



**LUZERNE/WYOMING
COUNTIES**

FALL 2017

Dear NAMI Members:

The end of the year is quickly approaching. Our next meeting will be held on November 13 at 6:00 p.m. We will be preparing for our holiday party to be held December 11 at 6:00 p.m. We would like to get a count on the number of people planning to attend and also what they may like to donate. Please call the office if you plan to attend at 570-371-3844.

The membership dues for 2018, is as follows: \$5 Open Door, \$40 Individual, and \$60 Household membership. The benefits of membership include the Local NAMI Newsletter, NAMI Advocate Magazine, attend the National Convention at a discount rate, online access to member only content, create a free account to subscribe to content of interest to you, connect with others in

discussion groups, manage your profile, preferences and subscriptions. Please join at the level you can afford.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By: **PAUL RADZAVICZ**

Remember we need members so our voice can be heard!

Also, we are accepting applications for a person to fill an open board position. Please call Magen at 570-371-3844 if you are interested.

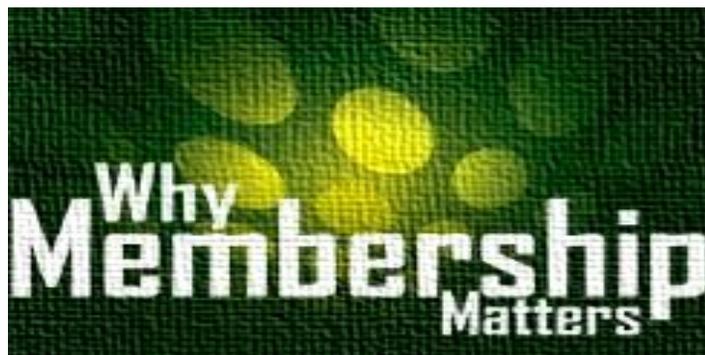
Happy Holidays,

Paul J. Radzavicz
President, NAMI Luzerne/Wyoming Counties

FOR MORE INFO ON MEMBERSHIP

EMAIL:
namiluzernewyomingcounty@gmail.com

PHONE: 570-371-3844



Why You Should Remember That Everyone's Battle With Mental Illness Is Different

By: Jessica Nickel

Jessica Nickel has been battling with depression, anxiety and an eating disorder for the last 14 years but she refuses to be defined by a diagnosis. She enjoys reading, writing and crafting, and hopes to pursue her dream of being an art therapist.

I've heard so many times lately — from friends and casual acquaintances — that since they were able to do X, Y or Z, I can do it too. This has been in regards to a lot of different areas in my life, but especially in regards to my battle with multiple mental illnesses. And in all honesty, that argument is getting old. It has no real logical standing.

What is possible for one person is not always possible for someone else, for a variety of complex reasons. Humans are complicated — so are mental illnesses. It's not that I don't appreciate the sentiment, but I think what often gets forgotten is that we all are fighting our own battles, we are all living our own stories and we are all doing the best we can to survive. What looks like self-destruction to one person may be the only thing holding someone else together. Recovery from any mental illness does not have a one-size-fits-all solution. What might be extremely beneficial for one person living with a mental illness might not be beneficial, might possibly even be harmful, for another.

Mental illnesses are biologically-based, genetically-influenced, family-influenced and society-influenced. Many people have gone through some kind of trauma which only adds to the complexity. Not everyone has a supportive and understanding family or has found the right combination of medication. Not everyone has found a reason to live. Not everyone has the same access to treatment options. Not all treatment options work for everyone. A lot of people have to deal with a whole pile of different diagnoses. There are so many factors, so many variables. Two people with the same diagnoses are not automatically both guaranteed to recover because of the same sort of treatment.

Mental illness affects people in so many different ways. It can be completely debilitating, making the smallest task seem insurmountable. The message I hear — even if it's not what is intended — when someone tells me if they can recover then I can too, is that they are saying I'm not trying hard enough; if I was truly trying then I too could be recovered. I hear I must not have it as bad as they did. I hear that my repeated attempts at recovery haven't been good enough. And that's just not the reality. I have tried so many different things at so many different points in time. I have fought with everything

I had in me and I still hear it was not good enough because I'm not recovered. Not every story ends in "they lived happily ever." That just isn't life, especially with mental illness. The truth is many people with mental illness *do* recover, but there are also some who don't. And it's not for lack of trying or some kind of weakness. It just is what it is, especially when it comes to eating disorders.

