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*Summer 2014*

## *Honoring the Volunteers in our Community*



President Jean Poland stands with Jean Walters(left) and Susan Larkin (right) after honoring them for the many years of support group leadership with an award from NAMI NYS

On May 6, NAMI NYS, partnering with 7 other organizations celebrated “What’s Great in Our State: A Celebration of Children’s Mental Health Awareness” at the NYS Museum in Albany. Seven groups were honored; Collaborative Solutions Network(CSN) of Tompkins County was one of the honorees for their “Whole Child Checkup Initiative”: their early recognition project. CSN is a *Systems Of Care* initiative that creates opportunities for children, youth, families, and community groups to work together in a community-wide approach to foster social and emotional wellbeing for all children and youth. NAMI FL connected with this 8-year-old organization last fall and is pleased that it received state recognition this spring.



### ***Acknowledging our volunteers***

Our board and other volunteers have had some busy months since our last newsletter. The Willard Suitcase Exhibit and accompanying programs at Tompkins County Public Library were a smashing success. Our thanks to Sally Grubb of TCPL and to our speakers, Darby Penney, Craig Williams, and Jon Crispin. Special thanks to the funders who made it all possible: Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Finger Lakes Independence Center, the DeLuca Fund, and Tompkins County Public Library. In November, Sherry Nedrow, Barb Anible, Betty Windstein, Andrea Staffeld and I attended the 31<sup>st</sup>

Annual NAMI New York State Education Conference in Albany. It was a positive, affirming experience to be among other NAMI members and to learn more about illness, treatment, and recovery. Our affiliate donated a beautiful hand-made bag filled with note cards and books of photographs to help raise funds for NAMI New York State. Thanks to Sherry Nedrow for donating the bag and to photographer Susan Larkin and botanical artist Milly Acharia for donating the books and cards. Our annual membership meeting was held in March at the Sciencenter. The meeting was preceded by an interesting and informative talk about dental hygiene

and mental illness. Many thanks to local dentist Martha Catalfamo for good information and handouts.

Brigitt Schaffner was elected to the board of directors at the annual meeting. Welcome, Brigitt. We also re-elected Sherry Nedrow, Deb Grantham and myself. Long-time board member Joanne Denison resigned. Thank you, Joanne, for seven years of dedicated service to NAMI Finger Lakes as treasurer and membership manager. Continuing board members are Barb Anible, Derek Osborne, Rich Shaw, Joni Spielholz, and Bill Staffeld. At the board meeting following the annual meeting we elected officers for the coming year. I was re-elected president, Joni Spielholz is vice-president, Sherry Nedrow is recording secretary, Barb Anible was re-elected corresponding secretary, Deb Grantham is treasurer. I look forward to another productive year working with this great board of directors.

This spring we held another successful Family to Family educational program, led by Joni Spielholz and Bill Staffeld, with help provided by Julia Black. Barb Anible and Sherry Nedrow are leading a Basics course in Dryden with the help and support of Mary Hicks from Dryden elementary school and Chris Bobrowich. Bill, Joni, Sherry and Barb are dedicated leaders. Congratulations to them and to everyone who participated in Family to Family and Basics. It's a major commitment of time and emotional energy to lead and to participate in our educational programs. We are continuing our regular programs. Family Forum continues to be held the fourth Tuesday of every month at Tompkins County Mental Health Services. Rich Shaw, Carol Booth, and Susan Larkin do a great job arranging for guest speakers

and publicity. Our support groups meet the first Tuesday evening and third Thursday afternoon. Thanks to Susan Larkin and Greta Perl for taking the time to attend training and for leading the groups. Our volunteers continue to be available to families at the Cayuga Medical Center Behavioral Services Unit once a week. Chris Bobrowich, Tami Battin, Norma Helsper, and Cheryl Jewell provide support and referral to family members in crisis. Andrea Staffeld and Susan Larkin talk with students at Ithaca College every year, giving the students a real word perspective on the effects of mental illness. Thanks Susan and Andrea for the outreach and for donating your honorarium to NAMI Finger Lakes. There would be no newsletter without Barb Anible. Thanks, Barb, for such great work. Our website has a new look and the content is being updated! Bruce McKee spent a great deal of time and energy developing a template for us to use. He provided training for Deb Grantham and me – we are beginning to review and update the content. Bruce created and has maintained our website for many years. That's been a major contribution to our success as an organization. And thanks to Lightlink for hosting the site. Deb Grantham has developed our facebook page.

