NAMIWalks Northwest

NAMI SW WA had 14 teams participate on Sunday, May 21st, a beautiful sunny day. Participants were pleased with the number of people that attended.

Finally! Connection Recovery Support Groups are BACK!

NAMI Connection Recovery Support Groups are being held weekly on Thursdays in Clark/Skamania from 3:30 to 5 p.m. and in Cowlitz from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

NAMI Connection is a no cost and confidential support group for adults living with mental health challenges. NAMI Connection offers a safe environment for adults who live with mental health challenges to express themselves without being judged. Drop-ins are welcome. For more information, click www.nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-Programs/NAMI-Connection

Support NAMI SW WA

Hungry for Burgerville? If so, please visit the 4th Plain Burgerville in Vancouver on Tuesday, June 20th between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. A percentage of all purchases will be donated to us!

NAMI SW WA Behavioral Health Services

Ready to address your mental health issues, but you are being told you will need to be put on a waiting list? If you have Apple Health (Medicaid) coverage through Molina Healthcare of Washington or Community Health Plan of Washington, NAMI SW WA currently has no waiting list, but spots are rapidly being filled.

Call 360-695-2823 for more information.
Dear Members and Friends,

Thanks to all those who joined NAMI SW WA in the 2017 NAMIWalks in Portland, OR on May 21st. We greatly appreciate your help in keeping our offices up, running, and able to continue the wide variety of programs we offer. We also appreciate those who have chosen to donate through us to the NAMIWalks in Renton, WA that takes place on June 3rd. While most of us prefer to make the short trip across the Columbia River to walk along the banks of the Willamette River, we welcome friends from across Washington State who support us with the Washington Walk. Thanks so very much for walking and/or donating to us!

Mental Health Month takes place every May. We had many interesting special programs and outreach events during the month at churches such as the Community AME Zion Church this past weekend to be followed by another presentation in June and, on the last day of the month, at HeLa High School in the Evergreen School District that includes part of Vancouver, Orchards, and other small communities in SW WA. HeLa students attend this school because they are interested in health and biosciences. A group of sophomore students called NAMI SW WA because they are interested in mental health and in educating their fellow students about mental health issues. NAMI SW WA presented a one-hour program to the student body. The goal is to have a number of students from all four grades volunteer for special training at NAMI SW WA this summer so that they can become peer supporters for others in the school who might be dealing with signs and symptoms of mental health issues; these trained peers will be there to help them next year. We are very excited about the possibilities for this program and look forward to working with these students. In addition, you can read a short article on page 9 by a middle school Boy Scout, Brilan Rohan, who is preparing to make the climb to become an Eagle Scout. As part of his preparation he met with John McDonald, one of our Certified Peer Support Counselors who attained Eagle Scout a few years ago and me to talk about his project on mental health and NAMI SW WA.

Thanks again for being strong supporters of NAMI SW WA. We appreciate your effort and your funding.

Peggy
Eight Reasons I Find Beauty in My Bipolar Disorder
By Angela Swanson

When I was a kid, I used to lie on my back and watch clouds, puffy and brilliant white, glide across the sky. They were constantly morphing, changing shapes: a dragon, a rabbit, a face. They were becoming something new over and over again. Even storm clouds, while gray and ominous, had their beauty, in that they promised rain the earth needed, and when they passed, the clear sky behind them seemed that much bluer and more beautiful.

That’s how I feel about having a mental health diagnosis. I’ve been living with bipolar disorder for over 20 years, and I almost let it destroy me. Like storm clouds, it can by ominous and scary, especially in the beginning when I had no idea what I was dealing with. And I felt like I was always changing, becoming a new (and sometimes not improved) version of myself every day, or sometimes even every hour.

But over time, I have found many reasons why I wouldn’t give any of it up. It has taught me to see the silver lining in everything that happens to me, no matter how bad it is. There is even the smallest sliver of good that can come from anything—even if all I can say is “I survived, I am stronger, and now I can relate to and help others.” It’s this attitude that has helped me accept and embrace any challenge in life. And while I appreciate everyone’s journey and symptoms are different, and many people may wish their mental health issues away, I want to share the reasons I find beauty in my bipolar disorder.

