

## NEWSLETTER UPDATE

The White Picket Fence is now being published quarterly. Please continue to submit your stories, poems, and other works of self-expression. You may email your submissions to: [info@namipbc.org](mailto:info@namipbc.org)

## PEER COUNCIL CORNER

Michael Garden continues to keep us all active with new and creative events.

Our costumes-mandatory Halloween Party was a great success; fun was had by all. S-c-r-e-a-m louder, Bacon, Egg can't hear you.



We discovered how very talented she is when Doreen the Cowgirl, protected by Batman, serenaded a grateful audience.

Mini-golfers enjoy a beautiful Sunday afternoon...as Palm Tran waits for them!!!



The Peer Council welcomes your ideas. It meets at 1:00 pm on the 4th Sunday of the month at the NAMI office in Lake Worth.

## NAMI CONNECTION REVIEW

For years I have been looking for a support group to share triumphs and trials as we make our way through. A place to go where we don't feel alone, to listen and share or just to be there.

I knew when I walked through this door I had finally found what I had been searching for. Although I am so very new, I felt the connection through and through. Little did I know the kindness I would receive; you have caused the darkness to recede.

What a wonderful group of people you are. I am grateful and humbled, and most certainly blessed, to have the good fortune to have finally met. To all of you, I wrote this for you. —Christina Immoos

HAPPY HOLIDAYS  
NAMI WILL BE CLOSED ON  
DECEMBER 25, 2012 & JANUARY 1, 2013

## MY AWAKENING—JASON GELLERT

Depression for me has meant living with feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and isolation. After not responding to medication, seven years of E.C.T. have left me with an impaired memory, hardly remembering anything from 2000 to 2004. Thankfully, my seven years of E.C.T. were ended in 2010, and, it is now substantiated, that the brain regenerates itself, so my memory is slowly coming back.

Finally taking the right medication, however, hasn't been enough to lead a productive life since then. Thirty minutes of daily exercise have really boosted my mood. I've also discovered that a high-protein diet has helped me think more clearly, so now I can take more time to self-reflect and replace negative thinking with positive thinking, like Wayne Dyer suggests. I also take time to meditate and repeat my positive thoughts in a single word, or a mantra, like "love" or "hope." It has been proven that positive thinking can strengthen neural pathways, making positive thinking second-nature.

Since I've meditated, I've resumed my poetry, painting, and chess instruction. I've also begun to volunteer for NAMI three times a week, which is my new second home. Due to all these factors coming together, things are looking much brighter for me now. I can never discount the importance of support groups, friends, and a loving family. Living with depression is still a struggle, but a positive struggle, nonetheless.

"We poets have a mania for truth. We attempt to write down, in detail, what strikes. The poet never asks for praise...he wants to be believed."

—Jean Cocteau

UNTITLED

How sweetly do You show Your Love,  
 Deep beneath your tear,  
 Like flowers in the month of May,  
 That stem from year to year.  
 For nothing will You show Your Joy,  
 That cold may go or stay.  
 By virtue of the fact of Love,  
 You live from day to day.

—Jason Gellert

Music, Creativity & Healing by Clare V Donahue

Living with Bi-polar disorder has its challenges as so many of you may know. Having a resource like this to share ideas, websites, resources and our experiences is a gift. I'd like to share with you some of what helped me savor my own life and create a rich experience beyond this label. Looking back on my life I can see evidence of my bipolar condition at around the age of 17. Since I was an aspiring singer, my life had enough highs and lows to convince me that it was the artistic living (good times, bad times, rich times, poor times, the creative fountains flowing and all was well with the world, the creative fountains drained and dry and nothing was well with the world)! It was hard for me to separate "my lifestyle" and its effect on a normal, stable existence and "my condition." In fact, it took decades to do this.

