


NAMI Columbus, Georgia

The Area's Voice on Mental Illness

The National Alliance on Mental Illness – A powerful non-profit, self-help and advocacy organization



NAMI Columbus, P.O. Box 8581, Columbus, GA 31908 ~~~ (706) 320-3755 ~~~ NAMICols@knology.net

Georgia Crisis & Access Line: 1-800-715-4225

Single Point of Entry to access mental health, addictive disease and crisis services 24/7

Saturday
May 16, 2009
NAMI Georgia Annual Meeting
www.namiga.org



 **NAMI Walks** 
National Alliance on Mental Illness
Saturday, October 3, 2009
Form your team NOW
Get a head start
Go to www.namiga.org and sign up

April Education Program Moving to June!

5 pm SUNDAY, April 19, 2009

(our **LAST Sunday** monthly meeting)

CONTACT Training Building ~ 1520 22nd Street ~ Columbus

The NAMI Columbus Board of Directors voted to move the monthly meeting back to our affiliate's previous meeting time and day. For our last Sunday educational meeting we are planning another *Dinner and a Movie Meeting*. Our Potluck dinner instructions, which outline what dish you should bring to the dinner, can be found on page 2 of this newsletter. We will rent 3 different recently released comedies and everyone will vote on what we watch. Come enjoy the fun, food, and fellowship!

Beginning in **June**, we will resume holding our monthly educational meetings on the **third MONDAY** of every month. We have re-scheduled our previously planned topic for April about forensics at WCGRH. Carrie Hill, RN and Kelly Farris, Ph.D. will be speaking at our JUNE meeting instead.

You might be thinking "but what about May's meeting?" In lieu of our May monthly meeting we are hoping that many members will attend the NAMI Georgia Annual Meeting in Atlanta on Saturday, May 16th. Go to the NAMI Georgia website www.namiga.org and check out the information regarding the Annual Meeting. Our affiliate can either obtain a bus with a driver or riders can take private cars and split the gas cost.

In preparation for our monthly meeting schedule change, beginning on Monday, May 4th the family support and NAMI Connection support groups will exchange locations. This means that **ALL NAMI Connection** support groups will now be held in the multipurpose room of The Bradley Center. All family support will be held at CONTACT, 1520 22nd Street. Both locations are just across a parking lot should someone show up at the old location(s).

Please Come to our Potluck Dinner and help us laugh at a movie

Members whose last names begin with **A through D** bring salads or vegetables
Members whose last names begin with **E through J** bring entrees
Members whose last names begin with **K through P** bring desserts or fruit
Members whose last names begin with **R through Z** bring appetizers or rolls

NAMI Columbus will supply **utensils, paper goods and drinks.**

Please call the NAMI Columbus Office (706) 320-3755 or e-mail NAMICols@knology.net if you have any questions. Feel free to “trade” with another member whose name is in another alphabet category in order to bring a different dish. If you are bringing a hot dish, our meeting will be at CONTACT where an oven, microwave and refrigerator are available. It is much easier though if you bring anything needing heat or cold in that type of container.

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## 8<sup>th</sup> Annual New Horizons Benefit to Help CASA

On Tuesday April 28<sup>th</sup>, the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual New Horizons Community Service Board (CSB) Benefit will take place at the Green Island Country Club. For 8 years our community has been helping New Horizons raise funds to help their employees help others “Build Better Lives” (their Mission Statement).

As Georgia has removed (or as DHR Commissioners have called it in the past, redirected or repurposed allocations) funding to the Georgia CSBs, it has become increasingly more difficult for them to carry on and do their jobs. Many CSBs are on the verge of closing many more programs. It is more important than ever that we support our CSB (New Horizons) this year. The proceeds from this year’s benefit will go toward the Child and Adolescent Substance Abuse (CASA) Clubhouse Program.

