



**nami** National Alliance  
on Mental Illness

## of the Finger Lakes

# News

"The nation's voice on mental illness."

WINTER 2006

### Family to Family Education Program

#### For family members of close relatives with

*major depression  
borderline personality disorder  
bipolar disorder (manic depression)  
schizophrenia and schizo-affective disorder  
panic disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder  
co-occurring brain disorders and addictive disorders*

Classes will be taught Wednesday nights,  
starting March 1, at the:

Henry St. John Building  
301 South Geneva Street  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
6:30 to 9:00p.m.

This is a series of 12 weekly classes to help family members understand and support their mentally ill relative while maintaining their own well being. The course is taught by a team of trained volunteer family members who know what it is like to have a loved one with a mental illness.

This program is for family members and close friends only. Registration is required, and classes are limited to 20 people. There is no cost to participate. We invite you to call for more information: (607) 273-2462 or (607) 272-6573.

The class will be taught by Carol Booth, Ann Carter, and Joanne Denison

### Letter from a Co-President

We have had a very busy fall and a very successful one. In late September, Jeff Keller from NAMI-NY came to our business meeting and gave a brief workshop on family issues concerning Kendra's Law. Jeff told us what the law means, and when it can be used. If you would like to see the written material he provided, call the NAMI-FL office (273-2462), and we will mail you a copy.

In October, we co-sponsored *Out of the Shadow*—a remarkable documentary about a woman and

her family's journey through schizophrenia. Over 150 people attended the viewing, listened to our expert panel, and learned much more about mental illnesses. Many people in our community—including service providers and individuals—thanked us for presenting this film.

At the end of October, I attended the NAMI-NY Educational Conference in Albany. The conference was wonderful, and I was elected to the NAMI-NY Board of Directors—many people were supportive of my nomination, and I will try very hard to represent our local interests, as well as those of the other regions of our state.

In November, we were invited to a presentation on Medicare Part D by Catherine Wedge at the Mental Health Association. Her presentation was both comprehensive and understandable—that is, for a naturally complex topic! If you need information about the plan, please call the NAMI-FL office.

We ended the year with a social at Jean's house—a time not to talk about business, but to get to know each other.

Now it is time to look ahead to our new year. A fifth Family to Family Class will begin on Wednesday, March 1. The support group will continue to meet the first Tuesday of every month. We will provide crisis support as needed, and more community education. We will strengthen our connections with the Behavioral Unit at Cayuga Medical Center. And we will have some fun along the way! I encourage all of you to read your state and national newsletters—get involved in goings on outside of Ithaca. Talk to me about attending events in Albany—I always like companionship! Think about getting involved with similar agencies in your community to help spread the word of NAMI.

Carol Booth

### NIMH Genetic Study of Schizophrenia

The Schizophrenia Research Program at the National Institute of Mental Health, located on the campus of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda Maryland is seeking healthy adults diagnosed with schizophrenia or schizo-affective disorder (depressed

type) to participate in a two-day outpatient study. Travel and lodging assistance is provided and a stipend is also given to participants.

This study seeks to identify the genetic and environmental factors that increase the risk of developing schizophrenia. The procedures include confidential interviews and a blood draw, a neurological exam and neuropsychological testing, neuroimaging, and recordings of eye movements and brain waves. Siblings are also invited to participate in these procedures and parents are invited to give a sample of blood if possible.

For more details, call the toll-free schizophrenia studies referral line at 1-888-674-6464 (TTY: 866-411-1010) at NIH, Department of Health & Human Services.

### **Support Group**

The NAMI-FL support group, coordinated by Jean Walters, has been meeting at 104 E. Lewis St. for the past several months. The support group provides time for family members to talk about their current situations. Other family members can offer suggestions that may be of help. Sometimes just talking about the situation with others who understand what it's like can be useful. We meet on the first Tuesday of each month. Our next meeting will be at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, February 7. Anyone with a mentally ill friend or relative is welcome to attend. If people need support at other times or would like to join the support group for the first time, they are invited to call the NAMI-FL office. (273-2462)

*Susan Larkin*

### **Help from I. C. Student**

NAMI-FL Lakes recently completed a communications project with Ithaca College graduate student, Kjersti Aastad. The project was based on feedback from recent Family to Family classes, where our students complained that they had never heard of NAMI before taking the course. It also became clear that NAMI-FL was "invisible" within the Finger Lakes area.

