



National Alliance on Mental Illness

The Voice

The Newsletter of NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania

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The Dick Jevon Story

How One Advocate Championed the Evolution of the Family Advocacy Movement in Southwestern PA

People use a lot of different words to describe Dick Jevon. Leader. Advocate. Visionary. Problem-solver. Friend. Activist. Gentleman. Communicator. Watchdog. But the most important word he has been called is Dad. And it's because he's a dad that Jevon became one of the founding fathers of the family advocacy movement to help transform the behavioral health system in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

“Ultimately, Dick is just a dad who loves his sons, and one of his sons has a

serious mental illness,” describes NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania Executive Director Christine Michaels. “His love for his family, and his determination to ensure that his son receive the best possible treatments and other resources to support his recovery efforts, grew into a passion that has led to system-wide changes that positively impact many other families today.”

Prior to 1966, people with serious, disabling mental illnesses were committed and confined for extended periods of time to large state mental hospitals because no other effective treatments existed. In Pennsylvania, the enacting of the Mental Health Law of 1966 transferred treatment to communities and required counties to establish programs to provide diagnosis, care, treatment and rehabilitation for people with serious mental illness. The magnitude of this paradigm shift was not fully understood or appreciated at the time, and even today, community resources are still developing and expanding to fulfill these hopes and expectations from decisions made more than 40 years ago.

During this time of transition, when communities were being tasked with the responsibility to care for those with mental illness, many psychiatrists and other professionals still continued to



question the root of mental illnesses, often believing that families were the major cause. Families rebelled, fighting back in the early 1970s through the establishment of a national organization, the Alliance for the Mentally Ill (AMI,) to support, educate and advocate on behalf of citizens with mental illness and their families. In the Pittsburgh area, two early pioneers in the local family advocacy movement, Eleanor Slater and Anne Handler, started support groups for families with mentally ill loved ones. Soon after, Jevon met these women and, together, with a handful of other family members, they embarked on a journey that became a highly organized, well-respected, grassroots family mental health advocacy movement in the region.

In This Issue...

From the Desk of the Executive Director	2
News Around the Region	3
Reflections from Fellow Advocates	5
2012 NAMI Walk Wrap Up	6
In the Spotlight: Dick Jevon	8
13th Annual Education Conference	10
NAMI Local Support Groups	11

continued on page 4



From the Desk of the Executive Director

Christine Michaels, MSHSA
Executive Director, NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania

Since our last newsletter, we have been as busy as ever here at NAMI Southwestern PA. But the most significant event that occurred was: Dick Jevon retired! Dick's retirement, while not a total surprise and while we were somewhat prepared, still upset the order of our NAMI Southwestern PA universe. Dick served as the North Star of our universe, guiding us through the dark times, always there, providing the direction of where the organization needed to go.

I had the personal privilege of working with Dick daily. He was an icon of inspiration, motivation and perseverance to all of us here at NAMI. It was always a very humbling experience as an employee to think that Dick was a volunteer who really didn't have to come into the office every day.

We dedicated this issue of our newsletter in honor of Dick. I would draw your attention to our *In the Spotlight* column, where you can hear from Dick himself. My favorite part is the four most significant positive changes, not just because he enumerated a bit but because his perspective is so transformational, steeped in a recovery philosophy, so clear and genuine.

As Dick retires, his words of best advice are, "Always have hope." Hope for the many more advances to help people with mental illness that are soon to come.

Like the North Star, Dick's inspiration and hopefulness will always be present in the NAMI Southwestern PA universe.

On behalf of all the consumers and families you have helped, thank you Dick.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris".

Christine Michaels, MSHSA
Executive Director, NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania Mission Statement

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness through recovery focused support, education and advocacy.

News Around the Region

Updates on Initiatives, Legislation and Policy Impacting the Mental Health Community

Sharon A. Miller, Director of Education and Community Relations



Governor's Proposed State Budget

Gov. Corbett presented his proposed state budget on Feb. 5. Currently budget hearings are wrapping up in both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. Soon we will see the Senate and House versions of the Governor's proposed budget. Gov. Corbett's budget is based on the sale of the state liquor stores, privatization of the state lottery and the restructuring of the state employee pension plan. Final budget negotiations occur in May and June.

Highlights of *Fiscal Year (FY) 2013/14 Proposed State Budget: Overall Community Mental Health* is flat funded.

