NAMIWalks are the biggest fundraisers of the year for NAMI SW WA.

NAMIWalks Washington will be held Saturday, June 6, at Marina Park in Kirkland, WA.

NAMI SW WA’s focus now turns to raising money from corporations, businesses and individuals who prefer to write a check over donating via websites. We ask you to help us make our participation in the NAMIWalks WA as successful as we were with NAMIWalks Northwest. Please consider writing a check to support our mission: We are dedicated to supporting those affected by mental illness.

Anyone in Clark, Cowlitz, and Skamania counties wishing to participate in NAMIWalks Washington can visit www.namiwalks.org/washington to register to walk. To donate click on the big blue “donate” button and follow instructions. Your zip code identifies a donation for NAMI SW WA.

Or you can mail your check to NAMI SW WA – NAMIWalks WA, PO Box 5353, Vancouver, WA 98668. We will be actively contacting current and potential donors through August 2015.

Wednesday
June 24, 2015
1:00—4:30 pm
Gaiser Hall
Clark College

Families in Limbo
Our community conversation will examine some of the difficult and contradictory situations in which families and caregivers of seriously mentally ill adults find themselves. We will explore a variety of situations these families are in, possible solutions, and develop an action plan toward resolutions.

Who should attend?
- Mental Health Practitioners
- Educators
- Medical & Substance Abuse Counselors
- Law Enforcement
- Legal Professionals
- Families and Caregivers
- Consumers

Pre-register by calling (360) 695-2823

Funding for this event provided by

[SWBH logo]
Update on NAMIWalks Northwest, Portland Oregon
held May 17, 2015

NAMI SW WA was proud to be part of the NAMIWalks Northwest with 11 of our 14 teams participating onsite! Last year we only had 2 teams registered. We also had a handful of individual and/or virtual walkers who were not associated with a team. We extend a huge thank you to our teams: 4Results Mentoring, ACES, Clark County Juvenile Court, Columbia River Mental Health Services, Donnelly Boardwalks, Friends of the Carpenter, Gates of Grace, Grey Matter, La Center United, Raising Jordan, Team CUP, Team Gertsen, Team B, and Wolff Pack!

At the time of publication, using amounts raised as listed on the NAMIWalks Northwest website, our top 5 fundraising teams were: Wolff Pack, Donnelly Boardwalks, Raising Jordan, Grey Matter, and La Center United! Donations will continue to be accepted until July 15. Please visit www.namiwalks.org/org/northwest, click on the big blue “donate” button, click on team tab, search for any of the NAMI SW WA teams above, and follow the instructions to donate...or send your checks to us at PO Box 5353, Vancouver 98668.

Thanks so very much for your participation!

Suzanne Arnits,
Development/Marketing Director

Donate until July 15, 2015.

From the Director’s Desk

It is June and the year is almost half over. At times such as this I always try to take stock of what we have accomplished and what we still need to do this year to stay with our goals for the year.

One of our biggest accomplishments is that we are well into better meeting the needs of the many people who come through our door each week who have fallen through the mental health cracks. For a variety of reasons they are unable to get the therapy they need either because of a long waiting time to see someone or, for those on private insurance, Medicare, or the many who still do not have any insurance, the cost is too great. Janet, our licensed clinician, and our interns offer six weeks of sessions while we help them make other plans. This opportunity is helping many people to get over rough spots that might otherwise mean that they had to go to the emergency room or might even end up as a guest in the local jail.

Another big accomplishment is that we are holding a large number of Family to Family classes, usually overlapping, to meet the needs of all those family members who want to participate. Family members, please read the article in this newsletter about the Jean Lough Conference to be held on Wednesday, June 24th at Gaiser Hall on the Clark College Campus. We look forward to this interesting community conversation in which attendees will leave with a charge to take action on the select issue that will help to meet the needs of our many Families in Limbo, those with adult children living with mental health diagnoses. Please register for this conference by calling 360-695-2823.

Happy June!

Peggy McCarthy
IN MY OWN WORDS—John

Living with Autism

After twenty six years of having society making me feel ashamed and bad about myself for being the way I am, I find that I no longer want to be that “nobody” who is different, or sad with a problem no one wants to be bothered with. Loneliness has been a big part of my life. The way my mind works shapes my outlook on life, which is almost always regarded as “unorthodox” Most people tend to shy away from things that don’t fit well into their pattern of thinking or behaviors. For me, it is easier to engage in a role playing game that to engage with most humans.

