

2008 ANNUAL REPORT

NAMI Sacramento is the Sacramento affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. It is a non-profit, grassroots, volunteer support and advocacy organization of people with mental illness (consumers) and their family members and friends. It is dedicated to improving the lives of consumers through education, support and advocacy. NAMI Sacramento provides all of its services, classes, educational materials and meetings free of charge.

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

Our Office Assistant, Dawn Correia, has worked for us for two years. In 2008 she responded to 1140 telephone calls and emails providing referrals to NAMI classes and support groups, as well as providing information relating to navigating the mental health system, and finding treatment, hospitals, housing, legal help and other resources available in the Sacramento area for people who are living with mental illness.

EDUCATION

Family-to-Family Classes: NAMI Sacramento offers these classes for families and friends of people with mental illness. The 12-week course has a standardized curriculum, designed by Joyce Burland, Ph.D, director of NAMI National's Education, Training and Support Center, and is taught by family members who have received training in conducting the course. Students learn about different diagnoses, symptoms, medications, and other treatment options for mental illness. Students also learn about coping skills and communication techniques that can be helpful when dealing with someone with a mental illness.

We regularly hear from participants that the course has helped them to better understand their family member's illness and to empathize with their struggle. Comments from two student evaluations from 2008 were: "I am so grateful that I heard about this course. It was informative and realistic as to what the illness looks like." Another comment: "I have benefitted in at least two ways from taking the course. First, I was educated regarding mental illness, and second, I have benefitted from the support and understanding of the group itself." The class is provided free of charge. In 2008 two new Family to Family teachers were trained, and two classes were completed educating 45 family members.

Peer-to-Peer Classes: NAMI Sacramento offers training and classes for consumers living with mental illness. In 2008 10 consumers were trained in the Peer-to-Peer program in which mental health consumers teach other consumers about living well with mental illness and avoiding or minimizing relapses. Two classes were completed helping 23 consumers. There are presently 139 consumers on the waiting list for the classes – our greatest constraint to offering more classes is funding.

In the words of one Peer to Peer graduate, "While it might seem dramatic to say the classes saved my life, the classes certainly helped make my life livable. I credit the Relapse Prevention Plan that I created in the class. I also learned important things like combating the stigma that is unique to people with mental illnesses. This helped me tremendously with my self esteem. I also learned the particulars of my specific illness outside of the acute setting of the hospital. And to be able to "tell my story" to

others who are walking in the same shoes that I walk in was liberating. I always felt that a Peer-to-Peer classroom was a safe place to talk about my illness.”

In Our Own Voice (IOOV): This is an anti-stigma education program about the realities of recovery and living with mental illness and is designed to be presented to all kinds of community groups by mental health consumers who have first-hand knowledge of the experience. IOOV presenters provide deeply personal and moving stories about their journeys of recovery. In 2008 10 IOOV presenters spoke to 443 persons in 37 groups including the Turning Point Crisis staff, the Sutter Center for Psychiatry (IOOV makes presentations twice monthly at the Sutter Center for Psychiatry to patients and their families), Janssen Pharmaceutica, NAMI Yolo, Alta California Regional Center, Laguna Creek High School Psychology classes, Sacramento City College – Administration of Justice classes, and the Sierra Vista Community luncheon. Many IOOV presentations have already been scheduled for 2009.

Law Enforcement Training: NAMI Sacramento provides a ninety minute training course to law enforcement personnel. The information presented is intended to address the growing number of mentally ill individuals who are arrested and to encourage peaceful interactions between law enforcement personnel and mentally ill people and their families. Five trainings were completed in 2008 addressing approximately 300 people - two to the Sacramento Police Department cadets and three to the Sacramento Sheriffs’ Office.

ACTIVE SUPPORT

Monthly Meetings: NAMI Sacramento has general meetings ten times a year which are free of charge and open to the public. Attendance at each meeting ranges from 30 to 70 people. These meetings feature presentations by mental health experts, community leaders and others regarding a variety of mental health issues. They provide crucial information, as well as an opportunity for people to meet and be with others in the community who are coping with the impact of serious mental illness.

