

National Alliance on Mental Illness Denver Affiliate

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



By Heather Turner, J.D.

Spring has sprung and with it brings hope and fresh ideas. The legislative session will be over on May 9, *sine die* (last day). The real excitement remains to be seen as the various bills have moved through one

House and go to the second for either approval to the Governor's desk or they are "postponed indefinitely" (a fancy phrase for "killed") on legislation that we are opposing or supporting. I am still looking for NAMI members to come join me down at the Capitol. Again, it is quite interesting and really not an intimidating process. Feel free to get in touch with me directly, cell, 303-585-1336, if you get a free day or hour and I can let you know what is going on. I am happy to show you the way . . .

The NAMI Denver Board of Directors is very excited to have approved the addition of new board member Anjali Budhiraja. Anjali is also *Dispatch* Assistant Editor, so she has a real pulse on the activities of our community! Look for her Profile in a future edition of *Dispatch*.

We are now sharing our newsletters with all of the Presidents of the NAMI Colorado affiliates. We hope they will begin to do the same. If you would like us to forward any of those on to you (by e-mail only, due to postage costs), please let us know. I am in the process of setting up a statewide meeting of NAMI affiliate Presidents so that we may collaborate and serve our memberships to the fullest extent.

New member Nell Bishop and I have received Board approval to form a committee regarding the exploration of a peer support group for parents with mental illness and their children. We will be collaborating with social workers, child psychologists, child psychiatrists, and our current family to family instructors. Nell and I are both mothers of 11- and 12-year-olds who have identified their need to talk with other children. Nell and I feel a need to be supported as parents as well. Should we put the children in one group and the adults in another? Or everyone together? Would love to get your thoughts . . . or, if you have ideas of whom should be a part of our newly formed committee, please let

Continued on page 3

Inside this Issue

Calendar and Bulletin Board	2
Wellness: Beyond Bipolar	3
Docu-drama moves forward	4

Meet Kathryn Chaney, NAMI Denver Vice President

Kathryn Chaney has served on the NAMI Denver Board for the past four years, and was elected Vice President in December 2007. She was first exposed to NAMI when she lived in New Mexico and met a NAMI member at a support group there.

Kathryn coordinates NAMI Denver's Family to Family classes as well as the monthly Education Program.

As the parent of a child with paranoid schizophrenia, Kathryn knows all about the challenges, the stress, and the fear that come with being a parent of someone with mental illness.

In 2001, Kathryn was living in New Mexico. At that time, her son was 19 years old and experienced a psychotic break. Her son exhibited a number of behaviors that landed him in the emergency room several times. After months of trying to understand what was happening, Kathryn was contacted by the local Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) who took her son to a local mental health center.

During her son's treatment, Kathryn was referred to a weekly support group run by two social workers at the center where he was being treated. "All I wanted was to understand what was going on," Kathryn says. Through that group, Kathryn learned how helpful support groups are.





"It made me understand that I wasn't alone, that the people there were having similar experiences to myself." She continued to attend the group even after her son was out of the hospital.

One of the support group members turned out to be affiliated with the local chapter of NAMI, which is how Kathryn was introduced to the organization. In Albuquerque, she took a NAMI Family to Family class, became an instructor and began teaching Family to Family herself.

It was her son's mental health challenges that led her to Denver. In 2004, he ran away to Colorado. After several months of trying to manage her son's situation from a distance,

Continued on page 4

Upcoming Meetings and Events

What	Topic	Where	Date & Time
 Peer Support Meeting	Ongoing Monthly Support Group	4141 E. Dickenson Place	Wednesday, April 9 7 - 8:30 p.m.
 Monthly Education Meeting	Information about Empower Colorado, presented by Cheri Bena	4141 E. Dickenson Place	Wednesday, April 16 7 – 8:30 PM
 NAMI Denver Board Meeting	All members welcome	4141 E. Dickenson Place	Thursday, April 24 6:30 p.m.
 9 Health Fair	Community Health Fair Thank you NAMI Denver volunteers for working at the fair!	Various locations statewide	April 12-20

Note: Mark you calendars in advance! Peer Support meetings are always offered on the second Wednesday of the month; Education meetings are always offered on the third Wednesday of the month, and NAMI Denver Board meetings are always on the fourth Thursday of the month.

Bulletin Board

NAMI Connection of Colorado

Peer support for individuals living with mental illnesses

For information, contact NAMI Colorado, 303-321-3104.

