



National Alliance on Mental Illness

The Voice

The Newsletter of NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 20, Issue 1 November 2016

NAMI Southwestern PA designated as the State NAMI office in Pennsylvania

NAMI Southwestern PA is expanding the scope of its operations and influence by becoming the official state organization to NAMI National. The strongest of the 58 NAMI affiliates in the Commonwealth, NAMI Southwestern PA was determined by NAMI National and stakeholders in the mental health system from across the state to be the best choice to rebuild the NAMI state organization in Pennsylvania.

“The absence of a state office in Pennsylvania has been detrimental to

advancing NAMI’s mission of providing recovery-focused support, education and advocacy to those living with mental illness and their families throughout the Commonwealth,” explains NAMI Southwestern PA Executive Director Chris Michaels. “We are uniquely positioned to assume the role of the Pennsylvania state office because of our visibility as the largest state-wide affiliate, our excellent staff and board of directors, and our accreditation from the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations (PANO).”

NAMI National conducted extensive research to determine the best approach to rebuilding a successful state organization in Pennsylvania: start over from the beginning and create a new 501(c)(3); or identify the strongest affiliate and build on its foundation. Three listening sessions were hosted by NAMI National this past June in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg and Philadelphia to gain feedback from NAMI members. Stakeholders across the state have been encouraged to offer opinions on whether to create a new state office or build upon the success of a current affiliate. This process provided confirmation that NAMI Southwestern PA - already serving as a leader across the state - was the solution.

“A strong state organization means a strong consumer and family voice,...With a renewed focus on collaboration, we will have the power to improve the quality of life for people with serious mental illness and their loved ones in every community in the Commonwealth.”

~ Chris Michaels, NAMI Southwestern PA Executive Director

“This organization has proven to be fiscally responsible, well-managed and effectively governed,” says Susan Gaffney, National Director of Field Capacity and Governance, NAMI National. “NAMI Southwestern PA lives the NAMI mission and has a deep commitment to serving all those with serious mental illness, both within their region and far beyond their own front door.”

NAMI National extended the invitation to NAMI Southwestern PA in July,

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From the Desk of the Executive Director

Christine Michaels, MSHSA
Executive Director, NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania

With Bob Dylan in the news and all that is happening here at NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania I couldn't help but think of my all-time favorite Dylan song: *The Times They Are a-Changin'*. I think it's a very apt way to describe our current environment. While Dylan sang this song like a somber warning to the world, I have found myself humming the tune like a cheerful "Amen." An affirmation. Yes! The times they are a changin', and we--NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania--are in the midst of great, wonderful change along with new events and new happenings.

In this edition of *The Voice*, we are excited for you to read about our new designation as the state NAMI organization in Pennsylvania. This edition also includes our regular articles: a public policy update, a listing of NAMI Support Groups, and a new informational piece offering a practical, user friendly overview of Mental Health Advance Directives. Alyssa Cypher is featured in this issue's *In the Spotlight*. Alyssa is a NAMI *In Our Own Voice* presenter who does a wonderful job with our school presentations.

Inside you will also find highlights from our 2016 NAMIWalks listing the top Walk fundraisers and sponsors. This year's Walk was by far our most successful ever. We had more teams and more walkers than any other year. Thank you to everyone who helped make our 10th Year Anniversary NAMIWalks such a great, great success!

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania is very excited about two new upcoming events. First, mark your calendar for Thursday, December 1 for the 1st Annual Green Light Gala for Mental Illness, to be held at the Heinz History Center. The gala aims to shine a light (green for mental health awareness) on the stigma of mental illness. Tickets for the event are still available by calling the office or visiting the web at www.namiswpa.org.

The second event is NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania's 1st Annual Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference. The conference will be on Friday, March 31, 2017 at the Pittsburgh Airport Marriott. There is so much excitement and energy around this conference; the initial feedback has been absolutely incredible. When registration opens, remember to sign up early as we probably will sell out.

Lastly, as you read through this edition, please take note how many times you see "1st", "new", "innovative", "record" (breaking) and know that we are delighted and eager to bring NAMI's signature education programs and our public awareness/anti-stigma events not only to the southwest region but now across the state. Yes indeed the times they are a changin'. NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania invites you to join with us, embrace the changing times, and come along with us on this new journey to becoming the new state NAMI organization in Pennsylvania.

