**Big news for NAMI Fox Valley, a dream come true**

*by Beth Clay*

As was announced at the April Awards Celebration, NAMI Fox Valley has engaged in a creative collaboration with The ARC of the Fox Cities to co-purchase the building at 211 E. Franklin Street, in Appleton. This is not a merger of the two agencies, rather it is a co-habitation of two of the Fox Valley’s strongest non-profits in a beautiful downtown building! Both non-profits will share ownership and be housed in the building, with each significantly increasing their programming space to meet the present needs, and having room to grow in the future. In the meantime, empty suites will be available for rent by other non-profits – allowing the building to serve the community as a “center for non-profits”. The building location is ideal in several ways: centrally located in downtown, with sufficient parking including a parking lot, street parking and near a ramp, and proximity to the bus station. The ability for both agencies to share risk, liability, occupancy costs, outside services, and even volunteers makes this collaboration a true win-win relationship for Boards of Director, staff, consumers, families, volunteers, and funders of each agency. Most importantly, the opportunity to share space with non-profit leaders in the Fox Valley will promote opportunities for innovative collaborations, brainstorming and creative problem-solving, and will ensure the sustainability of the engaged agencies. Keep your eye on NAMI Fox Valley’s website for details on this exciting opportunity, and to learn about how you can support the move into NAMI Fox Valley’s new home!

We are thrilled to share that the Co-Chairs for the Capital Campaign Steering Committee are the previous Executive Directors for each agency, Karen Aspenson, NAMI Fox Valley and Beth Hoffman, The ARC. Who better to carry the vision and mission for each agency into the community? Who better to bring to fruition their dreams for a new building… a new home?

NAMI Fox Valley thanks you for your continued support as we strengthen ourselves today and for future generations!

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**Introducing Sarah Bassing-Sutton, CIT/CIP Program Coordinator**

Welcome to Sarah Sutton, who joined NAMI Fox Valley in February as the new CIT/CIP Program Coordinator. Sarah will work in close partnership with our NAMI Fox Valley police specialist, Appleton police Sgt. John Wallschlaeger, to develop, enhance and implement the Crisis Intervention Team law enforcement training, and the Crisis Intervention Partner training for corrections and related fields.

Sarah, who holds a bachelor’s degree in psychology, with a minor in sociology, from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, brings a wealth of experience working with nonprofits, at-risk populations, and those living with mental illness. Sarah, who is a certified AODA counselor, worked as a Clinical Substance Abuse Counselor early in her career.

Prior to coming to NAMI, she served as the program manager for Housing First at the Emergency Shelter of the Fox Valley where she worked with individuals dealing with mental illness and substance abuse issues through a harm reduction approach.

Sarah and her husband Todd have three school-age children, and she enjoys spending time with family and friends and is actively involved in volunteer work.

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Introducing Wendy Magas, Outreach Director

We are also pleased to welcome Wendy Magas, who also joined us in February as NAMI Fox Valley’s new Outreach Director. Wendy will be responsible for outreach activities for our affiliate and developing and implementing a marketing plan with consistent messaging about, and awareness of, NAMI Fox Valley and its programs.

Wendy will also take over managing the NAMIWalk program and will work to cultivate community partner and donor relationships.

Wendy, who holds a bachelor’s degree in psychology and journalism from the University of Michigan, worked as a newspaper journalist for 15 years, reporting primarily on health and social issues. Wendy left the newspaper business in 2008 to launch her freelance writing, web development and multimedia business. Wendy received her web design/development certificate from Fox Valley Technical College in 2008, and had served as NAMI Fox Valley’s web developer for the past three years.

Wendy and her husband, John, have two school-age sons. Wendy enjoys spending time with her family and road trips to the U.P., where both she and her husband are from.

