Message From Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Hope, knowledge and access to treatment are essentials to brain health. Our country is severely lacking in providing hope, knowledge and access to the very individuals who are most acutely in need of all of these. The science and professional community have a lot of the knowledge and tools for treatment but prohibitive laws, bureaucracy, misconceptions and discrimination are barriers to access to those in need.

SARDAA provides information, advocacy and hope. We collaborate with research and other brain health organizations. Tens of thousands of parents are imploring for help for their children with little regard for their pleas. We all need to stand together so that individuals and their families affected by brain disorders will receive treatment as others living with other organ disorders.

It is time to change speaking of schizophrenia spectrum disorders as Mental Illness or Behavioral Health; they are Brain disorders - neurological disorders that require serious treatment. We don’t call pulmonary disorder cough disorder; so why call a neurological disorder a behavioral disorder? Behavior is a result of acting in response to a symptom. Until schizophrenia spectrum disorders are regarded as the neurological disorders they are, parity will not be totally implemented and people will continue to regard serious brain disorders as behaviors related to choices. No one chooses to live with a schizophrenia spectrum disorder, it is primarily due to a genetic risk, just like some forms of diabetes.

We applaud Dr. Tom Insel, NIMH Medical Director, for his leadership emphasizing schizophrenia and psychotic disorders as neurological brain disorders with research studies and findings. As Dr. Insel leaves NIMH, his
legacy is the great strides accomplished in the area of brain research and he will continue to accomplish great strides for brain health at Google.

Come hear more about the realities, hope and treatment related to schizophrenia spectrum disorders on October 10th in Houston, TX!

Sincerely,

Linda Stalties, MSN
Executive Director

Join us for our Annual Conference on October 10, 2015
JW Marriott Houston
5150 Westheimer, Houston, TX
11:00 AM - 5:00 PM Conference
7:00 PM - 11:45 PM Educational Gala
Purchase Tickets NOW

Ismael Cala, CNN en Espanol celebrity anchor, is the evening’s Key Note speaker. José Griñán Fox26 News anchor Hosts the Gala; Nakia Cooper, of Click2News and Newswithattitude.com and Guy Michaels, of KPVU 91.3 FM Guy Michaels Morning Show, are our emcees.

Experts address challenges faced daily by individuals, families, professionals, the criminal justice system and policy makers, when psychiatric illness is involved.

“International Jazz On My Mind,” features a dinner, an incredible auction and
Contemporary Jazz artists Tom Braxton, Larry Braggs and Vel Lewis. Buddy Bolden, innovator of contemporary jazz, lived with and died due to the illness of schizophrenia, as do many great jazz artists and millions of others. Proceeds go to education, support and resources for people affected by schizophrenia-related brain disorders.

Tickets can be purchased by clicking here:

Purchase Tickets Here

Message From SA Coordinator
by Margery Wakefield

Greetings from SA!

Here in Michigan, as in many parts of the country, we are enjoying some unseasonably warm summer weather. We actually had a solid week of sunshine, which NEVER happens here. It was so nice. However, when I went out today, I noticed that the tree at the end of my sidewalk is beginning to turn. The leaves are turning red. That means one thing. Fall – and winter – are not far away.
October in Michigan means one thing. The first snow. I remember when it happened last year. At first it was just a few stray flakes, then before I knew it, the ground was covered with a white blanket of snow. My neighbors and I hunkered down for the long winter.

But no matter what the season, the work of SA and of SARDAA will continue. In September we had two new SA groups, one in Oklahoma City and one in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Word is beginning to spread. We have had several inquiries in the past week from people who want to start new SA groups in their area.

I took on a big project in September, and it will continue into October. That is, I decided to contact all of the MHA organizations in the country to see if they are interested in having an SA group at their facility. There are exactly 189 MHA’s in the US. We currently have SA groups active in three of them. That’s not enough! I am hoping through this project to expand SA. It’s worth a try!

On a personal note, I am shopping for a (leased) car. I don’t want to buy a car, as my plans to stay here in Michigan are uncertain, so I want to lease a car. I am looking at a Honda, a Chevrolet and a Kia. This is Michigan, so we have a lot of car dealers here! Hopefully, I will end up with a car soon, before the winter. Taking the senior bus is very time consuming, although I cannot complain about this service. It’s been a great help to me in getting around here for the past several months.

