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National Alliance on Mental Illness

THE VOICE

The newsletter of NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania

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Annual Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference Focuses on Collaboration, Conversation, and Community

The perfect mix of mental health professionals, educators, parents, and caregivers joined NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania for its annual Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference, *Expanding the Conversation: Giving Voice to Children, Adolescents, and Families in the Behavioral Health System*, on Friday, June 8, 2018, at the Pittsburgh Airport Marriott.

“This is the second consecutive year that we’ve dedicated this regional conference to children and adolescents,” said Christine Michaels, CEO of NAMI

Keystone Pennsylvania. “We’re really starting to develop some strategic partnerships when it comes to helping youth and their families find resources to access treatment and services.”

This year, the event drew more educators than ever before and that’s part of the plan. “We have been working really hard to build relationships with area school districts,” said Debbie Ference, COO of NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania. “In some cases, the teachers are the first to notice a behavioral health concern in a child and they want to be able to help them in the proper way.”

“We knew from our presentations throughout the year that teachers, school counselors, and administrators wanted more information to help their students,” said Susan Caban, Director of Education at NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania. “So we lined up three speakers and 12 workshop presenters who would be able to provide them with ideas and resources that they would find useful.”

Child psychologist, author, and professor, Ross W. Greene, PhD, delivered the keynote presentation. Dr. Greene is well known for his Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) model. “The basic idea is to focus on solving the



Dior Vargas, keynote presenter pictured with Christine Michaels

problems that are causing someone’s challenging behavior rather than simply trying to modify the behavior,” said Dr. Greene. “The model is non-punitive, non-adversarial, collaborative, and proactive.”

Dr. Greene is also the founder of Lives in the Balance, a nonprofit organization that works to provide accessible resources and programs to caregivers of behaviorally challenging kids, who he says are challenging because they lack the skills to not be challenging.

“He just presented so many unique ideas,” said Ference. “When I looked around

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From the Desk of the CEO

Christine Michaels, MSHSA
Chief Executive Officer, NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania

The spring season was a busy one here at NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania! Our team organized our second successful Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference that was held Friday, June 8, 2018, at the Pittsburgh Airport Marriott. Keynote speakers included Ross W. Greene, PhD, a child psychologist and author, and Dior Vargas, a Latina feminist mental health activist. As you read our cover story, you'll see how both presenters placed an emphasis on the importance of communication and collaboration when addressing mental health concerns.

While planning for this conference, we kept caregivers, educators, and mental health professionals in mind. We wanted our keynote speakers and workshop presenters to offer useful information that participants could take back to their homes, classrooms, and workplaces.

One of the highlights of our Children's conference every year is the presentation of the Dick Jevon Advocacy Award. This newsletter features a great story on this year's recipient, Julius Boatwright, and the impact he and his organization, Steel Smiling, are having on Pittsburgh communities.

As you read through the July newsletter, you'll see that our next Child and Adolescent Mental Conference is already scheduled for Friday, March 8, 2019. You will also want to mark your calendars for our 12th annual NAMIWalks, our second Green Light Gala for Mental Health Awareness, and our 2019 State Mental Health and Wellness Conference in Harrisburg. The dates and details are inside.

This summer, the first season of the *Stories That Heal* author series will come to a close. On page 8, you can read more about how the event has exceeded expectations and the plans we have for the fall.

We're also excited to introduce you to our newest part-time staff member, Nikki Dawson. Nikki was hired in May as the Special Projects Assistant after spending two semesters as an intern with NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania. Nikki, a U.S. Army veteran, is featured in our *In the Spotlight* section.

NAMI affiliates from across the state also have a lot to share. From a walk, to an award, to a new mental health awareness campaign, we have all of the details in our Keystone Connection page.

Please enjoy. And remember, if you ever have questions about mental health resources, you can call our HelpLine at 1-888-264-7972 or log on to our website, www.namikeystonepa.org.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris".

NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania is a 501(c)(3) grassroots, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children, adolescents, adults, and families affected by mental illness through recovery-focused support, education, and advocacy.