Making a shift

You will begin to see an exciting shift in focus of NAMI Fox Valley’s newsletter, The Alliance. We are looking to reinvent the purpose and content of the newsletter, as well as modernize our distribution and sharing of it. During 2012, The Alliance will:

- Move to a recovery-oriented focus
- Highlight personal stories, both consumers, and family members
- Include a creative corner in which to share with the NAMI community your latest inspiration in any art form
- Include relevant book and movie reviews
- Share quotes from program participants
- Highlight mental health focused news stories
- Begin to move in the direction of an environmentally-friendly, non-paper, e-newsletter (electronic newsletter) to be received by email and to be accessed electronically on NFV’s website.

Don’t worry: A paper version of The Alliance will remain an option for non-computer-users!

NAMIWalk season underway

by Wendy Magas

Thanks to everyone who turned out to our Walk Information Meeting held April 19 at the Atlas Coffee Mill & Café in Appleton. To recap, be sure to mark your calendars with these important NAMIWalk dates:

Wednesday, August 8, 2012 – Team Captain Kickoff Breakfast at the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton.

Saturday, October 6, 2012 – Seventh Annual NAMIWalk at Appleton’s Memorial Park.

Thanks again to all of our NAMI Fox Valley members, friends and supporters who made last year’s Walk the most successful ever! Our 2011 Walk raised a record $160,000. Some 700 walkers on 75 teams brought in more than $96,000 while sponsors donated an additional $63,000. This year, we’ve set the bar a little higher and hope to raise $65,000 in sponsorships and $125,000 from Walk teams.

We are looking for volunteers to help us with planning and implementation of this year’s NAMIWalk. It takes more than 100 volunteers to make our Walk happen. If you are interested in joining one of the following work groups, contact Wendy Magas at (920)954-1550 or wendy@namifoxvalley.org.

- Raffle Committee: Help us reach out to area businesses and solicit donations of goodies to fill the beautiful gift baskets for the NAMIWalk raffle.
- Sponsorship Committee: Help us solicit sponsorships and expand our sponsor network. We are excited to announce that the JJ Keller Foundation will again be a presenting sponsor ($10,000) for this year’s Walk. Who could you contact in your network for sponsorships?
- Kickoff Breakfast Committee: Help us plan our annual Team Captain Kickoff Breakfast.
- Logistics Committee: Coordinates walk day activities.
- Team Building Committee: Help support team captains and walkers to maximize results.

There are other ways to get involved on Walk day. Form a team and come walk with us! Register your team by August 1, 2011 and receive a prize at our Kickoff Breakfast! Or maybe you’d like to schedule
a presentation on NAMI and the Walk at your workplace. Forming a business Walk team is a fun way to get your co-workers involved and to help them learn about NAMI.

Stay tuned!
Our online Walk registration page is being retooled and will be back online soon. But feel free to visit our NAMI Walks page on our website, www.namifoxvalley.org, for more information and additional resources. Feel free to download and print our sponsorship brochure to share with any prospective sponsors, or our Walk Information Sheet, to share with potential team members. If you have any questions or would like some more information, don’t hesitate to contact Wendy Magas at 920-954-1550, or wendy@namifoxvalley.org.

Local law enforcement agencies receive Crisis Intervention Team Training Grant
The Appleton Police Department received notice that they are the recipient of a $57,833 grant to support the costs associated with officers attending a week long Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training program. CIT training is a specialized 40-hour training program focused on recognizing and understanding the signs and symptoms of mental illness with emphasis on de-escalation.

The Appleton Police Department, which is the lead agency for this grant, collaborates with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Fox Valley to conduct the training two times per year. CIT is conducted as a collaborative effort involving many of the mental health providers in the Fox Cities including Outagamie County and Winnebago County Human Services, Affinity, Thedacare and Children’s Hospitals, FVTC, UW-Fox Valley and several other agencies.

Several Fox Cities police agencies are receiving training assistance from the grant
The Appleton Police Department was the first police agency in Wisconsin to host CIT training. More than 350 officers have been trained since 2004.

For more information contact Sgt John Wallschlaeger at the Appleton Police Department at 920-832-5544.

