BY JOHN SHARP

IT WAS A GLORIOUS DAY, as usual— partly sunny and not hot. Everyone was in a festive mood and the music was playing as 45 walkers from three teams, supported by more than 350 donors did the loop for the NAMI-Cambridge/Middlesex affiliate. Back with us this year were the team for the Cambridge Health Alliance and Katelyn’s Klan. The total amount raised was $40,536, making Cambridge-CM the top Affiliate Team in the Walk for the sixth year in a row.

Donations will be divided as follows: 10 percent for the NAMI national organization and 45 percent each for our NAMI affiliate and for NAMI Massachusetts. NAMI Mass also met its goal of $600,000.

OLE! A Taste of Spain
4th Annual Auction to Benefit New Social Inclusion Fund

NAMI-Cambridge/Middlesex will tackle the problem of social isolation among those with serious mental illness through its annual fall fundraiser this year. Since partnering with the Cambridge Health Alliance three years ago, Cambridge-CM has raised almost $35,000 to help patients overcome social isolation through its Recovery U Drop-in Center. Now, in our fourth year, we are expanding this effort by establishing a new “Social Inclusion Fund” to support more organizations in providing services that will help those with mental illness overcome the devastating effects of social isolation.

This year’s benefit will feature Spanish food, wine and other delights, as well as an expanded silent, live, and online auction. Auction items will include vacation weeks on Marco Island, Florida, Costa Rica, Cape Cod, and Plum Island; an exclusive golf outing and harbor cruises, sports, theater, and concert tickets; gift certificates at the very best area restaurants and shops; and many unique experiences.

For more information, check our phone: 617-984-0527 or website at: www.nami-cambridgemiddlesex.org
Support Groups for Family Members

Call Elizabeth at 781-646-0397 for more information.

NAMI Cambridge-Middlesex offers bi-monthly support group meetings for family members and friends of people with mental illness. Trained NAMI volunteers who are also family member caregivers facilitate the support groups. Conducted in a confidential atmosphere, the purpose of the support groups is to help provide mutual support and coping strategies. Many families find NAMI support groups helpful.

Please contact Elizabeth if you would like more information or to attend. She can be reached at Elizabeth@nami-cambridgemiddlesex.org or 781-646-0397.

The support groups are FREE and conveniently located in the 3rd floor Conference Center of the Cambridge Health Alliance, 1493 Cambridge St., Cambridge. On-site and on-street parking are available and the location is T accessible.

First, third and fourth Mondays, 7:30-9:30 pm
For more information and updates on Cambridge-Middlesex programs: www.nami-cambridgemiddlesex.org

Family-to-Family Education Program

Sept. 3-Nov. 19, 2015, Thursdays 6:30-9 pm in Cambridge
Preregistration required. Contact Sharon at 914-960-9072 (sharon@nami-cambridgemiddlesex.org); Carolyn at 917-375-980 (carolyn@nami-cambridgemiddlesex.org).

Area Family Support Groups

ACTON Contact Susan McDougall at mcdougalletal@aol.com or 978-263-8830; Clare Cooper at cooper@westfordconsulting.com or cell 978-692-8994.
BEDFORD Call the NAMI of Central Middlesex affiliate helpline 781-982-3318.
DORCHESTER Contact Monica, 857-342-2796 or Mpmare28@gmail.com; Mark, 617-522-7439 or mzanger@comcast.net.
STOW Call Trish Woods at 978-897-2962.
WAKEFIELD Contact Kay at 781-438-1851, or Diane at 978-658-3567 or email: Dianeh23@yahoo.com
CARING FOR THE SOUL-CAMBRIDGE Info: bosejo222@yahoo.com

For Peers

NAMI CONNECTIONS Support Group for peers/consumers: Vinfen/ Cambridge-Somerville Recovery Learning Center, 35 Medford St, Ste. 111, Somerville. Press 1R and go through elevator; walk up ramp, enter first suite on the left. Contact Janel Tan (tanj@vinfen.org) or 617-863-5388, or Judi Maguire jmaguire@namimass.org.
DBSA-MCLEAN HOSPITAL Visit www.dbsaboston.org or call the DBSA office 617-855-2795 (email info@dbsaboston.org).
THE COLE RESOURCE CENTER, Belmont 617-855-3298, coloresourcecenter@yahoo.com.
YOU COULD HEAR A PIN DROP in Macht Auditorium on April 7 as four people told moving stories of how they got their lives back after a diagnosis of mental illness almost stole them away.

