Gov. Scott Walker attends Mental Health Awareness Month kickoff
Mental health supporters gather to ‘stand up against stigma.’

By: Wendy Magas, Communications Director

Gov. Scott Walker’s sons have had their share of sports injuries, his wife Tonette lives with Type 1 diabetes, and his dad suffered from depression after he retired as a minister.

“I share that because in each of those cases, that’s part of our health and wellbeing,” said Walker, who shared his personal story at the second-annual Mental Health Awareness Month Kickoff in Appleton on May 1. “(Mental health) is part of our health and why last year, working with folks here and across the state, we put more resources - $28.9 million, the most we’ve put in 30 years, into mental health services.”

Walker was joined by state and local leaders, mental health supporters and community members who gathered at Riverview Gardens to share their stories and commitment to fight stigma and improve mental health services and supports in the community and beyond.

“I received my technical diagnosis in a mental hospital after I had experienced my first, full-blown, panic attack the day before my 20th birthday,” Lawrence University student Anastasia Skliarova told the crowd of more than 150 gathered for the event.

Anastasia went on to describe her recovery journey back from debilitating anxiety and depression and how she has reclaimed her life with treatment and support from others.

“If we are to be supportive, compassionate human beings, we must offer respect and understanding, unconditionally, to all who are struggling,” she added. “We must find the connection between those around us and ourselves, for we have all experienced pain. We must show that we care and that we are willing to listen, because asking for help can be the scariest thing in the world, and by offering help and support, you might very well become the spark for a person’s recovery.”

Gov. Walker applauded Ms. Skliarova and the other presenters for speaking out in support of those affected by mental illness.

“Your testimonies today are a great reminder of a moral imperative to break the stigma of mental illness,” Walker said. “I would like to add that practically, it’s also an economic imperative. … When we have people suffering from mental illness who have yet to get the treatment they need, those people are sitting on the sidelines and are not engaged in our workforce.

“We need to have everyone who is able – or wants to work – be able to work, and part of that is making sure that people who need mental health treatment or assistance are able to get it.”

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Mike Veny, a New York-native, professional drummer and mental health consumer, made a special appearance at the kick-off event. Veny, a nationally known mental health speaker, was in town to give a keynote address at the NAMI Wisconsin 2014 state conference held May 2-3 at the Radisson Paper Valley.

As Veny discussed the stigma surrounding mental illness, he referenced a cartoon he saw recently on Facebook. “It was kind of like an old comic book-style cartoon, and in box number one, it said if you have a cold people will comment ‘feel better,’ he said. In box number two, it said if you break your arm, people will sign your cast. In Box three, it said if you go to the hospital, people will come visit you, give you cards and you might even get a stuffed animal. In box number four, it said if peolpe find out you have mental health issues, they need to get far away from you.

“We as a society are very uncomfortable talking about things above the neck. You’ll see celebrities put their vasectomies online, but we are afraid to talk about mental health issues.

Veny went on to encourage the crowd to do three things “to continue to transform stigma into strength.”

“I encourage you to take care of yourself, to keep mental health in the conversation when you leave here today and look for teachable moments,” he said.

Erin Davison, WFRV TV news anchor, emceed the hour-long program which also included comments from Sue Jungen of Affinity Behavioral Health; Jean DeKeyser of ThedaCare Behavioral Health; Appleton Mayor Tim Hanna; Wilson Middle School Principal John Magas; Dr. Doug Moard, a family physician; and a video address by Congressman Reid Ribble.

NAMI Wisconsin conference filled with energy, inspiration

More than 400 participants turned out for the NAMI Wisconsin Annual Conference 2014, Perspective Makes a Difference, held May 2-3 at the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton. The conference featured 35 workshops and the engaging stories and advice from three keynote speakers, Mike Veny and mother-daughter team Cinda and Linea Johnson, authors of Perfect Chaos.

Appleton North theater students presented Behind the Door, their original 35-minute play that utilizes a combination of poetry, monologues and images to raise awareness about mental illness and fight stigma. They gave an awesome performance!

