



National Alliance on Mental Illness

**NAMI**

**Flagstaff**

Northern Arizona's Voice on Mental Illness

# NAMI Flagstaff Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2014-2015

*Thank You!*

To everyone who walked, jogged, skipped, and dashed for mental health!

The Walk Your Socks Off Walk-A-Thon was a success and we were able to raise money for both the NAMI Wellness Project and other NAMI groups and classes. The NAMI Wellness Project links mental wellness with exercise through a weekly routine coached by a personal trainer. We appreciate your support!



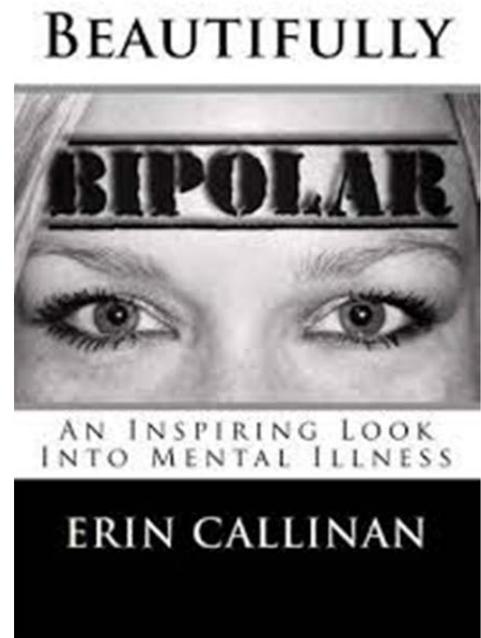
# Book of the Month

By: Barbara Bartell, NAMI Flagstaff Past President

## **Beautifully Bipolar: An Inspiring Look into Mental Illness**

By: Erin Callinan

This book is the perfect gift for a teen or young adult experiencing life problems that often accompany growing up and leaving home. At a time of life when we are least prepared to deal with the arduous journey towards recovery, mental illness is most likely to strike. The years between 14 and 25 are fraught with conflict and danger, even during the normal developmental process. The addition of a mental illness and the loss of a stable sense of self in a young person of this age is tragic. It can lead to an even more tragic outcome: suicide. Suicide is the third leading cause of death between the ages of fifteen to twenty-four.



At one of the lowest points in her illness, Erin Callinan stated, “I wanted to die, but I didn’t know how to let go enough to end it.” Erin’s psychotic break happened at the end of her junior year of High School. She had no family history of bipolar disorder and no traumatic experiences that could explain the sudden onset of these disturbing symptoms of psychosis.

Erin’s parents could not explain the sudden changes in their daughter’s personality or level of functioning because there was no significant exposure to drugs or alcohol. Erin was eventually hospitalized for a period of time where she was heavily medicated with anti-psychotic drugs which further took away her personality.



Finally, Erin’s psychiatrist, Dr. Caspian, weaned her off the inappropriately large doses of medication. She put Erin in charge of managing her own medication. With help from Dr. Caspian, Erin learned to monitor her own illness for signs of a relapse and to practice self-care.

This is an inspiring story of triumph over tragedy. If more young adults like Erin were able to speak openly about mental illness, it would prevent much of the damage done by the deadly silence. Erin Callinan’s book should be required reading at high schools across the country.

Erin and her parents speak to groups throughout Arizona about their struggles and triumphs. We hope they return to Flagstaff soon. Her message needs to be repeated loud and often. When teens and their parents hear it, they will come to realize that mental illness is an illness like any other and not a moral failing.

## **NAMI Member Spotlight: Kay Brown**

Kay Brown has been dubbed a workhorse for NAMI Flagstaff because of her tireless devotion to its programs. She wears many hats for our affiliate and for NAMI Arizona. Kay is one of the founding members of NAMI Flagstaff and currently serves on our Board of Directors. Her time is divided between her home in Flagstaff and a home in Phoenix where she serves on the Governing Board of Directors of NAMI Arizona and as the State Board Representative for NAMI Flagstaff.

Kay joined NAMI Phoenix in the early 1990's for support and guidance with her husband who suffers from bipolar disorder. Sometime later her elder son, in the midst of an exciting international career, was stricken with this same disorder.

