NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania joined the Disability Rights Network lawsuit against the Governor’s proposed state budget, along with a coalition of consumer and family organizations, and continued to lead an onslaught of grassroots advocacy activities. We visited our legislators in their local offices, sent regular email alerts, gave presentations on the state budget and coordinated a successful postcard campaign in southwestern Pennsylvania. NAMI brought a busload to Harrisburg for the PA Community Provider Association’s annual Capitol Day, which included legislative visits and a noontime rally. Usually held in the Capitol’s rotunda, the largest rally ever was moved outside!

Our Call to Action alerts were being issued right up to June 30 when Gov. Corbett signed the budget a few minutes before midnight. Harrisburg insiders let us know the legislators heard our message. We know that we made a difference, but we also know we cannot stop now. The thought of postcards flooding the legislative mailboxes in Harrisburg brings a momentary grin to our Education and Community Relations Director Sharon Miller. She very quickly and grimly adds, “We need to make state budget advocacy a year round activity.”

Intense advocacy was able to mitigate the proposed 20 percent cut in mental health services to 10 percent. And while the proposed block grant was removed from the final budget, a human services block grant pilot program was included in House Bill (HB) 1261, the welfare code bill enacted as Act 80.

Act 80 provides the framework and details of the human services block grant pilot, which is limited to 20 counties. In order to participate, interested counties needed to complete an application designed to assess the county’s readiness to move forward. The deadline for applications was Aug. 17. Block grants would be phased in over a four year period with limits on how much money can be moved from one category to another, ranging from 20 percent in 2012-2013 to no limit in 2015-2016. NAMI Southwestern PA is monitoring its 10-county region and the counties applying for the pilot. The block grant will simply be phased in.

Legal concerns have emerged regarding a county’s exposure to liability lawsuits in a block grant funding arrangement.

continued on page 5
Since early spring, we at NAMI Southwestern PA have been tirelessly working to advocate against the 20 percent state budget cuts, the human services block grant and the elimination of General Assistance cash assistance, all included in Gov. Corbett’s 2012-2013 proposed budget. Now, we are consumed with what I have dubbed as the “aftermath” of the finalized 2012-2013 state budget. Enacting the state budget always requires General Assembly legislation and usually related pieces of legislation. This year it is Act 80 that contains the welfare code changes to General Assistance and establishes the block grant pilot program for 20 Pennsylvania counties. Between the feature article and Sharon Miller’s News Around the Region, the lasting issues of the 2012-2013 state budget process are well depicted.

Our regular work demands didn’t stop. Find Information. Gain Insight. Get Support. provides an impressive overview of the NAMI signature programs that we are able to bring to the region. Also, in this edition of The Voice we are featuring an organization in our Spotlight column. The Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers’ Association, a greatly valued organization near and dear to our hearts, is showcased.

And finally, it’s NAMI Walk time! Our Walk fundraising is more critical than ever this year. Like many consumer and family organizations, NAMI Southwestern PA saw a substantial cut in government funding for 2012-2013. Even though successful advocacy trimmed the cut in overall mental health funding to just 10 percent, NAMI Southwestern PA experienced a 20 percent cut. And yes, we have more work to do, more reasons to advocate, more classes to teach, more support to offer families. We are needed more than ever. Supporting the NAMI Walk supports our work!

Be there! Join us on Sunday, October 14 for the 6th Annual NAMI Walk!

Sincerely,

Christine Michaels, MSHSA
Executive Director, NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania
Ensure Your Vote is Cast

On Aug. 15, the Commonwealth Court upheld Pennsylvania’s New Voter ID Law in effect for the upcoming general election. The Dept. of State has intensified its voter outreach efforts through www.VotesPA.com and social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The law requires voters to show an acceptable photo ID at the polls on Nov. 6.

If you do not have an acceptable photo ID and require one for voting purposes, you may be entitled to get one FREE OF CHARGE at a Penn Dot Driver’s License Center.

www.votespa.com - has an updated format for easy access to information on what constitutes an acceptable photo ID and how to obtain a valid ID.

www.namiswpa.org - is the All-the-Election-Info-That-You-Need site. Or you can call the NAMI Southwestern PA office at (412) 366-3788.

