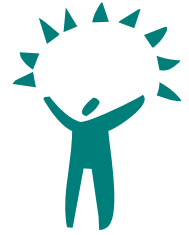




Harriet Shetler



NAMI Loses a Key National Founder

By Jan Winter

On March 30th of this year, NAMI lost one of its key founders, Harriet Shetler, who was 92. The organization's beginnings in her town of Madison, WI, in 1977, were the result of the anxiety Mrs. Shetler felt after her son, Charles, was diagnosed with schizophrenia. Together with a friend from her Congregational church who also faced challenges with a son with schizophrenia, she decided to assemble a group of family members with similar concerns. Within 6 months, they had 75 members.

They chose the name Alliance for the Mentally Ill partly because its acronym meant "friend" in French. More recently the name was changed to National Alliance on Mental Illness to broaden its scope of advocacy, education and services for families of persons with mental illness and their loved ones.

Very soon Mrs. Shetler and Mrs. Young discovered other similar family groups were springing up around the country, especially in California. They organized a national conference in 1978 that drew 250 people, including Dr. Herbert Pardes, then director of the National Institute of Mental Health. By the end of the conference the national group had been formed, named and financed.

The remarkable grass roots nature of the founding of NAMI gave rise to its circular logo with grass inside. And today, the organization, called "the greatest single advocacy force in mental health," has affiliates in every state and more than 1,100 communities.

NAMI's local chapter partners with the Mental Health Association to offer educational and advocacy opportunities for families and consumers. Its members are active on the MHA board and volunteer in fundraising, the Fellowship Club Recovery Learning Center, the annual Mental Health Arts Festival, and other activities. NAMI's free 12-week Family-to-Family classes are taught by specially trained NAMI members, are offered twice a year, and have benefitted more than 300 families over the years. Peer-to-Peer sessions for consumers are being planned by the local group. Together, NAMI and MHA comprise a rich community collaboration in promoting recovery and rehabilitation from mental illness. ☺