She said it was not easy getting a NAMI affiliate started in Flagstaff, as she was told "no one in Flagstaff suffers from mental illness". In spite of it all, through networking with Flagstaff community members and getting the support together, an interest developed in forming a NAMI affiliate. In 2001, the kind folks of NAMI Sedona held a book sale and donated a portion of the proceeds to help fund the start-up costs for the formation of our Flagstaff affiliate.

In addition to her Board roles, Kay plays an active leadership role in NAMI Flagstaff programs as a Family Support Group Facilitator, a Family to Family Education Class Facilitator and as Art Program Coordinator. She threw a great amount of time and energy into our recent Walk Your Socks Off fundraising event. In Phoenix, Kay is active in legislative advocacy in order to obtain funding for programs to improve the lives of those who suffer from mental illness.

Kay has two degrees from Northern Arizona University – a B.S. in Social Work and a B.A. in Art. She uses her education and skills in her work with NAMI.

Kay is a caregiver for her husband. In her spare time, she enjoys painting in her home art studio and spending time with her family and two dogs. She laughs as she tells how one of her sons says to her, "Mom, you think everyone suffers from mental illness" and Kay replies calmly with her favorite mantra, "Normal is relative."

Kay believes that NAMI offers "a very good product." She is pleased to be working with present group of Board Members which includes young professionals and graduate students who bring their skills, dedication and enthusiasm to promoting NAMI's mission of improving the quality of life for those affected by mental illness by providing education, advocacy and support that is high quality, recovery oriented and culturally sensitive.

Thank you for all you do, Kay!

"Like" NAMI-Flagstaff on Facebook and keep up to date with news, events, and upcoming trainings. Share your own recovery story. Be an active part of the NAMI-Flagstaff community and "Like" us on Facebook! <https://www.facebook.com/pages/NAMIFlagstaff>



## **An Open Letter to my Child's Teachers**

I am the parent of a seriously mentally ill adolescent. Statistics reported by the National Alliance on Mental Health show “one of every ten youth lives with a mental health condition that interferes with their day-to-day lives.” You definitely have students suffering from mental illness in your classes as well as some who live with mentally ill parents or siblings.

As an educator, your main responsibility is to ensure my child learns and learns well. My main responsibility is to ensure my child stays alive. If you think I am overreacting, consider the fact that my child's disorder claims the highest completed suicide rate of any mental illness. Education is critically important, but no one would argue that keeping a child alive is not infinitely more important. This means I sometimes make choices that seem designed to seriously undermine educational concerns. I deeply value education and you have no idea how painful it is to be forced to make choices that take away from my child's educational opportunities. However, parents and other family members of seriously mentally ill people don't get to play by normal rules. Sometimes we only get to choose between two or more undesirable choices.

I understand that teaching my child adds significantly to your daily workload and stress. I wish it were not so. I *am* deeply grateful for your efforts. I do see your frustration when my child repeatedly misses deadlines and turns in seemingly shoddy work. Again. Unfortunately, mentally ill students literally live in a different world. They cannot consistently process content or manage due dates successfully. They cannot. “Brain disorder” is perhaps a better descriptive term than “mentally ill.” It helps us understand that something is broken in the brain. To illustrate, a P.E. teacher who berates a paraplegic child for being unable to get up out of a wheel chair and run laps would be considered insensitive and ineffective, among other things. Expecting a student with a brain disorder to effectively process complex content and juggle complicated assignment schedules without appropriate accommodation is no different. However, while it is readily evident that someone cannot walk, brain disorders are hidden. Appropriate accommodations are not as obvious or understood and accommodations that are working well for a time may suddenly fail. In addition, many children are either undiagnosed or not receiving adequate treatment, further complicating the educational picture.

