



NAMI Frederick County

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Find Help. Find Hope.

April 2014

Dear NAMI Frederick Friends,

Greetings! It is spring , *I think* and winter has gone to rest, *I think*. But no matter the season, our affiliate continues with its programs - pleased with the **past** and hopeful for the **future**.

The Past--March was a busy month, with a couple of special events offered in addition to our family education classes, support groups, and hospital visits. The Unitarian Universalist Community of Frederick (UUCF) sponsored a Mental Health Resources Evening that brought us together with a number of Frederick County agencies striving to offer better mental health services. Also, an informative lecture "Understanding Bipolar Disorder and Severe Irritability in Children & Youth" by Dr. Kenneth Tobin (NIMH) was co-sponsored by Frederick County Schools.

The Future-- On the evening of **April 15**, we offer a lecture entitled "**Working for Recovery**" that will focus on the role of work in mental health recovery and supported employment. On Saturday afternoon, **May 31**, our primary annual fund raising and advocacy activity, **NAMIWalks** will be taking place at Baltimore's Inner Harbor. We hope you'll join us for both events. More information follows in this newsletter.

We continue working for better mental health through a broad range of programs:

- Hospital Visits to FMH's Behavioral Health Unit.

- Advocacy on behalf of those with a mental illness.

- Lectures by invited experts in the field of mental health.

- Support Groups for the family & friends of a loved one with a mental illness.

- Family-to-Family educational classes for family & friends of individuals with mental illness.

- Informative Brochures delivered to individuals, organizations, and businesses.

How does our affiliate offer these programs in Frederick? **Volunteers!** We invite you to join us, to volunteer with us. Do you have an interest in distributing brochures, assisting with helpline inquiries, helping with the publication of this newsletter, community outreach, or serving on our NAMI Board. We have a place for you at NAMI Frederick!

To learn more, please contact us: website www.namifcmd.org, email gerry.blessing@namifcmd.org, or call 240-379-6186.

Thank you for reading this newsletter, for volunteering, and for caring.

Sincerely,

Gerry Blessing

Gerry Blessing

NAMI Frederick President



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

"Service to a just cause rewards the worker with more real happiness and satisfaction than any other venture of life."

Activist, Carrie Chapman Catt

A Taste of Heaven

By Susan T. Holt
NAMI Frederick Member

The Mental Health Resources Evening took place at my church, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Frederick, on March 13, 2014, thanks to the agreement of the minister, Rev. Dr. Carl Gregg. When Mary Bowman-Kruhm, the Social Action Committee, and I started planning the evening, I had little hope. How would we fill my church with mental health resources if most of the representatives of invited organizations did not respond to my emails? Little did I know that Mary is a whiz-banger planner. She followed up my emails with her emails, and by the time the date came around, a dozen mental health organizations were represented at this event, which was attended by a total of 63 people.

The evening was rich and meaningful. Rev. Carl introduced President Gerry Blessing of NAMI Frederick. He provided information about what NAMI is and what it can do for people at the local level. Next, I expressed my appreciation for the Recovery International program, which had benefited me personally for the last 20 years with its cognitive behavioral training. I gave an example of how a Recovery International meeting works. Then, clips of the film "People Say I'm Crazy" were shown. John Cadigan, a man with schizophrenia, had filmed it with his sister Katie Cadigan, and it explored his life with the illness.

Finally, Rev. Carl introduced each mental health resources group that was represented, and a spokesperson of each described their basic premise and services. As a result, all the attendees got to hear from each organization. Not having been aware that the Frederick Police would attend, I was impressed that they were represented, along with so many others.

I had done more than send out a few emails, which I mentioned earlier. Early on, I had seen a need for consistent signage at the event, and ultimately I created two simple but splendid signs for each table. The first was the

name of the group; the second was their mission statement: The font was Arial; the text, left-justified; and the card stock, of a pale hue. The identification of the participants was accomplished! When the crowd broke up from the introductions, we manned our signed tables while attendees circulated.

