

December 2011



Frederick County

A Letter From Our Frederick NAMI President

Charity Holiday Gifts, It's Not In The Gift

Whether it's a Christmas gift for your husband, wife, child or friend, the act of giving is a show of love and appreciation. It also satisfies a basic need in all of us to please another. All too often, though, we forget about the larger purpose of giving, the purpose giving holiday gifts to charity can fulfill.

Of course the act of giving a gift to a loved one or someone close to you has an immediate positive impact in seeing the joy on their face as they receive the gift and then seeing them lighting up when they see how much you thought and cared to pick that particular gift for them. This personal connection and reinforcement is missing when giving gifts to charity during the holidays or any other time for that matter. You put some thought into the charitable gifts you buy, picking different items for a family charity than a homeless charity, but in the end it just disappears; for all you know it actually went into a

black hole. Don't be fooled though, the importance of giving a charitable holiday gift is far greater than your personal experience.

Use Imagination

The act of giving charitable Christmas gifts is actually more important than the gift itself. You don't need to be affluent to participate in this grand contribution. You only need to use imagination. Picture in your mind the type of person or people who will receive the gift. Imagine yourself in their place.

For example, put yourself in the shoes of a family down on their luck, and the joy the father and/or mother will have watching a child open a gift that would not be there if it weren't for charity. You realize then it won't take much to bring that joy about. And the happiness of that child, and the joy of that parent, is just the beginning.

The care and love you use to purchase a charitable holiday gift represents the larger care and greater understanding you have of your role in the world. The process, the use of your imagination, the uplifting feeling you and everyone involved receive, all add positive energy to the world and help to make it a better place. You do have the power to make a difference and in the end you need to realize the giving of holiday charity is not about the gifts, but about the contribution you are making on a larger scale.

A gift to NAMI Frederick County will benefit local families by enabling us to continue providing the many educational and support groups that have touched and changed so many lives. This is a gift that you know 100% of your donation will be used to support the NAMI programs. Our NAMI staff is all volunteer and we have little overhead—meaning your contributions go directly to the consumers of NAMI. A few dollars can make a big impact!

Remo Molino

President NAMI Frederick

Give a Gift That Will Last

DONATE TO NAMI OF FREDERICK

See the back page of this newsletter for details on how to donate. We really appreciate your support and couldn't do it without you.



Supported Employment

By Mary Lou and Gerry Blessing

Surveys suggest that 70% of those with mental illness wish to work but only 15% actually do work. On May 7th we attended a full-day informational workshop on making employment work for those receiving disability payments, via the concept of "Supported Employment". A critical element of this approach is employment-centered benefits counseling which helps the consumer and their family members to understand their benefits and to make informed decisions about work. Frequently, consumers and their family members fear the potential loss of Social Security benefits and health care coverage following employment. The concept of "Supported Employment" provides benefits counseling and job opportunities to aid in maximizing the individual's gross income and to do so without forfeiting access to needed Social Security cash benefits and health insurance coverage. These programs, resources, and work incentives are already in place in Maryland which support incorporating employment into a personal recovery plan.

First, we heard research and programmatic information on the concept of "Supported Employment."

Principles behind this concept are:

Anyone who is a part of the public mental health system is eligible, if there is a program in their area.

Benefits planning is offered prior to work and when work changes are contemplated.

Employment services and mental health services are integrated.

Employment specialists honor individual preferences as to kind of job, hours, and location.

Employment specialists build a network of job opportunities based on the individual's preferences.

Job searches occur quickly - actually getting on a job, not practicing for one.

Employment at a competitive job (regular wages & without regard to disability status) is the goal.

Job supports are available as long as needed (in Maryland - unlimited).

This program of "Supported Employment" has been shown to benefit persons with mental illness through increased income, improved self-esteem, increased quality of life and reduced sys-

tems.

