



NAMI Blue Ridge Family Alliance Newsletter

January 2009

Upcoming Meetings Visitors Welcome

Informal Support Group Meetings

First Thursdays
5:30pm-7:00pm

January 8 • February 5 • March 5
April 2 • May 7 • June 4
July 2 • August 6

Speaker Meetings

Third Thursdays
5:30pm-7:00pm

Thursday, January 22, 5:30-7:00pm
[Note: This is FOURTH Thursday]
Mindfulness and Coping with Mental
Illness within the Family

Deb Frazer is Region Ten Adult Outpatient Mental Health Program Manager. Deb is also a professional counselor whose work includes teaching a course on "mindfulness". Deb will lead us in a discussion of how caregivers can use mindfulness and other techniques to help care for themselves and all members of the family.

Thursday, February 19, 5:30-7:00pm
Ask the Doctor

One of our local psychiatrists will join us for an informal Q&A. This is your

opportunity to meet the doctor in a small group setting and ask all those tough questions you have been struggling with.

Thursday, March 19, 5:30-7:00pm
An Insider's View of Mental Illness

Andrew Gadtke wrote "Regular and Decaf", a book that presents an on-going series of conversations between Andrew, who has been diagnosed with schizophrenia, and a friend diagnosed with bipolar disorder. In addition to his presentation at the Virginia Festival of the Book, Andrew will join our group to discuss his "insider's" perspective on mental illness.

*** Location ***

BRFA/NAMI meetings are held at the new Region Ten location at 500 Old Lynchburg Rd. From I64 Exit 120, take 5th Street Extended south (away from Charlottesville) for about a mile to Old Lynchburg Rd on the right. (You passed the new county office building on your left.) Turn right on Old Lynchburg Rd and then right again at the first driveway. The new Board Room is in the administrative building at the rear of the property.

NAMI-Blue Ridge Family Alliance

[a 501(c)(3) organization]

Charlottesville, VA 22903

Voice Mail: (434) 970-1257

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421 Key West Drive
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NEWSLETTER

Editor: April Ballard
Circulation: James and Shelah Scott

This newsletter is published bi-annually. Persons wishing to contribute an original article are asked to contact the editor.

Monticello Avenue site
<http://avenue.org/brfa>

Charlottesville Community Calendar
www.chvillecalendar.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MESA (Mutual Education Support and Advocacy) Family Workshops

MESA workshops are a series of classes for parents, siblings, spouses and adult children of individuals with mental illness. A major goal is to reduce stress in the lives of families through education on mental illness, coping strategies and community resources and through the support which develops among participants.

The workshops have been on going in communities throughout the state since 1987. They are co-led by family members and mental health professionals, highlighting that both have special knowledge and skills to share.

The first six weeks focus on learning about mental illness and the last six weeks focus on skill building and include meetings with local people related to mental health services -- for example, magistrates, doctors or nurse practitioners, social security disability workers, and police officers.

You are welcome to join classes in session. We hope to offer MESA at least twice a year.

Location: Region Ten Administrative Offices
502 Old Lynchburg Road
Charlottesville, VA 22903
434-972-1800

The MESA Family Workshops are a project of the Virginia Chapter of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (www.NAMI.org)

To register, call Shannon Wright at 434-970-1451 or email shannonw@regionten.org

Two new peer led groups beginning in January

Two groups led by peer specialist Sharon Rogers will be held on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month.

Acupuncture for Relaxation 3:00-4:00pm

Acupuncture is painless and relaxing and is used to improve feelings of wellbeing and to promote recovery. It is also used to reduce symptoms of withdrawal and cravings for substances including tobacco, sugar, caffeine, drugs or alcohol. Men and women welcome

Women's Peer support group 4:15- 5:15pm

One of the important elements in recovery from mental illness is support from people who can say "I have been there" Peer support groups are a safe confidential place to talk about and overcome the challenges of mental illness and recovery. This group is for women only.

These two groups are for people recovering from mental illness and are free.

If you want to know more call Mental Health America at 434 977 4673 or just come to the MHA office on the 1st or 3rd Wednesday.

