

NAMI Boulder County

Circle of Support

National Alliance on Mental Illness, Boulder County, Colorado

Issue No. 193

- For all those touched by mental illness -

December 2007

Interfaith conference on mental illness draws local clergy and lay leaders

More than 100 people swarmed the lobby of Christ the Servant Lutheran Church in Louisville on October 18, as they picked up literature and nuggets of wisdom from the resource fair tables at NAMI Boulder County's interfaith conference. Clergy and lay leaders from approximately 20 faith communities in Boulder and Broomfield counties participated in the one-day conference, entitled "Mental Health and Faith Communities: Sharing the Promise of Hope and Healing." They came to learn about mental illness and discuss ways to better support the people in their congregations who are living with mental illnesses.

Conference participants warmly received keynote speaker Reverend Susan Gregg-Schroeder, a minister and consumer who specializes in helping faith communities become caring congregations. Susan spoke about her struggle with depression and how it led her to discover universal truths about spirituality during difficult times. She also offered concrete examples of what faith communities across the nation are

continued on page 3



Reverend Susan Gregg-Schroeder from Mental Health Ministries gave the keynote address at the Oct. 18 interfaith conference.

NAMI BOULDER COUNTY

1333 Iris Avenue, Boulder
303-443-4591

www.namibouldercounty.org

~

Board of Directors

President, Alan Kelly

Vice-President, Nancy Coleman

Secretary, Laura Hadaway

Treasurer, Bill Kauffman

Sharon Bowyer, Greg Coleman,

Valine Demos, Susan Gallagher,

Bob Hadaway,

Elizabeth Kauffman, Joanne Kelly,

Bev Melius, Phoebe Norton

Reg Saner, Cathy Stiers

Christine Vigorita, Anne Weiher

~

Friends of NAMI

We are most thankful for your past and continuing friendship, but our list has grown too large for this small space. Please know how much you mean to NAMI Boulder County.

~

Office Manager, Sharon Bowyer

Volunteer Coordinator, Barbara

Connors

NARSAD Cards, Cathy Stiers

Newsletter, Joanne Kelly

Contributing writers for December:

Reg Saner, Alan Kelly,

Anne Weiher, Phoebe Norton

Barbara Connors

Upcoming events

December 17 - Support Group

January 7& 21- Support Group

January 14 - Family-to-Family class starts (12 -week class)

January 15 - NAMI Boulder

County Board Meeting 6:30 p.m.

Christ the Servant Lutheran Church, Louisville. Feel free to join us.

January 25-February 29- Colorado

Visions class, Friday mornings 9:00-11:30. 5 classes.

February 19 - NAMI Boulder

County Board Meeting 6:30 p.m.

President's Corner

Writing an upbeat column is difficult today. Joanne and I just got back from a memorial service for the son of a couple we taught in a Family-to-Family class. I was glad they felt comfortable talking frankly about their son's illness at the service. I felt sad that we still have a long way to go in the search for a cure. For the young man's parents, there was a sense of release because their son had suffered so greatly for much of his 36 years.

Many days it is difficult to see the blessings of a life affected so harshly by mental illness. While our friends may be celebrating their children's academic and career successes, Joanne and I have learned to count our blessings differently. We are grateful that Joanne's son has not been arrested for a couple years now, that his girl friend wasn't really pregnant, and that he still has a safe, comfortable place to live. And that he has the courage to get up and face the challenges of each day.

I can count many blessings on the NAMI front. One is the terrific board we have and its members' can-do attitudes. Another blessing is our dedicated volunteers who sign up to help with project after project. I am grateful that the Faith Outreach Conference was a tremendous success and there are now several faith communities putting terrific programs in place for people in their congregations who are touched by mental illness. Our Family-to-Family and Colorado Visions classes fill up quickly. We've recently revived our support group and have added a successful "Let's Talk" program to the mix. Our support for the Crisis Intervention Team trainings is making a difference in how law enforcement personnel respond to emergencies involving people with mental illnesses. And if that's not enough, NAMI national just launched the Veterans Resource Center. See www.NAMI.org for more information. Most importantly, the national dialogue about mental illness is changing. People are talking about their struggles and experiences. The subject is less taboo than it once was. For this, I am grateful.

