

# STEPPING STONE

June 2012  
Volume 1, Issue 1

## Getting Started

NAMI Forsyth, Dawson, Lumpkin (FDL) affiliate is pleased to present STEPPING STONE, the first official newsletter for NAMI FDL, a long-standing affiliate of NAMI Georgia. Our mission is to bring topics of education and interest to NAMI FDL family members and consumers, as well as reach the wider audience invested with advocacy for quality mental health treatment delivery. Direct your comments, questions, news items, poems, and personal stories to:

Mari Forquer, Editor  
[mariforquer@yahoo.com](mailto:mariforquer@yahoo.com)

All used submissions are subject to edit depending on available space.

**STEPPING STONE** extends an invitation to personal caregivers and consumers to share their stories of success, triumphs and challenges while obtaining and maintaining mental health. As editor of your newsletter, it is appropriate you know who I am. "My story" is humbly offered for your information and your sense of camaraderie under *Up Close and Personal*. Thank you for listening...



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## Join NAMI today!

When you become a member of NAMI, you become part of America's largest grassroots organization dedicated to improving the lives of persons living with serious mental illness.

**NAMI FDL membership is only \$35 per year.**

Gifts of any amount are accepted and appreciated. For those with limited income our "Open Door Membership" is \$3 per year.

Members receive the *NAMI Advocate* national magazine. Please make your check payable to:

**NAMI FDL**

NAMI Forsyth Dawson Lumpkin  
P.O. Box 2665  
Cumming, GA 30028

## Up Close and Personal



Being mother to a child with bipolar illness carries responsibilities a parent never knew existed. Can we bear it? Can we explain our loved one to friends? Are there working treatments bringing successes? Gratefully, the answer to each of these questions (and many more) is YES! Our family's journey began with my now 50 year old son way back in 1985. Not having permission to use his name, I'll call him "Son" here.

Returning from an overseas stint in the U.S. Army, it became clear quickly Son had several problems. He was living in a different state from me, and his dad chose to not be involved in the issues. So Son called me. He was without resources, wanted a job and had little positive to report about his life.

Sadly, this was not real news to me. Son had problems throughout his childhood and teen-age years. He was always resistant to any interventions in trying to bring him help. So it was not a surprise this was still a large part of his otherwise generous personality. Son's troubles continued as a marriage brought a son of his own, job instability and a turbulent married life. By 1989 he exhibited addictive behaviors as well. Divorce was imminent. Son proclaimed himself "broken." I see it now, but I was broken, too. I was an enabling mama unable or unwilling to let go of the ropes of codependency.

Fortunately, in 1989 NAMI came into my life. At least I had a place to go with my own disabled self. Month after month my NAMI family listened to me lament my inability to help Son. I gave him money; he did not use it wisely.

I bought him clothes; he was not appreciative. I paid for gas for his car; he wrecked the car. My trying to get him help with local mental health agencies met rebuff after rebuff on his part. Ten years later, the only thing I refused to do was bail him out of jail. That probably was the most helpful, as a mandated DUI course to get back his lost license brought Son to the point of admitting he had a problem. He agreed to medical treatment for what was now identified as a bipolar disorder.

NAMI remained my lodestar for hope. I took a NAMI Family-to-Family teacher certification course, and taught F2F for the NAMI Forsyth, Lumpkin and Dawson counties Georgia affiliate until 2011. I learned something new with each class. Mostly, the lesson was the by-words of Family to Family: "You can't know what no one has told you." What I finally learned is my son is responsible for his own choices, even when he is ill. We can help as much as what is really helpful. Beyond that, we can only become alive again by allowing that coveted degree of freedom for ourselves and for our loved ones.

Son made personal progress during those years, but continued to engage in self-defeating behaviors. Ultimately, after an unsuccessful suicide attempt in 2010, he found comfort, knowledge and companionship with the VA Residential mental health program in Atlanta. I am grateful for my son. Through our struggle with mental illness, we gained a mutual appreciation. I am contented to note he and I grew up together!

