

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.

A Letter From the National Connection Program Director



The NAMI Connection Program is now completing its fourth year, and what a fantastic four years we have had. To date, we have over 520 operational support groups in 47 states, over 2,500 trained facilitators, and have reached nearly 80,000 support group attendees, over 11,000 of which had never previously been to a Connection support group!

These accomplishments have been made possible by a number of people. The facilitators who run the groups, the trainers who train them, the affiliate and state coordinators who make these programs possible, and the champions who support them. Providing peer support in 47 states on a weekly basis has required a real team effort, and the success of this team effort shines through.

There are some very special people in particular who have made these accomplishments possible that I would like to highlight, and those are the National Connection Staff members. With our program now established and rooted in 47 states, and the National Education, Training and Support Center Team shifting focus, we will unfortunately be saying goodbye to some very talented, dedicated and hard working colleagues: Gretchen Anglin - Connection Field Specialist, Anna Goodwin - Connection Training Manager, and Ellen Ioanes - Connection Program Assistant.

Gretchen and Anna have accomplished much in their tenure with the National Connection program. Some of these accomplishments include an overhaul of our training program, including the creation of a local two-day training to help states save training costs while at the same time allowing for the training of more people; The creation of a one day refresher course for trained facilitators wishing to brush up on their skills; A mentoring program to help facilitators who find themselves in a situation of being the only facilitator of their group; The establishment of monthly facilitator and coordinator calls to help with program support and technical assistance; And the beginning of our online support group effort.

The work that Gretchen and Anna have put into the National Connection program over the past four years has been nothing short of phenomenal. The three of us have been working together since early 2007, and I can say that it has been one of the most enlightening, rewarding and fun experiences I have ever had. We have been through many ups and downs together, and have grown to be not only excellent working colleagues, but also good friends. I will miss them dearly, and so will our program.

Ellen Ioanes has been with us for a very short time, yet has already made quite an impact. Stepping into the role of Connection Program Assistant at the beginning of October, she has accomplished much with the Connection Team, including the daunting task of catching us up on our data collection efforts.

With many changes upon us, we will have some adjusting to do. We are prepared to continue our support of everyone who is working so hard to bring peer support to individuals living with a mental illness, and will update you on our new structure early in 2011. In the meantime, I wish ALL of you a happy and peaceful holiday season!

With Warmest Wishes,

~ Candita Sabavala



What does this mean for the Connection Program?

With the departure of the Connection Training Manager, Field Specialist and Program Assistant - there will no doubt be some program changes coming up in 2011. The Education team is reorganizing and more information on that will be sent out in January. For now please forward all Connection questions to Candita Sabavala (Candita@nami.org). On page three of this newsletter, you will see some initial changes to the Connection program, involving technical assistance and support.

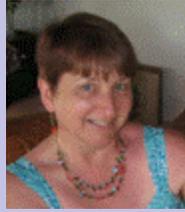


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National Spotlight: Anna Goodwin



Even before it received its official name in 2007, the NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group Program was indeed about connection. This amazing program has brought people together, out of isolation, out of poor self-esteem, out of an existence that is not always kind to one's spirit, into an accepting connectedness with an ever-expanding family whose members live across the country. We all have our individual experience and yet find a connection within those separate experiences that allows each one of us to help others and to be helped ourselves as we try to navigate living well with a mental illness.

We know that recovery is holistic. That means that our spirituality is vital to our journey of living well. I believe NAMI Connection is spiritually nutritious because I believe that our spirituality is our connectedness – to our greater power, ourselves, each other, the earth and our community. Each step I take on my recovery journey is a step that is connected to my next step. I have been fortunate to have been part of the Connection program since its start up for it has given me the opportunity to connect with others on a similar journey and more deeply with myself. My life is spiritually richer because of NAMI Connection.

I am certain that if the power of giving back and paying it forward alone could eradicate mental illness, the people of the NAMI Connection family would effectively cause mental illness to become a mere memory, something found only in history books. It has been an honor to be part of this dedicated, courageous group of people. Always remember, you are connected.

~ Anna



National Spotlight: Gretchen Anglin



I want to say farewell to you all as I leave my position at NAMI. December 31st will be my last day at work.

It has been an enjoyable and enriching experience to have worked on the Connection team, with Anna and Candita, and with all of you in the field more than I can say. The Connection program has come so far under Candita's leadership and vision. There is no way that we could have provided the service we did, except with her direction and support.

My admiration for each of you as facilitators and coordinators cannot be matched. You are an inspiration to many, including me, and this life-changing program will continue to grow with your dedication.

During these last four years, without fail, you all have provided me with the kind of support and collaboration needed to launch and to grow this wonderful program. With many of you, I am blessed to have formed friendships which I hope will continue in the years to come. I now look forward to new challenges.

I do wish you and the Connection program success and growth beyond our dreams.

Sincerely,

~ Gret



National Spotlight: Ellen Ioanes

In my short tenure at NAMI, it's been a pleasure working with you all over the past couple of months. The hard work you do and the dedication you all have to this program has made it extremely successful. My time at NAMI has allowed me to see the sheer number and variety of people that Connection serves, and it's quite impressive. As funding for mental health services decreases rapidly, the services you provide become ever more vital for the millions of Americans living with mental illness. Thank you so much for sharing your time, your experience, and your compassion.

As much as I have learned, and as much as I have enjoyed working with Candita, Anna and Gretchen, the time has come for me to say goodbye. Beginning in January I'll be working at a charter school in Washington, DC, and I'm excited about this new opportunity. I'll definitely be keeping up with the Connection crew, and I can't wait to see what lies ahead for the program! Thanks again for all you do!

~ Ellen



For Facilitators

Due to the reduction in National Connection staff, we will now have only one facilitator call per month.

Each monthly call will be recorded and available for play-back for 30 days. For those of you unable to make the call, please listen to the recording and send any questions you may have regarding the call to connection@nami.org. You may also submit questions ahead of time by emailing connection@nami.org



The 2011 Facilitator Call Schedule and call information will be announced at the beginning of January—stay tuned!

For Trainers

Many of you are used to having a pre-training call with the Connection Training Manager before each of your training events. Again due to lack of staff resources, these pre-training calls will now be discontinued. We will offer trainer calls in the near future so please stay tuned.

For training materials and resources, please be sure to check the Connection Intranet. Also you may contact your state program coordinator or program director with specific training questions, and if there is something you cannot find either through the intranet or your state contact please email connection@nami.org with your inquiry, or Contact Candita Sabavala, Connection Program Director, at 703-600-1100.

For Coordinators

The coordinator call schedule for 2011 will be announced in January. In the meantime, for any Connection program inquiries, please contact Candita Sabavala directly at Candita@nami.org or 703-600-1100. Please remember to use the Connection Intranet and Connection Coordinator Guide as a first resource for your program questions, as it may take a few days to receive a response to your inquiry.

Please continue to order Connection materials as usual per the NAMI Store.

IS YOUR NAMI CONNECTION GROUP LISTED ON THE NATIONAL WEBSITE?



Please visit www.nami.org/connection to see if your support groups are listed online. We have an incredible amount of traffic on our Connection website and through our national helpline, so making sure that your groups are visible to those who need them is a great way to get people into the groups.

If you do not see your group listed, please contact your state program coordinator right away to let them know your group time and location.