



NAMI

Cheyenne

National Alliance on Mental Illness

The Official Newsletter of NAMI Cheyenne

June-July 2009

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In Our Own Voice Presentation

For the May 7th educational meeting Lois, “Lou”, Dowell and James Trout gave an In Our Voice (IOOV) presentation. Both Lou and James, as consumers, have been trained by NAMI Wyoming to give the IOOV presentation to interested groups. In the way of introduction, they mentioned that over 5% of Americans have a mental illness and 9 to 13 % of 14 to 17 year olds have a major mental illness. The IOOV presentation starts with an introduction of the presenters, then the topics of their discussion are their: dark days; acceptance; treatment; coping skills; and, finally, successes, hopes and dreams.

years she was married, had two children, was divorced, and had three suicide attempts. She was hospitalized and treated for everything but what was wrong with her.

James suffers from schizoaffective disorder and alcohol abuse, which makes him dually diagnosed also. He said he first started hearing voices when he was in junior high school. As a result, he began medicating himself with alcohol and has had a suicide attempt. His father’s non-supportive attitude was, “If you can’t see it, it’s not broke”.

Dark Days

Lou, who has a dual diagnosis of mental illness and substance abuse, related that as early as five years of age she felt “out of sync” and that her greatest desire was to “make everyone else happy”. During the next 30 or so

Acceptance

Lou offered that the acceptance of her illness came in stages. She accepted her problem with drugs and alcohol first. The mental illness diagnosis did not come until 1994 and she was actually elated to finally find what out

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Calendar:

Educational Meetings

- **June 4, 7:00 PM** Election for Board of Directors and film “Out of the Shadow”
- **July 2, 7:00 PM** Video on Obsessive/Compulsive Disorder

Support Group Meetings

- **June 18, 7:00 PM**
- **July 16, 7:00 PM**

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New Board of Directors to be Elected June 4th

At a board meeting on March 19th it was determined from the NAMI of Cheyenne Bi-Laws that a new Board of Directors needs to be finalized at the June 4th educational meeting.

next Board will be a general business meeting of all members of NAMI of Cheyenne.

The meeting for the election of the

The Bi-Laws stipulate that 25% of the membership must be present to

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In Our Own Voice Presentation (Contd.)

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“what was wrong with me”. Even then it took time to understand her illness and take care of herself. She doesn’t have the deep, dark days anymore, and has learned to take responsibility for her actions. Lou says she has “accepted the challenge of her illness and found out what therapy and coping skills work best for her, despite professional attitudes toward them”.

James has come to accept his illness as not being his fault and that it is just part of him. According to Jim, “Who understands us better than someone like us”. His treatment started in 1993 when he started to learn how to get in a better state of mind. It took another 3 years to accept his schizoaffective diagnosis.

Treatment

Lou said she didn’t do treatment well. She doesn’t like people telling her what to do. The pills made her a zombie at first. She quit the pills and found something else. Through trial, error and keeping track of the side effects of each medication, she found a medication that works for her. Lou has been in treatment since she was 21 years old. She advises, “Make the doctor or therapist talk to you, and listen to you”. Part of Lou’s treatment is her job as a peer specialist at Peak Wellness Center, which is a job she loves.

Jim said the first medication got rid of the voices, but he developed tremors. He has been on medication since 1993. Currently, Jim is on a combination of medication and electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), plus

group therapy. He has developed a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) so his sister can help with proper decisions when Jim can’t or won’t decide. Jim related that he likes himself now and is re-establishing a relationship with his sons. They have asked him about his illness. The treatment is doing him wonders.

Coping Skills

Lou copes by not worrying about the future and staying “in the here and now”. She has pets and likes to sew. When she reacts emotionally, she knows to take some down time. Lou related that she has a violent temper, but honors that emotion and redirects it in a non-violent manner. She gives herself permission to smoke, but considers that a minor vice compared to other things. “One has to take responsibility for oneself”, said Lou.

Jim keeps a journal every evening. He writes down the good and bad of his day, and then decides if he needs to apologize for anything. “If it’s gloomy outside, it doesn’t have to be gloomy inside of me”, according to James. He strives to be honest with himself and attempts to get outside himself, this is, relate to others.

Successes, Hopes and Dreams

Lou wants to stay where she is in recovery. She likes the person she sees in the mirror now. She hopes to continue a relationship with her children, but recovery is first and foremost in her life. Lou tells everyone to find their own dream life. It’s

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“...I was actually elated to finally find out ‘what was wrong with me’”.

- Lou Dowell

“Who understands us better than someone like us.”

- James Trout

IOOV Presentation (Continued)

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“not a white picket fence and 2.4 children world for most of us”, according to Lou. She advises to advocate for oneself; speak up.

Jim hopes that his kids don't have to go through what he has, although one son has an alcohol problem. Jim would like to go back to school and get a job in the probation system. He

hopes to stay functioning. If he makes a mistake, he feels he now has the strength to back up and try again. He hopes people get something out of their IOOV presentations.

Finally, Lou said recovery is being successful and liking oneself. To Jim, recovery is moving forward in life and not hurting others.

New Board be Elected (Continued)

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make the election valid..

At this time there are no new candidates for the offices.

Please make your desires known to keep NAMI of Cheyenne a healthy and viable local of NAMI!

Educational and Support Group Meetings

Educational meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 3005 Thomes, in Cheyenne. The meetings start at 7:00 PM and typically last an hour.

On **June 4th** there will be a general business meeting and an election of a new Board of Directors. Following the election, there will be a viewing of the film “Out of the Shadow”. Directed, produced and photographed by Susan Smiley, this very personal documentary chronicles the filmmaker's mother, Millie, and her family through Millie's battle with schizophrenia, and her subsequent trials within the public health system. This version of the film contains a new, short epilogue, updating Millie's life since the original film was made four years ago.

On **July 2nd** there will a viewing of a short Pfizer educational video on Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.

Support group meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at the Unitarian Universalist Church. The June meeting will be on the 18th and the July support group meeting will be on the 16th.

At the start of the meeting attendees break into two groups—one for family and friends, and a second one for consumers—provided there are enough attendees for each group. Support group meetings start at 7:00 PM and normally last an hour and a half.



NAMI of Cheyenne Membership Application

TYPE	COST	AMOUNT ENCLOSED
<input type="checkbox"/> Consumer/Open-door	\$ 5.00	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Family/Profession	\$35.00	_____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Please remove me from the mailing list.

Make checks payable to and return form to:

NAMI of Cheyenne
604 East 25th Street
Cheyenne, WY 82001

Affiliate memberships expired at the end of March. Please renew your membership, if you haven't already done so.

Do You Have an Email Address?

Would you be interested in receiving an email version of this newsletter?

If so, let us know at:
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We may be able to offer an 'E' version soon.

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