I hope that everyone can prepare for the winter in his or her own way. For those of you who live in the south or west – be grateful that you don’t have to deal with this great inconvenience. If you want to experience the winter, you can always come and visit me! Just bring the sun with you…

Have a great autumn!
Margery Wakefield
SA Coordinator

We are now accepting messages from SA Members to include in the newsletter. Please submit your message to: info@sardaa.org for consideration for next month's newsletter

*** HOW TO START AND GROW A SA GROUP ***
By Margery Wakefield

Welcome to SA (Schizophrenics Anonymous)! I understand that you want to start an SA group, and that is great! READ MORE

*** WHAT SA MEANS TO ME ***
(From the Torrington, CT SA Group)
In SA, I try to make friends. Most people are not friendly. Sometimes you have to ignore them if they are not nice to you.

SA helps me cope with the stigma of schizophrenia. That’s why I like to look forward to the weekly SA groups.

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I like talking to people or keeping busy mentally and physically. If I can explain things to myself or others it helps me tremendously. I enjoy the SA group because I enjoy talking to people. It is not something I do at home alone.


*** Personal Story ***

“I surrender. I admit I need help. I can’t do it alone.” Those words form Step 1 of the six-step program from the SA group at our clubhouse. Over the last several years, I avoided Step 1 in SA – until now.

READ MORE

A STORY OF RECOVERY
by Brian D.

On May 15, 1980, I graduated from The University of Connecticut School of Law. I had no worries, except my studies, as my parents paid virtually all my bills until I was 25 years old. In college at Miami University, in Oxford, Ohio, I had a work study job, and for one year of law school, I worked at the West Hartford Public Library. The second year of law school I did title searches for a real estate attorney. After graduating from law school, I spent that summer studying for the Connecticut Bar exam.

Back on April 14TH of 1980, I was involved in a head on car crash, which happened while I was in an alcohol induced blackout. I tell you this now because it might have contributed to my suspicious thinking, which eventually led to full-blown paranoia.

I quit that job in February of 1981 without having another job. Eventually I went to live with my parents who suggested that I see a psychiatrist. I met with the doctor for no more than one-half hour, and he prescribed 10 milligrams of Stelazine. This was a shock to my body and in February of 1984, I signed myself into the John Dempsey hospital in Farmington, Connecticut. For the first week there I was not well. The doctor recommended Thorazine. This med worked well enough to have me discharged from the hospital to a transitional living facility in Hartford, Connecticut.

For the next 8-9 years. I repeated what would become a pattern. I would do well on a new med, then decompensate and have to be hospitalized. Throughout this time I was also drinking beer, off and on. I had a total of 19 admissions, with stays lasting 2 months to 2 years. In 1992, while at the Norwich State Hospital, a doctor suggested that I try a new med called Clozaril. With an adjustment to take it all at bedtime, that turn out to be my last hospitalization until a 4-day stay for anxiety in 2013.

During that same hospital stay at Norwich State, I stopped drinking beer. I continue to be a recovering alcoholic with 23 years of sobriety. In March of 1995 I secured a full time position with the Western Connecticut Mental Health Network (WCMHN) in Torrington, Connecticut. I continued to work there until my disability retirement in December of 2014.

I was introduced to Schizophrenics Anonymous by Jim Cronin. I refer to Jim as my SA mentor as he helped me to start the Torrington area SA meeting in 2004. Today it is a closed meeting. It is a class within the Recovery & Wellness program at WCMHN. I have
been involved as the paid staff person from 2004 until December 2014, when I retired. Along with Jim Cronin, I was one of the first moderators of the SA group calls. In 2014 I was elected to the SARDAA Board of Directors. SA has been a very important part of my life and recovery.

I'M SO GRATEFUL
By Andrea Willard

I am valuable enough to realize that my healing began with my Higher Power and me. I'm bouncing back with better insight, resilience, new coping skills, a new medication regimen and a life giving hope that has saturated all my days and nights with more effort than I have ever experienced.

I was finished with illicit drugs in 1974. I stopped gambling in 1979. I stopped drinking alcohol in 1991 and smoking cigarettes in 2006. Believe me risky behavior went hand in hand with a refusal to face the facts.

So intent was I to do well in business that I stopped the medicine in January of '89 and became completely psychotic and spent 12 weeks in a mental health facility. Oh did I learn? People diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder, a disorder characterized by a separation between thought and emotions, mood swings and by delusions and yes odd behavior, we often delude ourselves into thinking we are not ill.

