

Circle of Support

National Alliance on Mental Illness, Boulder County, Colorado

Issue No. 207

- For all those touched by mental illness -

June 2011

Meet Lucy Hausner, Our NAMI Connection Facilitator

“It is an honor and privilege to help others who are experiencing the same problems I did,” says Lucy Hausner, the facilitator of the NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group that meets every Tuesday evening 7:00 to 8:30 at the Broomfield United Methodist Church, 545 W. 10th Avenue, Room 201, Broomfield.

NAMI Connection is a peer-facilitated support group for adults with mental illness regardless of diagnosis. It offers a casual and relaxed atmosphere in which to share the challenges and successes of coping with mental illness and daily living. It provides a confidential, safe, welcoming place to connect with others to share feelings and problems, find new solutions, new insight and new friends.

Lucy’s journey with depression began at the age of 16-18, with a diagnosis at the age of 30. She grew up in a family of high achievers, so she worked very hard to live up to her family’s expectations and found the struggle painful and lonely. Disapproval and disappointment were her constant companions.



Lucy Hausner

While living in England for 12 years with her husband and young daughter, her depression and isolation became very extreme. The gray, damp weather made her days long and dreary. Her thoughts were often sad, dark and lonely. Diagnosis was a relief and empowered her.

Upon returning to the U.S. and starting a new life in Colorado, where the sun shines almost every day and where the mountains ground her, she began work at a local mental health center. She is now employed as a client and family advocate to help others handle problems in some aspect of their

treatment. She says it is the first time her mental illness has worked in her favor. Mental illness is a part of who she is and it gives her the ability to relate to others with the same challenges.

NAMI Connection has complemented her job in mental health. To be a Connection facilitator, she participated in a three-day NAMI-sponsored training, which allowed her to practice through role playing and provided her with a wealth of written reference material.

Lucy believes that some of the benefits of attending a peer-led support group include being among people who truly understand what you’re going through without pity or judgment. It provides camaraderie and shared experiences. Advice is accepted more readily and more honestly due to trust that is built among group members. Everyone helps each other “stay in the here and now” to take steps toward recovery, avoiding the past pitfalls of ruminating thoughts and old behavior patterns.

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NAMI BOULDER COUNTY

1333 Iris Avenue, Boulder
303-443-4591
www.namibouldercounty.org

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~

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.

~

Newsletter editor: Joanne Kelly
Contributing writers for June:
Anne Weiher, Alan Johnson, Nancy Coleman, Liz LaRoux

Upcoming events

June 29 - Veteran's Panel -- 4:00 p.m. at the Boulder Public Library. See details on page 8.

July 11- August 29 - Sutherland Seminar Series on Bipolar Disorder -- see details on page 8.

August 10 - NAMI Boulder County Board Meeting, 7:00 p.m. at the San Lazaro clubhouse, Valmont and 55th, Boulder

President's Corner

I cannot believe how fast this year has gone by. The Boulder/Broomfield affiliate has been very busy, and we have made significant inroads in working with other organizations in our area. We co-sponsored many events this year and made contributions to support others, from the "Hope Lights the Night" memorial for those touched by suicide to the "Beautiful Art for Beautiful Minds" event, which raises much-needed funds for Chinook

Clubhouse. The Interfaith Network on Mental Illness, which had been a task force of NAMI, is now its own independent 501c3. While we are sorry to see them go, we will maintain strong ties to them.

We had a nice turnout for the annual meeting, and it was great to catch up with folks. It was bittersweet, however, as we said good-bye to several key board members. Bob Hadaway resigned and we will certainly miss his presence and wisdom on the board. Nancy Coleman, an integral part of the board and our past president, is also leaving. She will be truly missed, but she promises to keep in touch. Bev Seeds, who has worked in our office, is leaving, and we thank her for her many years of service to NAMI. She has promised to work on smaller projects, and I am very thankful for that.

After many years in NAMI, Sharon Bowyer is leaving the board and will no longer serve as office manager. We can never replace her knowledge, wisdom, and dedication to NAMI. I am thankful for her support and help this past year and glad that she will still serve as a consultant for NAMI.

We extend a hearty welcome to new board members Charles Horowitz and Elicia Goodsoldier. Charles comes to us from the Bay Areas where he had extensive interactions with NAMI. Elicia, a unit coordinator at Chinook, brings youthful enthusiasm and badly needed technical advice to our board. For these new members and all the ones who agreed to stay on, I am truly grateful as I begin my second year as president.

It is also with great sadness that I announce that Joanne Kelly will no longer be doing our newsletter. She has set the gold standard for excellence not only in layout and design but also in editing. She has been a great source of support for me and our organization for many years and we will miss her more than she will know.

We have empty board seats, jobs to fill from the newsletter to office work to our volunteer coordinator. If you are interested in any of these positions, please contact me or the office. We begin the new year with excitement and promise and I look forward to our continued outreach and presence in the community and to making NAMI a household name.

Thank your all for your support and commitment to NAMI.

Anne W. Weiher

Rev. Jana Drakka Connects at INMI conference

NAMI Boulder County was one of several cosponsors for the Interfaith Network on Mental Illness "Compassion and Acceptance" conference May 11-14, 2011. The conference featured Rev. Jana Drakka, a Zen Buddhist monk who works with homeless people on the streets of San Francisco.

Jana Drakka shares the stories of her life with transparency. Her connections with people arise from her own experiences. Jana has abused alcohol and other substances. She has suffered from PTSD and has attempted suicide. She has been homeless and a patient in a psychiatric hospital. She has been abused in a violent relationship and has been rejected for being a lesbian.

Even so, she is able to say, "I have been in the lowest places, the deepest depression, the most despicable conditions, and still I am here. I am filled with calm, happiness, peace, and joy. If I can do it, so can you. Don't give up."

The one thread throughout the 4 days of events was Jana's teaching about mindful meditation. "Being in the present. What is here right now. This is reality, the only reality we have." She came back again and again to this practice, reminding people that all faiths have a contemplative tradition. She practices a sitting meditation and then talks about this because, "I want to share with others what has saved my life."



Jana spoke without notes since she believes that "the words that are needed to be said will be spoken." She spoke for a total of at least 12 hours over the 7 different events in which she participated. In each presentation she revealed her authentic self, a person whose life journey has led her to be unafraid.

Imbedded in my memory will be Jana's description of her very first meditation, one that used visualization. In the locked ward of a psychiatric hospital as a result of a serious suicide attempt, an intern from Austin, Texas invited her to do a visualization practice. At that time Jana felt herself worthless, self-loathing, not wanting to be alive, despising herself, and inca-

pable of doing anything of value. She was in the depth of her depression. The intern invited her to become still and visualize "a stream of silver sparkling rain gently flowing upon her." "This is my own goodness," she said, "filling me up. That first meditation saved me." The first step in recovery is self-acceptance and, for Jana, meditation has become a practice that changes the brain rut of self-rejection and loathing and creates a new brain pathway that brings her love and joy. She teaches that offering loving kindness to oneself is essential to offering compassion to others.

Making light of her own cognitive impairment, she said that because sometimes

she could not remember faces, let alone names, of even her close friends, she was able to approach every person with an open hearted greeting, as if they were her best friend. Maybe they actually were, or could be! In her own vulnerably shared stories, Jana conveyed a deep well of hospitality in her spirit that welcomed each of us who received the gift of her presence.

By Alan Johnson
Chair, Interfaith Network on
Mental Illness Board of Directors,
Revalan2004@comcast.net

NAMI Walk 2011

NAMI Boulder County was well represented at the NAMI Walk 2011 held May 21 at Stapleton Park in Denver. Approximately 700 people attended this year's walk. The walk is held each year to raise funds and fight the stigma associated with mental illness.

