

NAMI Connection Mission Statement: There will be a NAMI Connection recovery support group within reasonable traveling distance for every person in America who lives with a mental illness, every day of the week.

NAMI Florida Hosts Peer Conference

Florida held the first annual Peer conference, "Bringing Change to Mind" on March 10-12th 2010 at Lake Yale Conference Center in Leesburg. The event was hosted by NAMI Florida and sponsored by the Florida Department of Children & Families. The conference provided an opportunity for people diagnosed with a mental illness and or substance use disorder to network and learn how to improve their physical and emotional well-being. Approximately 170 people attended the event.

Featured speakers included Clarence Jordan, NAMI National Board of Directors, David Sofferin, Assistant Secretary for Substance Abuse and Mental Health, and Sherry Jenkins Tucker, Executive Director of the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network. Available workshops offered attendees the opportunity to access education programs or relax in one of the meditation rooms. Connection groups were available for those who wanted to participate in a support group.

Dr. Janetta Cureton, DCF Medical Director, offered an "Ask the Doctor" session giving participants the opportunity to discuss their illness and medications. Clint Rayner, DCF Director of Consumer and Family Affairs, and Jackie Beck, DCF Chief of Adult Mental Health had standing room only during their respective sessions on "Peer Specialist" and Trauma and Recovery. Other sessions included WRAP, Veterans Recovery, Social Inclusion in Recovery, Nutrition and Health, Clubhouses and many more.

NAMI Florida's Executive Director, Judi Evans, shares her thoughts with us. "Although every session was well attended and rewarding the highlight of the conference was the Assistant Secretary's Plenary Session, 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly'. Mr. Sofferin was joined on stage by Dr. Cureton, Jackie Beck and Clint Rayner to ask participants to prioritize their needs for recovery. The personal remarks heard from those who attended this session were heartfelt and quite frankly amazing." Congratulations to NAMI Florida for hosting this exciting event!



Testimonials

NAMI Connection has been the most rewarding experience for me. I was very skeptical when my psychologist handed me a paper and suggested the support group. I was never much into "support groups". I felt I could walk this journey of mental illness myself. I did go to the meeting and I was very impressed. First of all, I thought there would be psychiatrists running this group and I was surprised when we went around the table and introduced ourselves that the facilitators also had a mental illness --this may sound strange but that really impressed me. I felt that they could connect with me and really understand what I was going through as they had gone through similar situations. So as Paul Harvey says "and the rest of the story is history" I continued in the group and became a facilitator which has always been a passion of mine to do but never took the initiative. Now I am hopefully making a difference by sharing myself with others.

—Sandy Kinney

(Warren County, OH)

Facilitator Spotlight: Joe Teixeira

What is your current role in the Connection program in your state?

First, I am a Facilitator trained in 2008. I am also the Consumer Programs Coordinator for NAMI Sacramento. In that capacity, I provide support to the Connection Coordinator. Finally, I am a Connection Trainer trained in 2009.



What are some innovative things you are doing with Connection? It's the little things. I

give rides to folks who live nearby to the Connection meetings. Another thing we like to do at the close of the meeting, so as to leave the group on a positive note, is one of the facilitators will read a short passage from the book, "100 Simple Secrets of Happy People." Another thing I do is visit the DBSA meetings occasionally to remind their group about the Connection group. The meetings are on different evenings and I have a great relationship with the DBSA folks. So we publicize each others programs.

What do you like best about Connection? The feeling that you're making a difference. That people look forward to coming and seeing you and they leave feeling better. I am also a Peer-to-Peer mentor, but facilitating a Connection group is more personal to me.

Tell us a little about you. What are some of your favorite hobbies or past times? I'm a 47 year old white male with bipolar disorder, in recovery since 2005. I am a full-time government employee, and a divorced father of four. I enjoy traveling especially around California, because this is a huge state and I want to see it all. I also enjoy movies and keeping up with friends and relatives on Facebook.

Tell us one goal you wish to accomplish in 2010. With respect to Connection, I would like to get a few more facilitators trained so NAMI Sacramento can offer Connection on the North side of our very large metropolitan area. Personally, I would like to spend more time with my aging mother and father.

Want to share a positive Connection thought? Please email testimonials to connection@nami.org

Program Progress

Facilitator Trainings: 133

Facilitators Trained: 2,178

Support Groups: 492

For more information on the NAMI Connection program, please visit www.nami.org/connection or call the HelpLine at 1(800) 950-NAMI (6264)



Coordinator Spotlight: David Sawyer



What is your current role in the NAMI Connection program in your state?

My current role for the NAMI New Hampshire Connection program is two-fold. I am both a facilitator and New Hampshire's NAMI Connection Coordinator.

What are some innovative things you are doing with NAMI Connection?

Some innovative things we are doing are respecting the wide diversity of recovery among our facilitators and, secondly, not pressuring in any way the individuals who have so far been unable to facilitate no matter what their reasons.

What do you like best about NAMI Connection?

What I like best about NAMI Connection is going to our local group (which has no need for me to facilitate except in an emergency), and just be an average, ordinary contributor with my own issues and, sometimes, positivity.

Tell us a little about you – what are some of your favorite hobbies or past-times?