Anne Whitman, now vice president of the NAMI Mass Board of Directors and chair of the Metro Boston/Southeast Recovery Learning Center, told the all-too-familiar story of how her life as she knew it was snatched away from her when she became ill. At the age of 33, she lost her job at the Harvard Business School, her marriage, and custody of her baby daughter, all in the course of a month. “I sat home in my apartment with the phone never ringing, filled with shame and guilt, and having lost all hope that I could rebuild my life,” she recalled.

Her first step out of the apartment into a larger supportive community was the hardest, but she found her way—first through the emotional authenticity and true sharing of AA meetings and the peer support groups of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance held at Mclean and MGH. Twenty-five years later these support groups and members of the Metro Boston Recovery Learning Community are her friends. “They nurtured my soul, broke the isolation, helped with shame and guilt and, most importantly, gave me the hope that I could recover and encouraged me to find a totally different but fully satisfying life,” she said.

Anne’s journey started with a small volunteer job running a depression awareness campaign for the Mental Health Association of America. “This gave me feedback on my strengths and talents and helped me to realize that I was an excellent creator and innovator,” she observed. With peer encouragement, she developed her natural talents and skills and went on to co-found Bright Horizon’s Children’s Centers. She also co-founded the Cole Mental Health Consumer Resource Center at Mclean Hospital. These innovative, person-centered peer organizations provided an open community, which made it possible to fully recover from intrusive thoughts, paranoia, and trauma. They also provided practical help with employment, disability benefits, housing options, and “vast experience” navigating the mental health system, to say nothing of “discounted T passes and free theater tickets.”

After some searching, she found a doctor and medication that has worked for her for more than 25 years. These peer resources, her doctors and her family have helped Anne create a life of joy, connection, and fulfillment, one that is totally different from what she imagined before her illness hit. “I’ve had to mourn the loss of the life I thought I wanted,” she points out, “but my life now is better for me.”

Megan Wiechnik, the resource and helpline coordinator for NAMI Mass, was isolated, depressed, and suicidal from age 12 until she was finally diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder. Her family’s ability to trust her judgment about the treatment she needed, even supporting her decision to move several hours away from home for school, started her on the road to recovery.

Accepting her illness and trusting her treaters were her first steps to recovery. Her therapists gave her simple, manageable assignments to get her out of the house—first, arrange to meet someone for coffee, and second, “show up.” Now she lives with five friends who support her, walks enough to tire her so she can sleep, stays organized by making lots of lists, and is working full time at NAMI, where there is no stigma.

Paul Stipow, director of the Metro Boston Recovery Working Community, describes his twenties as “a disaster” of self-medicating and deliberate isolation. Working as a mechanic and commercial fisherman, he was deeply depressed and made several suicide attempts, including an overdose that blinded him. It wasn’t until he reached out to help others through a volunteer job in a soup kitchen that he started on the road to recovery. He was eventually offered an upper management job at the shelter, learned about computers, and went on to college. Along the way, he got sober through AA. “I didn’t plan this life,” he said of his rebirth. “I just kept choosing the right next thing.”

Gary Bromley, a jail diversion specialist and a long-term support coordinator of One Care Support, lost everything when he was 52 years old—his job, home, and family. Struck by Bipolar Disease, he was depressed, unemployed, and homeless and isolated by his shame and guilt. Finally, about to give up the false hope of regaining his former life, he took small, courageous steps to build a new life, starting with the peer community and resumed his calling in life. “Self determination is the key,” he said.
MENTAL HEALTH IN THE NEWS

The Mental Health Channel
Mark S. Komrad, M.D. FACP, DFAPA, the speaker at our January meeting, tipped us off about a great new resource, the new online project: The Mental Health Channel, a nonprofit online, high quality site featuring short original videos on mental illness.

http://mentalhealthchannel.tv/about

Beautiful Mind John Nash’s Schizophrenia ‘Disappeared’ as He Aged
Scientific American, June 4, 2015


Mathematician John Nash, who died May 23 in a car accident, was known for his decades-long battle with schizophrenia—a struggle famously depicted in the 2001 Oscar-winning film A Beautiful Mind. Nash had apparently recovered from the disease later in life, which he said was done without medication.

But how often do people recover from schizophrenia, and how does such a destructive disease disappear? Recent studies have found that, with treatment, up to 60 percent of schizophrenia patients can achieve remission, defined as having minimal symptoms for at least six months, according to a 2010 review study in the journal Advances in Psychiatric Treatment.

