

Freedom from Stigma CAMPAIGN

Bulletin

May 2004



Can you find the Statue of Liberty in this photo?



NAMI NEW JERSEY Programs Wage War on Stigma in 2004

NAMI NEW JERSEY, *New Jersey's Alliance for Persons Affected by Mental Illness*, has officially launched a groundbreaking **"Freedom from Stigma"** Campaign to combat debilitating stigma against people with mental illness. The NAMI NJ 2004 Annual Conference on Saturday, May 15, at the Somerset Marriott is devoted to the theme of **"Freedom from Stigma."** NAMI NJ will present special awards to recognize outstanding contributions to combat stigma, and to promote public awareness and understanding about mental illness. **The "Freedom from Stigma" Campaign will:**

Focus media attention on people with mental illness, their families and their personal stories.

Sponsor an essay/poetry/story contest celebrating wellness, recovery, hope and advocacy for **"Freedom from Stigma."**

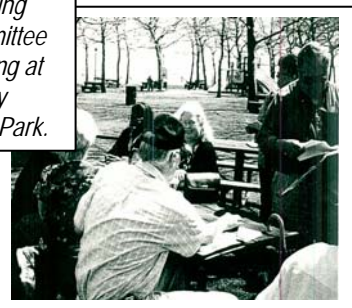
Make available statewide *In Our Own Voice – Living with Mental Illness*, a recovery education program given by trained consumer presenters.

The NAMI NJ Campaign will culminate in our Statewide Walk for **"Freedom from Stigma"** on Sunday, October 10, 2004. This inspiring event will take place at Liberty State Park, Jersey City, within sight of the Statue of Liberty, a universal symbol of hope and optimism.

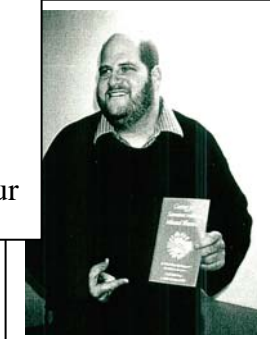
For contact information on Campaign activities see reverse side of Bulletin.



Volunteers attend onsite Walk Planning Committee Meeting at Liberty State Park.



Trainers, coordinators and presenters prepare to expand In Our Own Voice



Media Training offers pointers for working with the media.



THE PROBLEM WITH STIGMA ...

We at NAMI NEW JERSEY, *New Jersey's Affiliate for Persons Affected by Mental Illness*, believe that stigma is a thief, robbing persons who are affected by mental illness of understanding, self-respect, inclusion, and self-actualization. Stigma shatters dreams. Stigma attacks adults who face schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression and other severe mental illnesses. Stigma attacks children with these disorders, as well as those with severe emotional disturbances, and their families. NAMI NJ dedicates its 2004 Annual Conference, its public education programs, and its second statewide walkathon to achieving "Freedom from Stigma."

We know stigma when we see it. Here's how *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* defines it. Stigma is: *something that detracts from the character or reputation of a person, group, etc.; a mark, sign, etc., indicating that something is not considered normal or standard; and a mark of disgrace or reproach.*

Stigma takes root when people are ignorant of the nature and realities of severe mental illness. Ignorance grows fear, and fear drives disgrace, denial, isolation, silence, discrimination, hostility, inaction, and even death. The devastation and demoralization strike individuals and families alike. Yet, all too often, they remain unacknowledged and invisible. People affected by mental illness are feeling, thinking human beings with great potential to learn, grow, recover, give, and love. Stigma takes the following toll:

- *Delayed diagnosis and treatment.*
- *Physical, emotional, educational, social, and spiritual stress.*
- *Fear, friction, isolation and potential family break-up.*
- *Loss of social and educational opportunity.*
- *Undue incarceration.*
- *Discrimination in employment and housing.*
- *Lack of popular will and governmental resources for care and treatment.*
- *Self-medication with alcohol and drugs.*
- *"We/They" perceptions that divide society.*
- *Suicide and death.*



NAMI NEW JERSEY

is a private nonprofit statewide grassroots organization dedicated to support, education, and advocacy for persons and families affected by mental illness. NAMI NJ is an affiliate of NAMI - The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness.

Sylvia Axelrod, Executive Director
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NAMI NEW JERSEY WALKS **For Freedom from Stigma**

Sunday
October 10, 2004
Liberty State Park
Jersey City

WALK Honorary Chairs

U.S. Senator Jon Corzine
U.S. Congressman Rodney Frelinghusen
U.S. Congressman Rush Holt
U.S. Congressman Robert Menendez
N.J. State Senator Diane Allen
N.J. State Legislator Leonard Lance

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