

## NAMI Maryland's 2011 State Conference

Experts in medical research, treatment, health insurance, criminal justice, storytelling and much more came together at NAMI Maryland's annual state education conference this past October to share their ideas and experiences, present new research, explain new legislation, and offer practical advice on a wide range of topics. The theme this year was "Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities." This year, the conference was expanded to two days and to 4-5 concurrent workshops

The event was held on October 14 and 15 at the Conference Center at Sheppard Pratt in Towson, Maryland. Up-to-date information was covered on topics of interest to individuals with mental illness, their families, service providers, law enforcement and correctional staff, educators, and advocates.

In these days of battles over state and federal budgets, and the Affordable Care Act, health care coverage is a hot topic. We were privileged to have top experts make presentations about the challenges and opportunities of



Secretary Sharfstein presenting on Healthcare in Maryland

covering mental health care. Pamela A. Hyde, JD, Administrator at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), pointed out that behavioral health needs to be seen as a public health issue, not just a social or medical issue.

John O'Brien, SAMHSA's senior advisor on health care financing discussed the latest— and what's



NAMI Maryland Awardees: NAMI Southern Maryland, Alnicia Gibson, and Clarissa Netter.

yet to come—in health-care financing. Joshua M. Sharfstein, MD, secretary of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, discussed mental health care reform, and how Maryland stacks up against other states. A common theme was the advocacy that will be necessary to make sure that these reforms are retained and that Maryland implements them to effectively help individuals with mental illness reach and maintain wellness.

Workshops included everything from health insurance and criminal justice to working with volunteers and storytelling. In the concurrent workshop sessions, experts explained how the new health-care law has already had an impact on coverage for children and young adults. They explained the new temporary options for people who can't afford insurance and the fact that patients can no longer be dropped from health-care plans because they get sick. Other workshop sessions explained the future benefits of the new law, including health-insurance exchanges that are scheduled to go into effect

*Continued on page 3*

## From the Director's Desk

### Kate Farinholt



Dear NAMI Maryland Members,

This year has been a year full of changes and growth at NAMI Maryland. I am excited and look forward to the new year which will offer more growth and opportunity to help and support individuals with mental

illness and their families. We plan the continued expansion of trainings for NAMI programs that change people's lives for the better. We expect to make the May 2012 NAMI Walks (in Silver Spring and Baltimore) the largest mental health awareness events in the state. We need your support. Join me in being team captains and engaging your family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers to participate. This is a wonderful chance to educate and create community conversations about mental illness.

Despite heightened public awareness of mental health issues and some progress at the national, state and local levels, huge obstacles still prevent consumers and family members from getting the services they need. As we gear up for Maryland's Legislative General Assembly in January, we have an opportunity to educate our elected officials about mental health issues. Many legislators are simply uninformed about mental illness and its impact on their constituents.

Join us on January 24, 2012 in Annapolis for Advocacy Day. We need your help to make our voice heard this legislative session. Your elected officials do listen to constituents voices.

Together, we can make a difference,  
Kate Farinholt,  
Executive Director, NAMI Maryland

## From the President's Desk

### Don Slater



Members of NAMI Maryland,

Fall (and a touch of winter) is in the air. And here at NAMI Maryland, we are following up and reviewing the Annual Education Conference. We are very pleased with how the conference was received and we hope to do even better next year.

We are getting ready for the winter round of program trainings. My wife and I will be doing a statewide NAMI Family-to-Family teacher training in February. Of course, we are also well into the process of planning the 2012 NAMI WALKS in Maryland. As was the case in 2011, we will again be walking in Baltimore's Inner Harbor and around downtown Silver Spring. I hope that we can continue to increase the participation in both WALKS. Much of our budget to support trainings, advocacy and outreach is supported through the funds raised on the WALKS.

At the state level, we are in the middle of NAMI National's process of re-chartering the NAMI state organizations and re-affiliating the local NAMI chapters throughout the country. This is intended to bring a level of consistency across the organization. We are working closely with National NAMI and leaders of our affiliates to ensure that NAMI is well represented in Maryland.

Finally, I would ask you all to turn your thoughts to the patients and staff of Clifton T. Perkins State Hospital and their families. The recent tragic events at Perkins bring into sharp focus the continuing need for high quality mental health services in Maryland, which includes maintaining a safe environment for the patients and staff at all facilities. Ask your own members of the legislature not to allow cost cutting to hurt mental health services they go into session in January.

Best wishes for the holiday season,  
Don Slater  
President, NAMI Maryland

*Continued from page 1*

in 2014 and will help many people get insurance who otherwise couldn't afford it.