So it is a mixed bag today, the passing of one soul to the ravages of mental illness, and hope and support for the future. Count your blessings, one by one, and give an extra hug to the people you love.

Together we can make a difference.

Alan Kelly

Interfaith conference

continued from page 1

doing to educate their congregations and create programs to erase the stigma of mental illness.

The conference also featured eight different breakout sessions. Particularly popular was a panel discussion entitled “What Works/What Doesn’t: How faith communities can open the door to people with mental illness and their families” and a workshop called “Pastoral Counseling for People with Mental Illness.”

Conference participants gave the conference high marks on the evaluation forms they filled out (see a few of their comments at right). Even more gratifying than the praise is the fact that several of the faith communities that sent representatives to the conference have already moved forward to create Mental Health Ministry teams and have begun implementing programs for the people in their congregations that have mental illnesses and their families.

Many thanks to the core team members who worked for more than a year to make the interfaith conference a success. The core team included Joanne Kelly (team leader), Anne Weiher, Susan Gallagher, Gordon Ward, Barbara Ryan, Olga Jacoby, Elizabeth and Bill Kauffman, and Nora Smith. Many thanks as well to all the speakers and volunteers who gave so generously of their time and talents.

A big “thank you” to our interfaith conference sponsors and financial supporters!

Sponsors

- NAMI Boulder County
(National Alliance on Mental Illness)
- The Mental Health Center Serving Boulder and Broomfield Counties
- Boulder County Aging Services
- Foothills Behavioral Health

Financial support provided by

- Thrivent Financial for Lutherans
- Wells Fargo
- Invisible Child (nonprofit organization)

Comments from conference evaluation forms:

- Good overview and lots of resources. Thank you.
- Thank you! What a great beginning!
- All of the speakers/presenters were excellent - I appreciated the wonderful amount of resources we received!
- The personal stories helped me to have compassion for what people may be going through in my community.
- The format was excellent (1 day, keynotes + breakouts). Susan Gregg-Schroeder was fantastic. Also great discussion and questions from participants in breakout sessions.
- Thank you for a wonderful conference!
- This was all so inspiring. Thank you so much for presenting this!

If you were unable to attend the conference and would like a copy of the resource kit we gave to conference participants, please contact Joanne Kelly at 303-494-4882. The kit is designed to give clergy and faith community lay leaders valuable tools that will help them better support the people in their congregations who are dealing with mental health issues.

Public Policy Update by *Phoebe Norton*

I have the privilege of serving on the NAMI Colorado Public Policy Committee (PPC) chaired by Nita Bradford. The PPC continues to work to ensure that all of the important psychotherapeutic medications are included in the insurance and Medicaid formularies. Last week the committee met with Dr. Friedman from the Colorado School of Medicine who explained the research findings about second-generation anti-psychotic medications compared to older medications. We had hoped the second-generation medications would prove to be much better than the older medications, but unfortunately, the difference isn't as dramatic as we had hoped. Nevertheless, we know that for some people the newer medications have worked wonders, so we want to be very cautious about giving up anything in this area. Please let me know if particular second-generation medications are important to you and your family members. This information will be useful to us.

I am attending the all-day sessions of the Legislative Behavioral Health Task Force along with NAMI Colorado Executive Director Lacey Berumen, and I am on the Funding and Streamlining of Services Subcommittees. In 2007, the Colorado legislature created this task force and charged it with studying mental health and substance abuse services in order to coordinate the efforts of state agencies and streamline the services provided and maximize federal and other funding sources.

Representative Anne McGihon, from Denver chairs this task force. She is a social worker and previously worked in a psychiatric hospital, so she understands the issues well. Like me, she is concerned about the proliferation of administrations in our system and the multitude of siloed funding streams and accompanying regulations. I believe the task force members from the legislature and the state administration are committed to streamlining these as much as possible and thereby promoting the integration of services with other state functions such as child welfare, the criminal justice system, the school system, and public health clinics. This would make the behavioral health services more prominent in these other systems, more accessible to more people in need, and at the same time more effective and efficient. Of course, given the size and complexities of our federal and state funding and administration, these are formidable goals. We are currently having guest panelists from different states and national organizations telling us how they achieved some success in other parts of the country in streamlining services and making the administration more efficient. I will keep you posted as recommendations begin to be formulated so that you can give me your input. Thanks to all of you on our NAMI Boulder Board who filled out the task force's survey giving them your priorities. I will report the results of this survey as soon as they are available.