Dept. of State’s Voter ID Hotline: 1-877-VotesPA (1-877-868-3772)

Key dates for the 2012 elections

• 10-9-2012 - General Election Registration Deadline
• 10-30-2012 - Last day to apply for Civilian Absentee Ballot
• 11-2-2012 - Last day for County Board of Elections to receive voted civilian absentee ballots
• 11-6-2012 - General Election

Mental Health Care Gets My Vote

NAMI PA, NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania and NAMI PA Main Line have partnered to customize NAMI’s Mental Health Care Gets My Vote! initiative for Pennsylvania. We urge NAMI members and our stakeholder partners to join with us to support this effort to mobilize voters and educate the candidates on issues related to mental illness and mental health care.

To help you to mobilize voters, we have prepared voter information for 2012 Election Guides which include:

• How to register
• How to get the ID you will need to vote this fall
• Important deadlines

Please share this information via newsletters, your website and handouts at your events.

To help you educate candidates on the issues, we recommend the following links, which can be found on our website www.namiswpa.org (click Mental Healthcare Gets My Vote! image):

• NAMI’s recommendations, including their suggestions for contacting candidates to “Ask a Question” about their positions on mental health related issues
• Candidate Kits
• Contact information for Pennsylvania candidates for U.S. Senate and House races

We encourage you to contact the candidates in your district to schedule a time to distribute the candidate kits as well as to ask questions (either direct to the candidates or campaign staffers) about their positions related to mental health care and inform them about NAMI positions. Contact me at the NAMI office at (412) 366-3788 or smiller@namiswpa.org for additional Mental Health Care Gets My Vote! education materials.

General Assistance Benefit Ended Aug. 1

General Assistance (GA) was eliminated from the recently enacted state budget. As of Aug. 1, GA payments were no longer available. This affects very low income Pennsylvanians who received the $205 monthly cash assistance allowance. While a limited benefit, recipients of this program did not
meet the requirements for TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) and other programs. This small amount of money was typically used to help people take the bus, do laundry, afford co-pays for medicine, rent a room and maintain basic hygiene.

Be sure to let the welfare office know if:

- You are pregnant, OR
- You are caring for a minor child, OR
- You are blind.

Most people in these categories may be able to KEEP their cash assistance.

**When to File an Appeal**

If you or a family member or someone you know falls in one of these categories and had their cash assistance eliminated, an appeal should be filed. If you also had your food stamps and/or Medical Assistance cut along with your cash assistance, an appeal should be filed. If for whatever reason at any time you believe the welfare office made a mistake, an appeal should be filed. Everyone has a right to a face-to-face hearing on their appeal, and accompanying support persons and witnesses are permitted.

The appeal form is on the back of the welfare notice of termination. Once completed, drop the form off at your County Assistance Office (CAO) and be sure to keep a copy for your records. If you cannot get to the CAO, send your appeal by certified mail, return receipt requested. If the welfare notice form is misplaced, an appeal can be filed on a blank piece of paper.

If after you file an appeal, you require further assistance, contact Community Legal Services’ Welfare Law Line: (215) 227-6485.

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**Book Review...**

**Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Demystified: An Essential Guide for Understanding and Living with OCD**

**Author:** Cheryl Carmin, PhD

*Recommended for:* This book may be of interest to those that are looking for more information about OCD for themselves or a loved one.

Do you have a loved one that you believe might be dealing with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)? Want to know more about the signs, symptoms, biology and treatment of OCD?

*Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Demystified: An Essential Guide for Understanding and Living with OCD* is a great book for readers that are looking for an easy to understand book that gives practical advice and general information about OCD that would be great for a person that is just beginning to find out about the disorder. The book contains chapters on finding appropriate treatment, Obsessive-Compulsive Spectrum Disorders and comorbid disorders, common medications prescribed, and includes a chapter focused on children with OCD. Each chapter has a “Frequently Asked Questions” section that gives helpful answers to common questions that might arise related to that chapter’s content, and Chapter 12 is devoted to organizations and resources that can provide more information and support.
NAMI Southwestern PA Answers Call to Action continued from page 1

For more information, go to www.namiswpa.org and click on FY 2012-13 Human Services Block Grant Pilot.

Regrettably, no degree of intense advocacy was able to stop the elimination of General Assistance (GA) cash assistance in the final stage of the budget. GA was created over 80 years ago during the Great Depression to provide Pennsylvania’s most vulnerable citizens a last resort safety net program. GA cash assistance, no more than $205 per month, provided a critical bridge to self-sufficiency and stability to 70,000 individuals. GA helped victims of domestic violence secure new housing as well as many homeless individuals dually diagnosed with mental illness and substance abuse disorders. The elimination of GA cash assistance will place a strain on shelters, soup kitchens, churches and community mental health agencies. Others rather than beg charitable help will turn back to criminal activity like stealing and selling drugs, almost guaranteeing their return to jail.

