

Frederick County

A Letter From Our Frederick NAMI President

Here we are in the dog days of summer. People seem to be dragging but there is a brewing agitation that comes before the start of every school year. It is an odd mix of excitement and worry that puts us all at odds and ends. Transitions, even good ones, are very challenging. This year seems particularly tense, perhaps it is the heat and lack of rain, but another villain seems to be the ever present stress of making tough choices in tough economic times. Fear and uncertainty seem to color our days and that is sad. We have so much to be excited about, or at least grateful for. I find it so intriguing when the small community of family mirrors the larger reality of life. In the midst of so much, there is the constant worry of not enough.

At NAMI we also mirror the challenges of these tough economic times. We have been blessed with hard working volunteers, wonderful financial support from our

members and also through generous grants. We continually reach out to our community offering support, information and advocacy which is our mission.

Sadly, this fiscal year opens with the loss of a \$1400.00 grant, which we have been blessed with for years. That may not seem like much, but it is 14% of our operating budget and we counted on it to pay for the printing of Family to Family materials. Needless to say, we have to cut back. Fortunately, we do not have the bitter disagreements that mark the budget negotiations in our Nation's capital, but we do need to find other sources of revenue and cut back on spending....just like our families also must do in these difficult times. We are appealing to you, our loyal members, fully aware that tough times effect all of us, to consider making a donation to

NAMI Frederick to help keep our programs operating. Any amount is always appreciated and 100% of it goes to our mission and is tax deductible. We are so fortunate to still operate with an all volunteer staff, which makes it possible to keep an annual budget of \$10,000. We continue to look for ways to cut back and our wonderful Board members continue to search for other ways to bring in financial support. Consequently any help you feel you can give to NAMI Frederick will indeed, be greatly appreciated.

Wishing you cooler days, which seems impossible during 100 degree temperatures. September will bring our next Family to Family class and Mom's will start back up. We hope to be restarting the Connections support group too. Many exciting and wonderful things are always a part of NAMI Frederick. Thank you for making that possible

We Want You!

DONATE TO NAMI OF FREDERICK

See page 7 for our donation coupon along with details on how to donate. We really appreciate your support and couldn't do it without you.



Tuition Waiver at Community Colleges for Disabled

Maryland House Bill 104 was unanimously passed and approved by the governor on May 19, 2011. This bill clarifies the wording of a previous law which had caused confusion, resulting in some colleges not allowing disabled individuals to receive tuition waivers.

HB 104 allows a person who is out of work due to a disability, to obtain a tuition waiver at a community college. Certification from the Social Security Administration of an individual's receipt of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits provides eligibility for the waiver. The tuition waiver is limited to 6 credits per semester or up to 12 credits per semester if the individual is enrolled in classes as "part of a degree or a certification program designed to lead to employment."

At Frederick Community College, this is now a pretty simple process. Here's how it works:

Step 1: The disabled individual brings his/her annual letter from the Social Security Administration (SSA) showing receipt of SSI or SSDI to the Welcome and Registration Department (Building A) at FCC. This department will photocopy the letter and put it in the student's file. (This step needs to be done annually—each year when the individual receives his/her letter from SSA). **Step 2:** Register for classes—either on-line at home, or at FCC in person.

Step 3: Tell the Welcome and Registration Dept. that you have registered for classes and need a "tuition waiver slip." This department will look up the stu-

dent's class schedule and make sure he/she has an up-to-date letter from the SSA on file, and then give the student a signed tuition waiver slip.

Step 4: Take the tuition waiver slip to the Cashier's window (also located in Building A) and show your student ID card.

Step 5: Student is required to pay the "fees" associated with the classes, but no tuition.

Currently, this information is not on the FCC website or in any of their literature, but if you have any questions you can call either the Welcome and Registration Dept. at 301-846-2431 or the Students With Disabilities Dept. at 301-846-2408.

Submitted by Jane Kohlheyer
NAMI Secretary

Did you know?

Most colleges and universities have onsite resources to help students suffering from mental illness? Contact your school's guidance office to find out what services the school offers.