Public Policy Updates

By Christine Michaels, MSHSA, CEO, NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania

State Budget

After months of negotiations with bipartisan legislative leaders, Gov. Wolf signed a new state budget into law for the 2018-19 fiscal year. Gov. Wolf approved the \$32.7 billion spending plan on Friday, June 22. The new fiscal year began on July 1. The plan includes additional money to help those with intellectual disabilities and money to continue addressing the state's opioid problem.

Strong Mom Strong Baby

On Tuesday, June 14, 2018, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives passed House Bill 200, also known as the Strong Mom Strong Baby bill. The legislation helps to ensure that infants and their mothers affected by postpartum depression have access to services. The governor's office says mothers at high risk for postpartum depression and their infants who are referred by a physician, healthcare provider, or parent would be automatically eligible for assessment and tracking by Pennsylvania's Early Intervention programs. Gov. Tom Wolf, who supports the bill, is urging Senate approval.

Community HealthChoices

As Community HealthChoices is implemented across the state, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) has compiled a frequently-asked-question-and-answer

document to help people through the process. The document can be found on NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania's website under the Blog section.

House Bill 2138

A bill moving through the state legislature is targeting individuals and families who rely on Medicaid. House Bill 2138 calls for work requirements, lockout periods, eligibility determinations, and eligibility bans. All non-elderly, non-disabled, working-age adults who are not pregnant or in school would be required to work 20 hours a week, complete a job search verified by the department, or complete 12 job training program-related activities a month. Those who do not comply with the work requirements would be locked out of Medicaid for a period of time. According to the Pennsylvania Health Access Network, at a minimum, the state would need more than \$700 million in startup funds and at least 300 new workers under House Bill 2138. This does not include the ongoing costs of running the program. NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania issued an action alert regarding HB 2138, asking supporters to contact their state senator urging them to vote against the bill.

If you would like to receive Action Alerts from NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania regarding legislation affecting mental health services send your request to info@namikeystonepa.org.



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Keep our network strong by renewing your membership today.

If you're unsure whether your membership is close to expiring, contact the NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania office by phone at 412-366-3788 or by email at info@namikeystonepa.org.

You can renew online at www.namikeystonepa.org/get-involved/join.

Annual Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference continued from page one

the room, people were taking a lot of notes and I think they wanted to write down every word and take it back to their home, office, or classroom.”

The CPS model is being used in different settings across the country. “In families, the model has been shown to dramatically reduce challenging behavior, improve relationships and communication between kids and caregivers, improve parents’ feelings of competence, and improve kids’ problem-solving skills,” said Dr. Greene.

Dr. Greene also says many schools have found the CPS model to be an effective replacement for antiquated disciplinary procedures and policies. “In schools, the model has a track record for dramatically reducing discipline referrals, detentions, and suspensions.”

“Now, more than ever, educators need to increase their literacy about mental health issues which affect the K-12 students we serve,” said Melissa Nelson, principal at Washington Elementary in the Mt. Lebanon School District. Ms. Nelson and several of her colleagues from the district attended the conference.

“School psychologists, counselors, teachers, and administrators desperately want to consume the information that the presenters shared so that we can provide the best possible mental health supports for all of our students.”

Dior Vargas could have used some of that support while in high school. Vargas, a Latina feminist mental health activist, was the second main speaker of the day. During her

presentation, she shared intimate details about her experience with mental illness and suicidal ideation as a teenager.

“Dior’s talk was very emotional,” said Caban. “When someone opens up and shares such personal moments with a crowd full of strangers, all in the name of breaking down stigma, ending discrimination, and empowering others, it’s a very powerful moment.”

Ms. Vargas also talked about the need for more conversation and advocacy regarding mental health in communities of color. She shared images from her People of Color & Mental Illness Photo Project, which she started compiling to combat the lack of diversity in the media coverage of mental illness.

“There are disparities when it comes to accessing mental health services,” said Caban. “Dior is bringing attention to that, and she’s also showing how diversity in the portrayal of personal experiences can shine a light on not only the problems, but potential solutions.”

