Representatives from NAMI affiliates across Pennsylvania, as well as professionals, families, and consumers made the trip to Harrisburg May 12-13 for the first-ever NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania Mental Health and Wellness Conference: Working Together to Build a Better Future. The event served as a kickoff celebration as NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania officially becomes the state organization under the new name NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania.

“We wanted to use this conference as an opportunity to bring together all Pennsylvania NAMI affiliates and explain to them where we are in this process,” said Christine Michaels, Executive Director of NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania.

On the evening prior to the conference, a business meeting drew nearly 50 affiliate leaders from across the state. Chris Michaels and consultant Leslie Bonner discussed transition specifics.

“This meeting was really important to make everyone aware of the process,” said Leslie Bonner of Bonner Consulting. “It was crucial for the affiliate leaders to see how we got to this point, so we’re all on the same page.”

“Our goal of the meeting, and of the entire conference, was to bring everyone together,” said Michaels. “We wanted it to be clear from the beginning that serving the affiliates is a top priority.”

The business meeting was followed by a networking reception featuring different foods from Pennsylvania including a Pittsburgh Steak Salad station, Philly Cheesesteaks, Turkey Hill Ice Cream Sundaes, and Hershey’s candies.

“We wanted the reception to have a relaxed atmosphere so people felt comfortable getting to know each other,” said Debbie Ference, Associate Director of NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania. “We thought that a fun selection of food was a good way to set the mood.”

To mark the beginning of the conference, Susan Gaffney, the National Director of Field Capacity and Governance for the National Alliance on Mental Illness delivered emotional opening remarks about Pennsylvania.
If I had to choose one word to describe the past several months, it would be transformative. As you all know, NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania has been transitioning into NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania, the state organization for NAMI. But, as you read this newsletter, please take note that NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania activities did not miss a beat. This issue contains our annual NAMIWalks spread, a feature on our first Green Light Gala, first Children’s Mental Health Conference, and our first NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania state conference.

Please appreciate all of the “firsts”! They reflect the growth and increased capacity that comes with transformation. NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania enhances our ability to serve the Southwestern region.

It’s time to acknowledge and thank the NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania Board of Directors for their leadership and dedication in meeting our mission. It’s also time to recognize the NAMI staff for their good work and endurance – transformation is not easy! Thank you – Debbie Ference, Susan Caban, Susan Rabenold, Sara Levine, Julie Trbovich, Mike McCarthy, Alyssa Cypher, and Maria Kakay (In the Spotlight).

Finally, a thank you to our members, friends, sponsors, funders – everyone who supports our work on behalf of children and adolescents, individuals, and families affected by mental illness. You are not alone. NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania is here for you!

That’s a lot of change in a short period of time. But everyone here at NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania is eager for our transformation to continue and to keep moving forward in a positive direction.

Warmest Regards,

Christine Michaels, MSHSA
Executive Director, NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania

NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania
Mission Statement

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

PA House Bill 218
In April 2017, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives passed House Bill 218. The state budget bill for 2017-2018 includes deep reductions to several human-services programs including $9 million in cuts to mental health and substance use disorder funding. Secretaries Ted Dallas (DHS), Karen Murphy (DOH), Teresa Osborne (DOA), and Jennifer Smith (DDAP) issued a letter to the Chairs of the PA House and Senate Appropriations Committee about how PA House Bill 218 will have a devastating impact on vulnerable Pennsylvanians if passed as is. The bill now moves to the Pennsylvania Senate.

Agency Consolidation
One proposal still under debate during the budget talks is Governor Tom Wolf’s plan to consolidate four agencies into one. The Departments of Aging (DOA), Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP), Health (DOH), and Human Services (DHS) will merge to create a new Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The unification is expected to save taxpayers more than $90 million.

In Memory
The staff at NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania is saddened after the loss of Dennis Marion. At 62, Dennis passed away unexpectedly on March 29, 2017 at Holy Spirit Hospital in Camp Hill, PA. Since 2013, Dennis served as the Pennsylvania Deputy Secretary for the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Dennis was an advocate for individuals living with mental illness and their families, and he worked daily to provide access to vital services that improve quality of life.