HIPAA and Disclosures to Family: The Law is Wiser than You Think
By Mark S. Komrad, M.D., for “Practicing Ethically” column in The Maryland Psychiatrist

Confusion and misunderstanding on the part of psychiatrists communicating with families led the APA and the AMA to convene a meeting with HHS, for clarification of the HIPAA law.

http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/special/mhguidance.html

The re-clarification of the existing law was clear: “psychiatrists can discuss information with family and other third parties, if, in their judgment, the patient lacks the capacity to meaningfully agree or object to this disclosure. In recognition of the integral role that family and friends play in a patient’s health care, the HIPAA Privacy Rule allows these routine – and often critical – communications between health care providers and these persons.”

New Legal Guide for Parents

Download at www. ppal.net/pulication/guide

July Declared Minority Mental Health Awareness Month
Congress has declared July Minority Mental Health Awareness Month in honor of Bebe Moore Campbell (1950-2006), the best-selling author who was a powerful national advocate for mental illness, especially in the minority community. Her interest in mental health was motivated by a loved one in her family who was struggling with mental illness. You can find a recommended list of books related to minority mental health at: http://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Raise-Awareness/What-You-Can-Do/Books-to-Read.
2014 Auction Bidders Enjoy Winnings

Jeff Wheeler and friends didn’t have to go to the mountain caves of Europe to see a genuine cheese cave. They enjoyed the experience on an underground trip to Formaggio Kitchen’s Cheese Cave, pictured at left, which Jeff won in the NAMI-CM 2014 Silent Auction.

John Sharp, right, auction donor and winner and birder extraordinaire, goes birding near the condo rental he won on Marco Island, Florida in the 2014 NAMI-CM Silent Auction. At right is a spectacular Roseate Spoonbill John photographed on another trip to the pristine Little Saint Simons Island off Georgia.

Advocacy

A small contingent of NAMI-CM members had a very productive meeting on May 6 on the FY2016 state budget and related mental health funding issues with State Representatives Marjorie Decker and Jonathan Hecht and an aide of Sen. Sal DiDomenico, vice chair of both the Senate Committee on Ways and Means and the Joint Committee on Ways and Means.

At right: NAMI-CM members Carolyn White, Jane Hester, Ann Haycox, Valerie Headley at the State House on April 3 for Advocacy Day 2015.

Fresh Air Bill Signed Into Law by Governor Patrick!

The FRESH AIR BILL, which groups have been trying to get passed for more than 10 years was signed into law on the last day of Governor Patrick’s term. It will give persons in mental hospitals a qualified right to regular access to the outdoors (“fresh air”), which is now the sixth “fundamental right” under Massachusetts statute. See the bill at: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/188/House/H3804

At right: NAMI-CM members Carolyn White, Jane Hester, Ann Haycox, Valerie Headley at the State House on April 3 for Advocacy Day 2015.

MEMBERS—Watch for renewal date on the mailing label of your newsletter—envelope enclosed.

Join NAMI Cambridge-Middlesex:

Please print clearly and mail to the address below with your check or visit www.nami.org to join online

NAME

STREET

CITY STATE ZIP

TELEPHONE NUMBER EMAIL ADDRESS

☐ I would like to become a NAMI-CM member. Please send $35 (or $3 for Open Door membership)

☐ I want the Cambridge-Middlesex NAMI newsletter only, since I am already a member of another affiliate. Please send $10.

Make checks payable to: NAMI-CM Mail to: NAMI-CM, 174 APPLETON ST., CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

This is not an office, but a mailing address only. NAMI-CM is a volunteer organization; we do not maintain an office.

www.nami-cambridgemiddlesex.org
Since the publication of Crazy: A Father’s Search Through America’s Mental Health Madness in 2007, journalist and author Pete Earley has visited 48 states and three foreign countries advocating for mental health reform. He has also witnessed his son’s deterioration from mental illness and his eventual recovery. Pete Earley is the bestselling author of such books as The Hot House and Crazy. As a former reporter for The Washington Post, Pete uses his journalistic background to take a fair-minded approach to the story while weaving an interesting tale for the reader.

When he is not spending time with his family, he tours the globe advocating for mental health reform. Pete Earley returns to Cambridge to share with us what he has learned along the way. Pete Earley Returns to Cambridge

What I Have Learned About Resilience and Recovery

A Mental Health Journey from Despair to Recovery to Determination

Tuesday, September 8, 2015, 6:30-8:30 pm

Cambridge Public Library, 449 Broadway, Cambridge, MA

Parking available under library. Enter on Broadway to the left of the library.