I am always amazed at how much NAMI Finger Lakes does. We are all volunteers with busy lives who are often facing family crises. Thanks to all NAMI Finger Lakes members and friends for your generous spirit and your willingness to help each other and our community.

*Jean Poland*

## **Compromise Reached on Psychiatric Hospital Closures**

In the last few days, NAMI-NYS has continued to update members on bill number A.8294 which passed in the NYS Senate and gained momentum in the Assembly. It would have blocked the closure of state-run psychiatric hospitals. Last night, a compromise was reached between Governor Cuomo and both houses of the legislature which keeps these hospitals open until appropriate services and supports are put in place.

Many thanks to the Government Affairs Committee of NAMI NYS for all their hard work and to our grassroots advocates whose voices helped influence this compromise. We are hopeful that this agreement will help establish both community services that meet the standards set forth by the NAMI Public Policy Platform , as well as make certain that in-patient psychiatric beds and appropriate services are available for those with serious mental illness.

### **HOW NAMI ADVOCATES**

<http://www.nami.org> from home page search *inform yourself/about public policy/NAMI policy platform*

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Maybe this was your experience when you first found yourself at CMC's Behavioral Science Unit until that friendly volunteer told you about NAMI who handed you one of our folders

THEN

**A LIFELINE**

And when each of us are able to support, educate, or advocate for someone because "we've been there" we feel that sense of giving back... and a little less alone.

Please think about becoming a hospital volunteer to continue this work.

It only takes 2 hours every month!

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If interested, please call Chris Bobrowich at (607) 280-3717 or email her @ [cbobrowich@gmail.com](mailto:cbobrowich@gmail.com)



*NAMI Finger Lakes founder Jean Walters* is one of twenty four people featured in "Talk Tompkins: Portraits by photographer Ben Altman" which was on display at Tompkins County Public Library through June 30. The exhibit includes audio interviews with the participants. The interviews can be accessed at <http://benaltmanphotographs.com/talk.html>.

Ben Altman describes his project on his website, a portion of which is printed below.

Since moving to the Ithaca area some seven years ago I have been intrigued by the many and diverse communities that exist in the town and surrounding areas. It seems to me that these groups, defined by history, geography, class, race, ethnicity, interests, and many other factors, sometimes have little contact with one another.

In doing the project I have discovered a great deal I did not know about Tompkins County, including much greater diversity than I realized. I found out that the Tompkins County Public Library and other libraries in the area are greatly used and valued, both for their collections and as a focus of community. I note that the project refused to be contained strictly by the geography of the county – many people who are deeply involved here have businesses, homes, or second homes in neighboring counties or elsewhere.

I expect to continue the project and welcome suggestions.

*Check It Out!*

## Family Together Conference

On April 6th and 7th, I attended the state wide conference for Families Together. This is a family based, nonprofit organization that works to provide advocacy and support for children and adolescents with social, emotional and behavioral challenges, and their families within NYS. What I experienced was truly heartwarming and hopeful as well as educational and thought provoking from so many different perspectives. There were three sessions, grouped into one of three different tracks that I'd like to share some examples from to give you a taste of what occurred during these two days.

There was the Leadership Track that targeted audiences whose members were in the position of making change in the different systems of care. **One of the sessions** I attended presented how 2 hospitals in Buffalo, NY funded their local Mental Health Association to provide staff to support and educate families of patients admitted to their short term psychiatric units. Through work done at the hospitals in the ER and on the behavioral science units, and in follow-up contacts, procedures are being put in place to make transition from the hospital better and readmissions less of a possibility for the patients. Not only this, but there are now youth staff involved on the adolescent units. **Another session** was presented by an experienced system of care leader in Monroe County along with a youth currently in school in Rochester, NY. They shared what they are doing and have experienced in their efforts to improve the schools within the county to better meet the needs of students with emotional and behavioral challenges.

