

# NAMI says thanks for continued support

Posted: Tuesday, April 19, 2016 12:51 pm

It's something many people still don't wish to talk about because of the stigma and the embarrassment. And often, they are even reluctant to seek information. But more people struggle with mental illness than cancer or heart disease combined.

NAMI Centre was the host of the recent April breakfast meeting of the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce. Sue Guffey with NAMI Centre expressed her appreciation to Centre for its support of NAMI during the meeting.

"In our little county and our little town is amazing what has happened with NAMI," said Guffey. "We are on the map in this state, I want you to know. We get rewards all the time when we go to our state meetings. We raised the most money of any affiliate next to Huntsville for our NAMI Walk last year and I thought that was pretty good. You were very generous and I really appreciate that."

At least one business, Cedar Bluff Oil, contributed \$1,000, the largest individual donor and seven local businesses were corporate sponsors of \$250, Guffey said.

One small company, she said contributed \$5,000 last year.

"Mental health is a huge issue," said Guffey. "Mental illness affects one in four families and a lot of you who are here today have an interest because you have somebody you love who struggles with mental health issues."

"We have another walk coming up and I had several people who contributed \$100," said Guffey. "We can do a team where are there 10 members usually and the team goal is usually \$1,000 and each team members raises \$100."

Guffey introduced Nancy Steed with CED (Cherokee-Etowah-Dekalb) Mental Health Center for treatment.

"If you have mental illness in your family or a friend who has it, there are two agencies in this county you can go to for help," said Guffey. "Nancy works for CED. And if a person doesn't have insurance that doesn't matter they have to see them. They will take people who are insured as well."

Guffey said they could also turn to NAMI.

"We advocate, support and educate we do not treat," said Guffey. "We are there to help each other. We are a family, a NAMI Family. I can't tell you how much I love my NAMI family, all over the state and nationally. Larry Guffey, Doug Ford, Patti Ford and I have been fortunate to go to several of the national conventions where we have learned a lot."

Guffey shared that she celebrated a milestone birthday while training in Montgomery a few years ago. One of her colleagues painted purple irises in her honor.

"This is the flower for NAMI," said Guffey. "The reason they have the iris is Van Gogh, who suffered from severe mental illness and was in and out of hospitals painted irises all the time when he was in the hospital and so Ethel painted me these irises."

Guffey said she begins every NAMI project with prayer including the Chamber of Commerce presentation.

"When I came in Joy Perry (Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce staffer) went out in the rain yesterday and picked irises, not white, but purple," said Guffey. "It was a God thing. Folks. She didn't know any of this. So I thought that was just really neat."

Guffey introduced Amy and John DeCenzo, who recently moved to the area from Maryland.

Amy, who has struggled with mental illness for a good portion of her life, recently completed a painting and her work will be displayed in a NAMI sponsored art exhibit in Montgomery for approximately six weeks.

Amy showed her painting and shared her experience with mental illness. Along with the painting, she shared her story with those in Montgomery who are organizing the art exhibit and shared her story with the Chamber audience.

"People who have mental illness are highly intelligent and very creative," said Guffey.

Following a "drum roll," Guffey announced the honorary NAMI Walk chairman this year, Alabama Crimson Tide Coach Nick Saban. The walk is scheduled for Sept. 24, 2016, at Wynton Blount Cultural Park in Montgomery.

"He (Saban) has a good friend whose son committed suicide," said Guffey.

Guffey said a friend of the current Alabama NAMI executive director and president met an acquaintance of Coach Saban at a legislative session who suggested they send him the material and Saban agreed.

On behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, Thereasa Hulgán, executive director, presented a plaque of appreciation to Guffey for NAMI hosting the April Breakfast.

For more information on NAMI Alabama, call (334)396-4797, go to [www.namialabama.org](http://www.namialabama.org).



## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS. Sue Guffey with NAMI Centre shares how NAMI is trying to erase the stigma associated with mental illness during the recent April Breakfast meeting of the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce.