

Circle of Support

National Alliance on Mental Illness, Boulder County, Colorado

Issue No. 196

- For all those touched by mental illness -

September 2008

Howl: Ginsberg, bipolar and me

By Clay Evans

Never convinced of his “genius,” I had always judged poet Allen Ginsberg by the content of his character, which was, it seemed to me, problematic.

Yet there I stood, wild and revved, a few feet from the open door of a cramped downtown bookstore, a copy of Ginsberg’s famous “Howl” close to my chest. The proprietor seemed busy with another customer.

I pushed the chapbook beneath my arm, turned, and with a sense of exhilaration stepped out into a breezy, sunny spring day.

“Hey! What are you doing?” The shopkeeper had abandoned his conversation, and was striding toward me, goateed and glaring.

I stopped. The poem was in my hands, a strangled dove.

“I was stealing this book. I’m sorry.” I handed it to him, and started up the sidewalk. The shopkeeper screamed about “people like you” and the trials of being a small businessman.

“Don’t ever come back in here!”

As I drove up the canyon toward home, heart thumping, thoughts racing, telephone poles

whispered to me audibly. What’s happening to me? I asked. Their answers were unintelligible.

I spent the rest of that weekend dosed on alcohol, nicotine and ecstasy. Friends visiting from

“ I am alive. I am creative. I have not become a zombie, as I once feared I would. I am more me than ever... ”

New Mexico told me they were worried. I laughed, wild and defiant, popped more pills, and they decided to leave.

“We can’t watch you do this to yourself.”

Years before, my first therapist, a retired Catholic priest with a Jungian bent, told me I’d never escape my heavy black chains by running to another job, another

city, another girlfriend. It’s simple, he said: You have major depression.

Thanks, Father. I stopped seeing him and accelerated my self-medication. Soon after, I returned to Boulder, my hometown, weighted almost to incapacity in my chains. I spent long days in my parents’ basement, unable even to muster the energy to carry out the suicide that haunted my dreams.

The episodes passed, as always. It wasn’t until my close encounter with Ginsberg that a therapist mentioned bipolar illness. My father, a physician, had always preached that “you are who you are,” and seemed to believe that mental illness was just an excuse, a sign of weakness or perhaps defective character.

But “Howl” had opened my eyes: Running 15 miles without water or food, then collapsing in quivering exhaustion; the constant consumption of drugs mild and wild, depending on my mood; susurrating telephone poles, trees, skies; my mind’s painful oscillation between soaring energy and crushing darkness ... So maybe I did need help.

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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.

~

Office Manager: Sharon Bowyer
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Alan Kelly, Barbara Connors. Clay
Evans. Ann Matino

President's Corner

Close your eyes and imagine being in a room filled with thousands of passionate advocates working to make the world a better place for those with mental illness and their families. Imagine them telling their stories, sharing their strategies and celebrating their triumphs. Does it give you goose bumps? I got goose bumps when I experienced it first-hand at the NAMI National Convention in Orlando in June.

Three members of NAMI Boulder County attended the national convention this year. I went as affiliate president, Joanne went as NAMI Colorado president, and Anne Weiher went as our state Consumer Council representative. We had some interesting adventures (ask me sometime about the bus ride from the airport) and ate lots of mediocre hotel food, but it was worth every penny we spent getting there. The keynote sessions were inspiring and the break-out sessions were diverse and informative. I attended a couple on board development and board transformation. It was also a great opportunity to network with other NAMI leaders and find out how other affiliates handle similar problems.

There was a fair amount of activity at the convention around the presidential primaries and the national election. We were fortunate to have Barak Obama's medical policy advisor come to the convention to not only answer questions but to listen and to take back to the campaign the concerns of those at the convention. John McCain did not send a representative, but issued a statement emphasizing the individual's personal responsibility for their healthcare. Our Colorado elections will be important, too, and I urge you to attend our local candidates' forum (see info on next page).

Now close your eyes again and imagine living in a future time when persons with mental illness are well cared for, involved in meaningful work, and accepted as valuable members of their communities. All of our efforts bring us closer to that day. Together, we can make a difference.

Upcoming events

September 7 - NAMI Walk - See page 3 for details.

September 8 - Interfaith Network on Mental Illness meeting - See page 5 for details.

September 8 - Family-to-Family class starts

September 15 - Support Group - See page 11 for details.