NAMI Colorado PPC is monitoring our state's response to some egregious violations of the Medicaid Home-and Community-Based Waiver and how people with severe mental illness were being cared for in a group facility in Denver and in another part of the state. Part of the problem is that this care is supposed to be provided in lieu of institutional care or nursing home care. However, Medicaid pays only \$12 a day for this care, as opposed to \$110 a day for nursing home care. We just can't spend that little – even for getting someone to go to a person's apartment to help them with tasks of daily living (cleaning, grocery shopping etc.) – without encountering shortcomings. Unfortunately, most of the oversight from the federal level has been review of charts and reports, but the real problems in group settings are not seen through a review of paperwork, but by onsite visits. I will keep you posted.

As the legislature reconvenes in January, we will be following the most important bills relating to behavioral and mental health; we will probably need your help in communicating with legislators. A past state legislator from Boulder County told me that every group should be as well organized as NAMI. She said NAMI has tremendous influence because many members communicate with legislators by e-mail, letter or phone and that their input to pending legislation and funding bills is very important. Yeah for us!

Spotlight: HOPE Coalition – Supporting Depression Awareness and Suicide Prevention in Boulder County

Because we believe that working collaboratively with other organizations can be an effective way to accomplish our objectives, from time to time, we will spotlight other non-profit organizations that are working in the mental health arena. This overview of the HOPE Coalition is the first in our series.

The HOPE (Hold On Please Everybody) Coalition's mission is to educate, engage, and empower the community about depression and suicide prevention. The organization grew out of the Parent Engagement Network about 5 years ago. The coalition, formerly known as the Depressions Awareness and Suicide Prevention Coalition, put on its initial "hope" event shortly thereafter to educate parents and high-school and middle-school students about depression and suicide.

The coalition has staged several events since the first one, the most recent of which was a conference for "gatekeepers" that focused on preventing suicides in high-risk populations.

The coalition is made of up of several Boulder county organizations: Boulder Valley School District, Colie's Closet, Compass House, Parent Engagement Network, University of Colorado at Boulder, and the Boulder County Prevention Connection.

For more information on the HOPE coalition, contact Kathy Valentine, valstone2@hotmail.com, or call the office of suicide prevention at 303-692-2560.

Suicide warning signs:

- Signs of depression
- Sadness
- Loss of sleep or excessive sleep
- Loss of appetite or overeating
- Sense of hopelessness or worthlessness
- Noticeable change in behavior
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Decline in performance of work, school or other activities
- Reckless behavior
- Giving away favorite possessions
- Purchase of guns or pills
- Sudden happiness after prolonged depression
- Preoccupation with death or dying
- Withdrawal from friends or family
- Statements like "You won't have to worry about me anymore" or "I want to go to sleep and never wake up"
- Threats of suicide

Suicide risk factors:

- Previous suicide attempt
- Loss of health (real or imagined)
- Divorce, separation or broken relationship
- Death or terminal illness of a loved one
- Loss of job, home, money
- Family history of suicide
- Depression
- Someone close to individual has completed suicide

What to do:

- Take threats seriously
- Ask questions
- Listen in a non-judgmental way – "I'm here for you"
- Take action – get individual connected with professional help

What NOT to do:

- Do not keep suicide threats a secret
- Do not act shocked or condemn
- Do not point out how much better off they are than others
- Do not interject your own problems and feelings
- Do not suggest drugs and alcohol as a solution
- Do not minimize the person's feelings
- Do not offer simple solutions
- Do not leave the person alone
- Do not try to be a therapist – get professional help

Volunteer Corner



*Barbara Connor,
NAMI Boulder
County Volunteer
Coordinator*

As I write this, Thanksgiving is right around the corner. Many of us think about the things we are grateful for at this time of year, and I am grateful to the board of directors, the volunteers, and the members who make NAMI Boulder County a strong force in supporting and educating people with mental illnesses and their families. Board members are always willing and eager to jump in and do whatever they can any time there is a need for volunteers.