American Health Care Act
In May 2017, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the American Health Care Act. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the bill will slash $834 billion from Medicaid over the next 10 years, ravaging the public mental health system. It is also estimated that 23 million Americans will lose coverage for mental health care by 2026, including 14 million people who will no longer be covered by Medicaid. The U.S. Senate has created a working group of 13 senators, including U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey from Pennsylvania, to draft the Senate’s version of health care reform. Sen. Toomey chairs the Subcommittee on Health Care for the Senate Finance Committee. Sen. Bob Casey, who also represents Pennsylvania, serves on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania is participating in the #DontCutOurCare social media campaign and has issued action alerts prompting members to email or call U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey and U.S. Sen. Bob Casey asking them to stand up for mental health care and reject cuts to Medicaid and mental health protections.

PA Department of Human Services (DHS) Updates

Community HealthChoices
Pennsylvania is postponing the implementation of Community HealthChoices (CHC), the new managed care insurance program for the delivery of long-term services and supports. The delays are due to the resolution of several bid protests. Rollout was to begin in July 2017, but Phase 1 will now take place in January 2018 in the Southwest region. Phase 2 will begin in July 2018 in the Southeast and the January 2019 start date for the rest of the state remains unchanged.

Strong Mom Strong Baby
The #StrongMomStrongBaby campaign is a statewide effort to amend legislation in order to categorize postpartum depression as an at-risk condition. This designation would allow infants to undergo assessments, provide support to parents in helping them bond with their babies, and if needed, implement early intervention services to ensure moms and babies have the best start together. NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania supports the mission of the #StrongMomStrongBaby campaign and its efforts to bring awareness to postpartum depression.
“Despite challenges and adversity, the NAMI mission has persevered in Pennsylvania,” said Gaffney. “Members and grassroots leaders across the state persisted in serving those impacted by mental illness, because it matters too much not to. To be part of celebrating that commitment paying off was an honor.”

Another representative from NAMI National, Sita Diehl, gave the morning keynote address. Diehl, the Director of Policy and State Outreach for NAMI, highlighted results from the research report, *Pins & Needles: Caregivers of Adults with Mental Illness*. Diehl’s presentation included anecdotes from caregivers explaining the challenges they’ve faced with their loved one’s medication, hospitalization, and access to services. The excerpts hit home with attendees like Neen Davis, Board President of NAMI Montgomery County.

“As President of a large NAMI affiliate, I am in contact with families on a regular basis,” said Davis. “The challenges they face can be overwhelming. We get calls from families who don’t know where to turn for help with medication issues, housing, and support services they so desperately need.”

The second featured speaker also focused on an important need in the mental health community: early psychosis programs. Irene Hurford, MD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania and a sought-after speaker for her expertise in first episode psychosis.

“Dr. Hurford’s work is groundbreaking,” said Susan Caban, Director of Education for NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania. “To have the opportunity to showcase a Pennsylvania psychiatrist who is accomplishing game-changing research was really exciting.”

Dr. Hurford shared early outcomes data from participants in the PEACE (Psychosis Education, Assessment, Care, and Empowerment) Program at Horizon House in Philadelphia. The program aims to keep people with early signs of psychosis on their normal life paths with a treatment plan that focuses on recovery.

“Keeping people with early signs of psychosis in school or work is significant,” said Michaels. “Many of these first episode psychosis programs address the importance of keeping or getting someone’s life on track and families as well as communities play a crucial role.”

Getting life back on track has been a consistent theme for Mike Veny. The closing speaker and founder of TransformingStigma.com shared details of his lifelong struggle with mental illness. The professional drummer brought the crowd alive by not only playing for the audience, but by giving them instruments to tap and shake along to the beat.

“Mike is truly an engaging presenter,” said Caban. “His personal story is inspiring and his presentations have the power to bring audience members together. The energy of the drum beats becomes a channel to the positive feelings of recovery, redemption, and survival.”

**Challenges of Caregivers**

- One-third report loved one had been arrested
- One in five say loved one had been homeless for one month or longer
- More than 60% of mental health caregivers are concerned that their loved one will self-harm or complete suicide

The Voice

NAMI National Alliance on Mental Illness
Walks

2017 Sunday, October 1
The Waterfront, Homestead

#StigmaFree
Join the NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania mental health walk to raise funds and awareness to help change perceptions about mental illness.

