

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Marjorie Antus

A FAMILY OF FAMILIES

At the end of a NAMI Family-to-Family Education course that I was co-facilitating two summers ago, a man said, "What a relief this is. I thought you guys were going to blame *me* for my daughter's illness."

"Not in this class. We don't do blame," I answered. Because NAMI Family-to-Family Education is (as are all NAMI programs) grounded in the intricate science of brain health and brain illness, there's no room for moralizing. The topics of "weak character" and "bad parenting," erroneously considered throughout history to play a role in mental illness, have never been part of the curriculum.

Rather, the first four classes of the NAMI Family-to-Family Education are devoted to the study of brain function, brain disorder, brain research, and psychiatric medications. No one is expected to master the material as a college student might, and there are no tests. In fact, class members are urged to focus on material that is personally most helpful to them.

Something else asked of class participants: openness to the biological complexity and breathtaking mystery of the human brain so that *blaming* becomes a thing of the past.

In every course I've experienced, an encouraging shift takes place between the first and third sessions. That is, when people come through the classroom door for the first time, they usually seem uncertain and apprehensive. On my first night of class when I took the NAMI Family-to-Family Education, I remember thinking, "Okay, I'm admitting to a group of strangers (and myself) that there's mental illness in my family that I need help with."

By the third session, though, my classmates knew each other's names and greeted each other with what appeared to be good cheer. Without exception, I've seen this sense of community develop in the numerous NAMI Family-to-Family Education courses I've taught over the years.

Think about it. People who usually don't know each other, who are going through trauma, who haven't been listened to for a long time, if ever, commit to a series of 12 classes and discover both their own strength and the wisdom of others who are living with many of the same challenges and difficulties.

"People in a room sharing experiences is the heart of NAMI," said Suzanne Robinson, the Assistant Director of NAMI's national educational programs, recently. "The magic of NAMI is people interacting."

That's why the educational course is called "NAMI Family-to-Family" and why, over time, a NAMI affiliate tends to become a family of families.

**A NAMI Family-to-Family Education course will begin on October 22 in Manassas.
See this newsletter for details on page 4.**

Join us on **Saturday, October 13** for our Annual *Go Green for Mental Health* Walk Fun Run.. See registration info below. Walk/Run in honor of or in memory of someone you know.

**WALK
FUN RUN**

— 5k/3mi —

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13

Novant Health UVA
Health System Prince
William Medical Center,
8700 Sudley Road Manassas



GO GREEN FOR MENTAL HEALTH

In-person Registration: 9:00am
Walk: 10:00am (RAIN or SHINE)




Walk to honor
those living with
mental illness.

Walk to raise funds
for vital community
education about
mental illness.

Walk to raise awareness
and combat stigma.

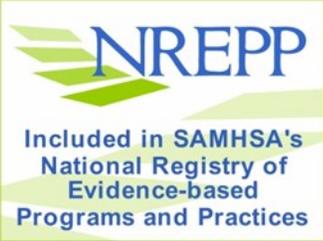
Registration fee: \$25. Includes a free Go Green for Mental Health shirt. Join us at Novant Health at 9:00 am to register **or register online at nami-pw.org**

Questions: info@nami-pw.org

Hosted in partnership with



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FREE Family-to-Family Course

Education for Families Who Have Relatives with Serious Mental Illness

When: October 22 through November 28, 2018*
Every Monday & Wednesday for 6 Weeks
6:30 – 9:30 PM

Where: Novant Health Prince William Medical Center, Manassas

***No class on Weds., Nov. 21**

These 12 classes are taught by trained family members. They discuss clinical treatments plus knowledge and skills to help family members cope more effectively with these illnesses:

- Schizophrenia,
- Bipolar disorder (manic depression),
- Clinical depression,
- Panic disorder,
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD),
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Weekly topics include:

- Learning about feelings and facts;
- Diagnosis, causes, coping with critical periods of the illness;
- Biology of the brain/new research, medication review;
- Problem-solving;
- Empathy – what it’s like to have a brain disorder;
- Communication skills;
- Self-care in the family;
- Advocacy: fighting stigma.

ADVANCE REGISTRATION REQUIRED. Call 703-659-9983

NAMI PRINCE WILLIAM FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS

The challenges of mental illness do not only affect an individual's family members but also friends, teachers, neighbors, coworkers and others in the community. "Family member" and "caregiver" refer to anyone giving emotional, financial or practical support to a person with a mental health condition. Whether you're providing a lot of assistance or very little, the information and support you receive from a NAMI Family Support Group can help you better understand the issues that you might face. (Excerpt from: <http://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Family-Members-and-Caregivers>.)

