



Picnic June 17

Come to the NAMI Lansing summer picnic and annual meeting. There will be a cookout and potluck at lovely Sharp Park. Come early to enjoy the 57 acre park. Stay for the potluck dinner in the shelter house overlooking the pond, followed by a brief business meeting to elect our officers for next year. Chicken, hotdogs, beverages, plates, and utensils will be provided. [Download Picnic Flyer](#)

What: NAMI Lansing Picnic

When: Tuesday, June 17, 5:00 to 7:30 p.m.

Where: Sharp Park, 1401 Elmwood

Sharp Park is on Elmwood, 1/2 mile north of Saginaw Hwy



Kevin Fischer, New director of NAMI Michigan

Read his column "[A Life's Mission](#)"

in Dome Magazine, May 30, 2014

Kevin writes about his personal experiences trying to find services for his son Dominique, who died of suicide. He urges us to work with NAMI for support, strength, and influence. Kevin recently became our new NAMI Michigan Executive Director. Kevin's column is reprinted below:

In This Issue

[Picnic June 17](#)

[Kevin Fischer, NAMI Michigan](#)

[Ask the Doctor](#)

[NAMI Michigan Regional Meeting](#)

[NAMI Walk 2014](#)

[Youth Mental Health First Aid](#)

Join Today!

Show your support for NAMI Lansing's mission to provide Education, Support, and Advocacy for persons with mental illness and their families.

Benefits of membership include the NAMI Advocate and NAMI Messenger, access to online communities at nami.org, discounts for conference attendance, and the satisfaction of contributing to NAMI's work.

Every parent wants the best for their child; they have high hopes and aspirations - but no one ever plans for a life of worry, suffering and tragedy.

My son Dominique could light a room with his smile; he was a star athlete, an essential "All-American Kid". We never suspected mental illness; he was diagnosed as being bipolar schizophrenic as a teenager. For the next three years we struggled to understand his diagnosis and how to best help him.

I did all I knew to help him. I repeatedly went to the Department of Human Services for Medicaid and begged his doctors for more support. I was living on unemployment, with no health insurance. On June 10th, I wrote and personally delivered a third letter to his psychiatrist begging her to hospitalize him for 30 days, just to get him stabilized, but again no one listened. On June 28th I wrote my last letter, which simply read:
"Dear Dr.____, please disregard my last letter. Dominique killed himself yesterday."
I lost my son Dominique to suicide June 27, 2010.

One of my most precious memories is shortly before he passed, Dominique told me "I know no matter how much trouble I'm in, no matter where I am in the world, I know my dad will come for me, because you show up even when I don't want you to." Sadly now every day I wonder if he was counting on his dad to show up and catch him when he put that strap around his neck and stepped off the chair.

It is immeasurable the amount of grief that a parent goes through in losing a child - let alone a child who has suffered silently with mental illness. As a parent you want to step in and make it all better, but you feel helpless. It is my journey, my purpose now to ensure that no other parent endures what I did in losing my son. I now have to stand tall and rally around my other children to be their protector, their teacher, their guide in life. But we all need support along the way. Help is available, support groups are available, and no one

An individual membership is \$35.
Open door membership is \$3.

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should feel they are alone as I did and no parent should ever need to write such a letter and suffer silently again.

EDUCATE: Support, Strength and Influence
I have been a part of NAMI Michigan (National Alliance on Mental Illness) in various capacities for several years. It allows me the outlet to inspire other people to get involved in their loved one's lives. To let them know that they have a support group. That someone else has felt their pain and difficulties and walked a similar path.

Dominique was a beautiful young man who loved life, but got cheated out of it. I know he would want me to help other families avoid the same suffering, grief and tragedy. As painful as it is for me to have lost him, it was just as hurtful to witness the pain and destruction mental illness caused in his life, and the failure of the system to help us. I thought I was yelling at the top of my lungs, but no one heard me. NAMI gives me a louder voice; a chance to help the voices of others to be heard.

In the NAMI Mission, some key words stand out - support, strength and influence.

Support is essential as part of the NAMI goals as its members stand in support of one another through difficult times. NAMI is dedicated to the improvement of the quality of life for persons, families and others, who are affected by mental illness, including children with serious emotional disorders.

Strength is key as a NAMI objective as it aims to strengthen local affiliates to provide support, educate and be advocates in their communities. NAMI Michigan links national resources with local affiliate's passion and action to provide the best possible educational tools for consumers and their families who may be looking for answers.