Perhaps most difficult is what happens at home. Kids become quite accomplished at holding themselves together while at school. You may think some of their behaviors are “off the chart,” but you really have no idea how bad things really can be unless you have dealt with mental illness in your home. The stress of school, which can be the result of the academic requirements, pressure from teachers or social drama with peers – or just the brain disorder itself - can turn very ugly at home. When my child was younger, I dreaded after-school pickup because the screaming would begin immediately. One day, my child tried to exit our moving vehicle. Another day a fully loaded backpack was thrown across the back seat and hit a sibling, leaving bruises. Homework can be a battleground. Seriously mentally ill adolescents often knock holes in walls or throw furniture. Family members often state, “It feels like my home is a war zone” or “living with her is like living with a jackhammer that's always running.” I share this to communicate that when my child shows up without an assignment or with a poorly executed assignment – you have no idea what we may have gone through just to survive the prior evening and get him or her to school at all. And night after night, year after year, it's a remarkable accomplishment in and of itself to just show up. Regardless of whether one piece of work ever gets turned in complete and on time, my child is still alive and the rest of the family is more or less ok. That's the best we can do on most days.

*Continued on Page 5*

## **An Open Letter to my Child's Teachers**

*(Continued from page 4)*

As teachers, you are strategically situated to have life-giving impact on students who are struggling with mental illness. You know who some of these students are, and some you will never know for sure, but every single day you have the opportunity to positively impact their lives by offering empathy and compassion. By taking a deep breath when they lose yet another assignment or act up in class and by remembering they face challenges and obstacles you cannot see. By making sure you understand how a brain disorder can affect learning (there are similarities across different brain disorders). By collaborating with one another to form a cohesive educational plan to make your classrooms more accessible for mentally ill students. By remembering that keeping someone alive sometimes means temporarily sacrificing his or her education in the process. By reaching out to partner with overwhelmed parents. Please remember these children and their parents are doing the best they can under unbelievably trying circumstances. Sometimes we cannot save these children. But know this: you can and do make a difference.

Thank you,

*Anonymous*

## **NAMI Wellness Project Updates**

By: Travis Agnew

The NAMI Wellness Project is coming to the end of its first year at The City of Flagstaff Aquaplex. The program continues to be a success! All of the original program participants are still making regular trips to the gym. Several have even begun to work out on their own to help to make even more progress. With the recent grants and the Walk Your Socks Off fundraiser, a few of the participants are considering increasing their frequency of workout sessions with their personal trainer; however, that reward comes with a price.



The participants, if they decide to accept the extra session a week, will have to redouble their dietary efforts. Weight along with body fat percentages will be recorded along with their physical abilities. The goal behind this is to help push their progress into high gear in the effort to achieve a great deal of data that could help future grants and research projects. We are currently looking for a research partner to help with research and detailed data compilation. The long-term hope is to perform a scientific study examining the benefits of exercise on treating mental health issues and mood disorders along with short term and long term benefits to the individual participating and the community.

In 2014 there were a total of 10 participants in the NAMI Wellness Project!

## AZ Dialogues Training

Are you aware of Arizona Dialogues? AZ Dialogues is a model of facilitated discussions between groups that have roles in serving the behavioral health needs of community members and the general public. AZ Dialogues bring about understanding and partnership with the goal of reducing mental health stigma in a community. NAMI Flagstaff considers AZ Dialogues an important opportunity to reach out in a new and powerful way to leaders, law enforcement, schools, businesses, advocacy organizations, and anyone whose misunderstanding of mental illness shapes their views of people who struggle with it.

The Arizona Dialogues program falls under the auspices of the Office of Individual and Family Affairs (OIFA) at the Arizona Department of Behavioral Health Services (ADHS). When ADHS offered the training in our region, several NAMI Flagstaff board members leaped at the opportunity to participate so that we can host community Dialogues on a regular basis beginning in 2015. On October 31, several members of NAMI Flagstaff's board joined behavioral health service providers in Flagstaff to participate in a training to become facilitators of AZ Dialogues. The training, hosted by Northern Arizona Regional Behavioral Health Authority (NARBHA), was led by Kathy Bashor, MC, who helped found the AZ Dialogues program at OIFA.

Mental health stigma hurts individuals, their families, and, by extension the community at large. As Kathy explained, AZ Dialogues lead to healing. By developing awareness and understanding, people begin to develop trust and eventually create partnerships that allow them to work together toward common goals.

