

## 2009 Year in Review

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 three years. In 2009 she responded to 801 telephone calls and 44 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 2009 were: *"I know now that I'm not alone. These issues cannot be discussed at work, in the community, at church, in my extended family etc. I finally found a group of respectable people who go through the crazy things that I do at home."* *"The class was very informative. I feel more at ease dealing with our situation and less isolated. The moral support and understanding I received from others in the class is a treasure."* The class is provided free of charge. In 2009, three Family-to-Family classes were completed educating 55 family members.

Peer-to-Peer Classes: NAMI Sacramento offers training and classes for consumers living with mental illness. Peer-to-Peer is a nine week course on the topic of mental health recovery. It is taught by three trained mentors who themselves are experienced at living well with mental illness. Each week builds upon the last, offering a variety of tools to participants so they can better understand and manage their lives. Participants gain hope for the future, knowledge about

a variety of mental illnesses, increased self-awareness, and coping skills for day-to-day challenges. In 2009, two Peer-to-Peer classes were completed educating 42 consumers.

In the words of one Peer-to-Peer graduate, *“The classes were so helpful. I took a big step toward understanding the emotions that I’m dealing with. I felt I was among folks who understood me.”*

In addition, Peer-to-Peer mentors made two program overview presentations to clinicians at the Veteran’s administration clinics, a presentation at the Sacramento Public Library in connection with the “One Book Sacramento” program featuring the book by Steve Lopez “The Soloist”, a presentation on NAMI’s consumer programs at Sierra Vista Hospital, and a presentation on consumer programs at American River College.

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 2009, nine IOOV presenters spoke to 116 persons at groups including The Sacramento County Library, the Turning Point Crisis staff, the Sutter Center for Psychiatry, 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.

Law Enforcement Training: NAMI Sacramento provides a sixty 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. Two trainings were completed in 2009 addressing approximately 70 people – both sessions were for the Sacramento Sheriffs’ Office cadets.

## **ACTIVE SUPPORT**

NAMI Connection Consumer Support Group: NAMI Connection is a weekly recovery support group for adults living with mental illness, regardless of their diagnosis. Group members learn from each others’ experiences, share coping strategies, and offer each other encouragement and understanding. Connection meets on Sunday evenings at the Sutter Center for Psychiatry in Sacramento and is led by consumers who have completed training provided by NAMI. This is a new program in 2009 for NAMI Sacramento. So far there have been 35 sessions with a total of 224 people participating.

Family 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 four to eight 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, clergy members, and others in the community who are trying to help family members cope.

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 2009 included:

- **January:** We had an encore showing of the excellent film *Out of the Shadow*. Filmed over five years, it chronicles the life of the filmmaker's mother who suffers from schizophrenia.
- **February:** NAMI Sacramento Board President Pat Pavone talked to members in a "State of the Organization" address, covering accomplishments for 2008 and the outlook for 2009.
- **March:** Linda Ellis, Director of Nursing at [Turning Point Community Programs](#), spoke on managing medication in a recovery model.
- **April:** [Nancy Kilgore](#), MS, spoke on understanding Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- **May:** [Dr. David Mee-Lee](#), a Davis psychiatrist and one of the nation's leading experts on co-occurring substance abuse and mental health disorders, spoke.
- **June:** Dr. Robin Zasio, licensed clinical psychologist and co-owner of the [Anxiety Treatment Center](#), spoke about anxiety disorders.
- **August:** There was a public recognition and awards ceremony for NAMI volunteers in all family and consumer programs.
- **September:** Tom Wootton, author of *The Bipolar Advantage* and *The Depression Advantage*, introduced his next book *Bipolar In Order* and spoke about living an extraordinary life with bipolar and depression.
- **October:** Robin Bevier, Esq., spoke about Special Needs Trusts and Charitable Remainder Trusts.
- **November:** Mary Susan Hansen, M.D., clinical professor of psychiatry at University of California, San Francisco and past President of San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis spoke on Relapse Awareness and Recovery Strategies. This program was sponsored by Janssen Pharmaceuticals.

Website: NAMI Sacramento's web site ([www.namisacramento.org](http://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 2009, there were over 334,904 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.

## **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.

In 2009 NAMI members:

- Served on the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) steering committee including NAMI Sacramento Board Vice President Caroline Caton and Board member Al Lipson;
- Participated in a panel discussion at the Sacramento County Transition Age Youth Conference;
- Helped to train crisis intervention volunteers of the St. Stephen's Ministry at the Trinity Cathedral in downtown Sacramento;
- Provided an overview of NAMI programs and services to parents and teachers at the Sacramento City Unified School District's Parents Information Exchange Meeting;
- Addressed county and provider staff as part of NAMI Stanislaus' Provider Education Course;
- Spoke to CSUS Special Education Credential Students;
- Attended several United Way Agency Fairs and spoke at United Way events;
- Participated in the 2009 Consumer Speaks Conference at the Oak Park Community Center in Sacramento;
- Distributed information at a booth at the Franchise Tax Board Wellness Fair;
- Distributed information at a booth at the Sacramento City College Diversity Fair;
- Distributed information at a booth at the Sacramento Public Library in connection with the "One Book Sacramento" program featuring Steve Lopez's book "The Soloist";
- Participated in the development of a training video for State Correctional Officers at the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation;
- 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;
- Were featured in an article about the budget cuts to the Sacramento County Mental Health Crisis Center;

- Appeared on Mental Health Matters, a local TV show to discuss NAMI's role in calling attention to the problems confronted by seriously ill clients placed in facilities outside the County far from home and family;
- Recommended to the Mental Health Board the creation of a Working group to examine out-of-county placement issues and served as a member of this group; testified on numerous occasions before the Mental Health Board on the subject of Out-of-County placement;
- Appeared on Channel 10 news to discuss issues presented by closure of the Crisis Stabilization Unit at the County Mental Health Center;
- Testified before the Board of Supervisors on the effect of closing the Crisis Stabilization Unit and the need for setting up small Psychiatric Health Facilities to handle crisis patients. The Board subsequently allocated \$1 million to support creation of such a facility;
- Served on a planning group set up by the County to develop training materials to assist law enforcement in responding to mental health crisis situations.
- Served on planning group to develop MHSA Work Experience and Training Program.

#### **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

NAMI Sacramento was challenged in 2009, 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, with a lot of help from our community partners we were able to maintain our programs and services.

We received \$5,475 in financial support as a result of our first year as a Certified United Way Partner. This was very welcome income. In addition, we raised \$6,700 through two direct mail drives, \$3,135 through a yard sale and \$1,856 from a special "Bench Press" fund raising event sponsored by the Sacramento Police Department.

Also, in July of 2009 we were approved as one of only three new NAMIWalk sites in the country, along with Baltimore and New Orleans. We will be joining with sister affiliates in El Dorado, San Joaquin and Yolo counties to present the first Northern California NAMIWalk at William Land Park in Sacramento on April 24, 2010. Our total fund raising goal for the event is \$50,000 and NAMI Sacramento hopes to net at least \$25,000 from this inaugural event.