The general meeting speakers in 2008 included:

- **January** Manoj Waikar, MD, Medical Director of Gardner Family Care Center, a community mental health center in San Jose
- **February** Paul Powell, Associate Director at Transitional Living and Community Support
- **March** Nancy Purtell, RN, CEO of Sierra Vista Hospital
- **April** Mike Paravagna, Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator for the City of Sacramento
- **May** Michelle Callejas, Mental Health Services Act Program Manager
- **June** Representatives from the California Mental Health Association, NAMI California and Sacramento County answered questions and took input on the Mental Health Services Act
- **September** Michael Paravagna, Americans With Disabilities Act Coordinator for the City of Sacramento
- **October** Crossroads Employment Services representatives spoke on Social Security
- **November** Lt. Cara Westin, Sacramento Police Department Night Watch Commander for the Downtown area

Website: NAMI Sacramento's web site (www.namisacramento.org) is a resource for NAMI members, mental health consumers, family members and all members of the mental health community in the Sacramento area. Through donated web master services, it helps the community with information on support groups, helpful links, and a current schedule of events relating to mental health. The web site posts crisis information and the most extensive listing of mental health resources in the greater Sacramento region. NAMI Sacramento's bylaws, official Board policies, and Board of Directors meetings minutes are also available on the website. In 2008, there were over 85,000 hits to our web site.

Newsletter: NAMI Sacramento publishes a monthly newsletter to keep its members, people in the health care field, elected officials, and the public informed about the latest developments in research, care, treatments and legislative matters affecting those with mental illness and their families. Two hundred and fifty newsletters (hard-copy) are distributed each month and an additional 50 are sent by email. Back issues of the newsletter are available on the NAMI Sacramento web site.

Support Groups: NAMI Sacramento has two family support groups that meet monthly. Support group facilitators have completed NAMI group facilitator training provided by NAMI California. Attendance each month ranges between five to ten family members in crisis at each group. These groups enable individuals to share concerns and get emotional support and practical help from others who have faced similar problems. Our support group leaders regularly receive referrals from clinicians. A recent expression of gratitude by a family member to one of our facilitators was typical. She said, "Thank you so much for your kindness. You are the first person to not look at me like I'm crazy."

ORGANIZED ADVOCACY

NAMI Sacramento is active in monitoring mental health issues at the county level and supports advocacy efforts at the local, state and national levels. We have a close working relationship and often partner with the County Office of Education, UC Davis School of Medicine, Transitional Living and Community Support, The Mental Health Association, Consumer Self-Help, Turning Point Community Programs and other NAMI affiliates.

In 2008 NAMI members:

- Received an award (NAMI Sacramento President 2008 Caroline Caton) for Volunteer of the Year at the Sacramento County Department of Mental Health Aging Conference focusing on suicide prevention;
- Served on the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) steering committee including NAMI Sacramento 2008 Board President Caroline Caton and Board member Al Lipson;
- Joined the Sacramento Mental Health Association and Community Self Help in formally protesting a new drug formulary developed by Sacramento County, requesting an exemption from the new process for mental health drugs so that mental health patients can continue with their current regime or have access to drugs their clinicians deem most beneficial;
- Participated in a California Institute of Mental Health panel of advocates representing NAMI Sacramento;
- Attended several United Way Agency Fairs and spoke at United Way events;
- Distributed information at a booth at the Festival de la Familia at Cal Expo staffed by Spanish speaking NAMI members distributing NAMI materials translated into Spanish;
- Made a presentation to Older Adult System of Care Conference;

- Participated as members of the Workforce Education and Training Task Force to develop guidelines and criteria for the dissemination of Mental Health Services Act funds
- Testified at Sacramento County Budget meetings about the effect on consumers of budget cuts for mental health services for children and adults;
- Appeared on television station KCRA (channel 3) speaking about the need for increased police training to deal with those who have mental illness;
- Appeared on public access television station “Mental Health Matters” focusing on the problem of out of county placement of consumers;
- Testified at meetings of the Sacramento County Mental Health Board about out of county placement of consumers.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

NAMI Sacramento was challenged in 2008, as were most nonprofit organizations, to deal with daunting program and budget issues and the loss of services throughout the region driven by the poor economy. Nevertheless, we moved forward to make some major changes in our organizational infrastructure that were necessary to reposition our organization in a way that would improve our ability to serve the community.

In July 2008, we moved from our office space provided by the Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services to a new location at the facility of one of our community partners, Turning Point Community Programs (TPCP). This move was made necessary because of new security restrictions at our former address that made it virtually impossible for anyone to access our office and library. In addition to providing us with low cost office space and additional space to house our library and educational materials, our new location provides us with opportunities to work with TPCP on future projects of common interest.

In addition to moving our office location, we hired our first part-time Executive Director, Sontine Kalba. NAMI Sacramento had been one of the largest local affiliates that did not have an Executive Director and our Strategic Plan clearly identified this as a limitation to our growth as an organization. After a nationwide recruitment, we were fortunate to hire Ms. Kalba, who has experience working in the mental health field and is the former development director of a non-profit in Nevada County.