

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **For immediate release: NAMIWalks for the Mind of America**

**ELLCOTT CITY, MD** – Citizens of Maryland take action together with thousands across the country Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008 in the Campaign for the Mind of America. Gathering at Centennial Park in Ellicott City at 10:00am, dedicated participants in NAMIWalks for the Mind of America will “friend and fund raise” according to Lynn Albizo, Executive Director of the Maryland affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Old and young, rich and poor, the common goal is to make America a better home for people with brain disorders through education on mental illnesses and improved system-wide treatment opportunities.

“My daughter has a serious mental illness and this is one of the main reasons why I am walking for NAMI. My daughter was diagnosed at age 12, but unfortunately we didn’t know about NAMI until years later. Once I was connected to NAMI Maryland I was able to take their Family to Family Course and join a support group. When my daughter had her first major breakdown, it was the knowledge I gained from Family to Family, attending Monthly Support Group meetings, and the wonderful friends I have made at NAMI that carried us through. I am walking to help at least one person who is in a similar situation than I was in before I found out about NAMI,” said Margaret Sommerman, NAMI Anne Arundel County member and walkathon participant.

In 2008, there will be close to seventy NAMIWalks across America. “The goal of every volunteer, sponsor, walker and supporter, “said National NAMIWalks Team Leader Blair Young, “is simple; to involve as many people as possible and to raise enough support so that NAMI can help as many Americans with mental illness as possible.”

“There is dignity and empowerment in acting together with others who believe. We believe in protecting the lives, liberties, and pursuit of jobs, homes, and families – a full life, for people with mental illness,” says Elizabeth Caruthers, a walker who suffers from schizophrenia. “Like any physical illness, mental illness, while grossly misunderstood, is not a disorder to be ashamed of – the shame is to ignore it.”

NAMIWalks in Ellicott City, Maryland is sponsored in part by many national and local businesses. There will be activities for the whole family at the event. To participate in the WALK as a walker or sponsor, contact Chrissy Thornton at (410) 863-0470 or at [cThornton@nami.org](mailto:cThornton@nami.org). Visit NAMIWalks on the web at [www.nami.org/namiwalks/MD](http://www.nami.org/namiwalks/MD).

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