Next, we went to work understanding benefits counseling by working on many examples of earned income and various exclusions which can be applied to that income. For instance, if necessary for work, expenditures for eyeglasses, hearing aids and transportation costs can be excluded from that earned income. There are student expense exclusions for those under 22 and regularly attending school. If a Social Security Administration approved plan towards self support is created, then expenses toward that goal are excludable. These are a few examples of the ways benefits planning can help an individual achieve their highest possible gross income. For "rep-payees" this information is absolutely essential. At the time of the workshop there were 23 providers in Maryland already participating (or coming soon) with programs implementing this concept of "Evidence-Based Supported Employment." In Frederick County the provider is Way Station, Inc.

This workshop was provided thanks to NAMI Maryland, the Johnson & Johnson-Dartmouth Community Project Family Advocacy Team, the Mental Hygiene Administration and the University of Maryland Evidence-Based Practice (EBPC) and Mental Health Services Training Centers (MHSTC).

Holiday Tip

If you suffer from loneliness or holiday depression, do not be alone for the holidays! Even if it means volunteering your time to help the needy at a food line or soup kitchen, do not be alone. There are many valuable programs to become involved with well before the holidays, and such involvement on your part will lessen your feelings of loneliness, of low self-esteem and low self-worth.

Tips to Prevent Holiday Stress and Depression

When stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past.

1. Acknowledge your feelings.

If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.

2. Reach out.

If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.

3. Be realistic.

The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children can't come to your house, find new ways to celebrate together, such as

sharing pictures, emails or videos.

4. Set aside differences.

Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.

5. Stick to a budget.

Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Try these alternatives: Donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.

6. Plan ahead.

Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. And make sure to line up help for party prep and cleanup.

7. Learn to say no.

Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. If it's not possible to say no when your boss asks you to work overtime, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.

8. Don't abandon healthy habits.

Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to

your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks. Continue to get plenty of sleep and physical activity.

9. Take a breather.

Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Take a walk at night and stargaze. Listen to soothing music. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.

Seek professional help if you need it.

Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

Take control of the holidays

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression that can descend during the holidays. Learn to recognize your holiday triggers, such as financial pressures or personal demands, so you can combat them before they lead to a meltdown. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the holidays.

Holiday Tip

Give yourself a gift during the holidays. Something you have wanted but didn't purchase. Wrap it up and wait for a day that is special and then open it. It gives you something special to look forward to. We treat others during the holidays so make sure to take time to treat yourself.



A Mother's Compassion

By a NAMI Frederick Mom

There is a quote by David Augsburger that I can relate to. He says, *"If you quit loving the moment it becomes difficult, you will never discover compassion."*

When you are living with a child who has a mental illness, life is difficult a lot of the time. I have always loved my son—even through the difficult times—and because of his mental illness I think I have discovered a new kind of compassion. At the time in his life that he should be carefree and excited about his future, he is instead filled with anxiety. He worries about his ability to negotiate the world on his own. He worries about his ability to finish school, whether or not he can handle a job and where he will live in the future. There are times when he lashes out in anger over his situation and although I am usually the recipient of his anger, I try to maintain compassion for him.

There is a fine line for me between expectations and compassion for my child. I encourage him to be as self-sufficient as possible. I've done my best to teach him to do household chores and to cook a little. I push him to continue his education. These endeavors often end up as frustrating failures, but I continue to try to prepare him for life without me. My expectations are high, given his illness, and I often have to push him to get results. I have to remember not to push too hard because that can cause such anxiety that more symptoms of his illness will emerge. It would be easy to give up because sometimes it just seems too difficult.

When I see homeless people on the street, I often have to catch my breath because I realize my son could end up there someday. I have great compassion for the homeless, but I am also determined that my son will not end up there. And so, I continue to push my son to move forward in his life and be as self-sufficient as possible. There are times I am so frustrated with him that I want to quit—but then I remember David Augsburger's quote—and I just try to love him even more—and try to be more compassionate.

If you would like to share a personal narrative about living with mental illness, please email your submission to susan.ways@namifcmd.org



The Benefits of Quitting Smoking Begin the Day You Quit Help to Stop Smoking is Free and Easy to Access

The health benefits of quitting smoking can begin the day you stop smoking, according to a recent workshop entitled *Smoking Cessation Among People with Mental Illness*. Dr. Carlo DiClemente, Center Director, MDQuit, presented information, resources, and best practices to help individuals in Maryland develop a plan of action to stop tobacco use. The presentation was part of the recent annual NAMI Maryland education conference.

