



# NAMI

National Alliance on Mental Illness

# Stark County

Winter 2023



## Meet the NAMI Stark County Team!

**First Row: Faith James and Jewell Opperman**

**Second Row: Sheryl Falcone, Kay Raga, Robin Holland and Cindy Kisik**



### **Kay A. Raga Executive Director**

Kay is the mother of two grown children, a son and daughter. Both suffered with ADD/ADHD, depression and suicidal thoughts through their school years and her daughter was hospitalized and completed partial hospitalization while in high school. Both are adults living on their own, completed their education goals, manage their mental wellness, working on their careers and personal relationships. Kay started with NAMI Stark County in 2007 by taking NAMI class. She then became a NAMI Basics, NAMI HomeFront and Family-to-Family teacher, NAMI Peer-to-Peer, NAMI Family-to-Family State Trainer, support group facilitator, board member and started working at NAMI Stark County full time in 2012 and named Executive Director in 2017.

Kay is a graduate of Leadership Stark County 30th Class Signature Program, member of Leadership Stark County Diversity Day Committee, NAMI Ohio Advocacy Committee, Stark County CIT Steering Committee, StarkMHAR System of Care Advisory Committee, Stark County Stepping Up Initiative Committee OhioRISE Family Advisory Committee and Stark County CISM Critical Incident Stress Management Team.



### **Sheryl Falcone, Program Coordinator**

Sheryl is a person living with Bipolar Disorder, PTSD and Generalized Anxiety Disorder. She has 2 grown daughters with mental health conditions. Her 26-year-old daughter is transgender and is diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder, ADD/ADHD, Selective Mutism, and Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Her daughter is gainfully employed in a career that she loves. Her 20-year-old daughter is diagnosed with ADD/ADHD and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. Her daughter is a thriving new mother to a beautiful healthy baby girl. Her daughters and granddaughter are her biggest joys in life! Sheryl's mom, dad, sister, and brothers all struggled with depression. She had a twin brother who died by suicide at the age of 25 which caused her devastating grief and his death contributes to fuel her passion in helping those who struggle with mental illness. She continues to work on her recovery and has dedicated the last 13 years to educating others through the NAMI Education Programs, Support Groups, and Presentations. She continues to offer hope and encouragement by sharing her recovery story as a person living with mental illness.

Sheryl started with NAMI Stark County in 2007 by taking a Free NAMI Class that helps parents who have children with mental health challenges. She then became a NAMI Basic's, NAMI Family to Family, NAMI Provider, and NAMI Peer to Peer teacher. She is also a Peer-to-Peer State Trainer and a support group facilitator. In 2015, She was hired to work as an Outreach Liaison at Heartland Behavioral Healthcare and in 2017 she was named Program Coordinator for NAMI Stark County. Sheryl serves on the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team. She also serves on the Stark County Cultural Competence Learning Community and Committee (SC3C) and organizes NAMI Stark County involvement with Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training for law enforcement.



### **Jewell Opperman, System Navigator**

Jewell has been at NAMI Stark County for about 5 years as the Outreach Liaison at Heartland Behavioral. As of February 1st, she is taking on the role as Systems Navigator. She will still be at Heartland running groups, teaching NAMI Peer to Peer and connecting people with NAMI Information and other community services as needed. She will also answer NAMI Stark County phone calls and connect people with services. She is our facilitator for NAMI Stark County Peer Groups on Tuesday and Friday evenings. She also serves on the Suicide Prevention Committee.

