



Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

This has certainly been a very hot summer. Besides working part-time at the Racker Center and having the opportunity to teach three lessons on family involvement in Mental Illness to high schoolers studying at Cornell, I have been spending some time on NAMI-FL business as well. Bruce McKee, your other co-President, and I have met a number of times regarding incorporation and tax exempt status (we are still working on this and we are making progress!), the Annual Calendar of Events, and the Fall Community Education Program.

Ann Carter, Program Chair, Bruce, and I just attended the last Tompkins County Mental Health Subcommittee and gained overwhelming support for co-sponsoring the Documentary *Out of the Shadow* on October 20 at the Holiday Inn in downtown Ithaca. We are forming a committee for this purpose and met with Rick Melfi from Janssen Pharmaceutica to talk about details. We will convene a panel to react to this very moving video and will serve light refreshments. I am very excited about this project—several members of the Subcommittee said they would like to help and a representative from Lakeview Assisted Housing also was very interested. Collaboration is the name of the game!

Ann, Bruce, and I are also on the brink of printing a new brochure and some business cards for all of us to distribute. We are trying very hard to get our name out there—everywhere!

Recently, I became re-acquainted with the social worker for the Homeless Program at the American Red Cross. We plan to meet about ways that we can improve community mental health plans, including experiences at our local hospital. I hope to put together a plan for many of our members to get out into the community with our new brochures.

I have been nominated (one more time) to run for the NAMI-NYS board. Ione Christian, present board President from Rochester, would love to see some solid representation from the Finger Lakes, and I am happy to put my name into the hat again. I hope all of you

will be on the lookout for the slate of nominees and will vote for me. I will continue to work hard to advocate at both the local and state level for the needs of all of our family members—for their right and opportunity to lead quality lives. If you have any suggestions for my campaign, please let me know.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Booth, Co-President

NAMI-FL Officers Elected April 4, 2005

Co-Presidents Bruce McKee and Carol Booth
Vice President Abby Eller
Recording Secretary Stacy Oster
Corresponding secretary Susan Larkin
Treasurer Joanne Dennis
Program Chair Ann Carter

NAMI Support Group

A support group for NAMI-FL family members, coordinated by Jean Walters, began in May to provide support and information for anyone wishing to attend. We meet at 7:00 PM at 104 East Lewis St. on the first Tuesday of the month. The next meeting will be Tuesday, October 4. The support group has guidelines that respect confidentiality and anonymity for those attending. We provide a time, kept close to an hour, for family members to talk in turn about the current situation with their ill family member. At that time participants can seek resources, as well as support, from each other as needed. We welcome and encourage you to come to any meeting of the group.

Abby Eller

Workshops on Kendra's Law

Jeff Keller, Deputy director of NAMI-NYS will be at Jean Walters' house on Tuesday, September 27, at 7 PM to present facts on the newly renewed Kendra's Law (NYS Assisted Outpatient Treatment) and to help focus families on how they can use this law to insure that a loved one with severe mental illness can safely survive in the community. After a brief business meeting, Jeff will offer a 30-minute presentation. Please plan to attend this event.

Carol Booth

Fall Educational Conference

Navigating in Rough Seas: Finding the Way to Recovery from Mental Illness is the theme for this year's educational conference in Albany, October 28–30. Information will come in the mail for NAMI Members. Those of you who are still not members should call our office number, (607) 273–2462, and pick up information. Well-known key note speakers and a variety of very interesting and informational workshops will take place on Saturday. Several of us from NAMI-FL will be attending this excellent conference so let Jean, Bruce, or Carol know if you are interested—it will be well worth your time.

Carol Booth

Joyful News

From Mark Lenzenweger and Lauren Korfine:

Lauren, Mark, Julian, and Anya welcome their new baby—Sage Phoenix Lenzenweger Korfine, born joyfully and magically at home, June 27, 2005.

New Medicare Drug Plans

The Medicare Modernization Act will affect New Yorkers who suffer a mental illness or cognitive disorder and who qualify for benefits from both Medicare and Medicaid.

