



NAMI

National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI Navigator

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A Letter From Bob Williams

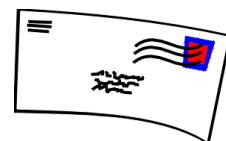
In accordance with our affiliate bylaws, my term as President of NAMI Hampton/Newport News comes to an end in April. During my tenure, I witnessed many major changes in our affiliate. It's pretty cool to think back on how this organization started to grow. I remember one of my first meetings after becoming President. NAMI had recently initiated Family-to-Family. Several people expressed interest in offering this class locally. Because the group was so small, we had some concerns and worried if we could pull it off. Well, we did and everything else followed that: IOOV, Connections, Peer-to-Peer, weekly Family Support Group meetings, obtaining a 501(c)3 status, developing a website, NAMI On Campus, and CIT. We have become the "Model Affiliate" for the other 27 affiliates in Virginia. While I have been at the helm, everything that we have accomplished simply would not be possible without the help and dedication of so many other people. Since I also serve on the Board of Directors for NAMI Virginia, I can attest to how fortunate we are to have so many talented people who are willing to step forward to volunteer their time and talents. By doing so, they have made a tremendous impact on the mental health needs for individuals and families in our community. Whether they are working in the consumer support, family support, or child support area, all are to be commended for their unselfish commitment to their respective area of responsibility.

I saw this group rise from a monthly meeting group into a vibrant full service organization that provides every program that NAMI National offers. Beyond that, we have raised the bar in so many areas of support and education for families and individuals. Recently we initiated the first ever Family-to-Family support group for veterans and Peer-to-Peer for veterans. NAMI Basics will start on April 7th. We now have a great group of young college folks starting a NAMI On Campus club at Christopher Newport University. We developed numerous partnerships that expanded our outreach programs beyond my wildest expectations.

It has been my privilege to serve as President of NAMI Hampton/Newport News. I will still be involved as much as time allows. NAMI has changed me. I have become friends with a group of very remarkable people. I hope everyone will support the next President as much as they have supported me. If you are still sitting on the sidelines, please consider becoming more involved. Just a little bit of your time can be so rewarding. You can make a difference.

-Bob Williams

President of NAMI Hampton/Newport News



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**Check out our calendar of events
on Page 5 of this newsletter!**

NAMI Launches “StrengthofUs”

“The website is designed for many types of young adults, including:

- *Young adults living with a mental health condition who are looking for peer support, information and/or to connect with others in their age group;*
- *Young adults living with a mental health condition who want to share their personal experiences, creativity and resources to help and support their peers;*
- *Young adults living with a mental health condition who may feel socially isolated; and*
- *Young adults who have a family member or friend living with a mental health condition and are in need of resources and/or support.”*

This March, NAMI launched a revolutionary new social networking site for young adults, ages 18-26. Here is an interview between the NAMI Navigator and one of the StrengthofUs creators, Dana Markey:

NAMI Navigator: What was the main idea behind StrengthofUs?

Dana Markey: We really had several ideas driving the development of this site. We wanted to provide young adults with an online community where they can connect with their peers, share stories and information, provide mutual support, and confidentially access information and resources designed specifically with them in mind. We wanted StrengthofUs to especially connect those who may feel socially isolated because of their mental health condition with their peers and local communities. We also wanted to empower young adults through resource sharing and peer support to help them find the hope, encouragement, support and most of all, the strength to live out their dreams and goals. We know that some states have not yet focused on connecting with young adults. We hope this site fills this gap by providing young adults with resources and support geared specifically toward them and their unique needs.

NN: How do you think you have accomplished those ideas?

DM: I think we accomplished our ideas in several ways. By working closely with young adults in developing StrengthofUs and by having young adult NAMI staff members spearhead the project, we ensured that the site and resources appeal to young adults and address their unique needs. We also aimed to create practical resources that were active, hopeful and encouraging, so users can take the information and go on to achieve their dreams and goals. The various social networking components help users connect with one another, exchange stories, creativity and information and support each other on the site. We hope the state-based groups and calendars on the site will assist users in connecting with their local communities as well. We plan to really build up these state-based groups as more and more resources come in from users and state organizations.