I began teaching elementary school in my early 30's and taught for more than a decade. This brought great joy and great healing into my life (working with children is always a gift). I can name many healing experiences it brought into my life: elementary school has more creative opportunities than many other forms or levels of teaching; **the giving** and receiving of love (since I am unmarried and have no children) meant so much, but perhaps the most amazing gift was **STRUCTURE**. For the first time in my life, I was rising and eating at the same times each day. The day was split up into 15-minute and 30-minute intervals: 15 minutes for play/recess; 15-30 minutes for writing; 15-30 minutes for story time. I was well for many years; in fact, I shined in that environment, receiving many awards and promotions. Gradually, as teaching became more and more stressful and less and less creative, it was my decision to leave both for my health and happiness.

But I learned so much in education! I learned how to structure my own life, giving myself time each day to read (some days it can't be 30 minutes and I always have books in the car that have 2 or 3-page chapters). I always have one inspirational book that I read a page or two in each day. I still write everyday! First thing in the morning, I write a

page, and I write a one-page gratitude list right next to it. The gratitude list can be written at anytime or at the end of the day. I find if I keep myself on a structure making gentle lists of things I'd like to do and accomplish, it keeps me focused on things to do. What I mean by gentle is: whatever I do I cross off, whatever I didn't do goes onto the next day's list. I don't beat up on myself for not doing the entire list. I'm happy if I've done 3 or 4 things! One of my biggest challenges is consistency. I don't know if that is the same for everyone with bi-polar or mental illness. But working against the strength of some of my emotions or feelings of lethargy can take tremendous effort, and I've beaten myself up for it for too long. Now I am nothing but gentle and loving with myself. I've seen that so effectively demonstrated in teaching. With negative talk you do no good whatsoever! With love and understanding and assistance, you make the difference in the life of a child. It works that way for us to!

While diet and exercise are also key. I have found that simply **WALKING** is a healing tool. If you want to double the effect of a walk, walk in nature, in a park or on the beach. Looking at natural beauty and knowing that you are one with the earth and its cycles brings a sort of groundedness and acceptance of the now.

Lastly, I want to mention creativity. Creativity to me is a spiritual component as well. As a professional singer, creativity also means being in the flow and receiving inspiration and ideas from spirit or the universal source of creativity. But practicing some form of **CREATIVE EXPRESSION** is a key to healing. Whether it is writing, crafting, creating for creation's sake. Something that brings you happiness. I taught The Artist Way for years and would watch people come out of depressions and actually change their lives or open up their lives during this course. I know that creativity is an essential part of living a joyful life.

I know how hard these things are to do when depression is on top of you and making every move a struggle. Perhaps we can employ them when we are feeling well. I hope you try just one of these when you are feeling low. Happy Holidays!

**PEER COUNCIL HOLIDAY PARTY**  
 Sunday, December 16, 2012, 1pm  
 Oakmont Estates  
 3411 Vanderbilt Drive  
 Wellington, FL 33414  
 Call Michael at NAMI: (561) 588-3477

## MY STORY—Valerie Storer

I was first hospitalized when I was 15 years old. This had a lot to do with circumstances I was facing: pregnancy, physical abuse and sexual abuse. I was struck that there were people, psychiatrists, social workers, who saw me differently from my family, my church and myself. I remember thinking that they were intelligent, or not parochial, like my surroundings. Looking back on it, I became extremely depressed when I left their care. I would stay awake late into the night writing poetry about how death was the ultimate freedom.

Soon after that I experimented with drugs. They made me feel better for a little while, but later I was always worse off than when I started. I became a spiritual seeker and took LSD when I was about 18. I thought I had found something very profound. But no one seemed to understand what I was talking about. I thought they were playing dumb. However, I could not ignore my inability to function, to hold a job. My father eventually took me to see a psychiatrist at the hospital where he worked. That man was the first person I had spoken to in months who understood what I was saying. I was so encouraged. The last question he asked me was about laughter and crying. "They're the same thing!" I happily answered. He nodded and excused himself for a few minutes. I knew now that he would tell my father that while I certainly had some problems to work on, I really had found answers to some basic spiritual questions. When the psychiatrist returned he told me that he wanted to admit me to the hospital. I was too stunned to do anything but agree. I was crushed.