They volunteered in the spring at the 9 Health Fair and over the summer at the Boulder Farmer's Market to staff information tables and spread the word about NAMI. Members of the board participated in the NAMI Colorado Run in Littleton along with other volunteers, and NAMI Boulder County won an award for the most people on an affiliate team. I am indeed fortunate to work for and with such a hard-working, dedicated board.

I am equally thankful for the many friends and members of NAMI who have also volunteered their time: Christine Armstrong, Karen Campbell, Ava Erger, Joan and Allan Wolfer at the 9 Health Fair tables; and Annie Briggs,

Catherine Cox, Jan Dobbs, Jeanne Dolan, Lynn Dyba, Anne Goldstein, Patty Jansen, and Joan Wolfer at the Farmer's Market.

I have called some members four or five times this year to let you know about upcoming NAMI events and to ask you if you would like to volunteer. I want to thank you for your patience and support. Sometimes when I call the membership, I talk to a lot of answering machines. When I do connect with members on the phone, I am always appreciative of your openness and kindness. Many of you have thanked me for what I do, and the feeling is mutual.

I'm looking forward to working with all of you in 2008.

Upcoming classes:

Family-to-Family Class

A free, 12-week class for family members of people with brain disorders (mental illnesses)

**Monday evenings January 14 – March 31, 2008
7:00 – 9:30 at First Congregational Church in Boulder**

Class leaders are Joanne Kelly and Alan Johnson. To find out how to register, call the NAMI Boulder County office at 303-443-4591.

Colorado Visions Class

A free, 5-week class for family caregivers of children and adolescents with brain disorders (mental illnesses)

**Friday mornings January 25 – February 29, 2008
9:00 – 11:30 in Boulder**

Class leaders are Cathy Howe and Ann Taylor.
To find out how to register call Ann at 303-776-3199.

Learn more about these classes at www.namibouldercounty.org

Get the support you need

NAMI Support Group

For all those touched by mental illness (consumers and family members)

First and third Monday evenings

7:00-8:30

**Boulder Community Hospital
(Alpine and Broadway)**

Call Anne Weiher at 303-442-9209 or 720 839-4139 for details.

A consumer speaks up: Time to take a look at our own stereotypes

Take a moment and close your eyes. Imagine someone living with a mental illness. Whom do you see? Do you see a ragged homeless man talking to himself on the mall, or someone sitting next to you on the bus, disheveled and inappropriately dressed for the season? Or do you imagine your next door neighbor who may be silently living with depression or bipolar disorder — someone whose house is always neat and who never goes out without caring about his/her appearance? Or do you imagine a co-worker who is almost always at work but sometimes seems somber or subdued?

Mental illness can affect all of these people — some are rich and successful and some are hanging on despite enormous odds. The vast majority of the more than 55 million people who live with mental illness in a given year are more like the silent neighbor than the homeless man. It is often difficult

to see beyond our own personal experience. We all form stereotypes and they are often rooted in our unique experience.

Oftentimes, I feel isolated and alone in my struggle to live a full and productive life despite a diagnosis of a major mental illness. I hear words like “bipolar” or “schizophrenic” and I wonder if people see me as my illness or as a person who lives and struggles day to day with an illness but is not defined by it. Sometimes people — even NAMI members — make comments that lump all consumers into a single mold. At a meeting I attended recently, someone talked about how easily you can spot a person with a mental illness.

Comments like these can be hurtful to someone with mental illness. Sometimes I am so devastated by people's comments that I remain silent; other times I try to speak up and don't think I'm heard.

Language can be a powerful tool, and stereotypes can be deeply ingrained. Before we as an organization can be truly effective at erasing stigma in our world, we all need to examine our own stereotypes and prejudices. We all need to recognize that many consumers are living full, yet challenging lives despite what may seem like — and often is — a terrible diagnosis.

The mission of NAMI Boulder County is to serve both family members and consumers alike. I believe we will do a better job of serving consumers if we remember that the eradication of the stigma of mental illness begins at home.