Register and Donate Today!
www.namiwalks.org/swpa

For more information contact:
Sara Levine
slevine@namiswpa.org
412-366-3788

#namiwalksswpa

Check-in at 9:00 am
Walk at 10:00 am

Walk Location:
The Waterfront, Homestead
NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania’s first Green Light Gala for Mental Illness had it all -- great food, great music, and a great turnout. More than 300 guests attended the event that raised nearly $90,000 for mental health awareness.

“It was very exciting to see so many people come to our event and support our goal of raising awareness for mental illness,” said Christine Michaels, Executive Director of NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania. “Mental illness is common, it is treatable, and recovery is possible. Events like this help chip away at the stigma.”

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania board member Kathy Testoni, along with siblings Libby Mascaro and Sam Kane, co-chaired the event at the Heinz History Center in the Strip District on December 1, 2016.

“The gala was something that was missing in Pittsburgh,” said Mascaro. “Most of the events held here are about physical diseases. This was the first chance for people to go to a black-tie event and talk about mental illnesses.”

“Getting the word out about mental illness, stigma, hope, and having a fulfilling life for all involved has been ignored for too long,” said Testoni. “Events like this get a much-needed conversation going.”

For Libby and Sam, it was personal.

“When my mother ended her life by suicide after a 25-year battle with bipolar disorder, my brother and I knew we had to do something for her and for the millions of other people who suffer every day alone and in silence,” said Mascaro.

“Many people who came to our gala have been affected by mental illness in very traumatic ways,” said Michaels. “But the feeling of the night was inspirational. Everyone there wanted to focus on recovery and making people’s lives better.”

Pittsburgh’s own, The Move Makers Band, provided the entertainment for the evening, while Common Plea catered heavy hors d’oeuvres and food stations. A professional auctioneer rallied bidders for the “Hope” painting created by renowned Pittsburgh artist, Johno Prascak.

“The painting showed an elephant and butterflies,” said Michaels. “Mental illness is the elephant in the room, and the butterflies are the people whose lives were transformed because of the help and services they received. If you look closely, one of the elephant’s tusks is damaged to symbolize we’re all a little broken.”

Prascak, who is also a family member, was so inspired by the cause he donated his work to the event. Michael Mascaro had the winning bid. Copies of the original print are available for sale at the offices of NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania. The cost of the print is $50. If you are interested, call the office at 412-366-3788.
Thank you to the 2016 Green Light Gala Sponsors

**Presenting Sponsors**
UPMC Health Plan and Community Care Behavioral Health

**Platinum Sponsors**
Howard Hanna * Mascaro Construction Company, LLC

**Gold Sponsors**
Henderson Brothers * Highmark, Inc. * TriState Capital Bank

**Silver Sponsors**
Alkermes * Interim Healthcare * Pittsburgh Psychiatric Society
The Fine Foundation * W.G. Tomko, Inc.

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Peoples Natural Gas * Poly-Cor Enterprises
Pure Barre Mt Lebanon * Quartet Health
Snavely Forest Products * St. Clair Hospital Foundation
The Physical Therapy Institute * The Via Center
Nearly 300 people packed into the Pittsburgh Airport Marriott on March 31, 2017 for the very first NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference. The conference theme was Creating a Culture of Transformation for Children, Youth, and Families.

“This is a growing focus in our organization and in the entire region,” said Christine Michaels, Executive Director of NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania. “We wanted to play a role in bringing together the regional leaders to showcase the latest research and local specialists who are making a difference.”

The conference was unique in that the entire event centered solely on the mental wellness of young people, and the resources that are available to help them as well as their families. “We pulled from a number of contacts I have made working in schools and with mental health professionals who specialize in dealing with children,” said Julie Trbovich, Program Manager for Children and Families at NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania.

The result was a conference that featured four speakers, 12 workshops, and a record number of exhibitors.

“Representatives from nearly 40 organizations attended the conference to network and provide various resources and materials,” said Susan Caban, Director of Education for NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania. “Overall the feedback we’ve received has been really positive.”