- \$28.4 billion spending plan for the fiscal year 2013-2014 that begins on July 1 includes an overall spending increase of 2.4 percent over this year.
- Mental Health Services received an increase of 4.1 percent. The increase disproportionately goes to the state hospital system leaving less than one percent of the increase for community mental health funding.
- The one percent increase includes a proposed new 90 bed CHIPP (Community/Hospital Integration Projects Program) initiative.

Medicaid Expansion in Pennsylvania

During his February budget address, Gov. Corbett indicated he could not at that time recommend the expansion of Medicaid health coverage authorized through the Affordable Care Act. On April 2, the Governor and U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius met to discuss his questions regarding the expansion of Medicaid eligibility for Pennsylvania and the assurance of 100 percent federal funding for the first three years. Gov. Corbett has not offered a final decision. The expansion is voluntary and there is no deadline for reaching a decision. Medicaid expansion begins Jan. 1.

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania provided testimony in support of Medicaid expansion at a public hearing held by Sen. Jim Ferlo and Sen. Vincent Hughes on March 8.

Look to www.namiswpa.org for ongoing updates on Medicaid expansion and all matters impacting the mental health community in Pennsylvania. Contact us at info@namiswpa.org to receive timely email *Call to Action* alerts.

OMHSAS Deputy Secretary Named

Dennis Marion was appointed to the position of Deputy Secretary of the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) of the Department of Public Welfare. Prior to the appointment, Mr. Marion held various positions in Cumberland and Perry Counties. Most recently he was Cumberland County's Chief Operations Officer. Mr. Marion holds a law degree from the Dickinson School of Law.

We welcome the opportunity to work with Deputy Secretary Marion on MH policy development and planning. The new Deputy Secretary attended and presented at the March meeting of the Western Behavioral Health Stakeholders' Advisory Committee on March 22.

Congressional Forum with Representative Tim Murphy - April 1

Congressman Tim Murphy organized a public forum to discuss violence and mental illness. Both NAMI Southwestern PA Executive Director Chris Michaels and Board Member Cindy McHolme provided individual testimony. The forum was held at the Mt. Lebanon Public Safety Center. ☎

NAMI Support Groups

Visit the NAMI Southwestern PA website, www.namiswpa.org, and click on the "Support" link at the top of the homepage for a complete listing and meeting dates of support groups.

Dick Jevon Story continued from page one

“Dick was in the right place at a time where people were becoming more open to the reality that consumers in recovery deserved to be a part of their communities, and that the process must happen with great care to ensure people with mental illness lead safer, more secure, happier and fulfilled lives,” explains Patricia Valentine, DHS Executive Deputy Director for Integrated Program Services of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services. “Dick’s background as a high-level executive and his professional business acumen, combined with his personal passion, made him a highly effective advocate.”

When Dick and Betsy Jevon’s teenage son was first hospitalized in 1974, the state’s behavioral health system was in chaos. The legal and justice systems, as well as mental health care providers, were just beginning to attempt the creation of new processes, procedures and community-based treatment programs as a result of the Mental Health Law of 1966 and other new legislation. Families had not yet found their voice. But parents like Jevon, along with Handler and Slater, had recognized the important role that families should have in developing a system of care that would provide better treatments and supports for their children. They understood that mental illness directly impacts families on a daily basis, and family members typically must make the decisions that their loved ones cannot. During a time of rampant stigma, these Pittsburgh families came together through support groups to provide encouragement and share resources. They also formed a non-profit organization - Advocates for the Mentally Ill in Transition (ADMIT) - to identify problems

within the system and push for much needed changes.

ADMIT, with Jevon as one of its key spokespeople, brought to the forefront the disproportionate funding in Pennsylvania for citizens with mental illness during the mid 1980s. Later, when the state mental hospitals began to close, he served as a community watchdog, carefully analyzing the state budgets and following the money to ensure it was being equitably transferred into community support services. Jevon was a leader in ADMIT’s evolution to AMI



Pat Valentine, Executive Deputy Director for Integrated Program Services, Allegheny County DHS, presents Dick Jevon with a Lifetime Achievement Award

of Southwestern Pennsylvania, which became NAMI Southwestern PA in 1993 and hired its first paid staff. For the past 20 years, he has served NAMI Southwestern PA as a volunteer leader while many issues have impacted the world of mental health, including insurance parity, open access to psychoactive medications, championing the need for more budgeted state monies for community-based mental health, and examining the implementation of Behavioral Health Managed Care under Medicaid.

