



# nami

# Ventura County

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Newsletter

November/December 2009

## GENERAL MEETING

**Tuesday November 10th, 2009, 6:30 pm**

A light dinner will be served  
(Note changed time and location)



## ACHIEVING WELLNESS AND RECOVERY

Featured Speaker:

**Manoj V. Waikar, MD**

*Medical Director, Gardner Family Care Corporation, San Jose  
Adjunct Clinical Faculty, Stanford Dept. of Psychiatry*

The Choices in Recovery program is designed to help consumers, family members and caregivers better understand mental illness and treatment. Recovery is an ongoing personal process of working to achieve goals.

Join us for an informative and interactive discussion on all the ways to achieve treatment goals and reach recovery.

**Location:**

**Camarillo Center for Spiritual Living  
340 Mobil Avenue, Camarillo, CA 93010**

Check-in at 6:30 pm, dinner at 6:45, speaker session at 7:00

Free event! Space is limited. Register today!  
**ADVANCE REGISTRATION REQUIRED**

**To register: email or call NAMI Ventura County  
namiventura@gmail.com, (805) 641-2426**

Please include names, telephone, email

*A Family Support Group is held at the church prior to the  
General Meeting, from 5:30 pm*

## Who Will Care When I'm Not There?

*by Lisa Severns*

A concern of many of us families who care for disabled loved ones is how we will provide for a disabled family member after we pass on.

Gary Chang, director of legal affairs for Proxy Parent Foundation, spoke at NAMI Ventura County's September General Meeting about families providing for their disabled members through a special needs trust.

A special needs trust is set up as part of a living trust, the usual vehicle for disbursement of the estate of someone who has died. The special needs trust is particularly useful to a disabled beneficiary in that the trust funds are disbursed without affecting the public benefits the person receives. Disability benefits may include SSI, SSDI, Medi-Cal and Medicare.



Because a disabled person's benefits may be reduced or eliminated if he or she inherits money or has more than \$2,000 in assets, the special needs trust is filtered through a third party. Public benefits continue to pay for essentials such as food and shelter, and funds from the trust may be used to pay for dental care, phones, televisions, computers, cars, clothing, vacations and other life-enhancing special needs.

Funds from a special needs trust may not go directly to the disabled person, but are filtered through a third party. The third party could be a trusted family member or friend, an institution (such as Bank of America or Wells Fargo, for large trusts), or a pooled trust, such as the Proxy Parent Foundation.

Proxy Parent Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, California corporation dedicated to assisting people with disabilities by  
**(contd on page 2)**

## COMING IN DECEMBER

(No General Meeting in December)



**NAMI Holiday Party 2009**

**Tuesday December 8th**

**5:00 PM to 9:00 PM**

**Elks Lodge, 801 South A Street, Oxnard**



**For all clients, families, staff from residential  
care facilities, board and care homes, VCBH**

see page 3 for more information

### **Who Will Care When I'm Not There (contd)**

safeguarding their access to public benefits and providing personal support services much in the same manner as a family member.

Caretakers would be wise to set up a chain of trustees who would take care of the disabled family member. The chain may begin with a trusted family member and then move to a trusted family friend in the event that the family member can no longer function as trustee. The chain of trustees may include or end with an entity such as Proxy Parent Foundation.

Other pooled trusts exist, some of which are specific to certain disabilities. Gary Chang encouraged families to check with a trusted attorney before signing up with any pooled trust, to make sure that the company can meet the needs of the family and of the disabled person.

Those who are interested in finding out more information about Proxy Parent Foundation may access their website at [www.proxyparentfoundation.org](http://www.proxyparentfoundation.org) or may call toll free 888-574-1258. Information on other pooled trust funds may be gathered online by searching "pooled special needs trust." ❖

### **THE NAMI OFFICE NEEDS YOUR HELP**

Our office is located at 1339 Del Norte Road in Camarillo, near the United Way office and across from the Harley-Davidson dealership, easily visible from the 101 freeway just west of the Central Avenue exit.