NN: What organizations are behind StrengthofUs?

DM: NAMI developed the website in collabora-

tion with young adults. We surveyed over 200 young adults on their social networking habits, resource preferences and support needs. This survey report served as the blueprint for the project. Additionally, we had a young adult Expert Advisory Group that we worked with from the very beginning to the end. They provided ideas, thoughts and feedback on all aspects of the website; including the resources, design and features. The project was generously supported by the Rodwell Dart Memorial Foundation, which was set up in memory of Roddy Dart, who lived with bipolar disorder and tragically died of a traumatic brain injury while celebrating his twenty-second birthday. The project would not have been possible without their support and vision. We also had a creative Web 2.0 design firm, Saforian that helped make our vision a reality. Additionally, we had many organizations generously provide us with permission to repost and adapt their resources for the site. Lastly, we also worked with various experts to develop resources for the site. They answered questions from young adults on a variety of issues including co-occurring conditions, medication side effects, supporting family and friends living with a mental health condition, sexual dysfunction as a result of medication use and much more. If you would like to learn more about the development of the website, please check out the About section at www.strengthofus.org.

NN: What type of person was the website designed for?

DM: The website is designed for many types of young adults, including:

- Young adults living with a mental health condition who are looking for peer support, information and/or to connect with others in their age group;
- Young adults living with a mental health condition who want to share their personal experiences, creativity and resources to help and support their peers;
- Young adults living with a mental health condition who may feel socially isolated; and
- Young adults who have a family member or friend living with a mental health condition and are in need of resources and/or support.

Continued on next page

“StrengthofUs” Continued...

Users may fall into all four groups. We were very fortunate to have a diverse group of young adults involved with our expert advisory group, so we had many types of young adults represented in the development of this site.

NN: About how many users do you have right now?

DM: Within one week of launching, we have over 200 active users. We are really excited with the turnout and we expect to have much more as we continue to promote the site. We have a few more marketing events planned that we expect will bring in many more users. We are incredibly touched by how much users are already supporting each other and opening up on the site.

NN: What things can a person do on the website?

DM: A person can do a lot on the site! It is a user-generated and user-driven community; so basically it's whatever users make it. Users can connect with peers and share personal stories, creativity and helpful resources by writing and

responding to blog entries, engaging in discussion groups, posting status updates on “The Wire” and sharing videos, photos and other news. Users can also access resources on issues young adults have identified as important to them; including healthy relationships, family and friends, independent living, campus life, employment, housing, mental health services and supports and much more. These resources are available to the public, so young adults do not need to create an account to access them. They only need to have an account if they wish to check out the social networking features. We have plans in the future to host “expert chat sessions” so users can ask questions to providers confidentially. We also plan to create a series of podcasts on issues important to young adults. There is already lots of activity happening on the site, so we encourage young adults to join the conversation now by visiting www.strengthofus.org!



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Family-to-Family for Veterans Update

Family-to-Family for Veterans Facilitator, Char Cate, gives us this update about their current class:

“Evelyn Steward and I are the facilitators. All participants advised us that this was long overdue and very much appreciated.

All participants keep expressing their thanks to us, which equates thanks to NAMI. They feel as we do—that the family members suffer as much, if not more, than the consumer. I hear all too often in the Family Support Group and

Family-to-Family class that if the ill family member is doing well, the rest of the family is doing well. Post-traumatic stress has really taken a toll on the veteran family members. A couple of spouses said that the person that left for war was not the same person that returned home. That’s very sad.”

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“Life is not a resource to be used up, so that the older we get, the less life we have left. Life is the accumulation of wisdom, love and experience of people encountered and obstacles overcome. The longer we live, the more life we possess.”

-Rabbi Harold Kushner

What's Going On?