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training
NAMI Fox Valley and the Appleton Police Department will be offering the sixteenth session of Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training for law enforcement during the week of September 17-21, 2012. CIT is a comprehensive five-day, 40-hour training session designed to assist law enforcement officers and other first responders in recognizing and understanding the signs and symptoms of mental illness including depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and anxiety disorders, as well as other associated illnesses including developmental & cognitive disorders and dementia.

Officers learn various options to facilitate de-escalation of the mental health consumer in crisis; about resources in their community that are available to the mental health consumer and their families; how interacting on a regular basis in this kind of outreach program reduces the potential for crisis and/or injury of the officer, consumer or others.

This training experience is very challenging, not unlike these types of calls for service. Participation will not be without rewards. The skills taught in this course will be used throughout the life of the officers both personally and professionally.

This training is modeled after the recognized Best Practices “Memphis Model”. Visit http://www.appleton.org/departments/page_1a8a71950250/?department=e57d6de90f38&subdepartment=21c4ed77c1c4 for additional information on CIT.

Law enforcement and other first responders interested in participating please apply as follows:

Send a confidential letter of interest to Beth Clay, Executive Director, NAMI Fox Valley, 516 W. 6th St., Appleton, WI 54911. Please include the following information:
1. The reason you are interested in CIT
2. The qualifications you believe make you well suited for CIT
3. A short career history
4. A daytime phone number where you can be reached for a brief telephone interview
5. The name and phone number of your immediate supervisor

Application deadline is one month prior to training – Do not delay – Space is limited.
Family-to-Family classes for family members of veterans and active military members

by Jill Mitchler

Did you know that, according to the Veterans Administration, 18 veterans die by suicide every day, one every 80 minutes? In 2010, more military personnel completed suicide than were killed in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan.

These staggering facts are among the reasons that NAMI Fox Valley is offering a special Family-to-Family education program this fall for family members of veterans and active military members.

Almost all returning service members face challenges in reintegration. Family-to-Family is led by family members for family members of persons diagnosed with mental illness, including PTSD. Class participants will receive vital information, insight and understanding about their loved one and his or her illness. Participants also learn de-escalation of crisis skills, communication techniques and coping skills.

This free 13-week class will be held on Thursdays from September 6 through December 6 (excluding Thanksgiving) from 6-8:30 pm at Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton.

Over 300,000 family members have graduated from NAMI’s Family to Family program…it is described by participants as life-changing. Contact Angel Gruber at angel@namifoxvalley.org or 920-954-1550 to register.

Increasing myself

by Angela Kessler, a Family-to-Family participant

My older brother has the mental disabilities of Bipolar and Asperger’s disorders. Growing up, my family and I faced many struggles dealing with the drastic mood swings, bizarre habits, and frequently changing medications and treatment centers that came with my sibling’s disabilities. However, these specific issues did not dictate my childhood so that it was solely negative. My brother was and is incredibly thoughtful and amusing, while my parents were and are loving and resilient. My experiences growing up with my brother and his particular hardships led me to having very positive aspects of my personality, like being kind, having a good sense of humor, and feeling grateful.

From what I remember of my upbringing, my brother was never mean or hurtful towards me purposefully, like some brothers might be as immature children. His intentions toward me were always kind, but there were certainly times when his illnesses inflicted hurt upon my entire family. However, on the surface you would not be able to tell the amount of trouble that his symptoms, like depression, compulsions, and impulsiveness, really caused. Mental illness is not as apparent as physical illness, but it is just as debilitating – possibly more, because it is not as easily seen and accepted by others. The experiences with my brother’s conditions taught me that other people could be struggling, but I might not be aware of it. Because of this, I believe kindness should always be a default way to behave. That may be difficult to do in today’s judgmental society, but I remind myself of the determination my brother showed, even if that determination sometimes was a determination to be goofy.

My brother taught me to value having a good sense of humor. He and my dad always seemed to be laughing about something, whether it be at a show my brother had stumbled upon on Cartoon Network, or a story he was telling or inventing with his toys. He had a very strange and particular sense of humor, and I think my peculiar one had a lot to do with our closeness in my childhood. I also think it was admirable of him that he found so much humor seemingly all the time, in everyday situations, despite his constant obstacles. I try to duplicate this aspect of him in myself often, and that has resulted in me always trying to look at the bright side of things, looking for a way to turn a lousy situation into a comical memory.

