February’s Presentation: “Circle of Friends”
Tuesday, February 22nd, 7:30 PM

The popular "Circle of Friends" meeting and discussion will be held on Tuesday, February 22nd at 7:30 PM via Zoom. A panel will explore various topics affecting persons with mental illness and offer insight from their own experiences in dealing with mental illness in their family member.

The panel will consist of Joyce Benz, LCSW, director of IFSS (Intensive Family Support Services) at the Mental Health Association in NJ, as moderator and members from the NAMI Union County Board.

This is an opportunity for information sharing with others who have a common interest: improving quality of life for themselves and their loved ones as we deal with mental illness. Talk will be candid. Bring questions and concerns.

Register in advance for this Zoom meeting:
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAldO2oqj4sEtF5qYDuq4yYnKeDrbMqxWd2

An email reminder with a clickable link to register will be emailed to those of you who’ve provided us with your email address.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing the link to join the zoom meeting on February 22nd. Please note: Meeting starts at 7:30 PM but the zoom site will open at 7:00 PM.

Our meetings are an opportunity for information sharing with others who want to live a better quality of life while dealing with mental illness. Our format is relaxed and audience participation is welcomed. If you’d like to learn more about mental illness, please join our discussion. There is no charge. Our information and friendship are priceless – and free.
President’s Message

Although January 2022 may not have started off as everyone had hoped for, I still remain very optimistic. Here’s why. In reflecting on the challenges of the pandemic years, I firmly believe that NAMI has positioned itself to become more resilient and creative so we could continue to meet the community’s need for mental health education and support programs.

NAMI Union County’s commitment throughout the pandemic has never wavered. It is best reflected in the slogan, “Keep on Keeping On.” Our dedicated NAMI volunteers made certain that our annual Holiday Star party was celebrated in December with the usual abundance of treats and gifts for Mount Carmel Guild Day Treatment Program participants. Our NAMI UC online Family Support group continues to be offered each month. On February 22nd, NAMI UC will kick off the 2022 Speaker Presentation Series with the “Circle of Friends” meeting. This meeting is a perfect opportunity to learn more about mental illness and to ask questions or share concerns with others who might have common experiences.

In addition, I am happy to report that the Family-to-Family education course will be offered by NAMI Union County in March. This 8-week course has been described as a “lifesaver” by all who attend. You will find more information about Family 2 Family in this newsletter.

Every day we hear in the news that there is an overwhelming need for mental health programs for people of all ages in all communities. NAMI UC would like to offer more programs that can address some of these needs but, first, We Need You. If you have ever attended a NAMI program, then you know that all the teachers/facilitators are volunteers who received training so they could share what they have learned. No other special qualifications, degrees or expertise needed. Just the desire to step up to help and make a difference.

Think about it - ARE YOU READY TO MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE? NAMI UC is ready to forge ahead in 2022 and we welcome you to join us. Please contact me: write naminunioncounty@yahoo.com or (908) 233-1628.


Julie Donohue
Julie Donohue, President, NAMI of Union County

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**CALENDAR**

All meetings are conducted via ZOOM till further notice.

**Family Support:**
3rd Tuesday of every month 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
February 15  March 15  April 19
To register, email Denise at naminunioncounty@yahoo.com with your name, town, and phone number.

**Speaker Presentation:**
4th Tuesday 7:30 PM
February 22  March 22  April 26
To register, go to http://www.naminj.org/support/affiliates/union/ >Upcoming Event>Click on the Register here link. Link will be available a few days before the event.
CIT Training - You’re Invited!

NAMI Union County has been a proud sponsor and supporter of the Union County Crisis Intervention Team training program since it began in 2010. The program is 40-hours of instruction over one week that is offered to all Union County police officers, police dispatchers and anyone working in the mental health field in Union County. The goal of the CIT program is to teach responders how to defuse potentially risky behavior before an incident escalates to a crisis situation.

