The meeting was called to order by Dr. Brooks at 6:10 p.m. After a brief review, a motion to accept the minutes from the May 16, 2007 meeting was accepted. CHAC members then introduced themselves. Handouts were distributed.

Capt. Connie Walker – NAMI Southern Maryland:

Dr. Brooks introduced guest speaker, Capt. Connie Walker, President of National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Southern Maryland. NAMI Southern Maryland is one of 13 affiliates of NAMI Maryland, a statewide organization dedicated to advocacy for and education of persons with serious brain disorders and/or mental illnesses, their families, and the community. NAMI Maryland and its affiliates advocate for the public and private resources needed to improve the availability, accessibility, and quality of comprehensive mental health services throughout the state, and for research into the causes of and cures for serious mental illnesses. NAMI is headquartered in Washington, D.C. There are currently 50 state offices and over 1200 affiliates within and outside the U.S. The total membership for NAMI currently exceeds 220,000.

The mission of NAMI is to provide family and peer education and support programs; to educate the public about serious mental illness to eradicate stigma and discrimination; to advocate at local, state, and federal levels of government for insurance parity and mental health program funding; and to increase public awareness of the need for better and more research.

Capt. Walker provided information pertaining to the Family-to-Family Education Program for CHAC members and guests. This program is a 12-week course which focuses on training families of individuals with severe brain disorders or mental illnesses in order to cope more effectively. This course was offered for the first time in southern Maryland this past January and is being offered again September 5. Capt. Walker
expressed her gratitude to Dolores Martin and the Chesapeake-Potomac Home Health Agency for their sponsorship of this program. She explained that now more than ever, there is a need to address the issue of mental illness in our community, especially with the number of soldiers who have returned or will be returning from Iraq, some with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). She stated that NAMI Southern Maryland had a great deal of support to regionalize and they were officially chartered at the federal and state levels in September 2006. They have an eleven member Board of Directors, which includes representatives from Charles, Calvert and St. Mary’s Counties.

NAMI Southern Maryland is a non-profit, all volunteer agency. She said they were launched with the assistance of the Mental Health Authority and core service agencies from Calvert and St. Mary’s Counties. Capt. Walker provided CHAC members with a list of activities, partnerships, and initiatives in southern Maryland which include “Mental Health Matters and Grading the States”; a task force on mental health services for Maryland OIF and OEF Vets which served to pass Senate Bill 873, signed into law in April 2007; NAMI Walk 2007, which is a fundraiser for NAMI that earned over $10K for NAMI in 2007; the formation of the NAMI On-Campus Affiliate at St. Mary’s College, which is the only on-campus affiliate in Maryland; and Maryland Office of Forensics “Responding to the Person with Mental Illness” training for Law Enforcement and First Responders, as well as numerous other activities and upcoming events. NAMI Southern Maryland is partnering with St. Mary’s Hospital’s Health Connections to provide a presentation by Dr. Steven Sharfstein, President and CEO of Sheppard Pratt Hospital, scheduled for October 25, 2007. She stated that Sheriff Cameron is vested in a community modeled crisis intervention team which would call for stake-holder partnerships across the spectrum. Capt. Walker ended her presentation by providing CHAC members with membership forms and encouraged anyone interested to join the organization. She also requested anyone who may know of any dedicated office space to please let her know.

**Deputy Ross, School Resource Officer, and Tina St. Clair, Executive Director, St. Mary’s County Mental Health Authority – Mental Health Issues in the Public School System:**

At this time, Dr. Brooks introduced Tina St. Clair, Executive Director for St. Mary’s County Mental Health Authority (MHA), and Roy Fedders introduced Deputy Ross, a School Resource Officer (SRO) with the St. Mary’s County Public School System who provided CHAC members with information regarding mental health issues of children in the public school system. Deputy Ross began the discussion by informing committee members that many students are uncomfortable with approaching teachers or parents regarding confidential matters, and part of the job of the SRO is to assure students of confidentiality in their conversations with them because, for many students, the school is their safest environment. Many of the school psychologists are required to cover five or
six schools; therefore, many do not have the time necessary to address the needs of the individual students. Each high school in St. Mary’s County utilizes one SRO. The middle schools offer a DARE program for which three officers have been assigned.

Deputy Ross stated that one of his most important jobs is to ensure safety for all the students, and to mentor those in need. He also explained the purpose of the Alternative School, which is a secondary school providing smaller class sizes for emotionally unstable students who are prone to violent outbreaks. There are approximately 45 – 75 students enrolled in this school at any given time.