It is not too late to purchase a seat and/or donate toward helping someone else attend the Benefit (\$100.00 per seat). It will begin at 6:30 p.m., with dinner being served at 7:00 p.m. This year’s guest speaker will be Mr. **Steve Melton**, CEO of CB&T Bank and Regional CEO of Synovus. We think his talk will be as interesting as his commercials on television have been. This year’s New Horizons/NAMI Impact Award will be given to **Judge Aaron Cohn**. Most residents of our area know that Judge Cohn has been tireless in his efforts to help children in the juvenile justice system. He has been recognized locally and nationally for his work and advocacy. As usual, the cost of the benefit is tax deductible (minus the cost of the dinner).

We hope you have received your invitation and are planning to attend. Whether you mail a check or call your reservation in to the New Horizons number on the invitation (706-320-3890), please let them know you would like to sit at a NAMI table. Call the NAMI Columbus office—(706) 320-3755—if you have any questions.

***Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup> is our semi-annual indoor yard sale. Collect your goodies!***

## And OUR Hospital is Next!

Since our last newsletter update on the DHR Blue Print that Commissioner B. J. Walker has been forcing on us, so much more has occurred. NAMI Columbus is very concerned about what has happened because we are due for the same treatment Savannah is receiving when DHR turns their attention to us. Following is what has occurred in recent weeks.

NAMI Savannah and NAMI Georgia requested a 60 day delay of any changes at the Savannah Regional Hospital (repurposing) plan being pushed by DHR Commissioner Walker. Governor Perdue gave them a 60 day delay. In spite of this, pink slips were issued to over 75 Savannah Hospital employees and then were rescinded the next day. Despite being promised a delay, Commissioner Walker continued moving forward with her Mental Health Game Plan which the vast majority of mental health advocates believe will be a disaster. Acute care hospital beds were already reduced from 35 to 19 beds. Our NAMI President, Nora Haynes-Lott requested a written interpretation from Governor Perdue on what a "60 day delay" meant. On March 31<sup>st</sup>, NAMI Georgia received a reply from DHR which was a double-speak reply. Many advocates doubt that Governor Perdue was ever shown the request for clarification of what a 60 day delay meant.

April 1<sup>st</sup>, DHR directed the Savannah Regional Hospital to admit NO MORE acute care patients. DHR gave NO NOTICE to the any of the 44 county public providers or law enforcement. The next step in the plan calls for all forensics to move to the hospital in Rome. At the NAMI Summit the next day, DHR personnel admitted to stakeholders that all admissions are being forced into the crisis stabilization unit or turned back.

On April 3<sup>rd</sup> 11,000 petitions were delivered to the Senate and the Lt. Governor. On that same day the present DHR received the ultimate "no confidence" vote and the General Assembly approved that the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse would leave DHR as of July 1, 2009. At the same time that advocates were celebrating the end of years of misery from being in DHR, DHR employees were reviewing Savannah Regional Hospital's budget to find more ways to make cuts to "give Commissioner Walker back the promised money that would come with hospital cuts".

On April 6<sup>th</sup>, a murder which occurred at Central State Hospital (believed due to the ordered cutbacks and therefore lack of adequate staffing to properly monitor patients) became public news. Two days later the Department of Justice arrived at Central State and stated they have plans to come to Savannah in May to review the ordered changes and back to Central State in June. Last Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, a list was delivered to Savannah Regional employees for approximately 100 people to lose jobs. Once employees are gone, it's very, very difficult to reverse this process and be able to re-hire trained, professional employees. We've had to learn that the hard way in our own hospital here in Columbus.