Photos courtesy of McKennzie Rains



NAMI Walk 2011



Eating disorders: A mother speaks out



*By Anne Weiher,
NAMI Boulder
County board
president and a
professor of
psychology*

Like all mental illnesses, eating disorders are a spectrum disorder and are commonly misunderstood. The scientific definition of an eating disorder is a severe disturbance in eating behavior, such as extreme reduction of food intake or extreme overeating, or feelings of extreme distress or concern about body weight or shape. The key word here is “extreme,” for most of us overeat at some point, or restrict food intake, and we all can feel distressed about our body weight or shape. Just like depression, which most of us have experienced at some point in our lives, the symptoms of eating disorders touch many of us. However, for some these illnesses become more than just passing ideas. They affect the heart and soul of an individual and while it would be nice to say that there are easy answers to their etiology, the causes are a complex interplay of biological, social, and psychological factors which we do not understand. In most severe cases of eating disorders, there is co-morbidity with other psychiatric disorders such as depression, substance abuse, anxiety disorders, or obsessive compulsive disorder.

Eating disorders are the leading cause of death of any of the psychiatric disorders. Death may come in the form of suicide, but often is the result of health complications such as heart conditions, kidney failure, or electrolyte imbalances.

Treatment can work for some, but about 10% of individuals with eating disorders are treatment resistant. They may have periods of health but suffer recurrent relapses. The most common types of eating disorders are anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. For those plagued by anorexia, there is a severe emaciation, an extreme drive for thinness and an unwillingness to maintain a normal or healthy body weight. There can be a distorted body image that seems to border on psychosis. People (mostly women) with anorexia may severely restrict their food intake, use exercise or laxatives in excess to lose weight. Individuals who suffer from bulimia may have a normal body weight which they maintain using a binge and purge cycle (vomiting, excessive use of laxatives, fasting or excessive exercise). Like those who live with anorexia, people with bulimia fear gaining weight and are extremely unhappy with their body image. As time goes on, their health deteriorates and complications such as osteoporosis, brittle hair and nails, dry and yellowish skin, anemia, muscle weakness and loss, low blood pressure and drop in body temperature may occur.

Like all mental illnesses, eating disorders take their toll not only on the individual who suffers from the illness, but the family as well. Our 38 year old daughter has had an eating disorder for over 20 years. In the beginning, it was characterized by bulimia and I failed to recognize the signs of this illness. As time went on, symptoms of anorexia appeared. This behavior was reinforced during a stay at a treatment facility for those with eating disorders. For a time, she maintained a normal weight. Then she relapsed. Treatment did not seem to work and a brush with death did not really scare her into change.

My daughter’s illness has affected me, my husband, and her sister. As many of you with a loved one living with mental illness know, we all wish for the daughter and sister we once had before this demon entered our lives. In a real sense, we are all helpless in the face of this devastating illness. We can set boundaries, provide support (without enabling), and encourage small steps toward wellness. We realize this will be a lifelong struggle for her and that her illness may kill her as surely as cancer can kill. I carry the hope that she can find peace in her life and happiness in the face of one of life’s greatest challenges. Yet, as someone said, it is a roller coaster ride for all of us.

Eating disorders: A daughter's view



By Anne
Weiher's
daughter,
Liz LeRoux

Eating disorders destroy lives. It's that simple, whether you die from them, or you lead a life of seclusion in constant fear of your weight. I'm an recovering anorexic and it destroyed my life. I was hospitalized many times and went to treatment twice. I just wasn't ready to get well. I lived a life of isolation, depression, anxiety, pain and loneliness. I finally hit rock bottom when my marriage fell apart. I knew I had to get healthy and I knew that

God had bigger dream for me. I am now almost at my goal weight, have gotten my medications rights, and for the first time in 20 years I feel happy, healthy, committed and strong.

I didn't get to recovery easily and I still have issues with food. I will probably have that problem for some time. I had a great team working for me: a therapist, a psychiatrist, a nutritionist, and a doctor. I also had the love and support of my family. Although they were loving and supportive, they were also scared. So was I. This was a total change from the life I'd been living for 20 years; if you can really say I had a life.

