



NAMI Savannah News

www.nami-savannah.org

January 2010

NAMI-Savannah, Inc. is a member of the National Alliance on Mental Illness
7805 Waters Ave., Suite 2B, Savannah, Georgia 31406
Mail to: NAMI-Savannah P. O. Box 13731 Savannah, Georgia 31406

February 2010 General Meeting

Our next General Meeting will be held on Monday February 1st, 2010 at 6:30pm at Trinity Lutheran Church 12391 Mercy Blvd. (across from St. Joseph's Hospital)

NAMI Savannah Board Retreat

The Nami-Savannah Board will hold its yearly retreat on Saturday, Jan. 30th from 10AM-4PM

Homeless Authority
2301 Bull Street,
Savannah GA

The Board will elect its executive officers at this meeting. Board members are asked to review the duties for each office in their Tool Kits and carefully consider how they may serve.

Share and Care Group

A Share and Care Group will meet on the third Tuesday of each month at Trinity Lutheran Church 12391 Mercy Blvd. from 6:30-8:00pm. This group will replace the former Family Support Group until a new facilitator is found and trained. The January meeting will be on January 19, 2010.

NAMI Connections

Talk to someone who understands ...someone just like you. NAMI Connections is a recovery support group program for people living with mental illness.

The January NAMI Connections schedule is as follows:

Every Tuesday at Trinity Lutheran Church from 6:30-8:00pm

Every Thursday at Pine Woods Retreat - 1149 Cornell Ave. Suite 3A from 6:30-8:00pm

Every Saturday at Candler Hospital Heart and Lung Building (2nd floor 3rd meeting room) 1:30-3:30pm.

The Connections Support Group for family members is held on the third Tuesday of each month (January 19th 2010) 6:30-8:00pm.

Peer Support "Warm Line" at 1-888-945-1414

The Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network operates a state-funded, consumer-directed "warm line" for anyone struggling with mental health issues, 24 hours a day.

CRISIS HOTLINE

The 24-hour Georgia Crisis and Access Line, operated by Behavioral Health Link and also sponsored by the state, is 1-800-715-4225.

Nami-Savannah Welcomes The New Year At New Location

Nami-Savannah held our first General Meeting of the New Year on Monday January 4th. We met at our new location, Trinity Lutheran Church 12391 Mercy Blvd. Chatham County Mental Health Court members shared "How and Why Treatment Works (If You Can Get It)". The program was introduced by Erica Usher, Chatham County Superior Court Mental Health Court Coordinator. She announced that the Mental Health Court recently celebrated its first graduation class which consisted of five individuals, each of whom has completed a rigorous 24 month program.



Erica Usher, Chatham County Superior Court Mental Health Coordinator

Erica pointed out that in the years prior to entry into the Mental Health Court, the graduates had amassed 170 criminal charges in Chatham County, 93 arrests, and had spent 3,818 days in the local Chatham County Jail. They had been admitted to Georgia Regional Hospital 57 times, spending a total of 783 days. During the past 24 months the group had 0 new arrests or charges, 15 jail sanctions and spent only 29 days at Georgia Regional. At the beginning of the Court four graduates were homeless, one was afraid to leave the jail, and one first began using drugs at the age of 6. Now, all have permanent housing, they are sober, they are stable, and they are living their lives productively.

Three current Mental Health Court members presented a panel discussion on how the court has affected their lives. **LaSonia Thompson**, **Thomas Boykin** and **Christcell Grant** related their lives before Mental Health Court and how the Court has positively helped them. Find more information online at www.nami-savannah.org.

New Nami-Savannah Board Members

Three new Nami-Savannah Board members were elected at the December meeting. The new members are **Herbert Smith** -Community Service Specialist for Savannah- Chatham Authority for the Homeless. Herb coordinates the PATH Program, Supervises Peer Support Specialist Team, Advocates and acts as liaison for Mental Health Consumers. **Jodi Whitaker**- NAMI member since 2001, who is trained in 3 NAMI programs: Provider Education Program, Peer to Peer: and Connection Support Group. Also Trained in Georgia Peer Support Training Academy. **Judy Schuknecht**- Recovery Coordinator for Pine Woods Retreat mental health services.



Nami-Savannah President Diane Reeder (Left) presents new NAMI Board members Jodi Whitaker and Judy Schuknecht. Herb Smith was not present.