I spoke to people who were interested in Recovery International, providing information at my table. Next to the NAMI table manned by Gerry Blessing, I also participated in some NAMI-related discussions, since I am currently on NAMI's board of directors. When I had a few minutes, I enjoyed speaking to the author, B.W. DeCaro, who focuses on striking down stigma, a strong concern of mine. Toward the end of the evening, he inscribed a copy of his novel, "Grown Men Don't Cry," for me. The inscription thanked me (!) for fighting "the stigma."

I only wish I could have talked to everyone. I did not have an opportunity to partake of the refreshments and also did not have a chance to talk to my friends Stephen Darnell and Sea Raven, who were playing flutes and Celtic harp, respectively. Their added ambiance was a class act.

The evening, planned to go till 8:30 PM, extended closer to 9:00. People were having a good time and appreciated the gift of mental health resources all made available in one location. The event was most worthwhile.

Questions remain: Is this the only Mental Health Resources Evening we will have? Or was it a "first annual?" I am not the only one to ask. I personally would like to think it was merely a taste of heaven and there is more to come. I was very grateful for the opportunity to participate in the night of wisdom and warmth in the midst of this cold, dreary winter. I am forever thankful to Mary Bowman-Kruhm for making it happen and Rev. Carl for championing it. I also would like to acknowledge everyone else who was key to the operation. Thank you, all: You brought a piece of heaven to Frederick, Maryland!

Family Fun Day at Rock Creek School

By Dede Pucino
NAMI Frederick Member

On March 8th, NAMI Frederick participated in the annual Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee Family Fun Day at Rock Creek School. It was a true community event sponsored by SECAC, the YMCA, FCPS, the ARC of Frederick County and FCDC Family Support. Many services were there for the Resource fair and workshops were offered like, Money Matters and Transitioning Youth from School to Adult Services. There was even a *Sibshop* to celebrate the many contributions made by siblings. The best part was that there was plenty of family fun for all ages. Story-telling, music, magic and tons of activities for kids...even Zumba!

This is an annual event which is free for everyone. To be reminded of this opportunity and many other resources, go to the Frederick County Public School website, www.fcps.org. Scroll to Find out First and register for their updates even if you do not have a child currently enrolled in public school. Many of the offerings such as the planetarium evenings can be very helpful to all ages. You just never know what might ring a bell and offer you or your family a resource that you may not have considered. The Family Fun Day is a great example. Keep your eyes out for it next year! Our "village" of Frederick County has lots of support and resources available...the trick is to know about them! SECAC on the FCPS website is a great place to start.

NAMI Frederick Education Meeting **Working for Recovery**

Topics covered will include:

- The role of work in mental health recovery
- Key ingredients of evidence-based practice supported employment
 - How to access supported employment services in Frederick
 - What supported employment services look like in Frederick

The meeting will be held on

Tuesday, April 15th

at the Frederick YMCA

1000 North Market St.

7:00-8:30 PM

Presented by

Bette Stewart

Evidence-based Practice Training Specialist, University of Maryland

and

Tim Kenyon

Manager of Community Employment, Way Station

RSVP and Questions lkcoyle@yahoo.com



The Importance of Brain Research

by Jane Kohlheyer
NAMI Frederick Member

The human brain only weighs about three pounds, but it has 100 billion nerve cells. This tiny organ controls every aspect of our human bodies, including such things as heart rate, memory, appetite, mental health, and how our immune system responds to disease. The extraordinary brain has enabled people to do such things as compose musical masterpieces, map out the human genome, and build underwater tunnels for trains. It has the capacity to store more information than the latest computer and it can create “network connections” that outshine even Facebook. Scientists and doctors have made some significant strides in brain research in recent years, but there is still so much about the human brain that we simply don’t understand. Brain research is the key to developing better medicines and treatments for all brain disorders.

Brain research is at the center of the efforts of the **Brain & Behavior Research Foundation**, a non-profit group that began as a family effort in 1981 and has grown to become the world’s leading funder of brain research. This is an impressive foundation that awards grants (NARSAD Grants) to scientists and doctors who are doing brain research. And equally as impressive is the fact that 100% of all donor contributions go directly to the NARSAD Grants for brain research. All overhead costs for things like a website, newsletters, and office supplies are covered separately by two anonymous families.