Ask your child to sign an Authorization to Release of Medical Information to keep on file at the school so you can stay involved.

Partnering for Success

The new school year is upon us and this is an excellent time to start partnering with your loved ones academic team to help set them up for success. It is never too early or too late to start this process.

Years ago, I thought it was best to keep my daughter's mental illness a "secret". I was told by a psychologist once that it was better to not let the school know too much information. I took that advice and for years I just managed each incident as it came. At one point it dawned on me that this was not a successful approach as there was no partnership. So I changed my approach and began to involve the school in my daughter's diagnosis, treatment and how that impacted her academic success.

The transformation was immediate and what I found that providing them

the information on my daughter's illness allowed them to engage with her on a different level - one that involved understanding and partnership.

Starting the process before the school year is very helpful. The process can begin with selecting the best teachers (when possible), implementing an IEP (individualized education plan) that is in place on day one of the school year, class selection and most importantly a communication plan.

The best thing I ever did was immediately upon getting class schedules and teacher assignments was to go to the school website and find the email addresses for the teachers and send them an introductory email. I would also set expectations of when and how I would like communication (e.g. weekly email updates). I found the teachers to be very accom-

modating and welcoming of this approach. Setting these expectations in the beginning allowed everyone to be on the same page and started the year off on the right foot.

Don't be afraid to get involved. Don't be afraid to share information about your child's situation. This doesn't mean involving people in every intimate detail but providing a high level overview of their illness, what to expect from your child and how best to manage it.

Think partnership in everything you do relating to your child. Whether it is therapy, medication or education - you are your child's best advocate.

Susan Ways

In The Streets

Visit the NAMI booth at Frederick's annual In The Streets Festival on Saturday September 10th from 9:30 AM—5:00 PM. NAMI will be set up in the Kid's Block between 4th & 5th Streets. There will be an interactive balloon animal display and lots of great NAMI literature.

For more information visit www.celebratefrederick.com

Changing Lives—A Letter To A Caretaker

I wanted to write you to let you know that you are in my prayers every night. I know how big of a load it is to be the caretaker of someone who suffers from a mental illness. Many say that it is harder than having mental illness himself. After what I have gone through the past few months I can see how that would be true. I don't know at what point in the process you are emotionally, but I know all too well the many layers that you will peel through before you feel absolutely stripped to your very core. I know how you can feel like you are in mourning for the life that you dreamed of or should have been & in hatred of what your life has now become. I know how depressing it is to spend day in & day out in doctors offices & hospitals and living with the uncertainty that mental illness can bring. I know that during this process I have felt the highest of highs but also the lowest of lows. Each day is like a journey of its own. As difficult as that is—each day is also a new day, a new beginning, & the blessing of another day. I know how hard it is to see someone you love suffering. And I know how hard it is to try to be all things for all people only to be left with so little of yourself at the end of the day. I have wept for moments that have been taken from our lives until I felt like I had no more tears left to cry. I know that you can easily sink into a place where you feel like it will never get better but I am here to tell you that it WILL get better. I love how in the Bible it talks about our ashes being turned into something beautiful. My life, at one point during this process, turned to complete ashes but I am beginning to find hope again & you will too. You

guys are in a fight for life against a terrible disease but you cannot let the fight itself be what takes you down. There will be difficult moments when those of us suffering with mental illness won't always be the best people. The only 2 people that will know how truly difficult this is are you & believe it or not, in my moments of clarity....me. Unfortunately while you get to be there in all of the amazing moments you are also there for the darkest moments as well. You are caretaker, confidant & trusted friend but you are also the person who has to deal with my pain & at times my frustration. That is never easy, but know that it is because I now look to you as a source of strength & what an honor it is to be that to someone who needs it so desperately. I know that there are moments when you will feel like you have nothing more to give but you always do—sometimes you just have to dig a little deeper to find it. This journey is just that—a journey. There will be many different moments, feelings thoughts & emotions & it is ok to have every single one of those things. It is ok to be angry & it is ok to be sad. Just don't allow yourself to stay there for long. You are always, always much braver than you think that you are. This journey will prove that to you every day. And you now have the gift of a life changing perspective that will make you a better person for know-

ing it.

