



the Voice

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Join NAMI DC for the Weekly Support Group:

When: Every Wednesday at 7:00 pm

Where: Hill Center at The Old Naval Hospital ([open in Google Maps](#)), near the Eastern Market Metro station; 921 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20003.

Note: Enter building on the 9th Street side.

Open to consumers and family members. Free. Confidential. No reservation required.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE FROM JEAN HARRIS



Jean Harris, President, and Krystal Wortham, former Executive Director

I want to begin by thanking our former executive director, Krystal Wortham, for her dedication and commitment to NAMI DC. During her tenure Krystal moved the needle forward by reaching out to re-establish old relationships and creating numerous new ones in the wide mental health community, thereby putting NAMI DC back in the District of Columbia conversation on mental illness.

To honor her work, the board intends to maintain the legacy she left, and at the same time develop new projects going forward. These include introducing and standing behind the Early Engagement Policy Statement recently rolled out by the National Alliance on Mental Illness; building our fundraising efforts; increasing our membership base; and last but not least, striving to be the "Voice on Mental Illness in the Nation's Capital."

I recognize that there are challenges ahead: finding and funding a new executive director; managing the NAMI DC office with volunteer support at this time; and preparing for our involvement in the upcoming 2017 NAMI convention in Washington, DC. However, I go forward with enthusiasm and confidence that we can and will meet these challenges together.

Report from the NAMI National Convention in Denver, Colorado

For four days in early July, eight delegates from NAMI DC joined NAMI folks from around the country to discuss, learn, collaborate, mingle, and in short, get inspired and re-energized. DC delegates were Executive Director Kristal Wortham, Office Manager Janiene Ausbrooks, Vice President Rev. Robert Renix, Treasurer Bob Thurston, Consumer Council Coordinator Michelle Jackson, Outreach Coordinator David Thurston, and members Lark Catoe and Ivory Smith. All of us enjoyed the conference, the chance to meet so many NAMI folks from all over, and the times we could find to get together and compare notes. We missed President Jean Harris, who was unable to attend, but V.P. Renix did a great job of representing DC as needed.

Some of the highlights for us:

- At the opening session on July 7, CEO Mary Giliberti offered this food for thought: “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, take us with you.”
- Patrick Kennedy’s speech at the same opening session gave us two phrases to remember: “A checkup from the neck up” (advocating for wider use and support for mental health screening); and “The brain is part of

the body” (a summing-up of legislation he and others are pushing for to achieve real parity for mental health with physical health).

- A variety of really informative workshops highlighting cutting edge research, model programs in mental health, successful programs like C.I.T. training (crisis intervention teams for police), diversity initiatives, and many more.
- The opportunity to meet and learn from people like Ron Honberg (NAMI Senior Policy Advisor), Andrew Sperling (NAMI Director of Legislative Affairs), Ken Duckworth (NAMI Medical Director), Sam Cochran (aka the godfather of C.I.T.), and many others.

The convention was a terrific experience for those of us who had the opportunity to go. I wish others could have had the same chance—but the good news is that next year’s convention will be right here in Washington, DC! As that time approaches we will let you know how you can attend, AND how you may be able to help out as our city hosts the 2017 NAMI Convention.

—Bob Thurston



Left to right, Lark Catoe, Michelle Jackson, and Ivory Smith at the NAMI convention



Left to right, NAMI DC convention delegates Michelle Jackson, Krystal Wortham, Rev. Rob Renix, and Bob Thurston

NAMI Recognizes Groundbreaking Advances in the Science of Mental Illness

Sometimes science laboratories seem remote from everyday life, and the subject matter of their research seems arcane and (dare we say) pointless. But three scientists honored by NAMI on November 17 are doing work that offers a possible biological explanation, and eventually treatment, for schizophrenia, a seemingly intractable disease that affects about 1% of the population.

The recipients of the 2016 NAMI Scientific Research Award are Dr. Michael Carroll (Harvard Medical School and Boston Children’s Hospital), Dr. Steven McCarroll (Stanley Center at MIT and Harvard, and Harvard Medical School), and Dr. Beth Stevens (Harvard Medical School and Boston Children’s Hospital). These three, and research teams they lead, have been studying a gene called C4. Out of more than 100 chromosomal sites of known genetic risk for schizophrenia, variations in C4 are by far the most highly correlated with occurrence of the disease.

