

# GAMIGram



Volume 21 Issue 2

NAMI Glendale

February 2006

## DATES AND EVENTS

### SHARE AND CARE

Do you need someone to talk to? Would you like some of your questions about mental illness answered? Our support group for family and friends of the mentally ill meets Tuesdays at 6:00 PM at Arden House, 1552 Colorado Street, Glendale, at the corner of Colorado and Lincoln. We encourage you to come. Enter through the front or rear entrance. Parking is available behind the building or on the street.

### MONTHLY NAMI MEETINGS AND EVENTS

**Tuesday, February 7, 2006**

**Share and Care: 6 pm – 6:50 pm.**

**Speaker: 7:00**

Carl Povilaitis from the Glendale Police Department will discuss how the “system” does or does not work when dealing with criminal matters and those who are potentially mentally ill. He will also share how the police in Glendale are trained to work with someone with a mental illness or with their families.

- **Tuesday, February 14, 2006**  
**Share and Care: 6 pm — 7:30 pm.**
- **Tuesday, February 21, 2006**  
**Share and Care: 6 pm – 7 pm.**  
**Business meeting – 7 pm.**
- **Saturday, February 25, 2006**  
**A Writers’ Retreat at Jane Hancocks**  
**8:30 am – 5:30 pm**  
**Come share your stories**  
**Call 818.240.7279 for details**
- **Tuesday, February 28, 2006**  
**Share and Care: 6 pm – 7:30 pm**
- **Tuesday, March 7, 2006**  
**Share and Care: 6 pm – 6:50**  
**Speaker: 7:00**

Lynn Brandstater, CEO of Verdugo Mental Health, will update us on the building project, VMH programs in general, and plans for VMH 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in May 2007, reflecting on history and plans for the future.

**HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES?**

## WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Jonée Shady**

The New Year started off with a bang with many exciting things planned for 2006. The first event sponsored by NAMI Glendale with the assistance of the Los Angeles DMH is our Family-to-Family class. After a plea to our membership to register, (I was fearful that we would have to cancel) we ended up overenrolled. We have managed to accommodate most everyone but people are still calling and asking to register. I am so pleased with this overwhelming response that I have agreed to hold another class immediately after this session ends. I hope that my wonderful co-teacher, Niki Davis, will be available too. So if you missed the boat this time around, we hope to see you in May. But make sure to sign up early so you won't miss the boat again.

LACCC (Los Angeles County Coordinating Council) spent a day discussing the future of NAMI Walks and its potential for LA County. The walk is an opportunity for fundraising on a greater scale than most of us are used to and we could use these funds to provide much needed outreach and services that NAMI has to offer. Another meeting is scheduled for February. A representative from this affiliate and I will be attending. If you would like to join me at this meeting, anyone who is interested is quite welcome.

We want NAMI to grow and we now have a greater potential to do this but it will only take place with the help of our members. So I am pleading to have a few more advocates join us in our efforts to spread the word of NAMI. We are here for support but we can offer much more than that in the way of education, awareness and advocacy. I have few good ideas in mind but as I have said in the past and I will reiterate again, I can't do it alone. And as our former first lady stated, it takes a village. So please join our village and help do this important work.

**DBSA GLENDALE - A SUPPORT GROUP**  
**for those suffering from**  
**depression, manic depression, bipolar disorder**  
**Glendale Adventist Medical Center**  
**1509 Wilson terrace, Glendale**  
**Tuesdays/Thursdays 6 – 8 pm**  
**dbsaglendale@earthlink.net**  
**626.358.6587 or 626.794.9751**

## WHAT GOES UP . . . by Judy Eron



### A Stranger to You Words and Music by Judy Eron

Love means caring and respecting,  
Love means trusting and protecting.  
That's what you and I are proud we always do,  
But one day I'll be a stranger to you.