I'm not saying the answer is to give up, to stop fighting and to just admit defeat, although I know some days all I feel is defeated. And I don't really have an answer — more just a plea for compassion, for empathy and for people to stop assuming we are all going to recover. The statistics say otherwise. Please know that, when it doesn't look like I'm fighting, I am truly fighting my hardest just to hang on. I don't need you to tell me everything is going to be OK, that I'm going to be OK and one day I'll be able to say "I made it." I just need you to love me and have compassion for me as I am, right now.

Please know, I am so glad you are making it to the other side, or have fought your way there because I know you have fought incredibly hard to get to where you are. Please know too though, that I am also fighting incredibly hard. My fight may not look like yours did but I'm still fighting with everything I have in me left to fight with. I am trying; I really need you to believe me when I say I am trying.

My Brain is Different
by EMILIA POLICARE

My brain is different.	No ones the same.
It's not like yours.	Everyone struggles
It has highs and lows	But no ones to blame
My brain is different	My brain is different
Even my mom knows	I'll take that.
There are days of sadness	Because it doesn't define me
And days of pain	It makes me stronger.
Days of sorrow	And every day I get through
And days of mental rain	Is a day I've lived longer.
Everyone's different.	

2017 CANDLELIGHT VIGIL

2017 LESTER VERANO AWARD FOR ADVOCACY GOES TO AUDREY GOZDISKOWSKI

The Lester Verano Advocacy Award is an award in memory of Lester Verano, who was one of the founding members of NAMI Luzerne/Wyoming County and a staunch mental health advocate. The recipient of this award must have demonstrated over a significant period of time, dedication in advocating for families and individuals with mental illness. This year's recipient's accomplishments more than qualify her. As a member of our local NAMI chapter she served as our affiliate president, is certified to teach Family to Family, In Our Own Voice and Breaking the Silence.

In addition to those accomplishments Audrey started the first affiliate newspaper and even developed the first local website. She has made herself available to present at CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) to police officers and first responders, in order to offer a family perspective as part of the curriculum.

Audrey did not stop there though. She continued to try and spread mental health awareness as well as her enthusiasm to help those in need. She developed programs for children for presentation at public libraries, used her own funds to form the Hands on Recovery Craft Group for consumers in Wyoming County and even started a CSP program for the county residents. She even planned a recovery walk and candlelight vigil for the community in Tunkhannock and created Repurposed Hands, a craft group, at the Tunkhannock Library.

Additionally, Audrey got her certification to be a Peer Specialist and co-facilitated a NAMI Veteran Support Group at the VA Medical Center and continues to act as a Senior Peer Counselor Volunteer through CCS and RSVP programs.

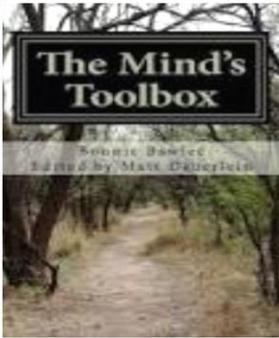
Believe it or not, this is only a partial list of Audrey's accomplishments. She is also a fierce environmental advocate for clean air and clean roadways. She once cleaned Thirty (30) miles of roadway, by herself, in the Tunkhannock area and donated the money she gained for cashing in recyclables and donated it to the Clean Air Coalition.

Audrey's life can be summed up into Three (3) Mottos:

- 1) If you see something wrong, help correct it;
- 2) If you see something broken, help fix it; and
- 3) If you see someone that needs help, help them.

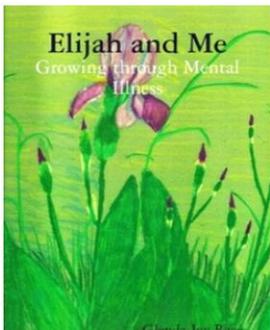
Audrey Gozdiskowski is a wonderful example of what it looks like to be an advocate. Thank you Audrey for all that you have done and continue to do!

WHAT PEOPLE ARE UP TO AROUND THE VALLEY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!



***The Mind's Toolbox**
by Bonnie Bawiec*

***Elijah & Me**
by Glenda Race*



We have two local members of our mental health community that have written books to help individuals on their path to recovery. I think that this is one of the greatest ways of helping others. When we share knowledge with one another we are able to provide an asset to both ourselves and perhaps, more importantly, others. By providing this great service both authors below took their own perspectives and training and applied it to help bring knowledge to others.

The first, entitled “The Mind’s Toolbox: A Depression Workbook”, written by Bonnie Bawiec. Bonnie is the assistant supervisor of the Crisis Response and Recovery Center at General Hospital in Wilkes-Barre. Her workbook is intended to teach individuals how to implement new thinking patterns, build coping skills and create future orientation. She designed the workbook to give patients the tools they need to self-reflect and strengthen their communication skills. The Mind’s Toolbox is available on Amazon for \$10.00 or you may contact Bonnie directly at themindstoolbox@gmail.com.