Each year, The Brain & Behavior Research Foundation receives hundreds of grant applications covering all areas of brain and behavior research. These applications are reviewed by the foundation’s all-volunteer Scientific Council which includes: 4 former directors of the National Institute of Mental Health, 13 members of the National Academy of Sciences, 21 Chairs of Psychiatry and Neuroscience Departments at leading universities, and 2 Nobel Prize winners. The Scientific Council chooses what they believe are the most promising and innovative research ideas to award the NARSAD grants. They look for research that has the potential for major breakthroughs in scientific research of the brain.

Since 1987, the **Brain & Behavior Research Foundation** has awarded more than 4,000 NARSAD Grants to scientists, doctors, medical centers and universities throughout the world. Here are just a few examples of how the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation has impacted the world of mental health:

- ◆ In 1988, Dr. Herbert Meltzer, a faculty member at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine received a NARSAD Grant to test his idea that clozapine might be a good “second-generation” treatment for patients with treatment-resistant schizophrenia. Dr. Meltzer’s research led to **FDA approval of clozapine**, as well as the **development of other “atypical” antipsychotics** that are effective in treating millions of people living with schizophrenia today.
- ◆ In 1995, Mark S. George, M.D. was unable to get funding from the NIH for his research idea for an alternative to Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT). He applied with the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation and was awarded a NARSAD Grant which led to the development of **Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS)**, a non-invasive treatment for people with **treatment-resistant depression**. Following Dr. George’s initial NARSAD Grant, the Department of Defense, the VA, and the NIH granted awards that furthered the development of TMS until it received FDA approval in 2008.
- ◆ In 2000, Daniel Weinberger, M.D. received a NARSAD Grant to research which genes increase susceptibility for developing schizophrenia. He worked with 400 sibling pairs (one sibling with schizophrenia & one without) testing and measuring levels of n-acetyl-aspartate to see if this chemical could be linked with targeted genetic association studies in schizophrenia. The results of Dr. Weinberger’s research represented the first absolutely objective insight into the **biological causes of schizophrenia**. Today, Dr. Daniel Weinberger is considered worldwide as the pre-eminent scientist in schizophrenia.
- ◆ In 2005, Karl Deisseroth, M.D., Ph.D., of Stanford University, used his NARSAD Grant to

develop optogenetics, which revolutionized systems neuroscience. **Optogenetics** involves the use of light to rapidly open and close membrane channels in the brain and allows for observation of the effects on behavior. Today, optogenetics is used in thousands of labs throughout the world. It gives scientists extraordinary control over specific brain circuits, enabling them to identify and get insight into the brain mechanisms that affect **autism**, **anxiety**, **Parkinson's disease** and other brain disorders.

- ◆ Dr. Paul Greengard, Ph.D., was awarded a NARSAD Grant in 1992 to research what happens inside a neuron after a signal is received in the brain. Eric R. Kandel, M.D., of Columbia University, received a NARSAD Grant in 1995 to research what happens in the brain when memories are formed. Their research has led to greater understanding of changes in the brain and has aided in further research in treatments for **dementia** and **Alzheimer's Disease**. In 2000, both Dr. Greengard and Dr. Kandel were awarded the **Nobel Prize** in Physiology and Medicine for their important contributions to understanding the molecular changes in the brain that underlie memory and mood.

The Brain & Behavior Research Foundation has a great website at www.bbrfoundation.org where you can find information about brain disorders and read about the latest research. They also offer a scientist webinar series called "Meet the Scientist" on the second Tuesday of each month, where different scientists present some of their research. It's free of charge and participants can ask the scientists questions, or just listen. Check out the website for more information and to see a list of upcoming webinar topics.

One in four families in the United States is affected by mental illness and more than 94 million Americans are treated for a variety of brain and neurological disorders every year, with treatments costing more than \$648 billion.

Advances in brain research could save billions of dol-

lars but, more importantly, could offer new and better treatments for illnesses of the brain and help improve the quality of life for millions of people.