**So, here's the bottom line.** Despite the fact that

- Commissioner Walker will not be in charge of mental health needs as of July 1, 2009, she is still forging ahead with a plan that will leave our new Department in a very shaky condition,
- 44 counties in the Southeast portion of Georgia are now without acute care hospital beds and if people have a need, they will either be turned away or driven at least 2-1/2 hours away to another hospital, OR sit for days in an Emergency Room waiting for a bed to free up (and Columbus is next),
- Governor Perdue promised a 60 day moratorium on proceeding with the DHR Game Plan (renamed Blue Print when consumers objected to being termed as being part of a "game"),
- Over 11,000 people called for stopping the closure of acute care beds at Savannah Regional by signing petitions,
- Advocates believe that if the community resources had not been steadily cut over the last 20 years and recovery services had been offered, the hospitals would have decreased their overuse through attrition—not forced closure;
- There are an overwhelming amount of people now receiving mental health care in prisons and jails instead of the hospitals or in the community because of the steadily increasing removal of services,
- Parents of young children seeking mental health assistance find it increasingly hard to obtain services due to the fact that Commissioner Walker ignored advocate warnings that the 2007-2008 changes she ordered for children would lead to disaster;
- Georgia now has a "failure driven mental health system" (children and adults must FAIL a certain number of times before they can get the intensive treatment that is needed).

Despite these facts and many more besides, Commissioner Walker is being allowed to make decisions that negatively affect the new Department. Since she is due to lose control anyway, we need to make it happen sooner rather than later.

**Here's what you can do:** Call Governor Perdue's Office (404-656-1776) and request that he name Gwen Skinner to take over immediately as interim head (as he promised he would). This would stop the adverse effects that are being caused by Commissioner Walker and put someone in charge who listens (really listens) to advocates.

Sue Marlowe, President -- NAMI Columbus

# THE



# TO RECOVERY

**NAMI Columbus C.A.R.E.S.**

*Consumers Achieving Recovery Thru Education & Support*

I am always surprised when I walk into a support meeting and there are other people there. In my eyes, everyone else looks too . . . healthy . . . to have mental illness. I think of myself as part of a dog-and-pony show. Me and my shadow, me and my bipolar disorder – same difference, right? There are always two options here. I can trot it out, we can do tricks together, and I can act like having this disease doesn't faze me a bit. Or I can hide it. Hiding it is exhausting. Besides, this is NAMI – there is no reason to hide here. I asked to attend Peer-to-Peer because I am on a mission – to be able to manage bipolar disorder, instead of it managing me. Hiding it would be counterproductive.

In Peer-to-Peer, I learned more about my disease, how it manifests itself, how it can be managed and fought. I learned that bipolar disorder is not the result of horrific karma. I did not do something to deserve it; it is not what I have earned.

The basic tenets of my life, the ones my mind repeats to me throughout the day: You are not smart enough to finish college. You are not strong enough to work. You are not (fill in the blank). You are not. That's really the meat of it, isn't it? You Are Not.

While I did not cause bipolar disorder to become part of my life, I have earned one thing because of it. I have earned the power to finish the sentence my mind throws at me. You Are Not . . . a quitter. You Are Not . . . bipolar disorder first, Jennifer second. You Are Not . . . unworthy of grace. You Are Not . . . alone.

*~~ Jennifer ~~*

## **It Can Always be a Sunny Day**

My mother always used to tell me if there was enough blue sky to make a sailor's pants; it will be a nice day. When I was growing up, it was always sunny. Of course, I grew up in South Florida, the land of sun, sea and fun. There were no seasons; it was always warm and always sunny. However for the past twenty years I have lived in West Georgia and the change in seasons plus having bipolar disorder can create sadness for me when there are few sunny warm days in the winter season.

Seasonal affective disorder is more than just feeling cabin fever during the winter months. According to the Mayo Clinic, "With seasonal affective disorder, fall's short days and long nights may trigger feelings of depression, lethargy, fatigue and other problems". There are theories that light therapy helps but I have a light box that I received as a gift and I did not notice a remarkable difference in mood during the winter months. So what will help? I propose that people experience seasonal depression with both the coming of fall as well as the coming of spring because of change. There is a change of the length of days in both fall and spring and also a change in temperature. Both of these changes can affect your sleep patterns and trigger a depressive episode. In addition to medication and talk therapy, the following are more ways I've used to battle seasonal depression:

1. Make at least one goal each day. It doesn't have to be monumental. It can just be organizing your paperwork or washing your clothes. When you achieve that goal, you'll feel a sense of accomplishment.
2. Get out of bed, step outside and breathe fresh air. You may not feel like bathing or getting dressed but this seemingly simple task does wonders.
3. Talk to someone. Even talking to your dog, as silly as it sounds, can distract your mind and it leads to thinking happier thoughts.