**By: Mari Forquer**  
**Editor: NAMI FDL Newsletter**

## May, National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Month, is dedicated to increasing public awareness of children’s mental health issues.

### NAMI Basics

NAMI Basics is the new signature education program for parents and other caregivers of children and adolescents living with a serious emotional disturbance or mental illness. The program is intended for any parent, grandparent or foster parent who is the caregiver of a child up to age 21 who has not graduated high school. The class may also include aunts, uncles, adult siblings or other relatives who are responsible for the child. The course is taught by trained teachers who are the parent or caregiver of individuals who developed the symptoms of mental illness prior to the age of 13 years.

The course consists of six classes (usually in six consecutive weeks), each lasting for 2 ½ hours. All instruction materials are FREE to participants. Look for upcoming announcement about a class.

**NAMI Basics is a peer-led educational program for parents and other caregivers of children and adolescents with a mental illness. Development of this program was based on the success of other NAMI Signature Education Programs for consumers and families.**

*Kathy Archambault, a Forsyth Co. NAMI FDL member, tells us of her experience taking the Basics course.*

I was recently introduced to Ovie Hughie while accompanying a friend to a NAMI support group meeting. Ovie is an experienced volunteer for NAMI and she suggested that I might be a good fit in facilitating the NAMI Basics course to assist families who have adolescents diagnosed with mental illness.

My daughter was diagnosed with bipolar disorder at the age of four. Our doctor referred to this as “early onset bipolar disorder”. On April 20th and the 21st Ovie and I took part in the NAMI Basics training workshop which was held in Atlanta. In this training course we would learn to be workshop facilitators of the NAMI Basics course for the Forsyth, Lumpkin and Dawson counties. We settled in to begin our next two days of training.

The NAMI Basics Education Program developed in 2007, is a rigorous six class curriculum that is designed to assist families who have a child who has been diagnosed with a mental illness. Suzy Kyle (of Northside) and Faye Taylor (of Forsyth, Lumpkin and Dawson County (FDL), our facilitators for the course, graciously provided a wealth of additional information and pamphlets which we could utilize as resources. It was interesting to note in one of the provided pamphlets, “Parents and Teachers as Allies”, that “12 percent of American children under the age of 18 live with a diagnosable mental illness”. The basics course will cover recognizing signs of mental illness as well as a review of some basic developmental benchmarks for your child.

Family members/caregivers will learn factual information regarding brain biology, treatment options, as well as understanding how to advocate for your child. We spent a great deal of time focusing on the emotional aspect and reactions that a family experiences. As someone who has experienced this first-hand, I know that in a time of crisis it is important to understand that some well-known methods for parenting and communicating simply may not work. For example, during the workshop the instructors

led a role-playing exercise where parents/caregivers learned skills on how to effectively interact and diffuse situations when their child is in distress. We were encouraged to speak through our feelings of frustration, guilt and grief and to understand that self-care is another important key to continuing to thrive as a family.

The NAMI Basics course provides parents and caregivers the tools they need to understand the biology of a brain disorder, to recognize and deal effectively with an event or crisis, and to learn to cope while keeping hope. The purpose for me has been the healing power of sharing, and learning how to advocate for my daughter. As caregivers, mentors and guardians of these children we are tasked with the responsibility to educate ourselves, our family, our doctors and even the children's' teachers. You know your child the best. The NAMI Basics Education Program will give you strength, help build your alliance with a team of volunteers and parents and be a valuable resource on your quest for information to assist and support your child with mental illness.

**Submitted by Kathy Archambault**

Reference Burland, Ph.D, J. (2011, Fourth Edition). Parents and Teachers as Allies. NAMI



## WHERE WE LEARN....

Roused from dreams at 5AM  
 I open one glazed eye;  
 Stand and stretch, throw on a robe,  
 Oh baby, how you cry!  
 You're hungry, yes, I suppose that's so,  
 But don't you know the score?  
 We are now, my child, on DST,  
 And it's really only four!  
 Anon.