Accordingly, we approached Dr. Diane M. Gayeski at Ithaca College's Park School of Communications to see if any of her students might be willing to help make us more visible. Dr. Gayeski was on sabbatical at this time, but she passed on her request to her colleague Dr. Steven Seidman, who was running a graduate Communications seminar in Fall 2005. Dr. Seidman mentioned the project in his seminar,

and Kjersti Aastad, a Norwegian graduate student, approached us about doing a seminar project for us.

We asked Kjersti to address two major problems facing our small support group for families with mentally ill family members: that we are not well-known within the community and that many families who do learn about us are reluctant to contact us, due to the intense stigma of mental illness.

Kjersti devised two ways to address these needs: some very eye-catching bus posters; and a new NAMI-FL web site, emphasizing a simple design for fast loading, easy maintenance, and compatibility among different browsers.

We are very pleased with Kjersti's work. We feel that it improves the visibility of NAMI-FL within the our area.

We have already started using the website Kjersti designed. So far we have added information about:

- background on NAMI-FL,
- Family to Family,
- treatment facilities in Central and Upstate NY,
- links to special treatment centers and programs,
- contacts for NAMI chapters in Syracuse, Rochester, Binghamton, Elmira, and Corning,
- psychiatrists practicing in the area,
- criminal justice and the mentally ill,
- navigating the maze of mental health care.

We encourage people to check out the new web site at [www.namifingerlakes.org](http://www.namifingerlakes.org).

Do you have information you'd like to share about doctors, treatment and diagnostic programs, or recovery programs? Is there specific information you would like to see on the website? Then please e-mail our acting webmaster Bruce McKee at [bwmckee@twcny.rr.com](mailto:bwmckee@twcny.rr.com).

We would like to make our web site a valuable tool for all families dealing with mental illness, and your ideas and information are critical to making this a reality.

*Bruce McKee*

### **Breaking the Silence in the Schools**

I have been teaching lessons on mental illness most of the fall to 5<sup>th</sup> graders, middle schoolers, and high schoolers. I opened new territory at Newfield MS and HS and also at Northeast Elementary School—the principal hopes I will come back next year. This semester I already have requests from DeWitt MS Health and all Fall Creek 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers.

I am on the Children and Youth Committee of NAMI-NY along with Janet Susin, who was one of the co-authors of the lesson plans. Our committee has as its main goal to make teaching about mental illnesses in public schools a mandate. I may be involved soon in meeting with Sharon Carpinello, the Commissioner of Mental Health in New York. Then we will go on to the education department. I have been asked by Amy Lax, coordinator of the Breaking the Silence Program itself, to speak to the Health Curriculum Director for NY City Schools to advise her on how successful my teaching about mental illness has been. Also, I have been asked several times to write short articles for the *Breaking the Silence*, a newsletter put together by Amy Lax.

Please pass the word on about the free availability of outreach consultations or presentations to 4<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms. Any interested person should call me directly at 272–6573, or call Mary Kay at SETRC-BOCES at 257–1551. *Carol Booth*

### Out of the Shadow

On October 20, 2005, at the Holiday Inn in Ithaca, NAMI-FL, the Tompkins County Mental Health Services, and Janssen Pharmaceutica sponsored a presentation of the movie *Out of the Shadow* by Susan Smiley. This documentary tells the story of the filmmaker's mother, Millie, and her family as they battle with Millie's schizophrenia and her subsequent trials within the public health system. Immediately following the movie Carol Booth presided over a question and answer session with a panel that included Robert Deluca, Commissioner Tompkins County Dept. of Mental Health; Gerald Lippert, MD, Psychiatrist, Tompkins County Mental Health; Rob Ameigh, Consumer Advocate; Mark Wickham, Executive Director, Lakeview Mental Health Services; Ann Carter, NAMI-FL member; and Lt. Ed Valley, Ithaca Police Department.

Much work went into this event, and we were pleased with the excellent turnout. Bruce McKee set up a table with information about the Family to Family class, and several people signed up to be contacted. Members of Lambda Chi Alpha were present along with their banner showing the support they provided from their fall clothing sale. Thanks also go to Ann Carter and her hard-working Program and Publicity Committee—Carol Booth, Jean Walters, Bruce McKee, and Staci Oster—and to Joanne Denison for organizing a table of information for the

library.