Judith Cohen, MD, delivered the morning keynote address. Dr. Cohen is Medical Director at Allegheny General Hospital’s Center for Traumatic Stress in Children and Adolescents, which is the only program of its kind in the region. “Dr. Cohen provided a very comprehensive review of the work she’s doing on trauma-focused, cognitive-behavioral therapy for children and families,” said Caban.

Dr. Cohen’s research-driven presentation provided a nice balance to the morning plenary delivered by Jordan Corcoran, founder of Listen, Lucy, an online outlet where people can anonymously share their stories. “Being a speaker at NAMI's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference was truly an honor,” said Jordan Corcoran. “These conferences are so important to this community and for people like me, who struggle with mental illness every single day. The room was inspired, the people were excited and I couldn't be more proud to have been a part of such an incredible event.”

Two leaders from the Allegheny County Department of Human Services delivered the lunchtime address. Patricia Valentine, Executive Deputy Director of Integrated Program Services, and Denise Macerelli, Deputy Director of the Office of Behavioral Health, updated the audience on the status of new programs and initiatives in Allegheny County dealing with children and transition-age youth.

“There are a lot of important projects going on at the Allegheny County Department of Human Services,” said Michaels. “The department has always been a big supporter of ours, and being one of our conference sponsors, it was great to have two terrific representatives speak at our event.”

As an added bonus at this year’s conference, attendees received toolkits that contained resources for families. Organizations such as Wesley Spectrum, UPMC, Allegheny Family Network, and several others provided information on early childhood, education, trauma, support and advocacy, and first episode psychosis. The toolkits were made possible with the help of Project LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children’s Health) and the Young Child Wellness Council that Trbovich co-chairs. “We
have been working with so many agencies that have amazing resources for young people and their families,” said Trbovich. “Since we had such a large attendance for our conference, we thought it was a great opportunity to reach a lot of people and provide them with one comprehensive toolkit that compiled a lot of different information.”

The most touching moment of the day was the presentation of the Dick Jevon Advocacy Award to Thad Kaminski, treasurer of NAMI Alle-Kiski. Thad’s son, Greg Kaminski, accepted the award on his father’s behalf. “Thad has been a steadfast supporter of NAMI. He’s filled many roles, and he had been nominated multiple times, so we’re excited to see him achieve this,” said Michaels.

Thad Kaminski said getting the award was an honor that represents the hard work and dedication of the entire team at NAMI Alle-Kiski. He also explained why NAMI played such an important role in his family’s life. “When my son, Michael, was diagnosed with schizophrenia in the early 1980s, his physicians were wonderful,” said Kaminski. “But, as most people associated with NAMI realize, medications are simply not enough. NAMI changed our lives, enabling us to navigate the medical, legal and social support available at that time. We never felt it was possible, but Michael is now successfully living on his own.”

Greg Kaminski proudly accepts the Dick Jevon Advocacy Award on behalf of his father, Thad Kaminski. Thad has been a long time leader of NAMI Alle-Kiski.

**NAMI Family-to-Family**

**NAMI Family-to-Family** is a 12-session education program for family, partners, friends and significant others of adults living with mental illness. The course is designed to help all family members understand and support their loved one living with mental illness, while maintaining their own well-being. Thousands of families describe the program as life-changing. The program is taught by trained teachers who are also family members and know what it is like to have a loved one living with mental illness.

NAMI’s Family-to-Family education program is offered at no cost to participants.

Classes will begin in September 2017.

Contact NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania at 1-888-264-7972 or email info@namiswpa.org to be placed on the course waiting list.
One of my most important roles here at NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania is to spread the word about the amazing things that go on here. The staff is so dedicated and knowledgeable, and they work hard every day to improve the lives of people affected by mental illness. Whether it’s through advocacy meetings, education classes for individuals and families, or presentations at schools or workplaces, these people care and they want to make a difference. My job is to showcase what they do, with the ultimate mission of getting the conversation going about mental illness to raise awareness and break down the stigma.

What is your role at NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania?

How did you first become involved with NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania?

