



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mental Health Month Kicks Off With ‘Walk For The Mind Of America’

BALTIMORE, MD (April 25, 2006) -- The fourth Annual NAMIWalks -- *Walk for the Mind of America* will be held on Sunday, April 30 at Centennial Park’s Pavilion D in Howard County. Registration begins at 10:00 a.m. and the walk will start at 11:00 a.m., rain or shine.

This 2.4-mile awareness walk kicks off the May celebration of National Mental Health Month. It is designed to highlight the importance of education, advocacy and support for persons diagnosed with a serious mental illness and their families.

"The stigma surrounding mental illness is diminishing, but there is still much more work to do," said Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) Secretary S. Anthony McCann. "This walk is one forum where many individuals throughout Maryland will have the opportunity to share the message that mental illness is treatable."

The event is sponsored by the DHMH and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Maryland (NAMI-MD.) Activities include face painting, and appearances by the Oriole Bird and one of the Ravens’ Mascots from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

“This walk demonstrates the united effort in developing a recovery model system in Maryland -- that with adequate supports and services, individuals with mental illness can and do recover,” said Barbara Bellack, executive director of NAMI-MD.

Mental Health Month provides an opportunity for consumers, families, providers of health services, vocational groups, support service staff, local and state government agencies, and advocates of adult and children’s services to share the message that mental health is important.

“This event continues to provide a unique opportunity in Maryland’s transformation of mental health services—having local, state, and community leaders, friends, families and neighbors working and walking together toward improving a system of care, bringing hope of recovery to individuals with mental illness,” said Brian Hepburn, M.D., executive director of the DHMH Mental Hygiene Administration. “We are very excited to continue our collaborations with NAMI-MD and equally excited to participate in Walk for the Mind of America.”

Approximately 325,000 residents of Maryland between the ages of 15-54 experienced some form of a depressive disorder during the last year; fewer than half sought treatment. One in five Maryland families are affected by mental illness.

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