Locations and Facilitators

Colorado Mental Health Institute at Ft. Logan
Every Thursday, 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm
 3520 W. Oxford Avenue
 Administration building, room #108
 Facilitators: Joe and Marc

S.T.A.R. Reach Clubhouse
Every Wednesday, 7:00 – 8:30 pm
 2531 W. Church Avenue (on north side of Arapahoe Community College)
 Littleton, CO
 Facilitators: June, Carolyn, Carol

Aurora Mental Health Center
Every Monday, 11:30 am – 1:00 pm
 11059 E. Bethany Drive
 Broadway Room
 Aurora, CO 80014
 Facilitators: Stacey, Donna

CHARG Drop-in Center
 Our Savior's Lutheran Church
 7:00 – 8:30 pm
 920 Emerson Street
 Denver 80218
 Facilitators: Kathy, Wallace

New Patient Rights Specialist at Ft. Logan

Donna Trowbridge was recently hired as the Colorado Mental Health Institute at Ft. Logan (CMHIFL) Patient Rights Specialist. She has a strong mental health advocacy background, including 5 years as a Consumer and Family Advocate, and subsequently Executive Director,

for the Mental Health Ombuds Program of Colorado (MHOPC).

If you have any concerns or questions regarding the care provided to you or your loved one at CMHIFL, Donna is available to assist you. Her office is located by the CMHIFL lobby; her phone number is 303-866-7079; her email is donna.trowbridge@state.co.us.

Wellness : Beyond Bipolar, by Jane Mountain M.D.



This is the first in a series of articles to be contributed by local author Dr. Jane Mountain. Dr. Mountain is a speaker, author and publisher who shares her personal experience of bipolar disorder with others. She brings her expertise as a physician and as a wellness expert. Her books can be purchased on her website, www.BeyondBipolar.com, or at any bookstore, including Amazon. Sign up for her free e-Newsletter, Beyond Bipolar on her website.

Step One: Hope! © Jane Mountain, MD

There is reason for hope because others have gone before us to show paths to wellness. Once I had lost hope because I was so sick. I now call this period of my life the “sick cookie” days—and I, truly, was the “sick cookie”! Others would talk of hope, but finding it seemed an impossibility that would never happen for me.

After much discouragement, searching for wellness became my goal. Finding hope was the first step. I searched high and low for hope. Before finding it, I had to know what it looked like. My first glimpses of hope came from others who shared their hope with me. They, too, had lived without hope due to their illnesses. And I also found hope from others who had never experienced the hopelessness of a psychiatric illness.

Today, this is what I tell others about hope, “Beg, borrow and steal hope wherever you can find it!” As in my case, your illness may have taken you to places without hope. In the beginning, you may only find hope by begging, borrowing or stealing the hope of others. Later hope will become your own to share with others.

Begin by finding pictures and statements of hope. Surround yourselves with hopeful people who become hope carriers through your darkest moments. Too often we struggle alone with our illness and fail to find the support that helps us move toward the goal of wellness. We collaborate with our illness to make our environment one of isolation.

Finding hope is a process in which we begin to shatter our isolation. The process may begin slowly but as we look for the ingredient of hope in our lives, we will find it, just as a master chef searches the globe before finding the secret ingredient of a prized dish.

In the meantime, while we are searching for hope, we must not listen to those who would discourage us from our pursuit of hope. We can recognize the voice of others, as well as our inner voice, and refuse to believe words of discouragement. Stepwise, we begin by allowing small pieces of our goals and dreams to re-enter our lives. We learn to rejoice in small steps toward wellness.

In our search for hope, we gather steam gradually, taking small steps. Some take us forward, some backward, and some to the side. There will be times when we just hold our own on the hope scale and others when we bound forward in our hope. Our overall direction is toward wellness. Gaining hope is our first step. *Hope is the essential ingredient in the recovery process.*

To learn more about finding hope, see Dr. Mountain’s books which can be purchased at www.BeyondBipolar.com, your local bookstore or on Amazon. To find hopeful people, call your local NAMI and ask for resources in your community that will provide support and help you on the journey to wellness.

President’s Message continued from page 1

You can contact Nell Bishop, our Executive Production Assistant, at Hot Critter Productions, 303-635-6551.

Also, in terms of peer support, we are exploring the idea of increasing our meetings to twice a month, at a minimum, depending on our volunteer base for group leaders. Personally, when I was released from the hospital and found NAMI, I loved the Peer support group. I was VERY disappointed to learn that it was only a monthly meeting. I

definitely needed more. Fortunately, Jennifer Hill and Debra Amesbury were willing to meet with me on an individual basis. Any feedback on this issue would also be greatly appreciated. NAMI Support Training is taking place April 11-13 in Denver. Heather Turner, Nell Bishop, Jennifer Hill and Anjali Budhiraja from NAMI Denver are attending.

