

# STEPPING STONE

May 2013  
Volume 2, Issue 1

## A Note from the Editor

Welcome to the second edition of the Stepping Stone. This is the newsletter for NAMI Forsyth Dawson Lumpkin (FDL) affiliate of NAMI Georgia. Our mission is to bring topics of education and interest to the NAMI FDL family members and consumers as well as reach a wider audience invested with interest and dedicated to advocacy for quality mental health treatment delivery. Direct your comments,



Mari

questions, news items, poems and personal stories to:

Mari Forquer, Editor  
mariforquer@yahoo.com

Linda Fitzwater, Tech Editor  
davlinfitz@yahoo.com



## New NAMI Affiliate Full Speed Ahead

After the death of her son, who suffered from mental illness six years ago, Jean Smilie looked toward NAMI for answers and support like so many of us do. She ultimately brought the first NAMI Family Support Group to the Mountain Community of Ellijay, Georgia.

FGP NAMI, serving Fannin, Gilmer and Pickens counties, is now six months old. Their mission is to bring support, education, hope and advocacy to this area of the North Georgia Mountains along the 515 corridor. They now have three family Support Groups for families and two consumer Connection Groups meeting monthly.

**Affiliate** continued on Page 2

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| A Note from the Editor                | 1 |
| New Affiliate                         | 1 |
| SOS – Survivors of Suicide            | 1 |
| The Link                              | 3 |
| Sandy Hook                            | 4 |
| Support Connection, Class Information | 4 |
| Nami Walk 2012                        | 5 |

## SOS - Survivors of Suicide by Carol Dooley

On February 1-2, 2013, The Link Counseling Center's National Resource Center (NRC) for Suicide Prevention and Aftercare held a Survivors of Suicide (SOS) Facilitator and Team Training workshop.

Having survived the loss of loved ones and completing prior training, three friends decided to pay it forward by honoring the memories of their loved ones and provide the same kind of help they

**Survivors** continued on Page 3



**Affiliate** *continued from Page 1*

The Blue Ridge Family Support and the Connection groups meet at the First Methodist Church on the first and third Thursdays of the month from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm. Ellijay’s Family Support and Connection groups meet on the second and fourth Sundays at the First Methodist Church of Ellijay 3:00 pm to 4:30 pm. The Jasper Family Support Group meets the first and third Mondays of the month at First Baptist Church of Jasper from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm.

Working with area providers, each community Family Support Group has presenters for educational classes from Highland Rivers Mental Health, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation and the new mental health court in that area. Additionally, the Rome NAMI affiliate conducted a week-long Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training in February for 30 police officers from the Pickens, Gilmer, and Cherokee County Sheriff Offices and Roswell Police Department.

Joe Davis, a NAMI teacher with FGP NAMI, helped bring the affiliate to fruition. He expresses appreciation to the seasoned affiliate, FDL NAMI, of Cumming, Georgia, for their sponsorship working through the affiliate process. He says, “There are so many similarities between these two affiliates: e.g., rural and small town aspects of the Hwy. 400 and Hwy. 515 multi-county communities.”

Joe adds, “We share the passion, mission and goals to help our populous eliminate the stigma of mental illness through education.” In the spirit of advocacy, Joe attended Georgia’s Mental Health Day at the Capital February 19. He met one-on-one with lawmakers expressing the area needs of consumers and caregivers. He says “This was a very productive day to help meet the goals for our affiliate.”