The Nation's Voice on
Mental Illness

With more than 230,000 members, NAMI is the leading grassroots advocacy organization solely dedicated to improving the lives of persons with severe mental illness including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, and severe anxiety disorders.

Website: <http://nami-savannah.org>
Email: nami@nami-savannah.org

PHONE: 912-353-7143
FAX: 912-353-7195

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Diane Reeder - President
Vacant - Vice President
Tracy Boyd-Treasurer
Polly Johansen-Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS

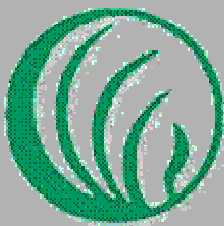
Mark Baggett
Yalonda Best
Karen Collins
Jane Eason
Pat Byrnes
Robert Meyer
John Richards

ADVISORS TO THE BOARD

Jane Nangle
Cpt. Claire McCluskey
Judge Harris Lewis
Rose McAlum
Julius Hornstein, Ph.D. LCSW
Arnaldo Correa
Stephen Johnson, Ph.D.
Kirk Palis

**STATEWIDE CRISIS AND
ACCESS LINE**

1-800-715-4225



New Peer-To-Peer Class

Beginning on **March 1st, 2010** a new Peer-To-Peer training class for consumers will be available. Classes will be held on Mondays from 5:30-8:30pm. Interviews are necessary prior to attending. Please contact Jodi Whitaker at 912-231-0390. Find the support you need from your peers. You are not alone.

Region 5 Community Forum

The annual Georgia Department of Mental Health & Developmental Disabilities, Regional Planning Board community forum for Region 5 & Chatham County will be conducted at Memorial Hospital's "Hoskins Center", **January 13, 2010**, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. and the public is invited. It is imperative that all segments of our public participate in this forum to assist our board representatives in preparing and presenting our needs and concerns to the state of Georgia as required by law. All too often our appointed and elected officials are not aware of the needs of the citizens they serve and will remain so unless we inform them. Each year our volunteer board appointees conduct public forums to receive input from the citizens and submit a report to the state on the needs and concerns of the local citizens. These reports are used to determine resources provided for mental health and developmental disability services (MH/DD) from the state that remain in critical demand. NAMI encourages all interested citizens to attend to include public and private providers of services.

For further information:
(912) 353-7143 phone
(912) 353-7195 fax

A Letter To Georgia BH/DD Commissioner Shelp

December 7, 2009
Commissioner Frank Shelp, MD
Department of BH/DD, Georgia
2 Peachtree Street, NW, Suite 22-205
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Commissioner Shelp,

This letter is a request for your direct action to resolve the delay on the issue of moving our Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), team off the hospital campus and into an appropriate community facility as required by the ACT guide lines contained in the national model.

We are approaching one year since this team was activated and there continues to be a lack of priority in providing the needed resources to enable this team to meet the fidelity requirements that all are agreed must be obtained to properly provide treatment to our community members that struggle with mental illness.

As the elected chair of our newly formed ACT Stakeholders Advisory Committee, it was agreed that I would send this letter to you directly after raising this issue and the lack of vehicles for the team in an earlier email to Audrey Sumner and Daniel Trussell of your department with a copy to you. The committee felt that this situation required your personal intervention as the boss of this department as it appears a priority can not be established otherwise.

Funding for this action is in place for this move- but the state department that manages this process is termed 'impossible' to motivate I am told by your staff. This then requires and needs your intervention as we are approaching the annual audit to determine the achievement or failure of the team to comply with the fidelity requirements necessary to properly perform their mission.

As my son is a client of this team, I am in a position to observe on a daily and weekly basis their struggle to perform their services without the needed resources to accomplish properly their treat-

ment and support to citizens and family members. This team has an excellent staff of professionals but a continuation of this failure to move them off campus and ensure they have the funded and required resources will result in less than appropriate services to the clients they are dedicated to serve. I would appreciate your response to me as quickly as possible to enable my report to the committee as a whole on your actions or recommendations.