- A brand new NAMI Connections two day facilitator training took place March 27-28, at the Hampton/Newport News Community Service Board. This is the first training of its type to be offered and our own Chris Cox and Evelyn Gay were the two brave pioneers to kick this program off. Congratulations to all of our newly trained facilitators!
- NAMI Virginia is now on Facebook! Search for “NAMI Virginia” and become a fan!
- NAMI Basics begins on April 7. Contact Vrenda LaRue for more information at vlarue@hnnncsb.org.
- NAMI Connections Support Group Facilitator training will be held April 9-11 in Richmond. For more information please contact Sarah Eisenman, NAMI Virginia Program Coordinator, seisenman@nami.org or (804) 285-8264 ext. 203.
- NAMI Family-to-Family Teacher training will take place in Richmond April 16-18. All your expenses are covered if you volunteer for this training. Teaching this class helps the people teaching as well, because you learn and absorb more than when you took the class yourself. We currently have 38 people taking the course in Hampton and Newport News and we need more teachers for this important job. Please see Rachel Shaw for an application or download one from the internet.
- The Children's Festival of Friends will be Saturday, May 1, from 10 AM—5 PM at Newport News Park. There are always lots of people at this event and we would love to have your help! No special skills are required. You just hand out brochures and talk to people about our programs. We will have our puppet, Iris the Dragon, there to help attract attention to our display.
- The NAMI Virginia State Convention will be held on Saturday, May 22, near Harrisonburg at Blue Ridge Community College at the Plecker Workforce Center, Weyers Cave, VA. It will be a one day convention this year. Our own Bob Williams will be presenting one of the workshops.
- The 2010 NAMI National Conference will be held June 30—July 3 at the completely renovated Washington Hilton in Washington, D.C. To register, visit www.nami.org.
- NAMI Walks Virginia 2010 will be held October 9 at Innsbrook in Richmond. We had a fabulous time last year. It's never too early to start raising money! If you would like sponsorship packets, see Bob Williams.
- NAMI Hampton/Newport News Elections are coming up at the May Open Monthly Meeting. All positions are available. Please be sure to attend this meeting to vote. If you would like to run for any of these offices, contact Elyse Hunt at ehunt3@verizon.net or Cathy Hunt at gehunt@verizon.net or call (757) 827-6276.

NAMI Hearts & Minds



NAMI launched a new program in February called “Hearts & Minds.” It is aimed at risk factors like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, and obesity (among others) that shorten the life spans for people living with serious mental illness. The program includes a dedicated website and new tools for state and local presentations. The Hearts & Minds Facilitator's Guide is available for purchase in the NAMI Store at www.nami.org.

Calendar of Events:

Date	Event	Time	Place
MON. 4/5	Open Monthly Meeting No Speaker, Just Discussion Panel	6 PM–7:30 PM	100A Medical Drive Hampton, VA 23666
MON. 4/19	Business Meeting	5:30 PM–7 PM	100A Medical Drive Hampton, VA 23666
SAT. 5/1	Children's Festival of Friends Volunteers Needed to Work NAMI Booth	10 AM–5 PM	Newport News Park 13564 Jefferson Avenue Newport News, VA 23603
MON. 5/3	Open Monthly Meeting Officer Elections	6 PM–7:30 PM	100A Medical Drive Hampton, VA 23666
MON. 5/17	Business Meeting	5:30 PM–7 PM	100A Medical Drive Hampton, VA, 23666
SAT. 5/22	NAMI VA State Convention	All Day	Blue Ridge Community College Placker Workforce Center Weyers Cave, VA 24486
MON. 6/7	Open Monthly Meeting	6 PM–7:30 PM	100A Medical Drive Hampton, VA 23666
MON. 6/21	Business Meeting	5:30 PM–7 PM	100A Medical Drive Hampton, VA 23666
Every MON.	NAMI Connections Peer Support Group	6 PM–7:30 PM	Riverside Behavioral Health Center 2244 Executive Drive Hampton, VA 23666
Every WED.	Family Support Group	6 PM–7:30 PM	100A Medical Drive Hampton, VA 23666
Every WED.	NAMI Connections Peer Support Group	6 PM–7:30 PM	100A Medical Drive Hampton, VA 23666
1st & 3rd THU.	NAMI Connections Peer Support Group	7 PM–8:30 PM	Denbigh Church of Christ 205 Denbigh Boulevard Newport News, VA 23608
1st THU.	NAMI Connections Veteran Peer Support Group	6 PM–7:30 PM	100A Medical Drive Hampton, VA 23666

<http://www.namihptnn.org>