Thank you and take care,

Christine Michaels, MSHSA
Executive Director, NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania

Public Policy Updates

PA State Budget



On June 29, 2016, legislators passed the 2016-2017 budget. Governor Wolf allowed the bill to become law without his signature and signed a revenue package to fund the spending plan on July 13, 2016. The enacted budget includes an increase in behavioral health spending to combat the state's opioid epidemic and an increase in spending for autism services. Although the Governor's

proposed budget included a partial 1/3 payment to restore human service funding cuts from FY 2012-13, the enacted budget does not include the restoration.

National News

In July, the House passed compromise language to HR 2646, Rep. Tim Murphy's mental health bill. The Mental Health Reform Act of 2016, S. 2680, is still awaiting a Senate vote. Neither mental health bill can move on to the next step in the legislative process until the Senate holds a vote.

Another bill awaiting a Senate vote is HR 1877, the Mental Health First Aid Act. The bill includes funding to provide Mental Health First Aid trainings. The House passed the bill in September. Identical bipartisan legislation has been introduced in the Senate.



While all eyes are on the Senate, it's likely that no legislative business will be attended to until after the election in November. Most Senators are back in their home districts through November 11.

State News

PA Legislative Updates

Rep. Dan Miller introduced HB 2057, an initiative that would require children to receive depression screenings before age 14. The bill requires school districts to notify parents of the requirement and collect verification of the screenings. Screenings can be done by a provider of the parents' choosing and results need not be provided to the school. Parents can opt their child out without providing a reason.

Representative Murt introduced HB 2173, a bill that requires insurers to submit information about their compliance with



the federal parity law. It also requires the Insurance Department to issue a report detailing how it's enforcing parity and educating the public about the issue.

Dept. of Human Services (DHS) Updates

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania continues to monitor the rollout of Community HealthChoices (CHC), the new managed care insurance program for the delivery of long term services and supports. Rollout of CHC will begin for the Southwestern region on July 1, 2017. In August, DHS announced that three health plans were chosen to provide CHC services: Amerihealth Caritas, UPMC for You, and Pennsylvania Health and Wellness (Centene). Following the announcement, five insurance companies submitted a bid protest. Until the protest is resolved, readiness reviews and contract negotiations have been postponed, although there is no plan to change the July 1, 2017 rollout date. Readiness reviews were scheduled to begin this fall. The state will send notices in early 2017 to those in the southwest region who will be impacted by the change. 🌐

which was accepted a few weeks later by the Southwestern PA board of directors. All parties involved are confident the organization has the governance, staff and access to resources to successfully rebuild the state office while simultaneously maintaining strength as an affiliate serving the 10 counties of Southwestern PA. NAMI National and NAMI Southwestern PA have now entered into a year-long structured planning and implementation process to accomplish this overarching goal.

“We would never want to prioritize needs at the state level at the expense of great work being done at the affiliate level,” Gaffney describes. “NAMI National and NAMI Southwestern PA have carefully assessed the potential for success and the intended consequences of significant growth in leadership for NAMI Southwestern PA. We are excited to be partners in this process as we determine a path forward that will reflect all shareholder interests across the state.”

Under the agreement between the two organizations, NAMI Southwestern PA will assume all the required responsibilities of an official state affiliate organization, including serving as the connection between NAMI National and every affiliate in the state. Goals are to:

- Rebuild and grow an effective state-wide NAMI by providing strong and dependable leadership to the 58 Pennsylvania NAMI affiliates, individuals with mental

illness and their families in the 67 counties of the Commonwealth.

- Develop and coordinate a statewide education and training program.
- Administer an annual statewide conference.
- Develop an effective statewide mental health advocacy program.

“A strong state organization means a strong consumer and family voice,” says Michaels. “So many of the affiliates in Pennsylvania are already doing great work. With a renewed focus on collaboration, we will have the power to improve the quality of life for people with serious mental illness and their loved ones in every community in the Commonwealth.”

A transition team will guide the process, ensuring that statewide interests are considered, the strength of the Southwestern PA affiliate is preserved, and a strategy is initiated to establish long-term fundraising success.

“Today, NAMI National looks with great enthusiasm to Pennsylvania as a place of promise,” Gaffney concludes. “A great spirit, wonderful activity and tremendous leaders have always existed in the Commonwealth. With a strong state office to unify and direct these efforts, we believe Pennsylvania will soon be one of the strongest states in the nation to ensure a collective voice for our constituents.”

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania invites you to join them at the

Green Light Gala for Mental Illness

Thursday, December 1 | 6:00 - 10:00 p.m. | Heinz History Center

Join us for a night of live music by Move Makers Band, delicious hors d'oeuvres catered by Common Plea and a special auction featuring a painting by renowned Pittsburgh artist, Johno Prascak.

