

## Letter From the President

We know that no matter what the diagnosis, mental illness is constant. It is certainly not consistent, but constant; it is always there, always in the back of our mind. There is this persistent worry of when the next crisis is coming. Even when we're not in crisis, we're still dealing with its constant illogical impact on our lives and our family member.

As family members, we all know that our role is a supportive one, in which we need to maintain not just a constant attitude but a consistent one. We need to be supportive, instructive, caring and helpful because this truly is an illness, one that has overtaken our son or daughter, our Mom or Dad or our husband or wife. We know that we have to be the solid one on whom they can consistently rely. But that is a tough job.

At our Family Support Group on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, I have often said that one of our primary responsibilities is that while our family member is on this mental and emotional roller coaster, we cannot get on that roller coaster. We must stay objective and not let that illness get the best of us. If we get on that roller coaster we can't help them. We lose our effectiveness, our objectivity and cannot be that constant and consistent part of our loved one's life. This is easier said than done.

Last month, I made a mistake and got on the roller coaster. I was on the phone with my mother who was just spiraling into that abyss of depression. Even though I had those words in the back of my mind, I jumped on that roller coaster. I had so many other things to do. I couldn't deal with her issues right then and I got frustrated. I got angry and I yelled.

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For days after that call I was frustrated not with the illness but with myself. I just wasn't the person that my mother needed. I wasn't who I was supposed to be. I didn't help the situation and at that moment made it worse.

Each New Year's, we all make resolutions or promises to ourselves to improve some part of our lives. It may be exercising, losing weight, eating healthy or cleaning out the basement. Our job as supporters for our family members is much harder than keeping any New Year's resolution. We are going to fail at times, just as we often do with other our resolutions.

One thing that we need to include in that mix of resolutions is the resolution to forgive. We need to forgive our family members for some of their actions, which are a part of the illness. And just as important, we need to forgive ourselves. We are not perfect and never will be. We need to forgive ourselves for all of those times when we are not a constant or consistent supporter. It is going to happen.

It's OK. We're not perfect. And we need to forgive ourselves for that.

I hate that stupid roller coaster!

**Mark Moser, President**

## Free Upcoming Events

### **March 28 Family Psychoeducation Lecture by Bette Stewart**

On Tuesday March 28, NAMI Frederick will host Bette Stewart to speak about Family Psychoeducation (FPE) at 7:00pm at the YMCA, 1000 North Market St in Frederick. This is a free event and is open to the public.

Family Psychoeducation (FPE) is an evidence-based practice (EBS) that gives individuals and their families' information about mental illnesses. It helps them build social supports and enhance problem-solving. In addition, communication and coping skills are improved.

Research supports the positive outcomes of participation in FPE. Participants in FPE experience fewer relapses and less time in the hospital. Families who participate report greater

knowledge of serious mental illnesses and less stress, confusion, and isolation.

Bette Stewart is a Training Specialist for the University of Maryland, Department of Psychiatry. A relative of Stewart was diagnosed with mental illness 25 years ago which led to her involvement in NAMI and a mental illness recovery programs. She has been involved in NAMI support groups and the Family to Family program. She works with public behavioral health providers to deliver EBP training for Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), Family Psychoeducation (FPE) and Supported Employment. She is also the Maryland Early Intervention Program (MEIP) Team Leader Trainer.

### **April 26 Child Anxiety: How to Minimize Risk and Optimize Health by Alison J. Bomba Psy.D**

On Tuesday April 26, NAMI Frederick will host Alison J. Bomba to speak about Child Anxiety at 7:00 pm at the YMCA, 1000 North Market St. in Frederick. This is a free event and is open to the public.

Some of the topics that will be covered during the lecture include common childhood anxiety triggers and what anxiety looks like in children. Participants will also learn anxiety management techniques and how to seek help.

Alison J. Bomba, Psy.D. is a licensed psychologist who has been treating children, adolescents, and young adults in private practice since 2007. She provides results-oriented, compassionate care and

uses ethical, evidence-based practices to effectively treat various psychiatric disorders. Dr. Bomba works closely with parents, pediatricians and school personnel to provide comprehensive treatment for her young clients.

