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‘Monologues’ fight stigma of depression, mental illness

By [Adrienne Burch](#) on April 18, 2012 12:10 AM CST

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One in three college students will experience prolonged periods of depression. Other mental illnesses such as anxiety are also widespread among young adults. Despite their prevalence, people are often hesitant to discuss mental illnesses openly or to seek help.

On Thursday, the University of Alabama’s chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness will host “Mental Health Monologues” at 7:30 p.m., in Lloyd Room 38. This event is aimed at reducing the societal stigma often associated with mental illnesses.

The event is free, but students and staff must have a CWID to enter. Community members are invited but are asked to make a \$5 donation to the club.

Student actors will perform monologues written by UA students living with a mental illness. Becca Kastner, Advocacy Officer for NAMI and coordinator of this event, said the performance will expose the prevalence and diversity of mental health issues on campus from the perspective of students who deal with the issues first-hand.

Students were asked to submit anonymous essays telling about their personal experiences with mental illness. There were 19 submissions for this year’s monologues with responses covering students suffering from depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder or living with family members who have mental illnesses. Student actors then auditioned for the opportunity to perform the monologues at the event.

“The aspect that makes this show so unique is that the monologues are written and performed by UA students, which gives the stories an authentic voice and brings the message home,” said Kastner.

Kastner also said that the members of NAMI hope to provide the audience with a better understanding of mental illnesses and the need to spread awareness across the UA campus. The purpose of the event is reduce the stigma surrounding mental illnesses and let students know that it is acceptable to discuss these problems with others and to seek help.

“It’s something people avoid talking about,” Kastner said.

This is the second annual “Mental Health Monologue” event hosted by NAMI-UA. After the performance, there will be a \$1 raffle and a reception with free refreshments.

Videos from last year’s event and more information about Thursday night can be found on the club’s website, www.namiua.ua.edu.

The NAMI-UA chapter is part of the nationwide NAMI organization that is dedicated to raising awareness, educating others and providing support for all those affected by mental illness.