Before lunch, attendees heard an update on the state’s efforts to better meet the behavioral health needs of communities. Shannon Fagan, director of the Pennsylvania Bureau of Children’s Behavioral Health Services, outlined how her agency, which is within the state’s Department of Human Services, is working to deliver more effective and meaningful services to children, youth, and families.

“Shannon highlighted the strong focus on building partnerships and bringing together state and local resources,” said Michaels. “When you engage families and include all stakeholders in the decision-making process, you have a good chance of increasing successful outcomes.” 🌐



**NAMI Keystone PA Board President,
Dr. Charma D. Dudley**

Conference Resources

Dior Vargas’ People of Color & Mental Illness Photo Project can be found online at <http://diorvargas.com/poc-mental-illness>.

To learn more about Dr. Ross Greene’s Collaborative and Proactive Solutions approach, visit his website www.livesinthebalance.org.

For additional information on the Pennsylvania Bureau of Children’s Behavioral Health Services visit www.dhs.pa.gov.

Annual Award Ceremony Celebrates Generations of Mental Health Advocacy

Dick Jevon's mental health advocacy work dates back decades. Throughout the 1980s and beyond, he traveled across the state to testify and advocate for mental health services. He served on advisory boards, steering committees, and stakeholder groups to bring the consumer and family voice to the table. In 1984, he was a founding member of an activist group that grew into NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Fast forward to 2018, and the need for that kind of passionate and persistent grassroots mental health advocacy is still very much needed. During NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference a torch was passed when Julius Boatwright was honored with the Dick Jevon Advocacy Award.

"It was humbling," said Boatwright, Founder and CEO of Steel Smiling, a nonprofit that bridges the gap between community members and mental health support through education, advocacy, and awareness. "It gives me a deeper sense of gratitude and appreciation for all of the community members, partners, and funders who invest in our service efforts."

"Every year when the nominations come in, we think about Dick Jevon and his work and we look for that special someone who is carrying on that tradition," said Christine Michaels, CEO of NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania. "Julius fits that description."

Through his organization, Mr. Boatwright, who is a licensed social worker, works to eliminate stigma and break down barriers in some of the most disadvantaged communities in Pittsburgh. "Our vision is to connect every resident in the region to resources and treatment."

He launched Steel Smiling in 2015 after it became clear to him that the mental health system was broken. His



Julius Boatwright (center), recipient of the Dick Jevon Advocacy Award, is pictured with John Lovelace, President, UPMC for You and Christine Michaels.

organization filled a much-needed void, especially in Pittsburgh's communities of color.

"Contrary to popular belief, the black community welcomes mental health support into our spaces. Knowing that, I saw organic opportunities to strengthen an ecosystem that already exists and thrives."

Mr. Boatwright is making a difference and leaders are taking notice. He was nominated by John Lovelace, President of UPMC for You and President of Government Programs and Individual Advantage at UPMC Health Plan.

"Julius' passion rings clear with every interaction he makes in the community," said Lovelace. "His commitment to those in need of mental health services drives him every day."

Dick Jevon's advocacy work touched countless lives. His words of advice have been to always have hope. For Julius Boatwright, his guiding principle is just as simple, but also, just as powerful.

"Please know that it's okay for us to not be okay. It doesn't make us inherently bad people. It just shows that we're human beings with feelings and emotions."

To learn more about Steel Smiling, visit the website www.steelsmilingpgh.org.

2018 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference Exhibitors

Every year at the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference, organizations sign up to exhibit, which is an opportunity for agencies to showcase their mission and resources to the peers, family members, and professionals attending the conference.

Shauna Frantz, a community outreach specialist for the Jefferson Hospital Behavioral Health Clinic, was a new exhibitor this year. “We just got a new child psychiatrist and we wanted to use the table as an exhibitor to get the information out about the clinic.”

To learn more about exhibiting at a NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania conference, contact Sara Levine Steinberg by phone at 412-366-3788 or by email at slsteinberg@namikeystonepa.org.



