

NAMI Finger Lakes receives award at the Tompkins County Mental Health Services Board Recognition Event

On May 27, 2009 the Tompkins County Mental Health Services Board held its first Recognition Event, described as “a celebration and recognition of the community of care that serves the people of Tompkins County.” Consumers were recognized for their personal achievements. Both individual and organizational service providers were recognized for their dedication and impact on consumers.



Carol Booth accepting Outstanding Service Award.

Carol Booth, President of NAMI-FL, accepted an Outstanding Service Award on behalf of NAMI-FL. Congratulations to Carol and to all of those people who work hard to make NAMI-FL a success and a valuable resource in the community.



Bob De Luca, Commissioner of Tompkins County Mental Health Services speaking to audience.

Approximately 100 people attended the event and the RSS Chorus opened the ceremony. Many thanks to Susan Larkin for the photos and to Trisha Engelhard and her colleague for their music.



Trisha Engelhard and colleague performing at the ceremony.



NAMI-FL members celebrating friendship, support, and the award.

Nutritional Wellness and Mental Health Illnesses

At the May Board meeting, I introduced a guest speaker. His name was Aaron Lambert and he is a nutrition specialist from the Nutritional Wellness Center in Ithaca, New York where he works with his sister, Tara Lambert (owner). He spoke to us for about 20 minutes about the digestive system, how specific foods inhibit or strengthen body and mind functions, vitamin and mineral deficiencies, toxins and how these things (from food and the environment) can have a direct impact on

the causes and symptoms of many mental illnesses including, but not limited to, depression and schizophrenia. The session was well received and gave us some “food for thought” for both our personal use, the use of our ill family member, and as a possible topic to be discussed in more detail at a future date.

Sherry Scott, NAMI-FL, member and Board member

FINANCE

Many thanks to all of you who have paid your 2009 Membership dues. We hope that others will follow suit, to help support NAMI — Finger Lakes activities. Part of your annual membership dues are forwarded to NAMI National and NAMI-NYS to pay for your national and state publication subscriptions. We are billed according to our membership roster, so when someone misses paying their dues, we have to absorb the cost of their national and state membership from other revenue services. If you wish to continue to receive national and state NAMI newsletters, please help us by submitting your membership in a timely way each year.

Please forward your payment to NAMI-FL, 104 East Lewis Street, Ithaca, NY 14850.

Single membership dues \$25
Family membership dues \$35

Thank you,
Joanne Denison, NAMI-FL Treasurer

FUNDRAISING

OCTOBER 3 GARAGE SALE!

NAMI-FingerLakes will hold a garage sale on Saturday, October 3, from 8A.M. to 2P.M. at Jean Walters' house, 104 E. Lewis Street. It will be an opportunity to donate items we no longer need; visit with other NAMI-Finger Lakes members and friends; and earn money for our affiliate.

We need people who can help us prepare the sale and/or work on the day of the sale. Drop off will be on Thursday, October 1 from 8A.M. to 5P.M. and Friday, October 2, from 8A.M. to 9P.M. Please let us know by email (SCL8@Cornell.edu) or phone (273-2462) if you can help in any way. We will need help with: publicity, presale preparations, working at the sale, and cleanup.

I'll keep a list of who will be able to donate and work and send reminders as the day of the sale approaches.

Thanks for any help you can provide.

Susan Larkin (539-7299)
Jean Walters (273-2462)

Community Partnerships:

We are hoping to partner with local businesses who will contribute a percentage of a day's sales to NAMI-FL. If you are willing to recruit a local business with which you have a connection, please call or email Deb Grantham (607-277-5148; dgg3@cornell.edu).

Donations via Paypal and Amazon:

We've added a Paypal Donation Button to

the NAMI Finger Lakes Web Page (www.namifingerlakes.org). You can access it by clicking the link at the top of the home page, or by clicking "Help Others".

Either link takes you to the "Help Others" page, which contains a Paypal button. Click this button to donate cash to NAMI via your Paypal account or a credit card. Your contribution appears in the NAMI-FL Paypal account, less a small processing fee (2.2% of the donation + a \$0.30 transaction fee).

The second way to donate electronically is shopping through Amazon (4% of your typical Amazon purchase goes to NAMI). You MUST access Amazon through the Amazon on the NAMI – Finger Lakes Web site (www.namifingerlakes.org) in order for us to benefit from your purchases.

Please contact us with any comments or questions.

Bruce McKee and Joann Dennison,
NAMI-FL members and Board members

Grants:

In 2009, NAMI – Finger Lakes Board members have written proposals and funding applications to the Cornell College of Human Ecology, Friends of the Library, Rotary Club, and the Service League. We have received funding from the Friends of the Library (\$250) and the Service League (\$1,300).

