

# AMI Newsletter



ALLIANCE FOR THE MENTALLY ILL  
of San Mateo County  
(Formerly P.A.S.)

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OCTOBER 1983

- IN THIS ISSUE:
- \* WE GET TO TALK: OCTOBER MEETING
  - \* FUNdraiser ON NOV. 29TH
  - \* PALO ALTO GROUP'S STAND
  - \* SB 162 SIGNED. FAMILIES NOW INFORMED IF MEMBER IS IN 24-HOUR FACILITY
  - \* PRELIMINARY RESULTS ON PHYSICAL EXAM STUDY

## OCT. MEETING....

Fourth Wednesday, as usual.  
Oct. 26, 8:00 P.M.  
San Carlos City Hall, 2nd floor.  
666 Elm St.

This meeting will star those world-famous veterans of the mental health wars, the members and friends of AMI. Our program people noticed that there are many new faces in the group and no time to get to know the people behind them, so this month's meeting is an informal get-together where we can trade information, and just be with people who know, without being told, what our lives are like, what concerns haunt us, what our problems are.

Please come. Maybe you can give someone the benefit of your hard-earned knowledge. Maybe you can learn something yourself.

One thing we might discuss is whether we would like to incorporate a talk time into every meeting, say from 7:30 to 8:00 before the speaker.

Thanks to the program people for thinking of this one and thanks to Geneva Niese who every month gets us our speakers. If you have suggestions, call Geneva at 341-1497.

## FUNraiser ON NOVEMBER 29TH

Time to put a little money in our coffers and on Tuesday, November 29th, you'll get a chance to help. It's a lunch at Mercury Savings, 99 El Camino, Menlo Park.

Mercury Savings is donating the room AND the lunch, so that all the proceeds can go to AMI. The donation is \$5.00, and there will be prizes. Prize donations will be gratefully accepted, either a nice new something, or a nice antique something. Here's a chance to find a good home for the Limoges salt and pepper shakers that don't go with your things but might go with someone else's. Deductible on your taxes, of course.

Pre-lunch punch	11:30
Lunch	12:00
Donation	\$5.00

Kidnap a friend to come with you, come by yourself, but come.

Tickets will sold at the Oct. meeting. The organizers could also use help with selling tickets, hosting, and hunting down good prizes. Call Terry Walker at 591-1176 or Betty Pugh at 369-5321.

A big thank-you to Mercury Savings. That's a nice donation. Any of us who are thinking of opening savings accounts might think of them.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY GROUP TAKES  
A STAND ON PARENTS TESTIFYING IN  
COURT AGAINST MENTALLY ILL OFF-  
SPRING.

The following memo was sent to all CAMI affiliates by the PAMI group in Santa Clara County. They would like our reactions. Call 408/292-4286.

"Four members of PAMI attended a preliminary court hearing where a mother initially refused to testify against her son who was accused of a crime. The son had a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia. The presiding judge notified the mother that he would have no choice but to send her to jail until she would consent to testify. After a short court recess, she returned and testified under duress only because she had the sole responsibility of an adolescent daughter and an aged mother. Subsequently, the accused refused, for weeks, to speak with anyone, including his attorney.

Please study the following resolution which PAMI will introduce at the CAMI fall meeting in Redding. Be prepared to make any desired changes in wording and content, and to support or oppose the Resolution. If passed, it will become a policy statement for CAMI."

RESOLUTION:

WHEREAS a person with a history of psychiatric illness at anytime can suffer confused thoughts, delusions, hallucinations, paranoid feelings and impaired judgment...

WHEREAS the family provides the ultimate expectation of emotional trust and support for the mentally ill family member in his/her effort to survive the illness...

WHEREAS a mentally ill person accused of a crime could be confused and delusional and could interpret testimony by a trusted

family member as the family's intent to abandon him/her...

BE IT RESOLVED that the CA Alliance for the Mentally Ill supports legislative effort to add a Privilege to the CA Evidence Code, whereby an immediate family member could not be required to testify INVOLUNTARILY against a member who has a history of psychiatric illness.

MENTAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD REPORT

As readers have probably noticed, MHAB activities have been greatly hampered by the stalled CA budget. The Sept. meeting was no exception. Stay tuned, as one of the big issues coming up is the three-year plan for the county.

LETTER FROM THE HINCKLEY FAMILY

Your editor received a letter from the Hinckley family thanking us for our interest in their newly formed American Mental Health Fund, which will raise monies for education and research. They have established a Washington office and have contracted with a PR and fund-raising firm. One of the first projects will be a brochure on how to detect mental illness in a family member.

We are on their mailing list, and I will share further news from their effort.

GOVERNOR SIGNS SB 162

Good work, CAMI! Starting Jan. 1, families will be notified if their family member is admitted to a 24-hour facility, unless the patient specifically forbids it.

In the past, finding out what was happening with a loved one was more difficult. The family had to request the info (how would they know where and when?) and the patient had to give informed

consent to the release of such information, Getting informed consent was extremely difficult with a patient newly admitted to a psychiatric facility. SB 162 will make it a little easier to follow the fate of those we love.

#### NAPA AMI GROUP GETS PRELIMINARY REPORT.

You all remember SB929 which established a landmark pilot program for detecting over-looked physical illnesses in psychiatric patients. Well, the programs are just getting off the ground in four counties and two state hospitals. One of the hospitals is Napa.

Dr. Mahon-Haft of that facility gave our Napa group a preliminary peek at some of the early findings. Though the investigators have only studied about 30 people, they have found 26% with a severe medical problem. They have uncovered 1 brain tumor, 1 suspected brain tumor, 1 temporal lobe epilepsy, 2 severe nutritional deficiencies, etc. By using CAT scans, they found some had brain atrophy. All these disorders can result in severe mental symptoms.

This program has got to be one of the best things to come down the pike. We will be hearing more from these investigators in 1984 as they really get into gear, having processed a large enough sample so that they can begin publishing their results.

If you ever feel powerless, remember that CAMI was a major force in getting the funds for this pilot project through the legislature.

#### AN OBSERVATION

Tell people about your mentally ill kid, and you may be face to face with a backseat driver who'll tell you where you went wrong...the turns you missed, the signals you ran, and the roads you should be on. In general,

backseat advice falls into 3 categories: Ranch Romantics, Bullyboys, and Dripping Hearts. Ranch Romantics believe in the healing power of the high country. Send your kid to the Circle Z Ranch for a few months, they say, and he'll straighten out. The fresh air will do him good. Cows, goats, chickens, that's the ticket. Ranch romantics see the barnyard as a cure for schizophrenia.

Cow-pie therapy does not work. It simply moves the location of the problem from the city to the country.

Bullyboys are not so benign. Bullyboys will tell you to get tough with your mentally ill offspring. Kick 'em hard if they act up. Better still, kick 'em out. Bully boys move the problem from the house to the street.

Dripping hearts are the opposite of Bullyboys. Make love, not war. To Dripping Hearts, schizophrenia is a deficiency disease: not enough love. If only, they imply, you gave your son or daughter more love and understanding, all would be well.

How noble.  
How simple-minded.  
How insulting.

There are reasons why families of the mentally ill are still in the closet. It may be lonely in there, but at least they aren't run over by backseat drivers.

By Maryellen Hessel

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