We have expanded our office so that we can grow our services and engage more volunteers. However we are still in need of some items that are not in our budget, and we need your help to get these. Some of the key items on our "Wish List" are shown below:

- Training Tables, \$65 each (eight needed)
- Volunteer Work Table, \$100
- Volunteer Office Desk, \$150
- Wall Projection Screen, \$100
- Large White Board, \$100
- Brochure Display Rack, \$150
- Storage Shelves, five needed, \$80 each
- Book Shelves, two needed, \$60 each
- Building sign, lighted, \$350

Please select one or more items from the above list and consider making a donation that will allow us to purchase your selection. This will allow us to make our programs stronger and to help more people affected by mental illness.

Donations may be made online on our web site, or by mail to:

NAMI Ventura County  
PO Box 1613  
Camarillo, CA 93011

We are an IRS approved 501(c)(3), and all donations are tax-deductible. Thank you for your support. ❖

## **FAMILY-TO-FAMILY TEACHERS WANTED**

NAMI Ventura County thanks its great group of trained volunteers who teach our Family-to-Family classes, in English and in Spanish. We are currently looking for family members to train to teach this life changing education course in your area. Teachers tell us their own healing is helped and they benefit when they give back and help others.

If you have good communication skills, read well in front of others, and welcome the opportunity to help other families in a big way, you have what it takes to become a wonderful Family-to-Family teacher! Your own lived experience as a family member, and a desire to pass this information along to other families, are the best and most important qualifications for the job.

Pre-requisites: must have taken the Family-to-Family class and must have a first-degree relative (spouse, sister, child etc) with a mental illness.

We will be holding a free 2 ½ day Family-to-Family teacher training in Ventura, January 22-24, 2010.

Training manuals, other supplies, and meals will be provided for you during the training. For details and a teacher application contact Chris Novak, Program Coordinator, NAMI Ventura County, 805-641-2425 or [namiventura@gmail.com](mailto:namiventura@gmail.com)

Please join us and help bring this vital information to the families of Ventura County. If you won't, who will? ❖

### **ONLINE SUPPORT GROUP LAUNCHED**

Vince Caimano, PhD, has been facilitating the Conejo Valley DBSA Support Group for several years. A combination of peer support and education, these meetings have grown and now take place twice weekly, on Mondays and Thursdays, in Oak Park. See page 7 for details.

Vince has now launched a service to help people with depression, bipolar disorder and anxiety. These internet-based support groups are similar in structure to the regular support group meetings. They include an education segment and allow participants to interact with each other using their computers and their phones. They are led by professionals who compassionately guide each meeting.

If you or someone you know can benefit from this service, please try it out. Meetings are free for a limited time – just send a confidential email to Vince and request a free coupon code. For more information, see the support group web site at: [www.livedepressionsupportgroup.com](http://www.livedepressionsupportgroup.com) ❖

### **Donate your Car -- Cars 4 Causes**

If you have a used car, truck, boat, RV, or motorcycle that you no longer need, then consider making a vehicle donation. Help NAMI Ventura County raise money for our programs and get an IRS tax deduction at the same time! Call Cars 4 Causes at 1-800-766-CARE or 1-800-766-2273, or go to: [www.cars4causes.net](http://www.cars4causes.net)

Be sure to designate NAMI as the charity of your choice by providing the information below:

Charity Name: NAMI Ventura County  
Address: P.O. Box 1613, Camarillo, CA 93011-1613  
Telephone: (805) 641-2426 ❖

## October General Meeting Disability Benefits

At the meeting on October 13th, Katharine Raley provided an update on the changes in Medicare benefits that will take place in 2010. Katharine is the Program Manager for Ventura County's Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP).

SSI, or Supplemental Security Income, is a federal program for people who have no income and cannot work because of their disability which may include a diagnosis of a mental illness. It provides cash to meet basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. SSI recipients also receive Medi-Cal health insurance benefits.

SSDI is the Social Security Disability Insurance program that pays benefits to those who have worked and paid Social Security taxes. SSDI recipients may also get Medicare health insurance.