I am more creative. I wasn’t surprised when I read that 30% of Pulitzer Prize-winning poets are Bipolar. From Van Gogh to Hemmingway Virginia Wolff the list of creative people with some form of mental health issues is extensive. And those are just the ‘famous’ ones. There are likely thousands and thousands of us whose creative floodgates are unleashed during bouts of mania.

Why is this so? While there are several theories, one study published in nature.com’s nature and neuroscience journal concluded that people working in a creative field (dancing, acting, music, and writing) are up to 25% more likely than non-creative people to carry genes associated with bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

And while I’ve certainly had my ups and downs with my mental health, one thing I can say is I’ve been able to tap into the avalanche of creative energy that comes with it. When my mind is on fire, my ideas, enthusiasm, and ability to pull it all off seems limitless. For me, I have been able to accomplish an unusual amount when I’m in that “sweet spot” or hypomania to be exact. True, my mind was once a chaotic and disorganized place, but once I learned to harness the creativity and direct it toward a goal, I can pursue the things I want in life.

I am less judgmental. Because I’ve been on the ugly end of some unfair judgment, I am now hyper-aware of the difficult circumstances of others. I believe once diagnosed with a debilitating illness; you inherit a deep sense of humility. I try not to feel superior to anyone, regardless of where they are on their journey.

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continued from page 3

toward self-healing and have enormous respect for those who are seeking to get better, no matter what methods they employ.

I can also appreciate the bare honesty of those challenged by mental health issues because I know how difficult it can be to accept your disorder and understand you aren’t a label but a unique individual who fears judgment, alienation, and stigmatization.

I am more empathetic. My mental illness didn’t just disrupt nerve cells in my brain and cause my depression; it also expanded my heart. I’ve learned to trust my intuition and read other people’s emotions more accurately. I feel it enables me almost to feel others’ pain almost vicariously and allows me to be a better listener, helper, and advocate for those going through the same highs and lows.

I am no longer afraid. I have found once I’ve swung on the giant pendulum of a mood disorder, the fear of almost everything, including death itself, is muted to the point of non-existence. With both depression and mania, situations can still be somewhat alarming, but the fear that may cripple others is simply not there. Perhaps this is because I have been through it all, crossed that line of fear already, and now all I want to do is live life to the fullest. I’m not afraid to take risks, seize opportunities or jump into situations when I can’t always predict the outcome. I don’t let fear itself, steal my potential or opportunities anymore.

I am grateful. Like the blue sky after a storm, the joy and happiness that comes from a severe depressive episode are beautiful. But it often takes the absence of joy to be genuinely grateful for it when it returns.

It also has made me grateful for the relationships it didn’t destroy, for the friends who didn’t run. For the life, I’ve managed to reclaim and renew. Because, as Brigette Nicole puts it, “Anyone can show up when you’re happy. But the ones who stay by your side when your heart falls apart, they are your true friends.”

I am more confident. With the recognition of my challenges have come a newfound confidence in myself. I am OK with who I am and proud of the strength I have gained. I can use the word "Proud" because I’ve taken the necessary steps toward mental health recovery but most of all accepting and love myself.

I am more focused. At times, I have a heightened sense of focus, allowing me to be extremely productive and accomplish things more efficiently. When coupled with confidence and creativity, there are certainly times when I feel almost unstoppable.

I can help others. Helping others, I think, is the real soul of why I wouldn’t trade my mental health. Because of the support I have received, it has allowed me to give help to others. I can relate to the struggle, anticipate the obstacles and sometimes even inspire those who may feel hopeless and like life has given up.
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on them. Just as I have been inspired by others who have thrived in spite of the same, I do my best to be a light to those going through their dark days.

What all of this boils down to is acceptance. I have accepted my disorder, agreed to the fact there is no cure but there is recovery, and feel liberated. For 20 years, I tried to rationalize my behavior and its effect on my life, but that helped no one. Now I am learning to maintain balance through the recovery process. Not just through medication and therapy, but through a holistic lifestyle, including meditation, exercise, proper nutrition, educating myself and connecting with a healthy support network. Everyone else who is battling such mental health issues deserves to enjoy a beautiful blue sky.