September 16 - NAMI Boulder County Board Meeting 6:30 p.m. at San Lazaro Clubhouse.

September 17 - Supported Employment Workshop - See page 7 for details.

September 23 - Candidates' Forum - See page 3 for details

September 26 - Colorado Visions Class starts

September 27 - NAMI Colorado Annual Meeting at Fort Logan. Call 303-494-4882 for details

October 5-11 Mental Illness Awareness Week

October 21 - NAMI Boulder County Board Meeting 6:30 p.m. at San Lazaro Clubhouse.

Join us on September 7 for a NAMI Walk

This year's NAMI walk will be held Sunday, September 7 at the Westminster City Park Recreation Center. Registration will begin at 4:30 p.m., and the walk begins at 5:30 p.m. The walk is jointly sponsored by NAMI Boulder County, NAMI Jefferson County and NAMI Colorado.

The money raised by the NAMI Walk will help provide funds for ongoing programs in Boulder/Broomfield counties, including:

- Mental Illness Awareness Week
- Family-to Family classes provided free to participants,
- Colorado Visions classes for families with children dealing with mental illness (also free)
- Support for Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training for law enforcement officers
- Community education programs on mental illness

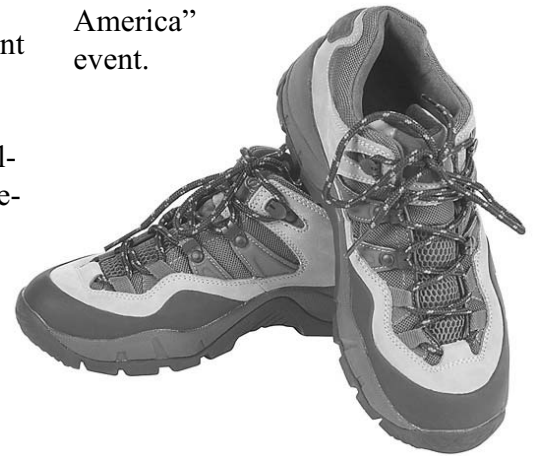
You can walk as an individual or as part of a team. We encourage you to get pledges from friends, family members, co-workers and all those from whom you've bought Girl Scout cookies, Gold C booklets, etc.

If walking is not your cup of tea, you can help support the NAMI Walk by sending a donation to NAMI Colorado, 1100 Fillmore St., Denver, CO 80206.

While one of the goals of the event is to raise money for NAMI Colorado, its affiliates and other non-profit organizations, an equally important goal is to raise awareness about mental illness. Your participation in this event can help show Coloradans how important this issue is.

A copy of the walk registration brochure is included with this newsletter. For more copies of the brochure or a form for tallying your donations, please contact Greg Coleman at gccoleman@coldwellbanker.com.

Next year, we will hold the walk in May instead of September, and – if all goes according to plan – it will be an official “NAMI Walk for the Mind of America” event.



Candidates to share views on mental health, substance abuse issues

**September 23, 2008
7 to 9 p.m.,
East Boulder Recreation Center**

NAMI Boulder County and the Mental Health Center Serving Boulder and Broomfield Counties will host a forum for candidates who are running for state offices from Boulder County. Twenty-five candidates for Boulder County Commissioner seats and the Colorado State Legislature are on the guest list. As of late August, 10 had agreed to attend. All the candidates will be asked to submit answers in writing to several questions regarding mental health, health, and substance abuse issues. At the forum, the candidates will each get a few minutes to give their thoughts on the pertinent issues and then a moderator will ask them each a question. The forum is open to anyone in the community who is interested in what the local candidates have to say on these subjects. Please join us!

Howl

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“I’m giving you a prescription to help with your bipolar symptoms,” said the doctor, an attractive, but to me threatening, psychiatrist to whom my therapist had sent me.

There was no follow-up plan. She had waved off my concerns about medication affecting my cherished creativity, my sexuality. We didn’t even set another appointment.

I tore up her script and threw it into Boulder Creek. Watching the little white leaves roll away on the spring-pregnant flow felt cathartic.

Screw you, lady. I’m OK.

And for five more years, I suffered. My symptoms persisted and metastasized. I got into trouble with police, the public and my intimates with a furious temper, I drove erratically, and spent bleak stretches at work spooking colleagues with hints of suicide. I medicated myself as best I could.

“Just go see him once,” a friend with a bipolar diagnosis finally told me, recommending her psychiatrist. “He’ll work with you and answer all your questions. You can’t live like this. You’re going to die.”

