Mental Health Day at the Capitol

NAMI South Dakota held its annual Mental Health Day at the Legislature on January 24, 2020. This year’s legislative session features a record number of bills affecting people living with mental illness and their families. We have voiced support and opposition to a number of bills in accordance with our state and national NAMI policy priorities.

**OUR MESSAGE:**

1 in 5 South Dakotans live with a mental health condition, but tragically, more than half go without needed treatment.

- Mental illness does not discriminate. It affects adults and children of every background, race and religion.
- Too often, mental illness is overlooked, marginalized and stigmatized.
- Mental health services and supports ensure that people with a mental illness receive treatment when they need it—helping them to stay in school, on the job and in recovery.

**Thank you to our sponsors:**

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Dear Friends of NAMI,

I recently watched a video featuring the director of NAMI Montana, Matt Kuntz. In it, he said there are no happy doors to NAMI. That statement felt both a little shocking and utterly true. The term “mental illness”, by its very nature, implies struggle and disrupted lives.

I wish my own door to NAMI had opened 25 years earlier, when my sister received a diagnosis of mental illness after decades of debilitating symptoms. Our family had very little understanding of her condition, and we hoped that medication would be the answer we’d been waiting for. What we didn’t realize was that the diagnosis was just another step in a long journey, and that we could have played a bigger part in her recovery if we’d only known how.

If that education had come earlier, I might have been better able to help my own children when they showed signs of mental health conditions, or known how to advocate for them with medical professionals and schools. Perhaps I would have been able to teach them how to navigate the world with more safety and more understanding of their illness. Instead, my door to NAMI came seemingly by accident.

After retiring from a career in education, I was looking for a new position that carried with it both challenge and meaning. When I was offered a chance to help revitalize the NAMI Family to Family program, it seemed like a good way to learn about nonprofit work and learn more about mental illness, too. I didn’t expect my life to change so profoundly when I walked into the last class of a 12-week Family to Family course.

What I remember most was the revelation that there were other people who had experienced what I had, and who understood how I felt. I listened as the other family members shared their struggles and sorrow, and talked about how far they had come from the first class. Feeling helpless and alone at the start, they now were confident in their ability to make a difference in the lives of their loved ones. I heard no shame or despair in their voices. Instead, there was determination and compassion.

The sense of hope that came over me that night has never gone away. Nearly 8 years later as State Director, I still feel relief and pride in belonging to a community of people who, despite their differences in geography or circumstances, understand what it’s like to live and love with the effects of mental illness in themselves or family members.

My door to NAMI, while not a happy one, was also no accident. I am so grateful that I walked through it, and that I stayed.

-- Wendy Giebink, Executive Director of NAMI South Dakota

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NAMI Members Complete Support Group Training

New NAMI Connection and NAMI Family Support Group facilitators were certified at a late November 2019 training in Sioux Falls. State trainers Kelly DeBoer and Kari Clark led the sessions, assisted by Marilyn Charging and John Williams. New facilitators will start a student support group at Dakota State University in Madison. Volunteers were also trained from Mission, Aberdeen, Sioux Falls, and North Dakota, through an agreement with NAMI North Dakota. Thank you to everyone who participated.

We are looking forward to the release of the new and improved support group training later this spring. If you are interested in being a trained facilitator, contact the NAMI SD office.

NAMI Staff and Volunteers Greet Students

Project AWARE Coordinator, Mallory Kloucek, Education and Outreach Consultant, Marilyn Charging, and coaches Jim Kellar and Angela Hyde enjoy visiting with students at USD in Vermillion, SDSU in Brookings, DSU in Madison and NSU in Aberdeen. Informal meet-and-greets allow students a chance to stop by the NAMI South Dakota table to talk with our staff and receive information on mental health.
Creative Experiences Enhance Mental Health

NAMI groups throughout South Dakota have discovered what researchers already know: being creative is good for you! People of all ages are coming together on NAMI Nights to share in activities like painting, art journaling, making mosaics, poetry, and more. Taking part in art and other creative activities reduces stress and improves mood. You don’t need to be an expert—the act of creating itself is what counts. Here are some ideas to incorporate creativity into your life:

- Figure out your mode of creative expression. Don’t be afraid to try new things.
- Focus on “doing” and let go of expectations. It doesn’t really matter how it turns out.
- Make time for art, like any other healthy habit. Designate a special place in your home to create.
- Share your experiences with others. Creating together is fun and rewarding.
NAMI Aberdeen Participates in Yogathon

NAMI Aberdeen continues its community partnerships by hosting or joining events each month. In January, a city-wide yogathon was held in studios all over Aberdeen. Local yoga enthusiasts helped raise $2,500 for their NAMI affiliate. Congratulations!

New Family to Family Classes to Be Introduced

NAMI recently released the new Family to Family curriculum, which is available to NAMI affiliates in South Dakota. NAMI Brookings and NAMI Watertown teachers are currently undergoing online training in the new format. The Family to Family program will continue to feature the trademark education modules that have helped so many people all across the country. One welcome change is that the program has been streamlined from 12 weeks to 8. We are looking forward to hearing good things from F2F participants this spring. **Contact us to find a class near you!**

If you would like to be trained to teach Family to Family in your community, please contact the NAMI SD office at 605-271-1871 or namisd@midconetwork.com.

Contact us to find a class near you!
NAMIWalks 2020 Updates

It’s time to register your team for the 2020 NAMIWalks event. Team Captains are the heart of NAMIWalks. Your passion and commitment inspire others. Please RSVP to namiwalksouthdakota@gmail.com so we can set a place for you at the Kick-Off Luncheon on Saturday, March 21.

Everyone can register for the Walk at www.namiwalks.org/southdakota. This event is all about awareness and decreasing stigma. Please put May 16, 2020 on your calendar and plan to join us at Sertoma Park in Sioux Falls. Registration starts at 8 am, the run is at 8:30, and the Walk begins at 9:30. Everyone is welcome—No registration fee! Come and join the fun! Music, coffee, friends and conversation are all part of our “party in the park.”
The mission of NAMI South Dakota is accomplished by volunteers, through the generosity of our donors and sponsors. With your donation, you become a partner in the mission. Thank you for everything you do for us and those we serve. We appreciate you. Every effort has been made to recognize recent donors. If you think there has been an error, please contact our office.

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Ask us how you can join our Circle of Friends!

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the South Dakota Day of Giving 2019.

We also appreciate the many responses to our Annual Appeal. Your donation helps us continue our programs in 2020. Thank you!

HOW TO BECOME A DONOR: Visit our donation page at www.namisouthdakota.org/donate to make a gift by Pay Pal or credit card. If you would rather donate by check, please make out your check to NAMI South Dakota and mail it to: NAMI South Dakota, P.O. Box 88808, Sioux Falls, SD  57109.

Ask us how to become a monthly donor to make the most of your gift. Planning your legacy giving? We would be honored to be included. Contact us for more information.

NAMI South Dakota is a 501c3 organization. Donations are tax-deductible. THANK YOU!
OUR LOCAL AFFILIATES:

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Sioux Falls 605-610-7226   Huron 605-350-9516
Pierre 605-280-2882       Brookings 605-692-8948
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