Stay Connected



www.namikeystonepa.org



The 12th annual NAMI Walks is scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 14, 2018, at The Waterfront in Homestead.

The NAMI Walks registration page is open, so log on and start building your team!

For more information email slsteinberg@namikeystonepa.org or call 412-366-3788.

Registration 9 a.m. | Walk 10 a.m
www.namiwalks.org/keystonepa

Save the Dates

Annual Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference
Friday, March 8, 2019 | Pittsburgh Airport Marriott



May 20 - 21, 2019 | Holiday Inn, Harrisburg-Hershey

For questions regarding sponsorships, exhibiting, or ads contact Sara Levine Steinberg by phone at 412-366-3788 or by email at slsteinberg@namikeystonepa.org.

Save the Date

NAMI KEYSTONE PENNSYLVANIA

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FOR MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

THURSDAY
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2018

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Stories That Heal Author Series Draws Crowds, Makes Connections

Many people find talking and writing about their mental health to be therapeutic. NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania's *Stories That Heal* author series combines them both and the events have been a huge success so far.

The first author series took place in April with Jordan Corcoran, author of *Write it Out* and creator of Listen, Lucy. "The turnout was overwhelming," said Susan Caban, Director of Education at NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania. "It was standing room only."

Stories That Heal is a free monthly event featuring authors who have written books about their experience with mental illness. It takes place in the lower level of City of Asylum at Alphabet City on Pittsburgh's North Side.

"We knew when we first saw the space that it was perfect," said Caban. "It was intimate and relaxing, and a great place to gather and share. The staff at City of Asylum welcomed the collaboration immediately so it really was meant to be."

"The space definitely created the vibe we were looking for," said Nicole Campbell, Peer Engagement and Education Specialist at NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania. Nicole and Susan came up with the idea for the series, and Nicole sets out to find local authors and artists.

"It's been an honor to be able to connect with our incredible featured authors," said Campbell. "Their stories are so powerful and it means a lot to me as someone with lived experience to be able to listen and speak with the authors about their literary works, their recovery journey, and connect them with others who may have similar experiences."

K. Rose Quayle, illustrator and author of *Look Left, Walk Green*, was featured in May. Her book was meant to be a guidebook of sorts to electroconvulsive therapy.

"The thing that has helped me most through so many situations is hearing people talk about their experiences," said Quayle. "Even if I have nothing in common with them or have never been in the same situation, just that we may have had similar feelings is like being handed a well-worn roadmap. Being the person to be able to do that for others is the ideal."

Don't Miss It!



**Wednesday
July 25
7PM-8PM**

NAMI
National Alliance on Mental Illness

**Keystone
Pennsylvania**

Stories That Heal

READING SERIES PRESENTED BY NAMI KEYSTONE PA
FEATURING LOCAL AUTHORS

July author: Abeer Hoque, *Olive Witch: A Memoir*

Enjeo Bwaf
Ciudad de Asilo
CITY OF ASYLUM
匹兹堡避难所

During the evening, authors talk about their experience with mental illness, read excerpts from their book, then answer questions from the audience. Guests like Linda Schmitmeyer appreciate the honest and open discussion. "The give and take allows audience members to probe a little deeper into aspects of the talk they deem important, thus increasing a sense of community and decreasing feelings of, 'I'm in this alone.'"

The final author series of the spring/summer season will take place on Wednesday, July 25 at 7 p.m. and will feature Abeer Hoque, author of *Olive Witch: A Memoir*. Because of a \$1000 grant from Awesome Pittsburgh, the series will resume in September. 🌀

**Featured authors: K. Rose Quayle,
Lindsey Smith, and Jordan Corcoran.**



Keystone Connection: Highlights from Across the State

NAMI of Erie County and System of Care Erie have teamed up for the “Let’s Talk About It” campaign to start the conversation about mental health. The goal is to encourage



education and early identification of mental health challenges for young people so steps toward recovery can be made sooner, and the stigma associated with mental illness can be decreased through peer support and outreach efforts. The presentations, which are delivered to students or teachers, include mental health facts, statistics, and personal stories.