1-in-4 of Us Live With a Mental Illness



Out of the 10 leading causes of disability identified and tracked in the United States and other developed countries; four are brain and behavior disorders: major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

It is estimated that:

18% of American adults will suffer from an **anxiety disorder** each year

10% of Americans adults will suffer from **depression** each year

4% of American adults will suffer from **attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)** each year

4% of American adults will suffer from **post-traumatic stress disorder** each year

3% of American adults will suffer from **bipolar disorder** each year

1% of American adults will suffer from **schizophrenia** each year

1% of American adults will suffer from **obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)** each year

1 in every 88 eight-year-old children are diagnosed with an **autism spectrum disorder**

(*Source: National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the Center for Disease Control)



Awarding **NARSAD** Grants

www.bbrfoundation.org

How Did You First Connect With NAMI Frederick?

By Christy Evans
NAMI Frederick Member

For many of us, the first contact with our local affiliate came at a time of family crisis. Perhaps a loved one was hospitalized due to a mental illness or demonstrating troubling behaviors and you were uncertain where to turn. My first contact with NAMI Frederick came after reading a short article in the newspaper about a course being offering called NAMI Basics. As a parent of a young child struggling with severe behavioral and emotional issues, this free course was invaluable. I learned a great deal about mental illness and benefited from the advice and experience of others facing similar circumstances. During my son's first psychiatric hospitalization, the NAMI Family Support Group and later the NAMI Moms' Support Group was my lifeline! It was the only place I could go where people understood what was happening in our family. I will always be grateful to the volunteers of NAMI Frederick for being there for me when I needed them most.

There are no paid employees at NAMI Frederick. It is a 100% volunteer organization. The person who reached out

to you to answer your email or phone call when you were in crisis was a NAMI volunteer. The instructors of your NAMI Family to Family course were also volunteers. The facilitators of the NAMI support group you may be attending are volunteers. The individuals who've written articles in this newsletter, the people doing community outreach on behalf of Frederick NAMI, the teams providing brochures during a hospital visit, and even the NAMI Frederick Board of Directors are volunteers.

When you needed to reach out to NAMI Frederick, someone was there for you. Do you want to make certain that someone will be there for the person who needs support next week, next month, and even next year? You can do this by stepping up and offering your time, by sharing your expertise, and by allowing others to benefit from your experience. NAMI Frederick is in need of volunteers and we can find a place for you! Please consider the open volunteers positions advertised below. There are many ways you can be a part of NAMI Frederick. Would you like to answer our helpline, serve on the board, volunteer with the hospital visiting program, distribute brochures, or help with NAMIWalks?

Please contact Gerry.Blessing@namifcmd.org or call 240-379-6186 to let us know how you can help.



Volunteer Newsletter Editor and Assistant Editor Needed

Individuals needed to compile, edit, and mail the affiliate newsletter three times per year.

Responsibilities include:

- Collecting articles via email
- Editing/proofreading articles for grammar, style, and length
- Writing articles, captions, etc. as needed
- Designing newsletter layout
- Coordinating newsletter printing, labeling, and mailing

If interested: email gerry.blessing@namifcmd.org or call 240-379-6186

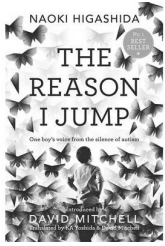
Volunteer Membership Coordinator Needed

Individual needed to maintain a database of current and prospective NAMI Frederick members.

Responsibilities include:

- Entering member names, addresses, and contact information into a spreadsheet
- Keeping track of membership renewal dates and mailing reminder postcards
- Communicating with the NAMI Frederick Treasurer and other NAMI volunteers as needed
- Generating address labels for mailings

If interested: email gerry.blessing@namifcmd.org or call 240-379-6186



A Book Review

by Dede Pucino
NAMI Frederick Member

Do you have an extra hour or two to spend on gaining insight? If so, pick up a copy of *The Reason I Jump, The Inner Voice of a Thirteen-Year Old Boy with Autism*, by Naoki Higashida translated from the original Japanese by K. A. Yoshida and David Mitchell. It's just 78 pages long on an e-reader. The translators are married and have a son with Autism. They were fortunate to have received a copy of the original version of the book when their son was 3 years old. They felt the book provided answers to the questions they had been asking themselves about their son. The author is from Japan and wrote the original on a device that he uses to communicate, since he is non-verbal.