Being kind and funny are good qualities that I learned to adapt from growing up with my brother directly, but the trait I developed from him indirectly was being grateful. He may have made a joke about it, but I knew having those illnesses could not be easy. I feel grateful for being mentally healthy, of course, but also having the talents I was born with. My brother especially seemed to have trouble with routine things, one example of this being his immense difficulty with just going to school and learning. Witnessing him battle this made me realize that I should be extremely grateful for the things that many, including myself, take for granted, like having the ability not only to learn, but to also get exceptional grades. Today, I still feel guilty when I slack off in class, because I know that I should be making the best of the educational opportunities given to me that my brother could never have. He has given me a gift that I will use every day, and made me realize that I am even grateful that he has made me so grateful, however redundant that sounds.

Being raised alongside a sibling who is mentally handicapped has had a fortunately positive impact on my mannerisms today, so that I am a more compassionate, funny, and thankful person. Looking back, I see that coping with all of the stress and
frenzied that comes with mental illness was so worth it. After all, as my bother has taught me, our problems are not meant to defeat us, but to increase us.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of NAMI Fox Valley

By Jill Mitchler, Program and Volunteer Manager

Ever wonder how NAMI Fox Valley is able to offer 312 consumer and 24 family sharing support group meetings each year? It’s because of our 16 wonderful volunteer support group facilitators!

Isn’t it amazing that NAMI Fox Valley holds over two dozen series of classes for consumers, family members, teachers, police officers, first responders, etc, as well as the general public, each year? It may surprise you to know that almost 100 volunteer class instructors, presenters and facilitators support our educational programs.

Do you want to know how we can coordinate about 100 outreach activities such as presentations or display booths to community members so more people can know about and benefit from our programs and services? There are over 20 volunteers who willingly speak to groups on behalf of NAMI Fox Valley!

One volunteer edits our newsletter every quarter and two volunteers write book reviews for the newsletter. Two volunteers make it their weekly mission to keep the NAMI Fox Valley Library maintained for NAMI members and other community members. Three others make it their responsibility to create our class manuals and informational folders for new members and new volunteers. Practically every day, you will find volunteers at the NAMI house copying, collating, assembling packets, doing data entry or yard maintenance, helping with a mailing, or doing any number of other important office support tasks.

Many volunteers help with our annual events such as the Summer Picnic, Awards Celebration, NAMI Walk and the Holiday Party, as well as brat fries and other fundraisers. They help on the planning committees, decorate, prepare and serve food, provide entertainment and help with set up and clean up.

Without these dedicated and passionate individuals, NAMI Fox Valley could not operate as it does. You see, employing enough staff members to perform all of the critical roles that are currently held by volunteers would be impossible. We wish to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to all who volunteer their time and talent to keep NAMI Fox Valley alive and well! Thank you so much for giving of yourselves!

NAMI Fox Valley Teen Support Group wins 2012 Fox Cities Youth Alliance Award

by Jill Mitchler

On Friday, April 20, 2012, at an awards luncheon at Liberty Hall in Kimberly, members of NAMI Fox Valley’s Teen Support Group received the 2012 Fox Cities Youth Alliance Award! This award is presented annually to a local group of youth to recognize their volunteer work in contributing a needed service to the community. Other selection criteria for this award included initiative, achievement, impact, time and challenge.

NAMI Fox Valley’s Teen Support Group meets weekly at Harmony Café and provides teens with needed peer support. Existing group members welcome new members regularly to the group. Group members become close friends, almost like family, and, within these supportive relationships, they courageously work to reduce one another’s sense of isolation and stigma that can be experienced by those living with mental health issues.