Thanks to the NAMI Wisconsin staff – and some of our NAMI Fox Valley volunteers, for organizing such a great conference that was chock full of informative speakers, useful information and research on mental illness, and engaging discussions and networking.

Congratulations to Joe Troy, NAMI Fox Valley’s former board Vice President, who received NAMI Wisconsin’s 2014 Special Recognition Award for his “contributions and efforts that went above and beyond to support NAMI.”

NAMI Fox Valley nominated Joe for the award in recognition of his years of work, advocacy and passion on the agency’s board of directors and his leadership on the “The Flight to Building Opportunities” campaign to help us co-purchase the 211 E. Franklin Building with The Arc. Thank you, Joe, for your countless hours and dedication to our agency and community!

Thanks to all our NAMI FV volunteers who made thousands of green ribbons that we handed out throughout the month of May for Mental Health Awareness Month. It’s empowering to spot the green ribbons on so many people throughout the community!
‘The Flight’ campaign exceeds fundraising goal!

The Arc Fox Cities and NAMI Fox Valley are pleased to share that we have not only met our fundraising goal of $999,211, but we’ve exceeded it … raising a total of $1,094,572 for “The Flight to Building Opportunities!”

The additional monies raised were targeted for our HVAC system which needed immediate repair. We asked and you generously responded. Thank you for supporting our agencies and our community with your generosity! Together, we are successfully helping people reach new heights.

We are also pleased to share that, in addition to The Arc and NAMI, four additional nonprofits have found a home at 211 E. Franklin Street: Fox Valley Sibling Support Network, Prevent Suicide–Fox Cities, CASA Fox Cities, and the Down Syndrome Association of Wisconsin. Sharing space and other resources with these agencies has allowed the Franklin Street building to become a non-profit campus – living and serving the Fox Valley from a centrally-located, visible, accessible building.

As was the dream, the agencies are sharing common space and saving operational costs in various ways:

• Shared phone and data services
• Shared building manager, financial administrator and facilities upkeep
• Rental income for building owners and low cost of designated and shared space for tenants
• Increased agency endowments/savings as part of the sale of existing buildings
• Future fund for capital costs and preventive maintenance (roof, elevator, etc.)
• Reduced utility costs with new, efficient boilers and HVAC system
• Ample room for all agencies to hold programming on site
• Opportunities for collaboration among agencies
• Shared training among tenant agencies
• Shared events (i.e. all building volunteer appreciation event)
• Convenient access to Valley Transit bus terminal, the Appleton Public Library and Downtown Appleton business
• Handicap accessible facility with elevator
• Growing number of people served and volunteers engaged for all agencies

This very successful collaborative project is a model for nonprofits everywhere. In the short time we have been in our new home, we have experienced cost savings, inter-agency referrals, increased services for our consumers, greater accessibility for those who need us, and a shared vision for continued growth in the future.

We greatly appreciate the support of all our friends and donors. Every donation, from $2.11 to $200,211, helped make this possible. Our deepest thanks to all of you.
Thanks to everyone who donated to “The Flight to Building Opportunities.”

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Paula Verrett
Lyle & Jacqueline Verstegen
Mary Ellyn Vicksta
Join our 2nd Annual ‘Strike Out Stigma’ Bowl-a-Thon
Team Captain Kickoff planned for Aug. 5

NAMI Fox Valley is excited to “get the ball rolling” on its 2nd Annual Strike Out Stigma Bowl-a-Thon! We had so much fun last year at our inaugural Bowl-a-Thon (not to mention it was a great success!), we decided to make it our annual fundraiser.

If you’re a returning team captain or would like to organize a team (it’s easy and fun!), please plan on joining us Tuesday, Aug. 5 for our Bowl-a-Thon Team Captain Kickoff. It will from 5:30 – 7 p.m. at The Grand Meridian, 2621 N. Oneida St., Appleton. We will have hors d’oeuvres from 5:30-6 p.m. followed by an hour-long program. The program will include information, training and tools for team captains on how to raise awareness and funds for NAMI Fox Valley.

Last year more than 400 bowlers and two dozen sponsors helped us raise more than $75,000. Help us raise even more this year! All of the proceeds from the Bowl-A-Thon stay in the community and benefit NAMI Fox Valley programs and services!