You will never hear this as much as you need to because the caretaker never does—but you are doing an amazing job. You are a strong person and I couldn't do this without you! Just keep moving forward little by little & day by day & before and most importantly, never lose your hope. You will be changed forever but you will be better for it in every way. Your life will find a renewed meaning & you will now appreciate those normal moments all the more. Just knowing that each day is one of your renewed hope is what keeps me moving forward. I was talking to a person in recovery from mental illness the other day & she told me that she never knew how loved she was until she walked through her battle with mental illness. I agreed with her completely. But my response was I never knew my own strength until I walked through this journey. If you haven't already you will find that strength within you as a caretaker...a strength that you have never knew you could have. You will be all the better for it. That is just another part of beauty rising from the ashes of this thing called life.

If you are a caretaker of a person suffering from mental illness—God bless you! You are doing one of the most difficult & selfless things you can ever do for a person—but there is an amazing blessing in store for you! It is my hope that this letter will encourage you. For everyone else reading this, maybe it can give you an idea of what it is like to be in the shoes of a caretaker. I hope & pray it's a role you never have to have but more than likely most of us will.

Connections A Place to Feel Safe and Understood

For many of us, our experiences living with a mental illness have presented a host of challenges and obstacles. The impact of stigma and discrimination affects our self concept, social lives, and relationships. Sometimes, we feel the need to speak to someone who won't judge us or remove themselves from our lives. Sometimes, it is necessary to talk to people in an uncompromising situation.

NAMI Connections is a peer support group that was formed for these reasons among others. It is a place for people living with mental illness to share their experiences, find support, and be linked to mental health resources. NAMI Connections is

not therapy. The program is based on a recovery model created at the national level in collaboration with mental health researchers. Connections is led by peer facilitators, with the requirement that they themselves must have a mental health diagnosis. As a matter of fact, no one is allowed to attend unless they have a mental health diagnosis. The facilitators guide the discussion in the group. Each attendee has an opportunity to share their experiences in the beginning of each group. After each person has "checked in", individual issues are addressed by the facilitators and the

group as a whole. As a long term member of NAMI and Connections Facilitator, I can attest to effectiveness of the model. People come to the group from all backgrounds and walks of life, and more often than not, leave with positive feelings about their experience. Confidentiality is sacred. NAMI Connections is a place to feel safe and understood.

On a side note, NAMI Frederick County is seeking volunteers to become facilitators for a new Connections group starting in the area. For more information, contact Dave Stant at dave.stant@namifcmd.org or 240-446-6207. Thank you.

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NAMI's Monthly Education Meetings:

NAMI of Frederick County is pleased to host the following speakers for our education meetings from 7-9 p.m. at the Way Station Annex Building (adjacent to Way Station), 230 W. Patrick St., Frederick.



Knowledge is Power

SEPTEMBER 13: Ms. Maren Voss

Adjunct Professor, Frederick Community College

Ms. Voss will discuss "Managing Your Stress" and the impact that long term stress could have on one's health and ways to manage stress.

OCTOBER 18: Ms. Patricia Ball

Senior Research Nurse and Study Manager, Maryland Psychiatric Research Center (MPRC) Outpatient Research Program.

Ms. Ball will provide updates on recent MPRC psychiatric research activities. Her research has included treatment strategies for managing weight gain and motivating patients to exercise and engage in healthy behaviors.

These programs are free and refreshments will be served. For more information, please call National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI's) virtual office 240 379-6186.

SAD—Seasonal Affective Disorder

Seasonal depression, often called seasonal affective disorder (SAD), is a depression that occurs in people who experience normal mental health throughout most of the year who experience depression each year at the same time, usually starting in fall or winter and ending in spring or early summer.

SAD causes some people to experience a serious mood change when the seasons

change. They may sleep too much, have little energy, and may also feel depressed. Though symptoms can be severe, they usually clear up.

Although many of us experience "the blues" when the weather changes, which goes away on its own, SAD can be disruptive to everyday life.