I howled, full of tears and fury, but made an appointment anyway. There was enough of me left to be afraid.

Dr. Wood was different from the first doctor I’d seen. He did blood panels, and we met several times before deciding on a medication. I saw him weekly, then monthly, and eventually quarterly, no matter how I was feeling.

He educated me about my disease. He explained the physiology, the importance of stabilizing behavior — eating well, sleeping, exercise — and helped me understand that my drug use was my brain’s attempt to balance out skewed biochemistry.

“This is not a moral issue,” he said. “It’s not a weakness. You have an illness.”

Almost immediately, my depressive episodes dissipated and the hypomania became much less intense and frequent. My obsessive thinking and racing brain slowed. I got a new therapist. Life got better.

But I still continued to self-medicate; after a quarter of a century, it was now ingrained behavior. My anger continued to flare. Dr. Wood refused to judge, but reminded me every time we spoke that using other drugs would inter-

fere with the effectiveness of treatment.

A few years later, I got into recovery. Once we got an accurate picture of my brain off drugs, the doctor changed me to a more effective medication.

Five years later, I am stable enough that sometimes I allow myself to forget that I have bipolar illness. But I am fortunate to have my therapist, psychiatrist, and recovery to remind me. Life goes on, with all its trenches and peaks, its joys and troubles, but my disease no longer amplifies them the way it used to.

I am alive. I am creative. I have not become a zombie, as I once feared I would. I am more me than ever, and that includes my illness.

And though I do feel somewhat indebted to him, I’m still no fan of Allen Ginsberg.

Schizophrenia Anonymous...new support groups launched

Schizophrenia Anonymous of Boulder will meet on Tuesdays, starting September 16, 7-8 p.m. at the Mental Health Center Serving Boulder and Broomfield Counties (1333 Iris Ave, Boulder) in the Boulder Room. There will be a greeter at the door (enter on the south side of the building).

The meetings are free and are open to anyone with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, or a related disorder. The meetings are meant to be a support system for its members in conjunction with all other treatment modalities, including medications and therapy.

Schizophrenia Anonymous meetings are overseen by the Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America (www.sardaa.org). Trained facilitators lead the semi-structured meetings. Group sharing and support are the major components of the meetings. For information call Margery at 303 717-8808 or Patrick at 303 413-6233.

Interfaith Network on Mental Illness launched, upcoming faith-related programs announced

Boulder County's Interfaith Network on Mental Illness (INMI) is in its formative stage. NAMI Boulder County has been involved from the beginning and will continue to be part of the organization.

You are invited to the next gathering of the INMI. It will be on Monday, September 8, from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. at Columbine Unity Church, 8900 Arapahoe Road, Boulder. The topic is "Spiritual Approaches to Mental Illness." There will be a representative panel, resource material, small group sharing, and a discussion of the working draft of the mission of INMI.

Please consider coming yourself or sending someone from your faith community. RSVP to Alan Johnson at 720-304-6918.

You are also invited to attend a weekend of programs with Craig Rennebohm, Saturday, October 11-Monday, October 13, sponsored by First Congregational Church, Boulder.

Craig Rennebohm is a UCC minister and founder of the Mental Health Chaplaincy. For the last 20 years Craig has done outreach on the streets of Seattle, worked with local congregations on ministry in the areas of homelessness and mental illness, and taught and advocated in the U.S. and internationally. He is co-author of the book, *Souls in the Hands of a Tender God*, which tells evocative stories of persons who desperately need psychiatric, psychological, and spiritual support.

On Saturday at 4:30 p.m., Craig will offer a spiritual support group

to families and consumers. This group is for those who are dealing with mental health issues or living with someone who is. It includes a time of prayer, readings, sharing and a time of spiritual discernment. The free support group will be held at First Congregational Church, 1128 Pine Street, Boulder (corner of Pine and Broadway).

Sunday morning, Craig will preach at First Congregational Church's 8:00 and 10:15 services. The title of his talk is "Personal Welcome and Healing Community." All are welcome to attend.

Sunday at 2:00 p.m., Craig will offer "Companionship Training." Companionship is a way of sharing the journey with a person who is suffering or alone. This training helps lay people grow in their capacity to welcome strangers and service neighbors---especially those who are homeless, isolated, alone and ill in body and mind. There is a \$10 suggested donation for this workshop.