There was **the Partner Track** where the audiences targeted were parents, children and youth looking to find different ways to connect and work together on topics of common interest as well as work together to make plans to improve systems of care. I very much enjoyed attending our very own Mental Health Association's presentation. Pat Vincent and Emily Knowles, along with two local teens and a grandparent held a panel discussion about communication during times of crises. The audience was totally involved! **Other sessions** included, "Community Discussion on the Needs of Children and Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Mental Health Concerns", and "Youth Advocacy Training".

And then there was my favorite, the Youth Track!, for children and youth, ages 12 to 25. I was filled with hope and joy to see young people with social, behavioral and mental health difficulties have the opportunity to build their self-help and advocacy skills. Just to give you an idea of what these youth did, there were sessions entitled, "The How, When and Why of Disability Disclosure", "Discover Your Resiliency", and "Communication Challenges - Overcoming Social Media Shortfalls and Other Special Problems".

My favorite part of the conference was getting to meet members of Youth Power! who organized and ran the Youth Track! sessions. They also ran "The Ninth Annual, YOUTH POWER! Speak-Out" that took place during the closing ceremony of the conference. These youth, individually and as a group showed great promise.

If you are interested in attending next year's conference, or finding out more about Families Together, go to [www.ftnys.org](http://www.ftnys.org) . If you are interested in finding out more about Youth Power!, go to [www.youthpowerny.org](http://www.youthpowerny.org) .



Chris Bobrowich is NAMI FL's liaison to the CSN (Collaborative Services Network) and a big promoter of "Breaking the Silence" NAMI's advocacy teaching for elementary, middle and high school students.

If you are a parent of a child or youth  
with mental health concerns  
then a **Family Navigator** may be able to help!

**A Family Navigator can...**

- *offer* emotional support,
- *help* you find needed information and community resources, advocate for your child, communicate with providers and your child's school,
- *share* ideas about how you can take care of yourself and your family,  
**...by connecting with you on the phone or in person**

*To connect with a Family Navigator simply call the Program Coordinator, Sally Manning at 607-793-1658 or email her at [sallymcss@rackercenters.org](mailto:sallymcss@rackercenters.org)*

You can also check out the Family Navigators Program page on the Collaborative Solutions Network website. Just type in [collaborativesolutionsnetwork.org](http://collaborativesolutionsnetwork.org) and scroll down the left side of the page to find the link to "The Family Navigators Program".

## Calendar of Events

Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
3 Support group 7p.m.	1 Support group 7p.m.	5 Support group 7p.m.	2 Support group 7p.m	7 Support group 7p.m.	4 Support group 7p.m.
		13 Summer Social 6 to 8p.m.			
5,12 Basics 6-8:30p.m.		21 Support group 1:30p.m.	18 Support group 1:30p.m.	16 Support group 1:30p.m.	17 Board Meeting 7p.m.
19 Support group 1:30p.m.	17 Support group 1:30p.m.	No Family forum this month.	15 Board Meeting 6p.m.	28 Family forum 6:30p.m.	20 Support group 1:30p.m.
24 Family forum 6:30p.m.	No Family forum this month.		23 Family forum 6:30p.m.		25 Family forum 6:30pm

- ✓ Support Groups meet at the NAMI FL office at 430 West State St, above Mama Goose
- ✓ Board Meetings meet at the NAMI FL office unless otherwise specified
- ✓ Family Forum meets in the board room of the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of Tompkins County Mental Health Services Building at 201 East Green Street

## NAMI-FL Summer Social

Join us at Cass Park, Ithaca, NY in celebration of family, friends, and our accomplishments.

Dish to pass

(NAMI will provide drinks & place settings)

Wednesday, August 13, 2014

6 - 8 pm

Cass Park Pavilion, Route 89, Ithaca NY

(near Children's Garden)

### *How to donate to NAMI Finger Lakes:*

Online: You can donate using PayPal by linking to our Web page: [www.namifingerlakes.org](http://www.namifingerlakes.org)

By mail: Send your check to NAMI-FL, P O Box 6544, Ithaca, NY 14851-6544

*Please let us know if your donation is in memory or in honor of a loved one.*

You can also donate a percentage of your [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) charges by connecting to [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) through our Web page: [www.namifingerlakes.org](http://www.namifingerlakes.org). Click on "Shop through [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)"

Thank you for your supp

