



NAMI Contra Costa

Contra Costa's Voice on Mental Illness *March 2007*

The NAMI Contra Costa Newsletter is available on the website: www.namicontracosta.org

COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH IN CRISIS

By David Kahler

Editor's Note: David Kahler is the Publisher of the NAMI-CC newsletter and the father of the late John Henry Kahler, who was in the county's mental health system from 1995 to May 14, 2003.

The headlines in the Contra Costa Times chart the recent decline of the county's mental health system.

November 7, 2006
**PSYCHIATRIC UNIT
TO CUT BACK**

November 15, 2006
**CUTS TO PSYCHIATRIC UNIT
APPROVED**

November 18, 2006
**PSYCHIATRIC UNIT
DIRECTOR RESIGNS OVER
TREATMENT OF TEEN
ACCUSED IN MOTHER'S
DEATH**

January 6, 2007
**HOSPITAL RECEIVES BILL OF
ILL HEALTH**

February 24, 2007
**PSYCHIATRIC WALK-AWAYS
STIR CONCERN**

On the front page of the May, 2006 edition of this newsletter (it is still on the website) Mike Cornwall, then president of Local #1, wrote "Denial is a very strong psychological defense, as long as it can be maintained. But it is the most brittle of defenses, and when it collapses, it is like an inner wall of protection tumbling down, revealing a painful truth all at once."

Mike was describing the denial and lack of insight that we as a society have towards our failed system of mental health. A failure on the federal level, on the state level and the county level.

That wall took some serious hits in the last six months. No one that does not have a family member that suffers from a serious and chronic mental illness knows much about the mental health system, nor do they care. Unfortunately this disinterest and lack of knowledge is reflected in their elected representatives.

But now after the series of articles in the Contra Costa Times by Sandy Kleffman and attention elsewhere in the media,

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March General Meeting

Thursday, March 15
7:00pm

Speaker

Dr. Aaron Chapman
Medical Director
South of Market Clinic

Topic

Dual Diagnosis

Library Available at 6:45 pm
Refreshments Available

John Muir Medical Center
Concord Campus
(Note: Formerly Mt. Diablo
Medical Center)
www.namicontracosta.org

2540 East Street, Concord
925-682 8200

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FREE Classes on Mental Illness	

NAMI-CC Care and Support Groups

Central Contra Costa County

1st Tuesday of each month, 7:30-9:00 pm Hillcrest Congregational Church, 404 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. Contact Peggy Luna, Dave Kahler, or Willie Mack 925- 676-5771 or e mail: xnamicc@aol.com

3rd Monday of each month, 7:15-9:15 pm, John Muir Hospital, Downstairs in the Stern Conference Room.. The group is facilitated by Dr. Mary Olwin and Gloria Hill. The Consumer Group will not be meeting. Call: Gloria Hill 925- 957-5146.

East Alameda County

4th Monday of each month, 7:00-8:30 pm., St. Claire's Episcopal Church, 3350 Hopyard Road. Pleasanton.

Contact: Russell or Donna White E mail: russdonnawhite@comcast.net 925-455 6901

CONSUMER RUN BIPOLAR SUPPORT GROUP

Where: 1420 Willow Pass Road, Concord, 2nd Floor
When: Every Tuesday, 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm
Contact: Chris Dodd: 925-646 5549 or
Marian: 646 5788

TRI-VALLEY BIPOLAR (Consumer Run)

Bipolar and Depression Support Group
Wednesdays, 7:15 pm to 8:45 pm
Clair's Episcopal Church, Pleasanton
Contact: Bob Hogan: 925-462 5481

BIPOLAR CHILL (CLIENT RUN)

Manic Depression Support Group
Wednesday 7:00—8:30 pm
710 Broadway #3G Walnut Creek
Contact Lisa or Scott 925-743 1160

SELF-INJURY SUPPORT GROUP

(Consumer Run)

For self-injury sufferers to talk about ways to change these behaviors and resolve feelings brought on by trauma.

