



nami

National Alliance on Mental Illness

NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA

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"Presidents Corner"

...Joan & Bruce Stevens

As this newsletter goes to press, our NAMI affiliate is getting ready for the Gainesville second annual Walk for the Mind of America. We will report on the Walk in the May newsletter. It has been heartening to observe Gainesville citizens understanding the importance of the Walk as an extension of the greater mission of our group: family and consumer support, education and antistigma, advocacy, and support of cutting-edge research. With the Walk completed we can turn to some of our other outreach programs in April, especially the Meridian CSU spruce-up project. If you want to participate in this project, email us at projects@namigainesville.org, or phone 374-5600 ext 8322 (out of town call 800-330-5615 ext 8322).

APRIL MEETING



Our April 9th meeting will be an education meeting. We will meet at 7:00 p.m. at Trinity United Methodist Church, 4000 NW 53rd Avenue. Enter through the Educational Building door, under the drive-up portico, and take the elevator or stairs on your right to Room 224 on the second floor. Go down the hall straight ahead and the room is on the right.



NAMI - C.A.R.E.

NAMI C.A.R.E. (*Consumers Advocating Recovery through Empowerment*) is a Support Group just for persons/consumers with a mental illness. CARE meets the first and third Mondays of each month at Vista from 7:30-9:00 P.M. Anyone with a mental illness is welcome, regardless of diagnosis or severity.

People with a Mental Illness Enrich our Lives...

This is one of a series of informational bits about people throughout history who have had or whose family members have had a serious mental illness.

Tipper Gore, the wife of former Vice President Al Gore, suffered from clinical depression. She took medication and received counseling treatment for her illness. Her mother was hospitalized twice for depression.



Tipper Gore

Tipper Gore's work has focused on issues such as mental health, children's health, education, homelessness and physical fitness. She forged a partnership with the National Mental

Health Association (NMHA) to produce a major photographic exhibit entitled "Homeless in America: A Photographic Project," which toured the nation. Gore served as Mental Health Policy Advisor to President Bill Clinton. She is committed to eradicating the stigma associated with mental illness and has worked tirelessly to educate Americans about the need for quality, affordable mental health care.

Family to Family Benefactors

Rob and Sharon Kain



Rob and Sharon Kain of Draper, Utah, have very generously provided the funding for the Family to Family courses for the past several years. Rob's brother, Jeff, suffered from bipolar brain disorder and ultimately lost his life to this disease.

Rob writes, "We continue to hear wonderful things about this program and the help it provides to families and caregivers of the mentally ill. Our family understands how difficult it can be to cope when a family member has a mental illness. Knowing how much my brother, Jeff Kain, cared about others, I can think of no better tribute to him than helping to sponsor the Family-to-Family program in the greater Gainesville area. Thank you for your excellent work on behalf of the mentally ill and their families in the North Central Florida area."

NAMI NCF and the many families that have benefited from the Family to Family courses are extremely appreciative for the Kain family's generosity.



Family to Family

A 12-week course for families of individuals with severe brain disorder (mental illnesses). The course is taught by trained family members. All course materials are furnished at no cost to participants. The course discusses the clinical treatment of mental illnesses and teaches the knowledge and skills that family members need to cope more effectively.

Classes Begin:

Tuesday, April 17, 2007
LifeSouth Blood Center
1221 NW 13th Street
Gainesville, Florida
6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Classes for family members only. Registration is required.
352-332-9881 (Michelle) or 352-378-1798 (Dianne)

SPONSORED BY NAMI NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA

SUICIDE PREVENTION ... "Rally in Tally"

BY JUDY BOUSQUET

The Florida Suicide Prevention Coalition and the Florida Suicide Prevention Task Force are having a "Rally in Tally" on April 25th to promote education and awareness of suicide prevention. Please join us! We will meet at the Wescott building at Florida State University at 3:00 p.m. and will walk to the Capitol. At 4:00 p.m. there will be a rally and press conference on the west side of the Capitol in Waller Park.

We have requested that Governor Crist proclaim Sunday, April 15, Florida Suicide Prevention Day, a day to recognize the serious health problem that suicide is and that prevention efforts can save lives. We encourage people to take the proclamation (that will come by email) to their houses of faith and ask for a prayer for those who have died and the survivors left behind.

For the fourth year in a row, a suicide prevention bill in the Florida government may be heading to defeat. Florida legislators have never voted against this bill, but politicians have other ways of defeating good bills. And this year may be no different. Suicide is a major cause of death of people of all ages, from their teens into old age. Suicide consistently ranks in the top ten leading causes of death in Florida and is the 3rd leading cause of death for our young people ages 15-24. In many cases it is preventable.

My son Brett died at the age of 27. Brett's death is not an isolated tragedy. Despite this it continues to be a silent killer. I know that there are so many important issues that you have to consider every day - all are important and have faces behind the statistics.

I guess I do have a hard time understanding why, as I was told yesterday, this is not an issue that is on the "front burner." When we step back from the human side of this issue and look at the economic impact it is staggering to think that we have yet to be able to pass a bill requesting \$150,000 to combat a preventable public health problem that is costing our state billions of dollars.

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC), supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimated the cost to Florida of completed suicides. Over a five year period from 1999 to 2003, the estimated medical and work-loss cost was \$2.2 billion dollars. During that time, there were 11,135 suicides. The goal of the Florida Suicide Prevention Task force is to reduce suicide by one-third by 2010. If successful, this would save the state over \$734 million dollars at an expenditure of \$150,000 per year.

The statistics clearly demonstrate that far too many Floridians are losing hope in themselves and their futures. We can't bring back Brett but the passage of this important legislation truly can make a difference by bringing suicide to the forefront as a public issue, and over time to save thousands of lives that would otherwise be taken by their own hands.

