

PRESS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NAMI New Jersey Recognized Mental Health Advocate Leaders and Celebrated 35 Years of Support, Education and Advocacy

North Brunswick, NJ—August 3, 2020—On Saturday, July 18, 2020, the National Alliance on Mental Illness of New Jersey (NAMI NJ) celebrated its 35 years of improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness at its virtual Annual Meeting. Over 30 distinguished awards were presented to exemplary leaders in the mental health movement, and new board president and trustees were announced.

Meredith Masin Blount, Executive Director, announced that Mark T. Williams, BSN, RN-BC has been newly elected as President of the Board of Trustees, and seven individuals have been welcomed onboard as regional or at-large trustees. The organization's first President Elena Stolzer, second President Marilyn Goldstein, and first Executive Director Sylvia Axelrod shared their heartfelt and encouraging messages with all members and volunteers, recognizing NAMI NJ's 35 years of service to NJ's diverse communities. NAMI NJ founders, past long term employees, key team members, and board of trustees were honored at the Annual Meeting, as well as founding and long term affiliate leaders, multicultural program leaders, volunteers of the month, 2019 Walk Sponsors and Top Fundraisers.

The following individuals were honored with this year's awards:

- Sherman T. Brewer, past NAMI NJ Trustee and Public Policy Committee Member, received Governor Richard J. Codey Mental Health Champion Award which recognizes a leader and advocate who has fought tirelessly to bring issues surrounding mental illness to the forefront, and demanded respectful services for people with lived experience of mental illness.
- Gail Dembin, former NAMI Atlantic/Cape May President and NAMI Family-to-Family State Trainer, received The Sylvia Axelrod Award for providing tireless service to those affected by mental illness, both in depth of commitment and in length of years committed to the cause.
- NAMI NJ Achievement Awards:
 - Madison Stiles, Royal International Miss New Jersey Jr. Teen, received NAMI NJ Youth Leader Award for going above and beyond in the efforts to overcome stigma and provide hope and healing to those affected by mental illness.

- Winifred and Bob Chain, NAMI Burlington Board Members and Past AACT-NOW Peer Engagement Specialist, received NAMI NJ Spirit Award for embodying the spirit of NAMI NJ: volunteering, inspiring, helpful and hopeful.
 - Jennifer Amato, Managing Editor of Newspaper Media Group, received NAMI NJ Media Award for her exemplary efforts in raising mental health awareness in NJ and her contribution to improving the lives of people affected by mental health conditions.
 - Jacquese Armstrong, NAMI NJ Dara Axelrod Expressive Arts Coordinator, received NAMI NJ Expressive Arts Leadership Award for leading the movement of using expressive arts to improve the lives of those affected by mental illness.
 - Samantha Zelnock, our Undergraduate Intern in 2019 summer, received NAMI NJ Intern of the Year Award for her leadership, passion, and dedication to our overall mission, and for showing continued commitment and service to the NAMI NJ members and community.
 - Maggie Luo, NAMI NJ Associate Director and CAMHOP Coordinator, received NAMI NJ Diversity and Inclusion Award (inaugural) for her exemplary efforts in engaging minority communities in programming, services, and team recruitment.
- NAMI NJ Signature Program Recognition Awards which recognize NAMI signature program leaders who have shown exemplary commitment and skills in serving communities through the evidence-based programs:
 - Adrienne Friedman of NAMI Middlesex and Nancy Grimaldi of NAMI Sussex received NAMI Family-to-Family Awards;
 - Dominga Gornell of NAMI Warren and Patricia Klint of NAMI Burlington received NAMI Family Support Group Awards;
 - Amanda Buchner of NAMI Mercer and Tarrin Morgan II of AACT-NOW received NAMI In Our Own Voice Awards;
 - Elena Kravitz of NAMI NJ and Patrick Melin of NAMI Somerset received NAMI Connection Awards;
 - Abbie Katz, Alex Zang, Arnold Hyndman, Dominga Gornell, Jayne Dempsey, Juliet Hyndman, and Marc Hurvitz received NAMI Smarts Team Award.
 - NAMI NJ Affiliate Awards:
 - Elaine Fehrenbach, NAMI Warren County President, received Affiliate Support Award for demonstrating empathy, passion, and dedication to supporting those families and individuals affected by mental illness, not only within the organization, but also in their local community and beyond.
 - Arnold Hyndman of NAMI Warren and Public Policy Committee Member received Affiliate Advocacy Award for excellence in advocating on behalf of those affected by mental illness in NJ.
 - Vicky Harvey and Maureen Donais of NAMI Salem, and Lara Zucker of NAMI Greater Bergen, received Affiliate Leadership Award for demonstrating their dedication, inspiration, and who has made an impact on furthering NAMI NJ's mission and community service.

- Multicultural Program Recognition Awards which recognize multicultural program volunteer leaders who have shown exemplary commitment and passion in serving NJ's diverse communities:
 - Donna Williams and Tiffany Mayers received AACT-Now Recognition Awards (African American community);
 - Victor Chou and Yin Y. Lam, M.Ed, MS, received CAMHOP Recognition Awards (Chinese American community);
 - Jasmin Perez and Viviana De los Angeles received NAMI NJ en Español Recognition Awards (Hispanic/Latinx community);
 - Phil Koshy and Yasmin Halim received SAMHAJ Recognition Awards (South Asian community).

- NAMI NJ Dara Axelrod Expressive Arts 2020 Mental Health Poetry Contest Awards:
 - Megha Sood of Jersey City - 1st place
 - Jennifer McGraw of Deepwater - 2nd place
 - Michelle Belfiore of Green Village - 3rd place
 - Edward Bello of Jersey City - 4th place
 - Karen Jung of North Brunswick - 5th place
 - Cooper Kidd of Philadelphia, PA - 6th place
 - Sacha Batra of Clark - 7th place
 - Jodie Intilli of Old Bridge - 8th place
 - Aparajit Sriram of Plainsboro - 9th place
 - Shelley Pickles of Manchester, UK - 10th place

- NAMI NJ Staff Recognition:
 - Celina Sanchez, past Executive Assistant for 24 years, received Long-Term Service to NAMI NJ recognition.
 - Jay Yudof, Recovery Programs Coordinator, Lynne Malloy, Director of Family Programs, and Stephanie Har, Communications Technology Manager, received Quarantine Superstars recognition for their excellence in providing programs to the community during the COVID-19 quarantine.

In response to racial injustice, NAMI NJ Board of Trustees unanimously passed a Resolution Against Racism which was announced at the Annual Meeting to a statewide audience. NAMI NJ commits to participating in activities and conversations that aim to reject racism and vows to develop and implement strategies that dismantle racism and ethnic oppression within its programming.

The virtual Annual Meeting recording and the 2020 Awards list are published on NAMI NJ website: www.naminj.org/events/awards.