

Advocacy Day at the State House

BY CAROLYN WHITE

APRIL 8 WAS ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL DAY of advocating for our loved ones. The Great Hall of Flags at the State House was filled to the brim as we listened to Congressman Joe Kennedy III ask us that when we have finished lobbying our State Reps (we are never finished!) that he needs our help down in DC. He plans to introduce more legislation to continue the Mental Health Parity work of his cousin Patrick and his uncle Ted Kennedy. NAMI has a strong ally in Joe, so let's keep track of what he is doing and support his efforts.

June Binney, director of the NAMI Criminal Justice Diversion Program, spoke about some "pockets of excellence" and Ashland Police Chief Craig Davis continued with that theme, enthusiastically endorsing the Centers of Excellence that NAMI is proposing: a statewide resource to provide six 40-hour Crisis Intervention Team trainings per year across the state. He said we need to "connect the dots" and get everyone working together: law enforcement officers working with the first responders who are the gatekeepers to the Criminal Justice System." He has an unwavering commitment to ensure that people with a mental illness get the help they need.

We couldn't help but be infected by the enthusiasm and energy of NAMI MASS Executive Director Laurie Martinelli and Board Member Steve Rosenfeld who deserve much credit for all the great NAMI MASS initiatives: CEOs Against Stigma, Diversity Training, and Jail Diversion project.



NAMI-Cambridge/Middlesex turned out in force for Advocacy Day 2016 at the State House. Left to right are Jim Kobler, Jory Agate, Jane Hester, Carolyn White, Cathy Haines, Larry Ouellette, Rae Simpson, Stephanie Palmer, Sharon DeVos, and Maureen Donovan. At left: Congressman Joe Kennedy III listened carefully while a participant in the NAMI-CM fall 2015 Family to Family class expressed concern for her brother and the difficulty she has in getting help for him.