Call: Veronica 925-845 7871

NAPA STATE HOSPITAL FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP (NSHFSG)

Meets the 2nd Saturday of each month
Where: Hospital's Volunteer Conference Room
For Information: Bill Schrader 707-433 9250

NEW HOPE

BIPOLAR SUPPORT GROUP

For parents of children and adolescents diagnosed with a mood disorder.

2nd Monday of each month

7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church Room #4

Contact: Anette 510-733 0577 or

Joani 925-962 9952

www.newhopesupportgroup.com

FAMILY ADVOCATE HOURS

Gloria Hill, Contra Costa County Mental Health Advocate

Mondays: 12:30—3:30 pm Tuesdays All Day: 925-957 5146 Thursday Morning: 925-957 5146

After 1:30 pm 925-646 5844 Pager: 925-476 2618 Any day of the Week.

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**PRESIDENT'S
COLUMN**
BY ART HONEGGER

The February General Meeting proved to be a very lively and emotional one. Our guest speakers were Dr. William Walker, Director, Health Services Department, and Donna Wigand, Director, Mental Health Division. Also present were Dr. Jeff Smith, Executive Director, Contra Costa Regional Medical Center, and Miles Kramer, Director of Psychiatry and Detention Health.

Dr. Walker and Donna Wigand presented what they viewed as a more effective use of resources. Funds used by the now closed Ward D are redirected to new outpatient teams assisting consumers at their local regions of our county. It remains to be seen if this will produce the care promised, and Dr's Walker and Smith encouraged the audience to follow the process and contact them directly when intended consumer help goes awry.

One of the primary concerns of those in attendance is the appalling lack of appropriate and effective residential facilities in our county. Several expressed feelings of disappointment in residential treatment centers both in and out of our county. They simply are not equipped to deal with the overwhelming needs, especially long term help for consumers.

Dr. Walker made a final comment regarding an immediate and major financial threat to the County Hospital. President Bush is activating funding cuts that include an \$8,000,000 hit to our hospital. He is doing this "administratively," needing no action by Congress. The only

**DR. ARRON
CHAPMAN
TO BE
MARCH
SPEAKER**

Dr. Chapman will be the speaker at the March General Meeting, March 15.

He is the Medical Director of the South of Market Mental Health Services Clinic. It is the largest outpatient mental health clinic in the San Francisco system.

Dr. Chapman specializes in the care of chronically and persistently mentally ill patients. He is very familiar with the intractable problems of those with a dual diagnosis. He treats the whole range of psychiatric disorders from bipolar to schizophrenia.

Dr. Chapman received his degree from Temple University in Philadelphia. He trained in psychiatry at Stanford University School of Medicine prior to going to work for the city of San Francisco.

E mail your questions in advance to: xnamicc@aol.com

remedy is restoration of funds through an act of our legislatures. I am personally shocked that this callous withdrawing of financial support can be done on the whim of one person.

Please contact your Representatives immediately (their contact info is on our web site, namicontracosta.org), and express your outrage.

The underlying injustice is the blatant discrimination in health care for persons with mental illnesses.....because of stigma. Shame on us.

COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH IN CRISIS

(Continued from page 1)

one would have to be in a vegetative state to be unaware that the system *is not working*.

Those that use the mental health system to help a loved one with a psychiatric disorder don't need anyone to tell them that it is a system in deep trouble.

It is a system that must follow the LPS (Laterman-Petris-Short) laws of 38 years ago that dictate a strong inclination to get a patient out of treatment earlier rather than later.

It is a system that features laws of confidentiality that make it exceedingly difficult for those with the responsibility for the patient to obtain critical information on the case. Laws that were passed to "help" the patient resulted in unintended consequences that sometimes make it all but impossible to manage the case.

Someone new to the field would presume that the decisions in the mental health field would be made on medical and psychiatric factors. They are not. They are made on budgetary and financial factors.

Example: You have been in an acute care hospital after a psychotic break and the nurse comes to you and says "you are getting out tomorrow."

"Oh, am I well?"

The nurse answers "no, your insurance has run out."

If you do not have the support of your family, you are on the streets to survive as best you can with your ongoing psychiatric disorder.

