



Brain Pages



The Newsletter of NAMI Greater Bloomington Indiana Area

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

Issue No. 10

February 2009



Recurring Events

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

Special Events

March 4:
Screening of CANVAS
MCPL Auditorium
6:30pm

March 4: NAMI-GBA to show the movie CANVAS

by Al Strickholm

Bring your popcorn and join NAMI members and friends for a showing of the film, CANVAS, at the Monroe County Public Library Auditorium on March 4, 2009 at 6:30pm. This full-length feature film is based on the true life story of the screenwriter Joe Greco, whose mother suffered from the mental illness schizophrenia. The film depicts the struggle that he had coping with the various stages of his mother's illness throughout his childhood, as well as portrays the difficulty of his mother's illness on his father.

This is not a Hollywood story where the mother, father, and 10 year old son ride off happily into the sunset at the movie's end. However, the film avoids the distortions often seen in movies depicting the mentally ill. Instead, it realistically includes the good times, the bad times, and the heroic devotion of John (the father), a construction worker who is plagued by unpaid medical bills and eventually gets fired by an unsympathetic and callous boss. The movie deals further with the stigma Chris (the son) encounters in school because of his mother's illness.

There is a humorous element where a presumed embarrassment at school turns into a clever monetary entrepreneurship for the youngster. It also deals with the dreams and problems John has in building the sailboat he promised Mary in earlier romantic times. After too many police calls for help, neighborhood goodness evaporates but does also produce a good laugh.

The film emphasizes the importance of medication when voices begin to dominate Mary's life. Although it ends with no simple conclusion, the film leaves viewers with the hope that rehabilitation and recovery are possible if appropriate care is made avail-

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Watch Award-Winning Movie CANVAS March 4

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able. The events depicted are those many of us can relate to on a first-hand level. Although it is not a "fun movie," it has a positive and upbeat theme, which shows Chris and his father bonding with a purpose. It displays their resilience and ability to "hang in there" no matter what the circumstances. They deserve three cheers for their efforts.

The film shows the obvious need for a Universal Health Care program that provides for adequate psychiatric and mental health treatment available for everyone - with no exceptions. It would have eased the struggles of Mary, John, and Chris, and the burdens that many of us also face. The film also shows that along with all the other difficulties the family had to deal with, stigma was an added burden. Resolving this issue will not be an easy task but it is one of NAMI's priorities.

Sidebar: Mental Illness and Violent Behavior

by Al Strickholm

There is a common public perception that mental illness causes individuals to be more dangerous and prone to violence than normal people. In a recent research study, published by E.B. Elbogen and S.C. Johnson in Archives of General Psychiatry, Feb (66) (2009), a study of 34,653 subjects with violent behavior, showed that a diagnosis of mental illness such as schizophrenia, did not independently predict future violent behavior.

Instead, factors other than mental illness were more in-

involved with predicting violence in people. These included past violence, juvenile detention, physical abuse, parental arrest record, substance abuse, perceived threats, recent divorce, unemployment, victimization, age, sex, and income. The study showed that when violence occurred with the mentally ill, other co-factors were also associated with the violence, such as substance abuse, environmental stressors, and history of violence, and not the illness itself, which was low on the causative list.

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

For information or questions, please contact Kat Domingo, this issue's newsletter editor.

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NAMI-GBA wishes to thank the Center for Behavioral Health for helping to underwrite this issue of the newsletter.

President Obama Signs Children's Health Insurance Bill!

Reprinted from nami.org

On February 4, 2009, President Obama signed in to law legislation reauthorizing the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The bill (HR 2) cleared a final hurdle today when it passed the House by a vote of 290-135, after passing the Senate 66-32 on January 30. The new law:

- * Will cover approximately 4 million additional uninsured children,

- * Ensures that all private sector SCHIP plans comply with the Paul Wellstone & Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 – the new federal parity law,

- * Is fully paid for, primarily with a 61-cent increase in the federal tobacco tax,

- * Extends federal support for SCHIP through 2013,

- * Encourages states to en-

roll children who are already eligible but not yet covered, and gives states new tools to reach uninsured children,

- * Makes sure that federal funding goes to states that are using the money (to ensure that the greatest number of children get coverage),

- * Makes it easier for people who are U.S. citizens to document their citizenship status by allowing access to government databases (but extends the requirement to document citizenship to CHIP, whereas before it had applied only to Medicaid),

- * Allows states to cover children in families with incomes up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level with full federal CHIP funding but does not establish a "cap" on eligibility level,

- * Requires states to change the way they fund coverage for the parents of kids in SCHIP after 2010.