Influence becomes necessary for NAMI; we are comprised of parents, family members, caregivers, consumers and people who simply care. Far too often those with mental illness fall into the shadows of government and society,

becoming only become a number, a statistic; we are here to make sure that doesn't happen. We will influence public policy and coordinate our affiliates, families and get consumer involvement to influence our public policy at the state level to ensure that the voice of the voiceless will be heard.

ADVOCATE: Check Up from the Neck Up

NAMI Michigan recently wrapped up their conference in Detroit. The conference allowed consumers, family members, stakeholders and advocates from around the region to come and listen to national mental health speakers who continuously fight for the rights of those with mental illnesses. The two-day conference involved several notable speakers including Actress Mariel Hemingway, U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, Congressman Patrick Kennedy and author Peter Earley.

This annual conference is held to raise awareness and create the momentum urging people to rally around mental health issues. I think a central theme that most people walked away with this year was to "Check up from the neck up" reinforced by former Congressman Patrick Kennedy. With so many mental health providers moving to an integrated system of care, promoting this theme is essential on the behavioral health side - but most certainly on the physical health side. "Check up from the neck up" encourages doctors to do thorough exams and be aware of patients' physical, medical and psychological needs, because as a person one thing may impact the other.

The saying is not a new one, but it hits the point that many of the workshops were touching on - Communication. We all need to communicate. Patients need to communicate to their physical doctors, physical doctors to the behavioral doctors, and so on. The cycle of communication is key to make a difference. Being involved in your loved ones life is key and advocacy is key.

Get involved and be that voice in making a difference, contact NAMI at: <http://www.namimi.org>

Kevin Fischer is the Executive Director of NAMI Michigan (National Alliance on Mental Illness). He can be reached at kfischer@namimi.org

Ask the Doctor: NAMI National Conference Calls

NAMI hosts monthly conference calls with doctors for children and adults. Calls are free and open to the public. Can't make the scheduled call? [Visit here to access archives](#) of previous calls.

Ask the Doctor: Teleconference Series

NAMI's *Ask the Doctor* teleconference is a monthly series (no calls in July) hosted by NAMI's Medical Director, Dr. Ken Duckworth. Typically, he is joined by another mental health professional or advocate who in turn presents on a topic in his or her area of expertise. Each month, two such calls are hosted; one focuses on adult issues, the other on child and adolescent issues.

To access these calls, dial 1 (888) 858-6021 and enter pass code 309918#. These calls are always held at 11 a.m. E.T. on scheduled dates unless

otherwise noted. The *Ask the Doctor* schedule and previously recorded podcasts can be found below.



Ken Duckworth, M.D.

Upcoming Ask the Doctor Schedule

Calls on adult issues

June 27, 2014: Dr. Don Goff; Schizophrenia

August 22, 2014: Dr. John Oldham; Borderline Personality Disorder

Calls on child, adolescent and young adult issues

June 20, 2014: Dr. Gabrielle Carlson; Changes to the DSM

NAMI Michigan Regional Meeting

Wednesday, June 18, from 6 - 8:30 pm

Human Services Building 5303 S. Cedar St. Lansing 48910

Enter door #3 & go to the 2nd floor, conference room B.

Please join us for an evening of camaraderie, innovations & good food. This is an opportunity to network with other NAMI members to get ideas on how to enhance your affiliate's potential while making or renewing friendships.

Ingham County's Mental Health Court

Read the City Pulse's excellent article on the new mental health court:

[Crime and treatment: Ingham County's Mental Health Court aims to keep sick offenders out of jail](#)

by Lawrence Cosentino

Change the Standard for Treatment? The Diane Rehm Show Covers the Debate

[Listen to the show](#) from June 2, 2014, with guests Torrey Fuller from the Treatment Advocacy Center, Curtis Decker from the National Disability Rights Network, and others, or [read the transcript](#).



Save the Date for NAMI Walk!

NAMI Walk
Saturday, September 27, 2014 at noon
Heritage Park
Canton

Youth Mental Health First Aid for Parents and People Who Work with Youth

Special sections of Mental Health First Aid have been scheduled at CMH for parents, teachers, and other adults who work with youth to learn to recognize and provide assistance to youth with symptoms of mental illness and substance abuse. This one-day training is provided free to most people involved with kids. It is scheduled three times per month through the end of September. [View the dates and complete registration information here.](#)

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NAMI Lansing is an affiliate of the Capital Area United Way. [LIVE UNITED.](#)



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