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Unity House Employees Participate in Wellness Walk for Mental Health



Seven Unity House staff 'walked the walk' to help promote Mental Health Awareness Month

AUBURN – Helping the Cayuga County chapter of the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) promote May as Mental Health Awareness Month, seven Unity House of Cayuga County Inc. employees took part in the chapter's Wellness Walk for Mental Health on Tuesday, May 6, 2008 in Auburn, NY.

The seven Unity House staff – Executive Director Joyce Williams; Darlene Podolak, Director of Cayuga County residential and Cayuga and Tompkins counties' day habilitation programs and services; Quality Assurance specialist Molly Malone; Intensive Psychiatric Rehabilitation Treatment (IPRT) program practitioner Valerie Becker; Jessica Williams, Assistant Director of Cayuga County residential and Cayuga and Tompkins counties' day habilitation programs and services; IPRT Director Susan Sloan; and Mary Mancinelli, Director of Nursing Services (*see photo, left to right*) – joined about 60 representatives of other local and regional human service agencies that also provide services and programs for individuals with mental illnesses on a 15-minute walk down designated Auburn city streets to advocate for the treatment and recovery of those individuals.

Newly elected Auburn Mayor Michael Quill greeted Cayuga County NAMI chapter officials Bart and Terri Wasilenko and the event's supporters at the Gazebo across from Auburn City Hall and issued a proclamation reaffirming May as Mental Health Awareness Month. His declaration also commended the local NAMI chapter for its role in informing and educating about mental illnesses and in supporting their treatment.

Bart Wasilenko thanked those walking in the planned event for helping to make Auburn and its residents more aware of the presence of mental illness and for advocating for individuals with mental illness and their families.

“Our purpose today in our walk for wellness is to let our voices be heard on behalf of those with mental illnesses and their families,” he said. “In walking our designated street route, we'll help to reduce the misconceptions about mental illnesses and let every one know that treatment of mental illnesses and recovery from them can and does happen.”

The local NAMI chapter is located on the first floor of Auburn Memorial Hospital at 17 Lansing Street in Auburn. Open Monday through Friday from 9 am to 1 pm, it hosts family support group meetings at that location at 6 pm on the first and third Tuesdays of each month. Call 315-255-7443 for more information.