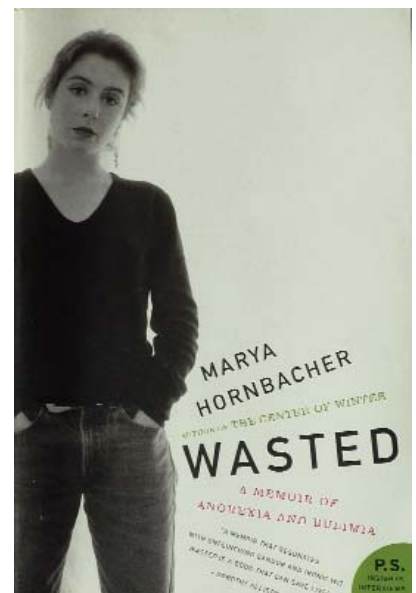
If you're suffering from an eating disorder or you know of someone who is, my best advice is to seek help. Remember God has bigger and better plans for you. If you know someone with an eating disorder, help them find that help. Love and support them, but don't be a doormat. Encourage them to live a new life. A life that is happy, thrilling, and wonderful. Walk with them, force them to see the people they need to see to aid them in their recovery. Do anything you can do to get them back into life. Because when you are in recovery, whether through many of the treatment centers or with a good team, your life can truly change.

Learn more about eating disorders

For good, factual information about eating disorders, go to the MedLine Plus website at
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/eatingdisorders.html>

or to the Academy for Eating Disorders website at
<http://www.aedweb.org>

For a detailed personal account of what it is like to live with an eating disorder, read Marya Hornbacher's emotionally wrenching memoir, "**Wasted.**" This well-written book will give you new insights into why people with this disorder go to such great lengths to hide their illness, the pain that they endure and the underlying purpose of their self-destructive actions that seem so baffling to an observer.



Meet Lucy Hausner

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Lucy's interests aren't just related to mental health. She enjoys learning about the English middle ages, and specifically Henry II. Her household has three dogs and a cat that keep her entertained. She recently returned from an exciting and interesting trip to Nepal to visit her daughter who is involved in humanitarian work there.

If you're looking for a warm, caring community where you can share your weekly trials and tribulations or celebrate successes and happy events, visit the NAMI Connection in Broomfield. Take steps with others on the path to recovery and friendship.

"Like"

NAMI Boulder County on Facebook

We need 25 people to like NAMI Boulder County in order to take advantage of more networking. Please add us and ask your friends to do the same.

SAVE the DATE

HOPE Lights the Night Candlelight Vigil

**Sept. 13, 2011
7:00 p.m.**

**Community United
Congregational Church**

Free Veteran Discussion Panel: A Veteran's Truth

**Wednesday, June 29, 4:00-6:00 p.m.
Canyon Theatre in the Boulder Public Library**

Veterans returning to civilian life face daunting emotional and physical challenges on a daily basis. The pressures of finding a job, reconnecting with loved ones and functioning in a non-military environment can be overwhelming. Public education and awareness of veteran's issues helps eliminate negative misconceptions and promotes a healthier integration for those who have returned from war.

As an Iraq Vet from a therapeutic support group stated, "It would be nice if people knew what 'IED' stood for because they killed so many of my friends. I can't believe I sit in class with people who don't know." With so many people returning from combat there is an increasing need to focus on education and support for those who interact with veterans. Community forums such as this allow a wide breadth of the community to attend.

To help meet this need, Windhorse Guild is sponsoring this free discussion facilitated by Trisha Dittrick, a therapist specializing in veteran's issues. The dialogue is open to the public.

A panel comprised of a WWII carrier pilot, a Vietnam medic, and a young non-combat soldier will share their military experience, reintegrating into civilian life and how they cope with trauma. A short clip from the HBO Documentary "War Torn" will be shown. A question and answer period will follow.

