



NAMI Founder Harriet Shetler's Legacy

Statement by Michael J. Fitzpatrick, National Exec Dir., 4/6/10

Harriet Shetler, whose wit and tenacious advocacy endeared her to NAMI members across the nation, died March 30 in Madison, Wisconsin. She was 92.

She has often been considered NAMI's founder—although in fact, she was part of a larger movement. With Beverly Young, also of Wisconsin, and more than 250 other grassroots leaders from around the country, Harriet convened a meeting in Madison in 1979 that resulted in the founding of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.

She went on to serve on the national board of directors, edit NAMI's first national newsletter and wrote unpublished histories of the first 10 years of the organization and some of its affiliates.

From the Madison meeting, individuals and families affected by mental illness have risen out of isolation, anxiety and anger to become a force to be reckoned with at local, state and national levels—challenging medical assumptions and the mental health care system.

The story of the historic Madison meeting is included in the documentary *When Medicine Got It Wrong*, which will be aired on many PBS stations in May 2010, during Mental Health Month.