The majority of the book is in a Q&A format, with Naoki providing the answers to prepared one sentence questions. His answers, about 2-3 paragraphs long, are at times, quite thought provoking. For instance, when asked "Do you prefer to be on your own?" Naoki responds, "No, for people with Autism, what we're anxious about is that we're causing trouble for the rest of you, or even getting on your nerves. That's why it's

hard to stay around other people. We'd love to be with people, but because things never ever go right, we end up getting used to being alone, without noticing this is happening." Now, sit with that for a while! Can you imagine how that must feel? I read the entire book first and now and then, just pick it up and read a question and answer, just to remember.

Interspersed among the questions are bits of Naoki's creative writing. David Mitchell provided the introduction to the text and speaks from a parent's heart. Together with the questions and answers, it is a very quick and pleasant read. However, if you are looking for a guide, or medical jargon, skip this one. There was also some controversy as to whether or not a 13 year-old author with autism could have really been this insightful. My belief is that those who have to face such challenges and sufferings in life are often far more insightful than the rest of us can ever hope to be, so don't let that controversy bother you.

This is a book for the heart and should probably be read with tissues within reach. To imagine how another faces the challenges in their lives is always moving. What adds to this one is reading and envisioning how our assumptions and our responses to differences can hurt deeply. It takes courage to try to understand but, as we know, all too well in NAMI, it is the only way to answer and hopefully stamp out stigma.

Newly Trained Support Group Facilitators

By Mike Koob
NAMI Frederick Member


NAMI Family Support Group (FSG) is a peer-led support group for family members, caregivers and loved ones (18 and over) of individuals living with mental illness. Five of our members recently completed a three day FSG training course taught by NAMI. Those completing the course were Gerry and Mary Lou Blessing, Jil Duralde, Mike Koob, and Jennifer Litz.

The hallmark of a NAMI FSG is leveraging the collective knowledge and experience of the participants. In Frederick we have two support groups that meet monthly for 90-minute sessions free of charge. The meetings are confidential. You can share as much or as little personal information as you want.

At each meeting, you review the Group Guidelines and Principles of Support and update the group on the current events in your life, then spend the bulk of the meeting in group discussion, or 'group work'. The group addresses urgent issues of its members and participants share their learned

experience, or 'group wisdom'. As a participant, your voice is heard, and you can contribute to a dynamic that encourages empathy, productive discussion and a sense of community.

The FSG can offer you practical advice on addressing issues related to mental illness and your loved one. It also gives you the appropriate space to have your personal needs met so that you can provide the best possible care for your family member. Taking time to voice your experiences and to hear from others may help you develop your inner reserves of strength. You may gain confidence in your ability to cope with your family member's mental illness as well as local knowledge on how to best access needed services for your family member.

Family Support Groups	
1 st Thursday of Each Month 7:00-8:30 pm	3 rd Wednesday of Each Month 6:30-8:00 pm
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church 1415 West 7 th Street Frederick, MD	 All Saints Episcopal Church 106 West Church Street Frederick, MD
All NAMI support groups are free of charge. For more info email: supportgroups@namifcmd.org or check our website: www.namifcmd.org	



Baltimore, May 31, 2014

MAKING STRIDES TOGETHER NAMIWalks Maryland

Why We Walk...

- To have fun!
- To support our communities
- To raise awareness about mental illness
- To show recovery IS possible
- To change perceptions & to STOMP STIGMA
- To raise vital funds for our FREE public programs
- To ensure that hope and help are available



To register, visit
www.namiwalks.org/maryland
To learn more or to VOLUNTEER,

Contact: Lori Dempsey
NAMIWalks Frederick Walk Coordinator
Lori.Dempsey@namifcmd.org

NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.



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National Alliance on Mental Illness

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