Dr. Bomba is a published writer and consultant on topics of mental health and in 2013 was a recipient of the Daily Record's Leading Women Award.

**To RSVP for either lecture, go to [Namifcmd.org](http://Namifcmd.org) and click on the link for the lecture.**

**Or**

**email Linda Coyle at [lkcoyle@yahoo.com](mailto:lkcoyle@yahoo.com) or call 301-471-0148. -**

# Reaching Beyond the Bars

By Kevin Coyle

It was the summer of 2003 when I was at a week-long academic seminar at Princeton University. My temporary lodging was at the top of a stone building with a grassy courtyard in the middle. The old wooden shutters and glass windows of my room had a resemblance to the movie, "A Beautiful Mind." I was no genius, but like John Nash I would soon travel down the path to a delusional state. While others were discovering their mind, I was losing mine.

Like a man weighted down in the water, I slowly submerged into the world of the unreal until I could not escape alone. It progressed so subtly that I was not aware of what was really happening to me. By the last night of the seminar I was convinced that I was Jesus or the messiah incarnate. Shut out from reality, I was imprisoned in a dream, an illusion of my mind's own making. When my father came to pick me up, I had a wide grin, the grin of a man caught in the throes of mania. It was one expression that my father will never forget.

I soon ended up in the mental hospital. There I was trapped behind the bars of psychosis. The world as I perceived it was distorted. Even during this time of suffering my family visited me. They probably felt like they lost me, wondering if the old Kevin would ever return. I would babble or speak in rhymes very fast. Although I could not respond appropriately I recognized them and looking back I can appreciate their love and support as I endured this new mysterious affliction called mental illness. I came home after four days. For the next four years I mustered my way through college going in and out of psychiatric units. Since hospitalization was not always practical, I often had to stay at home for weeks at a time.

Following my graduation from college, I hit

another low point. Each day I would wait on the couch for my parents to come home to talk about the delusions and hallucinations that tormented me. It took a toll on my family, even though they loved me so much. Searching for relief, they found a group home that I moved into in May of 2008. There, with the support of mental health organizations in my local community, I slowly recovered my ability to function. Another thing that helped me immensely was finding a good psychologist. I can express my thoughts to her without having to consult my parents all the time.

When I became stable enough, I began writing about mental health topics and gave speeches from time to time. In the summer of 2013, I gave a presentation to a NAMI Family to Family class talking about my experiences. There I sensed the pain and frustrations of family members dealing with their spouses devastating illnesses for the first time. They were on the outside looking in.

I have also been on the other side of the prison, not as a family member, but as a fellow consumer. I have witnessed my friends go through their own delusions. During such times, they want someone to lean on, someone to hold on to, just as I did when I had my first breakdown. Nothing is more painful or scary than suffering alone, wondering what you will say or do next. I often wish I could magically make their troubles go away, but sometimes all I can do is pray.

If I learned anything from my experiences it is this: None of us can go through mental illness alone. The sufferer needs love from family, friends, and guides. For sisters, parents, and brothers it is also hard. Caring for loved ones may mean time away from other things. It takes a lot of energy and time. This is why families need other families just as consumers need other peers. In the coming years I hope to continue to share my stories and provide comfort to those on both sides of the prison bars.

## Upcoming Events

### **2016 NAMI WALK SAVE THE DATE— SATURDAY MAY 21**

The annual NAMI Walk will be held on Saturday May 21 at the Inner Harbor in Baltimore. The goal of the Walk is to raise awareness of mental illness and the work NAMI does as well as raise funds for the organization.

**WALK WITH US!** This year our Frederick NAMI affiliate is walking under the team name of Namigos! This team name was originated a number of years ago by Fred and Fran Wenner. The name Namigos captures the spirit of friendship and support that we find at NAMI Frederick. We are proud to be using the name again this year and hope many of you will walk with us! To donate or register as a walker, go to [www.namiwalks.org/maryland](http://www.namiwalks.org/maryland).