1995 saw me in an asylum in a northern state because I stopped the meds again. That time it took me five years to recover. Haldol stopped working. The hospitalizations reached a crisis point. I desperately wanted to die and on the other hand I desperately wanted to live. That time I became catatonic. I was frozen emotionally and unable or perhaps unwilling to communicate. Finally (thank you God) a therapist said, “What happened to you?” “Were you abused sexually?” O my goodness I gushed and gushed and totally spoke the truth about my crazy childhood.

In 2012 I stopped my meds again. This time I faced arrest and jail time. I was incarcerated with felons who screamed their painful circumstances heavenward. I did too. I spent many weeks in a behavioral center after I was released from jail. The night of my discharge, I connected with a dear friend who called upon more friends who convinced me to seek help with mental health court.

Thankfully in May of 2013 my court case was dismissed. I had quite a few hospitalizations in '13 and '14 as doctors desperately tried all kinds of medicines to help with the paralyzing delusions. Three days before I was to be permanently committed to an Asylum, they tried one more med called Clozapine. It has worked so beautifully.

My days are spent rethinking every negative thought. I can now recognize delusions and am able with help to put them to rest. I started a SARDAA Schizophrenic's Anonymous meeting in a drop in center. The participants realize they can identify that their own challenges can be overcome.

I am a leader in Celebrate Recovery. I speak for them as do others. I’ve spoken five times for Crisis Intervention Trained Police Officer’s graduations. I’ve regained my sanity again to share again and lead again and comfort again.

THE END

In Memory of Joanne Verbanic
Founder of Schizophrenics Anonymous
By Nora Baylerian
Joanne was a very special person. After getting out of the hospital in October of 1987, my sister-in-law, Debbie, saw Joanne Verbanic on a cable show regarding Schizophrenics Anonymous (SA) and persuaded me to attend SA in Southfield, MI. I did not want to go, but Debbie insisted that I go. There I met Joanne and it was the start of a very special relationship with her. Joanne and SA are the best things that have ever happened to me; I am totally grateful for SA.

Joanne started her first SA meeting in Southfield in July of 1985. SA is a self-help group for persons diagnosed with schizophrenia and related disorders. It is a 6-Step Program with these basic principles:

**I Surrender, I Choose, I Believe, I Forgive, I Understand, I Decide**

In 1995, I started getting involved with SA on a volunteer basis; then I started to lead SA meetings. After getting involved with SA, my self-esteem sky-rocketed. Joanne helped me in so many ways. We talked every day and I saw her 2-3 times a month, going over to her house and going out to eat. She always said that “everyone is doing the Lord’s work through what we do for SA and mental illness”. She touched the lives of so many people, including myself.

Upon seeing her, she always had a smile and encouraging words for everyone she met. She used to tell me, “Nora, you’ve come a long way, baby!”

SA is so important for me. Joanne used to always say that God has a plan for her and all the others who devote themselves to the mental health field. She also said that SA was her life and that she would be devoted to everyone until the day she died — and she was. I used to call her “Hokis”, which means “my soul” in Armenian. Once, I called her Joanne and she said, “Nora, why didn’t you call me Hokis?!”

Joanne passed away due to serious health issues on May 7th. She will be missed by all; she left a legacy for us all and we must continue to strive to help the mentally ill.

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**Message From Family & Friends Coordinator**

As a parent, in my ongoing quest to understand why some people are given greater challenges in life, I find some answers, and solace, in the message of 'The Prayer of an Unknown Confederate Soldier'. Most have heard it, but will share...

“I asked God for strength that I might achieve. I was given weakness that I might learn humbly to obey. I asked for health that I might do great things. I was given infirmity, that I might do better.
I asked for riches that I might be happy. I was given poverty that I might be wise.
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men. I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life. I was given life that I might enjoy all things.
I got nothing I asked for but everything I had hoped for. Almost, despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered. I am, among all men, most richly blessed."

I am also reminded, in the words of the Rolling Stones, written by Keith Richards and Mick Jagger,
“No you can't always get what you want. But if you try sometime, you just might find you get what you need”.