The Bowl-a-Thon will be held Saturday, Oct. 4 at the Super Bowl Family Entertainment Center in Appleton. For more information about forming a team or to RSVP to the kickoff, please contact Wendy Magas, communications director, at wendy@namifovalley.org or (920) 954-1550.

NAMI Fox Valley awarded grant for state-funded Peer Run Respite Center

NAMI Fox Valley is thrilled to have been selected as one of three sites in the state to receive public funding to develop and open a Peer Run Respite Center for mental health consumers.

As part of the 2013 Budget, Act 20, nearly $2 million in state funds were approved for the creation of Peer Run Respite Centers in Wisconsin, a first-of-its-kind program in the state.

NAMI Fox Valley will receive more than $400,000 to develop and open a center, which will offer short-stay respite in a homelike environment for people with mental illness. The center will be staffed by state-certified Peer Specialists, who are individuals living well in recovery from mental illness that have received specialized training to offer support, guidance and resources to mental health consumers.

The respite center, which will be located in the Fox Valley, will serve as a supportive alternative to hospitalization for consumers experiencing difficult times. It can also serve consumers coming out of the hospital, offering them recovery support as they readjust to daily life.

Karen Iverson Riggers, NAMI Fox Valley’s Development Director, said the agency has long dreamed of opening a peer respite center and is ready to hit the ground running to make the plan a reality.

“We are elated by this grant award and our lawmakers’ commitment to bring evidence-based peer run respite centers to the state,” said Karen. “We are excited to offer a compassionate and comfortable respite center where consumers will feel cared for, respected, supported and empowered to take charge of their recovery.”
Paula Verrett and Jill Mitchler honored as 2014 Women of Strength nominees

Congratulations to Paula Verrett, NAMI Fox Valley’s Recovery Specialist, and Jill Mitchler, NAMI FV’s recently retired Volunteer & Program Manager, who were honored recently as nominees for the 2014 Connie Steele Woman of Strength Award.

Kathy Flores, who serves as the City of Appleton’s diversity and inclusion coordinator, was honored as the Woman of Strength recipient May 8 at Samaritan Counseling’s “Silent Samaritan Campaign” luncheon.

Here are excerpts from Paula’s and Jill’s nominations:

**Paula Verrett**
Paula Serves as NAMI Fox Valley’s recovery specialist and advocates locally, statewide and nationally for the needs of people with mental illness. Her passion flows from her own recovery. One nominator writes, “I’ve never seen someone move from disability back into self-sustaining work … until now.” Paula was nominated by colleagues Beth Clay, Karen Iverson Riggers, Faith Boersma and Elizabeth Hudson.

**Jill Mitchler**
Jill is a catalyst who “brings people together for the common good.” For 35 years, she put her “consistent beliefs and contagious optimism” to work for Kimberly-Clark, the Emergency Shelter of the Fox Valley and NAMI Fox Valley. Jill was nominated by United Way Fox Cities CEO Peter Kelly, her friends Barb Betcher and Julie Owens, and her daughters, Jenna and Mollie Mitchler.

NAMI Fox Valley, Timber Rattlers ‘Strike Out Stigma’ at May 31 baseball game

Thanks to all of our NAMI FV friends and supporters who turned out for an evening of tailgating and baseball fun at the Timber Rattlers stadium on May 31. And thanks to all the T-Rats staff for their support and proudly wearing our green May Mental Health Awareness Month ribbons.

We also gave out hundreds of green ribbons during the game at the NAMI Fox Valley resource booth which was located at the front of the stadium. During the game, it was exciting to see our NAMI FV “Strike Out Stigma” logo on the big screen while the announcer read a public service announcement about our agency. Thanks, T-Rats, for helping us spread our message of help, hope and recovery. And what a great way to wrap up a wonderful month of mental health awareness activities!

Ryan Kust named program coordinator at Claire Koepke Outreach Center

Congratulations to Ryan Kust, who was hired recently as the fulltime program coordinator at the Claire Koepke Outreach Center in Appleton. The Outreach Center, a program of Valley Packaging Industries, Inc., works to support people living with mental illness and improve their quality of life.

Ryan served NAMI Fox Valley as a Peer Advocate from January thru April. NAMI Fox Valley’s recent collaboration with the Outreach Center brought about a new opportunity for Ryan to serve as its program director, where he will develop, plan and oversee the center’s activities for participants.

Ryan is the first Certified Peer Specialist hired by Valley Packaging Industries in this capacity. We are sad to see Ryan go but are equally excited to see him excel and set an example of how a Certified Peer Specialist can make a difference in the lives of people affected by mental illness. We wish Ryan the best in this great new opportunity and thank him for his service here at NAMI Fox Valley. Ryan will continue to serve NAMI Fox Valley as a support group facilitator for our agency’s New Hope Men’s support group which will be held at the Outreach Center as well as at the Coffee Clutch at Atlas Café.
NAMI Fox Valley welcomes Evelyn Koehnke as its new peer advocate

We want to extend a warm welcome to Evelyn Koehnke as our agency’s new Peer Advocate. Evelyn, who is taking the place of Ryan Kust, has been involved with NAMI Fox Valley for nearly two years and has become somewhat of a local celebrity. Evelyn was the first graduate of Outagamie County Mental Health Court and she completed the Peer-to-Peer Education Program while participating in the court.

Following Peer-to-Peer, she went on to complete her mentor training and has taught three Peer-to-Peer classes, one of which was held at the Wisconsin Resource Center (WRC), a correctional facility for people diagnosed with mental illness. Evelyn has also completed support group facilitator training.

In addition, Evelyn has shared her story with the media and was featured in a Post-Crescent newspaper article that ran in March, which chronicled her recovery and how she turned her life around. She was also included in the documentary “Outagamie County Mental Health Court: From Incarceration to Inspiration,” which was filmed and produced by Rose A. Broll, a Lawrence University student.

We are all very excited to have Evelyn join our NAMI team. She has already demonstrated her skills in supporting people living with mental illness. Welcome, Evelyn!

Agency launches New Hope Men’s Support Group

NAMI Fox Valley is excited to announce the start of its New Hope Men’s Support group which is being hosted by the Claire Koepke Outreach Center, located at 322 N. Appleton St. in Appleton (just a few blocks from NAMI Fox Valley). We have seen an increase in men attending our support groups over the past two years. Many of them have expressed some discomfort in sharing personal challenges in mixed gender groups.

Since we have also had an increase in male facilitators, we felt it was a good time to start this new group. Our renewed collaboration with the Outreach Center also made it an opportune time to launch the support group. Sonya Pine of the Outreach Center noted that a large percentage of Outreach Center members are men and it seemed like a good fit for the group to be held at that location.

The group met for the first time May 12, and will continue to meet monthly from 6 – 7:30 p.m. on the second Monday of each month at the Outreach Center. The next meeting is planned for June 9, and then July 14.

NEW Hope Peer Specialist training moving toward state approval

The New Hope Peer Specialist training (formerly known as Consumers as Providers, or CAP), has moved forward in the approval process by the state of Wisconsin. In February, Karen Iverson Riggers and Paula Verrett of NAMI Fox Valley traveled to Kansas to receive training in the model. They were given permission by the University of Kansas to make changes to the training to make it more compatible with Wisconsin statutes and to train new trainers as needed so we would not have to send trainees to Kansas should the need arise.

Since then, Karen and Paula have been hard at work updating the curriculum. The pair presented the revised curriculum in April to the state Recovery Implementation Task Force, which is an advisory committee to the Wisconsin Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (DMHSAS). The task force recently approved the curriculum and we are now awaiting final approval from the DMHSAS. Once approved, our agency expects to start its first New Hope Peer Specialist training class in June.

The class will meet twice weekly for 16 weeks, with a one-week break midway through the course. The strength-based, person-centered curriculum covers an overview of mental health services in Wisconsin; trauma-informed care; the role of culture, spirituality and sexuality in recovery; crisis planning; ethics; and boundaries, among other topics. Upon completing the course work, students may continue on with a 100-hour internship at a local agency that serves people living with mental illness.