Please let us know any ideas you have for next year's program. *Susan Larkin*

### Meeting with Massicci and Dean

Last November, Carol Booth was contacted by Cindy Massicci, R.N., a psychiatric nurse from Cayuga Medical Center's psychiatric care unit, with a request to meet in early January. On January 7, Robert Dean, M.D. Medical Director of the psychiatric care unit at the hospital, Cindy Massicci, Carol Booth, and Jean Walters met to share information about our organization, its activities, and our efforts at outreach. Dr. Dean is a strong supporter of NAMI and has invited us to be in open communication with him. In the near future we will be invited to come to the hospital to speak to all of his staff to tell them about our local affiliate. It was a very warm meeting with a very positive outcome. One of the goals of NAMI has been for families and professionals to be partners for change. This is happening here in Ithaca. Following is a thank you note we received after the meeting. *Jean Walters*

Carol and Jean,

Thank you so much for your time and gracious hospitality. It was such a pleasure to meet and talk to you both. It is obvious you work very hard to provide a valuable asset to the community.

The wealth of resources you offer will provide patients, families, and staff with easy access to information for education and support.

The staff at 2 North look forward to meeting you to explore new ways to meet our mutual goals of assisting those who are in search for support.

Thanks again!

*Cindy Massicci and Robert C. Dean*

### In Our Own Voice

*In Our Own Voice* is a presentation by consumers that creates awareness about what is involved in recovery from mental illness. It provides living proof that recovery from mental illness is an ongoing reality. Carol Booth is working on bringing this program to Ithaca. We'll keep you posted on her progress.

*Susan Larkin*

## Retirement of a Good Friend

Rita Shawn, MSW, will retire February 1 as director and coordinator of family services at Binghamton Psychiatric Center. She has also been a strong supporter and member of NAMI and will continue her membership. Carol Booth and I attended her retirement luncheon on January 16. We wish her well and thank her for her many years of service.

*Jean Walters*

## Representation on the NAMI-NY Board

In November, I was given the opportunity to follow up with my great interest in education and advocacy by being elected to the NAMI-NY board. I was surprised and excited. I have since attended two board meetings, and there is another one coming up on February 6. That date is just prior to the NAMI-NY Legislative Day in Albany on February 7. I am just getting my feet wet, starting to understand the dynamics of the group, and asking lots of questions. Our affiliates in central and southern NY are truly happy that we have geographical representation. I hope to travel around a bit as the weather gets better to talk to people in different places and to find out what their needs are. I encourage all of you to call me at 272-6573 and talk about your concerns and also about any good things that are happening for you and your family members in the mental health system. Bob DeLuca has already told me that he feels that NAMI has lots of clout and is a very positive, legitimate force in bringing quality services to people with mental illnesses.

*Carol Booth*

## Legislative Day

The NAMI-NY Legislative Advocacy Conference will take place on Tuesday, February 7, at the Legislative Office Building, from noon until 2 PM. It will be followed by an opportunity to "Meet Your Legislators", starting at 2:30. If you plan to attend, please call Carol at 272-6573.

## Looking for volunteers

NAMI-FL looking for volunteers. We need a librarian for our library, a person to update our bibliography, and someone to be our legislative correspondent. Please call Carol Booth at 272-6573 or e-mail her at [cabteachwor1d@hotmail.com](mailto:cabteachwor1d@hotmail.com).

## Annual Meeting

On January 17 NAMI-FL held its annual meeting at 104 E. Lewis Street, Ithaca. Officers elected for 2006 are: Co-presidents, Bruce McKee and Carol Booth; Vice President, Abby Eller; Recording Secretary, Staci Oster; Corresponding Secretary, Susan Larkin; Treasurer, Joanne Denison. Other items on the agenda included our incorporation as a non-profit, the upcoming Family to Family class, the treasurer's report, and our publicity project.

## NAMI-FL Treasurer's Report

Chris Cannon, a NAMI-FL benefactor from Rhode Island and the members of Lambda Chi Alpha at Cornell held their annual clothing drive last Fall and as a result, donated \$3,140 to NAMI-FL. We are most grateful to Chris, J. P. Madarasz, and the other members of Lambda Chi Alpha for their hard work and generous donation.