I might be so down that I'm deep in a hole,  
Or I might be so high that I'm out of control.  
It's happened before—it can happen again.  
I know what the illness can do.  
One day I'll be a stranger to you.

So listen closely; we have to prepare.  
We're doing fine now, but we have to beware.  
A day's gonna come when you won't recognize me.  
One day I'll be a stranger to you.

I won't know what's best, though I'll sound like I do.  
I'll be so persuasive. You'll be so confused.  
My judgments will be bad.



**The *GAMlgram*, the Community's Voice on Mental Illness, is published by NAMI Glendale to educate its members and the general public about issues affecting the mentally ill.**

**President: Jonée Shady**  
**Editor: Jane S. Hancock**  
[janelou@aol.com](mailto:janelou@aol.com)

You should not trust what I believe.  
If this happens, please remember it's my illness, not me.

I love you so much, we have to prepare.  
We're doing fine now, but we have to beware.  
A day's gonna come when you won't recognize me.  
One day I'll be a stranger to you.

I know it's hard to believe that I could change so much,  
But believe me, you must. Believe me, you must.  
It's happened before, it can happen again.  
It probably will happen again. Yes, it's true,  
And one day I'll be a stranger to you.



Judy Eron's husband Jim was a Ph.D psychologist who had manic-depressive illness. After 13 years on lithium, he abruptly stopped taking it, which catapulted him into a year-long manic episode that ultimately led to his suicide. Her book is a personal account of her efforts to deal with his sudden enormous changes, how off-center she was thrown despite being a clinical social worker, despite both of them thinking they were prepared.

Judy Eron, special guest and author from NAMI Texas, gave a loving, sobering, and at times bittersweet humorous account of her journey with her husband Jim who ended his own life after more than a year of a manic episodes that drove his wife away and alienated him far from family, friends and reason. She spoke with warm vulnerability about the layered denial and untimely ignorance and unpreparedness that destroyed a loving marriage and stumped even the well-trained and practiced mental health providers in them both--she a psychotherapist and he a psychologist. She put this moving story to book and song and played a piece of her life to a packed audience on January 17, 2006, at a special NAMI Glendale meeting. Members bought copies of her book, *What Goes Up: Surviving the Manic Episode of a Loved One*, and the accompanying CD of her "bipolar love songs," written from the heart of her Nashville Tennessee songwriters' soul.

## ABOUT STIGMA

Elaine Des Roches, formerly from the NAMI Glendale affiliate and now a member of Long Beach Area NAMI, writes about a title of a session at a meeting she attended: "The Mentally Ill Among Us: A Danger to Themselves and Others." She says, "I thought that calling us an illness instead of people was stigmatizing." She quotes Michael McNellis, a volunteer at the County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, Office of Consumer Affairs, who said, "Does not this statement show a mindset that people with mental illness are dangerous, a common stereotype about people with mental illness? . . . Remember, you are the leaders in Los Angeles' diverse communities and must set an example for others. Be more sensitive about how you deal with and talk about all people, including those living with mental illness."

Something for us all to remember.

\* \* \* \* \*

Many NAMI members worried the moment they saw the commercials for the new sit-com "Crumbs." Stella March, stigma buster for NAMI, wrote the day after the show premiered, "Critics gave the premiere of ABC-TV's new comedy show 'Crumbs' on Thursday January 12 crummy reviews. The writing and acting were so bad that some predict that the show won't last more than two or three episodes. The bad news is that from a stigma perspective, the show was worse than NAMI anticipated. If the show remains on the air without major changes, the impact will be severe."

This week her comments were a little bit promising. Stella writes, "For two weeks running, ABC-TV's 'Crumbs' (Thursdays, 9:30 PM ET) has been watched by approximately 12 million people.

"Some StigmaBusters felt that the show exhibited a softer tone last week. This week, the shift was more noticeable, particularly in terms of stigmatizing language, which may have been redubbed. In fact, the January 26 episode, offered a glimpse of compassion.

