



National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI North Central MA

Affiliate Newsletter

May 2018

Family Support Groups

Messiah Lutheran Church
750 Rindge Road,
Fitchburg
7:00-8:30 p.m.
1st and 3rd Thursdays
Contact Gregg or Maryann
860-212-9363
978-342-0988

Clinton Hospital, 2nd Floor
Conference Rooms A & B
6:30-8:30 p.m.
Fridays
Contact Edie
978-345-2214

Connection Recovery Support Groups

Messiah Lutheran Church
750 Rindge Road,
Fitchburg
7:00-8:30 p.m.
Every Thursday
Contact Maryann
978-342-0988

Heywood Hospital
242 Green St., Gardner
Dining Room, Conference
Room B (inside Cafeteria)
7:00-8:30 p.m.
Every Tuesday
Contact Cortney
508-331-2921

Hi Everyone,

The NAMI Walk takes place Saturday, May 19. Please consider joining us for a walk at DCR Artesani Park! It is the 15th annual Walkathon, NAMIWalks, along the Charles River. Each year, this empowering event increases public awareness to help combat the stigma surrounding mental illness. The walk is our largest event and biggest fundraiser of the year. The money raised helps NAMI Mass provide educational programs, support groups, grassroots advocacy, and the NAMI Mass Compass, our resource helpline. With your help, all of these programs are offered free of charge to participants.

To register a team or donate go to www.namiwalks.org/massachusetts. If donating to this event make sure you search for team NAMI NCM. The website takes credit cards and/or pay pal or you may send a check to NAMI NCM. Please specify that it is for the NAMIWalk.

Our very own Bob Larsted, has been kind enough to offer a free kindle book, Witness to the Dark, My Daughter's Troubled Times, A comedy of Emotion. This is available 5/19 and 5/20 only. Please go to BOBLARSTED.COM for more information.

How Emotional Support Animals Can Help Treat Mental Illness

December 14, 2017
by Jacqueline Ledoux

Emotional support animals (ESAs) can be significantly helpful in allowing people living with mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression, or PTSD to cope with their daily lives. However, ESAs have also been a source of confusion, and even frustration, for both business owners and the handlers of service animals. While some people don't know how ESAs differ from service dogs, others actively try to take advantage of the system and give those who genuinely need ESAs a bad name.

As someone who benefits from having an ESA, here are some things I want others to know:

There Is a (Big) Difference Between ESAs and Service Animals.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a service animal is defined as "a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability." The task(s) must be directly related to the person's disability and the animal — some people opt to use miniature horses, although they are not specifically named in the definition — must do more than simply provide comfort to the owner.

Psychiatric service dogs, which are considered service animals, differ from ESAs because they're trained to perform tasks that help mentally ill people go about their daily lives. Some of the tasks that psychiatric service dogs perform include interrupting negative behaviors, such as self-harm, putting physical pressure on a person who is having a panic attack to create a state of calm, helping individuals with PTSD or other phobias negotiate corners without fear, and reminding their owners to take their medication.

Unlike service animals, ESAs simply provide comfort to their owners. They are not trained to perform specific tasks, they do not qualify as service animals, and they do not fall under the same legal protections.

When I first made my Toy Fox Terrier, Bailey, an ESA, I put a lot of research into it. I also came across many websites selling "ESA" badges, vests, and ID tags, as well as a few "national registries" — none of which are required by law.

All you need to make your animal an ESA is a letter from your doctor stating that the animal in question provides you with relief from whatever mental illness you may be living with. Because I struggle with two anxiety disorders — general anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) — my psychiatrist wrote me a letter detailing the way Bailey helps me reduce the severity of those symptoms.

Because Bailey is considered an ESA, she now receives some protections that other pets do not. Some such protections include living in apartments that have a "no pets" policy, flying free of cost, and being able to remain with me (on my lap but in a crate) in the cabin of a plane should I choose to fly with her.

Though I haven't attempted to move her into an apartment that has a "no pets" policy (because I imagine that would be a headache, regardless of the law), I have flown with her on two occasions, and each time, the airline staff was cooperative and understanding.

Some People Take Advantage of the Law; Please Don't Blame the Rest of Us

It's no secret that some people choose to take advantage of the law. A quick Google search about the topic of ESAs will bring you to a number of websites where people are constantly asking others how to make their pets ESAs in order to bring them into public places or to avoid paying a pet fee at their residence.