I believe the foregoing wisdom is repeated in the Sixth Step of SA, “I Decide...I make a decision to turn my life over to a Higher Power, as I understand the Higher Power, surrendering my will and false beliefs. I ask to be changed in depth”. Wishing you a good month.
With Heart,
Mary Ross, FFS Coordinator

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Phone Support Groups

**Family and Friends Support Group**
Not for Individuals Diagnosed
Every Tuesday - 7 pm Eastern Time
Frequent Guest Speakers

**SA Conference Call Groups**
*For Individuals Diagnosed*
Every Sunday, Thursday and Friday 7 pm Eastern Time

**Spirit of SA Conference Call**
For SA Leaders and potential Leaders
First Wednesday of Each Month 7 pm Eastern Time
*Toll-free calls*
News and Commentary from the Treatment Advocacy Center

"Is This the Kind of Country We Want to Be?" - guest commentary
"There has probably never been a worse place and worse time to have a severe mental illness than now in the US," writes Dr. Allen Frances in the Psychiatric Times. "Most countries in the rest of the developed world take much better care of their severely ill. We can do better and, if we are to avoid being ashamed of our country, we must."  READ IT ALL...

"A Decade Later, Skid Row Still 'a Human Catastrophe Unfolding'"
A group of former jail inmates this week sought changes to a recent settlement they say fails to require adequate services for mentally ill and homeless inmates after their release, and perpetuates the cycle in which people with untreated mental illness bounce back and forth between jail and Skid Row in Los Angeles County. READ IT ALL...

Articles of Interest

No Psych Bed Available for Mentally Ill Inmate Allegedly Murdered by Corrections Officers - “The tragedy in Santa Clara is the latest in a series of incidents across the nation in which a mentally ill inmate was forced to remain incarcerated because no psych beds were available,” said the Treatment Advocacy Center. READ MORE

Investigational Antipsychotic Eases Negative Symptoms of Schizophrenia Caripraszine, "A novel antipsychotic being developed by Hungarian drug maker Gedeon Richter Plc, proved more effective than risperidone for negative symptoms of schizophrenia in a phase 3 randomized controlled trial..."  READ MORE

Report on ISCTM Consensus Meeting on Clinical Assessment of Response to Treatment of Cognitive Impairment in Schizophrenia  If treatments for cognitive impairment are to be utilized successfully, clinicians must be able to determine whether they are effective and which patients should receive them. In order to develop consensus on these issues, the International Society for CNS Clinical Trials and Methodology (ISCTM) held a meeting of experts on March 20, 2014, in Washington, DC. Consensus was reached on several important issues. READ MORE

FDA approves new drug to treat schizophrenia and bipolar disorder

Clozapine: Drug Safety Communication - FDA Modifies Monitoring for Neutropenia; Approves New Shared REMS Program
National Suicide Prevention Month: NIMH 2015 Update

NIH framework points the way forward for building national, large-scale research cohort

NIH launches landmark study on substance use and adolescent brain development

Regional Behavioral Health Barometers

ED Visits Related to Schizophrenia Among Adults Aged 18-64: U.S. 2009-2011

Comments Sought for AHRQ Effective Health Care Program Report

Nondiscrimination in Health Programs and Activities: Comments Sought on proposed rule

Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects: Comments Sought on proposed rule

Research participation opportunity: Bipolar Disorder Pediatric Research Study: Treatment of Severe Mood Dysregulation

Donate to SARDAA

Click here for NIH research opportunities

Please take a moment to find out how you can help support SARDAA, not only today but every day - at no extra cost to you!!

When you do your at AmazonSmile, Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price to Schizophrenia And Related Disorders Alliance Of America.

IT'S SO SIMPLE: just bookmark this link http://smile.amazon.com/ch/33-1213657, start shopping and support us every time you shop.

Texas and Louisiana Friends:
Re-Enroll Your Kroger Plus Cards Beginning August 1st

You can support SARDAA without spending a penny! Register Schizophrenia and Related Disorders on your Kroger Plus Card and they will donate a percentage to SARDAA each time you use your card.

[2014 Re-Enrollment Info in English and Spanish (PDF)]
Please register online at [www.krogercommunityrewards.com](http://www.krogercommunityrewards.com)
Link to: Schizophrenia and Related Disorders–Kroger Plus Card 90425

Help Change Lives -- Donate Now

Thank you to those who already made a donation - Every contribution makes a difference.

Sincerely,
Linda Stalters, SARDAA Executive Director
Gina Robins, Newsletter assistant