“Dick has been an unusually effective advocate,” describes John Lovelace, President of *UPMC for You* and

President of Government Programs and Individual Advantage Products for UPMC Health Plan. “For many people, advocacy is very personal and focused specifically on individual needs, but Dick has had the unique ability and energy to translate his personal needs into advocacy for the greater good.”

“Dick is a skilled communicator who can look at the behavioral health system from a variety of different perspectives and effectively analyze how to make improvements that accommodate the needs of all stakeholders,” said

Lovelace, who is also the Chief Program Officer at Community Care Behavioral Health. “He also has had the patience and the perseverance to commit for the long haul. It’s great for passionate advocates to raise issues, but to accomplish lasting change, you need folks like Dick with the persistence to keep things moving incrementally forward over time.”

Jevon has always been diplomatically aggressive in raising issues that need to be changed, taking little steps that have amounted to big strides. Because of his educated, thoughtful and eloquent arguments in championing the consumer movement as a family member, government agencies and the provider community in Allegheny County recognize the value of family advocacy and embrace it as a positive component to improving the system.

“The first generation of family advocates demonstrated that family members should have a seat at the table and a rightful place in the dialogue about how to continue shaping an improved behavioral health system in Southwestern Pennsylvania,” Valentine comments. “Now is the time for a new generation

of family advocates to step up and continue meaningful participation in the process. We need others with deep conviction who are willing to participate on behalf of their loved ones to continue this great work begun by parents like Dick.”

“Dick is proof that one person can make a difference,” describes Valentine. “He’s a once-in-a-lifetime person whose daily presence will be missed, and who cannot be replaced,” agrees Lovelace.

“I miss Dick’s daily presence in our office,” Michaels concurs, describing

how he spent about five hours every day working at NAMI until just a few months ago, though he was never paid a penny to do this job. “He is a visionary and has been a touchstone for me and those who have preceded me as directors of NAMI Southwestern PA. He has always cared about our organization, been proud of our growth and concerned about our progress. I have enjoyed watching him engage in meaningful conversations with all types of people based on the wealth of knowledge he has gained and his understanding of our mental health system from every perspective -

consumer, family member, provider, or government representative. Dick went first, carving a path for all of us to follow through this system of recovery-oriented, community-based care.”

“Dick is one of the founding fathers of the family mental health advocacy movement in our region,” Michaels concludes. “There is still much work to be done. The best way to honor his efforts is to continue his legacy of supporting consumers and families while championing system-wide improvements that promote acceptance, understanding, recovery and improved quality of life.”

Reflections from a Fellow Advocate...

“Eons ago, back in 1984, I attended a schizophrenia workshop for families at Western Psychiatric Institute & Clinic (WPIC.) When it was over, the man sitting next to me asked, “Isn’t anyone doing anything about advocacy?” I immediately applied the “hook,” introducing that man, Dick Jevon, to eight parents who had formed the group ADMIT.

Together we formed panels with WPIC, traveling to counties across the region to bring families, professionals and county administrators together to introduce them to NAMI and the family movement. Our team spoke to high school students for many years, as well as to classes at the University of Pittsburgh, Duquesne, Carlow and Carnegie Mellon, to educate future generations of mental health providers. Dick was part of it all, and a wonderful friend and advocate for families who needed him and his golden touch. In all of the years that I have known Dick Jevon, he has always been an exceptional, compassionate person.

My only regret is that, in America, we do not have knighthood. Beyond any doubt, Dick Jevon fits that category.” ~ *Anne Handler*

“I started the first support group for family members in the Pittsburgh area in late 1979, and that group is still meeting today. During a time where stigma was rampant and family members were blamed for their children’s mental illnesses, I wanted to create a safe environment for family members to come together to encourage one another and to learn from each other’s experiences. Through these advocacy efforts, I became connected with Anne Handler and ADMIT. I am very thankful to have had Dick Jevon as a partner in what we accomplished through ADMIT, which then became NAMI Southwestern PA, especially our efforts to expand the role of family support groups far beyond Allegheny County. He and I both have a child struggling with serious mental



Betsy Jevon, Anne Handler and Eleanor Slater

illness, and through that common bond, we have advocated for our children, and for all of the other families in our region who are challenged with similar issues.

