“You Are Never Too Old To Set Another Goal Or To Dream A New Dream.”

– C.S. Lewis
Dear Members and Friends,

Summer is a slower time, however for NAMI SW WA it seems things are busier; we are working on so many current and new projects.

Suicide Awareness and Prevention planning are in the final stages as we involve students, schools, faith-based organizations, businesses, and other health and mental health care organizations. Steps are in place to have all four counties and all the cities and towns with councils to declare September as Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month. Our painted rocks play a significant role in this program: because of their popularity and the important role they played last year in the decisions of several people who found them, we are now planning to paint and place them year-round with the greatest push during September. This year our volunteers have painted over 1,000 rocks for placement in our four counties: Skamania, Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum. Look for these very lovely, shiny rocks with a tag on the bottom with our website. If you find a rock, you have a couple of choices to make: You may take it home with you, replace it where you found it, or gift it to someone who might need the message of hope. We ask that anyone who sees a rock to please go onto our website and tell your rock story if there is one. In addition, we will be training volunteers in August do two things: place rocks in parks, on trails, around their towns AND to give short prepared presentations at various sites in the four counties during September. If you would like to participate in either or both of these activities, please call us at 360-695-2823 to learn about training dates.

NAMI SW WA will soon be part of the NAMI hotline. We are still learning about this program and how our national headquarters plans to expand it but are excited that we will be part of this, working more closely with NAMI WA and a couple of other affiliates in WA State. We already have between 25 and 50 or so calls a day requesting help from people in our region and look forward to hearing about plans to expand this service.

Have a lovely August...stay cool which may become difficult if the temperatures continue near 100 degrees.

Peggy
**Board Spotlight – Jack Bothwell**

After spending 35 years in the banking industry, Jack Bothwell found himself on the doorstep of NAMI SW WA. A family crisis led him and his wife to attend the 12-week Family to Family class, where they both realized the value of the organization and that they might be able to assist in some small ways. His personal experience with mental health issues gives him a real appreciation of the need for places like NAMI SW WA where people and their families can get the help and support they need for as long as they need it.

Jack now divides his time among being the treasurer of the Fire Firefighter’s Association, a mentor at WSU’s College of Business, and board member of NAMI SW WA, where he focuses on fundraising and working on a new office complex to replace where NAMI SW WA and the other social service agencies are currently located. In his spare time, he enjoys tending to his fruit trees and traveling—especially taking cruises, both domestic and international. He is thankful for the ability to lead a successful life despite his previous struggles with mental health issues and wants to see others be afforded the same opportunity.

**Staff Spotlight – John McDonald**

After starting out answering phones and entering data at NAMI SW WA, John McDonald worked his way up to eventually coordinating the SEE ME program. He also serves as a peer support counselor. He can be found helping out with any hands-on labor that needs to be done. Working hard is part of his DNA, as he is an Eagle Scout, and loves all physical activities and the outdoors, including chopping wood for his father in the summertime.

John's philosophy on mental health stems from his own journey through diagnosed schizophrenia. He first came to NAMI WA SW five years ago after having a difficult time managing his symptoms and realizing he truly needed to get well. He has spent years participating in treatment programs, counseling and telling his story, and is now in a place where he can feel at peace with his condition and focus on helping others in similar situations.
ASK by Heidi Bjurstrom

We want you to ASK about suicide.

We are all sadly aware of the toll that suicide has taken on our community. Recent data have shown a 25-30% increase in the number of deaths by suicide occurring throughout our SW Washington region over last year. In observance of National Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month in September 2018, NAMI SW WA has developed a positive, community-based program asking individuals to make a pledge to ASK about suicide.

Our ASK campaign invites individuals of all ages in our community to begin paying attention to one another. It encourages individuals to ask essential questions when they have concern for someone who may be feeling suicidal, to help them connect to support and to be kind to one another in the face of the daily traumas and stresses we all encounter.

This campaign is designed to not only encourage individuals to be looking out and caring for others but also to reach out and ASK for help and support when they personally feel overwhelmed by life circumstances.