For more information, please contact Paula at paula@namifoxvalley.org or (920) 954-1550.
NAMI FV welcomes two new members to its board

NAMI Fox Valley is pleased to welcome Ron Hoffmeyer and Dr. James R. Richter to the agency’s board of directors.

Ron Hoffmeyer, of Sherwood, is a Community Leader for Walgreens serving the Oshkosh/Neenah-area Walgreens stores, where he organizes and oversees community events. Ron and his wife, Wendy, are the proud parents of five children: Emma, Ryan, Cole, Aric and Chase, ages 12 to 3.

“My wife Wendy and I met in Michigan at our place of employment, Walgreens,” said Ron. “She was born and raised in Hilbert, Wisconsin. She had told me that if she wouldn’t have met me she would have moved back to Wisconsin. I took that as a hint. However, I never realized how much I would love the Valley and how great it would be for my generalized anxiety disorder.”

Ron, who earned his bachelor’s degree in communications from Oakland University in Rochester Hills, Mich., has worked in retail for 27 years, 11 of them at Walgreens. Ron, who is known for his great sense of humor, enjoys performing stand-up comedy and has even won a few amateur night contests.

Ron has been a NAMI Fox Valley volunteer and supporter the past couple of years and is a familiar face from the 2012 NAMIWalk and the 2013 Strike Out Stigma Bowl-a-Thon where he served as the emcee for both events.

“I really look forward to this great opportunity and being part of your team,” said Ron.

Dr. James Richter is a Board-Certified Family Medicine physician with over 25 years of experience and is a co-founder of Family Care of the Fox Cities. He attended medical school at Washington University in St. Louis and completed his Family Medicine training with the U.S. Army at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

He served in the United States Army for 11 years.

With a special concern in caring for the terminally ill, Dr. Richter obtained his certification in Hospice and Palliative Care in 2007 and currently serves as the Medical Director for Heartland Hospice – Green Bay, and Parkside Care Center – Little Chute.

He is also passionate about mental health. He said his interest and experience with mental health includes “having family members and friends with depression and anxiety conditions. Professionally I see and manage mental health conditions with my patients on a daily basis.

“I try to help my patients understand that their conditions are just one part of their unique combinations of strengths and weaknesses; that having a mental health condition is no different from having diabetes or asthma; and that they are responsible for making the decision to try to control their condition or to have it control them.”

He has been married over 25 years and is the proud parent of two sons. His personal interests include being involved in the community, especially church. He also enjoys science fiction, walking and bird watching.

Welcome Ron and Dr. Richter!

Several new books added to agency library

By Kara Patterson, NFV Librarian

Welcome to the NAMI Fox Valley library corner. Here are a few reminders and announcements:

• The library is open Mondays through Thursdays during NFV’s business hours and during special program hours. Anyone can use the library – all that is required is registration as a NFV library patron.
• Patrons must fill out new library registration forms each year. Please remember to fill out your form for 2014 if you want to use the library.
• NFV wants to know what you would like to see on the library shelves. Patrons may request materials to be considered for purchase for the library. To make a purchase request, ask for the form in the NFV office.
• If you are waiting for an item that is already checked out by someone else, you can get on a wait list to be notified when the item is available. To sign up on a wait list for a particular item, ask for the form in the NFV office.
• The library acquired a selection of new materials at the NAMI WI conference in May. Here is a sampling of the recent additions to the shelves:
  - College of the Overwhelmed: The Campus Mental Health Crisis and What to Do About It
  - Healing the Trauma of Abuse: A Women's Workbook
  - Saving Our Last Nerve: The Black Woman's Path to Mental Health
  - The Storm in My Brain: Kids and Mood Disorders (Bipolar Disorder and Depression)
  - Transition to Adulthood: A Resource for Assisting Young People With Emotional or Behavioral Difficulties
Gold Stripe Consulting takes over CIT/CIP initiative

NAMI Fox Valley is pleased to announce that Karen Aspenson, former executive director of NAMI Fox Valley, and Appleton police Sgt. John Wallschlaeger, will be providing Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) and Crisis Intervention Partner (CIP) training under the auspices of Gold Stripe Consulting, their newly formed organization.