Jewell has a 22 year old son that she is very proud of. In her spare time she loses her soul in music, loves to read and color. She is proud and committed to her Recovery and loves to help others recover



### **Cynthia Kisik, Outreach Coordinator**

A Perry Local Schools alumna, Cindy was born with a very rare immune system disorder that required a lot of attention. She began seeing the effects of PTSD, depression, and ADHD at a young age after having been in and out of countless hospitals during her childhood. Having a lived experience with mental illness has allowed Cindy to offer hope for recovery to those who crossed her path. She took that passion and first became a volunteer for our local NAMI chapter before becoming employed in 2019. When she is not presenting at events, running a Mental Health 101 course, or hitting up health fairs & festivals, you can find Cindy in the local schools running her Student Series, which she designed specifically to help today's children talk about their mental health. Her dedication to educating our young ones extended further as she advanced her career and became a Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant in the pediatric community. Cindy currently resides in Louisville, OH with her husband of 10 years and 2 furbeebies; their dog, Kevin, and cat, Bryan. When she is not weightlifting, practicing T'ai Chi, hiking or spending time with her awesome nephew, Cindy is very active with volunteering for different organizations, including the Immune Deficiency Foundation, PETA & the MAPS



### **Robin Holland, Community Coordinator**

(Pronouns Cis, She, Her) Robin begins a new part-time position as of 2/1/23 and semi-retired. She has worked in the mental health or health field most of her career. In her new role as Community Coordinator, her goal is to create more communication between agencies working with those with mental illness. She is an Adult Mental Health First Aid Instructor for the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, an Ordained Minister, involved in CIT Training and educating Law Enforcement Academies, and a past Peer Support Specialist. Her passion is educating Stark County in mental health and trying to end stigma that goes with it. She loves writing and creating and does our daily “Lets Talk” page on Facebook, our weekly “Check In” sent out to community agencies and staff, and our quarterly Newsletter and All to educate on mental illness. She started a “Crafts and Mental Health Talk” at a few housing units and has committed to improving the quality of life of those with mental illness in a few others. She is also a court advocate. She also believes profoundly that individuals need to practice self care and wishes she would have started her own, earlier in life.

Robin has 2 grown children and 2 grandchildren. When she's not working, you can find her watching her grandson (Bryan Holland - Div. 3 State Cross Country Champion) running, practicing yoga, reading, painting, volunteering or hanging out with family and friends.



### **Faith James, Young Adult Coordinator**

is the newest addition to the NAMI Stark County Staff. She has a passion for the wellness of youth and animals, and about fashion. She would consider herself an advocate for anxiety, and a huge advocate for self-care. She is a Regional Leader for YouthMove Stark County. Her goal through YouthMove Stark County is to educate wellness through the support groups currently offered for free to our youth and young adults. She runs groups in Downtown Canton at our NAMI location and also at the 708 in Massillon.

She is on the fundraising committee for NAMI Stark County, StarkMHAR System of Care Committees, and Family Engagement Committee.

Faith is finishing up her Forensic Psychology Degree and plans to further her education while still working at NAMI. She is also writing her third poetry book.

She is married and has a cat named Camo. A few of her favorite self-care activities include hiking, painting, yoga, and practicing controlled breathing exercises.

The **Mission of NAMI Stark County** is to empower and provide hope for recovery to those impacted by mental illness, family and natural support and community by providing support groups, education programs, resources and advocacy.

We **enVision** a community in which all those impacted by mental illness experience the acceptance and support they need to achieve wellness.

#### **Our Ongoing Priorities:**

Establish and promote NAMI support groups and education programs

Promote early detection and treatment through education of parents and teachers.

Provide information and referral services to peers, their families and mental health professionals for the purpose of improving recovery and access to care.

Build partnerships with providers to help peers and families with life transitions.

Advocate for an adequately funded public health system that provides recovery orientated health care, social services and other supports for peers and families impacted by mental illness.

Advocate to maintain affordable, supportive and stable housing and Supported employment.

Educate the public and professional community by increasing understanding and eliminating the stigma of mental illness.

Encourage NAMI Stark County members to become involved in organizations that serve peers and families who are impacted by mental illness. Support research into the cause and treatment of mental illness.

Advocate for peers and families impacted by mental illness.