Watch for NAMI SW WA’s Suicide Awareness and Prevention events in September! You will have the opportunity to join us in pledging to ASK about suicide. Those who make the ASK pledge will be given a pin/button with the ASK logo to represent their commitment to ASK about suicide, along with resource cards with information about crisis services and suicide prevention in the community.

We believe this message and pledge will have a profound impact on our community. Our goal is to have 5,000 individuals commit to the ASK pledge, and we need your help! Please consider inviting volunteers from NAMI SW WA to come to your school, company, organization, a faith community, and wherever your community resides. To show people how to take the ASK pledge: This could take a variety of forms including brief presentations, information tables, family events, presentations to staff, volunteers and parent groups, or...
many other options.

We are happy to reserve dates and times in the month of September and will also be available to schedule throughout October and November to accommodate the busy back-to-school season. For information, contact Heidi Bjurstrom. Heidi.b@namiswwa.org or 360-695-2823.

Our Mission:

NAMI SW WA is dedicated to helping all people affected by mental illness through education, support, and advocacy.

We offer HOPE for today and HELP for tomorrow.
Everyone's mental health journey is different. What everyone's journey has in common, however, is the need for support. Nothing can be more isolating than believing that you are alone as you try to work through a condition that you think no one else can understand, relate to, or will judge you for. In fact, people with low levels of support from others in their lives report higher instances of depression, anxiety, and mental disorders.

A support group can help alleviate those feelings of alienation and hopelessness. These types of groups, often referred to as social support groups, support groups or mutual help groups, can differ depending upon the mental condition of the person or people involved. There are support groups for mental illness, drug addiction, alcoholism, and family and loved ones of those dealing with those issues.

The people who attend these groups may go for different reasons. Some want to share their stories, some want to hear the stories of others who are further along in their treatment, offering hope to those just beginning to deal with a diagnosis, some just want to know they aren't alone. The support group provides a safe place for people to share their experiences, feelings, fears, coping strategies and successes.

Some other benefits of support groups are:

- Feeling less lonely, isolated or judged
- Reducing stress, depression, anxiety or fatigue
- Improving skills to cope with challenges
- Staying motivated to manage chronic conditions or stick to treatment plans
- Gaining a sense of empowerment or control
- Enhancing understanding of a disease and your own experience with it
- Getting practical feedback about treatment options
- Learning about health, economic or social resources

If you have never attended a support group before, you may have questions or feel anxious about trying one out for the first time. Like any other situation, going in prepared will help lessen some feelings and allow you to get the most out of your experience. Some things to keep in mind when
first attending a support group are:

- No one will force you to share more than you want to.
- You may want to start by just listening to other members to get an idea of the format and the kinds of things discussed.
- You aren't married to the support group--if it isn't a good fit, you can always try a different group or format.

The longer you attend and the more you contribute to the discussions, the more comfortable you will feel and the more you will benefit from the group. And ultimately the more other people will benefit from your stories and experiences.

**NAMI SW WA** offers the **NAMI Connection Support Group** on Thursdays, 3:00 - 4:30 pm. It is for people who have a mental health diagnosis. NAMI SW WA also offers the **NAMI Family Support Group** on Thursdays 3:00 - 4:30 pm for family members of those struggling with their mental health for better understanding and support during challenging times.

**Volunteer Spotlight - Georgia Gerrior**

Art runs through Georgia Gerrior's veins. If she's not creating it herself, she is serving as Co-Coordinator of NAMI SW WA's Expressive Arts Group. After serving as an event coordinator for the Children's Cancer Association and then attending art therapy sessions at Lifeline Connections, she began searching for a more in-depth art therapy program. She found it at NAMI SW WA.

Georgia now coordinates therapeutic art projects for our popular Expressive Arts Group. Teaching, guiding and supporting peers at NAMI SW WA and watching these budding artists learn to express themselves is a beautiful experience. She also enjoys spending time with her two children, teaching, photography, birding, camping and volunteering for mental health organizations and environmental causes. She believes that mental health issues are diseases that can be treated successfully with therapy, surrounding yourself with a supportive community, and often with carefully prescribed medications. Wellness is possible with help.