Dick is a considerate, patient and knowledgeable man who would always take the time to talk to anyone. I taught Family-To-Family courses for 11 years, and Dick would attend the last class of every 12-week session to encourage the families in attendance. I have always told people, “If you need an answer, no matter what the question, call Dick Jevon.”

I am grateful to Dick’s wife, Betsy, for the way she supported Dick’s full-time advocacy efforts during their retirement years, and I am thankful for Dick’s tireless determination to improve our mental health system. Dick is a true gentleman.” ~ *Eleanor Slater*

A Look Back...



NAMI Walk 2012

The 6th Annual NAMI Walk was our most successful to date, attracting over 2,000 people and the attention of the media, plus raising a record \$165,000!

In sharp contrast to the cold and windy weather the year before, the 2012 NAMI Walk turned out to be a beautiful, sunny October day. Festivity was in the air with energetic music, tasty treats,

dancing, juggling, jumping in the bounce house, caricature art, chair massages, fun for kids, team photos and an amazingly positive vibe of recovery. Many of our walkers took advantage of the free flu shots generously provided by the UPMC Health Plan Van!

What a perfect day to walk a 5K along the Three Rivers Heritage Trail and

convene back at the SouthSide Works for more fun and raffles and celebration of the recovery from mental illness. Thank you to our amazing sponsors, teams, walkers and dedicated volunteers for making the 6th Annual NAMI Walk the most successful one ever in Southwestern Pennsylvania history. We can only guess what the next Walk holds! ☺

2012 Walk Chairs



JOHN LOVELACE
NAMI Walk Chair

The NAMI Walk could not be more fortunate to have the

wonderful and generous John Lovelace as our Walk Chairperson. John is the President of *UPMC for You*, the President of Government Programs and Individual Advantage Products of UPMC Health Plan, and the Chief Program Officer at Community Care Behavioral Health. Despite his busy schedule, John is involved with a variety of charities and non-profits, always lending a hand to help those in need. If you've had the pleasure to meet John, you know that he is down to earth, witty, warm hearted and committed to helping people affected by serious mental illness. As Chair of our NAMI Walk, John not only leads the way to a successful Walk season, he also brings the largest team to the SouthSide Works. Last year, his "superteam" (comprised of Community Care, UPMC Health Plan and Western Psychiatric)

raised a total of \$33,895. John opened door after door for NAMI to sign on new sponsors and even created an incentive, making a personal donation to the first 50 people who registered for his team. We at NAMI cannot be more grateful for his leadership, support, generosity and friendship. Thank you, John!

MICHELLE WRIGHT
Honorary Chair

Have you been involved with the NAMI Walk since the very beginning? Michelle Wright, news anchor at WTAE-TV, has been. NAMI's relationship with Michelle has grown tremendously over the past several years, and she has increased her involvement with not only the NAMI Walk but also NAMI Southwestern PA and our mission to help individuals and families affected by mental illness. Yes, Michelle always leads the way on Walk Day—whether rain or shine—but she also serves as a key spokesperson and reporter on mental illness in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Michelle has worked with NAMI on a



variety of news pieces, including a documentary she filmed for WQED-TV (part of which was filmed at the walk) and a five-part series on mental illness that won newscast of the year at the Entertainment Industry Council Awards in 2011. Michelle is the face of the NAMI Walk, and we are grateful to have her ongoing support and friendship at NAMI. Thank you, Michelle!

JIM EHRMAN
Family Team Chair

Jim is not only the all-time top individual fundraiser of the NAMI Walk, he was also instrumental in getting the NAMI Walk started here in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Now a member of the NAMI Southwestern PA Board of Directors, Jim has championed the NAMI Walk from the very beginning and remains actively involved with the Walk today. We are thrilled to have his support year after year at the NAMI Walk. Jim, who is an attorney at Margolis Edelstein and a devoted family man, is—and always has been—a huge part of the NAMI Walk's success. Thank you, Jim!



