

## **NAMI Helps**

*by Jan Reeves*

NAMI Greater Bloomington Area presented a forum at the Monroe County library this past spring. A panel representing the criminal justice system presented their various roles and the part each of these roles plays in caring for those with mental illness. The obstacles and challenges presented by this process were also discussed. My main take away was how the different departments communicate with each other. Two days later I learned my son had been arrested in another state. I was able to apply the information learned from the forum to establish a plan of communication with all departments and move forward with getting him help for his untreated mental illness. The experience and hope of other family members have provided me with hope. Although there is no set method or plan, the information I obtained was helpful in moving forward. The resources of the local, state and national NAMI have been invaluable.

NAMI Greater Bloomington Area  
P.O. Box 7794  
Bloomington, IN 47407



# **BRAIN PAGES**

The newsletter of

**NAMI**

Greater Bloomington Area

*Family and Friends Together  
Providing Support and  
a Voice on Mental Illness*

Issue no. 15



**Recurring Events  
all free**

*1st and 3rd Mondays:*

**Family Support Group**

*First United*

*Methodist Church 7:00pm*

*1st and 3rd Thursdays:*

**Depression  
and Bipolar**

*Support Group*

*St. Marks*

*Methodist Church 7:00pm*

*2nd and 4th Thursdays:*

**Schizophrenia  
Support Group**

*Fairview Methodist Church*

*7:00pm*

Spring 2011

## **FAMILY TO FAMILY PROGRAM**

by Nan Miller

The Greater Bloomington Area chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness is now accepting applications for our Spring 2011 Family to Family program. This free 12-week course will meet once a week on Tuesday evenings, beginning March 8 and running through May 24. The classes will be held at First United Church, 2420 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Bloomington, and will meet from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm. Nan Miller and Cathy Korinek will be team teaching this class.

The Family to Family class is open to family members (parents, spouses, siblings, adult children, significant others) who have loved ones with serious and persistent mental illness. Class size is limited to 20. The classes and the accompanying materials are free, but preregistration is required.

Information about schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, borderline personality disorder, co-occurring brain disorders and addictive disorders will be presented. Basic information on medications and on the brain will be given, along with sessions on problem solving, communications skills, self-care, rehabilitation, advocacy,



## IN THIS ISSUE...

- 1 Family to Family
- 3 NAMI Members Honored
- 4 NAMI Advocacy at Indiana Legislature
- 5 Brain Plasticity and Singing
- 5 NAMI Bookclub Proposal
- 6 Speakers' Bureau Update
- 7 Join NAMI
- 8 NAMI Helps

(continued from page 1)

fighting stigma, and an empathy workshop on what it's like to be mentally ill.

Family to Family not only provides basic education and skill training for families who must cope with the difficulties of their ill relatives, it also gives them practical and emotional support to sustain them in their role as primary caregivers in the mental health system. And perhaps most important, the classes provide a safe, confidential place to talk about what you and your loved ones are going through.

For more information or to register for the Spring class, please call Nan Miller at 876-3826 (a very friendly and private answering machine is available if Nan is out) or contact Nan via email at either of these email addresses:  
nan.4.nami@gmail.com  
namiller@indiana.edu

### HARVARD BRAIN TISSUE RESOURCE CENTER "BRAIN BANK"

*Did you know that when you sign the back of your driver's license to donate your organs the brain is NOT included?*

*Sign up as a brain donor today!*  
1-800-BRAINBANK  
[www.brainbank.mclean.org](http://www.brainbank.mclean.org)

## NOT YET A MEMBER OF NAMI-GBA? JOIN TODAY!

Your annual membership includes newsletters from NAMI National, NAMI Indiana, and NAMI Greater Bloomington Area, as well as access to NAMI's wealth of resources and information.

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 Individual
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$35.00 Family
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$3.00 Consumer
- \_\_\_\_\_ I want to support NAMI-GBA with a tax-deductible gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to:

**NAMI GBA**  
P.O. Box 7794  
Bloomington, IN 47407  
[www.namibloomington.org](http://www.namibloomington.org)

### I am interested in:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Helping to prepare mailings
- \_\_\_\_\_ Writing an article or book review for the newsletter
- \_\_\_\_\_ Helping with outreach for Mental Illness Awareness Week
- \_\_\_\_\_ Participating on the NAMI Family Panel for CIT Training
- \_\_\_\_\_ Training to be a Support Group Co-Facilitator
- \_\_\_\_\_ Training to be a Family-to-Family class Co-Teacher
- \_\_\_\_\_ Telling my story to church groups, university classes, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other creative ideas:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred method of contact \_\_\_\_\_

Brain Pages is the official newsletter of NAMI Greater Bloomington Area.

**P.O. Box 7794**

**Bloomington, IN 47407**

**[www.namibloomington.org](http://www.namibloomington.org)**

**[info@namibloomington.org](mailto:info@namibloomington.org)**

This issue's editor is  
Laura Jesseph

NAMI-GBA wishes to thank Centerstone for helping to underwrite this issue of the newsletter.

