



# NAMI

## National Alliance on Mental Illness

### NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA

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Serving Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy & Union Counties

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENTS

*... Joan & Bruce Stevens*

NAMI NCF needs volunteers for three projects.

- Σ Bipolar Disorder Awareness Day screenings, Tuesday, Oct. 10 and Thurs, Oct 12, in conjunction with NAMI Mental Illness Awareness Week, October 1-7, 2006
- Σ Gainesville's Downtown Fall Arts Festival NAMI Booth, November 4 & 5.
- Σ Meridian CSU-area paint renovation

For Bipolar Disorder Awareness Day, we are working with Vista again this year to provide free screenings for depression, bipolar disorder (and some other disorders) at easily accessible sites around town, most likely Shands UF and AGH. Again this year, Vista will have some of their mental health counselors on site for people who need or want follow-up to the screening. NAMI volunteers will get simple training to pass out and score the screening tool (a questionnaire). After scoring a person's questionnaire we will direct them to the counselors on site. We also provide printed information on NAMI and on specific mental illnesses.

Locally, we have participated in this national awareness and screening day, sponsored by NAMI National, for a number of years with much success. We look forward to working with Vista again to provide this service to our community.

At the Downtown Fall Arts Festival, we will have a table in the area of the festival designated for non-profits. We will provide printed information only, and maybe a laptop computer video (NOT on-site screenings). This is the first year we have been a part of the Arts Festival. We hope it proves to be both a service to others and enjoyable for our volunteers.

NAMI NCF suggested and Meridian agreed to collaborate on a paint-renovation of their CSU area. Their facilities department created a detailed list of painting tasks. Now we are ready for interested people to sign up. Mostly we need people to paint walls, doors and trim. There is also some patch work and sanding. Our work must be done on weekdays between 8am and 1pm. We will make up schedules when we have enough volunteers to complete the project.

For more info or to volunteer:

Σ Meridian paint renovation: call Bruce or Joan Stevens, 378-0886 or email peacock\_54@yahoo.com or contact us through the

## SEPTEMBER MEETING

Our next NAMI educational meeting will be Monday, September 11th. Our topic will be "Mental Illness Jail Diversion Initiatives in Alachua County" presented by Sadie Darnell, Community Relations Coordinator of Gainesville Police Dept, and Law Enforcement Officer of the Year (Florida, 2000).

Sadie is a member of NAMI North Central Florida. In her career with law enforcement, she has become dedicated to and knowledgeable about issues surrounding mental illnesses, jail diversion, and mental health court.



We will meet at Trinity United Methodist Church, 4000 NW 53rd Avenue, at 7:15 p.m. 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. You might want to bring a small item for our Home Van basket.



### NAMI -C.A.R.E.

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.

website.

Bipolar Disorder Awareness Day screenings or the Downtown Arts Festival booth, (2 hour shifts) call or email Bill Donnelly (332-9881 or donnelly@pathology.usf.edu) or Joan Stevens (378-0886 or peacock\_54@yahoo.com) or contact us through our website.

# Help Instead of Handcuffs: C.I.T.

If family members need help in a crisis involving a severe mental illness, call 911 and request a "C.I.T. Officer" to respond to your situation. Also, familiarize yourself with the "Panic Button" resources on our NAMI webpage ([www.NamiGainesville.org](http://www.NamiGainesville.org)). You are not alone in doing this: the majority of NAMI members has, or will, require 911 help at some time.

Many officers from the Alachua County Sheriff's Office, Gainesville Police Department, and UF Campus Police have been trained as CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) first-responders for calls involving face-to-face complex issues with people that have a mental illness crisis. CIT officers also perform their regular duty assignment as patrol officers. The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program is a community partnership working with mental health consumers and family members. Several of our own



NAMI members are teachers in the CIT course. The goal is to set a standard of excellence for officers with respect to treatment of individuals with a mental illness. Alachua County training involves classroom lectures, role-play scenarios, and site visits to mental health facilities. Lectures provide information on the spectrum of psychiatric disorders, psychotropic medications, community resources, empathic communication, and the family perspective. Site visits to Meridian or Vista CSUs give CIT officers an opportunity to be familiar with the facilities, establish contacts, and interact with patients. Officers get a first hand account of how a person with a mental illness prefers to be treated by law enforcement. In the role-play scenarios, officers demonstrate techniques to use when responding to a crisis situation.

