



Ahhh—Happy Spring to One and All!

Check our website for
more information at
www.namistl.org,
or give us a call at
314-962-4670.

Yes, this is the time of the year many celebrate the coming of spring by preparing their yards and gardens, by clearing old brush, twigs and any dead leaves, clearing away items of the past to make way for the new and exciting things for our future such as new growth.

We clear away the old dirt, plant the seed and cover it with fresh new soil and that seed grows into something spectacular. Maybe it blossoms into a colorful flower or a tall shade tree, maybe a garden of vegetables and good healthy herbs. With good doses of rain, sunshine and tender loving care, all shall live a good long healthy life span and in turn help us blossom that much more into healthy, colorful, outgoing, good spirited people who grow with a lot of hope for their future.

So get up, get out, take a deep breath and start to plant those seeds by planning out some outdoor activities! Gee, my girlfriend already has plans to drag me off to Six Flags and maybe we'll take a dance and dinner cruise down the mighty muddy Mississippi. Ha, Ha! I already have to talk her into coming to our NAMIWalk St. Louis (May 5)!

So take a good deep breath, for it is known that oxygen is good for the brain which leads to positive mental health. Uhh, I heard that outdoor exercise is good too! So get on your mark, get set, plant those seeds and once again, happy spring! Here's to good mental health.

Committee Chair,

Chris Lee

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Karl Miller—A Frequent I AM NAMI Contributor



Karl volunteers at Dogwood Thrift Shop!

He works our busy downstairs
sorting/reception room and cheerfully helps
us to manage our seasonal packing and
whatever else is needed!

Here, Karl is cutting buttons from garments
that, for one reason or another (i.e.; rips or
tears in a garment) make them unsalable.

Jars of buttons sell well in the shop!
Karl's friendly personality and bright smile
endear him to staff and all who meet him!

AND...

he brings donuts when he comes in to volunteer!

My Mother Juanita

By Scott Galyon

May 13 is Mother's Day. HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

A dozen deer with their legs folded beneath their bodies catching their much needed sleep. As we drove down the hill to visit my mother Juanitia, at the village North BJC nursing home, off Dunn Rd. The fountain of water glowing white and orange colors bursting with a vibrant glow reflecting, off the water.

Juanitia has bad knees. She shuffled around, in her wheelchair with her new Deerfoam house-shoes on. Mom is 95 years old and 96 in May. She was born in a small town named Corning, Arkansas, 30 miles from Popular Bluff, Missouri. She helped me do my homework and made me home made chocolate chip, peanut butter and oatmeal raisin cookies. She always sang songs to me when she woke me up and cooked me a nutritious breakfast.

Our mothers' brought us into the world. They took us to church, cooked for us and helped us with our homework, encouraged us to do better and loved us through our trials and tribulations.

Daffodils

By Joanie Milligan

Daffodils
Sprout
In yellow splendor,
Reaching
For
The Sky
They Dance
To the Wind
And
Lift
Their
Smiling
Faces
Toward the warmth of the sun
Welcome sweet flowers
Welcome Spring.



We Live Our Lives In 3 Acts

By Gregory Gebhart

I am 63, have a mental illness and end-stage kidney disease. I started experiencing symptoms of mental illness when I was in fifth grade. I had trouble sleeping and exhibited manic behaviors. My late parents knew I was having trouble at school but did not get me psychiatric help.

Despite having poor study skills, I achieved first class Boy Scout status. I convinced my parents to send me to summer school to study algebra after the 7th grade and the school counselor sent me to 8th grade algebra. In high school I was on the debate team for 10th and 11th grade and yearbook editor in 12th grade. On the college entrance exam, SAT, I got high scores-a 640 in language arts and 720 in math.