Only a doctor can diagnose SAD, so if you or someone

you know suffers from SAD, please contact your physician .

There are many different treatments for classic (winter-based) seasonal affective disorder, including vitamin therapy, light therapy with sunlight or bright lights, antidepressant medication, counseling, and carefully timed supplementation of the hormone melatonin



For more information on SAD, visit

<http://www.nmha.org/go/sad>.

Special Needs Family Members and Inheritances

Have you made plans for your special needs family member if you were to become incapable of providing for them - through incapacitation or death? A 2 hour course is being presented, as part of the Noncredit Continuing Education program at Frederick Community College (FCC) which will provide guidance on the particularities of dealing with the impact of inheritances on any entitlements your loved one might then be receiving. Ed Law, the presenter, has addressed this subject at a NAMI Frederick Educa-

tion meeting. Here is the course description as presented on page 24 in the FCC Continuing Education Classes booklet:

Wills and Trusts: Families with Special Needs Members (Wednesday 11/2 from 7-9 PM)

This informative seminar will explore the documents required to ensure peace of mind if you are the parents of a special needs child. Attorney Ed Law will focus on the special requirements for families with members who have

special needs. The discussion will include information on special needs trusts, letters of intent, and advance medical directives. It is recommended that you attend the Wills and Trusts class or have working knowledge of the topic before attending this class. (Wills and Trusts class is to be presented on 10/26 from 7-9 PM.)

2 hrs., Fees: \$19

For additional information on registering, call FCC at either 301-846-2431 or 301-846-2419. The course is FIN 181 and 4 digit # is 5497

HELP WANTED - Volunteer

Assistant Webmaster

NAMI Fredrick is seeking a volunteer to serve as an assistant to our webmaster. Duties include helping to maintain and update the current website and to send email notices to our current membership. If you have computer knowledge and a desire to assist in the NAMI Frederick mission please contact Remo.Molino@namifcmd.org



NAMI Frederick Board Members

NAMI Frederick is seeking additional board members for its board of directors. Our board is a working board so each member is responsible for a duty as well as being a voting member of the board. If you have organizational skills or fresh ideas, we'd love to have you join our board. Board Meetings are bimonthly. For more information contact Remo.Molino@namifcmd.org



NAMI Moms Get Together!

It's been a busy summer and now that the kids are heading back to school, it's time for moms and other caretakers to take a moment to relax while enjoying breakfast and some good, company. If you are the parent or caretaker of a child (of any age) with a mental illness, behavioral problems, or an emotional disability and are seeking support, information, and a chance to share your stories with others struggling with similar issues, please join us. Raising

a child with a mental illness is a unique challenge. Friends and family members may not understand the day-to-day struggles you are facing or the emotional burden placed upon you. You may be hesitant to share your situation with others or you may not know where to turn for support. Come and connect with others who understand what you are going through. Our next NAMI Moms' Support Group get together will

be on Monday, September 26th at 9:30 AM at the new Wegman's Market Café located at 7830 Wormans Mill Road, Frederick. Please email DeDe.Pucino@namifcmd.org or Christy.Evans@namifcmd.org for more information. Attendees will receive a copy of the booklet **Parents and Teachers as Allies** A guide to recognizing early onset mental illness in children and adolescents, for parents and educators.

Did you know?

That women who participate in groups experience lower incidences of depression, higher self esteem and report being happier in all areas of their life.

Recommended Reading

- Sometimes I Act Crazy: Living with Borderline Personality Disorder—Jerold J. Kreisman
- The BiPolar Teen—David J. Miklowitz PhD and Elizabeth L. George
- Broken Glass: A Family's Journey Through Mental Illness by Robert V. Hine



Join NAMI Frederick County

Please make checks payable to NAMI of Frederick County. You can mail the above donation coupon to:

NAMI of Frederick County
4 East Church Street
Frederick, MD 21701



Donation/Membership Coupon

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

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Email: _____

- Enclosed is \$_____ for my membership fee
- Enclosed is \$_____ for my donation to NAMI Frederick County