How does the Dialogue model work? In general, a dialogue is a process in which two or more groups of people are brought together as equals to explore their differing views, experiences, and belief systems. The dialogue is structured to allow for exploration of one's own perceptions and attitudes as well as to listen to other people explore their own. Other elements of the model:

- Dialogues provide a safe environment in which participants may speak freely to create better understanding, mutual trust, and respect.
- Dialogues are the first step toward establishing partnerships between people who agree to listen to each other.
- Dialogues focus participants on their human relationship with each other and their communities which opens the space for dissolving stereotypes and reducing stigma.
- Dialogues assume a relationship of equality and emphasize mutual listening, thus empowering those who may be marginalized and enabling others to express vulnerability.

### **The Arizona Dialogues Model**

- Arizona Dialogues provide an avenue in which both groups who participate may change attitudes and behavior.
- The Arizona Model requires trained facilitators.
- The Arizona Model incorporates two trained facilitators, each preferably a representative of the groups dialoguing.
- The Arizona Model involves a research process that documents changes of attitudes in all participants.
- Peers, family members, employees of the mental health system, and the community at large form partnerships in order to have a strong voice in the mental health system and share in the decision-making that directly affects their lives.

NAMI Flagstaff will begin hosting AZ Dialogues in the Flagstaff area in 2015. A schedule of Dialogues will appear in the next issue of this newsletter.

## Read All About It!

### Mental Health in the Headlines



**New Report Ranks States' Mental Health Status and Access to Care** - Our country is failing those in need of mental health services, according to a new report released by Mental Health America (MHA), the nation's leading community-based mental health advocacy organization. MHA for the first time has provided overall rankings for all 50 states and the District of Columbia on mental health status and access, and calls on the country to address mental health before Stage 4. The new report, *Parity or Disparity: The State of Mental Health in America 2015*, provides a more complete picture of mental health status in America, and indicates the country has a long way to go to adequately address critical mental health care needs. (Mental Health America, 12/3/14)

**Addressing Poverty, One Data Point at a Time:** This spring, University of Arizona undergraduate students taking the "Poverty in Tucson Field Workshop" course will collect, analyze, and present data on local community issues related to poverty. The course — led by Brian Mayer, an associate professor in the UA School of Sociology, and Julia Smith, a sociology graduate student — is a continuation of a collaboration among the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, the city of Tucson and local nonprofit groups through the Mayor's Commission on Poverty. Mayer, who is one of the inaugural fellows of the UA Agnese Nelms Haury Program in Environment and Social Justice, said the team has two major goals for the workshop course. We are preparing students for a career in the social sciences by offering them a unique opportunity to study an important social problem in their community," he said. "Likewise, we will provide data, analyses and interpretation to agencies, nonprofits and the community at large that we believe can help address the problem of poverty locally." The course furthers the UA's goal of 100% Student Engagement by providing students experience in a research project with value to our community, said Lydia Breunig, director of community outreach and special projects. "This ongoing project is a great example of how community partnerships advance the University's strategic goals," Breunig said. (uanews.org, 12/15/14)

**Obese People with Serious Mental Illness benefit most from Health Coaching Coupled with Gym Membership:** A health promotion program, called In SHAPE, specifically designed for people with serious mental illness, produced more fit participants and significant weight loss than a control group where participants only received a gym membership. The results of a randomized clinical trial, published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Dr. Stephen Bartels of Dartmouth and colleagues showed that more than half the participants in the In SHAPE group achieved clinically significant reduction in cardiovascular risk. These positive outcomes were maintained six months after the In SHAPE program ended. In SHAPE is a 12-month health promotion program consisting of a gym membership and a health promotion coach for people with serious mental illness. Participants have weekly individual meetings with their coach who is trained as a personal fitness trainer and who has received instruction in healthy eating and nutrition. (Medical News Today, 12/27/14)



## THE FUNDAMENTALS OF CARING FOR YOU, YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR CHILD WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

*The course and instructional materials are **NO COST** to participants!*

NAMI Basics is the new signature education program for parents and other caregivers of children and adolescents living with mental illnesses. The NAMI Basics course is taught by trained teachers who are the parents or caregivers of individuals who developed the symptoms of mental illness prior to the age of 13 years.

