The STAR-Center is a specialty program addressing the increasing problems related to adolescent suicide and depression, and youth violence. The services were expanded in 1989 to include consultation and training for schools in the area of crisis responding and school safety. The center publishes STAR-Center Link; a newsletter featuring best practices on mental health treatment and violence prevention and its "Survivors of Suicide" program is nationally recognized.

1998- Yellow Ribbon Programs expand in several counties: Decreases the stigma associated with suicidal thoughts/fears by normalizing asking for help. A tangible step that teachers, parents, students and other concerned individuals can take to help prevent suicide and entails:

- Business card size "yellow ribbon cards" are distributed to students and community members and carry the message of hope: there are people who care and will help. The card includes crisis intervention phone numbers.
- Young people contemplating suicide who may be reluctant or don't know how to ask for help are encouraged to hand a "yellow ribbon card" to a trusted adult.
- Adults who participate in the program are given basic training, an explanation of how the program works and a yellow ribbon to wear or display to signify that they are committed to listening and getting help for people in need.
- Participating adults are NOT asked to be experts in any way, but are simply given training so they know where to go for help.

2001- Interagency Committee of the Student Assistance Program (SAP) convenes a work group to formalize a Youth Suicide Prevention Plan:

- In the summer of 2001, various professionals within Pennsylvania inquired as to why Pennsylvania did

continued on page 10



Allegheny County

NAMI-CAN Support Group (Child & Adolescent Network)

Contact: NAMI Southwestern
Pennsylvania (412) 366-3788 or
Linda Ernhardt (412) 931-9478

NAMI Pittsburgh South

Mt. Lebanon
3rd Wed. each month
Contact: Donna Maher
(412) 653-2476

NAMI Pittsburgh North

Ross Township
1st Wed. each month
Contact: (Day) Dick and Sarah
Focke (412) 367-3062 or
(Eve) Pete and Candy Venezia
(412) 361-8916

NAMI Pittsburgh East-FAMILIAS

Churchill
4th Wed. each month
Contact: Anne Handler
(412) 421-3656

NAMI Spouse Support Group

Churchill
Contact: Mim Schwartz
(412) 731-4855

NAMI Sewickley Family Connections

Sewickley
Contact: Kathy Monahan
(412) 749-7418

NAMI McKeesport Area

McKeesport
2nd Thurs. each month
Contact: Cindy McHolme
(412) 754-0998

NAMI Western PA Borderline/Personality Disorders Family Support Group

North Hills
Contact: Rose Schmitt
(412) 487-2036

Minority Families of the Mentally Ill

Oakland
2nd Sat. each month
Contact: Wilma Sirmons
(412) 320-0601

NAMI W.P.I.C. Family Support Group

Oakland
Contact: Merle Morgenstern
(412) 246-5851

Armstrong County

NAMI PA, Armstrong County

Kittanning
Contact: Sharon Miller
1-888-264-7972 or
Family Counseling Center
(724) 545-6100

Beaver County

NAMI PA, Beaver County

Rochester
3rd Thurs. each month
Contact: Connie Roman
(724) 843-1593

NAMI-CAN Beaver County

Beaver
3rd Tues. each month
Contact:
Suzanne Vogel-Scibilia, M.D.
(724) 775-9152

NAMI-C.A.R.E. (Consumers Advocating Recovery through Empowerment)

Beaver
2nd Tues. each month
Contact:
Suzanne Vogel-Scibilia, M.D.
(724) 775-9152

Butler County

NAMI PA Butler County

Butler
3rd Wed. each month
Contact: Butler NAMI Office
(724) 431-0069 or
Sandy Goetze (724) 452-4279

Fayette County

NAMI PA Fayette County

Uniontown
4th Tues. each month
Contact: Carmella Hardy
(724) 277-8173

NAMI-C.A.R.E. Fayette County

Uniontown
2nd & 4th Tues.
Contact: Carol Warman
(724) 439-1352

Greene County

NAMI PA, Greene County

Contact: Sharon Miller
1-888-264-7972

Indiana County

NAMI/NAMI-CAN PA, Indiana County

1st Tuesday each month
Contact: Stanley Lewis
(724) 349-3939

Lawrence County

NAMI/NAMI-CAN Lawrence County

New Castle
Contact: Sandi Hause
(724) 657-0226

Washington County

NAMI PA, Washington County

4th Thurs. each month
Contact: Tom Shade
(724) 228-9847

NAMI-CAN South Hills

Contact: Debbie Solow
(724) 941-6323

Westmoreland County

NAMI PA, Alle-Kiski

New Kensington
2nd Wed. each month
Contact: Mary K. Slater
(724) 335-4593

NAMI PA, Mon Valley

Monessen
Contact: Harriett Hetrick
(724) 872-2186

NAMI-CAN (Child & Adolescent Network) Support Group Meeting

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania invites you to a monthly support group meeting of family members who are dealing with the same issues and problems. If your child or teen has been diagnosed with ADHD, Depression, Anxiety, Bipolar Disorder, or is experiencing emotional problems, you will benefit from meeting with other family members who are experiencing the same issues.