But health care wasn't the only topic covered at the conference. Attendees learned about treatment options for people with the negative symptoms of schizophrenia; and programs that integrate a wide variety of services for people with mental illnesses and substance use disorders, including job training, rehabilitative services, and mediation.

Advocacy training sessions explained how to connect with lawmakers to provide facts and anecdotes, suggest solutions, and follow up afterward. Others offered tips on telling powerful, effective stories about experiences with mental illness.

Experts in law enforcement discussed the need to advocate for more enlightened practices and educating first responders about how to identify mental illness and do a better job of de-escalating potentially dangerous crisis situations.

Attendees learned about several programs that already exist to enable police officers to identify signs of mental illness, enlist the help of mental-health professionals to respond to crisis situations, and follow up with experts to identify people who have repeated run-ins with the law and come up with customized solutions to help prevent those problems.

At special awards dinner on Friday evening, we had the chance to say thank you to four people who have been instrumental in advancing the cause of mental health and working to see that Marylanders with mental illnesses are better served:



Senator Cardin receiving his award from NAMI Maryland

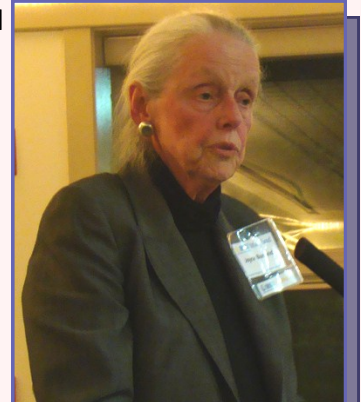
· Senator Barbara Mikulski has championed the Workforce Development Initiative for the Mentally Ill.

· Senator Ben Cardin has worked to end discrimination and require insurance parity for mental health services.

· Dr. Joyce Burland, Retired National NAMI Director of the Education, Training, and Peer Support Center, is the author of the signature national program, NAMI Family-to-Family Education, and has been recognized as a leader in the field of peer education.

· Dr. Brian Hepburn, Executive Director of the Mental Hygiene Administration of Maryland, has been instrumental in leading the MHA in improving clinical care and examining alternative financing strategies to achieve increased quality and consumer recovery, while balancing an inadequate budget.

The conference covered too much to list here, but whether you attended or not, you can find out more about these sessions and others by downloading free slides and handouts from presentations, plenary sessions, and workshops here: <https://sites.google.com/site/namiedconf2011/program/conferenceslides>



Dr. Joyce Burland speaking on NAMI Family-to-Family

### NAMI Maryland Award Winners

Lifetime Achievement Award  
Dr. Joyce Burland

Outstanding Mental Health Advocate Award  
U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski  
U.S. Senator Ben Cardin

Recovery Champion Award  
Dr. Brian Hepburn

Outstanding Achievement Award  
Alnicia Gibson

Iris Award  
Clarissa Netter

Affiliate of the Year Award  
NAMI Southern Maryland



## HOLIDAY MANAGEMENT TIPS

By definition, holidays are different than other days. They are special days and they imply the unusual, the unpredictable... they are stress inducing. The general notion of “holiday” is as a festive occasion! There are those generational traditions, special observances, brightly colored decorations, neatly wrapped gifts, and, oh yes, lots of food, family, friends and strangers. Planning and getting through the holidays can be stressful regardless of the anticipated enjoyment of the coming days.

Individuals with mental illnesses have more difficulty with the unexpected and change in routine than do others, and they can experience holidays as negative events. Family members may struggle to balance the needs of their relative with a mental illness with the desires of other relatives and friends.

Hectic schedules, numerous activities, large and frequent gatherings, high volume of noise and increased visual stimulation associated with joyous occasions can lead to feelings of confusion, anxiety, depression, reappearance of psychotic symptoms or unwelcome physical changes in eating, sleeping, energy level and daily functioning.

**“What matters is that the holidays are enjoyable and stress free.”**

Here are some strategies for coping with holidays for in:

### Have a Plan

Find ways to make holiday events more “ordinary.” Does this sound contradictory? Perhaps, but it is central to making the holidays calmer, easier and more manageable. Those with mental illness need:

- Predictability
- Routine
- Familiarity



### Ask for Help and Support

If the services/support of a therapist is needed, make an appointment early. A therapist can help to develop a plan that will alleviate stress. Work through unresolved grief; contrast the past and the present. Try not to feel disappointment with the “now.”

Get help with holiday tasks. For example, paying someone to help clean the house might be the best gift you can give yourself. Divide up the chores. Remind yourself that it really doesn’t matter if everything gets done. What matters is that the holidays are enjoyable and as stress-free as possible.

### Talk with a friend or family member

Remember to begin your sentence with “I feel” rather than “you.” Give yourself permission to enjoy the holidays. Be good to yourself. Try not to dwell on negative experiences but rather put yourself in the here and now.