SSI and SSDI should not be confused with regular Social Security Retirement benefits which start at age 62. Most people need at least 10 years of work at jobs at which they paid Social Security taxes in order to qualify for retirement benefits.

HICAP's counseling services are provided by fully trained volunteer counselors who are registered by the California Department of Aging. They provide assistance to those with questions about Medicare, Medi-Cal, Senior Advantage Plans, Medi-gap policies and Long Term Care insurance, in addition to assistance in resolving billing problems. They offer objective information to help you understand your choices and benefits. They will give you both the pros and cons of each option available to you. They neither sell nor are affiliated with any health insurance provider. Clients with mental illness or their families are encouraged to meet with a counselor if they wish to apply for disability benefits.

Changes in Medicare coverage for 2010 may be significant. There are 47 Part D drug plan insurance providers in California and coverages may have changed. How can you pick the best plan for you? Further, beginning January 1, 2010, changes in the law will make it easier for some people to qualify for Extra Help with their Medicare prescription drug plan costs.

To review your Part D coverage for your specific prescription medications or to apply for Extra Help, you should discuss your situation with a HICAP counselor. Open Enrollment for changes to Medicare Plans begins on November 15 and ends on December 31, 2009.

HICAP counselors are located in cities throughout Ventura County. To make an appointment with a trained HICAP volunteer, call (805) 477-7310. ❖

## NAMI HOLIDAY PARTY

### Save The Date!

Tuesday December 8th 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
Elks Lodge, 801 South A Street, Oxnard



NAMI Ventura County invites all clients to get together for a Holiday Party to celebrate the season and to have a good time with one another. This year's party will take place at the same great location where it was held last year.

We extend this invitation to families of clients to join us, in order to be with their loved ones as they celebrate. This is the perfect opportunity to meet other families and County staff. Though the Holiday Party is not suitable for younger children, parents and other family members are encouraged to attend.

Dinner will be served and gifts presented to all Clients. Drawings galore for Door Prizes! Music, dancing, DJ, and more surprise entertainment!

For some clients, this is a rare and special event because they get few such opportunities for coming together on such a large scale during the year.



Your support is needed to make this event successful. Here's how you can help:

1. We need lots of door prizes. If you have a gift or two that you would like to donate, please drop them off at the NAMI office in Camarillo (no candles or alcohol please) by Friday December 4th.

2. Contribute. There is no cost to attend the Holiday Party, but NAMI welcomes donations from families of clients to offset the cost of gifts, door prizes and other expenses. We need an additional \$3,000 in contributions, and all donations, small or large, are appreciated. Business sponsorships are welcome. Please write "Holiday Party" and mail donation checks to:

NAMI Ventura County  
P.O. Box 1613, Camarillo, CA 93011-1613

You can also make a secure online donation right now on our web site at [www.namiventura.org](http://www.namiventura.org).

All monetary donations to NAMI are tax deductible.

For more information, call the NAMI office at 641-2426. ❖

## Mental Illness Awareness Week

Several City Councils presented representatives of NAMI Ventura County with certificates of resolutions proclaiming October 4th to 10th as Mental Illness Awareness Week. The cities included Ojai, Santa Paula, Oxnard and Ventura.

A group of NAMI friends were on-hand to receive a proclamation from Ventura County Board of Supervisors Chair Linda Parks at the Board of Supervisors meeting on October 6, 2009. Recognizing NAMI Ventura County's efforts on behalf of those affected by serious mental illnesses, Supervisor Parks presented a proclamation to Ratan Bhavnani (NAMI Ventura County), Karyn Bates (The Client Network) and Pam Fisher (Ventura County Behavioral Health). The proclamation reads as follows:

*WHEREAS, severe mental illnesses such as major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, severe anxiety disorders, borderline personality disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorders affect one in every five people annually; and*

*WHEREAS, severe mental illnesses are more common than cancer, diabetes and heart disease and are the number one reason for hospital admissions nationwide; and*

*WHEREAS, severe mental illnesses have been scientifically proven to be highly treatable illnesses of the brain;*