**Current information about Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Major Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Anxiety Disorders, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Childhood Schizophrenia and Substance Abuse Disorders**

**Six Consecutive Thursdays January 15-February 19, 2015  
6:00 P.M. – 8:30 P.M.**

**The Guidance Center, Outpatient Services Building,  
Ellen Seaborne Indigo Room  
2187 N. Vickey Street, Flagstaff, AZ**

### What are the goals of the NAMI Basics program?

1. To give the parent/caregiver the basic information necessary to take the best care possible of their child, their family, and themselves.
2. To help the parent/caregiver cope with the impact that mental illness has on the child living with the illness and the entire family.
3. To provide tools for the parent/caregiver to use even after completing the program that will assist in making the best decisions possible for the care of the child.

Registration is required! Space and Materials are limited.

To register, contact Lee, Family Education Coordinator at [\(928\) 214-2218](tel:9282142218) or [admin@nami-flagstaff.org](mailto:admin@nami-flagstaff.org)

Sponsored by:



## Upcoming (*FREE!*) Classes and Trainings

<b>NAMI Arizona Annual Meeting</b>	Disability Empowerment Center, Phoenix	Saturday, January 31	<a href="http://www.namiaz.org">www.namiaz.org</a>
<b>NAMI Art Class</b>	AZPIRE	To Be Determined	<b>To Sign up email:</b> <a href="mailto:admin@nami-flagstaff.org">admin@nami-flagstaff.org</a>
<b>Board of Directors Meeting</b>	AZPIRE	3rd Tuesday of every month 6:30 – 8:00pm	<a href="mailto:admin@nami-flagstaff.org">admin@nami-flagstaff.org</a>
<b>Family Support Group</b>	Canyon Chapel <i>1919 N. 4th Street- next to Farmer's Market</i>	Every Wednesday 6:30pm-8:00pm	<a href="mailto:admin@nami-flagstaff.org">admin@nami-flagstaff.org</a>
<b>NAMI Connect</b>	Hope Community Church	Every Thursday 5:30pm -7:00pm	<a href="mailto:admin@nami-flagstaff.org">admin@nami-flagstaff.org</a>
<b>NAMI Basics</b>	The Guidance Center	Thursdays January 15 – February 19, 2015 6:30pm-8:30pm	<a href="mailto:admin@nami-flagstaff.org">admin@nami-flagstaff.org</a>

### **2015-2016 NAMI Flagstaff Board of Directors:**

**Kate Yenik, President**

**Heidi Fuller, Vice President**

**Sara Naprta, Secretary**

**Deanna Prida, Treasurer**

**Barbara Bartell, Past President**

**Kay Brown, Board Member**

**Sherry Matheson, Board Member**

**Steve Nickolaisen, Board Member**

**Sabrina Stoorman, Board Member**

**Trudy Woodard, Board Member**

**Darryl Ulibarri, Board Member**

**Lee Haggemuller**, NAMI Office/Education Coordinator

**Kay Brown**, State Board Rep

**Carolyn Christianer**, Website Administrator

*Join NAMI Flagstaff today and consider becoming a Board Member.*

NAMI Flagstaff's mission is to improve the quality of life for those affected by mental illness by providing education, support, and advocacy that is high-quality, recovery-oriented, and culturally sensitive.

For more information on Board Member responsibilities or to apply and serve your Flagstaff community, contact us at [admin@NAMI-Flagstaff.org](mailto:admin@NAMI-Flagstaff.org).

Newsletter edited by: Kate Yenik

# NAMI Flagstaff Membership



## NAMI Flagstaff

- \$35 – Individual/Family
- \$3 – Open Door
- \$3 -Military Veteran
- New

**\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Donation for NAMI Flagstaff**  
*Donations are used to provide public education programs, classes, and support groups to defuse the stigma of mental illnesses and promote an accurate understanding of these treatable brain disorders.*

Please make checks payable to NAMI Flagstaff & mail to:  
PO Box 30673  
Flagstaff, AZ 86003

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_



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