Angela Swanson is driven to be the voice for those who may not be empowered to speak for themselves, raising awareness of mental health issues, and challenging public opinions. She knows what it means to be in pain, to overcome, to be human, thus shaping her ideas of reform, recovery and allowed her to be a disability and mental health advocate. She is the founder and editor of balanced-minds.org, an online magazine. It promotes the art of being human and living a balanced life managing stress, anxiety, depression, mania with self-care, recovery, confidence, and advocacy.

Crisis Conversations

NAMI SW WA’s Question: For the past week my son/daughter/spouse/partner/sibling has been threatening to commit suicide. Every day s/he talks more about it and seems more agitated. Can Crisis Services help us?

Clark County Crisis Services Response

If someone you know is having thoughts to end their life, the Southwest Washington Crisis Line can help. We have mental health professionals available 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. Our staff can provide compassionate intervention, careful assessment, and referral to appropriate services and community resources to address the underlying causes and contributing factors that lead someone to consider suicide. We also provide support and guidance for friends and family members wondering how to express their care and concern. Our crisis counselors are available for in-person response throughout Clark County.

It’s extremely upsetting to learn someone we care about is suffering from such profound hopelessness, and conversely, it may be hard to believe they are truly in such distress. It is important to remember suicide does not discriminate, affecting young and old, rich and poor, those in good health and those suffering an illness. Responding appropriately includes expressing your concerns (“I’m really worried about you, can I help?”), asking the question directly (“Are you thinking of ending your life?”) and accessing help. We can be reached at (800) 626-8137 or call the National Suicide Prevention line at (800) 273-TALK (8255) or for LGBTQ focus call (866) 4-U-TREVOR. Southwest Washington Crisis Line 24 hours per day: 360-696-9560

Board Committees

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Suzanne Arnits
Peggy McCarthy

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Terry Gertsen
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Rosalie Larsen
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Suzanne Arnits
Peggy McCarthy
LET'S TALK MENTAL HEALTH
The Mind-Gut Connection

What do Hippocrates, Thomas A. Edison and Deepak Chopra have in common? Although hundreds of years apart, each of them were aware of the connection of the mind and the gut.

Let food be thy medicine, thy medicine shall be thy food. — Hippocrates

The doctor of the future will give no medication but will interest his patients in the care of the human frame, diet and in the cause and prevention of disease. — Thomas A. Edison

There are receptors to these molecules in your immune system, in your gut and in your heart. So, when you say, 'I have a gut feeling' or 'my heart is sad' or 'I am bursting with joy,' you’re not speaking metaphorically. You're speaking literally. — Deepak Chopra

Physical health and mental health are being revolutionized as scientists learn more about the links between digestion, mood, health, and even the way we think that are hidden in the walls of the digestive system. This “brain in your gut”, called the enteric nervous system (ENS) is two thin layers of more than 100 million nerve cells lining your gastrointestinal tract from esophagus to rectum. Jay Pastiche, M.D., Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Neurogastroenterology, whose research on the enteric nervous system has gained international attention explains, “The enteric nervous system doesn’t seem capable of thought as we know it, but it communicates back and forth with our big brain—with profound results.”

In his new book, The Mind-Gut Connection, Emeran Mayer, MD. says this ‘second brain’ and our regular brain use the same neurotransmitters and are connected through neural, endocrine, and immune pathways, so it truly is an integrated intelligent system with information flowing in both directions.

The ENS may trigger big emotional shifts experienced by people coping with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and functional bowel problems such as constipation, diarrhea, bloating, pain and stomach upset. According to Pasricha, “For decades, researchers and doctors thought that anxiety and depression contributed to these problems. But our studies and others show that it may also be the other way around,” researchers are finding evidence that irritation in the gastrointestinal system may send signals to the central nervous system (CNS) that trigger mood changes.

While there’s still much to uncover about the mystery of the gut and all it affects, Dr. Mayer offers a few things to do to improve gut-mind connections:

- Maximizing regular intake of naturally fermented foods (live cultured yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, dark chocolate, micro algae, miso soup, pickles, tempeh, kimchi, and kombucha tea).
- Cut down on animal fat in your diet.
- Avoid, whenever possible, mass-produced, processed food and select organically grown food.
- Eat smaller servings at meals.
- Be mindful of prenatal nutrition.
- Reduce stress and practice mindfulness.

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Psychoeducation and tools for a successful and sustained recovery from mental illness.
Drop in.

