

MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF NORTHEAST GEORGIA presents

Annual Awards Dinner & Meeting

Tuesday, June 12th at 6:30pm

*1190 South Milledge Avenue
Alpha Omicron Pi Sorority House
Athens, Georgia 30605*

*Guest Speakers will be Ellyn Jeager from MHA of Georgia,
Linda Phillips of Nuçi's Space, and
Scott Peebles, Ph.D., from the Medical College of Georgia.*

*Guests \$16.00 per person
Tickets are available by mail or phone (706) 549-7888*

Remembering Donald Keyes

Our friend Donald D. Keyes died Saturday May 19, 2007. Keyes suffered a heart attack while hiking in the Grand Canyon with his wife, Valerie Aldridge and their friends. He was 66 years old.

Donald has been a driving force behind our annual art auction for the past 18 years. He has not only served as the principle advisor, but also as the auctioneer. It is hard to imagine our art auction without Donald.

Keyes served as curator of American paintings for the University of Georgia's academic museum for 17 years until he retired in 2001. He was a partner in FiveArts Inc., a group of local developers and arts boosters who helped found ATHICA. Athens Institute for Contemporary Art (ATHICA) is an artists collaborative that includes an art gallery and studios in a renovated warehouse in the Chase Street Warehouse complex. Prior to this, he served as the director of the Marietta/Cobb Museum of Art for nearly twenty years. He was executive director of the Atlanta Photography Group from 1989-91.

It is hard to imagine a Mental Health Benefit without Donald Keyes. He has been part of this annual event since its inception 18 years ago. Our organization recognized his efforts with the *Claire Clements-Hans Peter Dietrich Volunteer of the Year* award in 2006. We will miss seeing Donald driving around in his old pick-up truck smiling and waving and brightening our day just by being around in our community. He was a true original, a breath of fresh air, a lover of the arts, a friend of mental health and the community, and he will be truly missed by this organization.

Mary Gannon Gunn, Executive Director, on behalf of us all.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE

Annual Meeting, June 12th

JULY

Welcome our new Executive Director!

Board of Directors & Officers

Pearl McLean, President
Ruth Parsons, Vice President
Jane King, Treasurer
Amanda Goucher, Secretary
Laurie Wilburn
Kevin Guthas
Jean Hornbuckle
Janet Grier McPherson
Chip Morris*
Andy McCollum*

Staff

Mary Gannon Gunn, Exec. Director
Jim Parker, Social Club Director
Erin C. Barton, Assoc. Admin.
(706) 549-7888

*Newly Appointed Board Members

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES...

Senate Resolution 363 — passed in response to an Atlanta Journal-Constitution series, “A Hidden Shame,” that documented 115 suspicious deaths in state psychiatric hospitals since 2002 — creates a commission that will spend more than two years studying ways to overhaul the seven state hospitals as well as community-based treatment services.

Sen. Renee Unterman (R-Buford), one of the resolution’s sponsors, said the commission’s scope should include services for developmentally disabled patients because they “are just as much a part of the system” as people with mental illness.

The change disappointed mental health advocates. Nora Haynes, president of the Georgia chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, said the developmental disability system already works well, while “mental health ... is in crisis.” But Unterman said the commission’s responsibilities could be expanded without undermining its effectiveness.

Legislative Updates provided by Pearl McLean, President MHANEGA

Report concerns about mental health abuse, inappropriate treatment, or lack of services to the Department of Justice:
Call 866-599-8901 or email: georgiaDOJ@nami.org

GET REAL ON DEATHS OF MENTALLY ILL

(Published on April 4, 2007 in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution)

It looks as though the Georgia General Assembly may yet again abdicate its responsibility to secure the safety of the state's most vulnerable patients. It is headed toward ending this session without funding an independent ombudsman to investigate unexplained deaths at the state's troubled mental hospitals.

A measure to pay for an ombudsman and a 15-member committee to oversee complaints about treatment died on the House floor last week. The position was created back in 2000, but the Legislature has walked away without funding it in each of the last six sessions.

Instead, the legislative leadership apparently believes that creating a House-Senate study commission to examine chronic understaffing and problems in moving patients from state hospitals to community mental health centers is an adequate response to the documented problems within the hospital system. That commission, passed by the Senate last week, has until mid-2009 to issue a report.

But patients in the state hospitals can't afford to wait on another study group. There have been a half dozen or more of those over the last 25 years, and their recommendations are often ignored by state officials. The patients in Georgia's hospitals — whose families long ago exhausted the financial and emotional capital to care for them — need protection now.

As reporters Alan Judd and Andy Miller showed in Sunday's installment of the AJC's "Hidden Shame" investigation, officials at the Department of Human Resources and administrators of the state hospitals simply can't get a handle on proper patient care procedures. They documented how a 59-year-old man hospitalized for the first time with mental illness died at Georgia Regional Hospital in Atlanta of a bowel obstruction that should have been easily diagnosed and treated. The man was one of nine patients in state mental hospitals who died between 2002 and 2006 from bowel obstructions or similar intestinal problems associated with the use of anti-psychotic drugs. In all, the newspaper has found at least 115 suspicious deaths in state hospitals during that same period — deaths that prompted little internal investigation by DHR and an appalling failure to learn from common patient-care mistakes inside hospital wards.

Legislators who care about the safety of mental health patients should look for a place in the state budget to appropriate the \$700,000 to \$800,000 needed to establish an ombudsmen office to investigate complaints of patient care.

If the General Assembly walks away from taking immediate action, the civil rights division of the U.S. Justice Department should step in to secure the safety of mentally ill Georgians in state facilities.

— Mike King, for the Editorial Board of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Have you paid your dues?

Name: _____ Phone: _____

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City: _____ ST: _____ Zip: _____

email: _____

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 Student | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Corporate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Lifetime Individual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$_____ Contribution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Associate | |

Would you like to receive this newsletter in electronic format? Yes No

✂ Clip out and mail with payment to: MHANEGA, PO Box 6384, Athens GA 30604

Thank you for your continued support! *If not us, then who? If not now, then when?*

Information contributed by Christine P. Fisher, Pfizer Regional Advocacy Coordinator

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- Together Rx Access™ is a prescription savings program sponsored by 10 pharmaceutical companies, including Pfizer. It provides savings on a wide range of prescription products at the pharmacy counter to eligible patients without prescription coverage. For more information, call 1-800-444-4106 or visit www.TogetherRxAccess.com.

If you or someone you know doesn't have prescription coverage and is having difficulty getting the medicines they need, fortunately there are programs that can help:

Prescription Assistance for the Uninsured



MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF NORTHEAST GEORGIA
(formerly The Mental Health Association of Northeast Georgia)

“Cast from the shackles which bound them, the bell shall ring out hope for the mentally ill and victory over mental illness.”

www.fightthestigma.com

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