Here's to you finding enough blue sky to make a sailor's suit because it's there even on the gloomiest days. Reach out to others and look within yourself and you'll find it.

# Irritability as a Symptom of Bipolar Disorder *By Christina Jones*

Bipolar disorder, also known as manic-depression, causes a person to have severely fluctuating moods, energy, and level of functioning. A person with bipolar disorder can go from an extreme high called mania to an extreme low called depression. In between manic and depressive episodes, a person with bipolar disorder may have mild or no symptoms at all. Bipolar disorder is not an uncommon disorder. A statistic shows that 5.2 million American adults, aged 18 and older, are currently diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

One of the major symptoms of bipolar disorder is irritability, which is defined as an excessive response to stimuli. Irritability is characterized by excessive feelings of annoyance or frustration with a person or situation. It can be experienced during both manic and depressive episodes. A manic episode may last for a few days or a few weeks and during this manic episode a person usually feels extremely elevated moods and behaviors causing them to become easily irritated. During a depressive episode a person usually feels sad, hopeless and empty. A person can also feel irritable during a depressive episode because they may be having problems concentrating and may be experiencing fatigue, making them easily frustrated and annoyed.

Irritability is not only a symptom in diagnosing adults; it is also a common symptom among children with bipolar disorder. Bipolar disorder is usually diagnosed during late adolescence or early adulthood, but there have been cases of children being diagnosed. A study shows that seven percent of children seen at psychiatric facilities have bipolar disorder. More recently, studies have found that children who show symptoms of bipolar disorder have been misdiagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). In a study, it was shown that in children, irritability was not sufficient enough to determine a bipolar disorder diagnosis. It is still a relevant symptom because many of the children with bipolar disorder did show increased frustration during a hard and emotionally demanding task. Irritability cannot sufficiently determine bipolar disorder because this is also a common symptom of ADHD. If it is in addition to elevated moods, grandiose behavior and decreased need for sleep, it can help secure a diagnosis for bipolar disorder because these other symptoms are uncommon in ADHD. Another problem with diagnosing bipolar disorder in children is that people assume the child has behavioral issues and they do not seek outside help. Also, diagnosing bipolar disorder in children is fairly new and the DSM-IV guidelines outline classic adult symptoms, not symptoms children might express. Some symptoms children might express in addition to irritability are explosive temper tantrums, distractibility, separation anxiety, sensitivity to emotional or environmental triggers, bed-wetting (especially in boys), and night terrors.

Bipolar disorder is a serious mental illness that can impact a person's daily life. One of the main symptoms, irritability, can appear in manic episodes and also during depressive episodes. Diagnosis of bipolar disorder does mainly occur with people in late adolescence and early adulthood, though cases have been found to appear in childhood. Irritability cannot determine a diagnosis of bipolar disorder alone. There are many other symptoms of bipolar disorder, and if you are experiencing those symptoms, you should try to seek help for treatment.

[Freedom From Fear](http://freedomfromfear.org) • 308 Seaview Ave, Staten Island, NY 10305 • 718-351-1717 (ext 24) • [help@freedomfromfear.org](mailto:help@freedomfromfear.org)

## Have you Made a NAMI Connection Yet?

All consumer support groups are called NAMI Connection Support Groups. Georgia is working on a goal to have many groups operating all over the state so that people will have many choices of which group to attend in the location they live in. Columbus has two NAMI Connection Groups:

- 1) Monday Nights 6:00 – 7:30 pm at Contact Building (for any diagnosis) Beginning in May the group will move to the Multipurpose Room at The Bradley Center.
- 2) Saturday Afternoons 1:00 – 2:30 pm (Depression/Bipolar Disorder)

**MAY is Mental Health Month**  
**National Anxiety &**  
**Depression Awareness Week**  
**May 3-9, 2009**

Come talk to others who understand...someone just like you. NAMI Connection is a recovery support group for people living with mental illness. It provides a place that offers respect, understanding, encouragement and hope.