*WHEREAS, scientific research is producing tremendous breakthroughs in the understanding of mental illnesses, resulting in more effective treatments that allow people to reclaim full and productive lives, and*

*WHEREAS, severe mental illnesses continue to be shrouded in stigma and discrimination from societies' prejudices, causing those who are affected to be cast as second-class citizens;*

*NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors hereby proclaims October 4-10 2009 as Mental Illness Awareness Week, and calls upon all Ventura County residents, government agencies, public and private institutions, businesses and schools to recommit our community to increasing awareness of mental illness.*

*Presented this Sixth Day of October, 2009*

*On Behalf of NAMI, National Alliance of Mental Illness,  
Ventura County.*

(Signed) Supervisors Steve Bennett, Linda Parks, Kathy Long, Peter Foy, John Zaragoza. ❖

*The following article was published in the Ventura County Star's Opinion/Editorial section on October 7, 2009. The recommendations included apply to you all year long.*

### Removing the stigma tied to mental illness

*by Ratan Bhavnani*

This is Mental Illness Awareness Week. Why should you care? Because mental illness does not discriminate, no one is immune.

This special week, designated by Congress a decade ago, promotes

public education about serious mental illnesses such as major depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Other diagnoses include post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety disorders, including obsessive-compulsive disorder and borderline personality disorder.

About 60 million Americans experience mental-health problems in any given year. One out of every 17 Americans lives with the most serious conditions. My son was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and, now 10 years later, he is moving gradually toward recovery.

The struggle that he and his peers go through each day is a portrait of courage. On average, people with serious mental illness live 25 years less than the rest of the population. One reason is that less than a third of adults and less than half of children with a diagnosed illness receive treatment.

Half of all lifetime cases begin by age 14, but 10 or more years may pass between the onset of symptoms and getting help. A major factor for the delay is the stigma that is wrongly associated with mental illness, which the U.S. surgeon general has identified as a barrier to care.

In the Army, the suicide rate has been the highest in more than 25 years. Two years ago, the number of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans seeking treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder from the Department of Veterans Affairs jumped by 20,000 — almost 70 percent.

Mental illnesses are medical illnesses. That is the starting point for understanding, as well as treatment and recovery. That's why MIAW and public education are important, so we can take care of ourselves and those we love. What can you do?

The first step is to educate yourself and those around you. Small steps count. Visit <http://www.nami.org> and browse information about different diagnoses and courses of treatment. Learn symptoms as warning signs. If you see cause for concern, discuss the symptoms with your doctor.

Early identification is often key to recovery. Treatment works — but only if a person gets it. Treatment may involve combinations of medication, cognitive behavioral therapy, interpersonal therapy, peer support groups or community services. Diet, exercise, sleep and social support networks each play a role, too.

During MIAW, simply renting a DVD of the movies "The Soloist" or "Canvas" and watching them with family or friends can make a difference. Afterward, discuss together what facts you learned about mental illness.

It's also important to know that the mental healthcare system needs improvement. This month, PBS television stations across the country will begin to air "Minds on the Edge: Facing Mental Illness," an exceptional program that challenges the mental-healthcare system. For more information, visit <http://www.mindsontheedge.org>.

Watch it. Then write a letter to your mayor, the Board of Supervisors and the governor and tell them what you think.

We need to end stigma.

We are working to transform the mental healthcare system in Ventura County, in California and nationwide.

We need to help ourselves and others. Help requires action, and education must precede action.

That's what Mental Illness Awareness Week is about — strengthening our community.

That's the reason why you — all of us — should care. ❖

## ACTIVITIES FOR CONSUMERS/CLIENTS

### ADULT WELLNESS & RECOVERY CENTER (AWRC)

This drop-in center is open to all clients, whether or not they are enrolled with Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH). Many activities and classes scheduled daily. Some clients are "Peer Counselors", and they engage new members and help them navigate the mental health system. The Center is run by Pacific Clinics, with funding from VCBH; open to all clients.