HB 1261 not only eliminated GA cash assistance but expanded the work requirements for some individuals to maintain their GA Medical Assistance benefits. The parent of a child under 21 years old must now meet work requirements to maintain the child’s benefits. Parents must verify 100 hours per month, earning at least minimum wage. The bill also expanded work requirements and enforcement language for individuals receiving Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or what is commonly called food stamps. The changes in the welfare code and the Human Services Block Grant Pilot both enacted under Act 80 have potentially devastating future consequences that we must anticipate.

The future of the community mental health system as we know it is very uncertain and under constant funding and regulatory attack. Every person who is a NAMI Southwestern PA supporter must share in the sense of accomplishment that our advocacy efforts made a significant impact. A 20 percent cut would have been very destructive; however, a 10 percent funding cut provides little comfort. And, we did slow down the implementation of the human services block grant.

We must continue the intense level of advocacy. Both state and federal governments will continue to cut mental health funding. Medicaid reform and the Affordable Care Act will bring changes to our mental health system. NAMI is a movement for social change, for social justice. Advocacy is not one size fits all, but there is an advocacy role for everyone. From legal to legislative to public policy oversight to membership, there are all types of advocacy. On a personal level, Debbie Ference, Associate Director of NAMI Southwest PA, said this about our trip to Harrisburg for Capitol Day in June: “It was the most important work I have done since I came to work at NAMI seven years ago.” Debbie experienced the actualization of advocacy, of making a difference.

Going forward, we need members and colleagues to support our advocacy activities.

The Disability Rights Network Lawsuit was dismissed. The Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania issued a ruling at the end of July 2012.

“Advocacy is not one size fits all, but there is an advocacy role for everyone.”
~ Christine Michaels
Sunday, Oct. 14
SouthSide Works & Three Rivers Heritage Trail
Registration & Activities: 9 a.m.
5K Walk: 10:00 a.m.

We walk to raise awareness of mental illness and let people know they are not alone!

Mental illness affects one in four people each year, and we know that treatment works and recovery is possible. Help us to celebrate recovery and spread the word.

Join us for the 6th Annual NAMI Walk!

Featuring:

John Lovelace, NAMI Walk Chair, President of UPMC for You & Chief Program Officer, Community Care Behavioral Health

Michelle Wright, Honorary Chair, News Anchor, WTAE-TV

Jim Ehrman, Family Team Chair, Top NAMI Walk Fundraiser

Walk with us and enjoy:

Complimentary Refreshments • Music and Dancing • Team Photos
The Pittsburgh Pirate Parrot • Face Painting • Moon Bounce • Caricatures • Balloon Artists
And Other Surprises!
Sponsors make it happen!
Thank you for supporting the 6th Annual NAMI WALK

Premier Sponsor

Kick Off Lunch Sponsor
Cindy and Norman McHolme

Silver Sponsor
Allegheny Healthchoices, Inc.

Start/Finish Line Sponsors
Clarion Psychiatric Center    NHS Human Services    The Testoni Family
Value Behavioral Health of PA    Westmoreland Casemanagement and Supports, Inc.

Bronze Sponsors
Mercy Behavioral Health    Ohio Valley General Hospital    Pepper Hamilton LLP

Supporter Sponsors
Charma D. Dudley, Ph.D, FPPR    Jewish Healthcare Foundation    Clifford A. & Dr. Cynthia Krey
Project Transition    R.G. Johnson Company, Inc.    Wesley Spectrum Services

See www.namiwalks/SouthwesternPennsylvania for a full list of sponsors.

Save The Date
NAMI Southwestern PA’s 13th Annual Education Conference
For anyone whose life is affected by mental illness
Saturday, April 6, 2013
Pittsburgh Airport Marriott
Over 20 Continuing Education Credits will be available

UPMC for You is seeking volunteers to participate in focus groups and surveys regarding Medicare for people with severe mental illness. If you are a current Medicare beneficiary living with a mental illness or a caregiver, you may be eligible. Selected participants may receive gift cards or be eligible for a drawing.