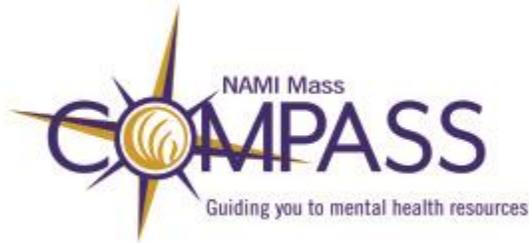
Those people exist but that doesn't delegitimize the fact that others really do benefit from having ESAs. ESAs can be helpful for a number of mental health problems. Although they're no substitute for proper psychiatric treatment, they are a great addition to it. As I mentioned earlier, Bailey helps alleviate some of my anxiety. For others, their ESAs may comfort them through bouts of depression or PTSD. They may soothe people living with autism and help those living with phobias to get through moments of intense stress.

While it's true that some people try to play the system, it's unfair to place the blame on ESA owners as a whole. Most of us are respectful, law-abiding people who simply rely on our animals to help us deal with issues related to our mental health, and that's nothing we should have to apologize for.

Jacqueline graduated Cum Laude from Southern New Hampshire University where she earned her BA in Creative Writing and English. Her work has been featured in Essig Magazine, The Penmen Review, and The Mighty. All of her work, both published and unpublished, can be viewed on her [website: https://jacquelineledoux.com/articles/](https://jacquelineledoux.com/articles/).

Save the Dates

- May 19 – NAMI walk – Artesani Park
- May 19 - Health and Wellness Community Day
10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
(rain or shine)
UMass Memorial HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital, Burbank Campus
275 Nichols Road, Fitchburg
- May - Book Sale Hannafords - Lunenburg
- August – Book Sale Hannafords - Clinton
- August 19 - 6th Annual Ride of Your Life
Montachusett Regional Technical High School
1050 Westminster Road, Fitchburg
- September 8 (Saturday): Clinton Olde Home Days
- October 7 (Sunday): Annual Candlelight Vigil, 7:00 p.m.



Navigating the mental healthcare system can be complicated—we help individuals and families affected by mental health issues find their way.

The NAMI Mass Compass is **operated by peers and family members** who have dealt with these issues first hand. Navigators are available to **answer a wide range of questions** and **refer to NAMI support & education programs and other community resources.**

Please call us at (617) 704-NAMI (6264) or toll free, (800) 370-9085 Monday-Friday 9am to 5pm or go to our webpage: <http://namimass.org/resources/compass>

Mental Health Referral Services

The **William James INTERFACE Referral Service** maintains a mental health and wellness referral Helpline **Monday through Friday, 9 am-5 pm, at 888-244-6843** (toll free). This is a free, confidential referral service for individuals across the lifespan living in participating communities.

Communities currently served are: Acton-Boxborough, Ayer-Shirley, Chelmsford, Cohasset, Concord, Carlisle, Dedham, Framingham, Groton, Dunstable, Leominster, Lincoln – Sudbury, Littleton, Marshfield, Medfield, Medway, Melrose, Middleborough, Natick, Needham, Newton, North Middlesex, Reading, Scituate, Wakefield, Waltham, Westford, Westwood.

If you live in one of these communities, and need access to mental health care, call 888-244-6843.

Centro

Established in 1977, CENTRO, formerly Centro Las Americas, is the largest minority led, community based, multiservice, multicultural, multilingual, nonprofit organization in Central Massachusetts. CENTRO's primary purpose is to assist individuals and families striving to reach self-sufficiency while promoting social responsibility, fostering cultural identity, and encouraging families to be significant contributors to the community as a whole.

Services provided include: Family Support Services, Adult Family Care, Latino Elder Program, Emergency Food Pantry, Children's Behavioral Health Services, and Children and Family Services.

For more information go to: www.centroinc.org or call 978-343-5836

Fitchburg office: 437 Main Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420

Families Anonymous

A 12-step Support group for families of someone with a substance addiction or someone with behavioral health issues. Meets at the Groton Senior Center, 163 West Main St. , Groton, weekly on Tuesday nights from 7-8:30. Contact Kathy 978-448-3402

Gardner Suicide Survivor Support Group

The Gardner Suicide Survivor Group meets the second Wednesday of each month from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at Heywood Hospital, 242 Green St., Gardner, MA. This is a peer support group open to anyone 16 or older who has lost someone to suicide. All are welcome to attend.

For more information, contact Peer Facilitator Brenda.Melanson@heywood.org.

Learn to Cope Support Group

Meets Tuesdays, 7 – 8:30 pm in the Kenneth & Doris Pierce Board Room (near Gift Shop & Pharmacy) at Heywood Hospital.

Learn to Cope is a support network for families dealing with addiction and recovery. They offer compassionate, experienced facilitators who have been there, support, resources, educational materials and guest speakers who are in long-term recovery or professionals in the field.

These meetings are confidential and open to all who have a loved one struggling with addiction.

For more information, contact the Learn to Cope office at (508) 738-5148 or visit the meetings tab at www.learn2cope.org.

Military Family Support Group

Meets the Wednesday of the month at 6pm in the Dining Room B at Heywood Hospital.