**Prevent Together**

Prevent Together is passionate about empowering one another to stay healthy and drug-free. They believe *connection is the best prevention*, so along with a team of community partners, they bring you National Night Out! This is a free event for youth and families focusing on fun prevention-education activities. Sponsored by FYSPRT. Tuesday, August 7 6:00-8:00 pm preventtogetherbg.org.
Here is the Basic Governor’s Meeting Update by Jerri Clark

I was very surprised to get a phone call yesterday at noon that our planned meeting with Rashi Gupta, Governor Inslee’s policy adviser on mental health care, was going to include a conference with the Governor himself! About 16 other family members and I sat down in the governor’s conference room at the Capitol for about 20 minutes to describe our group, Mothers of the Mentally Ill, and our shared concerns and vision for improvements to the state systems. I introduced myself and explained that I wore two hats in this meeting—that I was a mother of a young adult son whose illness has been underserved and criminalized and that I also represent parents across the state through PAVE. I explained that it has been challenging to guide families when our state systems for mental health care are so dysfunctional. I gave him our MOMI Notebook, which included the printed pages of our power point and a copy of my article about the Catch-22 in treatment law. The governor was very engaged as I showed him our two-page agenda summary and the set of 25 personal letters I collected from families in crisis across the state. He stated that he recognizes that mental illness has been criminalized and that he wants to make improvements a priority in the upcoming session. He recommended that we do all that we can to spread this message to legislators, local and county governments, and to the public. He wants to elicit change, and our timing was ideal after Monday’s headlines about the failure of Western State Hospital to pass inspection to receive federal credentialing. That failure will cost Washington State $53 million per year.

After the meeting with the Governor, our group spent nearly 3 hours talking about policy and the barriers encountered by families with Rashi Gupta and also Ken Taylor, a director at the state Behavioral Health Administration. They appreciated our insights and committed to working with our group throughout the coming year. I believe we will be asked to address members of Congress in session.

Please call Heidi @ 360-695-2823 or email heidi.b@namiswwa.org, if you want to participate in this project in other ways.
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Unforeseen circumstances may cause a group or class to be cancelled. Please call ahead to confirm.
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Write a Letter to Your Mental Illness by Chiara Caballero

Writing prompt from our Creative Writing for Wellness Group:
Write a letter to your mental illness and let it know why it doesn’t define you.

Hi, bipolar disorder with psychotic features. In my early 20’s I was saddled with you as a diag-
nosis, and it haunted me. I was in college, and it was the first time (and last) that I failed a
class. My relationships suffered as the medication experimentations began. (They should real-
ly warn you about how disruptive to life this process is.)

In the early 2000’s, I took medications ranging from some of the oldest to the newest bleed-
ing edge including a number of mood stabilizers and antidepressants—each with its own bat-
tery of side effects. I wondered how good these could actually be for your body, what if they
caused cancer? One of the newer medications worked the best yet it came with the unsettling
side effect that affected my intimate life, so I moved to the next choice and the next.

After a dozen medications, I reached the worst of all: one concocted by the devil himself. It
gave me the most hideous and disturbing nightmares of my life every night, and I became
more irritated and angry than ever. I think I was perceived as evil at the time. I can’t believe
my relationship lasted through this period. I didn’t want to sleep because of the nightmares,
and I couldn’t function without sleep. My job and my grades suffered. I almost got into several
car accidents on my way to the psychiatrist’s office. I opted instead to learn coping skills, go to
therapy, and never take another med in my life.

I was delighted with the decision to not take medication. For many years, I was healthy and
coping. When my diagnosis came out to friends, they didn’t believe me. I was in a good place.