Please contact Darcey Garda at dgarda@namiswpa.org or (412) 366-3788 for more information.
The Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers’ Association (PMHCA) provides information, referrals and supports to people who are receiving services or are in recovery from a mental illness. PMHCA recognizes the expertise that comes out of lived experience and is the only statewide association governed, managed and staffed by individuals who identify as being on their own mental health recovery journeys. The association promotes and supports recovery through advocacy and education to eliminate stigma and discrimination, and offers referrals to other resources and agencies that further promote recovery efforts.

Why is the recovery movement central to the work and goals of PMHCA?

Mental health recovery is a journey of healing and transformation that enables people with mental illness to live meaningful lives in their community of choice while striving to achieve their full potential. Recovery is believed to be the single most important goal for the mental health service delivery system, and the recovery movement puts into practice the belief that people can and do recover from mental illness. PMHCA advocates for recovery-oriented services for individuals and for recovery-oriented systems change because the opportunity for recovery is more likely in a society of acceptance, where the negative attitudes that surround mental illness are eliminated.

Why does PMHCA collaborate with organizations like NAMI Southwestern PA?

Like any organization, PMHCA doesn’t have the resources to be in all places at all times. We believe in cultivating a strong spirit of collaboration with other organizations – like NAMI Southwestern PA – that share our vision of what a successful mental health recovery system should look like. In the current economic climate, it’s important to avoid duplicating services while best utilizing the strongest assets of each organization. We can more effectively accomplish shared goals and affect positive changes when we combine resources and work together.

How successful was PMHCA’s recent postcard campaign?

PMHCA coordinated a postcard campaign in the spring of 2012 to deliver a strong message to Pennsylvania’s senators and representatives about the dire need to stop the dismantling of the state’s community mental health system through drastic budget cuts. Of the more than 15,000 postcards PMHCA printed, NAMI Southwestern PA was instrumental in mailing about one-third of them. Our collaborative efforts demonstrated that grassroots advocacy works. Though we were unable to prevent a number of devastating cuts from happening, we were instrumental in affecting some positive changes in the final budget. We informed our government leaders, and they now recognize the significance of the public’s interest and our passion to champion the mental health recovery movement locally and across the Commonwealth.

What does the future hold for PMHCA?

PMHCA has lost a large amount of state funding because of drastic cuts made to mental health services in the Governor’s budget. We are unsure about the amount of financial resources that will be available to us this fiscal year, so we are now operating with limited staff and resources. This means PMHCA is less able to participate in systems change and cannot offer as much individual advocacy, though we make that our priority when people contact us. Membership dues are traditionally low to enable consumers with limited means to join PMHCA, so we have appealed to our members for additional donations. We have also received grants from SAMHSA and the PA Developmental Disabilities Council and continue to move ahead on those projects as we seek new funding resources.
How can NAMI Southwestern PA members support the work of PMHCA?

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania members are welcome to further their commitment to increase the voice of Pennsylvania mental health consumers by also joining PMHCA. An individual membership fee is just $20, or whatever an individual can afford, and it provides opportunities to network with other people in recovery through training, committee and work group participation, as well as a subscription to PMHCA’s quarterly newsletter, email updates and a discounted registration fee for the annual conference.

Consider attending the Annual Pennsylvania Statewide Consumer Conference, held each June to celebrate mental health recovery. The conference is a community of people who come to share stories of the mental health recovery journey, renew old acquaintances, make new friends and learn from each others’ experiences, as well as participate in workshops on a variety of mental health related topics. Attendees find strength in the unity of diverse voices and are inspired to continue their own recovery efforts and advocate for system-wide reforms. Watch the PMHCA website www.pmhca.org for more information about the 25th annual conference, to be scheduled for June 2013, should funding become available.

NEW Organizational Membership Program

As a members-based, non-profit organization, NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania depends on members to achieve its mission of improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness through recovery focused support, education and advocacy. Organizational Members become part of a network of caring peer support and receive an enhanced benefits package that includes five individual memberships, recognition for the organization, discounts on events and training opportunities.

If you are a mental health professional or provider organization, consider joining the organizations listed below and become an Organizational Member of NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania. For details, contact Darcey Garda at dgarda@namiswpa.org or (412) 366-3788.