Please visit our website or contact the office to purchase tickets for this event. Tickets are limited. Complimentary valet parking. Cocktail attire.

Presenting Sponsors:

UPMC HEALTH PLAN





In the Spotlight...

**Alyssa Cypher, Presenter, *In Our Own Voice*
Founder, *Inside Our Minds***

What motivated you to tell others about your life-long struggle with mental illness?

I'll never forget the date - November 29, 2014; it's tattooed on my wrist. After years of isolating myself, every aspect of my life was suffering. It was becoming increasingly difficult for me to maintain relationships, stay healthy and follow through on my graduate school commitments. So I did something drastic and shared my story in a Facebook post to the world.

What happened after you shared your story on social media?

I was stunned by the response, which was fast and vast. People who loved me, and then people who knew me, and then people I had never met, reached out to me with messages of hope and understanding and acceptance. My whole life until that point was defined by negative experiences. This was the first time I defined my life through a positive moment rather than negative ones. It changed my whole outlook and was the catalyst for my recovery.

What do you believe people with mental illness need most?

Connectivity. Stigma creates isolation, which dramatically inhibits recovery efforts. Connecting with others who are living with mental illness, and with healthcare professionals and community service providers who offer treatment and other vital resources, promotes inclusion and acceptance. My passion is to encourage connections to promote understanding, empathy and education.

What is *Inside Our Minds*?

Inside Our Minds is an anonymous, uncensored storytelling project that shares the experiences of people affected by mental illness in the Pittsburgh area. I founded *Inside Our Minds* with the hope that these personal stories will inspire open discussion about mental illness and foster connection among members of our community. I recently wrote a blog post on this topic for NAMI, which you can read on NAMI Southwestern PA's website.

How did you become involved with NAMI Southwestern PA?

When I first thought of the project that eventually became *Inside Our Minds*, I decided to seek out stronger connections within the mental health community. My research led me directly to NAMI Southwestern PA, specifically to *In Our Own Voice*. I went through the training program in early spring 2016 and have given multiple presentations since then, primarily to high school students. The stigma I experienced in high school controlled me for years, so I am grateful to have the forum to let other kids know they are not alone.

Why are you so passionate about inspiring others to tell their stories?

Initiatives like *Inside Our Minds* and *In Our Own Voice* not only give people with mental illness a voice, but also inclusion in the conversation by providing a forum to deliver education and qualitative information through personal storytelling. In telling my own story, I have become a happier, healthier, calmer person. It's so affirming that people know the real me - the good and the bad - and they choose to have a personal connection with me. Everyone deserves relationships that validate their worth.

The advocacy, education and support services provided by NAMI's staff and dedicated volunteers give hope for recovery and a future filled with promise for the estimated 600,000 people in our region who experience a mental illness each year. In the Spotlight is one way NAMI recognizes these people who so diligently work to promote improvements in our behavioral health system while championing the needs of our constituents. To nominate someone to be featured in *In the Spotlight*, please email info@namiswpa.org.

Record Number of Walk Teams Raise Funds and Awareness for the 10th Annual NAMIWalks

A record 92 Walk teams and nearly 3,000 people walked the Three Rivers Heritage Trail at the Waterfront of Homestead on Sunday, Oct. 2, to raise awareness for mental health and show support to the thousands of individuals and families throughout the region affected by mental illness.

This year's walk got off to a great start on a sunny autumn day with a warm welcome by Honorary Chair, Michelle Wright of WTAE-TV, and Walk Chair, Deb Wasilchak of Community Care Behavioral Health, both of whom have proudly attended each Walk since its inception 10 years ago. Followed by a rousing speech to continue raising awareness for our cause by NAMI Southwestern PA Board President, Dr. Charma D. Dudley, Executive Director Christine Michaels welcomed all participants and kicked off the day's festivities.

As the crowd formed around the bridge to begin the Walk, Amelia Jarsulic shared her beautiful rendition of the National Anthem, impressing and inspiring the audience. News cameras from a variety of local stations captured the moment, and after a brief interview with Christine Michaels, the 2016 NAMIWalks began in earnest.

Followed by throngs of passionate NAMI supporters, Michelle Wright, along with the jovial Pittsburgh Pirates Parrot, led the march over the bridge. With smiles on their faces and NAMI's mission at heart, thousands of NAMIWalkers poured over the bridge, showing the world why NAMI is the leading voice on mental health.



People of all ages from around the region joined in supporting the NAMI Southwestern PA NAMIWalks, making it a successful and fitting 10-year anniversary. Thank you to all our sponsors, volunteers, NAMIWalkers, team captains, and donors for your support. Your commitment helps to improve the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness and your passion inspires us to continue our mission and serve our community.