At 8:00 a.m. Monday morning, NAMI Boulder County will sponsor an informal breakfast with Craig for religious leaders of the community. Members of the Interfaith Network on Mental Illness are invited to attend. The location is yet to be determined.

For more information on any of these events, please contact Alan Johnson, via e-mail at revalan2004@comcast.net, or call him at 720-304-6918.

Volunteer Corner



*Barbara Connor,
NAMI Boulder
County Outreach
Coordinator*

NAMI Boulder County has continued its presence with an information table at the Farmer's Market this summer. Many thanks to board members Nancy Coleman and Linda Davis and volunteers Gus Gustason, Noah Jennings,

Kristin Laubach, Coleen Murray, and Margaret Pevec for helping NAMI Boulder County distribute information to the community by staffing the information table. We will be at the Farmer's Market again on Saturday, September 20, and Saturday, September 27, and will need six volunteers each day. If you think you can take a two hour shift on either of those dates, please call me at 303-710-0701 or email me at blconnors@comcast.net.

Spotlight: Centennial Peaks offers intensive outpatient programs

Programs help clients who need more than once-a-week therapy but don't need in-patient treatment

*By Ann Matino, Coordinator,
Mental Health Outpatient
Services, Centennial Peaks*

Centennial Peaks Hospital offers intensive outpatient programs (IOPs) for clients whose needs are not met by more traditional treatment models. These programs are designed for clients who need more treatment than once-a-week therapy can provide but who do not meet in-patient criteria.

Patients typically arrive in the IOPs from two directions. Some “step-in” from the community and some “step-down” from inpatient treatment.

IOPs at Centennial Peaks offer services for clients with chemical dependency (CD-IOP) and with mental health issues (MH-IOP). The nine hour/week structure gives participants the skills and tools they need to successfully return to work and relationships with a greater understanding of and ability to manage their behavioral health and/or chemical dependency issues. Studies show the more quality outpatient treatment episodes clients receive, the less likely they will experience inpatient admission or readmission.

We encourage most patients who complete our IOPs to continue treatment with outpatient therapy providers, psychiatrists and appropriate group support as necessary.

Many individuals have both chemical dependency and mental health issues (co-occurring disorders). Currently, we assess their needs and determine which of our IOP programs would be of greatest benefit to them. Some complete a course of treatment in one program then enter into the other. An ideal option for these clients would be a Partial Hospitalization Program where they could benefit from both intensive mental health and intensive chemical dependency treatment on an outpatient basis. We are considering this level of care and will let you know when it becomes available.

Centennial Peaks Hospital is a non-profit 501(c)(3) free standing facility in Louisville, Colorado. We have been providing inpatient and intensive outpatient psychiatric and chemical dependency services for over 18 years and

have been pleased to have worked with NAMI on many occasions.

Current IOPs:

Mental Health IOP: Adult M,W, F, 1 – 4 p.m. (consecutive 12 sessions recommended)

Chemical Dependency IOP:
Adult M,W,F, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30.p.m. or M,TH,F, 6 - 9 p.m.
Adolescent IOP: M,W,F, 6 - 9 p.m. (consecutive 24 sessions recommended)

For more detailed information about the MH-IOP, please contact Ann Matino, Coordinator, Mental Health Outpatient Services, 303-666-2009. For information about the CD-IOP, please contact Jasmine Aranda, Coordinator of Chemical Dependency Services, 303-666-2070

To arrange for an intake appointment, please call our Assessment Department at 303-666-2008.

Who is a good fit for the Centennial Peaks IOPs?

Individuals who have:

- The motivation to seek relief from their considerable mental health and/or chemical dependency issues
- Transportation to CPH and the time to commit to completion of the program
- The ability to function and participate in a group setting
- The ability to pay for treatment (Insurance companies recognize and provide benefits for the IOP level-of-care. Medicare and Medicaid currently do not pay for IOPs.)



The Mental Health Center
Serving Boulder and Broomfield Counties



Recovering from Mental Illness: Supported Employment Services

Sponsored by: **First Presbyterian Church**
15th & Canyon, Boulder
(West Entrance)

Wednesday, September 17th
7:00pm – 8:30pm

A Free Workshop for clients, families, and community leaders addressing:

- *Boulder County Employment Services & Resources*
- *Strategies for assisting adults who suffer from a mental health disorder in returning to work*
- *Program Models for Supported Employment*
 - *Affirmative Business Approaches*

Panel Members Include: JoAnn Dorio Burton, Windhorse Community Services Supported Employment Program Coordinator; Ruth Arnold, Chinook Clubhouse Program Director; Paul Sandoval, Boulder County Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor; local employers and individuals who have successfully transitioned back into the workplace.