In October 2011, the Teen Support Group formed a NAMI Walk team and raised over $1,000 in critical funding for NAMI Fox Valley. In addition, individual group members spend time volunteering in their schools to increase public awareness of NAMI Fox Valley’s services and the help available for troubled teens. Recently, four members spoke to 400 9th graders about teen depression and helpful coping strategies.

We’ve always known that amazing things happen in our Teen Support Group, and we are very pleased that they have received this wonderful recognition. By increasing awareness and educating the community, this courageous group of young people is working to ensure that all people who need help and support will seek it out, without shame or judgment.

Through their dedication to NAMI Fox Valley’s mission, their initiative and outreach helps bring newfound hope to others. Congratulations to the NAMI Fox Valley Teen Support Group!
30 year celebration and annual awards celebration
by Wendy Magas

About 100 friends, family members and supporters of NAMI Fox Valley turned out for our annual Awards Celebration held April 26 at the Trout Museum in Appleton.

It was an evening marked by much laughter and many tears as we honored five special people and a business partner that are very near and dear to our affiliate. We received lots of positive feedback regarding the venue, where party-goers were able walk around and mingle while enjoying the delicious food prepared by Fox Banquets Rivertyme Catering.

Attendees also enjoyed the Art of Sir Winston Churchill, the museum’s latest exhibit which debuted in mid-April. In honor of NAMI Fox Valley’s 30th anniversary, a history timeline – made up of two dozen scrapbook-like pages – was on display and told the personal stories of NAMI’s founders, volunteers, community friends and staff members who helped shape NAMI’s journey and growth over the years. Thank you to Tom Tatlock for dreaming up the history project, to everyone who shared their stories, and to Paula Verrett and Wendy Magas for bringing the timeline to life. To view the history timeline, visit www.namifoxvalley.org.

The Frank Mixdorf Distinguished Service Award went to Karen Aspenson, who served as NAMI Fox Valley’s executive director from 2003-2011. “So many people affected by mental illness have been touched by Karen’s kindness and advocacy and have benefitted from the many programs and services she brought to life,” said Joan Helbing, board president of NAMI Fox Valley.

A new award, named the Heart of NAMI Award, was established to honor the memory and legacy of Tammy Bradley. In 2011, NAMI Fox Valley mourned the loss of Tammy, a longtime volunteer and friend who touched the lives of many consumers as a dedicated support group facilitator and the agency’s consumer coordinator. Tammy was the recipient of the inaugural award. In years to come, the new award will recognize individuals involved with NAMI Fox Valley who support the agency in meaningful and instrumental ways.

The Community Partner Award went to ThedaCare for its commitment to raising awareness about mental illness; raising funds to help further NAMI’s mission; and raising the bar as a health provider for its integration of mental health treatment and services as a key component of its care model. Mary Downs, former ThedaCare Behavioral Health Director, accepted the award on ThedaCare’s behalf.

Dave Vander Zanden, former CEO of School Specialty, was honored with the Professional Service Award for his tireless leadership and dedication to raising awareness about mental illness; working to improve the region’s mental health system; leading by example in his work life to support the mental health needs of his employees; and supporting the work of NAMI Fox Valley in numerous ways.
The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Officer of the Year Award was renamed The Karen Aspenson CIT Officer of the Year Award to honor Karen Aspenson’s work and dedication to helping develop and grow NAMI FV’s CIT program. The CIT program trains law enforcement officers how to respond compassionately and effectively when they encounter someone in a mental health crisis. The award went to former Appleton police Chief Dave Walsh for his commitment to the CIT training initiative and advancing it as a priority at the Appleton Police Department.

The Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Appleton resident Cathy Grambsch in appreciation of her inspiring dedication as a volunteer for NAMI Fox Valley. For five years, Grambsch has been donating her time, talents and energy to support the delivery of NAMI FV’s services.
Ending the Silence
by Jill Mitchler, Program & Volunteer Coordinator

NAMI Fox Valley is proud to introduce Ending the Silence, a 50-minute program developed by NAMI DuPage in Wheaton, Illinois, especially for high school freshmen.