No amount of rain could have kept NAMI Bucks County and their supporters from #MakingStrides in the 4th annual Stride For Mental Health Awareness. Fortunately, the rain subsided and allowed them to put their passion into action



as they walked through Fonthill Park and Doylestown in a show of support for mental health awareness and the no-

cost early intervention mental health education program, “Ending The Silence.” The event raised \$41,000.

On June 7, 2018, Abby Grasso, NAMI of PA Montgomery County Executive Director, was presented the 2018 CSP (Community Support Program) Ambassador of the Year Award. The award is intended to honor a person who embodies and promotes the principles of CSP: empowerment, cultural competency, natural supports, flexibility, coordinator, accountability, sensitivity to special needs, and a strengths-based perspective. Abby has been a Montgomery County CSP co-chair for two years and is known in the Montgomery County community as an advocate who empowers others.



NAMI Scranton & Northeast Region also brought home an award in June. The team was awarded the Outstanding Group Volunteer of the Year award by Clarks Summit State Hospital! Congratulations everyone!





In the Spotlight

Nikki Dawson, Special Projects Assistant, NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania

You started as an intern for NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania in the fall of 2017. What made

you apply for that position?

I have always been interested in advocacy and policy. I am currently enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh in the MSW program in the Community Organization and Social Action track. In the past, I considered politics as a possible career choice. However, somewhere along the way I decided that I needed to help and I didn't feel politics was the right answer anymore so I want to advocate for myself, my fellow veterans, and anyone else who doesn't have a voice.

You recently made the transition to part time as the Special Projects Assistant. What duties will this role entail?

Honestly, a little bit of everything. My current focus is to assist COO Debbie Ference with the re-affiliation process throughout the state. I am also working with the data and communications specialist to clean up and better organize our supporter database. But the thing I really enjoy the most is reviewing policy and sitting on policy-related calls, which can range from discussing policy in the works or how current policy is affecting consumers.

You spent time in the military. Where did you serve?

I served in the Army from 2003-2011 as a Spanish Linguist and Intelligence Analyst. I was stationed at Joint Base San Antonio (formerly Lackland Air Force Base) until 2008, then at Ft. Hood, Texas. While at Ft. Hood, I deployed with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and served as the Unit Prevention Leader under the Army Substance Abuse Program as well as a Unit Victim Advocate under the Sexual Harrassment/Assault Response & Prevention Team.

You are currently involved in the Community Leadership Course for Veterans at Leadership Pittsburgh Inc. How does this differ from the leadership training you received in the military?

The CLCV course teaches us how to capitalize on the

leadership skills we learned in the military while applying them in the civic leadership setting. It's also been beneficial to learn about the Pittsburgh region since some participants, including myself, are not originally from here. Another great thing about the course is the networking opportunities it provides. I've made some great connections thus far and I'm looking forward to forging new relationships with other community leaders.

How are you using your experience as a veteran at NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania?

Given the prominence of mental illness in the veteran community, I feel it's important that our concerns are heard and given the attention they need and deserve. Additionally, I've done some work and outreach to try and promote the NAMI Signature Program, Homefront. Homefront is designed to assist families and loved ones of veterans living with a mental health condition. This is important to me, because not only am I a veteran, but I'm also married to a veteran and it's very difficult to find family support.

In your opinion, what is the biggest barrier to veterans seeking treatment for their mental health needs?

Really, it's the stigma and it starts while you are still in service. So many times across all branches the thought is to pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and drive on. And if you are unable to do those things and if you need help, you are viewed as a coward or weak.

Why is the veteran voice so important in mental health advocacy?

Veterans need to know that we genuinely care about them and their well-being. They also need to know that recovery is possible and that you can live a fulfilling life post service. Additionally, I feel that those in charge of shaping veteran policy don't fully understand what it means to be a veteran in today's society. Furthermore, most of the veteran advocacy groups, such as the VFW and DAV (Disabled American Veterans), are typically comprised of men, so they don't accurately represent the overall veteran constituency.

