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Spring 2013

Report from your President

By Jean Poland

ANNUAL DUES
SHOULD BE
MAILED TO
PO BOX 6544
THIS MONTH
\$35/ PERSON



I am honored to be voted president of the NAMI-FL Board of Directors and look forward to the next year. NAMI Finger Lakes is the most supportive group of people I know. *Your stamina, goodwill, and kindness are the bases of our success.*

Let me introduce myself. Like most of our membership I have family members who are diagnosed with psychiatric illnesses. I first joined NAMI in 1991. At the time I was part of the Lafayette, Indiana affiliate. When I moved to Bloomington, Indiana I remained a member of NAMI. I've been in Ithaca for fourteen years now and have continued my membership. Now that I have retired I want to give back to the NAMI community at least some of the support I received all those years. I have been co-instructor for three rounds of Family to Family. This is my third year serving on your Board of Directors; I was vice-president last year.

Please see [Jean's Report](#) on page 2

Great Books to Check Out

By Jean Poland

NAMI-FL has close to two hundred books to support and inform ourselves and our loved ones. Five of them are highlighted on page 3 below. There is a list of most of the books we have at http://namifingerlakes.org/get_help.htm#Lending_Library. If you see a book you'd like to read contact Jean Poland (jp126@cornell.edu or 607-266-8079). There is a blue box at the top the stairs at the West Side Office Center on the way to the NAMI-FL office. Jean will leave the book there for you to pick up (Monday through Saturday 10-6, Sunday 12-4). You can return books there too. You can also return books by mail to PO Box 6544, Ithaca 14851-6544

If you can't make support group times, please contact Jean to arrange another time to see the office and review the books.

The NAMI FL office will
be open for ½ hour
before each support
group for book checkouts
6:30PM on 1st Tues.
1:00PM on 3rd Thurs.

Please see [Great Books](#) on page 3

NAMI Basics class to begin this spring

By Barbara Anible

Our chapter will sponsor the NAMI Basics Education Program, specifically for parents and other caregivers of children and adolescents with mental illness. The six week series of classes will begin in Ithaca on May 1 from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Sciencecenter's resource room. There is no charge for the series, but course participants must commit to the whole 6 weeks.

The course will cover information about ADHD, Major Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Anxiety Disorders, Obsessive Compulsive Disorders, Schizophrenia and Substance Abuse Disorders; coping skills such as handling crisis and relapse; basic information about medication use in the treatment of mental illness in children; listening and communication techniques; problem solving skills; and an overview of the mental health and school system's roles in treating children with mental illness.

See **Basics** on page 4



Jean's Report
from page 1

I want to tell you about our board members, the people who keep us organized and running. Most people join NAMI-FL when they are in crisis, as I did. It takes a while to realize there is a very passionate group of volunteers that keeps the organization running. We owe a tremendous thank you to Deb Grantham, past president for three years. She and her colleagues on the board led our transition from meeting at Jean Walters' house (where we met for 25 years!) through a few years of "virtual" and functional board without a real home base, to where we are now with a small dedicated meeting space. It took dedication, ingenuity, and leadership to keep NAMI-FL going. Thank you, Deb.

Deb is staying on as Secretary of the Board and past-president. Her experience and knowledge are invaluable. Sherry Scott, a long-term board member is now vice-president, and Joanne Denison remains treasurer. Barb Anible is continuing as newsletter editor. Sherry, Barb, Joanne, Derek Osborne, Bill Staffeld, and Joni Spielholz are returning board members. Many thanks to each of them and to Peter Harriott, who has chosen not to continue on the board, for their contributions over the years. Two new board members were elected at our annual meeting: Robin Hamlich and Rich Shaw. Robin is Assistant Director for Clinical Services at Cornell's Counseling and Psychological Services as well as director of Cornell Companions. Rich coordinates both the Dual Recovery and the Single Point of Entry programs at Tompkins County Mental Health Services. It's great to have Rich and Robin join us.