The most important thing that I would like people to know is that autism is not just a childhood disorder. As an adult, I find that most people in mainstream society do not want to be my friend, or to get involved with someone like me. I am different, “odd/eccentric” and I don’t process information the same. I want to conform to the unwritten rules of the “norm” – I strive to be “normal” in every aspect. But since I cannot, I find myself struggling with social isolation. I am fine if I am alone or with people I have known most of my life. Otherwise, I get nervous that I will do or say something wrong or inappropriate.

One of my biggest problems is not knowing how to respond to people, or predicting ahead of time how other people will react to me. I am not a criminal. Autistic people are not criminals, we are just different. I feel angry or aggressive when people want to have my world changed or shaped to fit into some mold that they determine I should fit in. I can’t be forced to be normal. I can only try to be “normal” and to fit in better.

It is really difficult to find places where I can be encouraged and supported in the opportunities I am interested in. I want to be a gaming artist. I have both a high school and college degree, yet I can not finish my project to show the great work I am capable. It appears to others that I am not motivated or that I am lazy. It takes a lot of energy and willpower to get me started.

Autistic people need to be encouraged and given opportunities to do the things that interest them and the things that they CAN do. I deserve to find a place in society where I am free to do what I am naturally interested in so that I too can live a worthwhile and happy life. I have dreams to be married, have kids and to be able to support my family. I know it is just going to take me a while to achieve those dreams with the support of great people and my family.
FACTS ABOUT AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

- 1% of the world population has autism spectrum disorder
- More than 3.5 million Americans live with an autism spectrum
- Prevalence has increased by 6-15% each year from 2000-2010.
- Autism affects 1 in 68 children, a ten-fold prevalence in 40 years. Careful research shows this increase is only partly explained by improved diagnosis and awareness.
- Boys are four times more likely to have autism than girls. An estimated 1 out of 42 boys and 1 in 189 girls are diagnosed with autism in the United States.
- Autism is the fastest growing developmental disorder, yet most underfunded.
- Autism greatly varies from person to person (no two people with autism are alike).
- Comorbid conditions often associated with autism include Fragile X, allergies, asthma, epilepsy, bowel disease, gastrointestinal/digestive disorders, persistent viral infections/PANDAS (autoimmune response to a strep infection), feeding disorders, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Tourette syndrome, obsessive compulsive disorder, sensory integration dysfunction, sleeping disorders, immune disorders, autoimmune disorders, and neuroinflammation.
- Children with autism do progress—early intervention is key.
- Autism is treatable, not a hopeless condition.
- ASD crosses racial, ethnic and social background equally.
- Autism service cost US citizens $236-262 billion annually.
- A majority of the costs in the US are in adult services.
- Cost of lifelong care can be reduced by 2/3 with early diagnosis and intervention.
- The US cost of autism over a lifespan is about $2.4 million for a person with an intellectual disability, or $1.4 million for a person without a intellectual disability.
- 35% of you adults (ages 19-23) with autism have not had a job or received postgraduate education after leaving high school.
- The average cost of educating a student is about $12,000 per year. It costs an additional $8,600 per year to educate a student with ASD.


ADULTS WITH AUTISM

Some adults with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), especially those with high-functioning autism or with Asperger syndrome, are able to work successfully in mainstream jobs. Nevertheless, communication and social problems often cause difficulties in many areas of life. They will continue to need encouragement and moral support in their struggle for an independent life.

Many others with ASD are capable of employment in sheltered workshops under the supervision of managers trained in working with persons with disabilities. A nurturing environment at home, at school, and later in job training and at work, helps persons with ASD continue to learn and to develop throughout their lives.

1.5 million people have autism in the U.S., with the majority aged younger than 22 years. It is predicted that this figure is set to skyrocket in the coming years. Even though every state has autism programs funded through Medicaid for people with the condition, the demand for the support services is outpacing the resources available, according to Autism Speaks. More than 50,000 individuals with autism transition into adulthood each year and require assistance including job placement and finding housing, as well as home health aides to help with daily functions.