*Joe Davis and a fellow advocate.*

**2012-2013**  
**NAMI FDL Board of Directors**

|                  |                         |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| Carol LaBranche  | <i>President</i>        |
| Linda Fitzwater  | <i>Vice President</i>   |
| Susan Gates      | <i>Secretary</i>        |
| Delores Browning | <i>Treasurer</i>        |
| Ovie Hughie      | <i>Education</i>        |
| Pearl Blackburn  | <i>Membership</i>       |
| Mari Forquer     | <i>Newsletter</i>       |
| Flo Giltman      | <i>Past President</i>   |
| Peter Allen      | <i>Consumer Support</i> |
| Faye Taylor      | <i>Past President</i>   |

**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 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 checks payable to:

NAMI FDL  
 P.O. Box 2665  
 Cumming, GA 30028



Visit our website at:  
[www.namifdl.org](http://www.namifdl.org)

## Survivors *continued from Page 1*

they received when their own pain was so intense and debilitating. With the help of Sheri McGuinness of the Suicide Prevention Action Network of Georgia (SPAN-GA), Karen Copija, Sherry Unwala and I, Carol Dooley, began the Cumming SOS group in April 2011.

To qualify for SOS Facilitator and Team Training one must be a survivor (someone who has lost a friend or loved one to suicide, and at least one and a half years beyond your loss). Professionals associated with this area and desiring to provide a service such as forming groups and increase skills also qualify. The program is designed to teach individuals how to create and facilitate SOS support groups.

The Forsyth County Sheriff Department received 138 calls threatening suicide in 2012. The number of attempts rose from 66 in 2011 to 101 in 2012.1) With 148 people taking their own lives over the past 10 years in Forsyth County alone, the need for a resource like an SOS Support group in this area is tremendous.

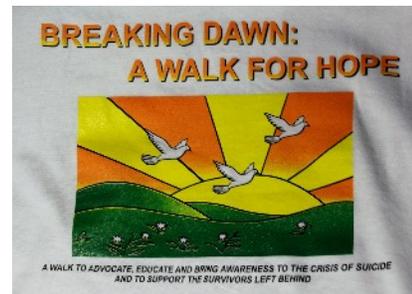
Depression and suicide are engulfed by stigma, ignorance and fear. SOS support groups provide confidential, non-judgmental havens of kindness, compassion and encouragement. We share our stories on this journey which none of us chose but are now forced to travel. It is through this sharing survivors learn they can in fact survive this trauma and will eventually, on their own timetable, find a “new normal.” The next time the subjects of depression or suicide come up, please keep an open mind and LISTEN!

- 1) LaRenzie, A. (2013 Friday, January 11). Suicide Statistics in Forsyth County. Forsyth County News; Cumming, Georgia.



“You can’t know what no one has told you!”

*Family-to-Family Handbook*



## The Link

*Located in Sandy Springs, The Link is a non-profit community counseling center offering counseling and psychotherapy to individuals, couples and families. It also hosts a variety of specialized therapy groups, and a program for children and adolescents in crisis and grief. Along with housing the National Resource Center and the Marriage and Family Therapy Training Institute, The Link also provides consultation to businesses, public workshops and training for other mental health professionals.*

*Forsyth County SOS is fortunate to have The Link as a great resource in our own backyard. However that is not the case for everybody. At the February 2013 training, 28 participants came from all across Georgia and as far away as North Carolina, South Carolina and Oklahoma. This did not include the team of 14 presenters, all volunteers with the exception of two, and all survivors with the exception of one. Having gone through the training, becoming a facilitator, and now as one of the presenters, I can tell you that these are two long strenuous days, both mentally and physically. But I will also tell you that it is worth every minute of it and I wouldn't have it any other way!*

*Carol Dooley*

## In Sandy Hook wake, mental health and guns intersect again

**Published:** Saturday, January 26, 2013, 10:30 p.m.  
*[More than a month]\*\* after a gunman killed 20 children and six adults in a Connecticut elementary school, the nation continues to search for answers.*

Some propose gun controls; others seek to re-examine the mental health care system.

Former FBI Special Agent Jim Fisher, a retired professor of criminal justice at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, said nothing will prevent bloodshed.

“It’s all feel-good talk intended to make people feel safe,” he said. “But life is not safe.”

The only way to prevent mass shootings, Fisher said, is to force every American to undergo a mental health examination, then imprison anyone who fails. In reality, society lacks the resources to diagnosis every dangerous sociopath, let alone pay for their forced treatment, he said.