If you do have the benefit of family support, you return to them placing a tremendous burden

on them, completely disrupting the family. A family that has never had as part of their education the management of a psychiatric case.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Signals of the inability of the system to function at an acceptable level were:

- The county had three incidents of "parricides," the act of the offspring killing their parent. Parricide is a rare occurrence. Three occurred in just four months in Contra Costa. Each of these killers had been in our county's mental health system.
- The procedure of taking a "5150" directly to the Psychiatric Emergency (PES) was recently changed. Now they are taken to the ER (Emergency Room). This has resulted in "walk-always" to the extent that the Concord Police Department sent Sergeant Jeffrey Crump to the Mental Health Commission meeting, November 22, 2007. He pleaded that a "protocol" be established to competently assure the safety of the patient and that of the public.
- NAMI-CC has had many instances where their loved one was taken to the Regional Center's Psychiatric Emergency and then returned to the streets a short time later, still in need of treatment. This results in a "lower census" for the hospital, and an enormous problem for the family and a danger to the public.

To have those three patients pass through the system and not have any idea that they might be dangerous, demonstrates a failed set of procedures. Contra Costa has 2% of the state's population and *five times the* rate of parricide.

WHOM TO BLAME

The Contra Costa mental health system is in systemic failure. There are many aspects of the system that should and could be corrected.

Before those issues are addressed, the broad issue of systemic failure must be acknowledged and an appropriate plan devised and agreed to.

"If you always do what you've always done,
You'll always get what you always got"

In this case it would not be useful to blame the receptionist, the therapist, the psychiatrist or the department head.

The governing body of the county and the authority over all of those people is the Board of Supervisors. Only they can make a commitment to systemic restructuring of the mental health system. If a problem is not acknowledged, it cannot be addressed. Some of that can be done within the existing laws and budgets.

What cannot be done within the existing laws and budgets, the Board should forcefully demand that Assemblyman DeSaulnier, Senator Torlakson and Governor Schwarzenegger make these *priority* issues on their agendas. Our Board of Supervisors must go public and demand help from *our* state government as well as restructure the system at the county level.

When a family encounters the roadblocks in the system, the first thought is "who is in charge of this mess?" That would be appropriate if all you needed to fix was that one issue.

In this case the system badly needs to be restructured from top to bottom. Only the Board of supervisors can do this.

(Continued on the next page)

THE VIEW OF LOCAL #1

When John Gragnani, Mental Health Unit President, was asked their view of the changes at Psychiatric Emergency he said "Public employees Local One is outraged that Dr. Smith's irresponsible 'plan of correction' regarding Psych Emergency Services has endangered so many lives in our mental health community. We look forward to discussing the issue further with NAMI and the Mental Health Coalition and pledge to take whatever steps necessary to ensure safety for those in grave need.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Why did the inpatient psych units continue to lose reimbursement for years based on the lack of documented evidence of adequate care?
- With whom did Dr. Smith consult prior to the recent decision to send every psychiatric patient through the ER? Did he consult with the ER medical director? The psychiatric medical director? The county mental health Family Advocate? The Martinez Police department?
- What trainings were provided to the ER doctors and nurses so that they would be able to care for the psychiatric patients in a competent and compassionate manner?
- What polices were enacted *prior* to the change to assure the patients would be treated in a competent manner?
- Dr. Smith stated it was necessary to send every patient through the ER in order to assure their medical needs were properly addressed. Are there statistics or reports from which he drew this conclusion?

(Continued on page 6, column 2)

WALKER AND SMITH ADDRESS GENERAL MEETING

By Annis Pereyra

My husband and I attended the monthly NAMI meeting in February where Drs. Walker and Smith were presenters along with the Mental Health Director, Donna Wigand. It seemed that many of people in the audience were taken in by the "hope" that things were going to improve.

A statement made by a Concord Clinic employee was the most honest statement of the evening when he said that there aren't the community placements and resources to use for these acutely ill consumers and trying to put them in the community only increases problems.

I dial 911 when there are no other options because there is no mobile response team. Our last call to 911 resulted in 12 police officers responding and a bloody aftermath lingers in my mind. Dr. Walker's stepson committed suicide because he wasn't able to get the help he needed in this county which is not encouraging for the rest of us. Donna admitted she has never even been to most of the far away facilities like Crestwood Angwin which function as nothing more than a warehouse.