PROFILES OF OUR FAMILY TO FAMILY FACILITATORS

Another Family to Family Educational Program is about to begin! The information about the course is included in the box on page two. We thought you'd like you to know more about the dedicated, trained facilitators that give so freely of their time to make this class possible - each who has a personal experience with mental illness. Thank you Paula, Susan, Beth and Dianne for all of your hard work and support!

👑 **Paula Ambroso** graduated with her master's in social work from Florida State University in December and has worked at the University of Florida for 22 years and at the Center for Women's Studies and Gender Research for the past 11. In April, Paula will begin a new adventure as a case manager for the Mental Health Intensive Case Management Program (MHICM) at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

She has been involved in NAMI for approximately six years. Paula was a member of the second class taught by Susan Boulet, Valerie Lynch, and Don Walsh. After taking the class she requested to be trained as a facilitator. "I was inspired by my Family-to-Family facilitators into advocacy. I knew I wanted to be a part of this team, empowering individuals as they had empowered me to speak out about mental illness and to stop the stigma and the isolation."

Paula was also trained as a group facilitator along with Joan Stevens. "I believe in the power of sharing our stories. I am inspired by other group members and I am thankful that I am not alone in this journey. No one should be!"

Paula was also invited by Susan Boulet to represent NAMI families on the Crisis Intervention Training team as a substitute facilitator teaching law enforcement officers about mental illnesses. She also serves as a member of the Alachua County CIT planning committee and is a member of the FACT team advisory committee.

👑 **Susan Boulet**, a semi-retired nurse, has been involved in NAMI for more than ten years. "NAMI has given me support, education, and opportunity for outreach." Susan joined Journey of Hope (a forerunner of NAMI) in Louisiana in the mid-1990's as a support group member. She was later trained as a facilitator of the JoH family education group. After moving to Florida in 1999,

Susan joined the local chapter of NAMI and was subsequently trained as a facilitator of the Family to Family education series for NAMI. She, Valerie Lynch and Don Walsh taught the first Family to Family classes in Gainesville. Susan believes that the value of Family to Family is in what we learn from one another. "I learn something valuable from people in every class I teach, something that improves my knowledge of and response to mental illness. What a joy it is to teach these classes!"

In addition to Family to Family, Susan also represents NAMI families on the Crisis Intervention Training team, teaching law enforcement officers about mental illnesses. As a member of the Alachua County CIT planning committee she helps implement CIT programs that offer the knowledge and tools needed to deal with mentally ill individuals in crisis situations. "My goal in the CIT program is to bring the family experience of mental illness to the officers, to help them better understand the emotional spectrum of family response to crisis and illness."

👑 **Beth Foley's** first knowledge of and involvement with NAMI was within the last four years when a family member was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. She and her husband attended the Family to Family classes and learned a great deal about mental illnesses from their two dedicated instructors, the extremely informative materials provided by NAMI, and especially by interacting with other class members. At the end of the class Beth agreed to attend the NAMI training to facilitate teaching Family to Family classes. Having co-taught two of the twelve-week series of classes, she finds this very time consuming but also very rewarding. "Teacher always learns from their students and both classes had a wonderful and sharing group of people participating. Watching the class members become a caring and interactive class is extremely rewarding."

Beth has taught many classes, mostly math and computer science, from elementary school

to the university level. Currently she and her husband act as consultants to several different Florida counties primarily developing curriculum instructional plans. They have been doing this for over ten years since moving from South Florida to rural Levy County. They are also very active, on a daily basis, as caretakers of a 20-month-old grandson.

👑 **Dianne Sky** has been an art educator in Gainesville for over 25 years. For the past 17 years, she has been teaching high school art for the University of Florida at P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School. Dianne holds a PHD in Counseling and a Master's degree in art. Her professional interests have always been focused around the philosophy that art is a therapeutic medium and art processes are a powerful means for healing, self-actualization, and the safe expression of thoughts and emotions. Dianne is a National Board Certified Counselor (NCC) and a Certified Christian Counselor. She offers counseling services to her extended Christian community as a volunteer ministry. In addition, she volunteers at the Alachua County jail, facilitating Bible studies for female inmates.

Dianne was a member of the first Family-to-Family class taught by Susan Boulet, Valerie Lynch, and Don Walsh. The class was a powerful conduit of information and hope during the initial onset of mental illness of her close family member. She was so inspired by the influence of the class that she wanted to give back to the NAMI network and asked to be trained as a facilitator. Although due to family circumstances, Dianne has not been able to be as actively involved in NAMI recently, she considers the information that she has gained as a facilitator invaluable for reaching out to and educating others. "NAMI has been there for us, even when we needed help for our loved one when he was out of the country. The power of knowledge through education, understanding, and empathy that NAMI offers is an incredible blessing." 👑

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SSD Benefits Claims

Family members or consumers themselves can initiate and succeed in getting Social Security Disability. Our website (www.NamiGainesville.org) has several links relating to how to do this. You can eventually get your claim approved if you persist. Occasionally, however, the claim is denied or gets bogged down. One alternative to getting your claim approved is to hire an attorney or to use a private claims service. I am not endorsing any particular service, but merely making NAMI members aware of a company called Allsup, Inc.. Allsup Inc. is the nation's first private Social Security disability claims services company. Allsup Inc. says they have a 97 percent award rate, which exceeds the national average of those applying without professional representation. We are not lawyers, and we only charge a fee when a claim is approved. Their phone number is 800-854-1418 extension 5049, and their website is: <http://www.allsupinc.com/> .

Bruce Stevens