The board will have a very busy spring and summer. In November, NAMI-FL was awarded a grant from the Community Foundation's Tompkins Today and Tomorrow Fund to support strategic planning. Over the next months we will

be working with consultants to identify our strengths as an organization and to determine directions for maintenance and growth. We appreciate the much-needed funding as well as the vote of confidence from the Community Foundation.

Just before the holidays Bill and Andrea Staffeld completed another Family to Family course. Thank you, Andrea and Bill, for your energy leading the group and congratulations to the participants. This spring we will be introducing another family support workshop, called Basics, specifically geared to family members of children and adolescents with mental illnesses.

It may sound trite but it is true: It takes a village It is members and friends like all of you who make NAMI-FL a great organization. Please contact me with your ideas and comments: jp126@cornell.edu or 607-266-8079.

Lincoln’s Melancholy: How Depression Challenged a President and Fueled his Greatness by Joshua Wolf Shenk

This is the year for remembering Abraham Lincoln. Shenk draws on his own research and that of others to tell about that part of Lincoln’s personality we don’t often hear about. In his day, Lincoln’s moods were thought of as odd and curious and people seemed to feel sympathy for him. Those around him developed a strong sense of loyalty. It was a different time, with different attitudes toward depressive illness.

Night Navigation by Ginnah Howard

Del lives in the countryside near the Finger Lakes region. Her adult son has bipolar disorder and strong addiction issues. This story begins on March night when Del has to drive Mark in the freezing rain to the only detox center that has an open bed, near the Canadian border. It’s the story of a mother caring for her troubled, often ill son. The jacket blurb summarizes “Al-Anon tells Dell to ‘let go’; NAMI tells her to ‘hang on.’” This is a very well-written novel many of us can relate to.

Stop Pretending: What Happened When My Big Sister Went Crazy by Sonya Jones

When the author was thirteen her nineteen year old sister had a psychiatric breakdown on Christmas Eve. This book of short poems shows us how it feels to see a sibling fall apart and the effect on the family.

A Beautiful Mind: The Life of Mathematical Genius and Nobel Laureate John Nash by Sylvia Nasar

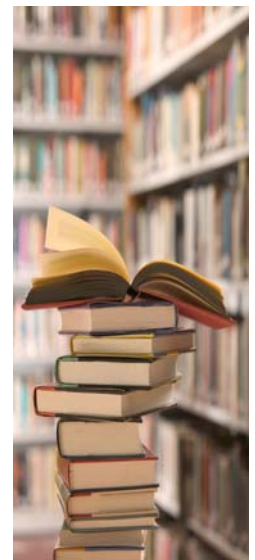
This is the book the 2001 movie was based on. John Nash is a brilliant mathematician, afflicted with schizophrenia. Throughout his life he moves in and out of recovery. The book tells us much more than the movie about his family life, how his children and their mothers dealt with John’s illness. John Nash was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics and continues to participate in the mathematics department at Princeton.

Crazy: A Father’s Search Through America’s Mental Health Madness by Pete Earley

There are two stories in this book. The first is the story of the author and his son, a young man who develops bipolar disorder. During a particularly difficult episode the son breaks into a home, eventually becoming involved in the court system. Pete Early describes his own learning curve and his son’s illness. The other story in this book is the story of people with mental illness and how they end up and are treated in our jails and prisons. That is what the word “crazy” in the title refers to.

Great Books

from page 1



Basics

from page 2

To register for the course or for more information: Call the NAMI phone 607/273-2462

The curriculum was written by an experienced family member mental health professional. The course will be taught by Sherry Scott and Barbara Anible who are caregivers of individuals who developed mental illness as children. They took training last fall to become course instructors.

"We have wanted to bring *Basics* to the Finger Lakes for a very long time," says instructor Sherry Scott. "It balances basic psycho education and skill training with emotional support, self-care and empowerment. We hope parents and other caregivers of children and adolescents with mental illness will take advantage of this unique opportunity."