Ending the Silence, consists of a slide and video presentation explaining the signs and symptoms of several common mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression, bi-polar disorder and schizophrenia. It addresses treatment methods available and presents suggestions for how to help yourself, a friend or a family member who might be dealing with mental illness and healthy coping skills for daily living. After the 30 minute slide and video presentation, a young adult consumer speaks to the students about his or her experiences of living well with mental illness. Through a generous grant from the Community Foundation of the Fox Valley Region, NAMI Fox Valley was able to bring the Ending the Silence, curriculum as a pilot program to Menasha High School in April.

Preliminary outcomes from the Menasha High School presentations, as well as elsewhere in the United States, indicate that Ending the Silence, gets young people talking about mental illness and paves the way for referrals and getting needed treatment.

NAMI Fox Valley wishes to thank school principal, Larry Haase; retired school psychologist, Bob Brooks; school social worker, Meghan Selleck; and the rest of the Student Services and English education staff members at Menasha High School for helping lay the groundwork for, hopefully, getting Ending the Silence, into all Fox Valley high schools. We also thank our volunteer program team members and presenters, Jacqueline West, Megan McLaughlan and Caleb Voss for their dedication and passion in bringing this important, life saving information to the youth of our community.

Please watch for more information about this exciting new program during the next school year!

The media and mental illness stigma:
Have we turned a corner?
Posted on February 21, 2012 by Laurie Flynn

Mental health advocates say the pain of stigma is as devastating to people with mental disorders as the symptoms of illness. For many centuries mental illness was terribly misunderstood. Individuals afflicted were viewed by society as dangerously demon-possessed, were locked up in prisons and even executed as witches. In our day it is still all too common for mental illness to be treated a joke. Consider how frequently we hear words that mock these serious brain disorders—“wacko”, “nut case”, “schizo”. This constant ridicule marginalizes young people struggling with mental illness and makes it very tough to engage them in treatment. Who wants to acknowledge having a mental health problem if it leads to being the target of name-calling? Adolescents in middle and high school often experience stigma as bullying. They are called “crazy” and “psycho” and are socially isolated and victimized. In a number of recent high profile cases, bullying has apparently led to teen suicides.

Knowing this grim history, I was pleased that NIMH director Dr. Tom Insel invited New York Times science reporter Benedict Carey to speak at a recent gathering of organizations supporting NIMH research. Meeting attendees applauded Ben Carey for his series in the NY Times. “Lives Restored” began running last summer with several stories appearing on the front page. The series profiled people who are functioning well in the community, despite struggling with serious mental illnesses. The stories underline advances in diagnosis, treatment and the research that has revolutionized our understanding of these disorders. More important, they humanize mental illnesses and make plain the strength and resilience of the individuals who shared their life stories.

The audience was moved by videos of Ben Carey’s interviews with the people he profiled.

I hope we’re at an important turning point in reducing stigma. For nearly 20 years we’ve seen a steady effort to help people shake off their prejudices and understand that mental illnesses are no-fault brain disorders. Public figures and celebrities have led the way in disclosing their personal struggles. The list includes successful authors William Styron and J.K. Rowling, actors Owen Wilson and Johnny Depp, actresses Patty Duke and Brooke Shields, Washington women Tipper Gore and Barbara Bush, musicians Billy Joel and Eric Clapton, pro football players Terry Bradshaw and Earl Campbell, astronaut Buzz Aldrin and many more. Each time a notable person talks about having a psychiatric diagnosis it emboldens others and chips away at the myths that surround mental illness.