Other efforts:

Sherry Scott sent a letter to Cornell ROTC requesting fundraising assistance.

A Cornell sorority will be assisting with the October garage sale.

NAMI-FL CALENDAR

Support Group: 7-9 PM, First Tuesday of each month at Jean Walter's house, 104 East Lewis Street, (607) 273-2462. Please call first if attending for the first time.

September

1st, Support Group
15th, *Mental Illness and Substance Abuse*, a NAMI-FL educational program with the TC Alcoholism Council and Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services
16th, Board meeting

October

6th, Support Group
3rd, Garage Sale, 104 E. Lewis Street
20th, Liz Grantham, In Our Own Voices speaker, 7 – 9 pm, Borg Warner Room, Tompkins County Public Library

November

3rd, Support Group
20th, Board meeting

December

1st, Support Group

January

5th, Support Group

LENDING LIBRARY

NAMI-FL maintains a lending library, adding to it as new books come in. If you would like to browse or borrow, call Jean Walters at (607) 273- 2462 or Carol Booth

at (607) 272-6593 and we will arrange a time.

Both of the books reviewed in this issue are available in the NAMI-FL library.

Jean Walters, Manager, NAMI-FL

BOOK AND MOVIE REVIEWS:



Madness: A Bipolar Life by Marya Hornbacher, hardcover published by Houghton Mifflin, New York, 2008, paperback published by Mariner books, 2008, Copyright Marya Hornbacher.

Marya Hornbacher takes her readers on a no holds barred trip through her world of depression and mania. She begins with her childhood when the fears kept her awake all night – the beginning of a life-long inability to let the mind rest and go to sleep. In a previous book, *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia*, Hornbacher wrote of her diagnoses of depression and eating disorders. It is not until well into adulthood, at age 23, that she is diagnosed with bipolar disorder. She shares her story of cutting, bingeing, purging, self-mutilation, drug and alcohol abuse, opportunistic sexual activity, the confusion that comes from psychosis. She tells of moments of joy, too. She describes the fun of her hypomanic shopping sprees, the wonderful parties she puts together, entertaining friends and family, the amazing energy she summons at work. Inevitably, psychosis, hospitalization, depression follow. It's a pattern many of

us know well. Hornbacher is a gifted writer who takes us along and tells us what's going on in her mind and in her life. She describes her perception of family and friends, lovers, and spouse.

In the prologue, Hornbacher describes what cutting does for her: "It stills the racing thoughts, relieves the madness of the pressure that has been crushing my mind, viselike for nearly my entire life." She describes the madness: "[M]y mind first lit up with flashes of color, currents of electric insight, sudden elation, then flooded with black and bloody thoughts that throw me face-down onto my living room floor, a swelling despair pressing outward from the center of my chest, threatening to shatter my ribs." She is a powerful writer telling her personal story.

Madness is not a pretty story but it is a captivating account of one person's struggle with her overwhelming illness. I recommend *Madness* to anyone who wants to know more about bipolar disorder. It's strong, well-told, and will help those who want to know more about what bipolar disorder "feels like" and also help people with bipolar disorder find words to describe their own experience. It is a book well worth reading, especially for family members and people with bipolar disorder.

Both Cornell's Olin Library and the Tomkins County Public Library have copies listed in their catalogs. The NAMI Finger Lakes library also has a copy.

Jean Poland, NAMI-FL member

The Soloist: A Lost Dream, an Unlikely Friendship, and the Redemptive Power of Music, by Steve Lopez, 2008, G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Not long ago, Los Angeles Times Reporter Steve Lopez devoted a series of columns to Nathaniel Anthony Ayers. This book, which appeared in 2008, and subsequent movie emerged from them--important contributions to the mysterious subject of schizophrenia.

Steve first notices Nathaniel, dressed in rags, next to the shopping cart filled with his belongings, practicing on a battered 2-string violin, near the Beethoven statue in Pershing Square or at the downtown Second Street tunnel entrance. His playing brings him small change for survival. Nights are always spent outdoors among the homeless.

"You don't follow music; it follows you," someone once said. Nathaniel's passion and enormous talent for music had earlier brought this black musician a double-bass Juilliard scholarship with the support of highly placed professionals and his mother. But sudden onset of bizarre behavior, which led to the diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia, shattered his hopes and dreams in his third semester.