Seek out supportive environments and fellowships through NAMI support groups. Stay close to family and friends that love and support you.

*Edited from materials by Nancy Alexander, LCSW-C*



## Meet Kristin Opalacz

### NAMI Maryland Programs, Events, and Training Coordinator

For the past three years Kristin Opalacz has worked at NAMI Metropolitan Baltimore as the Outreach Projects Coordinator and most recently as the Community Outreach Director.

Her current role at NAMI Maryland is the Programs, Events and Trainings Coordinator. She will lead the coordination of statewide and regional trainings in training individuals to lead NAMI Programs at the grassroots level. She will work with NAMI Maryland staff and local affiliate and programs leaders on program planning and outreach. She is thrilled to have the opportunity to work at NAMI Maryland and is looking forward to working closely with each affiliate!

Kristin graduated from Loyola University in 2007 with a Bachelor's Degree in Communications. She also serves on the Junior Board of the Eating Disorders Coalition. Her email is [kopalacz@namimd.org](mailto:kopalacz@namimd.org).

## ARE YOU GETTING MENTAL HEALTH INSURANCE PARITY IN YOUR INSURANCE PLAN?

A new federal law, the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, requires equity in mental health/addiction and medical/surgical benefits offered by insurance companies. With different state and federal rules governing mental health coverage, understanding the system is complex for both individuals and providers. That's where the Maryland Parity Project comes in.

NAMI Maryland supports the Maryland Parity Project, an initiative of the Mental Health Association of Maryland. This project aims to educate insured Marylander's about their new rights and help them use these new rights to access mental health and addiction treatment.

The Maryland Parity Project has announced the launch of the new and improved [www.MarylandParity.org](http://www.MarylandParity.org). This new site expands on the Maryland Parity Project toolkit, developed and distributed in spring 2011, and presents the information in an easy to read, interactive format. The site is the place to find out anything you want to know about insurance parity for mental health including:

- Coverage requirements of different types of insurance plans
- Your appeal and grievance rights

- Easy to understand explanation of your rights under State and Federal Parity Law
- A step by step guide of what to do if your rights have been violated
- Templates to help in filing an appeal or complaint
- A place to engage in a dialogue about mental health parity
- An easy way to contact Maryland Parity Project staff or download the toolkit

In addition to all the information provided on the website and in the Maryland Parity Project Toolkit, project staff provides case assistance to consumers, providers and families who feel they are not receiving the benefits to which they are entitled. They will evaluate complaints and walk consumers and providers through the process of appealing an insurer's decision. If appropriate, they will assist in the filing a complaint with the proper government authority.

### For Additional Resources

You can request a parity toolkit by contacting Adrienne Ellis, Maryland Parity Project Director, 410-235-1178 ext. 206 or visit [www.MarylandParity.org](http://www.MarylandParity.org) for more information. **If you or your clients are not receiving proper treatment or reimbursement, please contact the Maryland Parity Project at 410.235.1178.**

## NAMI MARYLAND ADVOCACY FOR THE 2012 LEGISLATIVE SESSION



As we gear up for the 2012 Legislative Session, we all are aware of how economy has been slow to recover and state services continue to be cut. NAMI Maryland will continue to advocate for support of the Mental Hygiene Administration budget, for the alcohol tax to be designated for mental health services and for support of other initiatives to raise revenue.

In the last several months there has been significant action taken by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to move toward a behavioral health system that integrates mental health and substance use disorder services. The Department is also taking action to implement the Affordable Care Act in Maryland. These activities include developing a Health Benefit Exchange, supporting programs focused on integrating behavioral health and primary care (Person Centered Health Homes) and supporting a workable health information exchange. All of these efforts have significant impact on public and private coverage for mental health services and access to those services. Legislation to support these efforts are likely to be introduced in the 2012 session.

### Revenue for Programs

Studies have shown that individuals with mental illness die on average, 25 years earlier than the general public. A large majority of those individuals smoke. NAMI Maryland will be advocating for an increase tax on non-cigarette tobacco products and for those revenues to be used for education and health programs that help individuals with mental illnesses stop smoking and improve their overall health.

### Affordable Care Act

Maryland is ahead of most states in taking decisive action to implement the Affordable Care Act which passed in March of 2010. The Act will be fully implemented by 2014. Maryland has already begun to work on developing a health care exchange as part of health care reform. NAMI

Maryland's concern is that more people will have insurance, but many services may not be covered by that insurance.