AWRC, 56 E. Main St, Suite 103, Ventura  
Tel: (805) 653-5045  
Open Tuesday through Saturday, 9 am to 5 pm

### TAY TUNNEL

Also run by Pacific Clinics, this drop-in center is aimed at helping Transitional Age Youth (TAY), age 18-25, and connecting them with services. Many activities daily. Open to all TAY clients.

TAY Tunnel, 141 W. 5th Street, Suite D, Oxnard  
Tel: (805) 240-2538  
Open Monday through Friday, 10 am to 6 pm

### WRAP PROGRAM

VCBH contracts with Recovery Innovations of California, Inc. (RICA) to run a WRAP program for clients – "Wellness Recovery Action Plan". Contact RICA at (805) 981-5439.

WRAP graduates are eligible to be hired to work at the County's mental health clinics as Peer Counselors.

Note that

- the program is open to all clients.
- clients may join the WRAP program at any time, and go at their own pace. Eight sessions are required.
- Graduates may enter the Peer Employment Training; starts every few months. 72 hours, over 2-3 weeks.
- RICA does the hiring of and employs Peer Counselors on behalf of the County.

### CLUBHOUSE

Turning Point Foundation's two community rehabilitation centers offer unique socialization activities and rehabilitation services.

Open only to VCBH clients.

Oxnard Clubhouse, 426 W. Fifth Street, Oxnard  
Tel: (805) 247-0750

Open Monday through Friday, 9 am to 2 pm

New Visions Clubhouse, 1065 E. Main Street, Ventura  
Tel: (805) 652-0596 ❖

## Ventura County Behavioral Health Adult Outpatient Service Sites

Main Number, STAR Program: **(866) 998-2243**  
(Screening, Triage, Assessment & Referral)

<b>If You Live In:</b>	<b>Contact The Officer of the Day:</b>
Ojai or Ventura (excluding Zip code 93004)	Ventura Outpatient Clinic 4258 Telegraph Rd Ventura, CA 93003 477-5700
Fillmore, Piru or Ventura 93004	Santa Paula Outpatient Clinic 333 W. Harvard Blvd. Santa Paula, CA 93060 933-4868
Oxnard, Port Hueneme or El Rio	Oxnard Outpatient Clinic 1911 Williams Dr., Suite 110 Oxnard, CA 93036 981-4200
Camarillo, Thousand Oaks, and Ventura County areas of Agoura, Westlake, Bell Canyon	Conejo Outpatient Clinic 72 Moody Court Thousand Oaks, CA 91360 777-3500
Simi Valley or Moorpark	Simi Valley Outpatient Clinic <i>(new location!)</i> 1227 E. Los Angeles Avenue Simi Valley, CA 93065 582-4075

## NAMI Ventura County Contact Information

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1613, Camarillo, CA 93011  
Office: 1339 Del Norte Road, Camarillo, CA 93010

Phone: (805) 641-2426

Fax: (805) 275-2188

e-mail: [namiventura@gmail.com](mailto:namiventura@gmail.com)

Website: [www.namiventura.org](http://www.namiventura.org)

Executive Director: Ratan Bhavnani  
Program Coordinator: Chris Novak

### Board of Directors

Debbie Hurt, Diane Kellegrew, Connie Hall, Sally Kosoff,  
Michael Ford, Carol Luppino, Kimmie Jordan, Irene King

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## Ventura County Jails

NAMI Ventura County has a pamphlet available: "My Family Member Has Been Arrested - What Do I Do?" This information is also available on our web site, at the "Resources" link.

Recently there have been several articles published in the Ventura County Star on the mentally ill in jails. NAMI Ventura County participates in a workgroup created by the Mental Health Board to look into the management of people with mental illness in jails.

The Mental Health Board had invited staff from the Ventura County Jail at its meeting on June 16, 2009. Members of the Board had the opportunity to ask questions. The following are extracted from the minutes of that meeting:

### **What happens if the family calls and wishes to provide medication for inmate?**

–The psychiatrist reviews the case and makes a decision regarding provision of medication.

### **Are some medications not on the formulary?**

–Yes – however there is a process in place to order medications from outside pharmacies.