NAMI Support Groups

Visit the NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania website, www.namikeystonepa.org for additional support group information and for a link to support groups throughout Pennsylvania.

Allegheny County

NAMI Connection Peer Recovery Support Group - Dormont Library, 2950 West Liberty Avenue. Meets 2nd and 4th Mon., 6-7:30 p.m. Contact 412-366-3788 for information.

NAMI Parent Support Group - Youth and Transition-Age Crossroads Church, East Liberty. 2nd Mon., 5:30-7:30 p.m. Contact: Linda Thornhill, 412-247-7489.

NAMI Pittsburgh South - Mt. Lebanon, 3rd Wed., 7:30-9 pm. Contact Email: nami.south@gmail.com. No Aug. meeting.

NAMI Pittsburgh North - Ross Township, 1st Wed., 7-9 pm. Contact: Candy/Pete 412-361-8916

NAMI Pittsburgh East-FAMILIAS - Churchill, Beulah Presbyterian Church. 4th Wed., 7-9 pm. Contact: Mim Schwartz 412-731-4855

NAMI Spouse Support Group - Churchill, Beulah Presbyterian Church. 1st Wed., 7-9 pm. Contact: Mim Schwartz 412-731-4855

NAMI McKeesport, Penn State McKeesport, Frable Bldg., Rm 122. 3rd Thurs., 7-8:30 pm. Contact: Anna Lisa 412-527-6600

NAMI Western PA Borderline/Personality Disorders Family Support Group - Ross Township, 3rd Sat., 11-1 pm. Contact: Jo Burkholder 724-776-5974

NAMI W.P.I.C. Family Support Group - Oakland, 2nd Mon. 6-7 pm. Contact: Ray 412-379-3902

Beaver County

NAMI Beaver County - Rochester, 3rd Thurs., 7-8:30 pm. Contact: Carla Braund at 724-888-6877 or email at carlabraund@namibeavercounty.com

NAMI Connections Recovery Peer Support Group - Tues., 12 pm. 1229 3rd Street, Beaver. Contact: Carla Braund at 724-888-6877 or email at carlabraund@namibeavercounty.com

Butler County

NAMI PA Butler County - Butler MHA. Contact: Butler NAMI Office 724-431-0069 for more information.

Family Support Groups:

Butler – Last Tues. each month, 6 pm, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian, 201 E. Jefferson Street

Zelienople – 2nd Tues., 5:30 pm, Passavant Retirement Community Center, 401 S. Main Street

NAMI Connections - Peer Facilitated Recovery Support Group 2nd Tues., 4 pm, Grapevine Center, Butler.

Fayette County

NAMI-C.A.R.E. Fayette County (Consumers Advocating Recovery through Empowerment) - 1st and 3rd Tues., 5-6:30 pm, Oak House Drop-In Center, 100 New Salem Road (ground floor, first door on the right). Contact: 724-438-6738

Lawrence County

Contact Sandy Hause 724-657-0226

Washington County

NAMI Washington County - Washington, Court House Sq., Rm 103. 4th Thurs., 7-8:30 pm. Contact: Jim Gleason 724-416-7574

Westmoreland County

NAMI Alle-Kiski - New Kensington, 2nd Tues., 6 pm. Maverick Drop-In Center, 310 Central City Plaza. Contact: Marci at 724-335-9883 x526.

NAMI Mon Valley - Contact: Harriett Hetrick (724) 872-2186 for more information regarding the following locations:

- Irwin, West Hempfield Presbyterian Church, 2nd Tues. except July and December, 7-9 pm

NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania
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McKnight Plaza, Suite 200
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NAMI MEMBERSHIP FORM

Annual dues include discounted rates for educational events, resource and referral information, newsletters, call to action alerts and membership in NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania and national NAMI.

- *Household membership \$60.00
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Membership is tax-deductible. Official registration and financial information of NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling toll-free within PA: 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.