Remember, individually you are all powerful. Together, we are a powerhouse.

Meet Kathryn Chaney, NAMI Denver Vice President continued from page 1

Kathryn decided she needed to move to Colorado. Just before the move, he disappeared and she had to try to find him again.

Kathryn describes what a terrifying time this was, as she contacted all homeless shelters in Denver and drove around certain neighborhoods with binoculars looking for him intently. She finally called the police, who pulled up his records and recognized him as someone who had frequently been hanging out on the 16th Street Mall. Shortly after that, he ended up at Porter Hospital, and a representative contacted Kathryn to tell her he was there. He stayed there for about two weeks, and was then transferred to Fort Logan.

Kathryn says that Fort Logan has been extremely helpful in treating her son. "It really mattered to them, *he* really mattered to them. That was the first time we could really talk about recovery. They worked hard to make sure he was on the right medications before releasing him and helped him with a recovery plan. They gave him the chance to survive."

Since that time in Fort Logan, her son has steadily been improving. He has had some setbacks, but he currently lives in a group home where things have been going well.

In the meantime, Kathryn has become an advocate and has coordinated NAMI Denver's Family to Family program.

"Family to family is critically important so family members can get a clear understanding of what mental illness is, what the various types of medications are, what's going on in the brain, and how you can communicate with your family member effectively."

"It's really rewarding to see people as they gain an understanding, and many start taking on that role of advocacy. Instead of being baffled and sad, family members often become activists."

Outside of NAMI, Kathryn is the Executive Director of the Interfaith Hospitality Network.

Mental Health Docu-drama Project Seeks Support

NAMI Denver President Heather Turner along with television producer Orin Levy and other supporters have formed Hot Critter Productions to create "MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS – Criminalizing Justice?", a docu-drama video that addresses mental health issues in the criminal justice system. Here is an excerpt from the company's brochure:

"In a groundbreaking effort to educate the public, lawmakers will join jurists, mental health professionals, and average citizens to expose the catch 22 faced by many with mental illness as they try to survive the court systems. From criminal court to probate court to civil, family, and juvenile courts, we'll meet the people, expose the issues, and offer solutions.

Our unique docu-dramatic approach drives the story home. Meet Colorado native Heather Turner, a mother, wife, daughter, friend, aunt, and sister, who rises to extraordinary heights only to be plunged into despair by her undiagnosed and untreated mental illness. Her impressive success as Chief Deputy District Attorney is forever altered by devastating episodes of her late developing bi-polar disorder. She lands in jail and the state psychiatric hospitals, beside the very people she has been prosecuting for years. Her story is about fighting and living through the tribulations of regaining her freedom, her career, and her son through the courts, whose workings demand an exacting stewardship she hardly possesses while going through these traumatic events. She is the person least able to help herself. Heather's story is not unique.

We will explore the difficult twists and turns of Heather's story, and meet others who are now in similar circumstances.

With the vision of hindsight, we will meet the attorneys, caseworkers, and judges who made the decisions in Heather's case, and some who are involved in current cases. We will address the policy makers responsible for institutional change. In the end, we will help them all to join the fight and stop the stigma.

MENTAL HEALTH. Fight on.

We are currently accepting donations to purchase a camera (for high definition, about \$5,000) in our charitable endeavor to produce this docu-drama. This is time sensitive as we are heavily involved in the legislative session and many legislators and policy makers who are interested in helping with this project, as well as the First Lady of Colorado. Although your contribution to Hot Critter Productions, a Colorado corporation, would not be tax deductible, it would most definitely be for a charitable cause. All donors will be recognized in this production, no matter how small! Every dollar counts. Although our members (who all either live with mental illness or are directly affected by it), are all volunteering their time, we do require certain equipment to proceed. When the segment is produced, we will list NAMI as a sponsor and link folks to our website. We will be marketing various products on the site. A percentage of proceeds from profits will go to NAMI Denver. Thank you for your consideration of this unique and noteworthy cause." Please send your donations to Hot Critter Productions, Inc., 130 Pearl St. Suite 907 Denver, CO 80203.



NAMI– National Alliance for the Mentally Ill - is a grass-roots, family and consumer, self-help, support, education, and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the lives of people with severe mental illness.

NAMI Denver Board Members: Heather Turner, President; Kathryn Chaney, Vice President; Michael Callahan, Secretary/Treasurer; members at large - Joyce Borgmeyer, Maureen Martin, Lucia Paparelli, Anjali Budhiraja

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