JOIN HOUSE IN CELEBRATING
the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

New House-ism shirts are now available in limited quantities!
Proceeds to benefit NAMI - **ORDER TODAY!**



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FOX Mondays 8/7c

USA Weeknights (except Tue) 8/7c
Tuesdays 9/8c

About Mental Illnesses: Facts from National NAMI

reprinted from nami.org

Mental illnesses are medical conditions that disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others, and daily functioning. Just as diabetes is a disorder of the pancreas, mental illnesses are medical conditions that often result in a diminished capacity for coping with the ordinary demands of life.

Serious mental illnesses include major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and borderline person-

ality disorder. The good news about mental illness is that recovery is possible.

Mental illnesses can affect persons of any age, race, religion, or income. Mental illnesses are not the result of personal weakness, lack of character, or poor upbringing. Mental illnesses are treatable. Most people diagnosed with a serious mental illness can experience relief from their symptoms by actively participating in an individual treatment plan.

In addition to medication treatment, psychosocial treatment such as cognitive behav-

ioral therapy, interpersonal therapy, peer support groups, and other community services can also be components of a treatment plan and that assist with recovery. The availability of transportation, diet, exercise, sleep, friends, and meaningful paid or volunteer activities contribute to overall health and wellness, including mental illness recovery.

Remember, mental illnesses are biologically based brain disorders. They cannot be overcome through "will power" and are not related to a person's "character" or intelligence.

Family to Family and Other Services

by Lee Strickholm

Our local NAMI affiliate continues to offer one of the most popular educational opportunities developed by the National NAMI organization, the Family to Family Program. The program has been available at least once a year locally since 2003. During this past year more than 35 family members and friends of loved ones living with mental illness participated in the classes taught in Bloomington.

This program was made possible in 2008 by the efforts of five members of NAMI-GBA who volunteered their time to recruit, organize and teach the

12 weekly informational sessions. Indiana State NAMI offers a workshop in Indianapolis each year to train new teacher volunteers at no expense to the participants. These participants then agree to teach a minimum of two complete course cycles in their home affiliates. To continue offering the classes locally, more volunteer teachers will be needed.

Other educational training programs are planned for this spring. A training workshop for new support group facilitators is scheduled for April 17-19, run by the Indiana State NAMI. Local support groups offer op-

portunities for families, friends, and coworkers to discuss their concerns, share problems, and explore possible remedies. Volunteer facilitators help to organize and guide the meetings.

NAMI Indiana is also offering NAMI Basics Teacher Training for caregivers of children who show symptoms of a serious mental disorder before the age of thirteen. It will be held in Indianapolis on May 15-17.

Anyone interested in these opportunities can contact Lee Strickholm at leestrick@aol.com or aramirez@nami.org for details.

Book Review: Touched with Fire by Kay Redfield Jamison, Ph.D.

by Laura Jesseph

Kay Redfield Jamison, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist and writer. She is an expert on bipolar disorder from which she has suffered since her early twenties. Presently, Dr. Jamison is Professor of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