**NAMI Stark County is not a clinical agency. We are trained educators with lived experience**

# Through The Cracks, Saving Undiagnosed Children with Autism

By David Thomas, Mental Health Case Manager & Human Rights Journalist, Alliance OH

**“1 in every 44 Children has been identified with Autism Spectrum disorder in the USA.” CDC**

**“Females with Autism Spectrum disorder are 8 times more likely to attempt suicide than females without.” Spark Research**

**“Males with Autism Spectrum Disorder are 1.93 times more likely to attempt suicide than those without.” Spark Research**

Speaking as a Mental Health Case Manager who is in the schools, I can tell you that I have seen with my own eyes children who have Autism and are Undiagnosed. Not only are these children undiagnosed, they also are alone and isolated in the schools. They eat lunch alone, they float thru the halls like ghosts. They sit in classrooms and struggle, struggle to learn, struggle to connect, struggle to be a part of their peer group and they are ignored and invisible. Their grades are struggling and their socialization is nonexistent. In order for a child with Autism to thrive and function healthily in life and in school, they need help, they need a support team and that starts with a diagnosis. Once a diagnosis is solidified connecting them to a counselor in school and out as well as getting them tutoring in the school and support to be a part of their peer group, connect and even participate in things like sports, or activities groups that contain their peers, the ones that they are isolated from. Case Managers, Med Practitioners, Counselors as well as school staff connecting and working together as a team on behalf of our Autistic Children is fundamental to eradicating this hidden epidemic of our Autistic Children and adults getting lost in this world and taking their lives.

**Dr. Sarah Cassidy, UK:** “Many adults in the UK find it very difficult to obtain an autism diagnosis and appropriate support post diagnosis. Our study shows that undiagnosed autistic people could be at an increased risk of dying by suicide.”

“It is urgent that access to an autism diagnosis and appropriate support post diagnosis is improved. This is the top autism community priority for suicide prevention, and needs to be addressed immediately by commissioners of services and policy makers.”

**Simon Baron-Cohen:** “Suicide rates are unacceptably high in autistic people and suicide prevention has to be the number one goal to reduce the worrying increased mortality in autistic people.”

In the British Journal of Psychiatry research was published on a study done on 372 Coroner Inquest reports of Suicides and 10% of them were found thru investigation to be undiagnosed Autistics. (University of Cambridge)

Speaking as an adult with Asperger's, I fell through the cracks. I was not diagnosed until later in my life and it's was a relief to me. I experienced the worst case scenario that a child with Autism could experience, abandonment, extreme poverty, abuse and Isolation as well as bullying and constant social rejection. I'm a fighter and I pressed through the very Dickens like upbringing that I experienced as an orphan with autism and was pulled through by my love of knowledge and self-development. I was Invisible and no one tried to intervene. I unfortunately had to save myself. I am high functioning Autistic so this was possible for me, but so very unfortunate and unnecessary, and I write this as a Case manager, Journalist and as an adult with Autism in the hope to create a dialogue that is a catalyst for change so that no child with autism experiences what I experienced. The answer to this great problem is awareness, training and connection as well as greater funding for autistic programs for our children and adults.

# YOUR VOICE MATTERS

FREE

GROUP 1 - AGE 14-17

Group 2 - AGE 18-24

Group 3 - AGE 25-30



**YouthMOVE Stark County** is a youth and young adult-led program offering advocacy information, education about mental wellness, community engagement, and peer support.

Snacks provided.