## Needed! Please Return Books and Videos Checked Out of NAMI NCF Library!

Check-out period for media from our library is one month. There are several books and videos that need to be returned so that others may use them.

Only paid NAMI NCF members may check out media. This is one of the benefits of membership.

## ER Features Sally Field in Series that Looks at Bipolar Disorder

On September 28, Sally Field will return to ER on NBC-TV in her role as Maggie Wycenski, the mother of one of the nurses, who also struggles with bipolar disorder. In 2001, NAMI honored ER and Field with an Outstanding Media Award for six-episodes that introduced the character and provided an accurate, balanced and

intimate look at the illness. Sally Field has been a champion on the forefront



of anti-stigma activities within popular media, and is featured on the front cover of a recent NAMI Advocate magazine.

## *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.*

Political humorist, Art Buchwald, was not born to the world of expensive summer houses. His father, a New York City draper, was forced to put Art and his three sisters in foster homes during the Depression. (His mother had been hospitalized for mental illness shortly after his birth.) He did not graduate from high school, and ran away from home when he was 17. He joined the Marines in World War II, went to Paris in 1948, talked his way into a job as a night-life columnist at the European edition of *The New York Herald Tribune*. Buchwald's career, which includes 30 books and current syndication in more than 500 newspapers, has been marked not only by his razor-sharp humor but also by what he calls "the black pit" of mental illness. Recalling his hospitalization for depression in 1963 and for manic depression in 1987, Buchwald described the choke hold these disorders once held on his life.

Without adequate hospital care, which temporarily eliminated the suicide option, he might not have survived. And without staff such as the orderly who "rocked me like a baby" during a particularly difficult night, he might never have seen that light at the end of his own tunnel.

In the following article in the Nov. 1999 issue of *Psychology Today*, Buchwald talks about his own travails.

"I had two depressions, one in 1963 and the other in 1987--the first clinical depression, the second manic depression. One of my major fears during my depression was that I would lose my sense of humor and wind up in advertising. I was hospitalized because I was suicidal, but I wouldn't have followed through anyway because I was afraid I wouldn't make the *New York Times* obituary page. I was fearful that Gen. De Gaulle would die on the same day, and no one would recognize my passing. But I still thought about it constantly.

My wife knew I was in this state, and on a visit to my hospital bed, she surreptitiously placed a photograph of my

three children on the nightstand. When I saw it, I realized I would be hurting them more than myself.

In the early '90s, I went on *Larry King Live* with Mike Wallace and Kay Jamison to discuss depression. I wasn't sure I should do it because I didn't want to become a poster boy for mental

health. But I did. As it turned out, the show had the most viewer reaction of any *Larry King* show. There were more depressed people in America than anyone guessed.

Celebrities can play a role in helping depressed people. When Bill Styron or Mike Wallace admit they struggled with depression, sufferers say, "If they can have one, then I guess so can I." Styron, for one, is a role model for me.

Mike, Bill and I suffered from depression at the same time; the only difference among the three of us being that Mike and I suffered--and Bill made a million dollars." (*They called themselves the Blues Brothers, and when Mr. Styron's memoir of depression, "Darkness Visible," became a best seller Mr. Wallace and Mr. Buchwald demanded a piece of the action because, they argued, they had talked Mr. Styron out of killing himself. They got a dinner at the Four Seasons and that's it.*)

"All kidding aside, the message is simple. You do get over depressions. More important, you are a better person for having had one. I seemed to wipe out many of my skeletons in a short period of time and discard many fears that had bugged me before. You become more sensitive and kind. In my case it was so.

"I'll admit that I thought of killing myself," he said. "But I never did--probably because I was afraid I wouldn't make it into the *New York Times* obituaries."



*Art Buchwald*

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## **NEW NAMI NCF TELEPHONE NUMBER**

Meridian Behavior Health Care Services is providing voice mail service to NAMI NCF at no charge to us. Callers dial 352-374-5600 or 800 330-5615. A recording welcomes callers to Meridian Behavioral Health Care and says to dial an extension. NAMI's extension is 8322.

## **NEW SUICIDE HOTLINE NUMBER**

The nation's largest suicide hotline, 1-800-SUICIDE, is out of service as of late August. Note that all calls should now be made to 1-800-273-TALK. Confidentiality of personal information and of personal disclosures will be maintained.