The situation, however, may improve as President Obama last year signed into law the Autism Collaboration, Accountability, Research, Education and Support (CARES) Act of 2014, which provides $1.5 billion in funding over five years to fund research and identify gaps in support for children and adults with the condition who are leaving programs designed for young people and transitioning into ones for adults.

Special thanks to Lisa Neibert for compiling the autism articles.
Quotes on Autism from Dr. Temple Grandin

"My Advice is: You always have to keep persevering."

"It is never too late to expand the mind of a person on the autism spectrum."

"Social thinking skills must be directly taught to children and adults with ASD. Doing so opens doors of social understandings in all areas of life."

"The most important thing people did for me was to expose me to new things."

"I had people in my life who didn't give up on me: my mother, my aunt, my science teacher. I had one-on-one speech therapy. I had a nanny who spent all day playing turn-taking games with me."

"I strongly recommend that students with autism get involved in special interest clubs in some of the areas they naturally excel at. Being with people who share your interests makes socializing easier."

"We have got to work on keeping these children engaged with the world."

WHAT IS AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and Autism are both general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development. ASD is a bio-neurological development disability that generally appears before the age of 3.

This disorder is characterized, in varying degrees, by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication and repetitive behaviors. With the May 2013 publication of the DSM-5 diagnostic manual, all autism disorders were merged into one umbrella diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

ASD can also be associated with intellectual disability, difficulties in motor coordination and attention and physical health issues such as sleep and gastrointestinal disturbance. Some person with ASD excel in visual skills, music, math and art.

Signs that ASD is present appear during the first 3 years of life and can ranged from very mild to very severe, and occur in all ethnic, socioeconomic and age groups. Some children with autism appear “normal” before ages 1 or 2 and then suddenly “regress” and lost language or social skills they had previously gained. Some signs to look for are:

- No big smiles or other warm, joyful expressions by 6 months or thereafter
- No back-and-forth sharing of sounds, smiles or other facial expressions by nine months or thereafter
- No babbling by 12 months
- No gesturing (pointing, waving bye-bye) by 12 months
- No words by 16 months
- No two-word meaningful phrases (without imitating or repeating) by 24 months
- Any loss of speech or babbling or social skills at any age
- No eye contact and doesn’t respond to his or her name
- Will not cuddle
- Doesn’t play with other people or make basic requests

CAUSES OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

Scientists aren’t certain what causes Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and have not identified a single cause. They believe many factors may contribute, including genetics. If one child in the family as ASD, another sibling is more likely to develop it, too.

Environment is the second factor scientists believe may contribute to ASD, and these may include prenatal and postnatal factors which affect development. Despite many claims that have been highlighted by the media, vaccines do not seem to cause ASD.

TREATMENT OF AUTISM

There is currently no cure for autism, but it is can be treated effectively. Autism is treated and managed by:

- **Educational and Behavioral Interventions**—Therapists use high structured and intensive skill-oriented training sessions to help children develop social and language skills such as Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA).

- **Medications**—These can be useful for co-occurring symptoms when combined with therapy.

- **Complementary and Alternative Medicine**—This can include supplements and changes in diet. However, there are very few of these alternatives supported by scientific studies.

Everyone is a genius. But if you judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.

- A Einstein
Upcoming Classes
For all NAMI SW WA courses
CALL (360) 695-2823
to sign up or visit or website to register. Classes fill up quickly so sign up soon.

BOOK REVIEW
"The Sibling Survival Guide," edited by Don Meyer and Emily Holl, is aptly named. It is "full of indispensable information for brothers and sisters of adults with disabilities." The book begins with touching personal accounts of how it really is to have a brother or sister with developmental or intellectual disabilities. The good news the book offers is that comfort and help are available to any teenager, young adult, or older sibling faced with these sometimes wonderful, sometimes difficult relationships.

Each phase of the sibling's life has its own challenges. School age children often struggle with peer insensitivity, and parents who are stressed out. Adults are sometimes kept out of the loop of planning for their brothers and sisters. Planning for the disabled can be difficult, and, if parents are reluctant to look ahead, the sib is powerless. The book, also, talks about those who find themselves in the "club sandwich" phase and have the daunting task of juggling care for their own families, aging parents and adult siblings with special needs. One is struck by the courage, resilience and hard work of those who do care for those who are less able to care for themselves.