Before working here, I spent 9 years as a television news producer at WTAE-TV, the ABC affiliate in Pittsburgh. I then moved on to WQED Multimedia, where I was a freelance producer for 6 years. During that time, I had the opportunity to work with Christine Michaels, Executive Director of NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania, on a number of initiatives concerning mental health. I had always admired the organization’s work, and now I’m excited to be part of the team.

What goal do you most want to accomplish through your work?

Ideally, the goal I’d most like to accomplish is to make the topic of mental illness so commonplace, that people don’t feel ashamed to talk about it. The more comfortable people feel discussing their mental health, the more likely they are to get treatment. I hope to make my contribution through storytelling. Our members have some very compelling stories. If they feel comfortable opening up about their experiences, there’s a good chance it will resonate with someone else, who may feel empowered to seek treatment. It would be a wonderful thing if people felt as comfortable talking about their mental health as they did about their physical health.

What motivates you most?

A driving force behind what I do is knowing that there are people out there who need treatment, but aren’t getting it. The more we talk about mental health, the more people, including legislators, will hopefully listen. The more we show that the proper treatment can turn someone’s life around and help them lead productive, fulfilling lives despite their illness, the more likely we are to get support in Harrisburg and Washington, D.C. for services. That is the hope of the staff and the Board here at NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania and that’s what makes everyone work so hard every day.
NAMI Support Groups...

Visit the NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania 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 Crossroads Church, East Liberty, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. 2nd Monday of the month. Contact: Linda Thornhill, 412-247-7489 for more information.

NAMI Pittsburgh South - Mt. Lebanon, 3rd Weds. of the month, 7:30-9 pm. Contact Email: nami.south@gmail.com

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

NAMI Pittsburgh East-FAMILIAS - Churchill, 4th Weds. of the month, 7-9 pm. Contact: Mim Schwartz 412-731-4855

NAMI Spouse Support Group - Churchill, 1st Weds. of the month, 7-9 pm. Contact: Mim Schwartz 412-731-4855

NAMI McKeesport, Penn State McKeesport, 3rd Thurs. of the month, 7-8:30 pm. Contact: Anna Lisa 412-527-6600

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

NAMI W.P.I.C. Family Support Group - Oakland, 2nd Monday of the month, 6-7 pm. Contact: Sue Rudisin 412-246-5859

Butler County

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

Family Support Groups:
  Butler – Last Weds. each month, 6:30 pm, Mental Health Association, Voyagers Room.
  Zelienople – 2nd Tues. each month, 5:30 pm, Passavant Retirement Community Center

NAMI Connections - Peer Facilitated Recovery Support Group 1st Fri., 1:30 pm, Mental Health Association, Voyagers Rm

Fayette County

NAMI-C.A.R.E.  Fayette County (Consumers Advocating Recovery through Empowerment) - Fayette County Health Center, Uniontown. Meets 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month, 5 - 7 pm. Contact: 724-438-6738

Lawrence County

NAMI Lawrence County Contact: Sandi Hause 724-657-0226

Washington County

NAMI Washington County - Washington, 4th Thurs. of the month, 7-8:30 pm. Contact: Jim Gleason 724-416-7574

Westmoreland County

NAMI Alle-Kiski - New Kensington, 2nd Tues. of the month. Contact: Roberta Walker 412-372-1236

NAMI Mon Valley - Contact: Harriett Hetrick (724) 872-2186 for more information regarding the following locations:
  • Belle Vernon, First United Methodist Church, 1st Tues. of the month except July and December, 7-8:30 p.m.
  • Irwin, West Hempfield Presbyterian Church, 2nd Tues. of the month except July and December, 7-9 p.m.
NAMI MEMBERSHIP FORM

*Please note new membership rates are effective beginning July 1, 2017. 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
☐ *Individual membership $40.00
☐ *Open Door/Limited income (minimum dues rate $5.00) $________
☐ Additional Contribution $________ Donation to remain anonymous ☐

NAME ___________________________________________________
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CITY ____________________________ STATE _____ ZIP _________
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☐ Send my copy of the Voice electronically. (provide email above)

☐ I am interested in receiving Call to Action alerts via email and participating in legislation and policy advocacy.

Please make check payable and mail to:
NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania, 105 Braunlich Drive, McKnight Plaza, Suite 200
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

Join or donate via the website at www.namiswpa.org.

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.