

Monthly speaker meeting Thursday, July 23 , 2009

Dinner at 6, Meeting at 7

Proxy Parents

Providing “family-like” services for persons with mental illness

Proxy Parent Foundation is a non-profit started by members of NAMI California and MHA-LA to serve NAMI California families and consumers. It helps families establish Special Needs Trusts that provide for ill loved ones when families no longer can. The trusts can fund a range of services that families specify, while safeguarding their family member's public benefits. Representatives of Proxy Parents will describe the program and take questions.

Last month's meeting--surely you didn't miss it!!!!???

The video, "The Shaken Tree", was shown. It is an award-winning documentary featuring several families who discuss the heartaches as well as the rewards of their relationships with their mentally ill loved ones: sons and daughters, spouses, parents, friends. The documentary has won awards for its exploration of many of the issues that face NAMI members and their loved ones, and allowed the families and the consumers in attendance to better understand each other's challenges and perhaps have some cathartic moments together.

NAMI CALIFORNIA CONVENTION August 21 & 22 in Torrance

Destination Recovery is the theme for this year's state convention. Early conference registration is open until July 10. Let's get a carload or two together for the drive down and back. Remember that the sharing of thoughts in the car is part of the enriching experience of these conventions! See namicalifornia.org for details.

IMPORTANT REMINDER FOR HISPANIC FAMILIES: Our new family advocate, Ramona Winner, is Spanish speaking, trained in family advocacy, and culturally competent. You may contact her at 884-8440, ext.106, for free assistance with family mental health issues.

Save the dates!!!

Heroes of Hope Event, Saturday, October 3: The Mental Health Association fundraiser will honor and hear from two of our mental health heroes, Ellen Saks and Steve Lopez.

Ms. Saks wrote the compelling account of her experience with schizophrenia, "The Center Cannot Hold," which many families have read and praised as the best such account they have read. Mr. Lopez is the Los Angeles Times columnist who befriended the homeless Nathaniel Ayers, a Julliard-educated musical prodigy who developed schizophrenia. The movie "The Soloist" is based on Mr. Lopez's book. Watch for details on this event.

Mental Health Arts Festival, Saturday, Oct. 10: the 15th annual Mental Health Arts Festival will be held on Saturday, October 10, in De la Guerra Plaza. In addition to raising public awareness of mental health issues each year, the event fosters contact between members of the general public and exhibiting artists, thereby reducing prejudice and stereotyping while creating opportunities for artists to market their work. Results include a great deal of personal validation for participants, an increased sense of self esteem, and a reduction in feelings of isolation and marginalization by the community. Featured are crafts, poetry, jewelry, music, paintings, sculpture, more!

The event is sponsored by NAMI and the Mental Health Association in Santa Barbara County. Other sponsors include Cottage Health System and Phoenix of Santa Barbara..

For information, to volunteer or to display art, call the MHA at 884-8440. Volunteers needed!!

No August general meeting of NAMI -- but Family to Family Alert!!!

Our local NAMI omits the general meeting in August. However, the **annual alumnae picnic** for persons who have taken the Family to Family course will be held in August. All alumnae will receive a flyer in the mail. Watch for it and join your Family to Family friends!

If you have not yet taken this free 12-week course, a new series will begin in early September. Tona Wakefield will be assembling a list, so call her at 884-8440, ext 105. Hurry, as the class size must be limited to 20. Families are unanimous in their praise of the information and fellowship: typical comment, "It saved our family's life!"

Consumer Voices: Lesley's book picks

Lesley Grogan is an avid reader and is particularly interested in personal accounts written by persons living with schizophrenia and other chronic mental illnesses. As a person who has managed her own illness, until the last few years without support from family or even from mental health clinicians, she recognizes authentic voices in what she reads, and her 1-4-star system is very reliable! A talented and versatile artist, Lesley is also the Fellowship Club's Art Director, and has held that job at the Club for several years.

*NAMI News will continue to publish Lesley's reading recommendations and we also invite input on any other topic from other consumers for a regular section which we will call, "**Consumer Voices**". (Apologies to those who, like Lesley, do not like the term "consumer".) **Contact Jan Winter, editor**, with contributions for this section. Email: wintercal@cox.net.*

Lesley's picks:

The Center Cannot Hold by Elyn Saks. ★★★★★

An articulate and insightful first hand account of dealing with schizophrenia and succeeding despite it. Hard to put down!

