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Local News

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September 27, 2010

NAMI awareness week strives to remove stigma of mental illness

Kelly Urban
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— It's estimated that one in four adults, about 57 million Americans, experience a mental health disorder at some point in their life.

To raise awareness, the Cambria County chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness will hold its annual Mental Illness Awareness Week from Sunday through Friday, Oct. 8.

"I do see some changes, but I also get reminded every day what a long way we have to go, so it's important to talk about mental illness because it affects everyone it touches and also affects entire communities in ways that might not even be known," said Wendy Stewart, the local NAMI executive director.

A candlelight ceremony, "Spark the Conversation, Ignite the Change!" will begin the observance Sunday at the Heritage Discovery Center in Johnstown's Cambria City section. The idea is to bring residents together for an evening of socialization and education. The ceremony will be presented by the NAMI Drop-In Center and includes music and refreshments.

On Monday, PBS program panelists will present "Minds on the Edge: Facing Mental Illness," which offers hypothetical situations playing out every day in local communities as people struggle with dilemmas around serious mental illness. It will be held in the Holiday Inn downtown.

"This is a broadcast made for communities to view together and be an eye-opener as to what is happening on our city streets, schools, courtrooms and jails and how people are cycling through these systems," Stewart said.

The presentation will be followed by a discussion with local panelists: Cambria County Judge Linda Fleming; Dr. Tejas Patel, behavioral medicine, Memorial Medical Center; Johnstown police Chief Craig Foust; and Dr. Mark Fuller, medical director, Value Behavioral Health.

The award-winning film "Unlisted: A Story of Schizophrenia" will be shown Tuesday in the Johnstown Flood Museum's theater. Filmmaker Dr. Delaney Ruston will speak to the crowd via Skype about her journey to reconnect with her father after 10 years and coping with his mental illness.

A highlight of the week will be on Wednesday when authors Gina Gallagher and Patti Konjoian present the humorous "Shut Up About Your Perfect Kid!: A Survival Guide for Ordinary Parents of Special Children" during a breakfast at the City View Bar & Grill in Westmont.

"These mothers become frustrated hearing about other people's kids being in the gifted classes while a major event in their lives was seeing their child sit through a whole day of school, so they wrote this book because they needed to brag and celebrate the successes in their kid's lives," Stewart said.

The week will wrap up Friday in the Holiday Inn ballroom with the presentation Choices in Recovery: "Relapse Awareness and Reduction Strategies," an educational session to help sufferers, caregivers and family members understand relapse in schizophrenia.

Stewart said the week's goal is to get people talking and get the words "mental illness" out of the closet.

"Once we acknowledge its existence, we can talk about mental illness as something that isn't shameful and we can get rid of the stigmas," she said.



Discussion

Add a comment on this story

Harold A. Maio wrote:

NAMI awareness week strives to remove stigma of mental illness

By running it in a banner headline? Sorry, that does not work.

Harold A. Maio, retired Mental Health Editor

September 28, 2010, 12:19 PM

j hessler wrote:

What about the victims of people with mental illness? When do we receive some awareness? I believe that many of the people with mental illness could make a positive change in their lives if they chose to, but they find it easier to use their illness as an excuse and ruin their lives and everyone around them.

September 28, 2010, 1:38 AM

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Some things to talk about

The National Alliance on Mental Illness Cambria County will observe its annual Mental Illness Awareness Week with the following events:

Oct 3: "Spark the Conversation, Ignite the Change!" candlelight ceremony, 6 p.m., Heritage Discovery Center courtyard, 201 Sixth Ave., Johnstown.

Oct 4: "Minds on the Edge: Facing Mental Illness," 6 p.m., Holiday Inn-Downtown ballroom,

250 Market St., Johnstown. PBS program panelists to confront hypothetical situations. Discussion by local panelists will follow.

Oct 5: Award-winning film "Unlisted: A Story of Schizophrenia," 6 p.m., Johnstown Flood Museum theater, 304 Washington St. Discussion with filmmaker Dr. Delaney Ruston about her journey to reconnect with her father after 10 years of hiding.

Oct 6: "Shut Up About Your Perfect Kid!: A Survival Guide for Ordinary Parents of Special Children," 9 a.m., City View Bar & Grill, 709 Edgehill Drive, Westmont. Two mothers share stories on raising mentally ill children in a world preoccupied with perfection. Registration required by Thursday; call 535-3166.

Oct 8: Choices in Recovery: "Relapse Awareness and Reduction Strategies," 11:30 a.m., Holiday Inn ballroom. The program looks at the management of schizophrenia and being prepared for relapse. Registration required by Oct. 4; call 535-3166.

All events are free and open to the public.

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Local News

NEW – Bedford County accident claims South Fork man

A Cambria County man died Monday after the vehicle he was driving crossed the center line and crashed into a tractor-trailer in Bedford County.

September 28, 2010

Hopefuls face off

Pennsylvania's gubernatorial candidates sparred Monday night in the first debate of the general-election campaign over which of them is better prepared to tackle the state government's fiscal challenges and lead it through uncertain times.

September 27, 2010 1 Photo

Sides clash on Social Security

Both candidates in the 12th Congressional District race say they are staunchly opposed to privatizing Social Security.

Nevertheless, the federal program's future suddenly has become a hot-button campaign issue.

September 27, 2010 2 Photos

Speaker inspires students

Motivational speaker Bill Sanders makes no secret of how he is able to inspire youth. "You have to talk their language," he said.

September 27, 2010 1 Photo

Judge hears final arguments in Laurel Valley case

The solicitor for the Ligonier Valley School District said Monday during closing arguments in the trial over the closure of a Laurel Valley school that the board was diligent in making its decision to close the school.

September 27, 2010

Students receive counseling following fatal accident

Counseling for grieving students was available at Blacklick Valley High School on Monday after a classmate was killed in a weekend car crash.

What is your favorite place in the region for viewing fall foliage?

- The Menoher Boulevard / Westmont area.
- Route 403 through the Conemaugh Gap.
- Route 869 from Beaverdale to the Bedford County line.
- Blue Knob area outside Portage.
- Route 53 from Summerhill north to Prince Gallitzin.
- Route 56 east from Windber to the Pleasantville Mountain.
- Route 381 from Ligonier to Ohioyle.
- Beam Rocks off Little Summit Road on the Laurel Ridge.
- Mount Davis, in southern Somerset County.
- Someplace else.

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Community Calendar

Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun Mon

Oct 3 **Ken Mullen Cancer Benefit Basket...**
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Oct 6 **Wheeling Nailers vs. Toledo Walleye**

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September 27, 2010

Cambria, Somerset jobless rates drop

The unemployment rates for Cambria and Somerset counties dropped in August, though they remained above the state and national levels.

September 27, 2010

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September 27, 2010

In brief: Fund to aid family of wreck victim

The Richland Township Fire Department has set up a trust fund for the family of the mother of four killed Sunday in a two-vehicle collision.

September 27, 2010

Research institute seeks entries for essay contest

With Breast Cancer Awareness Month on the horizon, Windber Research Institute is holding an essay contest for kids 14 and younger.

August 20, 2010

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