The definition of what will be included as part of the **"essential benefit" package** will be a determining factor in what insurers who participate in health benefit exchanges will be required to offer their policies. Many of the individuals who will be part of the exchange are people who in the past may have received state funding for services because they were uninsured and not eligible for other benefits. NAMI Maryland will be advocating at both the state and federal level to ensure that the essential benefit package covers a **continuum of care and includes all the services necessary to ensure that a person can remain mentally and physically healthy.**

The health benefit exchanges must set up **"navigators"** to help individuals find affordable and appropriate insurance and what type benefits they are entitled to and how to access those benefits. Navigators should include community-based organizations serving a variety of needs and populations to ensure as much access as possible. (Organizations like NAMI serving special populations in the community are in a position to provide these navigating functions.)

The NAMI public policy committee will continue to review bills impacting persons with mental illness and providing testimony throughout the session. We look forward to another active session. The NAMI Maryland Public Policy platform is available at [www.namimd.org](http://www.namimd.org)

## How you can make a difference!

- ▶ **Tell your story!** The personal experiences of NAMI members makes a difference when talking to decision makers. Email [info@namimd.org](mailto:info@namimd.org) to share your story.
- ▶ **Respond to Action Alerts.** The collective voices of advocates can influence legislators' decisions.
- ▶ **Come to Advocacy Day!** On January 24, 2012 we invite NAMI members to come to Annapolis for Advocacy Day. We will meet with legislators and support funding for mental health services and have a rally at noon. Go to [www.namimd.org](http://www.namimd.org) to RSVP.

## Get involved with Maryland NAMIWalks to Stomp Out Stigma!

NAMIWalks has become the largest national mental health awareness event and one of the fastest growing programs of its kind. Across the country, NAMIWalks raises much needed money to fund state and local NAMI education and support programs, including Walks right here in Maryland. These walks will raise million of dollars in 2012 for NAMI and the mental health education and support it provides to thousands of individuals and families across the country.

All the funds collected by Walkers will be used to fund NAMI's programs right here in Maryland. Proceeds from NAMIWalks help us offer essential, practical education and support at no cost to our local communities through programs like:

- Web and print resource materials
- NAMI Peer-to-Peer courses
- NAMI Family-to-Family education programs
- NAMI Support Groups



**SAVE THE DATES!** Coming May 6 to Silver Spring and May 19 to Baltimore

**There is no registration fee! Get your coworkers, family, friends, and local businesses to sponsor you or join your team! Together we can stomp out the stigma of mental illness.**

**SIGN UP TO BE A TEAM CAPTAIN TODAY AT [WWW.NAMI.ORG/MDWALKS](http://WWW.NAMI.ORG/MDWALKS)**

### Local NAMI Maryland Affiliates

NAMI Anne Arundel.....	443-569-3498
NAMI Carroll.....	410-857-3650
NAMI Cecil.....	443-955-4963
NAMI Frederick.....	240-379-6186
NAMI Harford.....	410-879-8570
NAMI Howard.....	410-772-9300
NAMI Lower Shore.....	443-229-2744
NAMI Metro Baltimore.....	410-435-2600
NAMI Montgomery.....	301-949-5852
NAMI Prince George's.....	301-429-0970
NAMI Southern MD.....	301-737-1988
NAMI Washington.....	301-824-7725

Are you a relative or an individual with a mental illness? A health care provider? A concerned community member?

Make sure you get the notice of upcoming educational teleconferences of interest to YOU! Email us at [info@namimd.org](mailto:info@namimd.org) and put "NAMI Maryland email list" in the subject line, and tell us how you heard about NAMI.

#### NAMI Maryland's workplace charity numbers:

- 4186:** The Maryland Charity Campaign & Central Maryland– Private Sector
- 80114:** CFC of the Chesapeake Bay Area and National Capital Area
- 8568:** The United Way

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- February 15 (Spring Issue)
- May 15 (Summer Issue)
- August 15 (Fall Issue)
- November 15 (Winter Issue)

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NAMI Maryland  
10630 Little Patuxent Pkwy, Ste 475  
Columbia, MD 21044  
[info@namimd.org](mailto:info@namimd.org)  
410-884-8691





10630 Little Patuxent Parkway | Suite 475  
Columbia, MD 21044

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**NAMI Maryland**

10630 Little Patuxent Pkwy- Ste. 475  
Columbia, MD 21044  
410-884-8691  
Toll Free Helpline: (800) 467-0075  
Email: info@namimd.org  
Website: www.namimd.org

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Contribute to NAMI Maryland so that we can continue our mission to improve the quality of life for person diagnosed with mental illnesses and their families

I want to make a difference by:

- Volunteering (Skills/Interests \_\_\_\_\_)
- Making a contribution (circle one) \$100 \$250 \$ 500 other \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Making a monthly contribution (we will contact you with details)
- In memory of    in honor of    on the occasion of \_\_\_\_\_

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