

NAMI volunteer recognized for activism

Written by Palladium-Item

Jul. 17

pal-item.com



Betty Mark, 88, recently was celebrated for her efforts on mental health issues. / Supplied photo

Learn more

The National Alliance on Mental Illness East Central affiliate has an office on the Richmond State Hospital campus.

NAMI offers free programs to the community including Family Support, Peer to Peer for those recovering from mental illness and art classes for consumers of mental health services.

For more information, referrals for needed services, or someone to share with, call NAMI's "Warm Line" at (765) 966-4094. Office hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday. At other times, messages may be left.

For nearly 20 years, Betty Mark has been devoted to raising awareness about mental illness.

In honor of her efforts, Mark recently was celebrated at a gala organized by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of East Central Indiana. About 200 people attended the gathering in the CTC building at Richmond State Hospital.

Richmond Mayor Sally Hutton presented Mark with a proclamation and many members of the audience spoke, lauding Mark's many contributions to the organization and to the mental health community.

"I have only one life to live, and only the things done for others will last," Mark said. "I thank God for the opportunity to serve in this much-needed service. I am 88 years old, and because of age and declining health, I am handing the torch to others."

Mark got involved in the local NAMI chapter in 1995 when she moved back to Richmond from Florida.

"I was very focused on mental illness, as it afflicts several members of my family. A young member of my family who is especially near and dear to me became seriously ill. It came to me that I could no longer stand by and do nothing," Mark said.

"I heard an announcement of a class called 'Journey of Hope' being taught by Bernice Isaac and Dr. Joan Lafuze. I told my friend, Kay Lake, who was also having problems in her family, that we must take this course," she recalls.

"This was the best journey I have ever made. I had many wonderful partners. We took the course and joined the East Central NAMI affiliate. It was very small at this time," Mark said. "Together, we went to work organizing and doing public relations for about 18 years. We went to state meetings, national meetings, workshops, training seminars. Locally, we walked in the NAMI walk for mental illness to raise awareness."

One of the projects that Mark worked on that stands out to her is the Crisis Intervention Training Program. She and other NAMI members worked with Richmond Police Chief Wolski and Mayor Sally Hutton to develop the program, which helps police, ambulance personnel and other first responders to more effectively and successfully handle situations involving the mentally ill.

"We held telephone conferences with Sam Cochran, who was author and founder of the Crisis

Intervention Training Program in Memphis. Capt. Bobby Lipps (and) Diane Whitehead of the Richmond Police Department became two of the leaders of the Crisis Intervention Training Program when we established it," Mark said. "These classes proved to be highly successful."

The East Central Indiana NAMI chapter's first office was at the Dunn Center, now known as Centerstone, and was made possible by the CEO at the time, Dick Edwards. Mark said Laurie Carter Rice, who worked at Dunn Center, trained the NAMI office crew and wrote the training manual.

When more space was needed, the group appealed to Richmond State Hospital Superintendent Jeff Butler. NAMI moved into an 1840s house and renovated it with a grant from the **Wayne County Foundation**, Mark said.

"The remodeling was supervised by Sue Raby, a member and officer of NAMI, and by profession an interior decorator," Mark said. "She and her assistants did a wonderful job of transforming the house into a warm, inviting facility in which we hold classes, meetings and other activities."

In addition to being involved in bringing about the Crisis Intervention Training Program, Mark helped begin the chapter's "Family to Family" program, which offers education, support and encouragement for family members of the mentally ill. She also helped start the "Body, Mind and Soul" program, which is designed for members of the clergy, as well as other church employees and those in the faith community who might find themselves working with the mentally ill and their families through the church.

Mark has received many commendations and awards for her work on mental illness, including two proclamations from Mayor Hutton for her efforts.

She received the **2009 Ruth J. Wickemeyer Award for Community Service from the Wayne County Foundation** and the 2010 Delisa Kay Ferguson Award from the Community Council on Disability Awareness. In 2006, the Dunn Center named one of its apartment building in Mark's honor.

Before retiring and devoting much of her time to NAMI, Mark had a long career in fashion marketing.

During her residence in Richmond from 1950 to 1972, she worked at Julian's Fashions, doing fashion shows, organizing the bridal department and serving as bridal consultant. She also managed the former Morrison's in Richmond and Indianapolis. Later, she traveled as an independent sales representative for California Clothing Manufacturers.

She also worked for L.S. Ayres Crystal Room in Indianapolis, as well as Gidding Jenny and Henry Harris furriers in Cincinnati.

"These marketing skills undoubtedly aided her in the marketing and promoting she did for NAMI," said chapter member Elaine Oleska.