Open to the Public. Free Admission.

Questions? Contact: JoAnn Dorio Burton at jdorio@mhcbbc.org (303) 877-3891



Price Tags and a Bogus Dream

by Reg Saner, Board Member

If challenged by a game show host to guess human nature's

noblest emotion, I might say "sympathy." Not only is it an unselfish form of love; sympathy also begot every culture's version of the Golden Rule and morality in general.

On the other hand, there's a duality in each thing, and even our best qualities share this two-sided condition. That's why I've often thought adulthood a matter of learning to read price tags. As a species *Homo sapiens* is gregarious, yet groups also cooperate to

prey on others. And the same creativity which discovered pottery enabled the birth of atom bombs. But sympathy? How could there be a price tag on that?

I'm afraid we NAMI members know only too well that there is. The emotional cost of our caretaking would be far easier to bear if our sympathy gland were to dry up entirely. The grief of seeing one's daughter cope with depression or bi-polar disorder would fade away. Lovelessness would then feel like a great mercy. Oh, we'd continue as caretakers, but do it dispassionately as a checkout person running bar codes across a scanner.

Or so I have sometimes dreamed.

Beset by grief over an afflicted

son, I once asked a psychiatrist for his take on the situation. "Stop trying to relate to the son who is no longer there," he advised. "Instead, relate to the person he is now."

Well, that made sense. After all, what other choice had I? Yet something about the suggestion felt like shaking hands with a mortician. Nonetheless, I tried acting on his insight. Tried for quite a while, but could never make it work. After years of caretaking, I'm still far from accepting that my son as he was isn't there any more. So in such a case the price of sympathy is a bruised heart that keeps on hurting. Which no NAMI member needs to be told.

Less self-evident perhaps is the fact that my bogus dream of dispassion with its numbed state of loveless caretaking reveals the value of its opposite. Thus it's worthwhile to remind ourselves that even grief has its uses, energizing our sympathy for others not least among them.

Upcoming classes:

Family-to-Family Class

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

Tuesday evenings Sept. 9 – Nov. 25, 2008
6:00 – 8:30 at 1333 Iris Ave, Boulder

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 Sept. 26 – Oct. 24, 2008
9:00 – 11:30 at Boulder Valley Christian Church

To register call Ann Taylor at 303-776-3199.

Learn more about these classes at www.namibouldercounty.org

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.

Education and Support Groups

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. Next class starts in September. Next class starts Sept. 9.
- ▶ **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 Sept 24. Call now to reserve a seat.

NAMI 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 for details.

DEPRESSION AND BIPOLAR DISORDER

- ▶ **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) Longmont**
Mondays, 7:00-9:00 p.m., at Longmont United Hospital, Gaugin Room, 1950 Mountain View, Longmont. Contact Diane Dworkin-Wagner at 303-682-2911 Email: twinpeaksdbsa@hotmail.com
- ▶ **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) Boulder**
Two peer-only meetings a month and one friends and family meeting per month. Contact Lauren at (303) 641-6333 or email (preferred) boulderdbsa@gmail.com.
- ▶ **CareTogether Support Group** for spouses and partners of people with bipolar disorder and depression, second Mondays, 7-8:30, Baha'i Center in Lafayette. 303-507-8533, caretogether@gmail.com
- ▶ **The Robert D. Sutherland Center for the Evaluation and Treatment of Bipolar Disorder**
Visit rdsfoundation.org or call Dr. Brosse (303/492-5680) for information about the Sutherland Seminar Series. The 12-week educational series on bipolar disorder is offered twice yearly on Thursday evenings. Attend just 1 session or all 12. No pre-registration required.

CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Parents Experiencing Challenging Kids Support Group (PECK) - Meets second Sunday of each month at the Huckleberry in Louisville, 9:00 a.m. Contact Harriet Austin at 303-284-9863 or austinhb@hotmail.com

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 or Ilene, 303-938-1360.

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE ANONYMOUS

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

CHINOOK CLUBHOUSE, BOULDER

Chinook Clubhouse is 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 offers 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.

Many of the above 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.

- \$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**