If you are a smoker or tobacco user and are thinking about quitting, you may access free support and information at or by calling 1-800-784-8669 or 1-800-QuitNow. Visit MDQuit.org for more information. For a factsheet on smoking cessation from the National Cancer Institute visit www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/tobacco/cessation

The Importance of Exercise During the Holidays

It's hard enough to exercise when little is going on, but add holidays to the mix and many of us find exercise moving to the bottom of lengthy to-do lists. One thing you don't want is to add more stress by trying to maintain your regular exercise schedule. At the same time, staying active in some way will give you energy, help lessen holiday tension and, of course, help mitigate some of the extra calories you may be eating.

Studies show that people who exercise during the holidays generally feel better, report lower incidences of

depression and are able to keep off those extra holiday pounds.

Exercise doesn't necessarily mean power lifting at the gym or training for a marathon. A short walk around the office or simply standing up to stretch during a break at work can offer immediate relief in a stressful situation. Getting your blood moving releases endorphins and can improve your mood almost instantaneously.

Just 15 minutes of exercise a day can help to elevate your mood. When time is

tight consider these simple steps:

- Park far away from stores and walk
- Choose steps instead of escalators
- Walk the dog
- Watch TV while on the treadmill
- At holiday parties make a plan to "eat just one"

If you find that you put on a few holiday pounds don't let it get the best of you. Create a plan that will help you lose weight and feel better. Be realistic and go easy on yourself. We are not always in charge of our holiday schedules but some simple awareness can make a difference.



Holiday Tip

Make a decision to be happy and stick to it. When you find yourself feeling down repeat in your mind "I intend to be happy" and redirect your thoughts. You will be surprised at the difference it makes.

Pay It Forward! NAMI Volunteer Opportunities

Family to Family Teachers

We need Family to Family teachers! Frederick NAMI is seeking individuals who have taken the Family to Family class and are interested in attending a FREE teacher training workshop. Use your personal experience to help other struggling families. If interested please contact mike.neely@namifcmd.org

Hospital Volunteers & Substitutes:

Volunteers visit in the Behavior Health Unit at Frederick Memorial Hospital once a month to inform patients and their family members about NAMI of Frederick County and the services we offer to the community. NAMI hospital volunteers work in teams of two and training is provided by our Hospital Visits Coordinator, Margie Van Dyk. If interested please email margie.vandyk@namifcmd.org

Outreach Volunteers Needed

We are looking for individuals that can help spread the word about NAMI Frederick. Duties may include brochure delivery, posting flyers, contacting media sources about upcoming events, and other creative ways to reach out to the community. If interested contact remo.molino@namifcmd.org



Struggling to Cope with a Loved One's Mental Illness?

The NAMI Family to Family Class Can Help

In 2012, we are once again offering—free of charge—the “Family-to-Family” training course for family and close friends of those with serious mental illness, such as depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. The course is taught by trained, experienced family members of the mentally ill. All instruction and course materials are free to class participants. Join over 300,000 family members that have graduated from this national program by calling Mike Neely at 301-802-4496, or emailing mike.neely@namifcmd.org



Recommended Reading

Unplug the Christmas Machine: A Complete Guide to Putting Love and Joy Back Into the Season

By Jean Coppock Staeheli and Jo Robinson

Discombobulated: An Inspiring Journey of Hope Through Mental Illness

By Kelly Ann Compton and Cheryl Arnold, Ph.D.

Surviving Schizophrenia: A Manual for Families, Consumers, and Providers

By E. Fuller Torrey, M.D.

New Website Educates People Who Work With Mentally Ill Children

A newly launched website provides easily accessible training for Marylanders who work with children who have mental health needs and their families. Called the Virtual Training Center, the site provides instruction for people working in schools, clinics, homes, Inpatient and residential programs, and outpatient and other community settings.