2012 Organizational Members

- Allegheny HealthChoices, Inc.
- The Alliance for Infants & Toddlers
- Autism Education and Research Institute
- Community Care Behavioral Health
- Community Guidance Center
- Family Behavioral Resources
- Familylinks
- Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration
- Gateway Rehab
- Heritage Valley Health System
- Pace School
- PMHS Mercy Behavioral Health
- SPHS Behavioral Health
- Southwest Behavioral Health Management, Inc.
- Value Behavioral Health of PA
- The Watson Institute Friendship Academy
- Wesley Spectrum Services
- Westmoreland Casemanagement and Supports, Inc.
NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania provides an array of education and peer support programs to help individuals living with mental illness and their families. All across the nation, NAMI’s signature programs are offering help and a sense of community for parents and caregivers, veterans, healthcare providers and persons with mental illness.

NAMI Southwestern PA’s programs are unique in the fact that everyone teaching our classes, facilitating support groups or making presentations throughout the community has direct lived experience dealing with mental illness or caring for a loved one with mental illness. All volunteers go through extensive training and are committed to bringing these programs to those in need. NAMI Southwestern PA takes pride in the dedication of our valuable volunteers who devote so much of their time to teaching and presenting our free education programs.

NAMI Southwestern PA is proud to offer several of these national signature programs here in our region. If you are interested in understanding more about NAMI’s educational opportunities or would like to participate in any of the programs you see below, please contact Susan Harrington at the NAMI Southwestern PA office at (412) 366-3788 or email sharring@namiswpa.org.

Find Information. Gain Insight. Get Support.
NAMI a national leader in peer-lead education

NAMI Family-to-Family is a free, 12-week course for families, partners and friends of individuals with serious mental illness, taught by trained NAMI family members and caregivers of individuals living with mental illness. The course focuses on the emotional responses families have to the trauma of mental illness, and participants learn coping and communication techniques, strategies for handling crisis and relapses, and will receive up-to-date information on medication, research and guidance on locating services and supports. Many family members have described their experience in the program as life-changing. Sessions begin in September 2012 and again in March 2013, and pre-registration is required.

NAMI Family Support Group Program is a free, monthly meeting of caregivers of individuals with mental illness where family members can talk about their challenges and help one another through their learned wisdom. Meetings are facilitated by trained NAMI members, and participants are encouraged to share actively in the work of the group. Support group locations and contact information can be found on our website at www.namiswpa.org: click on “Support.”

NAMI Basics is a free, six-week education program developed specifically for parents and other family caregivers of children and adolescents who have either been diagnosed with a serious mental illness/serious emotional disturbance or who are experiencing symptoms but have not yet been diagnosed.

NAMI’s In Our Own Voice is a unique public education presentation that offers insight into the hope and recovery possible for people living with mental illness. Trained individuals living with mental illness lead a brief, yet comprehensive and interactive presentation about the journey one goes through when diagnosed with a serious mental illness. Presentations are generally 90 minutes long, and audience participation is encouraged. Presentations are appropriate for students, faculty, peer groups, mental health professionals, faith-based groups and community/business organizations.

NAMI Provider Education Program is a five-week course that presents a penetrating, subjective view of family and consumer experiences with serious mental illness to staff who work directly with people experiencing severe and persistent mental illnesses. The course helps providers realize the hardships that families and consumers face and appreciate the courage and persistence it takes to live with and recover from mental illness. The course is taught by a trained five-member team of family members, individuals living with mental illness and a mental health provider who is either a family member or individual living with mental illness.
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@yahoo.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 Sewickley Family Connections Support Group,
Sewickley Contact: James Boaks (412) 749-7888

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

**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 or Mary K. Slater (724) 335-4593

NAMI Mon Valley, Monessen & Irwin
Contact: Harriett Hetrick (724) 872-2186
NAMI Southwestern PA: Join Today — Let Your Voice be Heard!

Annual dues include access to our regional lending library, resource and referral information, newsletters, conference information, and membership in NAMI Pennsylvania and national NAMI.

☐ Individual/Family/Friend $35.00
☐ Consumer (minimum of $3.00) $_______
☐ Restricted Income (minimum of $3.00) $_______
☐ Professional $50.00
☐ Additional Contribution $_______

NAME ___________________________________________________________________________________________________________
ADDRESS ________________________________________________________________________________________________________
CITY ________________________________  STATE ________ ZIP _____________ COUNTY __________________________________
PHONE (H) ______________________ PHONE (W)  _______________________________ FAX __________________________________
E-mail ____________________________________________________   Number of family members in membership ____________________

☐ I would prefer my copy of the Voice electronically. (provide email) __________________________________________
☐ I am interested in receiving Call to Action alerts via email and participating in legislation and policy advocacy.
  (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.