The Quiet Room by Lori Schiller and Amanda Bennett ★★★

A personal account of a poet struggling with psychosis. Family and friends contribute their experiences to chapters in the book.

Stalking Irish Madness. by Patrick Tracey ★★★

On the backdrop of Irish mythology, prehistory and history, Tracey reviews the most up to date information on schizophrenia and struggles with his own experiences with his family's illness.

Divided Minds by Pamela Spiro and Carolyn Wagner ★★

About two twins, one with schizophrenia and the other a psychiatrist. Both contribute to the book.

Recovered, Not Cured by Richard McLean ★★

An artist's personal experience struggling with voices and relationships.

Me, Myself and Them by Kurt Snyder with Raquel E. Gur, MD, PhD & Linda Wasmer Andrews ★★

A basic, up-to-date understanding of the causes and treatment of schizophrenia. Includes personal experiences.

Welcome, Silence by Carol North ★★

A graphic rendition of psychosis without insight. Ending hard to believe. Written by a lady who became a psychiatrist

The Eden Express by Mark Vonnegut ★

A dense, hard to read book about a hippy starting a commune who loses his mind.

Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63) brings new power to family and consumer voices . . .

Prop 63 passed by the voters in November 2004, is accomplishing two important things:

1. bringing large new sums of money into the mental health system
2. establishing the principle of funding only services that are consumer- and family-driven

In Santa Barbara County, MHSA funds the **Consumer Family Member Advisory Committee**, which meets monthly to discuss and advise the county's mental health department on services. Eleven consumers and eleven family members have official votes. The meetings, held in Solvang every third Thursday of the month, draw a larger body of non-voting participants as well. All are welcome to bring their voices to this advocacy body that is growing in fellowship and influence! (Contact our family advocates for more information if you wish to attend.)

Consumer/family advisory bodies called "Guidance Councils" are also being formed in Santa Barbara, Santa Maria and Lompoc to facilitate and inform the work of the new MHSA-funded Recovery Learning Centers in each of the three communities. These Guidance Councils will meet monthly and will add to the venues available to consumers and family members to express their needs and views.

NARSAD, the organization all NAMI members should know about and support

NARSAD was founded in 1981 as the National Alliance for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression. NAMI and the Mental Health Association were two of the three founders. It is the world's leading charity dedicated to mental health research, for which it has contributed millions of dollars. In addition to funding research on schizophrenia and depression, NARSAD funds psychiatric brain research in many other areas such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, bipolar disorder and anxiety disorders.

Scientists who have received NARSAD grants have shaped psychiatric research throughout the world. Here is a sample of their findings:

- An elucidation of the pathways of memory.
- An understanding of the relationship between stress and anxiety.
- The revelation of links between environmental insults during pregnancy and schizophrenia and between father's age and schizophrenia.
- The development of new screening methods and interventions for children at risk for mental illness.
- The unveiling of the genetic link between schizophrenia and bipolar disease.

The Nobel Prize in Medicine or Physiology in 2001 was awarded to three NARSAD-affiliated scientists. A visit to their web site, www.narsad.org, will reward you with a trove of information, especially the descriptions of fruitful new research in so many mental health issues that families and their loved ones face. For example, this from the NARSAD site (www.narsad.org) is something you may have been wondering about:

Study Helps Confirm Role of Kynurenic Acid in Schizophrenia and Why Smoking Relieves Symptoms

(Great Neck, N.Y. - June 15, 2009) —

Levels of a substance called kynurenic acid (KYNA) are elevated in the brain and cerebrospinal fluid of people with schizophrenia and Alzheimer's disease, and KYNA had been suspected of a role in the cognitive dysfunction characteristic of both these disorders. Now, studies by NARSAD Investigator David Bucci, Ph.D., and colleagues in Dartmouth College's department of psychological and brain sciences, have shown that elevated concentrations of endogenous KYNA interfere with contextual learning and memory. The findings were reported in the March 19 online edition of the journal *Behavioural Brain Research*.

KYNA acts on molecules called nicotinic acetylcholine receptors, the receptors affected by smoking. People with schizophrenia smoke much more than people in the general population, which has suggested that they use nicotine as a form of self-medication. Dr. Bucci and his team have shown that acute nicotine administration in laboratory rats reduced their KYNA levels.