## **SPEAKERS BUREAU AN UPDATE BY JOHN ISBELL**

Our annual NAMI meeting in November saw the first appearance in public of our new Speakers Bureau, with two speakers, Janice Reeves (who joined our Board that day) and Judy Surzycki. Both spoke movingly about the struggles and rewards of caring for a family member with a mental illness. They talked about navigating the school system and the criminal justice system, and about the helpful role NAMI had played in their stories. Janice even brought a prop to pass around: a piece of wood her 4-year-old son had spent hours pounding nails into and which she had saved ever since! It was a great tribute to youthful determination, and we recommend props to all our speakers. Listening to our two speakers raised some interesting questions: for instance, are our local NAMI members mostly middle-class? Working-class consumers and family members may have obstacles to accessing NAMI's services that we should consider. Do people with an illness often have an advanced education? People with mental illness are often very smart people who succeed academically at a young age. Some practical questions were also addressed: what symptoms did the loved one start showing - how was it that it came to the family's attention that there was a problem? What did that look like? What were the behaviors? What was the diagnosis? How long did diagnosis take? What are the symptoms of this diagnosis and how do those symptoms interfere with normal living? What were the obstacles family members faced to getting their loved one help? What part of the system worked and what did not? Did the loved one fight or hate their meds? What about their ongoing fight for or against recovery and sanity? Finally, how did the speakers find NAMI and what does NAMI do for them?

## **NAMI MEMBERS HONORED**

By Lee Strickholm

Two members of our NAMI Greater Bloomington Area Affiliate were recently recognized for their contributions to improving our community resources for the mentally ill.

At the Indiana State NAMI Convention in October Aris Beldavs received the Patricia Wheaton Consumer Award for "exemplary courage in not only staying the course to recovery but also in educating and helping others to understand and to overcome." Aris is now an employee of Centerstone as a case manager and is active in their Peer Support program.

Valerie Markley received the Heroes for Recovery Award for a mental health professional from Mental Health America of Indiana at a luncheon in December. The award celebrates the "dedication and commitment of those who promote recovery of individuals in their ongoing treatment of serious and persistent mental illness". Valerie, who recently retired after 39 years as a faculty member of the IU School of Nursing, teaches in our NAMI Family to Family Education Program in addition to facilitating local bi-weekly meetings for the Depression/Bipolar and Schizophrenia Anonymous support groups.

**Congratulations to both of these inspiring NAMI members.**



## 2011 Indiana Legislative Session NAMI Advocacy Priorities

The Indiana legislature is now in session. Before it adjourns in April it will be considering numerous ways to cut costs to try to balance the state budget. Unfortunately some of those ideas will affect mental health services. However, the costs of cutting state mental health budgets are extraordinarily high, both financially and morally, because without treatment more people will end up hospitalized, in shelters, on the street, in jail or dead.

Indiana NAMI State Board members have targeted four specific areas to actively support and advocate at this General Assembly session to ensure that the services needed for adequate treatment are adequately funded. They are:

\* **Children and Adolescents** – Implementation of SEA 529, the Children’s Behavioral Health Plan which creates “comprehensive, coordinated mental health prevention, early intervention and treatment services” for children ages 0-22. Also for mandated training for school personnel about serious childhood emotional, behavioral and mental health disorders and provide for involvement of family members/caregivers in the implementation.

\* **Assisted Outpatient Treatment** – Expand the current law (AOT) to ease restrictions with respect to the conditions required for it to be applied. The law provides a means of access to treatment when a mentally ill person is judged to be gravely disabled or in danger of harming themselves or others.

\* **Removal of the Death Penalty** for those with severe and persistent mental illness if at the time of the crime the defendant is significantly impaired. In 1994 Indiana passed the law making it illegal to execute mentally retarded persons which can be amended to include these persons. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled it illegal to execute anyone under age 18.

\* **Use of Restraints and Seclusion** only as an emergency measure for safety in crisis situations. There is no therapeutic value in their use and de-escalation techniques are more likely to lead to long-term success in managing disruptive behavior.

More information about the value of investing in treatment that works and suggestions for successful advocacy efforts can be found at the web site: [www.namiindiana.org](http://www.namiindiana.org) , Click on “Legislative Action Center”, then “state advocacy”.

## A New Look At Brain Plasticity: A ROLE FOR SINGING

By Al Strickholm

As family members we are always looking for new ways to alleviate the symptoms of mental illness. A recent report on the effect of omega-3 fats and the role they play in brain plasticity and its reorganization could provide a new approach to remodeling a healthy brain. Another approach suggested by Cheryl Gerson, a psychotherapist, is that singing can be a helpful adjunct therapy to medications by effecting brain plasticity, especially for those experiencing depression.

Studies have shown that changing facial muscles from frowning to smiling can affect one’s mood. Singing requires an open mouth similar to a big smile which invites favorable reactions from others. Singing also produces sounds associated with joy. Singing requires a deep breath which charges our lungs and brain with oxygen. In all, the expression of positive emotions along with the physical exercise of singing might also affect brain plasticity. Yes, singing is exercise and exercise has been shown to be helpful in alleviating depression.

By taking the focus away from negative thoughts singing, by affecting brain plasticity, has promise of being another rung on the ladder of recovery.

## NAMI Bookclub A PROPOSAL



by Janet James

NAMI GBA members suggested recently that a reading group might be a sociable, informative device to bring folks together who have a common interest. We could select some books to read that members recommend, and meet at a congenial place. It could be a public place with COMFORTABLE seating that’s reasonably private and quiet, or we could rotate it among the homes of people who would serve as “host” of that meeting.

### WHO IS INTERESTED?

**CONTACT: JANET JAMES** [jjames@indiana.edu](mailto:jjames@indiana.edu) OR  
**KATHLEEN MICKEL** [kathimickel@gmail.com](mailto:kathimickel@gmail.com)