



1562 Route 130, North Brunswick, NJ 08902
(732) 940-0991 Fax: (732) 940-0355
info@naminj.org www.naminj.org

PRESS RELEASE

For additional information

Contact: Aruna Rao, Associate Director
Phone Number: (732) 940-0991
Email: info@naminj.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NAMI New Jersey Celebrated 30 Years of Support, Education and Advocacy

North Brunswick, NJ—June 23, 2015—On Saturday, June 13, 2015, the National Alliance on Mental Illness of New Jersey (NAMI NJ) celebrated its 30 years of improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness at its Annual Meeting and Awards Luncheon at Crowne Plaza Monroe. Over 200 NAMI NJ friends and supporters attended and enjoyed the heartening camaraderie of the classy celebration.



NAMI NJ's five founding members were recognized.

Among the groups of people who were recognized at the event for having made tremendous contributions to NAMI NJ's sustainable success are NAMI NJ's five founding members, Eileen Griffith, Marilyn Goldstein, Elena Stolzer, Lucille Klein and Joyce McKee; founding partner and former DMHAS Affiliate Liaison, Bonnie Schorske; Staff Longevity Recognition Awardee Celina Sanchez; 17 Present and 93 Past NAMI NJ Board of Trustees; 91 founding, long term and new affiliate leaders; the Von Lindern Family who received the first Ed Von Lindern, Jr. Advocacy Award; Stephanie Har receiving the first Dara Axelrod Expressive Arts Network Award; Top Ten winners of the 2015 Dara Axelrod Expressive Arts Mental Health Poetry Contest; Greg Muller and John Gesumaria of NAMI Union who received the Law Enforcement Education Awards; Consumer Council Rep. Bill Butler; Melody Dutch and Elena Kravitz receiving the In Our Own Voice & NAMI Connection Recognition; NAMIWalks NJ 2015 top ten fundraisers and teams, walk volunteer awardees NAMI Ocean County, Sudhir Jain, Emma Thompson and Allison Riccardelli; and NAMI NJ key partner organizations New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs, First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens, Hidden Gems, New Jersey Psychiatric Association and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

NAMI NJ History

NAMI NJ was founded in 1985 by a group of concerned New Jersey family members who had loved ones with mental illness. At a time following the years of "Deinstitutionalization," when care for persons affected by mental illness was severely fragmented, this group of family volunteers came together for mutual support, education and empowerment. They advocated for improved treatment and living

conditions, not only for their own ill family member, but for all people affected by mental illness. From these modest formative years has steadily grown our present organization, composed of dedicated volunteers in our 21 local County Affiliates.

In January 1992, NAMI NJ hired an Executive Director, Sylvia Axelrod, and Secretary, Celina Sanchez. Over the past 23 years the organization's staff has grown to include 7 full time staff and over 10 part-time program coordinator and outreach positions. The partnership between staff and statewide volunteers has resulted in an ever-increasing number of NAMI NJ volunteers trained to assess the quality of care offered to clients in our mental health agencies and to patients in our State Hospitals. NAMI NJ has trained and empowered volunteers to become family educators, support group facilitators, vocal legislative advocates, and recovery-oriented presenters. NAMI NJ staff and volunteers serve on major governmental policy stake-holder committees.

In responding to the mental health needs of children, adults and families from all economic and cultural backgrounds NAMI NJ has developed and initiated a broad array of support, education and advocacy programs. NAMI NJ is noted for outstanding cultural outreach, public education and anti-stigma programs. The organization and its leadership have received numerous recognitions and awards for their accomplishments. These accomplishments include award winning Videos – *“Documenting Our Presence, Multicultural Experiences of Mental Illness”* and *“Communities We Serve, Law Enforcement Training.”* As New Jersey's designated NIMH Outreach Partner, NAMI NJ is the primary resource for information on mental illness and support for NJ's citizens.

Since 2005 NAMI NJ has worked to establish a link with public schools and have developed a key partnership with the NJ Department of Education to provide K-12 educators with “Educating the Educators” (ETE) professional development about mental illness and strategies for building their skills to enhance classroom management. In 2009 NAMI NJ developed the “Every Mind Matters” (EMM) Program in response to the alarming upsurge in the incidence of suicide, bullying, depression, and failing mental health in middle and high school students. NAMI NJ has currently working on developing initiatives to outreach to Veterans and their families.

NAMI NJ looks forward to many more years of proving support, education and advocacy and furthering our mission of improving the lives of those affected by mental illness and their families.

ABOUT NAMI NJ

NAMI NJ, founded in 1985, is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families who are affected by mental illness through programs of support, education and advocacy.