Save the Date for NAMIWalks 2017
Sunday, Oct. 1, 2017



Top 10 Teams 2016

CommunityCare-Askesis 2016, Team Captain Duncan Bruce \$10,195

Jim's Jocks, Team Captain James Ehrman \$5,315

South Hills Stampede, Team Captain Gerry Dugan \$5,065

Value Behavioral Health of PA, Team Captain Sue Klaus \$3,984

AHCI Walks for NAMI, Team Captain Lea Ann Gerkin \$3,684

PH-BH Community Team, Team Captain Rebecca Cullen \$3,355

Bellefield, Team Captain Kelly O'Toole \$3,345

UPMC Health Plan, Team Captain Devin Stabryla \$3,070

Team DHS Allegheny, Team Captain Denise Macerelli \$2,417

Bipolar Bears, Team Captain Fred Terling \$2,365



Team T-shirt Winner
NAMI Pittsburgh East



CommunityCare-Askesis Top Fundraising Team 2016



Honorary Walk Chair, Michelle Wright, WTAE-TV
pictured with NAMI's Sara Levine and
Executive Director Christine Michaels

Top 5 Individual Fundraisers

Deb Wasilchak (CommunityCare-Askesis2016) \$5,600

James Ehrman (Jim's Jocks) \$4,890

Charma D. Dudley Ph.D. (Value Behavioral Health of PA) \$1,525

Mary Kay Macik (PH-BH Community Team) \$1,420

Stephanie Sluka (Team Awesome) \$1,161



2016 NAMIWalks Chair, Deb Wasilchak,
Community Care Behavioral Health &
2016 Top Individual Fundraiser

2016 WALK Sponsors

Our sponsors lay the foundation for a successful walk each year. We thank them for their generosity and continued support.

UPMC HEALTH PLAN



National NAMIWalks Elite Sponsor



Cindy and Norman McHolme The Chuckie Mahoney Foundation Dollar Bank NHS
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Value Behavioral Health of PA

Curtis Mayernik, MD Ohio Valley Hospital

Charma D Dudley, Ph.D, FPPR Family Behavioral Resources Greek Catholic Union
Hinkledire Entertainment Jewish Healthcare Foundaton Clifford A. & Dr. Cynthia Krey
Peter and Alice Leone Jon Lloyd, MD Maher Duessel, CPA
Theodore Trbovich, Attorney at Law Wesley Spectrum Services
Westmoreland Casemanagement and Supports, Inc

Do you know what a Mental Health Advance Directive is?

You should.

A Mental Health Advance Directive (MHAD) is a legal document that allows you to make your mental health choices and preferences known to mental health providers in the event that you are unable to do so in the future. In addition to giving individuals more choice and control over their treatment, an MHAD can, in some cases, reduce or eliminate barriers to family member involvement in a loved one's mental health treatment.

Here are some quick facts about Mental Health Advance Directives:

What kind of choices does an MHAD include?

At minimum, an MHAD must contain choices about beginning, continuing, or refusing treatment, including information about what treatment is wanted and what treatment is not wanted. The following information may also be included:

- Treatment preferences, including instructions about medication, preferences for treatment facilities, consent for Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT), and participation in drug trials.
- Instructions about religious choices, dietary requirements, family notification, temporary custody of children, and temporary care for pets.
- Information about what types of activities help or worsen symptoms and preferred intervention in the event of a crisis.

What types of MHADs are available?

- Declaration: contains instructions about your treatment in the event that you become unable to make decisions or communicate your wishes.
- Mental Health Power of Attorney (POA): designates someone else, called an agent, to make treatment decisions for you in the event of a mental health crisis.
- Combined Form: allows you to make some decisions and choose an agent to make other decisions for you in the event of a mental health crisis. You choose which decisions your agent can make for you.

What makes it valid?

- You must be at least 18 years of age at the time of writing.
- The document must be signed and dated with two witnesses' signatures.
- You must not have been declared incapacitated by a court or be under an involuntary commitment at the time of writing. Call us if you have questions about whether either of these applies to you.


What happens after I complete an MHAD?

- Give copies to your service providers, agent, and friends or family members who would be notified in the event of a crisis. We will also keep a copy on file.
- You can change or revoke your MHAD at any time, as long as you have capacity.

You must create a new MHAD at least every two years. Your MHAD will automatically end two years after the date you signed it unless you do not have capacity at that time.