Now we’re learning about everyday people – friends, neighbors and co-workers who are living with mental illnesses including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and even psychosis. People we know and love are being diagnosed, treated and are recovering with our help and support. The media, which often demonized mentally ill people as crazy killers or homeless bums, now leads the way in shaping accurate portrayals. I know we have a lot more to do in the battle against stigma, but it’s inspiring to read Ben Carey’s stories of hope and recovery, especially when they focus on “ordinary heroes.”
Beth Writes…

Happy Spring! Wow… did we have a beautiful 30 year anniversary and awards celebration on April 26th, at The Trout Museum of Art?! It was a night to remember! For those who joined us, thank you for being there. For those who missed it, please find some great coverage of the evening on our website and on Facebook. I had the privilege of writing a piece to share with the NAMI community regarding my thoughts and feelings as we begin the next chapter of NFV history. Of course, my submission was the last and most recent on the NAMI Fox Valley timeline. Here is some of what I shared:

“Every morning that I cross the threshold at the NAMI house, to begin another day, I feel like I must be the luckiest person in the world. For the first time in my life, I am serving in an organization in which my personal values and my work life are in perfect alignment – I am joyfully committed to this mission-driven, “labor of love!” One of the things that drew me to NAMI Fox Valley is that this place truly embodies, lives and breathes its mission through every person and every story and every program.

I am awestruck when I look back into NFV history, to what a small group of dedicated, passionate parents, consumers, and advocates were able to create and build into the NAMI affiliate that serves our community today. In the early days, these parents and consumers fought battles with doctors and social workers who disregarded and devalued a consumer’s insight into their own illness experience. They battled daily against the weight of stigma, and bearing the shame and secrecy of an illness as devastating and life-threatening as any other. They battled teachers and employers who assumed that mental illness was synonymous with cognitive delay. And they feared law enforcement, who unknowingly, criminalized the symptoms of their illnesses.

And here we are in 2012, where the one thing that hasn’t changed is the core message of NAMI. What has continued is that NAMI Fox Valley serves as the community’s voice on mental illness.

With all of the progress we’ve made, we, as consumers, family members, volunteers, and advocates are still dreaming of a brighter future, dreaming of a day when those living with mental illnesses will not live in poverty as a result; when we will not be rejected by society as ‘broken’ and ‘unfixable’; when words like “psycho” will be judged to be as distasteful as the “R” word, and when our prisons and jails will no longer serve as “the new insane asylum.” There is still work to be done. Our continued efforts to make our dreams a reality will take time, perseverance, dedication, and creative collaboration. I pledge to you that I am in it, heart and soul, for the long haul.”

It is a pleasure to be on this journey with you, to walk confidently into a bright future for NAMI Fox Valley, and as a result, a hope-filled future for all of us living with, and loving those with, mental illness.

Warmly,
Beth

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Annual summer picnic

You are invited to the Annual Summer Picnic, sponsored by NAMI Fox Valley, Friendship Place and the Outreach Center on Monday, July 23 at 5-7 pm. This year we will be at Pierce Park again on West Prospect Avenue in Appleton.

Attendees are encouraged to bring a dessert and lawn chairs. Also, if you are able to come early to help set up, help to serve food or stay late to help clean up, please call Jill Mitchler at 954-1550 or email jill@namifoxvalley.org.

All NAMI Fox Valley members, family members, and consumers are invited to come to share in good fellowship, food and fun!
It has been a very busy three months at NAMI Fox Valley and consumers have been busily engaged in a variety of activities. February took us to the Barlow Planetarium where we explored space and learned so much from our wonderful guide who took his time answering our questions and explaining everything we were seeing. Later that month twelve people enjoyed a game night following the donation of seven new games by Betsy Manteufel and her family. This donation allowed us to have an amazing evening of fun as we indulged in pizza from Papa John's.

On March 29th we enjoyed the theatre production of Dream Role at the UW Fox Valley Theatre. It was a hit with all. Thanks to UW Fox Valley and Susan Rabideau for your very generous gift of tickets which allowed us to attend this amazing production! April 17th brought us back to the UW Fox Valley Theatre for the production of Hair Spray. It was so amazing we all left singing our favorite pieces from the show.

“Food, glorious food!” That was the theme for our trip to the Shanghai Buffet on April 14th. One of our biggest turnouts of 27 participants! It was amazing to see so many people show up to enjoy the wonderful buffet. Not one of us went home hungry!