## YOUNG FAMILIES

I am a parent of a child who has been diagnosed with ADD/ADHD, Bipolar disorder, and Aspergers' Syndrome. My son has also been diagnosed with asthma and has been admitted to hospitals several times for urgent needs. On a daily basis he has to take multiple medications to help with the symptoms of his brain disorders and also to ease the pressure within his sinuses because of a deviated septum. On average, a doctor's visit can range in time from one hour to several depending on the nature of the visit. This can prove exhausting, especially on the child being treated. Due to constant sickness and frequent doctor's visits, my son had to be held back in school

Life with my child is not only challenging but can be downright difficult at times! The everyday obstacles that keep a child from reaching their goals and the constant mood swings are just a few of the obstacles associated with the illness(es). Often times, a child with a disability is overlooked or scorned by their peers. This same child might be capable of many great things if given the chance, but due to their differences, they aren't given the attention, nor the chances that they deserve. Isn't it enough that they have their own battles to deal with? Instead of understanding their needs, we just add to their frustrations. This is not only confusing to them, but also adds a fear of failure into the mix.

His inability to focus, along with his hyperactivity, keeps him from excelling in his school work. Sometimes he gets easily frustrated with what he's trying to do, and often I get frustrated too when I try to explain things to him in a way he can understand. It's hard to be firm--yet understanding at the same time.

People like having control over things. It gives us a sense of empowerment and a feeling of worth. Imagine having to watch your child struggle, get frustrated, get angry, give up, call themselves "stupid", and to have to repeat this process again and again everyday. Kids like to dream and look forward to their futures. Having a disability can sometimes make these dreams seem unreachable. A fear of failure may keep an otherwise brilliant child limited to only what is available at that time. Why do we put a limit on a child's future? We should encourage children every step of the way whether they are disabled or not. After all, the kids are our future!

Many of us were born with a disability of some type, or maybe an incident in life caused us to be disabled. Whatever the case may be, there are those with disabilities, who have said to themselves that they will not let their handicaps keep them from achieving goals in life. Helen Keller overcome her disabilities and was instrumental in so many ways that we still benefit from today. Let everyone who has excelled in spite of their disability encourage the children of today. All children need encouragement. A little love doesn't hurt either.

*By: Kimberly Greene (Mother Of The Child)*

### Volunteer and Make our NAMI the Best

Have you wondered how you can help NAMI Columbus? Volunteering helps NAMI, the community, and you. NAMI helps so many people with mental illness and being a volunteer expands our presence in the community. Currently, we have the office open every Monday from 1-5 pm. We have a variety of mental health books and audio-visual media available for NAMI members to check out. Our goal is to have every weekday covered so we have a live voice to answer the phone calls and to help with the clerical duties with NAMI. NAMI volunteers almost always say that by volunteering, they receive a great deal of personal satisfaction and they especially like that they are no longer a "passive" member. Give back and get more. Call (706) 320-3755 for more information on how you can help NAMI. If a volunteer is not in the office when you call, leave a message and someone will return

### Free Training

Are you interested in receiving NAMI Georgia's **free training** (July 17-19, 2009) to be a Family-to-Family teacher or a NAMI Connection or Family Support Group Facilitator? Please e-mail NAMI Columbus ([NAMICols@knology.net](mailto:NAMICols@knology.net)) or call the office at (706) 320-3755 for further information. There are certain requirements that must be met in order to be approved. Every interested person needs to submit an application and receive approval from their affiliate.

# Where Have All the Goodies Gone????

To the NAMI Columbus yard sale, of course. I know you look at all those goodies in your house, garage, office, storage unit, etc., and say in a panicky voice “I can’t let this go because I might want/need it someday (even if you haven’t used or looked at it for years).” You get that feeling in the pit of your stomach that tells you hang on to “(fill in the blank).” But I’m here to tell you that the feeling is really saying “let those goodies go; they’re just taking up space; they could help others.” And if you let them go, you would be helping us raise funds for all the worthwhile activities NAMI Columbus sponsors.