A welcome chuckle, to be sure. The point is well taken. It's not as late as we think. **NAMI's Signature Educational Program, Family-to-Family**, shows many of us how information and empathy bring us a new level of understanding.

***To a person, Family-to-Family students attest how they just did not know—did not realize the full extent of mental illness.*** Hope is gained again for a situation seemingly hopeless. It cannot be said enough: "We just don't know what we have not been told."

You'll find a description of NAMI's education programs offered in your own back yard. Take a few minutes to check this site's education link.

[http://www.nami.org/MSTemplate.cfm?Section=Support\\_and\\_Education&Site=NAMI\\_Forsyth\\_Dawson\\_Lumpkin&Template=/ContentManagement/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=139342](http://www.nami.org/MSTemplate.cfm?Section=Support_and_Education&Site=NAMI_Forsyth_Dawson_Lumpkin&Template=/ContentManagement/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=139342)

Contact Ovie Hughie for info for current programs available for you to attend.

[oviehughie@aol.com](mailto:oviehughie@aol.com)

### NAMI Family Support Group

7:00–8:30PM the 2nd Thursday each month.

Open to all adults 18 and older who have a family member or friend living with mental illness. Groups are confidential

Contact: [namifdlga@gmail.com](mailto:namifdlga@gmail.com)

### NAMI Consumer Connection Group

7:00–8:30 pm 2nd Thursday each month.

Open to all adults 18 and older living with mental illness who are stable and well enough to participate in a recovery group. This group will meet across the hall from the family group, so each group will maintain its own privacy and confidentiality. Contact: [namifdlga@gmail.com](mailto:namifdlga@gmail.com)

#### Location

Forsyth County Senior Center  
595 Dahlonega Highway (Highway 9)  
Cumming, GA 30040  
Next door to the Cumming Library

### NAMI Basics Course

*New* signature education program for parents and other caregivers of child up to age 21 with serious mental illness.

Summer class in Cumming; Pre-registration required, class size limited. The course consists of six classes (usually in six consecutive weeks), each lasting for 2 ½ hours. **All instruction materials are FREE to participants. Classes will be held Mondays, 6:30PM to 9:00PM, July 2 – August 6, 2012.**

Contact: Faye Taylor (770) 781–8325  
[faye.m.taylor@gmail.com](mailto:faye.m.taylor@gmail.com)

### Family-to-Family Class

This is an educational program for family members, close friends and mentors of the mentally ill (depression, PTSD, bipolar, BPD, schizophrenia, etc.) **All instruction materials are FREE to participants.** We ask an 11 week commitment to the series; each class lasting for 2 ½ hours; each week's topic is different. All classes fit together to form a better understanding of brain disorders and help participants learn to cope more effectively with the burden of mental illness.

Summer class in Cumming; Pre-registration is required. Class size is limited. **Classes will be held Tuesday's, 6:30PM to 9:00PM August 7 – October 14, 2012.**

Contact: Ovie Hughie (678) 341–9414  
[oviehughie@aol.com](mailto:oviehughie@aol.com)

### Information and Support

NAMI Forsyth Dawson Lumpkin  
[www.namifdl.org](http://www.namifdl.org)

Consumer and Family Support  
[namifdlga@gmail.com](mailto:namifdlga@gmail.com)

Veteran Support  
[labranch@bellsouth.net](mailto:labranch@bellsouth.net)

Mental Health–Criminal Justice Liaison  
[lgiltma1@gmail.com](mailto:lgiltma1@gmail.com)

NAMI National Helpline  
1–800–950–NAMI (6264) Mon.–Fri. 10–6  
[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

NAMI GA Mon.–Fri. 9 – 5  
770–234–0855 or 1–800–728–1052  
[www.namiga.org](http://www.namiga.org)



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*We're on the Web!*

*Visit us at:*  
NAMIFDL.org

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