Location:

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania office
105 Braunlich Drive, McKnight Plaza, Suite 230

Contact:

Linda Ernhardt 412-931-9478 for more information for the date and time of the next meeting.



October 26-29, 2006

**NAMI Pennsylvania Annual Conference 2006
Health, Home & Community: Access to Quality Life
Radisson Penn Harris Hotel, Harrisburg PA**

Keynote speakers: Frederick J. Frese, PhD. and Penelope Frese, PhD. Fred and Penny, nationally recognized NAMI advocates, are featured presenters! "Living with Mental Illness" will be the focus of their keynote address. For a brochure and to register please call 1-800-223-0500 or visit <http://namipa.nami.org>.

Friday, November 17, 2006

**23rd Annual Schizophrenia Conference
Sheraton Station Square, Pittsburgh, PA**

The conference is designed to disseminate the latest research findings to a wide audience: clinicians, researchers, patients and their relatives, and others who wish to keep abreast of etiologic and treatment research in schizophrenia. Contact Maria Pena-Jordan at penajordanmi@upmc.edu for more information.

**Emerging Leadership Institute:
Transforming the world, one lead at a time**

The emerging Leadership Institute is a series of workshops intended to give individuals recovering from mental illness and addiction the skills they will need to make the leap from being a leader in their own recovery, to being a leader in the recovery community and supporter of peers. A commitment to 7 weekly sessions is required. Each training is limited to 20 people and you MUST reserve your space in advance.

Topics include:

- Communication skills
- Speaking Essentials
- Goal Planning
- Problem Solving
- Team Strategies

Trainings will be held at the Allegheny County Mental Health Association. The next training will be held in October. Contact the Mike Reber at the Mental Health Association at (412) 391-3820 or visit the website at www.mhaac.net/westrep to register.

Volunteer your time as a Family-to-Family Teacher... and share with others the same enlightenment that you received as a student of the program!

Many of you have completed the Family-to-Family Education Program and can attest to the benefit of this course. You too had once felt alone and isolated with no knowledge or power to help your loved ones or yourself overcome the challenges of living with mental illness. Won't you consider giving back and helping others like yourself gain acceptance and understanding of their loved one's illness?

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania is currently providing two 12-week sessions of the Family-to-Family Education Program annually. Additional trained teachers are needed in order to sustain these nationally acclaimed classes.

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania needs Volunteers like you. This is great work and a great way to help others know they "are not alone."



Please contact NAMI Southwestern to inquire about the training, (412) 366-3788.

A Preventable Tragedy: Suicide in America continued from page seven

not have a “formal” youth suicide prevention plan as did many other states. As a result, the Interagency Committee of SAP took the lead in convening a workgroup of about 50 stakeholders from across the Commonwealth to formalize a plan that includes not only what already exists in Pennsylvania, but also a strategy to address the possible gaps.

2002 and ongoing- Pennsylvania completes its first Youth Suicide Prevention Draft Plan. In 2004 a five-year action plan was developed to ensure for implementation of the recommendations of the plan. Implementation review is being carried out by a small monitoring group (consisting primarily of state government representatives), and an advisory work group comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders, including NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania.

The goals and objectives of the Prevention Plan ought to provide a blueprint for action. The 11 goals focus on promoting community awareness that youth suicide is a public health problem that is preventable. Input into the plan also resulted in identifying strategies to reduce the stigma for youth associated with being a consumer of mental health and substance abuse services. Current activities include the implementation of training for recognition of at-risk behavior and the delivery of effective treatment.

2004- Potter and Greene Counties implement county-wide teen suicide prevention projects, comprised of counseling and peer intervention programs; Columbia TeenScreen® program is active in all Potter and Greene County schools and a suicide prevention coordinator is hired in both counties.

It has been said that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Suicide occurs when the pain is more extensive than a person’s coping skills and pain tolerance.

We urge NAMI members to use our collective advocacy efforts to urge policy makers and funders to prioritize expanded suicide prevention efforts. As noted prior, suicide deaths outnumber homicide deaths by five to three.

Yes, strides are being made in youth suicide prevention efforts but we must do more. We must ensure that every local school district offers a full complement of services for children, better implements strategies to identify at risk youth and have incorporated the recommendations of the state’s Youth Suicide Prevention Plan. We must advocate for expanded services for seniors, especially at risk older

males with a history of depression, and routine depression screenings for all seniors at every point of contact with medical treatment. We must urge for increases in the availability of protective factors accessible to all individuals. Research indicates that when protective factors are easily accessible, existing risk factors may pose less of a threat. Policy makers and funders must place a priority in expanding ready access to effective mental health treatment and supports. Increasing the availability of integrated physical and behavioral health care into one treatment location and the expansion of mobile treatment options is a step in the right direction.