"Recently released from a psychiatric hospital Mrs. Crumb (Jane Curtin), bored with her divorce support group, begins to socialize with a recovery group for crystal methamphetamine addicts. This situation becomes the vehicle for some disparaging jokes, however, when one of her sons criticizes her choice in new friends, Mrs. Crumb declares: 'Let me tell you something about these people. They've lost their homes, their families, their savings, and they've hit rock bottom. At least they look up to me.'

"The focus then turns to the stigma that Mrs. Crumb has felt since being released from the hospital -- knowing that people are talking about her, and not wanting to face old friends. Jokes aside, it was a relatively accurate and compassionate depiction of a stage of recovery. Sometimes, television shows evolve. Let's continue to monitor 'Crumbs' closely. We'll wait to see how or if the show progresses. In the meantime, StigmaBusters have accomplished a lot."

## RESOURCE INFORMATION

- ❑ (PMRT) Psychiatric Mobile **Response Team**, (626) 2582004 for **crisis management**, Monday-Friday 8 am – 5pm. At other times use the Access Line.
- ❑ Access Line, I24=hr: (800) 854-7771 for information and consultation, and for Psychiatric Mobile Response Team **After Hours** and **Week ends**.
- ❑ (MET) operates 5 PM to 1 AM. Call Local Sheriff Station (or 911 if dire emergency) to request MET response. For general information: (562) 9037530.
- ❑ Family Advocate: John Griffin (213) 637-2311.
- ❑ LA Police/Mental Assessment Response Team System – wide Mental Assessment Response Team (SMART.)
- ❑ Mental Evaluation Unit (MEU) call (911) to request the MEU response.
- ❑ IF YOUR LOVED ONE IS ARRESTED CALL: DMH Jail Mental Health Services: John Davis, District Chief (213) 229-9991.
- ❑ Inmate Information Center (213) 473-6080 or (213) 473-6100.
- ❑ Jail Inpatient Unit: Neil Ortego, MD (213) 893-5391.
- ❑ Suicide Prevention Center, Crisis Line 24hrs 7 days (310)391-1253.
- ❑ **Friendship Line**: a toll free telephone help-line, run by people with mental illnesses seven days a week, 365 days a year. This line offers Peer to Peer Support information about mental health Resources and connection to crisis lines.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Do you have a few hours a month to help us out? We are looking to fill the following volunteer positions:

✓ **Library Return Reminder**: Do you have one hour a month to call members who have checked out books from our library but have not yet returned them?

✓ **Recycling**: Would you be willing to come to Arden House once a month and collect recycling? You need a somewhat large car and you would take the recycling to Glendale Recycling Center on Chevy Chase in Glendale. Proceeds could then be mailed to our treasurer. Total time? Approximately 3 hours a month.

✓ **Contact person**: You would be required to simply provide the time and place for our weekly share and care meetings. Attendance at our meetings is not required so this is a job in which you will never need to leave your home but you would be performing a tremendous service for your affiliate.

✓ **Walk Coordinator**: Two representatives for our affiliate would attend one meeting a month on the second Saturday of the month. Their function would be to participate on the planning committee for the walk scheduled for October. The meetings are 2-3 hours long and then you would bring back the information to our affiliate at our monthly business meeting.

✓ **Book Reviewer**: Do you like to read? We need you to write an article or review of books that we have in our library or new ones that we could add to our library.

## COMMENTARY: MIKE MILLER

### What NAMI Means

#### A Father and Daughter Response

##### Michael and Carrie Miller

**Father:** Two years ago when my daughter, Carrie, was hospitalized for severe depression, I realized that I was desperate. I had read extensively about Carrie's illness, talked to psychiatrists and thought I had overcome the various problems including denial that sometimes afflict those of us who encounter mental illness. Although Carrie had been hospitalized before, my reaction to her current plight told me that I needed help. I asked the psychiatric nurse conducting a group session at the hospital for assistance and she recommended NAMI. I followed through with a phone call and attended my first meeting at NAMI Glendale. I have been attending ever since. Every Share and Care session is meaningful and contributes to making me a better parent (care giver) and more resilient in dealing with Carrie and her illness.