Under a lot of stress at my full-time job, lack of sleep, and stress triggered severe mania then
gave way to psychosis. I always came back from that place; slipping away from the delusions
and hallucinations plummeting into a depression so exquisite I couldn’t leave my bedroom for
days. I finally slept. Once I didn’t come back from the psychosis and kept devolving. I became
violent, got tangled up with law enforcement, didn’t eat or sleep for eleven days and rang in
the New Year feral and in solitary confinement.

Bipolar disorder with psychotic features, how do you not define me? I’ve lived so long with you:
Elated, on top of the world, passionate, hyper-manic, hardly sleeping, and then so depressed
the crying never ended and I would lay in my bed full of despair and hopelessness. I was vio-
Ient many times as a kid and just figured it was a family thing; part of my origin, where I came
from not realizing I had a disease.

So now how do I see myself past the illness? I’m creative, want to do well at anything I en-
deavor to do, am somewhat bright, have eyes that twinkle like stars in a clear desert sky when
I’m excited about something (or causing trouble). I cannot sit here and say who I am without
my illness because we’ve lived in tandem for so long and it affects my behavior—sometimes
beyond my control.

I love beautiful things, the ocean, the desert, monsoon season, making art, writing, music,
dancing, and a multitude of other things. I wouldn’t change this life and how it occurred—it is
singularly mine. I am a person whole and complete without you, however you have shaped
who I have become.
Let's Talk Mental Health: Group Success!

Our *Keeping Your Balance: Bipolar Group* ended with great success! What do you do when you meet with success? You do it again—and we are. Here are some of the positive comments from group members: "I learned so much and felt so supported." "Others knew just what I was talking about, they've been there." "I found that I can finally accept my diagnosis." "I was having a really bad week, a really bad day and I shared what was going on. I wasn't shamed or lectured; I was supported and encouraged. I don't get that from my family." "I'd do this group again in a heartbeat."

We hear the comments, but precisely what is it that makes a group experience so valuable? Many people find the prospect of a group a bit daunting. Some people are used to keeping their difficulties private, so the thought of talking about them in front of a group of unfamiliar people can be anxiety-provoking. While it may be an anxiety-provoking prospect, we offer this group because research has shown groups are effective. Groups provide an opportunity to learn that other people struggle with similar issues and this alone can be very validating. In addition, it allows the opportunity to learn from the experience of other people who are working on similar problems.

There can be many difficulties and stressful aspects of having bipolar disorder that is not addressed by medical treatment. Keeping Your Balance equips people with relevant knowledge and skills to help them manage bipolar disorder in combination with their medication. Recent research indicates that group psychological treatment can be a helpful addition to medication.

In addition to our supportive environment, *Keeping Your Balance* offers education regarding:

Continued on Page 13

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Support NAMI SW WA through AMAZON Smile when you shop!

Go to: https://smile.amazon.com

Log-in with the same username and password you use for your Amazon account.

- Type in NAMI Southwest Washington as the charity you want to support and select!
- Shop and save the link for the next time you shop your Amazon account.
- .05% of all of your purchases will be credited as a donation.
- Please sign-up today
• Bipolar disorder
• Monitoring mood and sleep
• Medications
• Identifying and responding to early warning signs
• Activity scheduling
• Identifying manageable steps to task completion
• Cognitive therapy (identifying, challenging and replacing unhelpful thoughts)
• Problem-solving

This group is available to individuals with a diagnosis of bipolar disorder who have Washington State Apple Health (Medicaid) through Molina Healthcare or Community Health Plan of Washington.

Pre-registration is required. Please give us a call at 360-695-2823 to get more information and sign-up for this eight-week group which starts on Tuesday, September 11 at 1-3 pm.

Supportive—Confidential—Learning—SUCCESSFUL!
Hello Friends!

Welcome to the Cowlitz Corner!