The most important thing to know is YOU ARE NOT ALONE. Below are the two NAMI Family Support Groups currently being held in Prince William County:

WOODBRIIDGE

Second Tuesday of the Month, 7:00 pm to 9:00pm
Sentara Potomac Hospital
Room "C" in the Hylton Education Center
2300 Opitz Boulevard, Woodbridge, VA
Contact: Donna Fortunato, 571-437-4579



HAYMARKET:

Third Tuesday of the Month, 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm
Haymarket Gainesville Community Library
Community Room
14870 Lightner Road, Haymarket, VA
Contact:
Bonnie Cuppett, 703-659-9983

Most family members attend the groups when their loved one is in crisis. When the crisis is over, they stop coming. Get in the habit of attending every month, whether things are going well or not. That way, if a crisis does hit, you know where you need to be. And remember, there are others who are new to this journey, and they need the support you can offer.



Do you have a mental health condition? Are you interested in enhancing your recovery? We currently do not have any NAMI Peer-to-Peer Education scheduled, but call NAMI Prince William now to get on the wait list, for our next course offering. 703-659-9983.

NOT ALONE

By Pauline Hunter, NAMI Prince William Director

Taking care of or being a supporter of a loved one experiencing any form of illness can be devastating. Yet being a caregiver of a loved one facing any form of mental illness can create an environment of loneliness, isolation, desperation, shame, guilt, and the list can continue.

I have been sitting on the edge of a cliff waiting for the next blow and wondering how I would manage it. Not knowing what resources were available, I felt alone and helpless. Then, one Sunday, I saw in our church's bulletin information about NAMI and the free, 12-session, NAMI Family-to-Family Education. NAMI Family-to-Family course gave me my first glimpse of hope and assurance that I am not alone in my suffering. My journey to here began with a simple phone call to NAMI Prince William and registering to participate in the NAMI Family-to-Family Education.

My husband and I graduated from the NAMI family education course. We had lots of information and connection to a community that understood our feelings of being a mental health caregiver and supporter.

My daughter suffers from panic attacks and depression. She has also been diagnosed with seizures. These have resulted in several trips to the Emergency Room but also introduced us to the Prince William Law Enforcement Department.

As a result of this relationship, I was asked to present my story at the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training. I wanted to ensure that everyone knew how influential one police officer had been to us as a family. The story I shared is one of compassion and helpfulness demonstrated by a police officer. A man who took the time to see us as individuals; a man that looked beyond the crisis at hand and saw alternative ways to elevate our hope is the story I shared. It was important to "break the silence" and also share the positive effect the CIT program can have on a family in crisis.

Yet, what I discovered was that it was not sharing my story that was impactful for me. It was the story of another NAMI family member who also participated in the CIT training and shared her story. I sat there breathless because so many of the emotions she described were mine. I listened. I felt as though I had a connection that I had never experienced before. I felt connected and understood. Someone knew how I felt. We became sisters on the journey where before we were total strangers. Yes! Someone knew my pain and I was no longer alone or hopeless. Her story allowed me to release the stigma of shame and embarrassment from being a mental health caregiver to a loved one.

The Reader's Digest version of this story is that you are not alone. It takes a village of people to help us navigate the mental health journey. All have an important role, but most importantly, we must become advocates for ourselves. We are not alone. Someone does know our name and our pain – NAMI. NAMI is the beginning, but only if you take the first step. Participate.





Mental Illness Awareness Week takes place from Oct. 7–13, 2018. Join us Saturday, October 13 in Manassas for the NAMI Prince William Go Green for Mental Health Walk/Fun Run and help us put an end to stigma. (See page 2.)



Prince William

P.O. Box 1423, Woodbridge, VA 22195-1423

T 703-659-9983 Email: info@nami-pw.org Website: nami-pw.org

MEMBERSHIPS: Household \$60 Regular \$40 Open Door \$5

*SPONSORSHIPS: Professional \$75 Corporate \$250

I want to donate _____

*Sponsorships are separate from membership and are considered donations to NAMI Prince William.

Please complete the form below and mail your membership/donation to the P.O. Box noted above, or pay online through our secure website at: nami-pw.org

Members are NAMI-PW's lifeblood; your membership helps us continue to provide free outreach, support & education. In bringing mental health issues to wider attention, we advocate for better treatment. As our membership base grows, our voice becomes stronger.

Respect, Compassion & Hope ... NAMI Works!

Check here for renewal: Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/St: _____

Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

I'd like to volunteer for NAMI-PW's 2018 Go Green for Mental Health Walk/Run.

I wish to receive NAMI National's solicitations.

NAMI Membership exists at 3 levels: Affiliate, State & National. NAMI Prince William (NAMI-PW) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit, charitable organization—contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. Together, we can continue to fight for all those affected by mental illness. PLEASE NOTE: If making a donation, in order for NAMI-PW to receive your full donation, please send your donation to the NAMI-PW office. Thank you!

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