Dr. Bucci wrote: "It is interesting to consider the possibility that cigarette smoking may be used by those with schizophrenia to attenuate cognitive and sensory deficits. Future studies in rat models should examine the capacity for nicotine treatment to reduce the deficits produced by upregulation of brain KYNA."

(Adapted from the NARSAD.org site.)

Local news: Santa Barbara County Supervisors Privatize Jail Mental Health Services

Last month, the Board of Supervisors voted to move jail mental health services from the department of Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services (ADMHS), which has provided services at the jail for decades, to a private company, Prison Health Services, which has been providing health care there to inmates. Sheriff Bill Brown explained that the move would offer two main benefits: 24/7 mental health care and discharge planning, two aspects of care not currently provided by ADMHS. To add that care under ADMHS, he testified, would roughly double the \$500,000 contract the jail has with ADMHS.

Supervisor Janet Wolf was the lone dissenting vote in the 4-1 approval, sceptical that Prison Health Services could augment care for half a million dollars less than the county's own department. Sheriff Brown explained that the savings would come from the ability of Prison Health to dually train its employees. Critics questioned that health and mental health employees overlapping could handle the double-duty responsibilities that Sheriff Brown described.

Prison Health Services, based in Tennessee, is the largest private, for-profit prison healthcare provider in the country and was linked by the New York Times in 2005 to several unnecessary inmate deaths, citing the undertraining of Prison Health doctors and nurses, withholding of medication from inmates, and nurses tasked beyond their training.

The decision that will affect large numbers of inmates seemed inevitable, given the county's need to make broad cuts in each department and the appeal of broader coverage at less cost. Supervisors Doreen Farr and Salud Carbajal requested a report on the services at the end of the first year. NAMI members will also monitor the change.

RECOVERY RESOURCES FOR CONSUMERS AND FAMILIES!

Family advocates Tona Wakefield, ext. 105, and Ramona Winner, ext. 106, are specially trained to assist families with their family issues. Ramona speaks Spanish and is an Hispanic family member. Call 884-8440 for either extension.

For Families and Consumers.....

NAMI's monthly speaker meetings are held at the MHA Fellowship Club, 617 Garden Street, on the 4th Thursday of each month, 6 pm dinner, 7 pm program. Consumers welcome. Call Tona Wakefield if you plan to come for dinner.

Family support group for English speakers meets each first, second and third Thursday evening at 7 pm at the MHA's new site, 617 Garden Street, second floor conference room.

"El Nuevo Amanecer" (The New Dawn): Spanish language support group for Latino consumers and their families; meets first and third Tuesday evenings from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm at the MHA's new site 617 Garden Street, 1st floor. Francisco Palencia and Lyra Monroe facilitate; for information (en espanol) call Lyra Monroe at 722-7331.

For Consumers...all small groups, consumer-led, welcome new members.....

Depression and Bi-Polar Support Group: peer support for people living with mood disorders. (Not appropriate for persons with thought disorders such as schizophrenia.) Meets 6:30 pm – 8 pm Tuesdays at CARES, 2034 De La Vina. Contact Bob Quinn at 696-5372.

Goal-Setting Group Tuesdays at 3 pm. Call Maureen for meeting place: 681-5455. A group of consumers, coordinated by consumer Maureen Mina, gather weekly to support each other in their short term goals and action steps to accomplish them.

Clutter Recovery Support Group meets the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month at 1 pm at the MHA, 617 Garden Street, 2nd floor conference room, led by Maureen Mina.

Women's group meets Wednesdays at 10 am at (new meeting place): Nordstrom Cafe. Very informal get-together to discuss varying topics or just share and support each other. Coordinated by Maureen Mina.

WRAP Group provides opportunities for persons to discuss what works for them when they are feeling good and to work on what can make them feel better. Coordinated by Maureen Mina. Call 722-8044 or 681-5455 for more information about the next group forming.

One-to-One Peer Support is now available for consumers who would like to meet with Maureen Mina to gain a peer perspective on dealing with quality of life issues. Call her at 722-8044 or 681-5455 to inquire about this service.

CARES CRISIS CENTER: 1-888-868-1649 - Monday-Friday open 8 to 5. After hours, walk in until 9 pm.

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