“It would require a degree of monitoring and government intrusion that would be abhorrent to most people,” Fisher said. “In the end, most of us would say that to maintain our freedom and keep government from being even more costly than it already is, we’re

going to have to accept the crime.”

Yet mental health experts say small steps can lower the likelihood of mass shootings, even if a panacea does not exist.

They urge a national dialogue on how America treats the mentally ill.

“If a kid gets diagnosed with cancer, everybody in the community rallies around them,” said Amanda Thomas, a family adviser for Forging Futures, which counsels parents and their kids who suffer from mental illness. “But you start talking about, ‘My kid might be bipolar,’ nobody knows how to respond. I hope for the sake of our children that this is going to be the start of a bigger, more uncomfortable conversation,” she said. “As a country, we need to be able to say, ‘I’m not perfect. My kid’s not perfect. How do we work together to deal with this?’ ”

*\*\*Editors note: This article first appeared in the January 2013 issue of the Georgia Northside Affiliate’s newsletter, N’sider, edited by Suzy Kyle. This is almost six months after the incident and still we are holding this fruitful national dialogue! More is the pity it took this long for mental health/mental illness issues to be recognized. But thank goodness we have finally, and rightfully, been shaken to the core.*

*Reprinted with permission, Ed.*



### **NAMI Family Support Group**

7:00 - 8:30 p.m. - 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.

### **NAMI Consumer Connections Group**

7:00 - 8:30 p.m. - 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. Group meets separately from the family group.

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

### **NAMI Education Meetings**

7:00 - 8:30 p.m. - 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday each month

Open to all adults 18 and older. Educational topics of interest pertaining to mental health and recovery are presented by community providers.

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

*It is refreshing to hear a candid view of everyday life from someone living with mental illness. Instead, family members and friends often get told what a consumer thinks we want to hear. Megan, who lives with a mood disorder, offers us the following prose poem describing some of her days.*

## Changing Channels by “Megan”

Going to the NAMI consumer group meetings helped me realize I’m not alone. I’m not the only person who has been married and divorced and changed jobs and careers and moved and given up and succeeded and spent everything and had it all and lost it all and thrown it all away and had it all handed to them and fallen down hard and stayed down or got up and reached higher and pushed it all away and grabbed for anything just hoping to hold on to even one thing or one person and have it hold onto you too or felt they were holding out too much and got buried by it all or lost in it all and didn’t want it anyway or didn’t know what they had and wanted more...wanting, hoping, needing, hating, holding, loving, reaching, leaving, sliding, falling, soaring, flying, exploding, shining, beaming, screaming, smiling, laughing, and dreaming. All in a day or week or month or in the last hour.

It’s liking flipping through the channels on the TV. Except not holding the remote. Sometimes it stops on a show I like, sometimes on something I hate, or it’s tolerable, or it won’t stop on anything and everyone is telling me that I’ve got the remote. I can choose whichever channel I want-but where is it? I can’t find the darn remote! And I don’t know who has it so I don’t know who to be angry at or to plead with. And why can’t I just walk over to the TV and turn it off?

I guess because there’s always the chance that something good will come on. And I’ll be able to enjoy it for awhile.

## NamiWalks 2012 - Atlanta



*Dave Fitzwater, Larry Giltman, Carol LaBranche, Linda Fitzwater, Pearl Blackburn, Flo Giltman, Joe LaBranche*

On November 4, 2012, the Happy Feet team from NAMI FDL walked in the annual NAMIWalks fundraiser in Atlanta at Turner Field. Teams from all around the metro area congregated at the ball park to raise funds for mental illness education and advocacy. It was a festive atmosphere and walkers that raised more than \$100.00 were invited to run the bases at the baseball stadium. What a fun day! Come and join us in the Fall for the next walk.



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

E-Mail:  
namifdlga@gmail.com

---

*We're on the Web!*  
Visit us at:  
NAMIFDL.org

---

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