All sessions will be held in the MHA office in the IX building. 953 2nd Street SE (parking lot entrance off 6th St.)

Charlottesville, VA 22902
434-977-4673
mha@aveue.org

NAMI WALKS

On October 4th, 2008, NAMI/VA held its signature fundraiser - NAMI Walks - and over 700 people gathered in Richmond to show support for, and raise awareness about mental illness. "This is a walk for hope, change, and recovery" said Mira Signer, Executive Director.

This year, thanks to the able leadership of Marjie Giuliano, the BRFA formed a team, The Blue Ridge Ramblers, and joined The Walk. Meindert Bloemers, Christine Brennan, Isabel Brennan, Jean Scanlon, Mike Kelley, Gail McDermott, Katherine Tolton, Ruth Woods, and Marjie raised \$2925.00 and we have already received a check for half of that amount. So it was a successful fundraiser for the Blue Ridge Family Alliance as well. Many thanks to everyone who took part in this event. We look forward to NAMI Walks, 2009!

CHARLOTTESVILLE SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE

Our survivors of suicide group comes together because we believe in life and have lost someone dear to suicide. This does not make sense to us and our grieving is complicated. We come together in openness and honesty as we try to

restructure our lives, with increased strength and compassion for ourselves and others. We respect each other's privacy and keep all that is said in our hearts but not on our lips. We also respect each other's differences and needs while realizing we are not alone on our challenging path.

Meets 1st Thursdays,
7:00—8:30PM
For information and location
Call Margie at 434.974.9314

Mental Health America
953, 2nd Street SE
Charlottesville, VA, 22902
434.977.4673/mha@avenue.org

WHY DO THE MENTALLY ILL DIE YOUNGER?

By Kate Torgovnick
Excerpted from Time Magazine
12.03.08

Cynthia Scott is your average health-conscious 56-year-old. She watches what she eats, drinks lots of water and takes a multivitamin every morning. She goes for frequent walks and visits her doctor regularly for checkups, including cholesterol and diabetes screenings.

Scott also has schizoaffective bipolar disorder, a mental illness she keeps in check with a low dose of Zyprexa. If you were to ask Scott, she would say she is a healthy person overall. So she was shocked when the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) published a study two years ago called Morbidity and Mortality in People with Serious Mental Illness. The report analyzed data from 16 states and found that, on average, people with severe mental illness die 25 years earlier than the general population. "Hearing that made me so sad," says Scott.

The findings were a bombshell for the rest of the mental-health community. "The study jarred the field," says Dr. Bob Glover, the executive director of NASMHPD. After the 2006 report came out, many mental-health agencies in the U.S. made it an immediate priority to figure out why their patients die sooner and how to improve their longevity. Says Glover: "Mental health has been late to the dance in terms of looking at the

connections between mental health and physical health. It may be moot what you're doing for mental-health needs if people are dying so early from physical causes."

NAMI-BLUE RIDGE
FAMILY ALLIANCE

2009 Annual Dues Notice
Please Respond By
March 1st

We need your help to update our files! You can help by returning the application form below to renew your membership for 2009.

Our membership year is January 1st through December 31st, but you can join anytime.

I (We) wish to join _____ or renew _____ membership in:

_____ NAMI dues \$ 35 (**NAMI, NAMI-VA and NAMI-BRFA newsletters**)

_____ NAMI-BRFA dues \$ 5 (**NAMI-BRFA newsletter only**)

I wish to support NAMI-BRFA's work to improve the quality of life for people with serious mental illnesses.

I have enclosed my tax-deductible donation of \$_____.

Thanks you so much for your continuing support!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____
State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (optional) _____ and/or e-mail _____

Would you like to receive your newsletters by email? _____

Please make checks payable to **NAMI-BRFA** and mail: c/o

Patt Keats, Treasurer

421 Key West Drive
Charlottesville, VA 22911

We welcome everyone to our meetings, but newsletter mailings can only go to dues paying members.

We will be deleting the names from our mailing list of those who have not responded in the past two years.

All newsletters are available on our website at <http://avenue.org/brfa>.