Surprisingly the 25mg of thiorazine actually made me feel better. I talked to my psychiatrist several times a week. I could not complain about the unit in a private hospital where staff was helpful and kind. I got a job and left the hospital. But there was no follow up with meds or therapy, and it was not long before working became too difficult and I was in the hospital again. This time, however, it was a city hospital and things were different. A good example, I think, was that I had, while at Montefiore, found and put up a sign that said, "You don't have to be crazy to work here, but it helps." The staff was very upset and spoke to me about it. At the city hospital there was the same sign on a staff member's desk.

Next stop Bronx State Hospital. People were much more seriously ill. Robert walked up and down the hallways talking to his hallucinations. One man sat in a chair

staring into space while his jaw shook quickly back and forth. I adapted, befriending Robert and others on the unit. But the staff was another story. It was a staff-centered environment, set up for their convenience rather than for the patients. Some staff tried to take sexual advantage of patients. It did not work with me, but I am sure more vulnerable patients fell victim. One staff technician led us in 'movement therapy,' which consisted of clapping our hands like playing patty cake. It was humiliating. When I refused to participate, the tech told me that she was going to note that I was uncooperative. 'You'll never get out of here,' she assured me. I was later told the admitting doctor had told my father that staying here would scare me out of my increasing institutionalization. He had no idea how scary home was.

I was in and out of that hospital for about 2 or 3 years. During my last stay I was on a training unit with many staff members including my own psychiatrist. One day she pointed to the guy whose bottom lip shook constantly, "He's chronic schizophrenic. That's your diagnosis. When you are working hard your chances are 50-50. When you don't it turns to 75-25 against you, and that will be you in 20 years.

That got my attention. One day I stood looking at the man with the shaking lip. My inner voice told me gently, "You can die, but you're not coming back here." I was referred for Welfare for the Disabled. Not having to work allowed me to function on a basic level, and I was never hospitalized again. Small wonder that I shut out my experience, no longer identifying myself with other mentally ill individuals, including good friends I had made during my journey.

And I have accomplished many things, much less than I imagined as a kid but much more than I could envision during the period above and for many years after. If there was a NAMI then I had not heard of it; they have changed the landscape I encountered 45 years ago. As I return now to my roots, accepting how profoundly depression and other brain based illnesses have plagued me these many years, I am so grateful to learn about this illness and to use all the tools available to cope, to recover.

### NAMI PEER-TO-PEER EDUCATION STARTING

Monday, January 7—March 11, 2013 from 1-3pm

Peer Place Support Center

2100 45th Street, B12

West Palm Beach, FL 33407

To Register Call NAMI: (561) 588-3477

National Alliance on Mental Illness of Palm Beach County  
1520 10th Avenue North, Suite D  
Lake Worth, FL 33460

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE PAID  
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PERMIT NO. 1327

*Or Current Resident*



## Palm Beach County

**NAMI Membership** exists at 3 levels: Affiliate, State & National

NAMI is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, charitable organization—contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. Together, we can continue to fight for all those affected by mental illness. **PLEASE NOTE: In order for NAMI/PBC to receive your full donation, please send your donation to the NAMI/PBC office.** Thank you!

FL SOLICITATION REGISTRATION NUMBER: CH6498 “A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING (800-435-7352) TOLL-FREE WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.”

*Members are NAMI/PBC's lifeblood; your joining helps us continue to provide free outreach, support & education. In bringing mental health issues to wider attention, we advocate for better treatment. As our membership base grows, our voice becomes stronger.*

*Respect, Compassion & Hope ... NAMI Works!*

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|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Voting \$45     | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional \$65 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate \$250 | <input type="checkbox"/> Open Door \$5     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$55     |  |

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**namipbc.org**

I'd like to support NAMI PBC with a donation of:  
\_\_\_ \$25 \_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_ \$100 *other:* \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- I'm interested in volunteering with NAMI/PBC       I wish to receive NAMI National's solicitations.