



## Tickets available: 'Unmasking Mental Illness' gala set to 'bust' stigma, boost awareness

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The Mobile chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness will host its third-annual "Friends and Family Walk" Oct. 13, following the Oct. 12 "Unmasking Mental Illness" gala. Pictured here are 2011 walk participants. (Photo courtesy of NAMI Mobile)

**MOBILE, Alabama** – There's no question Mobilians like their masks – especially when Carnival's in the air – but with more than five months until the parades roll and the throws fly, one group is asking local residents to help cast aside façades of a different sort.

"Mental illness is an illness that many people don't want to talk or think about. It remains an illness surrounded by stigma, which is why many do not seek treatment," said Connie Ewing, president

of the Mobile chapter of the National Alliance for Mental Illness.

In turn, NAMI Mobile will host its inaugural **"Unmasking Mental Illness"** Gala on Friday, Oct. 12. The three-hour event begins at 5:30 p.m. at the Mobile Museum of Art in the Grand Lakefront Lobby, and tickets are \$100 per person. The business casual event will feature a silent auction, cocktail reception, hors d'oeuvres, music and a cash bar.

Ewing said an initial goal of 250 tickets had been set for the gala, but only about 100 tickets had been purchased by Tuesday afternoon.

"Ticket sales have not really met our expectations, but we hope many folks are just waiting until the last minute," Ewing said, reminding those in search of more family-friendly events that NAMI Mobile's third-annual "Friends and Family Walk" begins with a 7:30 a.m. registration Saturday, Oct. 13, at South Alabama's intramural sports complex.

"It's is a fun, family event with an easy walk," she said, noting Bubbles the Clown will be on hand to entertain with balloons and face painting.

The events are part of the national organization's annual Mental Health Awareness Week, being observed through Oct. 13 this year and intended to increase awareness about mental illness while reducing the stigma surrounding it.

"As NAMI increases its education and support programs here in Mobile, and we 'bust' the stigma associated with mental illness, I believe we will continue to achieve growing support from the community," Ewing said.

Unfortunately, she said, less than one-third of adults and one-half of children with a diagnosable mental disorder will receive mental health services in a given year.

"And one in 17 Americans live with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, major depression or bipolar disorder, while one in 10 children live with a serious mental or emotional disorder," she said.

And while it might be too late for local businesses to receive any sponsorship recognition such as through printed materials or T-shirt, Ewing said any and all donations to the nonprofit cause are tax deductible.

For more information or to purchase tickets contact the NAMI Mobile office at (251) 709-3044 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Monday through Friday, or visit [www.namimobile.org](http://www.namimobile.org). Gala tickets will also be available at the door as long as they last.

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