



National Alliance on Mental Illness

nami

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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UCSD Psychiatrist Marc Schuckit, M.D. to receive Research Award at upcoming NAMI San Diego dinner

SAN DIEGO—The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI San Diego) will be honoring Marc Schuckit, M.D., distinguished Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California, San Diego—as well as other local individuals and organizations that champion mental health—at their annual Inspirational Awards dinner on October 7, 2011.

In the late 1970s, Dr Schuckit began recruiting subjects for one of the most ambitious research projects in the field of psychiatry. Over the course of 30 years, Dr Schuckit tracked more than 400 sons of individuals with alcoholism and control subjects along with their spouses and children. Among other things, his study found that a low sensitivity to alcohol (equating to “low response”) is a reliable predictor of alcoholism.

Low response is genetically heritable, but the twist is that low responders are inclined to associate with fellow low responders, which encourages heavy drinking. They also begin to think it is normal to drink to the point of drunkenness (as all their friends do), and begin to use alcohol to deal with the stresses that the alcohol causes. Thus, through more than two decades of unstinting effort, Dr Schuckit has shed important new light on the subtle interplay between genes and environment.

These findings have a very practical application, in that if we can identify at a young age those at risk then we can take preventive measures. He is now carrying out a project to test how these data can be used to help prevent heavy drinking in adolescents.

Dr Schuckit has also investigated the links between alcoholism and other mental illnesses, including depression, anxiety, and psychosis. He has published more than 600 research papers and written more than 10 books. In recognition of his outstanding contributions to alcoholism research, Dr Schuckit has been honored by the American Psychiatric Association, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the Research Society on Alcoholism, and the International Society on Biomedical Research

on Alcoholism. Until 2009, Dr Schuckit was the Director of the Alcohol and Drug Treatment Program at UCSD and the VA San Diego Healthcare System, where he still supervises residents, medical students, and staff.

In addition to recognizing Dr. Schuckit, the NAMI San Diego Inspiration Awards Dinner will feature Father Joe Carroll as the Inspirational Person of the Year and keynote speaker. Father Joe is well-known in San Diego for his tireless work on behalf of people who are homeless. He founded Father Joe's Villages which, collectively, is the largest provider of homeless services in Southern California, serving over 20,000 individuals and families each year.

There will also be a number of other awards at the dinner given to people and organizations who have greatly contributed to the mental health community. These include:

- Employer Champion: Shawn Crew of VONS
- Lifetime Achievement: Dilip V. Jeste M.D.
- Young Advocate: Maggie Reese
- Media Award: "It's Up to Us" Campaign

Councilman Todd Gloria will return to emcee the 8th annual Inspirational Awards dinner. Todd is a District 3 Councilman and a third-generation resident of the area where NAMI San Diego is headquartered. Among his former positions he has worked for the County's Health and Human Services agency and his commitment to the community is strong.

"We are extremely excited about this year's Inspiration Awards dinner," said NAMI San Diego Executive Director Shannon Jaccard. "Every award-winner sets the standard for compassion, education and advocacy in the world of mental health. It is truly an honor to be able to recognize their unique and valuable contributions to the community."

NAMI San Diego is a non-profit organization that provides education, support services and advocacy to improve the lives of everyone affected by mental illnesses, which, really, is all of us in one way or another. Most recently, the San Diego branch was named Affiliate of the Year by NAMI National. They received this due to their consistent support of NAMI's mission evidenced by the number of support groups, education classes, community outreach activities, seminars, and monthly meetings they offer. NAMI San Diego also runs a Family and Peer Support Helpline that offers free, safe, confidential information, referrals and support for people with mental illness and their loved ones. The number is (619) 543-1434 or (800) 523-5933.

The annual Inspiration Awards dinner is one of NAMI San Diego's largest fundraisers and proceeds from it enable them to continue doing their important work.

The dinner will be held at the Catamaran Resort in Mission Beach on Friday, Oct. 7. Tickets are on-sale now and can be purchased by calling the NAMI San Diego office at (800) 523-5933 or online at www.namisandiego.org.

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