Sincerely yours,



Anne Weiher

Support NAMI Boulder County during the holiday season

NAMI Boulder County will be providing **free gift wrapping at Borders Book Store** at 29th Street December 5 from 10:00-2:00, December 19 from 10:00-2:00 and December 22 from 2:00-6:00. In addition to wrapping presents, NAMI members will be giving out NAMI brochures and collecting donations for NAMI Boulder County. Come shop and get your gifts beautifully wrapped! (Thank you Cathy and Samantha Stiers and Bill and Elizabeth Kauffman!)

Cathy Stiers also has **NARSAD note cards and holiday cards** for sale; proceeds from sales go to NAMI Boulder County. You can view the NARSAD Web site at www.narsadartworks.org and let Cathy know what you would like. Call her at 303-449-8794.

Away

by Reg Saner, Board Member

Early March, 1953. Wishing we'd worn overcoats, the six of us stood shivering round the gravesite in suits and neckties. "Bury the dead" being one of Catholicism's "corporal works of mercy," each of our oddly assorted group had agreed to act as pall bearer for a perfect stranger.

Prairie wind nagged at Calvary Cemetery's winter trees and bushes, conspiring with its frigid looking tombstones to make us feel even colder. For some reason the parish priest couldn't come, so Harold Reavy, the town's only Catholic mortician, would read a quick prayer or two over the casket, then signal us to lower it into the grave.

Back then, if your "nervous breakdown" were persistent and serious enough, you were, as the saying went, "put away." True, the ample grounds of our Illinois State Asylum for the Insane were spacious and well maintained – but, of course, fenced off. Once committed, many spent the rest of their lives behind that fence.

You can imagine.

There on that blustery

morning all we knew of the deceased was that years ago he had been "put away" at what townspeople called "the Insane," and died there without family or friends. As Reavy opened a prayer missal to read, some among us kept bare hands thrust into pants pockets, while others tried fending off chill by hugging themselves, shifting weight from foot to foot, and wishing to hell he'd skip the prayer part.

But something was missing. "Hal," I said, "shouldn't we at least know the man's name?"

He gave me a quizzical look, glanced toward the others, and said, "Actually . . . I couldn't tell you what it was." He was a decent man, but as low-bidder mortician handled all the Asylum's Catholic deaths, so what was one more? Sensing my dismay he shrugged and said, "The name would be over there," nodding toward the hearse, "in amongst my papers. I'd have to look it up." As if that were a bother.

The other pall bearers, all older than I was, plainly found it irksome, this fuss over a mere

name. Just why it mattered I couldn't have explained, yet to me it mattered a lot. But, as I say, Reavy was a decent sort. He offered, though a bit reluctantly, to get the burial order, "If you really want to know."

It was becoming an issue. Quietly but clearly I said, "Well . . . yes, I really do."

All right then. From the hearse he fetched a clipboard, leafed through its pink forms, found the one he wanted, and said to me in particular, "Robert. His name was Robert," then turning to the others, "Last name, Moser. From Chicago. Date of birth unknown."

"So he's Robert," I thought, welcoming the grace note of those two syllables, little guessing they'd become unforgettable – along with, ever since, an awareness of the distancing implicit in phrases like "the insane" and "put away." Their appalling connotative power is among the many soul-withering effects which NAMI works to lessen, even end altogether.

Sign up for training to lead peer-to-peer support groups

NAMI Colorado is rolling out a peer-to-peer support program called NAMI Connections that was developed by NAMI National. NAMI Connections is a free, 90-minute weekly support group for people who have mental illnesses. It is led by individuals who also have mental illnesses. Training for support group leaders is planned for February or March. We are looking for volunteers with mental illnesses who are interested in leading a support group. E-mail Barbara Connors; blconnors@comcast.net if you are interested.

Education and Support Groups

NAMI CLASSES IN BOULDER COUNTY

On-going free education and support classes offering information on brain disorders, how to cope, and how to advocate. We keep an ongoing list for these classes. For information or to reserve a place, call us at 303-443-4591.

- ▶ **Family-to-Family Class** – A free 12-week program for family members, friends or caregivers who have a loved one with a brain disorder. Next class starts Jan. 14. Call today to reserve a place.
- ▶ **Colorado Visions** (formerly Visions for Tomorrow) – A free multi-week program consisting of workshops for caregivers of children and adolescents with brain disorders. Next class starts January 25. Call today to reserve a place.