### **What happens if an inmate identifies himself/herself as having a mental illness?**

–The inmate will be seen by a member of the psychiatric staff, have a complete psychiatric assessment and will meet with the psychiatrist for medication evaluation.

### **Are colored arm bands required for inmates with mental illness? Are they segregated?**

–The yellow color band is a type of classification that is not very common. Only those mentally ill individuals who cannot function well or safely interact with others receive the yellow armband. They are housed separately from the general population. Armbands are used to readily identify inmates. The classification system is intended to house inmates together who are compatible.

### **Has there been an increase in mental health services at the jail?**

–Yes. About nine years ago the psychiatrist time was increased from 20 hours to 40 hours per week and another full-time psychiatric nurse position was added.

### **Are there any other screening tools used to identify mental health issues besides the general health screening? Is the tool used as standardized tool?**

–Based on the Intake Health Screening findings, the inmates are referred for psychiatric assessment. The screening instruments and tools used are approved by the Board of Corrections and are used throughout the State of California in county jails. The tools are approved by the Correctional Standards Authority and the California Medical Association IMQ Committee and are also reviewed annually by the Public Health Department.

## MEMORIAL DONATIONS

### In Memory of Joshua Schechter

Lori Jarecky  
Elaine Herzog  
Jay & Sally Kosoff  
Helen Karlsberg  
Dorothy Schechter

### In Memory of Ben

Russ & Linda Charvonia

### **Regarding the peer review process, at what point do you talk to clients and people involved to obtain direct information?**

–There is an external peer review process in place, currently performed by Dr. Dial. Inmates have a right to grieve medical services. Grievances are answered and reviewed at quarterly Quality Assurance meetings.

### **Is there a vehicle for family members to communicate grievances?**

–Family members can reach us by calling the jail. The doctor is also available to talk to family members. Sometimes, the inmate does not give consent.

### **Are there other screening tools we (MHB) can look at?**

–There is a psychiatric assessment that can be made available to the MHB.

### **Is medication brought in by family members accepted?**

–It depends. Narcotics are not accepted. Psychotropic drugs are accepted if the clinician determines that the individual needs the medication right away.

### **What is done when behavioral issues which are not violent occur (i.e. refusing to wear issued shoes)?**

–The psychiatric staff would be called and staff would try to deal with the situation.

### **What should a family member do when they hear that their mentally ill family member received no treatment and was put into isolation in jail?**

–Chief Deputy Tennesen encouraged family members to provide the individual's name to him for a case review.

### **Are the deputies in the jail CIT trained?**

–All of the jail staff will go through an 8 hour custody CIT training beginning July 1st. There is a large percentage of senior deputies and sergeants who are CIT trained.

### **Has the jail Discharge Planner made a difference?**

–Yes, there has been great improvement in the connection to Behavioral Health. Dr. McFarlane also mentioned that it has made a difference to have the staff placed within the same offices as CFMG. ❖

## WALK COMMITTEE FORMING

NAMI Walks Ventura County 2010

Saturday May 1, 2009 Ventura Beach Promenade

The Walk helps change how our community views mental illness and recovery, and highlights our programs to help clients and families. The funds we raise help to continue and grow our programs.

We will be getting together in November for a Walk Volunteer Information Meeting. The purpose is:

- to announce the Walk to community members and tell them how they can participate
- to recruit a core group of volunteers to support the Walk
- to empower others to identify and recruit sponsors for our Walk.

We need key sponsors now, to publicize the Walk. Typical business sponsorships are as follows: Presenting Sponsor \$10,000, Major Sponsor \$7,500, Gold Sponsor \$5,000, Kick-off Luncheon Sponsor \$3,500. Sponsors receive recognition and publicity; if you know of business leaders with whom you can help us connect, please call Ratan Bhavnani at 641-2426.