It turns out that C4 plays a part in a normal process of brain development called “synaptic pruning,” in which our brains eliminate unneeded or excessive synapses (a synapse is a connection between nerve cells). Synaptic pruning takes place during childhood and is especially active in our teens and twenties. It seems that one “expression” of the C4 gene, called C4A, leads to over-pruning of synapses and could lead to the condition we call schizophrenia.

There is much more to learn about all of this. These researchers anticipate that as we learn more, we may find agents or treatment to counteract runaway C4 in at-risk individuals. Some possible agents are already being developed.

Although schizophrenia is known to be as much as 90% heritable, Dr. McCarroll emphasizes that “genetics isn’t destiny”—not everyone with the “suspect” genes develops schizophrenia. “Early intervention” strategies hold a lot of promise, as does this groundbreaking research. We hope that this research, and comparable studies in other areas of



Left to right, Ken Duckworth, NAMI medical director; Michael Carroll; Steven McCarroll; and Beth Stevens

mental health, will eventually lead to better understanding and more effective treatment for mental illness.

The awards were presented at a ceremony and reception at the National Geographic Society in Washington. NAMI DC attendees were Jean Harris, Rev. Robert Renix, Susan Ousley, Mary Jean DiPietro, Kent Alford, Janiene Ausbrooks, and Bob Thurston.

—Bob Thurston

Research Awards Web Resources:

<http://www.nami.org/About-NAMI/Awards/Scientific-Research-Award> (NAMI’s short video featuring these scientists)

<https://www.macfound.org/fellows/946/> (About Beth Stevens, who was a MacArthur Fellow; includes pictures)

<http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=steven+mccarroll+harvard+medical+school&qvpt=steven+mccarroll+harvard+medical+school&qvpt=steven+mccarroll+harvard+medical+school&FORM=IGRE> (pictures of Steven McCarroll)

http://www.idi.harvard.edu/investigators_research/investigator/carroll_lab (info and pictures of Michael Carroll)

We Are at the Table: Ombudsman Advisory Council

NAMI DC has representation on the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) Ombudsman Advisory Council.

The council was established by the South Capitol Street Memorial Amendment Act on April 10, 2012, after the death of four teenagers on South Capitol Street in one night. Initially designed to help youth get connected to needed mental health services, the scope has broadened to include groups for all ages who receive services from DBH.

The idea is that although there are agencies already in place to address the concerns of DC clients, the Ombudsman's office gives residents an additional option to voice their needs or complaints. The program is new

and still in the process of working out administrative and operational questions.

Ms. Patricia Thompson, overseer of the Advisory Council, stated at the first meeting that she was still looking for more individuals from community-based organizations to participate.

NAMI DC will serve as advisor as well as watchdog on the DBH Ombudsman Advisory Council to see that the voices of consumers of mental health services, and the voices of their families, will be heard.

—Jean M. Harris

Navigating the DC Mental Health System

NAMI DC Joins Attorney General Karl A. Racine's Panel to Educate and to Identify Unmet Needs

On September 20, Anacostia Library hosted the second in a series of panel discussions on DC's Mental Health System. Both discussions have featured senior officials in the medical, police, and judicial agencies, as well as NAMI DC representatives.

Member Tim Hider led off the discussion with a realistic and well-organized description of his experiences with what worked and what didn't. Other panel members made a point, during the discussion and afterward, of telling Tim how much they'd learned from his presentation.

This panel was led by Deputy Attorney General for Public Safety Tamar Meekins, who said she was taking copious notes on the needed changes that the panel and the audience pointed to.

Also on the panel were Dr. Mark Dalton, Chief Clinical Officer, Department of Behavioral Health; Dr. Hannah Ong, Medical Affairs Director, St. Elizabeth's Hospital;

Jonathan Ward, Deputy Director, *Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program* (CPEP); Inspector Regis Bryant, Metropolitan Police Department, in charge of Crisis Intervention Training; and Kamilah Oliphant, Assistant Attorney General, Mental Health Section.

Several other NAMI DC members, including Board President Jean Harris and Assistant Secretary Susan Ousley, attended.

The discussion and occasional challenges to perceptions and understandings of approaches were lively and benefited from the experience of people who have "been there."

You will hear about future panels. You can contribute to education and understanding, as well as identification of needed changes, by attending.

—Susan Ousley

Opening Up to Recovery

By David Thurston

Among the most challenging steps in moving towards recovery from mental illness is developing a therapeutic relationship with a psychiatrist. Unlike many other branches of medicine, with psychiatry, there are no magic tests to determine whether medications are working or whether symptoms are abating. Instead, we rely on the mental health consumer being able to clearly articulate his or her situation to a doctor.