**FORM A TEAM!** You can form your own team! Maybe you have an organization that would like to walk together or maybe you want to form a team to honor a friend coping with mental illness. If so, you can start a team of your own at the same website. [www.namiwalks.org/maryland](http://www.namiwalks.org/maryland)

**SPONSOR!** Would your business, church, or organization be willing to sponsor? If so, contact Linda Coyle at [linda.coyle@namifcmd.org](mailto:linda.coyle@namifcmd.org) to get more information.

**VOLUNTEER!** We will also need help on Walk day even if you do not want to walk. You can help set up, man our Frederick County table, and hand out water or clean up. It is a fun day with lots of other groups and organizations to see.

**DETAILS!**

**Walk Day: Saturday May 21**

**Time: Check in at 9:00 Walk starts at 10:00**

**Location: West Shore Park Inner Harbor Baltimore**

**Distance: 2 miles**

### **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

NAMI Frederick is an all volunteer organization. Most of us got involved in NAMI through a Family to Family class or a Family Support group. Some of us found out about NAMI at the Behavioral Health unit at Frederick Memorial Hospital. Or maybe we picked up a brochure at a doctor's office or the library. Each of those interactions was the result of a volunteer giving some time to help someone else experiencing mental illness in the family. We at NAMI Frederick need your help to maintain and enhance our programs in Frederick County.

- **Treasurer:** Maintain financial records. Attend board meeting bimonthly. Training provided.
- **Web updates:** Update website weekly. Training provided.
- **Hospital Visits:** Volunteers are needed to go to the Behavioral Health Department of Frederick Memorial during visiting hours to provide families with information about NAMI and mental illness. Once or twice a month. Work with another volunteer. Training provided.
- **Events Coordinator:** The coordinator would communicate with local event planners (such as In the Street, Frederick Fair...), set up a booth with a tri-fold and brochures and staff the table during the event or arrange for other volunteers.

**"I would rather walk with a friend in the dark, than alone in the light" Helen Keller**

### **Family Support Groups**

**We offer two Family Support Groups each month for the family and friends of those with mental illness. These support groups are in a very relaxed, caring, and understanding environment. You can share your story, or just listen to others knowing that all discussions are confidential. The information discussed is ever so valuable.**

**These monthly support groups are offered on two evenings at the following locations:**

**(1) Good Shepherd Church**

*1415 West 7th St. (just past the 7<sup>th</sup> St. Frederick shopping center)*

*First Thursdays – 7:00 to 8:30 pm*

**(2) All Saints Episcopal Church**

*106 West Church St. (please check website for parking & entrance)*

*Third Wednesdays – 6:30 to 8:00 pm*

These meetings are for the family and friends of those with mental illness. We welcome those 18 and older, noting that we follow NAMI guidelines which restrict younger participants as well as those with mental illness.

*For more information please visit our website [supportgroups@namifcmd.org](mailto:supportgroups@namifcmd.org) or call 240-379-6186.*

**Become a NAMI member for \$35 per year.**

**Member benefits include:**

- Membership at a NAMI Maryland, a NAMI Affiliate and the NAMI national organization
- Advance notice and information about our free educational and support programs
- Reduced fees for attending NAMI Maryland special events
- A subscription to *The Advocate*, NAMI Nation's quarterly magazine
- A subscription to *NAMI Maryland Connections*, the newsletter of NAMI Maryland and our local affiliates
- Eligibility to vote in all NAMI elections

Access to exclusive members-only material on [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

**Join Online at [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org) or send a \$35 check to NAMI Frederick 4 East Church St. Frederick MD 21701**

## **CALENDAR REMINDERS:**

### **Support Groups**

- First Thursdays at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church 7-8:30 pm
- Third Wednesdays at All Saints Episcopal Church 6:30 – 8:00

### **Education Lectures**

- Family Psychoeducation March 29 7-8:30 Frederick YMCA
- Child Anxiety April 26 7-8:30 Frederick YMCA

**NAMI of Frederick County  
4 East Church St.  
Frederick MD 21701**