Top 10 Teams 2012

TEAM CAPTAIN, TEAM	AMOUNT
Jennifer Boice, <i>Community Care</i>	\$18,227
Mary Kay Macik, <i>UPMC Health Plan</i>	\$8,373
Denise Macerelli, <i>Team WPIC</i>	\$7,294
James Ehrman, <i>Jims Jocks</i>	\$5,275
Eva Bednar, <i>South Hills Stampede</i>	\$4,065
Mim Schwartz, <i>Walk The Walk</i>	\$3,964
Lea Ann Gerkin, <i>Allegheny HealthChoices</i>	\$3,560
Megan DeBertrand, <i>WPIC - Team Bellefield</i>	\$3,511
Heather Liebherr, <i>WPIC Residents</i>	\$2,679
Harriet Baum, <i>Leo's Team</i>	\$2,600



Top 5 Fundraisers 2012

INDIVIDUAL, TEAM	AMOUNT
Deb Wasilchak, <i>Community Care</i>	\$5,000
Sharon Hicks, <i>Community Care</i>	\$2,350
Eileen Lovell, <i>South Hills Stampede</i>	\$2,250
Mary Kay Macik, <i>UPMC Health Plan</i>	\$2,210
Jack Cahalane, <i>WPIC - Team Bellefield</i>	\$1,755



A Look Ahead

7th Annual NAMI Walk
Sunday, Oct. 13, 2013
SouthSide Works & Three Rivers Heritage Trail
9 a.m.

Lucky Number Seven! We are very excited to announce the 7th Annual NAMI Walk and are expecting our best year ever! Mark your calendar now and visit our website at www.namiwalks.org/SouthwesternPennsylvania. You can already register yourself and/or your team! Let's get the ball rolling for our most successful NAMI Walk to date.

Also mark your calendar:

NAMI Walk Kickoff Luncheon
Wednesday, Aug. 14
Sheraton Station Square



In the Spotlight...

Dick Jevon, Dedicated Father, Husband and Advocate

Why are you involved with the family advocacy movement in Southwestern Pennsylvania?

My son was diagnosed with a serious mental illness in the early 1970s when he was 17 years old. At that time, the current behavioral health system was just being created in our region, and there were no effective treatments or supports in place to help my son recover, or to help my wife, Betsy, and me. Back then, families were typically blamed for causing their children to become mentally ill. Over time, we became connected with other family members who were struggling with similar issues. We didn't use the word advocacy back then. We were all just parents trying anything we could to get the best care for our sons and daughters.

How did your efforts to find better treatments and supports for your son evolve over time?

There came a point during my son's illness when I realized there just wasn't much I could do for him. I could love him and encourage him, but I couldn't get him a job or find him adequate housing or develop for him productive activities or create for him better medications. I recognized then that what I could do was to advocate for changes in the system of care that would have a positive impact on his opportunities for employment, housing and engagement in community activities, as well as for better medications and other treatment options. Encouraging system-wide changes meant improvements for not just my son, but for many other sons and daughters, and for their family members.

Why is family advocacy so important to the mental health movement?

Families are the ones who know the most about mental illness. We know best the impact it has on the person with the disease and on all those who love that person. Families are directly involved. We are on the front lines, fighting mental illness every day. We understand how it

affects daily life, we recognize its episodic nature, and we know how to expect the unexpected. Those with mental illness typically don't have the communication skills to be able to effectively convey to other stakeholders in the system what types of care they need. Families, on the other hand, can be extremely effective in that role.

What do you believe are the most significant positive changes that have occurred in the past 30 years?

I believe advocacy has helped to encourage many changes that bring us hope:

1. The advent of more effective, targeted medications with fewer side effects, and new brain-focused research efforts.
2. The willingness of people to talk to each other and share their experiences, which is helping to eradicate stigma and to grow a greater awareness and increasing acceptance of mental illness.
3. The focus on recovery, which recognizes how the debilitating nature of mental illness can be overcome.
4. Moving people from treatment in an isolated hospital environment to communities, which provides an increased level of acceptance, the opportunity for activities that foster a sense of purpose and connection to others, and a way to dispel a sense of loneliness and separation.

What is your advice to others who want to become stronger advocates?

Communication is the key. In the beginning when our son was sick, Betsy and I were silent. It was when we started talking to others that we became empowered to demand changes. Over the decades, people have become more open to talking about mental illness, so I've talked to anyone who will listen. Education is also important. Learn everything you can about mental illness to talk about it from a point of knowledge so your views will be respected. Gain an understanding of others' perspectives. There are many,

many people involved in our behavioral health system, from consumers and family members, to physicians, other providers and government officials. It's important to recognize what their goals are and how they are trying to address issues from their own points of view.

