



MISSISSIPPI STATE HOSPITAL

P.O. Box 157-A, Whitfield, MS 39193
Phone (601) 351-8018 Fax (601) 351-8364
www.msh.state.ms.us

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Contact: Adam Moore (601) 351-8262, adam.moore@msh.state.ms.us

NAMIWALKS 2010 SET FOR NOVEMBER 6

WHITFIELD—Stigma will be on the move this fall when the National Alliance on Mental Illness and community volunteers from across the area partner together for the annual NAMIWalks on November 6.

A fundraising effort that brings together mental health professionals, community leaders, families and those living with mental illness, the Central Mississippi NAMIWalks will be on Saturday, Nov. 6, 9 a.m., at Mayes Lake in Jackson. Mississippi State Hospital is just one partner in the walk, which has raised more than \$28 million across the country and has seen participation from 300,000 different people. Proceeds from NAMIWalks will be used for support and education in the battle against mental illness.

“This is an extremely important partnership for Mississippi State Hospital, as NAMI shares the mission we also have of helping dispel the stigma associated with mental illness through education and awareness,” MSH Development Director Paula Eure said.

“We want to promote education and awareness of mental health issues, and the NAMI walk is a great way to help educate the community through a fun and family-oriented event.”

Bringing together people from all walks of life will hopefully help others realize mental illness is just like any other illness; mental illnesses can affect anyone, there are physical reasons behind mental illnesses, and one out of every five people will experience mental illness at some point in their life.

La Vonne Whitehead, Coordinator of Children and Youth Programs for NAMI Mississippi, knows that firsthand. Her family has a history of mental illness, including her three children who have been diagnosed as well. She said getting involved with NAMI opened up a whole new world for her.

“All the support of the other people and the references that I was given from NAMI was more than helpful and so much appreciated,” she said. “I learned that there were people out there that had it as bad or worse than I did and that with the right kind of support you can make it through anything. I found that care and support at NAMI.”

Whitehead said that people can learn more information about NAMI or NAMIWalks by visiting the web site at www.namims.org. Visitors can sign up for a team there, support a walker, or just learn more about NAMI. They can also call her at 601-618-6807.

“I believe in what we are doing,” she said. “I have the passion to keep helping people with ridding the stigma that goes along with mental illness, letting everyone know that our children may be ‘different,’ but they are all unique and gifts from God and we owe them to do the best we can for them.”

MSH, a facility of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, was founded in 1855 and facilitates improvement in the quality of life for Mississippians who are in need of mental health, chemical dependency or nursing home services, by rehabilitating to the least restrictive environment, utilizing a range of psychiatric and medical services, which reflect the accepted standard of care and are in compliance with statutory and regulatory guidelines. The hospital is accredited by the Joint Commission.