On January 1, 2006 their prescription drug coverage will shift from Medicaid to Medicare under the new *Part D Benefit*. It is not yet clear whether these recipients will benefit from these changes.

Plan D calls for Medicare beneficiaries to choose from a list of individual plans offered by private, for profit, organizations. The providers will be required to include “all or substantially all” medications for treating psychosis, convulsions, and depression. Although New York will continue to cover, through Medicaid, some of the medications not included in the Plan D list, it is possible that other medications not included will no longer be covered by the state.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services will soon send details of the various choices under Plan D to current Medicare recipients. Dual eligible beneficiaries will automatically be enrolled in one of the prescription drug plans.

The dual eligibles will be exempt from premiums and deductibles, but will be responsible for co-payments. In the past, New York has reimbursed pharmacies for co-payments that could not be made due to financial hardship, a policy the state has no plan to continue.

NAMI National has more information on its web site, www.nami.org.

Sean Moran, Outreach & Development Director

Mini-Grants

NAMI-NYS has awarded our NAMI affiliate a grant of \$1000 to use for the purpose of running our affiliate—printing a new brochure and business cards, printing a newsletter and sending out flyers, buying supplies for our Xerox machine and computer and supplies for the office, buying a new Xerox machine if the need arises, etc.

I taught 3 classes to high schoolers at Cornell this summer and was awarded \$100—to be used for buying 2–3 new books on mental illness for the Tompkins County Public Library. Any suggestions? The local Eagles organization is also interested in making a donation once we send them a simple request on letterhead—this will be done in September.

If you have any comments or questions, let Bruce or me know of them.

Carol Booth

NAMI-FL Dues

At the January 4, 2005 NAMI-FL business meeting an increase in dues from \$15 to \$25 per person per year was approved by those in attendance. The dues increase was necessary as we are now paying Jean Walters \$100 a month for the use of her home as our office. Because of an increase in taxes the charge for office space was regrettably necessary.

The money donated to us from NAMI-NYS cannot be used to cover office rental space. It can only be used for office supplies and educational programs.

Susan Larkin

On the Death of Karen Eberts

This letter was written by Karen Eberts' parents to our members: August 15, 2005

It is with deep guilt, regret, shame, sadness, and all the other deep and uncommunicable emotions I am experiencing right now that I have to report to you all that my daughter, Karen, finally lost her struggle with her bipolar disease, and was finally successful in taking her own life over this past weekend. We are extremely sad at her passing, but her passionate, valiant, and desperate struggle with life is now ended.

She was found on her bed, with her four kitties on top of her, and her car keys in her hand. . . . She had probably taken pills of some kind. . . .

She had attempted taking her own life at least four times before this when she was in the depression part of her bipolar disease, but this time she was successful,

even though she reassured us in the past week that she would not go to this extreme. Both Ellie and I had spoken to her the night before, and her SW Colorado Mental Health team had also spoken with her at this time. She showed no signs that she would take such extreme actions. Indeed, she was downright cheerful when speaking to her birth-mother, Ellie, saying how beautiful it was in the country near where she lived, and her voice was strong when I spoke with her Friday evening, even if her thoughts were still showing deep depression. When I called her Saturday evening and she failed to answer I thought she had simply gone to sleep before I called (which she sometimes did). Actually she had, to the eternal sleep.

When she failed to report to Stepping Stones, a halfway house where she was staying due to her depression, Saturday evening, they called the police; the police found her doors locked, they also checked and looked into the windows but could see nothing; they are not permitted to enter a home when they find no “disturbance”. They did not look hard enough, since her car was there and she was missing from a state-run facility. They apparently did not deem it an emergency (but we are not going to blame them). Ellie and I talked with her team leader earlier this evening (Sunday), and these are the details we know now. We will never know for certain. . . .

I ask that you not call for a while. I will keep you up to date via email, and do not want to get emotional with you, which I know I would, so that I could not talk anyway. I can hardly contain my emotions; they keep coming to the surface unexpectedly. We will talk later, I am certain. . . .