Calendar of Events

March	April	May	June	July	August
5 Support group 7p.m	2 Support group 7p.m.	1,8,15,22,29 <i>Basics</i> 6-8:30p.m.	4 Support group 7p.m	2 Support group 7p.m	6 Support group 7p.m.
18 Board meeting 6p.m.	18 Support group 1:30p.m.	7 Support group 7p.m.	5 <i>Basics</i> 6-8:30p.m.	18 Support group 1:30p.m.	15 Support group 1:30p.m.
21 Support group 1:30p.m.	23 Family forum 6:30 p.m.	16 Support group 1:30p.m.	20 Support group 1:30p.m.	23 Family forum 6:30p.m.	27 Family forum 6:30pm
25 Family forum 6:30p.m.		20 Board meeting 6p.m.	25 Family forum 6:30p.m.	Summer Gathering To be announced	
		28 Family forum 6:30p.m.			

From our National office:

NAMI Standards of Excellence have a clear commitment to "a member is a member is a member" -- meaning that anyone who joins the organization at any entry point has joined the organization at all points (local/state/national).

Through standardized dues, we move away from the fractured, separate membership lists of the past that kept our head count low and our structures chaotic. Standardized dues eliminate all specialized membership categories such as associate, professional, student, consumer, etc. -- a person is simply a member.

Annual dues have been standardized at \$35/person. There are special fees for financial hardship; please contact the office. A family may choose to send in only one membership but will only have one vote in state and national elections. As a local affiliate we keep \$15 and the remainder is split between state and national. Joanne Denison will send out our state/national payment next month.

Please remember to send in your dues this month!!

Thoughts on
Family to Family
2012
Julia Black

I spent last summer doing spreadsheets at a bank in Toronto; in other words I spent the summer passing time by reading the Opinion section of the New York Times. I ended up reading a lot about mental health. My aunt Barb had recently been hospitalized for schizophrenia, so it caught my attention. It was interesting to read the various ideas people had about which medications were most promising, which policies should be implemented to support these individuals, and how the government should help financially. They never really talked about the family members of these individuals though. When I got back to Ithaca I decided I wanted to learn more about mental health. I contacted NAMI and was put in touch with the lovely William and Andrea Staffeld who were running the NAMI Family to Family class. I would assist them.

I walked into the first class and was surprised at the diversity of the people. I was the youngest (I was 19), but we had many generations and stories there. The first class we put our name tags on and made friendly conversation with one another. We started learning about the biological side of each mental illness. Slowly the name tags came off and we had the opportunity to learn more about the unique stories of each person in the classroom. Even though we all had such different things going on in our lives, and varying levels of relation to our affected family members, we were all able to discover a whole new side of mental health. I guess it's just something that the New York Times can't really cover. The compassion, strength, sense of humor, and commitment which each person brought into the class was truly remarkable. I thought we would be learning about mental illnesses and skills which can be used to help those affected, and we did, but I didn't realize that I would learn so many things about how I can live my life in a more meaningful way. I left that class every single Thursday beaming.

My grandmother always used to tell me that if you don't know what you should do in life you should read the newspaper and find the sections which interest you the most and use that as a guideline. I think that was some of the best advice I've been given in a while. My experience with NAMI's Family to Family class was so eye opening and was really a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Thank you to everyone who shared their stories and made it that way!

NAMI Finger Lakes
PO Box 6544
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National Alliance on Mental Illness

*The fundamentals of caring for you, your family and your child with
mental illness*

Call to register
607/273-2462

A NAMI peer education program for parents and
other caregivers of children and adolescents with
mental illness

Basics
will meet
Wednesdays
May 1st to June 5th
6 to 8:30 p.m.
at the
Sciencenter
601 1st Street
Ithaca NY
Class is free