The best advice I have is to always have hope. Life does not end when someone is diagnosed with a serious mental illness. Many advances have been made to help people with mental illness live quality lives with quiet dignity, and I believe many more are soon to come.

Congratulations to NAMI's New Family-to-Family Teachers!

NAMI Southwestern PA Executive Director Christine Michaels and Associate Director Debbie Ference, both certified state Family-to-Family trainers, conducted an intensive teacher training the weekend of February 22-24.



Pictured above back row: Linda Sustich, Arlene Kelly, Megan Lyons, Kathy McDonnell, Nani Manion, Cathy Greenberger. Front row: Cathy O'Brien, Maria Nychis, Sarah Obay, Karen Auclair

NAMI's *Family-to-Family* course is taught in 49 states, Canada, Italy and Mexico. It is a NAMI signature program with over 210,000 graduates and has been translated into five languages. The course consists of twelve 2 ½ hour classes and focuses on giving participants information about the diagnostic criteria and symptoms of major mental illnesses, a comprehensive review of medications and how they affect the brain, skills in problem-solving, empathy and communication. A major component of the course is an understanding of the stages of emotional response that families undergo through the process of coping with the mental illness of a loved one and a discussion of the essentials for recovery.

"Taking the training class changed my life," said Maria Nychis, who is now a *Family-to-Family* teacher in the South Hills.

For more information, visit the NAMI Southwestern PA website at www.namiswpa.org and click on the Education tab.

Behavioral Health Resource Guide for Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing Available

The Behavioral Health Task Force for Persons who are Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing of Allegheny County announced the updating of the Resource Guide for Southwestern Pennsylvania Behavioral Health Providers.

This resource guide lists regional behavioral health care providers that have experience working with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Additionally, the guide can also benefit persons who are deafblind, physicians, audiologists, behavioral health care providers and the general public.

The resource guide is available for download on the Allegheny County Department of Human Services website at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/guides.aspx#providers and on the Western Pennsylvania health resources website at www.healthbridges.info.

13th Annual Education Conference Brings Message of Hope and Recovery to Southwestern PA

A sense of hope and excitement filled the ballroom at the Pittsburgh Airport Marriott on the morning of Saturday, April 6 as over 200 attendees watched NAMI Southwestern PA Executive Director Christine Michaels take the stage. Thus began the 13th Annual Education Conference *Pathways to Hope: Shaping a Positive Future in Uncertain Times*, sponsored by Community Care Behavioral Health, Allegheny HealthChoices and the Staunton Farm Foundation, among other loyal supporters.

Ms. Michaels kicked off the program by speaking about hope: the personal hope she continues to find in her family story, the success we as advocates experienced over the past year, and the hope we embrace for the future—even during uncertain or difficult times. She spoke of the four phenomenal women who would be speaking at the day's event and introduced the first one, Dr. Jean Bennett, our regional administrator of SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

As our keynote speaker, Dr. Bennett went beyond giving an informative government update on how SAMHSA supports recovery and gives hope to family. She spoke of her own family story, explaining why she is so passionate about her work in supporting individuals affected by mental illness and substance use. Dr. Bennett took this opportunity to not only tell the audience about SAMSHA but

to illustrate various pathways to recovery in our nation's behavioral health system.

The next speaker made her entrance from the back of the ballroom, carrying a 28 lb. backpack on her shoulders. Tracy Carney told the audience about her remarkable journey from serious depression and a state hospital stay to a three-week backpacking trip along the Appalachian Trail. She likened her preparations, choices and challenges along the Trail to the preparations, choices and challenges she faces in her daily life of recovery from mental illness. She said, "I've gone from being a passive participant in my treatment to actively



NAMI Southwestern PA Executive Director, Christine Michaels (center) with conference presenters Dr. Jean Bennett, Tracy Carney, Laura Miller and Marie-Paule de Valdivia

deciding my treatment." She left the people in the room truly inspired!

NAMI Southwestern PA decided to multi-task during a Pittsburgh-style luncheon: Board President Dr. Charma D. Dudley conducted the annual board meeting, and Christine Michaels announced the *Dick Jevon Advocacy Award*, a new award that will be presented annually to one advocate who embodies the principles of volunteer service, community education and advocacy for those affected by mental illness.