Please mark your calendar for September 15th for the second Brat Fry to be held at Festival Foods on Northland Ave. This event helps provide funding for all of the social activities we offer throughout the year. Social activities are critical to helping people maintain their recovery and stay connected to the community.

Making a difference
by Paula Verrett

May is mental health month. Over the years it has been a time to focus on helping people who live with mental health conditions find help. It has also been a time when criticism of the system is highlighted and, unfortunately, the positive aspects are often overlooked. With that in mind, I would like to honor the many people who provide excellent services to those in need of support. There are many unsung heroes in the NAMI Fox Valley area. They provide support when there is nowhere else to go, when there are no ears to hear, or no arms to offer a hug. Some of these heroes are nurses on the behavioral health units at St. Elizabeth and Theda Clark others are therapist and psychiatrist, and still others are case workers, supervisors, police officers and emergency room staff. I want to thank you for all you’ve done to make a difference in the lives of those of us living with a mental illness. This poem is dedicated to those of you who have touched my life.

Living in a world of ups and downs.
Never knowing what will come.
Wanting to be connected to a world in which I often feel so rejected.
Needing to know someone cares and will help.

You are there to guide my direction.
You remind me what is to come can be bright.
You help me feel connected and see my purpose.
I know you care as you find ways to help.

I thank you for all you do.
Helping those in need.
Reducing suffering for those who suffer.
Making a difference.

Creative expression, in all art forms, is an effective and healthy coping skill on the road to mental health recovery and in our search for physical and mental well being.

Please share with us, consumers, family members, and NAMI friends) your latest inspiration: painting, drawing, photography, creative writing – art in any form.
[Image 35x31 to 211x762]
[Image 292x424 to 500x567]
[Image 413x57 to 563x276]

Look at any news story where a violent crime is committed by a veteran and PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) is almost said to be a factor. In the media narrative, violence and PTSD go hand in hand. At the same time, troops are criticized for not coming forward and admitting they have a problem, and seeking help for it.

Civilians get PTSD, too. In fact anyone can get it that has gone through trauma. According to the VA, about 7-8% of the general population will experience PTSD at some point in their lives. For veterans the risk is higher, around 20% with recent research indicating a much higher rate.

Violence is not a typical symptom of PTSD. Common symptoms include reliving the event, avoiding situations that remind you of the event, feeling numb, feeling jittery, suddenly being angry or irritable, and having trouble sleeping. While things may slowly be getting better, we still have a long way to go.

It has been noted time and again that there is a stigma associated with veterans that have PTSD. Clearly this goes for civilians as well. It’s no wonder there is a stigma attached to PTSD. The media paints vets who struggle with it as ticking time bombs about to snap at any moment. This encourages veterans who are struggling with the symptoms of PTSD even more reluctant to come forward and seek help.

Having PTSD does not make you damaged goods anymore than having cancer, depression or bipolar disorder or any other diseases. None of our troops afflicted with PTSD are damaged and 99% of them are not violent. The men and women who serve in our Armed Forces give up so much. They sacrifice their time with their families, their bodies, their mental health, and sometimes their lives.

So, please honor and show your gratitude for our service members and veterans.
Our Mission
NAMI Fox Valley exists to improve the quality of life for those with brain disorders (mental illness) and their families and friends through education, support, advocacy and research. It is affiliated with NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) and NAMI Wisconsin.

Our Vision
Live well with mental illness.

Upcoming events

June
12-14 SPARK 9am-4pm, DJ Bordini Center
27-30 NAMI National Conference, Seattle, WA

July
5-26 REAP, Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30pm, NAMI House
17-18 CIP, 8am-5pm, DJ Bordini Center
23 Summer Picnic, 5-7pm, Pierce Park, Appleton
24 Peer-to-Peer Begins, 6:30-9pm, Location to be determined

August
1 Be Well begins, 5-6pm, Location to be determined
6-15 Mental Health First Aid, 5:30-8:30pm, DJ Bordini Center
8 NAMIWalk Kickoff Breakfast, 7:30-9am, Radisson Paper Valley Hotel