

Flourish

NAMI Nebraska's Voices of Recovery

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NAMI Nebraska is a state organization of the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Director's Note

By Tom Adams, Executive Director of NAMI Nebraska



It was a long time ago that my daughters brought home some advice that I remember to this day. I don't know if it was from school, their brownie troop or some other activity they participated in but they came home with a saying that is my reminder today for how to make life easier. This applies not only to my personal life but the work we do at NAMI Nebraska or almost anywhere. So what was this advice? It was simple. It was this:

*Do what is kind,
necessary and helpful.*

It's not very fancy or complicated. There aren't any outcomes studies on the efficacy of it. It's not attributed to a religion or spiritual path that I can find nor does it require much thought. We hand out cold bottles of water to people who come in the building on these hot summer days and we always get a smile. We give gift cards for food to many who never ask but who we know need a meal. We listen more than you know to stories of struggling individuals and those who walk with them. In these and many other areas we meet people where they are at and it comes back to these basic three things of doing what is kind, necessary and helpful. ●

July is Minority Mental Health Month

- Mental illness affects people regardless of factors such as culture, race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc.
- Stigma, lack of access to culturally competent treatment, language barriers, financial insecurity, and other factors can make it more difficult for members of marginalized communities to get high quality mental healthcare.
- It is important to acknowledge that while July is Minority Mental Health Month, we need to recognize the unique challenges minority communities face in accessing care throughout the year.
- To learn more, go to nami.org/mmh. Also visit on NAMI Nebraska's Facebook page, where we are posting articles related to minority mental health throughout the month. ●



NAMI Nebraska Advocacy Update

By Cheryl G. Willis, Board Vice President and Advocacy Director

Save the date!

NAMI Nebraska is collaborating with several other organizations on a caregivers' conference on October 5, 2016 from 8:30am to 4:30pm in Omaha. Registration information to follow.

The 2016 Nebraska Legislature began their 60 day session on Wednesday, January 6th and adjourned on April 20, 2016. The State Senators had many bills to consider that would affect the opportunity that Nebraskans could have for improved health coverage, child welfare care and the economic system.

NAMI Nebraska members continued to advocate for persons who have mental illness and their families. Advocacy promotes recovery through support and education.

Policy change is one major way to make a difference in the lives of people living with mental health conditions and their families.

The Nebraska Legislature's main action in the area of mental health in 2016 was to establish Legislative Resolution 413. The Task Force on Behavioral and Mental Health will issue a report on their findings by December 1, 2016 to the Legislature. The Legislature's website is www.nebraskalegislature.gov and information on bills, resolutions and Senators can be obtained.

Issues for the 2016 Legislative session included those involving mental health services and appropriations for behavioral health services. Nebraska did increase the State Mental Health Budget for 2015-2016.

NAMI Nebraska did actively support LB 1032 which was the bill to adopt the Transitional Health Insurance Program Act (T-HIP) and provide duties for the Department of

Health and Human Services. The members of the NAMI Nebraska Board of Directors did send a letter of support to Senator John McCollister, the Senator who introduced this bill. This was one of several bills which did not pass and was placed on an indefinite postponed list. This was a big disappointment for nearly 97,000 Nebraskans who currently can't afford insurance.



Let's move on to the good news from The Legislature. The bills that were passed that pertained to behavioral and mental health in some manner were: LB 471; LB 598; LB 816; LB 849; LB 919; LB 1033; LB 1039 and LB 1110. The specific information on these bills can be viewed online at www.nebraskalegislature.gov. This is a very user friendly site containing information on these bills.

Advocacy will continue to work towards being an example of being stigma free especially at NAMI Nebraska. We want to replace stigma from mental illness with hope and understanding. ●

“In a gentle way, you can shake the world.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

Sitara came to NAMI Nebraska as part of the Lutheran Volunteer Corps (LVC), a service program connecting young adults with social justice nonprofits throughout the country.

NAMI Nebraska will be welcoming a new LVC Volunteer, Lauren, in mid-August!

Update on Flourish Project

By Sitara Mahtani, Community Outreach Associate

Since August of 2015, the NAMI Nebraska staff has been working on a project called *Flourish*. The project, part of our state contract with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, has consisted of newsletters, story videos, and webinars about recovery and resiliency.

The project was completed in June of 2016. In total, we compiled nine newsletters, filmed and edited 20 brief videos, and coordinated three webinars. The newsletters and videos focused on the stories of adults and youth in recovery from mental illness, and family members. The webinars (one on resiliency, one about mental health in school-aged children, and one concerning employment and mental

illness), were more informational in nature, aiming to educate individuals and family members about available services.

While we will be transitioning from a monthly newsletter back to a quarterly format, we will continue to feature one in-depth recovery story per newsletter, in addition to other NAMI Nebraska updates.

We would like to thank each and every person who contributed to this project. People generously shared their stories, knowledge, and expertise with us, and we very much appreciate it.

Visit www.naminebraska.org/flourish-project/ and our YouTube channel to view all of our newsletters, videos, and webinars! ●

Farewell from Sitara

“Stories make us more alive, more human, more courageous, more loving.”

– Madeleine L'Engle

Every single day I have worked at NAMI Nebraska, I have heard at least one new story. Whether over the phone, or during a video interview, or chatting with a volunteer, people share their pain and their hope with this organization. How lucky I am to have been a collector of these stories, to have been invited into people's lives in this way.

A theme I have focused on this year, both in the office and in my personal life, is listening. Listening to people's experiences, their stories, without judgment or interruption, is a challenging and messy and beautiful thing. Sometimes I have picked up the phone and known immediately what resource I want to suggest to the person on the other end,

but instead of interjecting, I have stopped myself and let them describe their experience. Because that is what they need, possibly even more than the resource I have to offer.

As I move on to my next endeavor on the East Coast, I will take with me not only the practical knowledge and skills I have gained here, but also the year-long reminder that we each have a story to tell, and no one story is more true or more valuable than any other.

It has been a privilege to be a part of the NAMI Nebraska team this year. I have learned so much from every individual who dedicates their time to this organization and mental health in Nebraska.

Thank you for having me here this year, and giving me the opportunity to hear your stories and share my own. Please continue to support NAMI Nebraska as it walks with people touched by mental illness. ●

Report on NAMI National Convention *By Suzanne Noonan, Connection Coordinator*

I enjoyed my time in Denver, CO attending the 2016 NAMI National Convention. I listened to interesting and dynamic speakers, took in the exhibits and learned about different programs and services for those with lived experience with mental illness as well as those who serve and support people with mental illness.

My favorite workshop was listening to a family tell their story from the perspectives of the individual with mental illness, the mother, the dad, and the brother. They presented their story with a lot of heart, hope, even some humor, which we say in NAMI Connection meetings: "We embrace humor as healthy." I always find it inspiring to hear of others' experiences in working with and/or living with mental illness.

I would have to say, though, that the most meaningful part of the trip was meeting and getting to know Bonnie, a homeless woman in downtown Denver. In listening to her story, I gained a new appreciation for those who live on the streets. This experience squashed a lot of ideas I had about what it's really like out there, what's happened in peoples' lives, and why they do what they do. She had a fascinating story. She was a joy to visit with...kind, funny, interesting, and intelligent. Meeting her was a true gift.

For me, this is what NAMI is all about. To simply listen. All people deserve to be heard, supported, and validated. It feels right to give that to someone, to be the difference is someone's day or potentially life. And in doing so, those conversations make the difference in my days and life. ●



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