The book is packed with invaluable information for navigating through the complicated network of governmental, legal, and non-profit resources whose services are available. Each state has its own laws and it is of the upmost importance to know the facts about the state the loved one resides in. A self-help group, "SibNet," seems to be a solid resource for moral support and concrete advice about planning the present and future course of siblings unable to plan for themselves. The internet makes so many other resources available to anyone searching for both solace and advice. Links are given. It helps people who find themselves in this "unique" situation, to finally feeling that they are not alone. I urge anyone responsible for the care of a developmentally or intellectually challenged relative to check out this compilation of facts and compassionate guidance. No task is to much with the help and caring of others who know your journey.

By Susan Correa

Hello, NAMI SW WA Cowlitz Friends,

As most of you know, we are still waiting for word on the space we hope to be leasing from the City of Kelso. In anticipation of our move, we’ve put off starting any new groups or classes, and we hope to get the go ahead soon. Our STRivE psycho-educational support group for anyone struggling with mental illness meets every Thursday from 5:00-6:30 pm at 900 Ocean Beach Hwy. in Longview (between Grocery Outlet and Buddy’s). This group is a safe and friendly “community” and always welcomes newcomers.

Our family support groups immediately follows STRivE from 6:30-8:00 pm. It is just getting started so it is still a small group, but you will feel welcomed and supported.

We are so happy to welcome our two newest volunteers to our Cowlitz program. Marcia Bentley has had experience with mental health issues for many years. Adam Pithan, Director of Cowlitz County Drug Court is also a member of NAMI SW WA Board of Directors. He is going to participate in our Cowlitz County office groups, classes and events as his schedule allows. We are honored and grateful for any time they can give and the knowledge and experience that they bring to our free mental health support services.

Until next month...be well.
And remember—Recovery is Possible!

Janie Gilason
Cowlitz County Coordinator
**Bulletin Board**

- **IN OUR OWN VOICE TRAINING** will be held Saturday and Sunday, June 13 and 14, at our office. People attending this class must be a peer or person of experience, engaged in recovery, a current member of a NAMI affiliate, willing to stay for the full 2-day training, and at least 18 years old. You must be preregistered to attend, and applications must be received by June 8. These are available at our office. There is limited space in this class, so to ensure a spot complete an application as soon as possible.

- **JEAN LOUGH SYMPOSIUM** will be held June 24 at Gaiser Hall at Clark College. Please call the office if you need more information or to register for this workshop.

- **STRive** meets several times each week in both Clark and Cowlitz counties.
  - Monday—Post Release STRive 1:00-2:30 pm
  - Tuesday—Women’s Group 1:00-2:30 pm
  - Wednesday—Evening Group 6:00-7:30 pm
  - Thursday—Cowlitz Group 5:00-6:30 pm

- **CONGRATULATIONS** to Eric Chastain and Daryn Nelsen-Soza on their graduation from USC. They both received their MSW degrees. Daryn has accepted a position with Seamar and will be working as a Health Integration Specialist. Eric will be headed to Texas to continue his service with the Army. He received a promotion to Sergeant Major earlier this year and will be engaged in interesting projects. Thanks for all you did for NAMI and you will be missed.

- **WELCOME** to Jean Miller, LMHCA, who will be accepting clients for therapy. She will be working Wednesdays, 9 am-5 pm, and you can make an appointment by calling (360) 695-2823.

- **COWLITZ FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP** will be meeting Wednesdays from 5:30-7:00 pm. This new group will be held at 900 Ocean Beach Hwy. In Longview. Family support groups provide support for friends and family of people who have a mental health diagnosis.

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**The Autism Awareness Ribbon**

The puzzle pattern of this ribbon reflects the mystery and complexity of autism. The different colors and shapes represent the diversity of people and families living with this disorder. The brightness of this ribbon signals hope - hope through research and increasing awareness in people like you.
☐ ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP - $35.00
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   (No one is refused membership due to economic hardship)
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NAMI Southwest Washington
P.O. Box 5353
Vancouver, WA  98668

To use a credit card and join online, go to
www.nami.org

Thank you for being part of the team!

Help support the one in four Americans who will be affected by mental illness this year.