Tina St. Clair then informed CHAC members of the issue of mental health in the public school system from the perspective of the MHA. She stated that guidance counselors are trained to guide students with academic endeavors and school psychologists are trained to do psychological testing on students, but are not licensed clinicians. The schools are not fiscally prepared to hire clinicians for each of the schools so it is difficult for the schools to address mental health issues with school-aged children. Ms. St. Clair commented that for the current school year, St. Mary’s County Public Schools has hired mental health case workers for George Washington Carver and Lexington Park Elementary Schools. It has fallen on the schools to come up with creative plans for dealing with mental health issues (i.e. attendance programs which encourage students to come to school on a regular basis, and working with pupil services teams to create behavioral plans.) She explained that St. Mary’s County has a unique environment in that it is a rural area, but it is also close to a military base and a large metropolitan area. It also has a diverse population that contains many citizens who are at poverty level or below, as well as a large segment who are affluent. Tina stated that she has plans to coordinate with Kathleen Lyon, Executive Director of Student Services with St. Mary’s County Public Schools, to discuss a resource produced by the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services entitled “Social and Emotional Factors that Enhance Secondary Education.” One of the modules offers training to teachers pertaining to the effects of children’s lives outside of the classroom and the relationship it has to their behavior within school.

Deputy Ross commented that most of his conferences with students are regarding mental health issues and not drugs. He also stated that bullying is a problem that, for many students, begins at home. Capt. Walker remarked that co-occurring disorders (substance abuse problems coupled with mental health issues) has become an insurmountable problem that needs to be addressed nationwide. Tina St. Clair informed council members that the state has been awarded a grant which is intended to help identify clients with co-occurring disorders to determine if mental health issues or substance abuse issues are the primary cause of the problem in order to provide the correct treatment.

Dr. Rene Grace, a member of the Board of Directors at Jude House, Inc. then requested to speak to CHAC members about this facility. He stated that Jude House, which opened in 1972, offers treatment programs for clients with substance abuse issues, as well as those with co-occurring disorders. At this time, Dr. Grace introduced Mr. Jim Flynn, also a member of the Board of Directors at Jude House. Mr. Flynn explained that Jude House is a 42 bed long-term residential care facility located in Charles County. Many of the
residents at Jude House are placed there after serving time in a correctional facility and are required to seek long-term treatment. He stated that, although co-occurring disorders are a universal problem, many problems with long term facilities such as Jude House are regional in nature due to financial constrictions. He explained that Jude House is funded by the Charles County government and the State of Maryland although its clients are from the entire Tri-County region. Mr. Flynn further commented that Jude House is reimbursed by Calvert County for clients staying there for 120 days; however, St. Mary’s County does not assist with funding even though as many as 11 beds are occupied by St. Mary’s County residents. He also stated that there is no facility that covers the same level of treatment in St. Mary’s County. Mr. Flynn commented that, because of politics and lack of cooperation between the counties, ultimately, it is the client with substance abuse issues and co-occurring disorders that suffers. At this time, Mr. Dennis Logan, Executive Director at Jude House, further explained that due to reductions in resources and operating as a non-profit agency, trying to locate the required medications for many of these clients is a dilemma. Mr. Logan stated that, although he does not know the solution to this problem, he believes it will require collaboration with everyone in the region.
SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Diabetes/CVD Subcommittees:

Richard Bjurberg distributed handouts to update committee members regarding the activities of the Diabetes Subcommittee’s “Take 2 – Steps to a Healthy Lifestyle” campaign since the last CHAC meeting. He explained that the subcommittee had completed the grant project it conducted beginning in September 2006. This project utilized a marketing campaign to educate citizens of St. Mary’s regarding diabetes awareness and prevention. Mr. Bjurberg stated that the subcommittee did not receive the number of responses from a “Take 2” survey conducted at BAE Systems that they had hoped, but they planned to continue with this campaign and visit other businesses. He explained that the subcommittee is working in collaboration with the St. Mary’s County Health Department (and the aid of a mini-grant they received) and in conjunction with the Department of Aging, to conduct a diabetes foot screening clinic. The subcommittee will continue to speak with organizations to promote good health, proper eating habits, and regular exercise in an attempt to prevent diabetes. They plan to participate in diabetes screening clinics, as well as a health fair being held in conjunction with the Department of Aging, scheduled for October. Another activity, “Diabetes Alert Day”, is scheduled for early 2008.

Questions and Comments:

Capt. Walker presented Christine Wray with some literature about mental health issues and requested that she review this.

With there being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m. The Community Health Advisory Committee will hold its next meeting on Wednesday, November 28, 2007 at 6 p.m. in the Board Room at St. Mary’s Hospital.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dolores Martin

kr