Diverting consumers to Nierka House is an example of why the "plan" is flawed. My son has been there multiple times. When the supervisor, Tony, is there things go in a better direction but the evening and weekend staff are not well trained nor is there a psychiatrist there most of

the time, so when someone is still too unstable, the police are called. Nevin House is supposed to be a residential dual diagnosis program which also doesn't have a staff who can handle people who are unstable. The same can be said for Pleasant Hill Crestwood which doesn't even accept the more difficult patients nor any the time, so when someone is still too unstable, the police are called. In addition Pleasant Hill Crestwood doesn't even accept the more difficult patients no one with recent substance abuse issue, which 70% of mentally ill people have.

Donna Wigand seemed confused about how many nurses were assigned to transition teams and in what locations.

Unfortunately these teams only work 8:30 to 5pm Monday through Friday with no nights, weekends, or holiday hours when most of the emergencies occur. Donna is not to blame for the mess at the county hospital and budget cuts have severely cut services. The solution to have people go to the regular ER first to be medically cleared was not well planned, and came from Walker and Smith. 5150's could have still gone into the psych ER and a team could have come over from Medical ER to "clear" them to increase revenue from insurances. The ER is not able to accommodate our loved ones with acute behavioral problems. The solution to hire a behavioral company for \$9,000,000 to come in to run the 23 bed inpatient unit at the county hospital does not appear to be a good use of tax payers' money since the company, BHR Corporation, is the company that

(Continued on page 6, column 3)

NAMIWALK NEEDS SPONSORS WALKERS AND TEAMS

NAMI's third annual San Francisco Bay Area NAMI-WALK is scheduled for May 12, 2007. This is our largest fundraiser and we need your help. Do you have a friend or family member who works for a corporation or small business and might be interested in being one of our sponsors?

If you do, please call (925) 354-1223 Anna Garcia or Walk Manager, Laurie Williams (800)556-2401 and we will provide you with the information you will need to solicit a donation.

If you are unable to make the call yourself, please call us with the information and we will contact them directly. Remember, we cannot do this without your help and our WALK sponsors are greatly appreciated. So, please do not hesitate to call with any information which might help in making NAMIWALK San Francisco Bay Area a huge success.

YOU AND YOUR SPONSORS ARE INVITED TO THE KICK OFF LUNCHEON IN SAN MATEO!

When: Thursday, March 22, 2007

Time: 11:30-3:30p.m.

Where: San Mateo Elks Lodge (Sanmateoelks.org) For Directions

229 West 20th Ave

San Mateo, CA 94403

Speaker: Katie Cadigan, Documentary filmmaker

"When Medicine Got it Wrong"

QUESTIONS TO ASK Continued from page 5, column 1)

- How many EPS's in the state send every patient through the ER first? How many in the Bay Area?
- What is the new outpatient plan with "special teams?" Is there a Program Description, with job descriptions and policies spelled out signed by the Mental Health Director?
- What information is being distributed to the families about these changes?
- Who will monitor this program and what guidelines have been set?
- Dr. Walker has stated that additional beds in the community have been obtained to alleviate the need for so many acute care beds at the hospital. Are these beds prepared to administer the level of acute care that would have been provided at the hospital?
- How many patients are being sent "out of county" since these changes were made. What is the expense?

This Kick-Off Luncheon is free for anyone interested in learning more about the Walk and how to participate as a Sponsor, Walker, Walk Team Captain or Volunteer

**RSVP requested by
March 11, 2007**

**Seating is being reserved in the order received.
RSVP to:**

**laurie@namiwalksfbay.org
800-556-2401**

OR

**go-banannas@hotmail.com
925-354-1223**

FUTURE GENERAL MEETING SPEAKERS

Thursday, April 19, **Veronica Vale & Krista Radojevich**, consumers, mental health advocates, "**In Our Own Voice**," a NAMI program of hope & recovery

Thursday, May 17, **Jacqueline Persons, Ph.D.**, Director, San Francisco Bay Area for Cognitive Therapy, "**Cognitive-behavior Therapy for Depression**."