It is extremely important that you open up to your doctor about all mental health symptoms and especially about side effects of medication. Many people are deterred by medication side effects and stop taking prescribed medicine altogether. These can be disastrous steps if you are trying to find the road to recovery.

Some psychiatrists make it easier than others to open up and develop the necessary therapeutic rapport. If you have a psychiatrist who seems to have little time for you and wants you in and out in five minutes flat, you may have to push back and insist on the time you need to articulate your symptoms.

Many people find it helpful to prepare for visits with their doctor by writing notes of questions to ask or issues to bring up. This can be extremely helpful, especially if you have a doctor who tends to be pressed for time. Prepare a day before, and write out notes to help ready you for the visit to come.

A therapeutic rapport with a psychiatrist is essential to stepping down the road to recovery. Take steps to develop it and you will find that your mental health prognosis improves markedly.

“It is extremely important that you open up to your doctor about all mental health symptoms and especially about side effects of medication.”

In Our Own Voices: Don't Miss the Next One

By Susan Ousley

For nearly 10 years, my main connection to NAMI DC has been the Wednesday Support Group (more on that in future newsletters). For a number of reasons, it has been a challenge for me to push myself out the door to attend other events. I'm guessing some of you have shared that experience.

Recently, however, I've had the good fortune to attend two events where some of our members really shone. Their successes make me want to encourage you to join us at future events.

On September 8, two members answered an invitation for Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church. The congregation's Health Committee created a welcoming place for NAMI DC members Janiene Ausbrooks and Tim Hider to make In Our Own Voices (IOOV) presentations to its church members and the public.

If you have never been to an IOOV presentation, you've missed a chance to learn, through the mixed media presentation—from people in recovery in various parts of the country and a variety of communities and from people you might think you already know. Janiene and Tim took us through their Dark Days, Acceptance, Treatment, Coping Strategies, and Dreams—the scripted topics—with such strength and thoughtfulness!

At each stage, after sharing their stories, they offered the audience opportunities to ask questions. We heard from several people who had been open about their mental illnesses in the past and felt empowered to speak up. We also heard from folks who are just beginning to cope with family members' illnesses. “

Janiene and Tim, with support from NAMI DC President Jean Harris, answered questions in the group and then in individual conversations. Member Judy Barr presided at the information table, where many people picked up materials and asked questions, with help from intern Laura Tharon.

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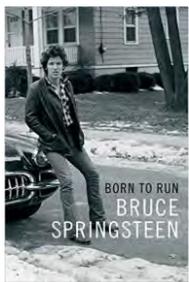
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Attending IOOV events are wonderful for:

- Learning more about how others have coped.
- Teaching your family and friends, as they hear experiences that reinforce yours.
- Giving you a place to volunteer—starting with helping at a table or greeting guests.

BOOK TALK

By Susan Ousley



Here's a book you might find useful. Write back and tell us what you think of the book— or review another one!

Bruce Springsteen's new memoir, ***Born to Run***, talks about his depression and steady efforts to combat it. He talks about working out

with a trainer, having a stable marriage of more than 25 years—and the therapeutic benefits of his rigorous touring schedule.

According to his wife, the writing itself was therapeutic. They agree that the more that can be done to erase stigma the better. Writing the book, they hope, will help.

Available at the DC Library (www.dclibrary.org): **BORN TO RUN**, by Bruce Springsteen, 2016, illustrated, 510 pp., Simon & Schuster.

What Books Have You Found the Most Helpful in Your (and Your Family's) Recovery?

In the Wednesday support group, we sometimes mention books that have especially helped us.

We'd like to share more.

Have you found a book that was especially helpful to you? We'd love to share your discovery here.

Send your book ideas to Susan at sousley@namidc.org.

DC's Expansive Family and Medical Leave Policy Advances

As of this writing, the DC Council has voted 12-1 (Jack Evans opposed) in favor of an innovative family and medical leave benefits program, using a new local business tax. The greatest good news is that mental health needs are covered just like other health needs.

Workers could get up to 2 months of paid time off for workers to care for newborn children; 6 weeks to help sick or injured relatives; and 2 weeks of individual sick leave.

The bill could still be amended before going to Mayor Muriel Bowser for signature or veto.