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania hosts the Allegheny County Mental Health Advance Directive Hotline and provides training, education, and assistance with individual completion of Mental Health Advance Directives. In the last year, NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania has educated over 150 individuals about the importance and function of MHADs.

We offer three different types of training: Comprehensive Provider Training, Service Coordinator New Hire Training, and Workshops for Individuals. We can also design a custom presentation that fits the needs of particular groups or organizations.

For more information about MHADs, contact the MHAD hotline at 1-888-264-7972 or, contact NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania's Advocacy team at 412-366-3788. 



NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania proudly presents:

1st Annual Child & Adolescent Mental Health Conference

Friday, March 31, 2017 | Pittsburgh Airport Marriott

Deadline to submit workshop proposals is Friday, December 2.
Visit <http://tinyurl.com/namiwrkshp> to submit proposals.

NAMI Family-to-Family Teacher Training Weekend

Friday, February 17 - Sunday, February 19

Pittsburgh, NAMI Southwestern PA Office

A NAMI Family-to-Family teacher is a trained NAMI leader. They play an important role in ensuring that all class participants feel welcomed and supported and that the course's educational objectives are met. NAMI Family-to-Family teachers are uniquely qualified to lead a class because they are family members who love and support a person living with a mental health condition. Teachers therefore can empathize with and encourage others who are just beginning, or continuing their journey with a loved one.

NAMI Family-to-Family teachers are volunteers who become certified by successfully completing a 3-day training. The training is designed so that volunteers learn and practice specific skills that will ensure that course participants have a meaningful, informative class experience. After training, teachers will know how to deliver class content, encourage group discussions, and direct class energy towards positive outcomes.

All potential teachers must first complete a training application and screening process before being approved to attend the training. It is preferred, but not required that individuals are graduates of the NAMI Family-to-Family education course. Candidates must also be a NAMI member at time of training.

Please contact Susan Caban at 412-366-3788 or email scaban@namiswpa.org for more information and for training applications. Space is limited. Deadline for application submission is Friday, January 20, 2017.

NAMI Support Groups...

Visit the NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania website, www.namiswa.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, 5-7 p.m. Contact: Linda Thornhill, 412-403-9539 for more information.

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

NAMI Pittsburgh North - Ross Township, 1st Wednesday of the month, 7-9 p.m. Contact: Candy/Pete Venezia 412-361-8916

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

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

NAMI McKeesport - McKeesport, 2nd Thursday of the month, 7 p.m. Contact: Violet Ludwig 412-373-7977

NAMI Western PA Borderline/Personality Disorders Family Support Group - Ross Township, 3rd Saturday 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. Contact: Sue Rudisin 412-246-5859.

Armstrong County

NAMI Armstrong County - Kittanning, 4th Thursday of the month. Contact: Family Counseling Center of Armstrong County 724-543-2941.

Beaver County

NAMI Beaver County - Rochester, 3rd Thursday of each month. Contact: Carla Braund at 724-888-6877 or email at carlabraund@namibeavercounty.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

Contact: Butler NAMI Office 724-431-0069

- Butler, last Wednesday of the month, Mental Health Association, Voyager Rm 6:30 p.m.
- Zelienople, 2nd Tuesday of the month, Passavant Retirement Center 5:30 p.m.

Fayette County

NAMI-C.A.R.E. Fayette County

Contact: Carol Warman 724-439-1352

Indiana County

NAMI Indiana County - Community Guidance Center, 724-465-5576

Lawrence County

NAMI Lawrence County

Contact: Sandi Hause 724-657-0226

Washington County

NAMI Washington County - Washington, 4th Thursday of the month, 7 p.m. Contact: Jim Gleason 724-225-1607

Westmoreland County

NAMI Alle-Kiski - New Kensington, 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7 p.m. Contact: Thad Kaminski 724-339-1339

NAMI Connection Peer Recovery Support Group - Greensburg, Tuesdays, 2:30 - 4 p.m. Contact: John (724) 853-8792

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

- Belle Vernon, 1st Tuesday of the month, 7-8:30 p.m.
- Irwin, 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7-9 p.m.

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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NAMI Southwestern PA: Join Today — Let Your Voice be Heard!

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

- ☐ Individual/Family/Friend \$35.00
- ☐ Open Door (minimum of \$3.00) \$ _____
- ☐ Additional Contribution \$ _____ Donation to remain anonymous ☐

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- ☐ I would prefer my copy of the Voice electronically. (provide email) _____
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(provide email) _____

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

You may also join or donate via the website at www.namiswpa.org.

Membership is tax-deductible. Official registration and financial information of NAMI Southwestern 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.