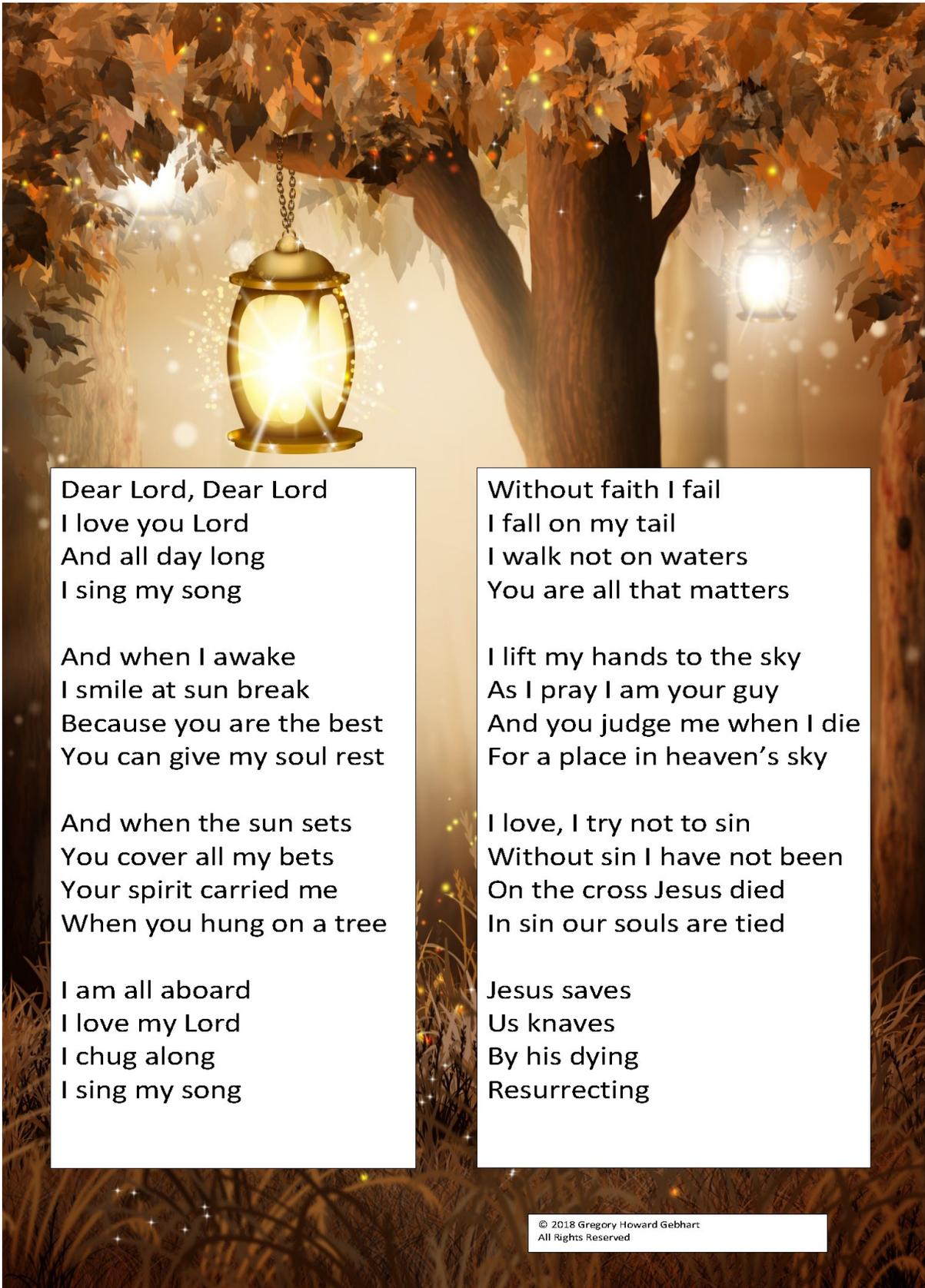
I got accepted into Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania where I was premed, but I had mood swings. My junior year I singlehandedly put out a dorm fire. I later applied to the MD program at Washington University in St. Louis and was put on their wait list. I also applied to the University of Buffalo's PhD program and was given a graduate assistantship; but my appendix burst and I became septic. I became extremely depressed and returned to St. Louis. When I got a letter from Wash U accepting me into the joint MD/PhD program, I was too depressed to attend. Thus ended a 12 year quest.

My wife, Fran Ferguson, and I met at a bar when I was out with friends from work. We married 7 months later despite Fran revealing she had bipolar disorder. I was accepted into Vanderbilt University's MBA program and Fran worked at its library. Upon my graduation we moved to Houston, Texas where I got a lab job at a refinery. Fran later got depressed and lost her job at an engineering company. She had to be hospitalized but when she returned to work, she got me to go to a psychiatrist. I was depressed and suicidal at the time and diagnosed with major depression.

I worked at many different jobs and was diagnosed bipolar II thanks to a boss who had a PhD in industrial psychology. Fran worked for 8 years as a librarian and became manic twice but was taken back at her job. She got her Master's degree in Library Science to complement her BA degree. I got a Master's degree in education. The lithium I was taking began to damage my kidneys and I lost 50% kidney function.

Because of ill parents, we returned to St. Louis. I still felt unwell mentally and was finally diagnosed correctly-bipolar with psychosis. I had the urge to put Fran's resume on the American Library Association's website and a month later she was hired, but she became ill and was on chemo for colon cancer. After 37 years of marriage and 14 years of colon cancer, Fran passed away with me holding her hand and a harp being played. I went on to work another 5 years at the VA before I had to retire on disability. Later I had to start hemodialysis because of the loss of kidney function. In my spare time, I wrote 16 books.

As you see Fran and I lived our lives in 3 acts: acceptance, setbacks and overcoming those setbacks. As my clinical psychologist Dr. Susan Costin said, "Anyone would have given up years ago." But we did not and neither should you.



Dear Lord, Dear Lord
I love you Lord
And all day long
I sing my song

And when I awake
I smile at sun break
Because you are the best
You can give my soul rest

And when the sun sets
You cover all my bets
Your spirit carried me
When you hung on a tree

I am all aboard
I love my Lord
I chug along
I sing my song

Without faith I fail
I fall on my tail
I walk not on waters
You are all that matters

I lift my hands to the sky
As I pray I am your guy
And you judge me when I die
For a place in heaven's sky

I love, I try not to sin
Without sin I have not been
On the cross Jesus died
In sin our souls are tied

Jesus saves
Us knaves
By his dying
Resurrecting



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Newsletter Mission:

The newsletter, established by the NAMI St. Louis Consumer Advisory Committee, will tell the stories of individuals with mental illness who are doing interesting things. It is a forum for information, inspiration, and creative expression.

Publication Guidelines

Newsletter Editor:
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- Materials should be from individuals living with mental illness in the St. Louis area, unless invited by the Consumer Advisory Committee.
- In an attempt to decrease stigma and isolation that often accompany mental illness, we ask that you identify yourself by providing your name, address, and either phone number or email address. You will be contacted if there are questions about your material. You will also be contacted if your material or question is published. Names will be published, but no other identifying information will be made public.
- Items for publication should be free from profanity or language that is prejudicial toward any culture, race, religion, gender, type of mental illness, or type of disability.
- Submission does not guarantee publication. Items are published at the discretion of the Consumer Advisory Committee.
- Please keep stories, articles, and poetry to two pages or less. Please do not send originals as they will not be returned.
- Submissions may be made by email, U.S. Mail, or fax.

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