

**HUNTERDON COUNTY CHAPTER, NJ NAMI
INTENSIVE FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES OF HUNTERDON
MEDICAL CENTER BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
FAMILY SUPPORT ORGANIZATION OF SOMERSET HUNTERDON
WARREN
RAMP, RENAUD & HLAVENKA**

PRESS RELEASE

**MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE TO SPEAK ABOUT BUILDING
COMPASSION INTO THE JUSTICE SYSTEM**

Attorney will keynote joint session of agencies supporting those with mental illness

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (FLEMINGTON, NJ, January 25, 2010) - Ann Renaud, an East Brunswick attorney passionate about protecting the rights of those challenged by mental health issues, will speak at a special program co-sponsored by the Hunterdon County Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the Intensive Family Support Services of Hunterdon Medical Center Behavioral Health and the Family Support Organization of Somerset Hunterdon and Warren on Tues., Feb. 9, from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at Hunterdon Medical Center. She will provide keynote comments at the session which begins at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium. It is open to the public free of charge.

“We should all become advocates for people with mental illness and developmental disabilities, seeing them not as problems to be managed but as possibilities to be unleashed,” Ms. Renaud says. “As a longstanding advocate for people caught in the legal system because of substance abuse, mental illness or a combination of both, I believe the justice system should be remodeled to include a more compassionate system, with effective drug rehabilitation and mental health care components.”

Recently Renaud called on Gov. Chris Christie to create mental health courts and to dedicate greater resources for research into mental illnesses and to bring insurance reimbursement for mental health services on par with other health services.

“Despite decades of good intentions on the part of our policymakers and the court system, the justice system in New Jersey today is inadequate. And the price of that failure is being paid not just by those who need help and aren’t getting it, but by all of us,” she said in her blog on www.ramprenaud.com. “Failing to deal effectively with mental health issues only results in further suffering by the individual and harm to society.”

Renaud calls for a sea change in the way the justice system metes out justice to those with mental health issues. “Our jails have become de facto psychiatric hospitals,” she says in quoting Baltimore Judge Charlotte Cooksey. “That must change.”

Renaud will talk about the rights of those with mental health and substance abuse

issues at the joint meeting of Hunterdon NAMI, the Intensive Family Support Services and the Family Support Organization. She will explore ways individuals caught in the justice system can advocate for themselves and utilize available public and private resources.

Renaud, who blogs regularly about the challenges faced by those with mental illness, developmental and intellectual disabilities and substance abuse issues on her website, will field questions from the audience.

About NAMI

NAMI New Jersey is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families who are affected by mental illness. The Hunterdon County Chapter of NAMI is located in Flemington.

About IFSS

The Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS) Program of Hunterdon Medical Center Behavioral Health offers a range of supportive activities designed to improve the quality of life for families with a mentally ill relative. Family members and professionals work collaboratively to provide each family with the knowledge, skills and supports they identify as useful to the family's overall functioning and sense of control. Services are available to any family, free of charge and regardless of whether or not the ill family member is receiving mental health services.

About FSO

The Family Support Organization of Hunterdon, Somerset and Warren Counties provides direct peer-to-peer support to the family members and caregivers of children with special emotional and behavioral needs. FSO helps children with complex emotional, mental health or behavioral issues

About Ramp, Renaud & Hlavenka

The East Brunswick, NJ, law firm of Ramp, Renaud & Hlavenka, LLC provides its clients with in-depth expertise across all its practice areas—the sort of knowledge that enables its lawyers to chart successful strategies and deliver winning outcomes. Making that proficiency even more powerful is the meticulous preparation that goes into every case. The firm's attorneys treat every client with kindness and compassion. They understand that when individuals reach out to a lawyer, they are seeking help with their most personal and pressing problems.

Please visit www.ramprenaud.com; www.naminj.org and www.fso-hsw.org.

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