I am a person who has (so far) survived a number of tragic life experiences. I witnessed the loss of a best friend/brother by car accident which caused me to self-medicate for a certain amount of time. This, of course exacerbated helped cover my feelings of loss and grief, but later led to a psychotic breakdown where my imagination simply went "haywire". But, like I say, I am a survivor (so far), and it is with much pride that I can say that 60's and 70's part of my life has been over for several decades.

Tell us one goal you wish to accomplish in 2010

As for the goal that I wish to accomplish in 2010, it is to finish the completion of a four bedroom house that I am building (or organizing the building of), and hoping to share the rest of my years there with my girlfriend Lisa, friend Don, and one other. I hope to have this home which is really quite nice with cathedral ceilings and all paid off in the short span of ten years! All are welcome to come visit, and share with us your community!



NAMI Connection Frequently Asked Questions

What if a Group member doesn't agree to the Group Guidelines or with the Principles of Support?

Sometimes a group member, especially a newcomer, may say that they do not agree with a guideline or a principle. This could be for many different reasons. You can politely ask which guideline or principle they do not agree with and ask why. Once you hear the reason, you can affirm his position, *"Thank you for explaining that. I can see why you feel that way and I respect your position."* and then ask if he can accept it for the time he is in group, *"These are the ways that we associate with each other and offer support in a Connection group. Do you think that you can agree to participate in this group with these guidelines and principles?"*

He may agree to observe the guidelines while in group or the conversation could go many different ways. If he wants to further explain, depending on your comfort level, you can let him say a bit more. Again affirm his right to believe as he does and bring it back to the fact that this is how the group runs for the 90 minutes you are together. If this is the first time he's been to the group, ask him if he would like to stay with the group and after the meeting he can decide if this is a good match for him. Much as we would like Connection to be the right fit for everyone, we recognize that it can't be. Some people will feel more comfortable in a different group.

Resource Table – what goes there and where do I get it?

- Brochures about mental illness/mental health
- Create a list of Information about local area mental health services, if you don't already have one. Include the NAMI National help-line, local crisis-line number, and the national Suicide Hotline number
- Information on other services that participants need on a regular basis - local disability lawyer; community health center; social security office
- Flyers for mental health programs or events in your area

Find resources to print out via the NAMI website www.nami.org. You can also go to your **Facilitator Manual: Facilitator's Guide to Preparing for Support Group Meeting** page and check out the info there. Finally ask for help from your local affiliate or state office for state specific resources to share.



It's WALK season—are you forming a NAMI Connection Team?

We've heard the buzz that many of you are forming NAMI Connection Walks teams this year and we couldn't be more excited! For those of you walking, don't forget to send us pictures of your teams wearing the winning design of the NAMI Connection T-Shirt contest as well as those wearing their own designs too. If we get enough team photos we could have a chance to be in the Advocate Magazine, so it's very important that you send us pictures of your teams. Please email those pictures to connection@nami.org.

The winning design from the NAMI Connection Walks T-Shirt contest is available for purchase at <http://www.3dASAP.com/NAMI>, simply click on the logo on the home page to order. The T-shirt is currently available in three colors: black, light blue and white.



NAMI Connection congratulates Jay Borgman from Greeley, CO for winning the "Community Advocate of the Year" award presented to him by Amanda Kearney Smith at the Leadership Academy in Colorado.



NAMI Maryland would like to recognize Royal Riddick (left) and Sarah Ashworth (right) for the excellent job they have done with NAMI Connection and thanks them for going the extra mile!

 **Monthly Facilitator Calls**
 Conference call number: 1-888-858-6021
 Conference Pass code: 4294442760
Facilitators are welcome on all calls, just pick the time and date that works best with your schedule!

April Facilitator Call Schedule

April 1st 7:00 PM	April 6th 1:00 PM
April 14th 4:00 PM	April 15th 7:00 PM
April 20th 1:00 PM	April 28th 4:00 PM

- Upcoming Trainings**
- April 9-11, 2010- Richmond, Virginia
 - April 9-11, 2010- Pewaukee, Wisconsin
 - April 10-11, 2010- New Haven, Connecticut
 - April 23-25, 2010- Denver, Colorado
 - April 2010- TBD, South Dakota
 - April 23-25, 2010- Dover, Delaware
 - May 14-16, 2010- Providence, Rhode Island
 - May 21-23, 2010- Helena, Montana
 - May 21-23, 2010- Jackson, Mississippi
 - June 3-6, 2010- Montpelier, Vermont
 - June 24-26, 2010- Jefferson City, Missouri
 - July 2010- TBD, Ohio
 - Sept 23-25, 2010- Cambria County, Pennsylvania

 **NAMI Connection is on Facebook**

Check us out on Facebook:
<http://www.facebook.com/thenamiconnection>

We want to thank everyone who has become a fan of NAMI Connection on Facebook — we have now reached 400 fans already! Some great testimonials and fan photos can be found on the site...

Are YOU a fan yet?

Have you had any recent **recognition events** in your community for NAMI Connection facilitators and/or trainers? Let us know so we can spotlight the event in one of our upcoming newsletters! connection@nami.org