FAMILY SUPPORT

- ▶ **Support group for anyone touched by mental illness** (family members and consumers) - First and third Monday nights, 7-8:30 at Boulder Community Hospital on Broadway. Call Anne Weiher at 303-442-9209 or 720 839-4139 for details.

CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

- ▶ **Parents Experiencing Challenging Kids Support Group (PECK)** - Meeting times vary. Contact Harriet Austin at 303-284-9863 or austinhb@hotmail.com for dates and locations.

DEPRESSION AND BIPOLAR DISORDER

The first two groups meet at Longmont United Hospital, Gaugin Room, 1950 Mountain View.

- ▶ **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)**
Mondays, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
Contact Diane Dworkin-Wagner at 303-682-2911
Email: twinpeaksdbsa@hotmail.com
- ▶ **Depression and Bipolar Support Group**
Wednesdays, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Contact Barbara at 303-443-0985 or Vanessa at 970-532-4973.
- ▶ **The Robert D. Sutherland Center for the Evaluation and Treatment of Bipolar Disorder**
Contact Dr. Alisha Brosse, Associate Director, at 303-492-5680 for information about a 6-week psycho-education group and an on-going skills training group (www.rdsfoundation.org)

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

Support group for people with OCD, their families and friends. First and third Wednesdays, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Mental Health Center, Norton Room, 1333 Iris Avenue, Boulder. Contact Brent, 303-422-9704, Arlene, 303-670-9691, or Ilene, 303-938-1360.

OCD ANONYMOUS (ocdcolorado@hotmail.com) and **SOCIAL PHOBICS ANONYMOUS/SOCIAL ANXIETY ANONYMOUS** (www.healsocialanxiety.com or healsocialanxiety@hotmail.com). For further information on both groups, call John at 303-325-3143

CHINOOK CLUBHOUSE, BOULDER

Chinook Clubhouse is a program dedicated to enhancing the recovery of men and women with mental illnesses. It provides opportunities for members to live, work, learn, and socialize while contributing their talents in a community of mutual support. The Chinook Clubhouse works with the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to offer transitional employment opportunities. Call 303-440-4842 for information (www.chinookclubhouse.org).

"SOFT VOICES" DROP-IN CENTER, LONGMONT

Resource and friendship center for adults with mental illness. Tuesdays, 10:00-noon; Thursdays and Fridays, 1:00-3:00. 5th & Kimbark, downstairs. Art sessions led by Mimi Farrelly meets on Fridays, 1:00-3:00 p.m. For more information, contact Gil at 303-776-0410.

Everyone is welcome to participate!

INTERNET RESOURCES

Visit the NAMI (national) Web site at www.nami.org
Visit the NAMI Boulder County Web site at www.namibouldercounty.org

If you need help finding information online, contact the sources below. Service is confidential and available for free.

Consumer Health Resource Library

Located at Longmont Hospital, 1950 West Mountain View Avenue, Main Entrance. Call 303-651-5112 for hours.

Grillo Health Care Information Center

Located at Boulder Public Library, 11th and Arapahoe, Main Branch, 2nd floor. Call 303-441-4174 for hours.

NAMI BOULDER COUNTY BOARD

Board members meet the third Tuesday of the month, September through June at 6:30 p.m. at Christ the Servant Lutheran Church, 506 Via Appia, Louisville. Meetings are open to all who would like to attend.

Join the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Your dues include membership in NAMI National, NAMI Colorado and NAMI Boulder County. You will get the newsletters published by each of these organizations

- \$35 per year individual/family membership
- \$3 per year for people with a limited income
- I want to support NAMI Boulder County with a tax-deductible gift of \$ _____

Your membership dues and gifts will help provide support, education and advocacy for Boulder County individuals and families who are coping with serious mental illness.

Does your employer have a matching gifts program?

I am interested in:

- Learning about volunteer opportunities, either ongoing or one-time only
- Arranging for speaker or presentations on mental illness for my club, church, work or other group
- Helping with advocacy efforts by writing letters/making phone calls to my elected representatives

Name _____ Email address _____

Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Home phone _____ Alternate phone _____

**Mail this form with your check to: NAMI Boulder County
1333 Iris Avenue, Boulder, CO 80304**