The next book is entitled “Elijah and Me: Growing Through Mental Illness” by Glenda Joy Race. Glenda’s book contains forty-two (42) devotional units which feature a reading on the life of Elijah, a personal narrative, poetry and a prayer prompt. Glenda has found writing to be one of her favorite and most successful forms of personal medicine, allowing her to express herself, and at the same time, help others. Elijah and Me is available for \$10.00, please contact the NAMI office by phone or email to reserve a copy today.

HAVE SOMETHING YOU HAVE WRITTEN OR GOAL YOU WANT TO BRING ATTENTION TO?? PLEASE SUBMIT A WRITE-UP TO OUR OFFICE AND WE WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO PUBLISH IT IN OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER.

PLEASE SUBMIT ANY POETRY, ARTICLES OR COMMUNITY EFFORTS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO BRING ATTENTION TO, TO OUR OFFICE LOCATED AT:

NAMI LUZERNE/WYOMING COUNTY
100 EAST UNION STREET SUITE #6
WILKES-BARRE, PA 18702

<mailto:NAMILUZERNEWYOMINGCOUNTY@GMAIL.COM>

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR PAST NEWSLETTERS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION!

NAMILUZERNEWYOMINGCOUNTIES.ORG

THE NEED FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & WHY THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY DEPENDS ON YOU

I decided to try and put together a scrapbook of our local chapter of NAMI to detail the history of our local chapter. It is not meant to WOW anyone in terms of my art skills when assembling it however, it is meant to WOW you when you realize how much work and time was spent by our founding members to get our local affiliate where it is today.

The founding members of our local NAMI Affiliate made it their life's work to ensure that services were available to members of our community and worked tirelessly to increase their knowledge on programs, services and opportunities that could be offered in the Luzerne and Wyoming County in the mental health field.

I learned so much by putting the scrapbook together.

I LEARNED how hard our founders fought to get services for the members of the mental health community in our area;

I LEARNED how much resistance they were met with due to fear and misunderstanding in the community;

I LEARNED that we have made great strides in overcoming some challenges that faced the mental health community.

However, the new challenges that face the mental health community in our world today are very real and need your voice to ensure that we continue to advocate for equality, stigma elimination and mental healthcare for everyone.

The greatest "thank you" and show of appreciation that we can show those that came before us is to continue to advocate for mental health rights; to share the passion our founding members harnessed in order to continue to make advances in our society and to reduce stigma!

It is important to note that no one will fight this battle for us, it is our responsibility to be facilitators for change!

We live in a world where there are many groups and organizations trying to achieve their goals and speaking up for injustice where they believe it exists.

As I watch national news programs and pay attention to their dialogue and listen to what the leaders of our country (from both sides of the aisle) have to say when it comes to the topic of mental illness I am aghast that there is no one speaking up for those with mental illness.

These statements and viewpoints often propagate stigma, the very opposite of what we here hope to achieve and these statements are coming from educated individuals, often leaders of our communities and frankly it needs to stop.

I believe it is essential that we stand up to these opinions with little fear and a collection of facts to combat this ignorance.

I encourage each one of you to do your part:

- ✓ Write a letter to your local government representative
- ✓ Compose an editorial on mental health matters that are important to you
- ✓ Speak up when you hear someone say something that gives stigma more power
- ✓ Voice your concern on how mental illness is portrayed on national news.

Please know you are not alone in bringing mental illness facts to the forefront, in fact, there are many who came before you, laying you a path that you may achieve new goals to bring real awareness to a cause that means something to you personally. A cause that knows no race, no religion and no socioeconomic limitations; it affects us all in one way or another and by having a voice and speaking up, you may be helping someone who does not yet have that privilege.



STAY UP TO DATE!

JOIN OUR NAMI MEMBERS GOOGLE GROUPS ACCOUNT AND LEARN ABOUT COMMUNITY EVENTS, EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES & FUN ACTIVITIES BEING OFFERED THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY!

QUESTIONS: CALL THE OFFICE TO GET SIGNED UP! 570-371-3844

Right: Members of NAMI attended the National Convention in Washington D.C. and took part in Hill Day, advocating for Mental Health Rights

Below: NAMI members, Joe Fedak and Emilia Policare assemble awareness ribbons for the Annual Candlelight Vigil for Mental Illness Awareness Week

Below & Right: Joe Fedak crocheting sleeping mats for the homeless. This is one way Joe uses Personal Medicine to assist in his recovery and help others in the process

Get involved, there are always fun and innovative ways to show you care!!!