Through our efforts to increase community awareness of mental illness and the reality of recovery we can lessen the stigma associated with diseases of the brain. In doing so we work to eliminate barriers that may prohibit people in crisis from asking for help. Contact the NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania office today and find out how you can assist us in our efforts. ☺

Resources and Where to Turn

In a crisis, contact:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
24-hour toll-free crisis hotline, federally funded, that directs callers to a near-by crisis center. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

National Suicide Hotline

Kristin Brooks Hope Center: 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2423)
Non-profit organization dedicated to suicide prevention, intervention and healing. www.hopeline.com

The Covenant House Ninline Hotline: 1-800-999-9999

24-hour toll-free crisis hotline offering confidential and immediate crisis intervention and referrals to local community resources. www.covenanthouse.org/programs_nl.html

The Trevor Helpline: 1-800-850-8078

National 24-hour, toll-free suicide prevention hotline aimed at gay and questioning youth. www.thetrevorproject.org

Ulifeline www.ulifeline.org

Site created by the Jed Foundation, providing mental health information and support to college students. Provides links to colleges’ mental health crisis centers and offers useful information about mental health issues and suicide warning signs.

Additional information concerning suicide can be found at www.namispwpa.org.

NAMI Family Mourns the Passing of a Founding Member and Establishes Memorial Scholarship Fund in her Honor

It is with great sadness that we utilize this issue of *The Voice* to share with members and non-members alike the announcement of the passing of Betty Holder. Betty died on June 18, 2006 in California where she had moved this past March to be closer to her daughter Pam, her son-in-law, Dennis and her two grandchildren.

Betty epitomized the spirit of volunteerism. She possessed the tenacity of an effective advocate, the wisdom of an educator who is constantly learning, and the requisite compassion to truly "care and share".

Step back in time to the mid 1970s, there were no support groups for families of loved ones living with mental illnesses and the notion of recovery was a vague and distant concept. The prevailing belief at the time: people with mental illnesses were destined to exist in the peripherals of life and families were most likely to be blamed or at the very least their actions or inactions furthered the course of their loved one's illness. Within our state hospitals the patient population was measured in the thousands, with little hope held for the majority of these individuals to return to a meaningful life in the community.

Betty Holder could not be silent when her son Alan was diagnosed with Schizophrenia in the Seventies. She would not be dismissed by psychiatrists who may have prescribed to the family pathology model. She could not discard hopes and dreams for her son. And she knew that she and her family "were not alone" in their fears, frustrations and unanswered questions.

In her search to connect with other families whose experiences were similar to her own, fate brought her to fellow family movement pioneers Anne Handler, Eleanor Slater and Marge Kerns to create a "SWAT" Team (Sisters Wanting Action Today) to visit state hospitals and mental health residential programs.

Those early efforts to speak on behalf of their loved ones diagnosed with serious mental illnesses were among the first steps towards advocacy and public education needed to ensure that people living with mental illnesses can now speak on their own behalf.

Betty Holder's contributions to NAMI's efforts are numerous. Some highlights include teaching the NAMI Family-to-Family Education Series from the program's inception through 2001, and at her own expense traveling throughout the state teaching family members the needed coping skills necessary to support their loved ones.

In addition, to the NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania Board of Directors, Betty served on numerous local, regional and state committees including the state mental health planning council. She was an original member of the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic/NAMI Collaborative and through that involvement she educated countless undergraduate and graduate students along with mental health professionals on the need for and benefits of incorporating the family's input into individual mental health treatment planning. Many people may feel as if they know Betty, even without meeting her, as she was an

on-camera participant in the educational video, *Mental Illness: The Family's Story*, a project of the WPIC/NAMI Collaborative.

Betty knew that family support in a "caring and sharing atmosphere" was critical to a family's ability to cope with the uncertainties of a diagnosis of mental illness. She was a founding member of the NAMI North Support Group and served as the affiliate

president through 2001.

Betty always believed that when mental illness strikes, the family's first response ought to be one of learning all that they can about the illness, the treatment options and supports available, and the reality of recovery.

In honor of Betty Holder's life of service and her passion for education, NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania has established the Betty Holder Memorial Scholarship Fund. This fund will allow a greater number of family members to become educated about these illnesses and thus better able to partner with their loved one on a journey towards recovery.

Betty is truly missed yet it is our hope that her passion for support, education and advocacy will live on through the actions of our ever-expanding NAMI family. ☺



Members of "SWAT" from left to right, seated Anne Handler and Betty Holder. Standing, Marge Kerns and Eleanor Slater.

NAMI Southwestern PA : Join Today — Let Your Voice be Heard!

Annual dues include access to our regional lending library, resource and referral information, newsletters, conference information, and membership in NAMI Pennsylvania and national NAMI.

- Individual/Family/Friend \$35.00
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Number of family members in membership _____

- I would like my copy of the Voice electronically. (provide email) _____
- I am interested in receiving Call to Action alerts via email and participating in legislation and policy advocacy.
(provide email) _____

Please make check payable and mail to: NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania
105 Braunlich Drive, McKnight Plaza, Suite 200
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

Official registration and financial information of NAMI Southwestern PA may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling toll-free within PA: 1-800-732-0999.
Registration does not imply endorsement.

The Voice

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