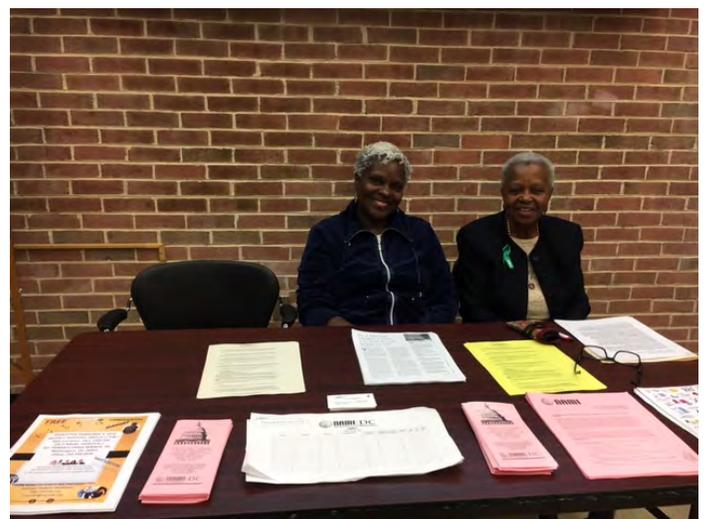
The leave won't be available right away: it may take several years to implement, because an agency to run it will have to be set up.

Councilmembers Elissa Silverman and David Grosso (both I-At Large) started working toward this plan last year. An energetic coalition, led by non-profits and forwarding-thinking local businesses made this happen (see www.dcpaidfamilyleave.org/coalition).

Thank your Councilmembers, including Council Chair Phil Mendelson, when you can. (Get their addresses, email, phones at <http://dccouncil.us/council>) They need to know that we appreciate their courage.

—Susan Ousley

NAMI DC OUT AND ABOUT



Celeste Richmond and Jean Harris at outreach event

Testimony: DC Statehood Commission

On June 18, 2016, I had the opportunity to speak at the New Columbia Statehood Commission for DC Statehood. Here is my testimony:

My name is Jean Harris. I am a third-generation Washingtonian, educated in this city from kindergarten through college, and have lived here all my life. I am a retired federal employee and currently serve as president of NAMI DC, the local state branch of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the nation's largest grassroots non-profit organization dedicated to building better lives for millions of persons affected by mental illness and their families.

I bring this up because I know the power of having a voice and a vote, and the feeling of being excluded when it is cut off. NAMI National is a powerful advocate for mental health, continuously advocating on Capitol Hill for bills that can improve funding and services nationally. Yet as a DC resident I am excluded from this process, not by NAMI but by the lack of statehood in DC. So not only am I affected locally because DC is excluded from full participation in its own affairs, but again nationally when I and others in similar positions have the opportunity to effect change, we are shut out.

I believe that every DC resident should push hard and smart for DC statehood first, while continuing to work on improving the constitution that will govern the State of DC. I believe we need to broaden the base of public participation to include and encourage all DC residents, those new to DC and those who have been here a lifetime.

There are some of you who have been working on statehood for decades, and may feel that this constitutional convention process is an unfortunate delay. I thank you for your dedication and hard work, but I believe this process will bring new eyes, strengths, and visions to the table. That will add to, not take away from, the work that has been done.

—Jean M. Harris

Capital Clubhouse Gala at the DAR Museum

Capital Clubhouse Inc. is an organization of independent individuals who have family members or are friends willing to support the clubhouse idea of treatment to recovery. The group's goal is to create "a community where people recovering from mental illness can achieve their full potential and be respected as co-workers, neighbors, students, and friends" (<http://capitalclubhouseinc.org>).

In the picture with Janiene Ausbrooks and me are Dr. Kay Redfield Jamison, the gala's featured speaker; her husband Dr. Thomas Traill; and Yvonne Smith, President of the Capital Clubhouse Board of Directors. I made comments on stigma and the need for early engagement that received loud applause.

—Jean M. Harris



NAMI DC OUT AND ABOUT



NAMI Science Awards (see article page 3)

Left to right, VP Rev. Robert Renix; national Executive Director Mary Giliberti; Pres. Jean Harris; Board Member Kent Alford

Join and Support NAMI DC

As a NAMI DC member you will be joining a community that is dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. Subscribe to the latest mental health updates, participate in local events, and add your voice to the mental health movement.

NAMI DC is the local chapter for the National Alliance on Mental Illness in the District of Columbia, providing education, support, and advocacy for individuals and their families with mental illness. NAMI DC is dedicated to providing opportunities to participate in programs and activities that enhance the quality of life for individuals and families living with mental health conditions.

Visit our Web site at www.namidc.org, email namidc@namidc.org, or call 202-546-0646 for more information.

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