\$1375 was donated to NAMI-FL in memory of Karen Eberts. Our thoughts and prayers are with her parents, Paul and Helene Eberts.

\$118 was donated to NAMI-FL in memory of Flora Sagan.



*Lambda Chi Alpha clothing drive.*

## NAMI dues

NAMI-FL dues are due at the beginning of each calendar year. To maintain membership in NAMI-NY and the national NAMI, dues should be paid by March 1. Dues are \$25 a year for individual membership and \$35 a year for family membership. Checks may be made out to NAMI-FL and mailed NAMI-FL, 104 E. Lewis Street, Ithaca, NY 14850.

*Joanne Denison, Treasurer*

## Fund raising

We are looking for ideas for fund-raising. Please send your suggestions to Ann Carter by e-mail at [kipcart@aol.com](mailto:kipcart@aol.com) or snail-mail at 622 Oregon Hill Rd, Lisle, NY 13747.

## Library needs Books Returned

Please return any borrowed books, videotapes, and DVDs that you have borrowed when you have read or viewed them so they will be available for circulation again. In particular we are looking for the videotape entitled, *After the Tears: Teens Talk about Mental Illness in their Family*. Thank you for your cooperation in returning borrowed materials promptly.

*Jean Walters*

## NAMI Acronym Name Change

Last fall NAMI changed the words in the NAMI acronym from “National Alliance for the Mentally Ill” to “National Alliance on Mental Illness”. The acronym remains the same, but the words the letters stand for have changed. This name change was officially confirmed by David Seay, Executive Director of NAMI-NY.

*Jean Walters*

## Incorporation of NAMI-FL as a Non-profit

A long-term goal for NAMI Finger Lakes has been to become a not-for-profit New York State corporation.

This status will give us more credibility and visibility within the Ithaca community, and will help fundraising efforts to support our educational and outreach programs.

We took a giant step towards this goal on Friday, January 20, 2006. On this day, in the presence of a Tompkins County Trust notary, NAMI members Jean Walters, Carol Booth, and Susan Larkin signed the official Certificates of Incorporation for NAMI Finger Lakes. The documents they signed formally begin the New York State incorporation process, and by spring we hope that NAMI Finger Lakes will be a state not-for-profit corporation.

We must acknowledge NAMI-NY's substantial help in making this process so easy. Under a special program for local affiliates, NAMI-NY has hired an attorney to handle all the incorporation paperwork. The local affiliates only have to fill out some relatively simple paperwork and attach a check for \$100. This is an incredible bargain for low-budget organizations like NAMI Finger Lakes, and we thank Sean Moran of NAMI-NY, attorney Michael West, and paralegal Melissa Mackey for all their help.

*Bruce McKee*

## Contact information

The NAMI-FL office is at 104 E. Lewis St in Ithaca. The phone number is (607) 273-1246. We can also be reached by e-mail at [namifl@lightlink.com](mailto:namifl@lightlink.com). You can visit our web site at [www.namifingerlakes.org](http://www.namifingerlakes.org).

## Calendar

### February

7	7:00 PM	Monthly Support Group	Jean Walters' house, 104 E. Lewis St.
		NAMI-NY Legislative Day in Albany	

### March

1	6:30 PM	First day of Family to Family Class	
7	7:00 PM	Support Group	Jean Walters' house, 104 E. Lewis St.

### April

4	7:00 PM	Support Group	Jean Walters' house, 104 E. Lewis St.
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### May

2	7:00 PM	Support Group	Jean Walters' house, 104 E. Lewis St.
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# Lost in the Maze of Mental Health Care?

Figuring out how to care for someone close to you who has a mental illness can feel like being lost in a maze. We know, we've been there. But there is a way through, and we can help you find it. That's why NAMLI exists.

NAMLI is the National Alliance on Mental Illness. We are the families and friends of the mentally ill. We can help you help someone close to you who has a mental illness.

We've been there before. We'll be there for you.



(607) 273-2462  
[www.namifingerlakes.org](http://www.namifingerlakes.org)

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NAMI-Finger Lakes  
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Ithaca, New York 14850