Also coming this year:

Dr. Steven Hinshaw, Chair, Psychology Dept., UC, Berkeley, **researcher**, author of *Mark of Shame*

Dual Diagnosis, a Panel Presentation: (1) individual from **Dual Recovery Anonymous**, a 12 step recovery program; (2) **Nina Farrar, specialist, dual diagnosis, chemical recovery**, John Muir Behavioral Health Center; (3) **Rebecca Woolis, Program Director, Bonita House** (dual recovery facility), author of *When Someone You Love Has a Mental Illness*

WALKER AND SMITH ADDRESS GENERAL MEETING

(Continue from page 5 column 3)

ran John George Psychiatric Hospital in Alameda county for 5 years with questionable results.

It is our responsibility to be the voice for those who cannot speak for themselves. We need to organize to wage an effective battle to get better housing, services, and resources in this county for our mentally ill who need them.

**LETTERS TO THE
EDITOR**

Editor:

Sorry I missed the Family to Family class on Thursday but my daughter, the one with the mental illness, was in the hospital. We found out she had stopped her meds months ago and she started hearing voices and going into her own little world. I took her to the Psych ward in Oakland and they admitted her. The next day they gave her a new med and we believe this may be the reason she began hearing really loud voices, some coming from outside her brain, and she started running to get away from them and ran out the fire escape door and fell a flight onto concrete.

She is in the hospital now with a shattered and dislocated wrist (they had to operate and put pins in) 30 stitches in one knee, and a knee cap broken in three places (they had to operate on the knee and put rods in).

I would like to get some legal responsibility over her so no one can take advantage of her and that would know and have to approve anything that is done to her.

Is that called a conservatorship or something like that? Sorry I don't know the legal term. Can you lead me to someone who can help with this- a lawyer or someone with this kind of information. I would really appreciate any information you can give me.

Name Withheld

COMMENTS

Comments for the newsletter should be sent to:
xnamicc@aol.com
Fax: 925-476 1444

MARCH DONATIONS

New Members
In the Century Club
Mark and Judith Cohen

Donation
Judith A. Raykovich
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Clorox Company Foundation

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A Very Generous Donation
Mary Lowenthal
Has Directed the
Society of FBI Alumni, Inc.
To make a donation to
NAMI Contra Costa

DONATION FORM

Make check payable to NAMI-CC
Mail to: Treasurer, NAMI-CC
P.O. Box 21247, Concord, CA. 94521
NAMI-CC Tax ID # 68-0209474

Name

Street Address

City State Zip

Phone: _____

Use Donation For:

- Peer to Peer Program
- NAMI-CC General Fund
- Family to Family
- K.I.D.S. Program
- Housing

NAMI Contra Costa
 P.O Box 21247
 Concord, CA
 94521

**Renew Your
Membership Now**

Stamp

NAMI Walk 2007
Less Than Two Months Away
Saturday, May 12, 2007 9:00 am
Speedway Meadow, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

NAMI Contra Costa

The annual membership dues are \$40. This makes you a member of NAMI National, NAMI California and NAMI Contra Costa. You are automatically a member of all three organizations.

If you are solicited for membership or special donations from the State or National organizations, give generously if you can, but all such donations are voluntary and would be over and above your membership in NAMI Contra Costa.

Dues paid in October, November and December provide membership for the following year.

Send your membership application to:

NAMI Contra Costa
 P.O. Box 21247
 Concord, California
 94521
 E mail: xnamicc@aol.com

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 E mail address: xnamicc@aol.com

Affiliated with NAMI National and NAMI California

APPLICATION FOR NAMI-CC MEMBERSHIP
 Make check payable to NAMI Contra Costa
 Complete this information cut-out and return it to:
 Treasurer, NAMI-CC
 P.O. Box 21247, Concord, CA., 94521
 E Mail Address: xnamicc@aol.com

Name _____

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City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

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Membership is: New A Renewal

<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Client	\$ 20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Dual Affiliate	20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> General Membership	40.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Membership	50.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Century Club	100.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime	500.00