The Military Family Support Group offers a safe place for family members of both active and former military members to share their experiences, struggles and hope in overcoming the invisible wounds of war that affect the entire family unit.

Veterans and their loved ones can suffer from one or many of the following: survivor’s guilt, separation anxiety, emotional numbing, adrenaline seeking, depression, anxiety, insomnia, alcohol and substance abuse, PTSD and traumatic brain injury. The group coaches and supports military family members to find healing, balance, and strategies for positive re-integration for military members with their family and society. We also connect families with local resources.

For more information, please contact Crystal Bean at (978) 320-9804.

MENders Support Groups

MENder’s brings together guys facing similar issues including illness, anger, stress, substance abuse, relationship problems or major life changes. By using a whole host of techniques, participants can develop the skills to deal with stressors. Members of support groups often share experiences and advice.

Athol - Men’s Support Group takes place the on the first and third Monday of each month from 7:30 – 9 pm in Athol Hospital’s Hillis Board Room. For more information, please call (978) 846-8201.

Fitchburg- Men’s Support Group takes place the on the second and fourth Thursday of each month from 7 - 9 pm at First Parish Church of Fitchburg (923 Main Street). For more information, please call (978) 846-8201.

Gardner - Men’s Support Group takes place the on the first and third Wednesday of each month from 7 – 9 pm in Heywood Hospital’s Community Education Conference Room. For more information, please call (978) 630-6455.

Leominster - Men’s Support Group takes place the on the first and third Thursday of each month from 7 - 9 pm at St. Mark’s House (62 West Street, Leominster)For more information, please call (978) 846-8201.

Important Telephone Numbers

NAMI Information Helpline	1 (800) 950-NAMI (6264)	
NAMI Massachusetts Information and Helpline	1-800-370-9085	
Veterans Crisis Line	1-800-273-8255	Confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	1-800-273-TALK	Free, confidential 24-hr. emotional distress line
Mass Substance Abuse HELPLINE	1-800-327-5050	Free, confidential information and referrals
Samaritans of Massachusetts	1-877-870-HOPE	24 hour Crisis Intervention/Hotlines
Samaritans of Massachusetts	1-800-252-8336	Teen Line (statewide)
Samaritans of Massachusetts	1-617-247-0220	24 hour Helpline
Emergency Services Programs (ESP)	1-800-977-5555	In-person behavioral health crisis assessment. Note: After dialing this toll-free number, you will be prompted to enter your Zip Code and will then be given the local number to call
Alzheimer’s Association	1-800-272-3900	For information and support. Free and confidential, 24 hours a day/7 days a week.

MAA Substance Abuse Information Hotline	1-800-327-5050	
The Partnership at Drugfree.org	1-855-378-4373 (DRUGFREE) - tollfree	assistance to families concerned about a teen's drug use or drinking. Trained specialists can help parents outline plans for prevention, intervention and other services. They also can direct parents to local and national resources.
SAMHSA's National Helpline	1-800-662-HELP (4357) 1-800-487-4889 (TTY)	Free and confidential information in English and Spanish for individuals and family members facing substance abuse and mental health issues. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. https://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov/

Board of Directors, NAMI North Central Massachusetts

Cathy Gaudet, President	978-870-8887 (c) 978-348-2165 (h)	catherine.gaudet@leominster.mec.edu c_e_s13@yahoo.com
Caryl Leeds, Vice President	508-574-0603	cmleeds@comcast.net
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MaryAnn LeBlanc	978-874-5602	Nanimary41@gmail.com
Theresa Gilman	978-855-0791	theresag063@gmail.com
Edie Scott, Treasurer	(c) 978-758-0443	ScottyGirl2@gmail.com

Membership Form

AFFILIATE #119, NAMI NORTH CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS, INC.

NAME _____ Telephone _____ e-mail _____
ADDRESS _____ Town _____ Zip Code _____
DATE _____

New members: Please tell briefly how you heard about NAMI _____

Check only one membership choice

<input type="checkbox"/> Household (\$60.00)	New member <input type="checkbox"/>	Renewal <input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual (\$40.00)	New member <input type="checkbox"/>	Renewal <input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Open Door/Low-Income (\$5.00)	New member <input type="checkbox"/>	Renewal <input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Extra Donation - Thank you!			\$ _____
TOTAL enclosed (Please make check payable to NAMI NCM)			\$ _____

Please mail to: NAMI of NCM, P.O. Box 442, Fitchburg, MA 01420-0442

NAMI North Central Massachusetts, Inc., is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

Membership is at all three levels: national (NAMI), state Chapter (NAMI Massachusetts), and local Affiliate (NAMI North Central Massachusetts)

You may also join on-line at www.nami.org (click on "Become a Member").



P.O. Box 442
Fitchburg, MA 01420