To join the Walk Planning Committee, send an email to namiventura@gmail.com or call 641-2426. ❖

## SUPPORT GROUPS FOR CONSUMERS/CLIENTS

*Please note – These groups are for consumers/clients. Family member support groups are listed separately.*

### Depression/Bipolar Support Groups:

**Ventura:** DBSA Support Group meets every Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Bible Fellowship Church, 6950 Ralston Street (& Johnson Drive), Building 300, Room 301, Ventura. For more information, call (805) 201-0619. Also see <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/DBSAVentura/>

**Ventura:** DBSA Support Group meets 1st and 3rd Saturdays, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Adult Wellness and Recovery Center, 56 E. Main Street (at Ventura Avenue in Ventura). For directions and information, call (805) 671-5038.

**Oak Park:** DBSA Conejo Valley Depression Support Group meets Mondays and Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. at Church of the Epiphany, Mitchel Hall, Room 6, 5450 Churchwood Dr. (Kanan & Churchwood) Oak Park. Info: Vincent F. Caimano, Ph.D., (818) 292-8551 or email [depressiongroup@mindspring.com](mailto:depressiongroup@mindspring.com)

**Friendship Line:** Telephone support is available to clients on weekend nights. The Friendship Line offers a friendly voice when you are lonely or having a hard time. Open Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays, 7 pm to 10 pm. Each call is limited to 15 minutes, with a maximum of 2 calls per night.

Toll Free: 1-877-672-AWRC (1-877-672-2972)

This Confidential Friendship Line is staffed by Peer Support Specialists from the Adult Wellness & Recovery Center.

## Pay Psychiatric Patients to Take Meds?

Written by E. Fuller Torrey, M.D.

A team at Queen Mary Hospital in London has begun a study of the effectiveness of paying individuals with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder to take their medication. The study will include 136 patients who "have a very poor track record for taking their medication" and who are all on long-acting antipsychotics, which they receive by injection every two weeks or so. Half of them will be paid £15 (about \$24) each time they come in for their injection, and half will receive no money and will thus be controls. Both groups will then be followed to see whether the payments make a difference in preventing relapses and rehospitalizations.

Paying patients to take their prescribed medication or to otherwise follow up their medical care, immunizations, etc., is not a new idea but has been little used in psychiatry. A 1997 article in the British Medical Journal analyzed 11 such studies published between 1976 and 1996; in 10 of the 11 studies, the individuals who received payments did significantly better than those who did not. For example, in a study of hypertension, patients were paid on a sliding scale from \$4 to \$16 depending on how close their blood pressure was to the target number. Payments have also been demonstrated to be effective in patients with tuberculosis, thus reducing rehospitalizations.

Objections to such studies have focused mostly on ethical issues such as, is it coercive? MIND, a politically correct British mental health charity, opposes the Queen Mary Hospital program because they claim "it runs counter to informed decision making." Most patients involved in the study are in it, of course, because they have anosognosia and do not know they are sick; thus, they are anatomically unable to carry out "informed decision making." But groups like MIND do not pay attention to such issues. Arguments in favor of payment programs include the fact that patients in such programs are likely to lead much better-quality lives and spend less time homeless, incarcerated, or rehospitalized. It is thought that the modest cost of such programs will be more than offset by savings in decreased rehospitalization alone.

We need more data on such programs for individuals with severe psychiatric disorders. Theoretically, the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) should be supporting such demonstration projects, but this is a hopelessly politically correct agency and is unlikely to do so. We will have to wait for the braver Brits to show us the way. ❖

## NAMI FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS

*Please note – These groups are for family members. Consumer/client support groups are listed separately.*

**NAMI in Camarillo** – Meets at 5:30 p.m., the second Tuesday of each month at St. Columba's Episcopal Church, 1251 Las Posas Rd., Camarillo. The meeting is prior to the General Meeting. Info: (805) 641-2426.

**NAMI in Thousand Oaks** – Meets at 7:00 p.m. the third Monday of each month at 72 Moody Court in Thousand Oaks (Behavioral Health, Conejo Clinic). Info: (805) 641-2426.

**NAMI in Ventura** – Meets at 6:30 p.m., the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of each month at College United Methodist Church, 4300 Telegraph Road, Ventura. Info: (805) 641-2426.