Support for friends and family of people who have a mental health diagnosis.
Drop in.

Support for families of military personnel who are struggling with mental health issues. (call to sign up)

Peer support group for those affected by mental illness. (Drop in)

5411 E. Mill Plain Blvd, Suite 4
Mill Plain Blvd between Devine and MacArthur.

Call 360-695-2823
MONDAY

NAMI Walks and Talks
12:00

TUESDAY

STRive First Steps
3:30 - 5:00 pm

WEDNESDAY

Women’s Support Group
Basics Class (registrants only)
Board of Directors’ Meeting
10:00 - 11:30 am
1:00 - 4:00 pm

THURSDAY

Writer’s Group
Family Support Group
Connection Recovery Support Group
3:30 - 5:00 pm
3:30 - 5:00 pm
3:00 - 5:00 pm

FRIDAY

NAMI Walks and Talks
Volunteer Orientation
Art Group
10:00 - 11:30 am
12:00 - 1:00 pm
1:00 - 4:00 pm

Mental Health Medication Consult
By Appointment
Call 360-695-2823

Disability/Work Incentives Counseling
By Appointment
Call 360-695-2823

INFORMATION LINE - 9-5 Monday-Friday
Call 360-695-2823

Our entrance is on the West side.
On Mill Plain Blvd between Devine and MacArthur.

Mental Health Medication Consultation
By Appointment
Call 360-695-2823

Unforeseen circumstances that cause a group or class to be cancelled. Please call. 
All listed events are held at our Vancouver office unless otherwise noted (*).
**MONDAY**
Office Hours 10 - 4

**STRive First Steps**
1:00 - 2:30 pm

**TUESDAY**
Office Hours 1 - 4

**Family Support Group**
4:00 - 5:30 pm

**ART Group**
1:00 - 3:00 pm

**WEDNESDAY**
Office Hours 1 - 4

**ART Group**
1:00 - 3:00 pm

**THURSDAY**
Office Hours 10 - 4

**Connection Recovery Support Group**
2:00 pm

**Volunteer Orientation** - 4th Thursday
3:00 - 4:30 pm

**STRive First Steps**
2:00 pm

**FRIDAY**
Office Closed
Notes from a Boy Scout:
Brian Rohan, a member of a local Boy Scout troop, asked NAMI SW WA if he might do his community project with us. One of the assignments was to interview a fellow student with an identified mental health issue to find out how it affected him/her.

Interview With A Fellow Student About Panic Disorder

Brilan Q: Can you tell when a panic attack is going to happen?
Student: When I start to have a panic attack my heart starts pounding and I start to break out into a cold sweat.

Brilan Q: What do you do to take care of it?
Student: I ask a teacher to go outside and distract myself.

Brilan Q: How do you distract yourself?
Student: I hum or play with a fidget spinner.

Brilan Q: Do panic attacks affect your schoolwork?
Student: I get behind on my schoolwork because I have to leave the classroom and I miss notes or work pages and it distracts me throughout the day.

I'm glad I was able to interview my friend who deals with panic disorder. When I interviewed her, I was able to learn that this disorder happens at random but there is a way to overcome it and help treat it. But I also learned the disorders can affect schoolwork in a major way. Disorders come in different shapes and sizes. Plus, anybody in the world could have a disorder.
Welcome to the Cowlitz Corner. We look forward to helping you on your journey with mental health challenges.

May was a busy month. We have lots of people to thank.

The outreach team met with Rev. Kathleen Patton, Rector from St Stephen’s Episcopal Church in Longview this past week. It’s wonderful being involved with those who care and want to support those in our community who are affected by mental illness. Thank you!

We began the month by supporting Columbia Wellness at the lake for “Run the Path for Mental Illness.” So many people from the community attended and stopped by and were interested in what we have to offer. We had one person stop by and thank us for helping her loved one. That meant a lot to all of us. Next, we attended the annual “NAMI Walk 2017” in Portland. Over 6,000 participated! We met some wonderful people who were there to raise awareness for those living with mental illness and their families. Thanks to all that attended as we are continuing to help break the STIGMA surrounding mental illness.