As an additional point, NAMI Georgia and the affiliates in Region 5 to include NAMI Savannah, will continue our advocacy efforts to empower you to serve the citizens of Georgia and will advocate directly and frequently with our legislators for their support. We hope you understand that this partnership with you and your staff is one that we enter into with a sense of urgency and responsibility, but there arises the occasion(s) that your personal intervention is necessary to move this elephant down the right path. Please let us know how we might better support your efforts.
Sincerely,

John Richards, Board
Community Liaison/Public Affairs
Chair, ACT Stakeholders Advisory Committee
NAMI Savannah, Inc.
PO Box 13731
Savannah, Georgia 31416

State Mental Health Agency Plans Cuts

By Craig Schneider
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
December 20, 2009

The newly formed state mental health agency is feeling the budget squeeze and announced Friday it will eliminate or scale back some programs and furlough thousands of employees. Agency spokesman Thomas Wilson said the agency has determined it must cut about \$15 million so as not to run out of money by the end of the state fiscal year in June. The cuts come as the agency is working to improve conditions at the state mental hospitals following a federal crackdown on bad conditions and safety problems. Programs that will be eliminated or scaled back include several that provide direct help to troubled children through the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. The agency will also continue what has been a 5 percent cut to the community service boards, which provide many community-based mental health services to people. The agency will eliminate a \$1.5 million program that provides outdoor therapeutic treatment to about 15 adolescents from the state department of juvenile justice. Some of the young people have substance abuse problems. Another program set for termination is a crisis stabilization program at a state mental hospital in Savannah. The participants move to a community-based operation for services. That move will allow the services to receive Medicaid money. Wilson did not have a full list of all the services that will be scaled back or cut completely, but he said the overall savings will be about \$15 million of the agency's billion-dollar budget. State officials had separated mental health services into a separate agency in July, and Gov. Sonny Perdue largely spared the new agency any budget cuts or furloughs. But agency officials -- pointing to a still-struggling economy and a 16 percent decline in state revenues -- said they must now take action. "We ... have to find ways to cut expenses to match declining income," said agency Commissioner Dr. Frank Shelp. "What makes that especially difficult is that the obvious fat has been cut from the budget long ago. Now, wherever we scale back, people are going to be affected." The new agency has been tasked with improving the seven state mental hospitals, which the federal Justice Department has said are rife with treatment and safety problems. Wilson said that while 2,900 workers in the state office and hospitals will take 12 furlough days by July, another 5,600 direct care workers in the hospitals will be exempt from the unpaid days off. Tensions are rising between the state and the Justice Department, which has asserted that the state is not moving fast enough to improve safety and conditions at the hospitals. Wilson said that despite the cuts, the state still expects to meet the benchmark of being in substantial compliance with the federal requirements for the hospitals by Jan. 15. State mental health officials last month stopped accepting new patients at Georgia's largest psychiatric hospital, following a federal inspection that found problems with patient violence, dangerous conditions and inadequate mental health treatment. While Central State Hospital in Milledgeville will remain open, the problems are so grave that the facility will not accept patients for a period that could last several months while changes are made, Wilson said. Longtime mental health advocate Cynthia Wainscott said the agency must focus on improving services despite the budget cuts. She hopes that the cuts forces the agency leadership to hone their priorities and make good decisions on moving forward.

NAMI-Savannah, Inc
7805 Waters Ave., 2B
P. O. Box 13731
Savannah, GA 31406

Phone: 912-353-7143



NAMI-SAVANNAH ANNUAL SURVEY 2010

Dear NAMI Savannah Members:

Please take a moment to fill out this survey and return by mail so that NAMI can better meet your needs. Also please send us an e-mail to namisavannah@bellsouth.net with your contact info so that we might capture your e-mail address and remind you of upcoming opportunities.

- 1. What programs would you like to see presented at our monthly education meeting held the first Monday meeting of each month?**
- 2. Briefly tell which program or service that NAMI provides has been most meaningful or helpful to you.**
- 3. Please make suggestions as to how we might improve.**
- 4. Where would you like to support NAMI- Savannah if not now maybe later?**

Serve on the Board of Directors

Serve on a Committee

Hospitality-once a month

Special Events- Mental Illness Awareness Week

Telephone-Make calls to membership as needed

Office Volunteer

Fundraising

Train to be a Support Group Facilitator or Family or Peer Teacher

“We must change the way mental health is treated in our community. We can do it together through NAMI.”

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE(s): _____

E-Mail _____

Please clip and fill out this NAMI-Savannah Annual Survey and mail to:

NAM Savannah, Inc.
PO Box 13731
Savannah, Georgia 31416