Under their visionary leadership, John and Karen brought CIT training to the Fox Valley more than 10 years ago and created a local mind shift about how law enforcement and other professionals respond to crisis involving those living with mental illness in our community. The CIT/CIP initiative created a ripple effect into many other systems of care (healthcare, access to treatment, 24/7 crisis, family support and respite, etc.) and positively impacts the Fox Valley still today, where the public can easily call for the support of a CIT-trained officer when mental illness is a factor and safety for all is the desired outcome.

A decade of offering CIT and CIP courses, as well as “Advanced CIT,” allowed for local officers and professionals to access training close to home and learn about local resources. It also allowed Karen and John to train officers and new sites from across the state, expanding the CIT/CIP to hundreds each year.

As a regional affiliate with local funding, it became clear that the coordination of the statewide CIT/CIP initiative belonged in the hands of our state organization, NAMI Wisconsin. We are excited to share that Julianne Carbin, Executive Director of NAMI Wisconsin, has designated a staff person, Annabelle Potvin, for this priority program, and that for the first time, an Advanced CIT training was held in conjunction with the annual NAMI Wisconsin Conference, held in Appleton, May 2-3. For information on the statewide CIT initiative, you can reach Annabelle at (800) 236-2988.

NAMI Fox Valley, in order to ready itself to take on the next wave of initiatives (including the Certified Peer Specialist movement, the creation of Peer Run Respite programs in the state of Wisconsin, and building of a system of care for early intervention and family-centered practice in serving youth and teens with mental illness) has been cultivating partnerships with key stakeholders to alleviate the burden, both financial and logistical, of independently offering these mission-critical programs. Over the last two years, many options and collaborations have been explored.

NAMI Fox Valley remains committed to our local law enforcement, corrections and criminal justice system professionals in their efforts to train locally in CIT and CIP. Community partnerships and collaborations, especially with our law enforcement, corrections and criminal justice systems, have forever changed lives and improved our response to those in crisis with mental illness. By collaborating, we can maximize the resources and expertise of our individual agencies to make greater community impact.

NAMI Fox Valley will continue to pursue partnership opportunities and ways to support Gold Stripe as they continue the important work of offering CIT and CIP locally in our community. We wish to extend a huge thank you to Karen, John, the NAMI Fox Valley Board of Directors and staff, as well as law enforcement, corrections and the criminal justice system, for their dedication and commitment to the CIT initiative – 10 years strong!

CIT/CIP Contact information:
John Wallschlaeger can be reach at jtwally@hughes.net or (920)420-2101.

By mail:
Gold Stripe Consulting, LLC
c/o Karen J. Aspenson
912 Ninth Street
Menasha, WI 54952

Join us for our Summer Picnic!

You are invited to the Annual Summer Picnic, sponsored by NAMI Fox Valley, Friendship Place and The Outreach Center from 4:30 – 6:30 p.m., Monday, July 21. The picnic will be held at Pierce Park again on West Prospect Avenue in Appleton.

Attendees are encouraged to bring a dessert to share. We are also looking for volunteers to come early and help set up, serve food, and stay afterward to help clean up. If you'd like to help, please contact Megan McLachlan, Volunteer Coordinator, at megan@namifoxvalley.org or (920) 954-1550.

All NAMI Fox Valley members, family members, consumers and supporters are invited to come to share in good fellowship, food and fun. Hope to see you there!
**The Alliance** is the newsletter of NAMI Fox Valley, published quarterly in March, May, August and November. Send news items related to chronic mental illness, opinions, or recovery to: Wendy Magas, Communications Director, NAMI Fox Valley, 211 E. Franklin Street, Appleton, WI 54911 or wendy@namifoxvalley.org

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**Our Mission**
NAMI Fox Valley works to support and empower everyone touched by mental illness. We commit to eliminate stigma and nurture recovery through education, support, advocacy and outreach.

**Our Vision**
We envision a community, free of stigma, that supports and promotes mental health and recovery.