It’s time again for our NAMI Columbus **Spring Yard Sale**. We hold our yard sale twice a year and it is really important. Why? Because it helps us put dollars back into our treasury in order to provide the support, education and advocacy programs that our members need.

## So here’s the scoop:

|                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Who</b>                | Who is heading up this fundraiser: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kristine Walls, new to the NAMI Columbus Board of Directors, has agreed to be in charge this year.</li> <li>• Mimi Marlowe has agreed to be second-in-command.</li> <li>• You can reach them at <a href="mailto:NAMICols@knology.net">NAMICols@knology.net</a> or 706-320-3755 (just leave a message)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>When</b>               | <b>Saturday, April 25, 2009, 8:00a.m. to 12:00noon</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Where</b>              | <b>1520 22<sup>nd</sup> Street</b> --- Contact Helpline Building (near St. Elmo)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>What</b>               | We need anything that will sell in a yard sale and is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In good (enough) condition</li> <li>• Clean (wash the dishes, dust off anything that’s been collecting dust because people won’t pay for dust...it just doesn’t sell, etc.)</li> <li>• Furniture, because it always sells well (dressers, bookcases, etc.)</li> <li>• Wearable (after the yard sale we have a shopping day for group home residents)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                        |
| <b>How</b>                | Here’s how you can help: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start setting aside anything you can donate</li> <li>• Bring it by Contact on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Thursday, April 23, between 5:30p.m. and 8:00p.m. A Family-to-Family class will be in session so just leave it in the hallway; or</li> <li>○ Friday, April 24, between 1:00p.m. and 5:00p.m.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If you have larger items and need help bringing it to Contact, please let us know.</li> <li>• If it needs to be stored, call us and we’ll see if we can help.</li> </ul> |
| <b>What else</b>          | <b>We need volunteers</b> to help to make this a successful yard sale. Specifically, we need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People on Friday afternoon to help us sort and price the items</li> <li>• People on Saturday to help out during the sale</li> </ul> <p><b>Bake Sale:</b> We’re also going to have a bake sale during the yard sale. We had a few items last fall and they really sold quickly and for good money. If you would be able to donate some baked goods, please let us know.</p>                                                                      |
| <b>LAST BUT NOT LEAST</b> | <b>If you can’t donate any sale items, baked goods, or your time, please consider making a donation to NAMI Columbus. We made almost \$700 last time and we want to beat that.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |



# Columbus

The Area's Voice on Mental Illness

P.O. Box 8581, Columbus, GA 31908, (706) 320-3755

### I want to support NAMI Columbus and NAMI's mission.

Name

Address

City State Zip

Phone Numbers (do not enter a number if you do not want to be listed in the Membership Directory (members only).)

E-Mail

### Please check type of membership desired:

- Individual Membership \$30 Dues
- Professional Membership \$50 Dues  
*(Individual and Professional Dues are for one year and are tax deductible.)*
- \$3 Open Door Membership (low income)
- I am not joining at this time, but I would like to make a contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_. (Thank you!!!)

*✂ Please Cut and Mail ✂*

NAMI National, NAMI Georgia and NAMI Columbus are dedicated to eradicating stigma and improving the lives of persons with mental illnesses thereby also benefiting their friends, family and community. Catch the wave and be a part of change.

NAMI Columbus is the largest affiliate in Georgia. We are a 501(c)3 non-profit charitable organization. Dues and donations are tax deductible. Membership includes a subscription to our monthly newsletter, membership directory, (501(c)3) and access to immediate news on advocacy, treatment and support issues from our national, state and local organizations.

Please make checks payable to:

**NAMI Columbus**  
P.O. Box 8581  
Columbus, Georgia 31908

You can also join safely online at [www.nami.org/join](http://www.nami.org/join) (\$35.00 by credit card).