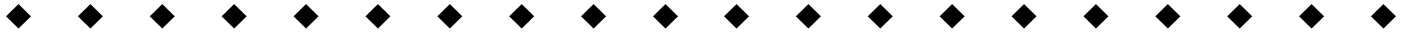
TO SIGN UP EMAIL

[fjames@namistarkcounty.org](mailto:fjames@namistarkcounty.org)



is free 6 week (2 hrs/wk) for parents and other family caregivers of children and adolescents who have either been diagnosed with a mental health condition or are experiencing symptoms, but have not been diagnosed. It is taught by trained parents

**Wed. April 26, 2023 – May 31, 2023 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm In-Person Holy Trinity Lutheran Church**



is a free 8 week (2 hrs/wk) recovery education course open to anyone experiencing a mental health challenge. This course is designed to encourage growth, healing and recovery among participants. It is taught by trained peers

**Saturday March 4, 2022 – April 22, 2023 10:00 am -12:00 pm Virtual Zoom Class**

**Thursday March 30, 2023 – May 18, 2023 6:00 pm -8:00 pm In-person Holy Trinity Lutheran Church**

**Monday June 19,2023 - August 1, 2023 6:00 pm -8:00 pm In -person Make=A=Way Massillon OH**



Is a free 8 week(2-1/2 hrs/wk) educational programs for families of individuals with mental illness. This course is designed to facilitate a better understanding of mental health conditions, effective communication skills, handling a crisis, self-care, and stress management. This program was designed as an evidence-based program and is taught by trained family members.

**Tuesday March 21, 2023 – May 9, 2023 6:00 pm – 8:30 pm In-Person Holy Trinity Lutheran Church**

**Tuesday May 30, 2023 – July 18, 2023 6:00 pm – 8:30 pm Virtual Zoom Class**



**Due to limited space – Registration closes 3 Business Days Prior to Class**

**You must be pre-registered to attend the class. Please call 330-455-6264 or email Sheryl at [sfalcone@namistarkcounty.org](mailto:sfalcone@namistarkcounty.org)**

**Also more classes may return to in-person in 2023.**

**EDUCATION**





## Same 8 hour certification program done as blended learning



Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is more than just a training program – in addition to teaching First Aiders how to identify, understand and respond to signs and symptoms of a mental health challenge, it emphasizes the importance of self-care, provides facts about mental health, and encourages you to #BeTheDifference where and when you can. This may look like checking in with a coworker, reaching out to a family member or just supporting a friend who has been having a hard time.

Winter classes will be held virtually on ZOOM, the rest will have a 2-hour virtual pre-course and a 7-hour in-person instructor led portion on the dates below. **All classes are free**, but you must pre-register and do pre-course before attending. Classes are limited to 20 participants.

### **Mental Health First Aid Adult**

Wednesday January 11, 2023 - 9:00 am – 4:00 pm on ZOOM  
Wednesday March 1, 2023 - 9:00 am – 4:00 pm on ZOOM  
Wednesday May 3, 2023 - 9:00 am – 4:00 pm at Stark MHAR  
Wednesday July 12, 2023 - 9:00 am – 4:00 pm at Stark MHAR  
Wednesday September 14, 2023 9:00 am – 4:00 pm at Stark MHAR  
Wednesday November 1, 2023 9:00 am – 4:00 pm at Stark MHAR

### **Mental Health First Aid Youth**

Wednesday February 1, 2023 9:00 am – 4:00 pm on ZOOM  
Wednesday April 12, 2023 9:00 am – 4:00 pm at Stark MHAR  
Wednesday August 9, 2023 9:00 am – 4:00 pm at Stark MHAR  
Wednesday October 11, 2023 9:00 am – 4:00 pm at Stark MHAR



# Stark County

Call 330-455-6264 or email  
[rholland@namistarkcounty.org](mailto:rholland@namistarkcounty.org)  
to register



## Support Groups

**NAMI Stark County Tuesday Peer Support Group**  
7:00 PM Every Tuesday evening  
<https://zoom.us/j/97629915727>  
Meeting ID: 976 2991 5727

**NAMI Stark County Friday Night Peer Support Group**  
7:00 PM every Friday evening on ZOOM  
<https://zoom.us/j/386459766>  
Meeting ID: 386 459 766

**NAMI Stark County Sunday Family Support Group**  
7:00 PM on 1st and 3rd Sundays  
<https://zoom.us/j/798097665>  
Meeting ID: 798 097 665

Support Groups are FREE to attend; NO registration is required.