To summarize NAMI's benefit to me, I have listed some high points:

1. NAMI lets you know you are not alone and that many people have similar and far greater problems than you.
2. NAMI provides practical information on how to deal with a myriad of everyday problems too many to list. They cover issues of stigma, treatment, health care, family problems, personal adjustment, violence, police, care programs, and so on. NAMI is a great source of resources including books, organizations and articles to help address the many issues of mental health.
3. There is a therapeutic value in talking about your problems and the issues of mental illness and in listening to others and helping them.
4. NAMI enables you to understand and empathize with your loved one in a personal, medical, and societal context.
5. NAMI reminds you to take care of yourself and your needs.

The above summary only touches the surface. Many of the benefits are subjective; they pertain to feelings and emotions and hope and expectations. Most of all they helped me deal with the reality of psychiatric illness and my ability to understand and communicate with Carrie.

From the beginning, I advised Carrie of my involvement with NAMI and often shared with her some of my experiences. Her response to my involvement has always been positive. I am pleased that Carrie has written the following comment to describe her reaction to my NAMI participation.

**Daughter:** I do not clearly remember the months during which my Dad first became involved with NAMI, attending regular meetings and reading recommended books, as I was in the midst of a severe depression. However, several significant emotions stand out to me that emerged during this time period, related to his participation in the NAMI support group.

While my dad had spoken to enough psychiatrists and had enough experience with my illness to know a lot about what depression was, his level of understanding deepened significantly as a result of his involvement with NAMI. I remember at one point realizing, with a sense of awe and disbelief, that I didn't have to work as hard to express myself around my Dad. We always communicated well, but the overwhelming fatigue and depression, which made my brain feel like a useless lump in my head, made it almost impossible to accurately articulate what I was thinking or feeling. Communication usually took monumental effort but now my dad seemed to innately understand much of what I was going through, even without my verbalization. I could just feel it, and it was a tremendous relief. I did not feel quite as alone in my own hell.

This deeper level of understanding also fostered a greater level of empathy from Dad. He saw more clearly what I was experiencing and there was no judgment or just trying to "fix me." I felt more loved and accepted as a person, in spite of my illness, and this felt so nourishing in the barren desert of depression. The kindness and unconditional acceptance my Dad gave me helped quiet that harsh voice in my own mind that told me that I was just a weak, pathetic, and shameful loser for being ill.

When my dad became less afraid to ask me questions and broach difficult or painful subjects with me, this also helped me feel less isolated and stigmatized--someone actually wasn't afraid to interact with me on a real level and enter my world a little. Most people are afraid of interacting on such a real level or feel they can't, especially with someone who has a psychiatric illness. I also found it beneficial to my almost non-existent self esteem, and even stimulating and enjoyable, when my dad would discuss with me books and articles he got from NAMI and issues discussed at NAMI meetings.

I still look forward to hearing about what subjects come up in his meetings, and I feel respected--like I'm still an intelligent person who has something to offer, particularly when he seeks my viewpoint on a particular issue.

My dad's involvement with NAMI also brought me a sense of relief and comfort because I knew he now had people in his life who could understand what he was going through and hopefully, bring some relief and comfort to him, since I am aware that my condition is not only burdensome to me.

Through NAMI, my dad is also able to help other people struggling with similar issues. It helps me to know that my terrible illness hasn't just worn down my dad, but has empowered him with new knowledge and enabled him to help others in the world. I greatly admire and respect him for creating something positive out of such a challenging and painful experience, and it gives me hope that I will be able to do this as well someday. For now, I am continuing to make progress towards healing and enjoying a relationship with my Dad that has definitely become more meaningful and rewarding for both of us.