

# Mental Illness | Picture of Need | About magazine | Stark County

**Odds are, you know many people with a mental illness.** One could be yourself. Or, family members, neighbors, friends, co-workers.

Mental health officials and organizations estimate that 1 in 4 adults experiences mental illness in a given year. And 1 in 17 live with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or major depression.

“You’re not going to prevent mental illness,” said John Aller, executive director of Stark County Mental Health & Addiction Recovery. “The key is to access the right service at the right time in the right intensity.”

John Aller

The MHAR organization is one of about 50 community-based groups in Ohio, that coordinate, find and monitor public mental health and addiction prevention, intervention and treatment. The agencies they fund assist and treat people, even if they don’t have public or private insurance.

MHAR received more than \$31 million in local levy, state and federal funding during its most recent fiscal year, according to its 2015 annual report. About half that amount was doled out to providers who make up a network of mental health agencies around the county, and \$9 million was spent on inpatient services.

An 18-member board of directors oversees MHAR, which serves as an advocacy and educational organization, as well as a safety net of sorts, for those who can’t afford to access services.

Its funded network of providers includes such agencies as Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health, Coleman Professional Services, Community Services of Stark County, Crisis Intervention and Recovery Center, ICAN Housing, Make-A-Way and the local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

The 51-year-old Aller has worked in the mental health system for 30 years.

Some things have evolved.

“What’s changed is that we’re moving out of the attitude of maintaining ... we’re moving toward a system of embracing recovery, instead of being sick,” Aller said. “That’s a seismic shift.”

More and more, the agency is involved in schools, arranging screenings and intervention to help deal with such things as stress and anxiety.

What hasn’t changed enough, he said, is the stigma of mental illness.

“The No. 1 reason people don’t access services ... is a concern about the stigma, a shame,” Aller said. “We’ve reached the point with cancer, for example, where it’s almost worn as a badge of honor.”

Aller said such acceptance of mental illness would go a long way.

“We know that the sooner people enter the system, the better off they will be,” he said. “Otherwise, it can lead to other problems ... homelessness, substance abuse, if they don’t get help early.”

The MHAR website (starkmhar.org) even includes a user-friendly “I am” feature to help guide people to the help they need or want.

Aller said mental illness doesn’t have to define a person. It’s merely one of many things about a person, who can otherwise lead normal, productive or even superior lives. Among those with mental illness were Abraham Lincoln, Ernest Hemingway, Terry Bradshaw, Elton John, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Isaac Newton, Irving Berlin, Vincent Van Gogh, Winston Churchill and Beethoven.

## A LOCAL WORKER’S PERSONAL STORY

Shannon Ortiz

Shannon Ortiz is president of the board for the Stark County chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, a local advocacy group. She’s also director of counseling services in the office of student affairs at the University of Mount Union. Her husband, Craig, committed suicide in August.

### **What services does NAMI provide?**

“It’s a great starting point ... to understand the system ... and it’s free.” NAMI’s mission is to “provide hope for recovery for persons and families impacted by mental illness.” The organization of four employees and 90 volunteers provides public education and information; family and peer support; and events to help raise public awareness.

### **How did you become involved in NAMI?**

“Tammy Daily (a psychology professor at Mount Union) convinced me to get involved about five years ago ... I already work with the college students.”

### **Did your husband’s struggle with mental illness play a role?**

“Yes, probably that too. He was bipolar.” Bipolar disorder, sometimes called manic depressive, is characterized by mood swings ranging from manic to depressed states. Her husband, Craig, and others, manage(d) the disorder with prescription medications.

### **How did his ordeal affect you?**

“I very much believe in what I do ... and we are going to lose some. You can know everything there is to know and still not save everyone.”

### **You wrote a very heartfelt letter that appeared in the September NAMI newsletter; how did that come about?**

“That was my eulogy.” Here are some of Shannon’s words about Craig, from that eulogy: “He did everything big. Laughed big, loved big and lived every moment to its fullest. So much so, some of you are shocked that I’m writing today about what a tortured soul he was. He was always battling the demons in his head and could never completely silence them.”

## WHERE TO GO & HOW TO HELP

If you or someone you know is suffering from mental illness, there are plenty of organizations in Stark County here to help you.

### ***Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health***

919 Second St. NE, Canton, 330-454-7917

4641 Fulton Dr. NW, Jackson Township, 330-433-6075

1207 W State St., Suite G, Alliance, 330-823-5335

[childandadolescent.org](http://childandadolescent.org)

This is a mental health organization that deals with behavioral needs of children, adolescents, young adults and their families. Services include intake and diagnostic assessment, psychological assessment, trauma treatment, groups, peer advocates, drug and alcohol services and case management.

### ***Coleman Professional Services***

400 Tuscarawas St. W, Suite 200, Canton, 330-438-2400

408 Ninth St. SW, Canton, 330-617-4747

1410 W State St., Alliance, 330-823-6932

[colemanservices.org](http://colemanservices.org)

Coleman Professional Services focuses on behavioral health, including those with persistent and serious mental illnesses, as well as employment and social services. It serves young adults to age 25, adults, seniors and families.

### ***CommQuest Services***

625 Cleveland Ave. NW Canton and multiple specialized centers around Stark County area.

330-455-0374

[commquest.org](http://commquest.org)

CommQuest Services provides mental health, substance abuse and social services to children, young adults, adults, seniors and families. Mental health services include counseling, case management, psychiatric services and school-based mental health services.

### ***ICAN Housing***

1214 Market Ave. N, Canton, 330-455-9100

[ican-inc.org](http://ican-inc.org)

ICAN Housings helps those who are homeless and mentally ill find and maintain housing at 30 different sites. It serves children, young adults, adults, seniors and families.

### ***Make-A-Way***

227 Third St. SE, Massillon, 330-837-0650

[makeaway.org](http://makeaway.org)

Make-A-Way offers free social and recreational activities, educational and peer support programs for members with a mental illness or physical or mental disabilities. It serves young adults, adults, families and seniors.

### ***NAMI Stark County***

121 Cleveland Ave. SW, Canton, 330-455-6264

[namistarkcounty.org](http://namistarkcounty.org)

NAMI is the county's affiliate of the nation's largest grass-roots organization dedicated to improving the lives of persons and families impacted by mental illness. NAMI is a non-clinical support, education and advocacy organization hosting 13 various support groups and four educational programs throughout the county, including Family to Family, Peer to Peer and Hand to Hand courses. It is the local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness; a grass-roots organization to help improve the lives of people and families impacted by mental illness; and hosts 13 various support groups and four educational programs.

***Stark County Mental Health and addiction recovery***

121 Cleveland Ave. SW, Canton, 330-455-6644

[starkmhar.org](http://starkmhar.org)

Stark County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery partners with service provider agencies in the areas of mental health and alcohol or drug addiction prevention, intervention and treatment.

Source: Adapted from Stark County Mental Health & Addiction Recovery Care Network.