Sutherland Center

Seminar Series on Bipolar Disorder

Mondays, 6-7:30 p.m., from July 11 - August 29

Seminars are primarily designed for adults with a bipolar disorder and their family and friends, but are open to anyone in the community. Attend only one session or come each week; no commitment or pre-registration is required. A \$10 donation per session is recommended but no fee is required.

Learn more: rdsfoundation.org

Education and Support Groups

Details on many of the listings below are available at www.namibouldercounty.org

NAMI CLASSES IN BOULDER COUNTY

Ongoing 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.
- ▶ **Colorado Visions** (formerly Visions for Tomorrow) – A free 5-week program consisting of workshops for caregivers of children and adolescents with brain disorders.

NAMI SUPPORT GROUPS

- ▶ **Support group for family members of people with mental illness** - 1st and 3rd Monday nights, 7-8:30 at the Boulder Mental Health Center (1333 Iris, Boulder). Call Anne Weiher at 720 839-4139.
- ▶ **NAMI Connection peer support group**, Broomfield, Tuesdays 7-8:30 p.m., United Methodist Church, 545 W. 10th Ave, Room 201. Email mbgwells@aol.com or savarstevie@aim.com

DEPRESSION AND BIPOLAR DISORDER

- ▶ **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) Boulder**, weekly peer-only meetings and one friends-and-family meeting per month. Contact Lauren at 303-641-6333 or email boulderdbsa@gmail.com.
- ▶ **The Robert D. Sutherland Center for the Evaluation and Treatment of Bipolar Disorder** Visit rdsfoundation.org or call 303-492-5680 for information about the Sutherland Seminar Series on bipolar disorder, which is offered twice yearly.
- ▶ **Supporting Together**, Thursdays 6:00-8:00 p.m. Longmont, for consumers and family members. Diane and Candy Dworkin-Wagner 303 682-2911, supportingtogether@hotmail.com
- ▶ **Longs Peak DBSA**, Mondays, 2:30-4:30 p.m. 303-833-4036, longspeakbipolarsupport@q.com.

SUICIDE SURVIVORS

- ▶ Free support group for family and friends of someone who has died from suicide. Longmont, 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 5:30-7 p.m. Call 303-532-7904.

CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Parents Experiencing Challenging Kids Support Group (PECK) - Meets monthly at a local restaurant in Louisville. For time and place, contact Harriet Austin at 303-284-9863.

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

Support group for people with OCD, their families and friends. First and 3rd Wednesdays, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Mental Health Center, 1333 Iris Avenue, Boulder. Call Brent, 303-422-9704 or Ilene, 303-938-1360.

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE ANONYMOUS (www.ocdcolorado.com) and **SOCIAL PHOBICS ANONYMOUS** (www.healsocialanxiety.com)

SCHIZOPHRENIA & Related Disorders Support Groups

Call 303 413-6233, for details.

1. Mondays, 7:00-8:00 p.m. sharp, Mental Health Center, 1333 Iris Ave, Norton Room, entrance on southeast.
2. Fridays, 10:30-11:15 a.m., Maslin House, 1036 University Ave.

FAITH-BASED SUPPORT GROUPS

- ▶ **Spiritual Support Group** for consumers and family members, 2nd and 4th Monday, 7-8:30 p.m. at First Congregational Church, 1128 Pine St., Boulder. Call 720-304-6918. All are welcome.
- ▶ **"Shift" groups** every Friday night at Flatirons Community Church. Learn more at www.flatironschurch.com/shift
- ▶ **First Presbyterian Mental Illness Support Group** (for family members and friends) 3rd Sunday of every month at First Presbyterian Church, Boulder. Call 303-442-1925

"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. Contact Gil at 303-776-0410.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Visit the NAMI website at www.nami.org
Visit the NAMI Colorado website at www.namicolorado.org

Many of these support groups/classes/resources are sponsored by groups other than NAMI Boulder County. Please use your own best judgement as to whether they are suitable for you.

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 NAMI National and NAMI Boulder County. If it is more convenient for you, you can join online at www.nami.org using a credit card.

- \$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**