Steve exerts enormous tact and patience to get to know Nathaniel well enough to interview him. "Passion for music is the center of his world." So the reporter first buys Nathaniel some violin strings. Readers later offer musical instruments and help as the columns continue. He tries to connect Nathaniel with Lamp, a downtown agency and a refuge for homeless people with mental illness, started by a nun. Nathaniel agrees to store his new instruments with them, to be played only at Lamp. But he declines to live there. A month goes by before he uses his new cello in their courtyard. Meanwhile, Steve's involvement with

Nathaniel deepens. He stays overnight with him amid the chaos and dangers of homelessness. Nathaniel now trusts him and talks about his early incidents of paranoia at Julliard. At first, medications seemed to help, but he stopped them after treatment in a mental hospital. He says that someday he might reconsider taking medications.

New contacts are formed and old ones re-emerge with teachers, psychiatrists, friends and fellow musicians. Invited by a supper-club manager, Nathaniel performs onstage-first with some difficulty. In the company of a psychiatrist, a nervous Steve is relieved that the final applause is deserved and genuine. The psychiatrist strengthens Steve's resolve that Nathaniel should not sleep in the streets. Music and support from fellow musicians slowly help Nathaniel's decision. Los Angeles Philharmonic cellist Peter Snyder offers lessons, to be held at Lamp. The concept of a studio is born. This, and the appreciation of his musical gifts by several fellow musicians, such as Ben Hong, others from the L.A. Philharmonic, and Yo-Yo Ma, convince Nathaniel to move. But without Steve Lopez and his family these good turns would not have happened. He gratefully concludes: "Mr. Ayers lives in his own world and was kind enough to let me in."

Mr. Lopez deserves our gratitude for letting us in.

PS: "Jennifer Ayers-Moore, sister of Nathaniel Ayers, has established the Nathaniel Anthony Ayers Foundation, a nonprofit grant provider to organizations that service the artistically gifted mentally ill. www.naayers.org"

Anna Moratz, NAMI-FL member

WE ARE SEEKING BOOK AND MOVIE REVIEWS. PLEASE CONTACT DEB GRANTHAM, 607-277-5148 OR DGG3@CORNELL.EDU WITH SUBMISSIONS.

EDUCATION

Family-to-Family Education Course

Janet Lynch and Jean Poland, with help from Joanne Denison, will lead the Family to Family course from March 3 through May 19, 2010. For more information please call 273-2462.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU

In the summer 2008 newsletter, I reported that as a Customer Advocate for New York State Electric & Gas Corporation, I held a couple of in-depth meetings with our Meter Services Field Personnel about mental illness. It was well received by my supervisor in Binghamton and the local Ithaca division personnel.

I once again offered my "training" session to NYSEG field personnel but this time to other divisions in the state. After approval and encouragement from both my current and past supervisors, I offered the 45 minute session to the Auburn, Binghamton, Elmira and Geneva areas of NYSEG.

I have completed three more sessions (Auburn, Binghamton and Geneva) that give an overview of what NAMI is and some specific literature and exercises to help our field personnel understand why

some of our customers act the way they do. The “empathy” exercise was once again extremely well received and all attendees walked away with some thought-provoking topics and simple communication guidelines to use in their everyday duties at NYSEG. The added benefit is that the more we do these types of sessions, the more likely we are to help erase the stigma associated with mental illness.

I hope to provide this training to other divisions in the state as travel allows.

Sherry Scott, NAMI-FL, member and Board member

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Liz and Deb Grantham were invited by Casey Carr to speak to her Cornell summer psychology classes in July, 2009. Around 50 high school seniors taking the class heard from Liz about her experiences with schizoaffective disorder. The questions and discussion were lively and perceptive.

Deb Grantham, NAMI-FL, member and Board member

In Our Own Voices

Liz Grantham attended a workshop for In Our Own Voices (IOOV) speakers in June, 2009. She has given a number of talks at NAMI-FL events and Cornell and Ithaca College classes, and IOOV is a next step in her recovery. Liz will give an IOOV presentation to NAMI-FL and Compos Mentis on October 20 at the Borg Warner Room, Tompkins Public Library.

LEGISLATIVE ALERT: TIMOTHY’S LAW

Timothy’s Law will expire this year unless the legislature acts! Call your legislative leaders and urge them to pass S.1646/A.5659, to make Timothy’s Law permanent. We must end the discrimination against people in need of mental health services through their private health insurance.

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (518) 455-3791

Senate Majority Leader Malcolm Smith (518) 455-2701

LEAVE THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE:
“I’m a registered voter from (your locality) calling to urge you to pass Senate bill 1646 and Assembly bill 5659 to make Timothy’s Law permanent!”



NAMI-FL Outstanding Service Award.