For the first time, this year’s CIT class is being opened to any interested NAMI member. The class is in-person, held at the Cranford Community Center on March 7th -11th from 8:00 am-4:30 pm. There is no fee for a NAMI member to attend. The course is intense and interactive. Capacity is limited. Pre-registration is required. You must commit to attending for the full week. If interested and to register, please contact Deborah White, Union County CIT training Coordinator, at deborah.white.esq@gmail.com for more information. Please put “CIT Training” in the subject line; please identify yourself as a NAMI member.

Holiday Star – Thank You!

Our annual Holiday Star event happened in December! Clients of the Mount Carmel Guild day program in Cranford – about 80 of them! -- received a reusable tote bag filled with a variety of items such as toiletries and cosmetic items, knit hats, socks, Find-A-Word books, a 2022 inspirational calendar, Lifesavers candy and snacks, and more, plus a generous box of yummy home-baked cookies.

NAMI of Union County volunteers dropped off the gift bags and food goodies for distribution by the Mount Carmel Guild staff to clients. While we really missed hosting the event in-person due to the health crisis, we feel fortunate to have been able to provide our guests the gifts and holiday cheer.

The Holiday Star Project Committee consists of NAMI members Irene Bieniaszewski, Julie Donohue, Beverly Eason, Joann Mehalick, Chris Russo, and Sandy Powers (Chair), all of whom worked diligently in purchasing gifts and assembling the gift bags, transporting them, and of course, overall organization of the event. Thank you, Holiday Star Project Committee!

Thank you as well to all members of NAMI Union County: Your dues and generous donations paid the expenses of this well-loved event. You’ve shown our Holiday Star guests that people truly do care about them.

<< Gift bags stacked high at a volunteer’s home

NAMI of Union County Officers of the Board of Directors

President Julie Donohue   Vice President Denise Gesumaria   Secretary Chris Russo
Treasurer Pam Eagan * Newsletter Editor Chris Russo
Family-to-Family education course begins March 3rd

The NAMI Family-to-Family Education Course starts on Thursday, March 3rd, meeting each Thursday over a consecutive 8-week period beginning at 7:00 PM. It will be held in-person at the RWJ Fitness Center in Scotch Plains. The course is free, with all necessary materials furnished at no cost to attendees.

The course is offered specifically to the parents, siblings, spouses, teen-age and adult children, and significant others of individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. The program is not appropriate for individuals who themselves suffer from one of the major mental disorders. The course is taught by NAMI members who have completed intensive training. F2F graduates have called F2F one of the best programs NAMI offers.

Curriculum topics include schizophrenia, bipolar disorder (manic depression), clinical depression, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder etc., the clinical treatment of these illnesses and how caregivers can learn to cope more effectively. You’ll learn about new research, medications, skills needed to successfully communicate with a relative and how to deal with critical periods.

Capacity is limited. Pre-registration is required. To register or if you have questions contact Pat Roman at 732-397-8123 or email patroman2@aol.com. Please include in the subject line: F2F Course. A F2F teacher will contact you with the details.

Many NAMI members have benefited from F2F. If you have not taken the course, now is a great opportunity to do so. If you have graduated, you know how essential F2F is to better living. Please recommend to a friend!

NAMI Union County 2022 Online Meetings

Family Support Group via Zoom

FOR:  Family members and caregivers of persons with mental illness.
Are you feeling stressed and alone in trying to cope with the effects of a loved one’s mental illness?
Join our peer-led group meetings and gain insight from others facing the same challenges.

To register, e-mail Denise at namiumunioncounty@yahoo.com with your name, town, and phone number.
3rd Tuesday of every month 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Speaker Presentations via Zoom

FOR:  Anyone who wants to find out about mental illnesses, treatments and community resources.  Professional speakers on relevant topics with Q&A to follow.  To register, go to http://www.naminj.org/support/affiliates/union/ >Upcoming Event>Click on the Register here link.
Link will not be available until a few days before the event.
4th Tuesday 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Join the Conversation about Mental Illness!
Our meetings are truly a welcoming environment -- inclusive as well as informative. NAMI membership is not required to attend.
Please note: All in-person meetings have been suspended. All meetings are via Zoom until further notice.

You are not alone!