Join by computer

Zoom.com

Enter meeting #

Or

Smartphone  
Download

Zoom app

Enter meeting #

Or

Call in

1-646-558-8656

Enter meeting #

Plan to join 10 – 15  
minutes before  
start time



**Some Groups will return to in-person during 2023 such as the Tuesday Night Peer Group will start at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church on March 7, 2023 at 7:00 PM**

**NAMI Stark County, will schedule virtual or in-person class for time and date convenient for your organization.**

**Please call 330-455-6264 to schedule.**

**NAMI Provider:** NAMI Provider is a staff development program for health care organizations that provide services for people affected by mental illness. This unique program is led by people living well in recovery, family members and health care providers. The presenters share their personal, intimate perspective on their treatment experience. The material is available in a four-hour introductory seminar. The primary goal of the program is to promote collaboration between the client, their family and health care staff. Having everyone engaged in the recovery process facilitates better outcomes.

**NAMI Smarts:** Grassroots advocacy is about using your voice to influence policy makers and make a difference. Turn your passion and your lived experience into a positive voice for mental health with the NAMI Smarts for Advocacy training. NAMI Smarts for Advocacy will enhance your advocacy skills and help you shape a powerful and personal story that will move policy makers. **The NAMI Smarts Difference** NAMI Smarts for Advocacy gives you step-by-step tools and the hands-on practice you need to feel clear, confident and ready to make a difference.





# The Book Corner

By Steven Pryce

## **Being Single in a Couples' World**

Xavier Amador Ph.D., Judith Kiersky Ph.D.

Simon & Schuster 224 pages

Being single is becoming more common, but Xavier Amador and Judith Kiersky feel it can still be challenging to today's divorced and unmarried people. They write about the cultural expectations and advantages of being married, the marriage script, and the current situation of single people. To be happy, single people must move through the four stages of being single, or the four As. The following chapters then answer the question of why someone is single and how they can "hold their own." It uses many examples of people in therapy.

The authors write that there are many reasons people become married including intimacy, companionship, love, and a sense of belonging. They have a marriage script that fits their lifestyle and expectations. It is likely they learned it in childhood. Single people can have the same experiences in today's society. However, they must learn their marriage script to discover why they are single.

Amador and Kiersky believe that single people face stigma and even systemic discrimination. Tax laws, insurance, and air fare favor married people. We also have not had a bachelor elected to the Presidential office. This can affect people's feelings of self-worth. But things are changing. People are staying single longer. Single people can now have economic security, a sex life, and children. Famous singles include Jerry Seinfeld, Sandra Bullock, George Stehpanopoulos, and Oprah Winfrey.

The four stages people must go through are Alienation, Assessment, Acceptance, and Assimilation. Alienation is when a person feels like an outsider. People in this stage often blame other people for their problems. Assessment is when a person feels like a second class citizen. It gives people a loss of value and they can even seek bad marriages as a result. Acceptance is knowing if you can or cannot change. Singles are a very large minority group and should not react to the pressure to be married. They should do it to be happy. Assimilation is when singles shed feelings of alienation, shame, and embarrassment. They are now impervious to stigma.

The book provides questionnaires to find out where a person is in the four stages as well as what their marriage script might be. The authors believe that a person's observations of their parents' marriage are important.

The following sections of the book address the questions of why a person is single and how to hold their own. They use many examples of people in therapy including a travel agent, a police officer, a lawyer, a stockbroker, and an administrative assistant along with their boyfriends and girlfriends. It addresses issues like being stuck on the ideal, the grass is always greener, being afraid to make the wrong choice, not leaving home, and never going all the way. It also stresses the importance of avoiding friendly fire, competition among friends, and feeling invisible.



The County's Voice on Mental Illness  
121 Cleveland Ave., S.W.  
Canton, OH 44702

Save the dates!  
8/18/23 Golf Outing  
10/1/23 Annual Walk



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