



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Editor's Note: [Resource](#) for reporting on mental illnesses available online.

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WISCONSIN MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES RECOGNIZE MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK OCTOBER 5-11, 2008

BIPOLAR DISORDER AWARENESS DAY- OCTOBER 9, 2008

NATIONAL DEPRESSION SCREENING DAY-OCTOBER 10, 2008

Madison—[Wisconsin mental health advocates](#) – including members of Wisconsin United for Mental Health (WUMH) and the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI)- Wisconsin will join forces for observance of [MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK](#) (October 5-11) to promote education and understanding of mental illnesses as real, common, and treatable; recovery is possible.

Established by Congress 18 years ago, MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK is observed nationwide with outreach and educational programs aimed to promote early detection, accurate diagnosis of mental illnesses, and to reduce the associated stigma and discrimination experienced by individuals with mental illnesses. During this weeklong event, family members and consumers will share their personal experiences, providing firsthand looks at how mental illnesses affect neighbors, family, and friends.

Carolyn Zahn-Waxler, Ph.D., both a mental health researcher and consumer, is interested in speaking with the press about her experience with mental illness. Please contact her at czahnwaxler@wisc.edu or by phone at (608) 310-9284.

Building Community, Taking Action

Mental Illness Awareness Week 2008 centers on the theme "Building Communities, Taking Action" to emphasize that real recovery from mental illness requires community action, understanding, and teamwork.

“The stigma and discrimination associated with mental illnesses continue to prevent people from seeking treatment, and create barriers to recovery,” says John Easterday, of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. “But we can all advance positive change in our own way. Whether it’s encouraging workplace policies that provide support to employees with mental illness, or simply offering an ear to a friend in need, we can all take action.”

[Bipolar Disorder Awareness Day](#) seeks to enhance education of bipolar depressive disorder and its [unique symptoms](#). Characterized by unusual shifts in a person’s mood, energy, and ability to function, bipolar depressive disorder differs from major depressive disorder and requires specific treatment.

[National Depression Screening Day](#) is 24 hours of outreach encouraging members across the community, including those who are often less likely to seek medical attention, to participate in mental health screenings. Screenings are known to be effective in identifying the first signs of serious illness. A free brief, confidential mental health [screening tool](#) is available online. Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton, WI United for Mental Health’s Honorary Chair, will also make screening available on her [Web site](#).

More than three times as many people died of suicide compared to homicides in Wisconsin in 2008. According to the [Burden of Suicide in WI Report](#), the greatest number of suicide deaths was among 35-54 year old males. Men account for about 80% of all suicide deaths, although women are twice as likely to make attempts.

“If awareness about mental illness is improved through education, sharing of personal experiences, and greater knowledge of treatment and support resources, we all benefit as a community,” says Terry Schnapp, Interim Executive Director of NAMI Wisconsin. “NAMI is a valuable resource for information and support for mental health consumers, their families and loved ones.”

A complete list of [mental health events](#) is available.

Wisconsin United for Mental Health (WUMH): [WUMH Fact Sheet](#). www.wimentalhealth.org

NAMI Wisconsin: www.namiwisconsin.org

NAMI Dane County: www.namidanecounty.org

Mental Health Center of Dane County: www.mhcdc.org

Wisconsin Family Ties: www.wifamilyties.org

Wisconsin Department of Health Services: www.DHS.wisconsin.gov