We also had our “Donation Wall” fundraiser this past week. Thanks to everyone who stopped by to show their support. We still have items for donation/purchase so please stop by and take a look. We really need your support to continue offering our services at no charge for those affected by mental illness and their loved ones.

We couldn’t do what we do without help from our wonderful volunteers. Thanks to all of you for your time and dedication to NAMI. We would like to thank Dani especially for her involvement by spreading the word about NAMI SW WA throughout the community. She brought in seven new memberships this past month, and we are grateful for that. Thanks again Dani!

We’re excited to announce the addition of another NAMI Signature program: **Connection Recovery Support Group**. This is a peer led group led by NAMI SW WA trained facilitators who’ve been there. It’s a support group for adults living with mental illness. Our class begins on Thursday, June 1st from 3 to 4:30pm and will be held every Thursday.

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**Crisis Conversations**

**NAMI SW WA’s Question:** For the past week my son/daughter/spouse/partner/sibling has been threatening to commit suicide. Every day s/he talks more about it and seems more agitated. Can Crisis Services help us?

**Cowlitz County Crisis Services Response**

Talking with loved ones about suicide can be uncomfortable. None of us want to believe that someone we love so dearly is hurting so badly. However, talking about it helps the family member know that you are listening and that you care for them.

Often, talking about suicide with a loved one builds avenues of understanding, support, trust and help. However, sometimes discussing one’s suicidal ideations brings up tension, frustration and emotional pain. It is always a delicate dance between providing support and love and revisiting painful thoughts.

I encourage you to utilize Crisis Services staff as sounding boards and guides through these times. We frequently receive calls from individuals who are asking the same question; “How can I help my loved one and what do I say”? We can help guide you through these instances and help you find the best way to provide that support. We can also be a support to YOU.

Crisis Services staff are always on duty and always willing to help you and your loved one. If you ever need us...call us, **Cowlitz County 24 Hour Crisis Line: 360-425-6064 or 800-803-833**
NAMI SW WA has counseling sessions open on the same or next day for those insured by Washington State Medicaid (Apple Health) and assigned to either Molina Healthcare or Community Health Plan of Washington. Please call our office at 360-695-2823 and ask to be connected to Janet to make an appointment.

- NAMI Signature Basics Train the Teacher Class will be held at the Vancouver office June 9-11. This class begins at 3 p.m. on Friday the 9th. If you are interested in becoming an educator for this program, please contact Phyllis Chun (Phyllis.c@namiswwa.org) or call 360-695-2823 for more information. Applications are due by Friday, June 2.

- The NAMIWalks WA will be held in Renton WA on June 2nd. Check the NAMI WA website for details if you are going to be the Seattle area and would like to walk on our behalf.

- The NAMI SW WA Behavioral Health Chronic Pain group will begin on Thursday, June 15. Each session will be held from 3 to 5 p.m. This group is only for those who are receiving counseling through our Behavioral Services with Washington State Medicaid (Apple Health) and assigned to either Molina Healthcare or Community Health Plan of Washington.

- The new NAMI SW WA Writers Group is meeting on Thursday afternoon from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. If you are interested in learning to tell your own story, have an interest in writing about anything, or are interested in talking to others who are writing please attend this group at our Vancouver office.

- NAMI SW WA and the VA, Vancouver will begin a Homefront class for family members of veterans beginning on June 14. This group will be held in the Vancouver NAMI SW WA office and will meet from 4 to 6:30 p.m.
$50 ($35 membership fee plus $15 donation)
$100 ($35 membership fee plus $65 donation)
$35 Individual membership
$3 Open Door annual membership
Free—membership scholarship
Donation $ ____________

We are a registered non-profit organization 501(C) (3) and donations are tax deductible.

Name: ____________________________________
Address: __________________________________
City: _________________ State & Zip: _______
Phone: (_____) ____________________________
E-Mail: _________________________________

NAMI Membership Includes:
☐ NAMI National Advocate Magazine, quarterly
★ Washington Friday Facts, weekly e-mail by request
★ NAMI SW WA Newsletter, monthly

Member Discounts on NAMI Events & Materials,
Please return your payment and completed form to:

NAMI Southwest Washington
5411 E Mill Plain Blvd, Suite 4
Vancouver, WA 98661

To use a credit card and join online, go to
www.namiswwa.org and click on Join NAMI