



When Dreams Die, Hope Prevails *a 317 Board Update*

“My son became very very ill with schizophrenia when he was attending Ohio University back in 1999. We were absolutely devastated as a family. Our son who we had all these hopes and dreams for was failing at school, his friends were abandoning him, he had delusions. And then finding NAMI, finding parents who were going through what I was going through was a huge support to me. In July of 2000 he took his own life. But here I am now, 17 years later, still involved with NAMI because it meant so much to me.”

Those are the words of Adrienne Nagy, president of the Athens Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

Nagy said that after her son came out of the psychiatric hospital for the first time he told his friends he had been in drug rehab because it was less stigmatic. NAMI’s mission, according to Nagy, is education, advocacy and support. “We’re trying to educate the public and reduce stigma which is a huge barrier to treatment.”

“When you have a loved one in your family with mental illness it creates so many stresses but one of the biggest stresses is you don’t know what to do, and NAMI is there to help.” Nagy adds that the biggest difficulty can be finding those who need NAMI because it isn’t necessarily well known in the Athens community.

Many people with mental illness that do not get help end up getting arrested or going to jail, although incidences of violence are no more prevalent amongst the mentally ill than they are in the general population. “When people end up in the jail and they don’t get their medicines they get sicker,” says Nagy.

NAMI puts its money where it can have an impact by using more of its resources to raise awareness about mental illness and to help those affected. From bi-weekly support groups for people with a newly diagnosed family member to a free twelve week series of classes for families of loved ones living with a mental illness, NAMI helps families learn how to cope. In addition, NAMI is working to create a fund for non-housing related financial shortfalls for mental health clients of Hopewell Health Center.

Nagy fears that if resources offered by NAMI were not available more people would die or end up in prisons, unable to get the help they need. “Mental illness can be fatal. It has a very high rate of death by suicide and illnesses connected with the treatments. More people would end up in the prisons which are already overburdened and don’t know what to do with them.”

Nagy says, “Given that one out of five people in the United States will at some point in their life face a mental illness, almost everybody is going to know somebody who does (have a mental illness).”

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, NAMI, is an association of hundreds of local affiliates, state organizations and volunteers who work in your community to raise awareness and provide support and education dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

Information regarding NAMI Ohio can be found at namiohio.org or by calling 800-686-2646.

NAMI Athens is a member of the Athens-Hocking-Vinton 317 Board Network of Care

For more information call, 740-593-7424, or go to namiathensohio.org