Helene, Ellie, and are planning to go to Durango on Tuesday or Wednesday to take care of everything. We intend to have services there. If you wish to send a gift, make it out to the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, Finger Lakes Chapter (NAMI-FL) and mail it to Carol Booth, president, 510 Mitchell Street, Ithaca, NY 14850.

Karen would also want you to know that she certainly was so sad that she was not able to make more of her life, and, when depressed, life itself was a particularly difficult struggle for her, a struggle which she felt she was losing. . . .

We know that you would want to support us in any way you can, and are so sorry to convey this message to you in this way. For those of you who knew her, please have some good thoughts for Karen; she deserves them. . . .

Paul and Helene

Phillip Gunn

Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to Dr. Jennifer Gunn, a local psychiatrist, whose 14-year-old son, Phillip died from complications during heart surgery. Our thoughts and prayers go out to her and her family.

Jean Walters for NAMI-FL members

NAMI-FL Web Page

Lightlink has donated web page space and e-mail account (namifl@lightlink.com) to NAMI-FL. At this point we've posted a simple web page at www.namifingerlakes.org based on the group informational brochure. We are working with Ithaca College graduate student, Kjersti Aastad on ways to improve and enhance the web page. Kjersti is working to help us improve our outreach techniques and make our identity stronger. She has completed similar projects in Norway. *Bruce McKee*

NAMI-Promise Conference

Soaring to New Heights: Hope & Recovery 2005

Wednesday, October 5th, 9:00 AM–4:00 PM

Empire Room, New York State Fairgrounds

Presenters:

Martha Manning, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist and author of *Undercurrents: A Life Beneath the Surface*, and *A Place to Land: Lost and Found in an Unlikely Friendship*. She has been featured in the HBO documentary, *Dead Blue: Surviving Depression*.

Moe Armstrong, the director of Consumer and Family Affairs for Vinfen Corporation, a mental health service provider in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A consumer for 35 years, Moe suffered his first psychiatric break when he went to Vietnam and faces the struggles of his own illness every day. Moe has received numerous awards for his tireless work as a mental health advocate and served on the NAMI National Board in 2003–2004.

Dr. Mantosh Dewan, Professor and Chairman of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Upstate Medical University, Syracuse, NY and Diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

Mary Ellen Clausen, founder of Ophelia's Place, a resource center which offers information about treatment, insurance, education and prevention for those dealing with eating disorders. Ophelia's Place provides a safe haven where sufferers and their families can find unconditional love, support, encouragement and hope.

Anne Bryan Smollin, CSJ, Ph.D., a sister of St. Joseph, as well as a therapist, lecturer, author, and former teacher. Sister Anne gives lectures throughout the country

on humor, laughter, stress and relationships. She is presently Executive Director of Counseling for Laity and serves as a therapist consultant to hospitals, and adjunct professor at several colleges.

See Carol for more info on this, or phone NAMI Promise at (315) 487-2085, or visit their web site at <http://www.nami-promise.org/events.html>.

Calendar

September

6	7 PM	Monthly Support Group	Jean Walters' house, 104 E. Lewis St.
27	7 PM	NAMI-FL business meeting. Presentation on Kendra's Law by Jeff Keller, NAMI-NYS	Jean Walters' house, 104 E. Lewis St.

October

4	7 PM	Monthly Support Group	Jean Walters' house, 104 E. Lewis St.
5		<i>Soaring to New Heights: Hope & Recovery</i>	Empire Room at the New York State Fairgrounds
20	6-8:30 PM	NAMI-FL <i>Out of the Shadow</i> community education program	The Holiday Inn in downtown Ithaca. The film is about an hour and ten minutes with a panel discussion to follow. Refreshments will be served.
28-30		NAMI-NYS educational conference	Albany, NY

November

1	7 PM	Monthly Support Group	Jean Walters' house, 104 E. Lewis St.
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December

6	7 PM	Monthly Support Group	Jean Walters' house, 104 E. Lewis St.
TBA		NAMI-FL December Social	Jean Walters' house, 104 E. Lewis St.