The training is in the form of free online video and audio presentations that participants can access at their convenience.

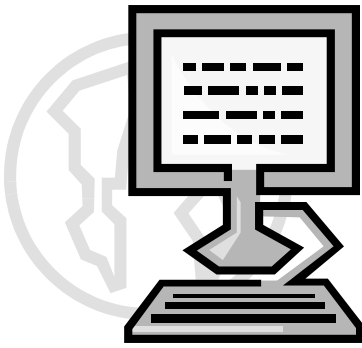
Participants can download all of the handout materials and print a Certificate of Proof of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) after passing the quiz at the end of each presentation.

The topics include:

- Childhood Development and Disorders
- Youth and Families as Partners
- Cultural and Linguistic Competence
- Screening, Assessment and Referrals
- Treatment Planning and Service Provision
- Outcomes and Quality Improvement
- Behavior Management
- Health and Safety
- Community Development

The website is a project of the Maryland Mental Health Workforce, a collaboration among the Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Special Education/Early Interventions Services, the Mental Hygiene Administration of the Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Maryland Child and Adolescent Innovations Institute at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Visit the website at:

<http://mdvtc.umaryland.edu>



For the Most Up to Date Information About NAMI Support Groups and Activities

Visit the Newly Updated NAMI Frederick Website

www.namifcmd.org

NAMI of Frederick County

NAMI is an all volunteer non-profit agency run by a dedicated team of people committed to the mission to provide information, understanding, education and support for persons experiencing mental illness and their families . If you are interested in joining the Board of NAMI and being a part of an organization that makes a difference, please contact any of the members below or email info@namifcmd.org.

Board of Directors

| | |
|--|--|
| Remo Molino, President | remo.molino@namifcmd.org |
| DeDe Pucino, 1st Vice President | dede.pucino@namifcmd.org |
| Gerry Blessing, 2nd Vice President and Grants Coordinator | gerry.blessing@namifcmd.org |
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| Curt Kohlheyer, Family Support Group Coordinator | curt.kohlheyer@namifcmd.org |
| Mike Neely, Family to Family Coordinator | mike.neely@namifcmd.org |
| Dave Stant, Consumer Coordinator | mike.stant@namifcmd.org |
| Susan Ways, Newsletter and Outreach Coordinator | susan.ways@namifcmd.org |

Volunteers

| | |
|--|--|
| Daryl Bruner, Webmaster | daryl.bruner@namifcmd.org |
| Phil Smith, Assistant Webmaster | phil.smith@namifcmd.org |
| Margie Van Dyk, Hospital Visits Coordinator | margie.vandyk@namifcmd.org |
| Terri Wenner, NAMI Walk Coordinator | terri.wenner@namifcmd.org |



Join or Donate to NAMI Frederick County

Annual Membership Dues are \$35 for an Individual, Family, or Business

A Limited Income Membership is \$3.00

Dues include membership in NAMI Maryland and NAMI National.

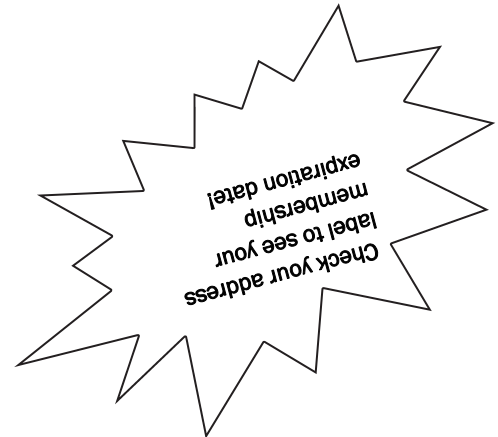
**Join, Renew, or Make a Tax Deductible Donation Online at
www.namifcmd.org**

Donations to NAMI can be made at the national, state, or local level. If you would like a donation to support local programs and activities, you can donate to NAMI Frederick directly by visiting our website or by mail. Thank you for supporting Frederick NAMI.

To make a donation, join, or renew your membership by mail please send your check to the address below. Be sure to indicate whether your money is going towards a membership or a donation.

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