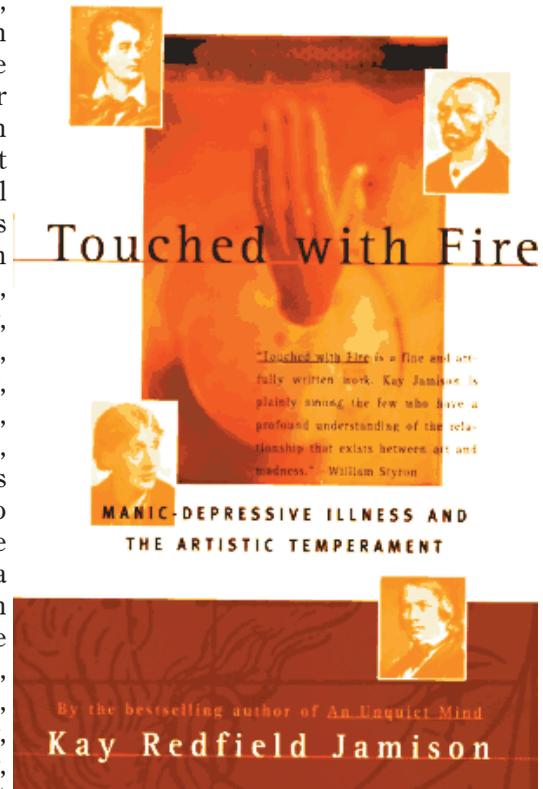
Jamison's book, *Touched With Fire*, examines the relationship between manic-depressive illness and creativity. Jamison explores this relationship largely through the writings of many great writers/artists/musicians. 19th century composer Hector Berlioz described his depression thusly, "... I had stopped composing, my mind seemed to become feebler as my feelings grew more intense. I did nothing. One power was left me - to suffer." Hugo Wolf wrote from his depressed state of the spring that he was witnessing "everywhere this bewildering urge for life, fruitfulness, creation-and only I may not take part in this festival of resurrection, at any rate not except as a spectator with grief and envy." The intensity of emotion expressed, coupled with the skill with which these people express themselves, make for an exhausting reading experience.

Touched With Fire leaves

the reader with little doubt about the existence of a connection between creativity and manic-depressive illness. In Appendix B, Jamison lists writers, artists and composers with probable cyclothymia, major depression or manic-depressive illness. This list is three pages long and includes (to name a few): William Blake, Robert Burns, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Emily Dickenson, T.S. Eliot, John Keats, Hans Christian Andersen, Honore de Balzac, Edgar Allan Poe, Dylan Thomas, Walt Whitman, Samuel Clemens, Charles Dickens, Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Herman Hesse, Herman Melville, Robert Louis Stevenson, Leo Tolstoy, Tennessee Williams, Virginia Woolf, John Dowland, George Frideric Handel, Irving Berlin, Stephen Foster, Charles Parker, Cole Porter, Vincent

Van Gogh, and Michelangelo.

Touched With Fire is dense and challenging to read. A full hundred pages are devoted to footnotes and appendices. That being said, with a little patience, it would benefit anyone seeking a better understanding of what mania and depression feel like—so much so, in fact, that small doses are all that an empathetic person can tolerate.



Update on Health Care Reform: What You Can Do

by Lee Strickholm

Why won't my son's private health insurance company cover his treatment for psychiatric care?

Why is it so difficult to get Medicaid approval for our daughter's bipolar treatment and prescription drugs?

Where can I find psychiatric care that I can afford? I earn a modest salary with no medical benefits.

These and other concerns are being expressed by more than 47 million Americans who are without health insurance, along with another 60 million who have restrictive policies with very high deductible costs.

Health care reform was a high priority in both presidential candidates prior to the past election and it has received much publicity since.

Universal health care is the goal and how to achieve it is being debated. Numerous reform ideas are being presented to our congressional members, who will be addressing this issue in the coming months. One of the bills before congress is HR 676, the United States National Health Care Act, or the Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act, which has been reintroduced by Rep. John Conyers of Michigan. It

would guarantee health care for all U.S. residents through a government-financed and privately-delivered system. As with Medicare, patients would choose their own doctors and hospitals. Care providers would be reimbursed by the federal government.

This bill has been endorsed by PNHP (Physicians for a National Health Care Plan), along with numerous city and town councils, church, labor and business groups. More information about the proposed legislation can be found on these websites: www.pnhp.org, and www.conyers.house.gov.

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

Join NAMI-GBA for Movie Night!

Award-winning film CANVAS will be screened. Written by Joe Greco, whose mother lived with schizophrenia, the movie stars Marcia Gay Harden and Joe Pantoliano

Wednesday, March 4, 2009
6:30 PM
Auditorium
Monroe County Public Library

Free and open to the public!

NAMI Greater Bloomington Area
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