Next up: the always inspiring Laura Miller, founder of the *Secret Agent L*

Project and NAMI Southwestern PA Board Member. Ms. Miller told her family story, saying "mental illness shaped the narrative of my life." She described how she found hope through simple, anonymous acts of kindness toward others, and how that project—now known as the *Secret Agent L Project*—changed her life.

Our afternoon keynote speaker Marie-Paule de Valdivia enlightened the crowd about Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) with her presentation called "A Case for Hope." Ms. Valdivia told us about her daughter's lifetime battle with BPD, a serious, complicated and often misunderstood mental illness. After many years of personal and clinical experience, she shared that there is a great hope for recovery for those who are accurately diagnosed. She also thanked NAMI Southwestern PA for being forward thinking and addressing BPD at its annual conference.

With such great interest in her topic, Ms. Valdivia conducted one of six workshops that ran simultaneously in the afternoon.

At the end of the day, this turned out to be one of the most well received conferences of NAMI Southwestern PA, garnering extremely positive feedback from attendees and presenters. "A consistent and ever present theme at NAMI is a focus on hope, being hopeful about the future," said Ms. Michaels. "In very individualized presentations, our speakers brought a message of hope and recovery." ☺

NAMI Support Groups...

Visit the NAMI Southwestern PA website, www.namiswpa.org, and click on the "Support" link at the top of the homepage for a complete listing and meeting dates of support groups.

Allegheny County

NAMI Parent Support Group - Youth and Transition-Age East
Liberty Carnegie Library, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. Contact: Linda
Thornhill, (412) 403-9539 for more information.

NAMI Pittsburgh South, Mt. Lebanon
Contact Email: nami.south@gmail.com

NAMI Pittsburgh North, Ross Twp.,
Contact: (Evenings) Pete/Candy Venezia (412) 361-8916

NAMI Pittsburgh East-FAMILIAS, Churchill
Contact: Anne Handler (412) 421-3656

NAMI Spouse Support Group, Churchill
Contact: Mim Schwartz (412) 731-4855

NAMI McKeesport, Penn State McKeesport
Contact: Violet Ludwig (412) 373-7977

NAMI Western PA Borderline/Personality Disorders Family
Support Group, North Hills
Contact: Rose Schmitt (412) 487-2036

Minority Families of the Mentally Ill, Oakland
Contact: Wilma Sirmons (412) 327-4890

NAMI W.P.I.C. Family Support Group, Oakland
Contact: Merle Morgenstern (412) 246-5851

Armstrong County

NAMI Armstrong County, Kittanning, 4th Thursday of the
month, Family Counseling Center of Armstrong County,
Contact: Linda Miller 724-543-4581

Beaver County

NAMI Beaver County, Rochester, 3rd Thursday of each month
Contact: Carla Braund at carla.braund@gmail.com

NAMI-C.A.R.E. (Consumers Advocating Recovery through
Empowerment), Beaver,
Contact: Dr. Suzanne Vogel-Scibilia (724) 775-9152

Butler County

NAMI PA Butler County, Butler MHA,
Contact: Butler NAMI Office (724) 431-0069

Fayette County

NAMI Fayette County,
Contact: Carmella Hardy (724) 277-8173

NAMI-C.A.R.E. Fayette County,
Contact: Carol Warman (724) 439-1352

Indiana County

NAMI Indiana County, Second and Fourth Tuesday each
month, 7:00 p.m., Trinity United Methodist Church, Indiana
Contact: Jim (724) 479-8824 or Dick (724) 463-8205

Lawrence County

NAMI Lawrence County,
Contact: Sandi Hause (724) 657-0226

Washington County

NAMI Washington County,
Contact: Jim Gleason (724) 225-1607

Westmoreland County

NAMI Alle-Kiski, New Kensington
Contact: Thad Kaminski (724) 339-1339

NAMI Mon Valley, Monessen & Irwin
Contact: Harriett Hetrick (724) 872-2186

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania
105 Braunlich Drive
McKnight Plaza, Suite 200
Pittsburgh, PA 15237-3351

412-366-3788
1-888-264-7972

e-mail: info@namiswpa.org
www.namiswpa.org

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Address Service Requested



A cycling event to raise awareness & support for mental illness in our communities

**SATURDAY
MAY 18, 2013**

Starting and ending in Cedar Creek Park, Rostraver Township, PA

DISTANCES FROM

5 MILES *to* **73** MILES

**REGISTER TODAY AT
www.namicycles.com**