Please welcome Joyce and LeeAnn to our fantastic group of facilitators who volunteer to lead our NAMI classes. They've just recently completed the NAMI training for our "Connection Recovery Support Group" and are already facilitating groups. LeeAnn is also newly trained in our STRivE program so congratulations Ladies! They join our other fabulous facilitators; Lee, Zach, Ron, Jeannie, Debbie, Olivia, Dani and of course, myself! :)

If you haven't dropped in, please call or stop by and we'll share the services that NAMI SW WA offers at no charge to those living with mental health challenges as well as family members, caregivers and friends that support them. Our staff and volunteers are all peers with lived experience. We offer a safe, inviting, confidential space for all.

As you all have noticed, our groups are growing by leaps and bounds! I want to thank you all for sharing NAMI SW WA with your friends and families and also our mental health partners for doing the same. Without you and our wonderful volunteers we wouldn't be here. We are a nonprofit and rely on donations and grants to keep our doors open so please help if you are able.

As I shared last month, we are busy gearing up for our September event, "Suicide Awareness and Prevention," which will be held at The Grove Alliance Church, 2116 E. Kessler Blvd in Longview on September 11 (evening time TBA). We are painting rocks and placing them throughout the community. We want to spread the message of HOPE and RECOVERY throughout our community.

Beginning August 21, we again will be offering our 8 session "Peer to Peer" program for those living with mental health challenges and wanting to move forward in their recovery. This course is offered at no charge and will be taught by NAMI trained peers with lived experience. Some things covered in this course are creating your own personalized relapse prevention plan and how mental health symptoms can impact your life. You will also learn how to advocate for yourself and many more helpful skills. Space is limited so call and reserve your spot soon!

Please check our website, namiswwa.org and take a look at our weekly schedule under the "Longview" calendar. If you would like to register for one of our "Signature" classes (Family to Family, Peer to Peer, Homefront, or Basics), you can do it online or give us a call and we'll reserve a place for you.

Until next month, be good to yourself!
Jan ~

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**Earn Dollars for NAMI SW WA by shopping at Fred Meyer!**

*Here’s how it works:*

- Sign up for the Community Rewards program and/or use your existing card by linking your Fred Meyer Rewards Card number to NAMI at www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards.
- You can search for us by our name NAMI or by our nonprofit number 87058
- Then every time you shop and use your Rewards Card, NAMI SW WA earns some change!
- You still earn Rewards Points, Fuel Points, and Rebates, just as you do today.
- If you do not have a Rewards Card, stop by the Customer Service Desk of any Fred Meyer store.
- Please renew every year. You can do that online.
Upcoming Events

2018 Suicide Awareness & Prevention Month Events September is Suicide Prevention & Awareness Month, and we are planning a series of events. Keep an eye out for announcements.

Art Shows & Silent Auction Between September 4 – 28, we will have a variety of work shown at Vancouver Community Library, Three Creeks Library, Skamania Chamber of Commerce, & Cathlamet Public Library.

Art-Avore: Art & Sip Fundraiser Saturday, August 18, 5:00-8:30 pm. Bring your creative appetite and create an original mixed-media piece using different kinds of materials. $50 per person. Wine, beverages, and refreshments provided. Vancouver Art Space, Vancouver Mall (360) 787-8772. Buy tickets at namiswwa.org.

New! Adult Mobile Crisis Intervention Clark County offers mobile crisis outreach services to adults 7 days a week between 10AM-10PM. Call the Southwest Washington Crisis Line for options: 1(800) 626-8137

Support Groups

Family Advocate Networking Group Family members are coming together to pool their knowledge, passion and support for one another in the new Family Advocate Networking Group. Tuesday July 10, 12:00-1:30 pm.

Women’s Support Group Gather with other women overcoming mental health challenges in Vancouver: Wednesdays, 10:00 am–11:30 am. Drop-ins welcome.

Upcoming Fall 2018 Education Classes Basics Have you had a difficult time advocating for your child or teen in school? This no-charge class is for parents and caregivers of children under the age of 18 living with mental health challenges and looking for support and education. Offered at our Vancouver and Longview offices. Pre-register for our next class at namiswwa.org.

Family & Friends - For family members and friends of those with mental health challenges, so they can educate themselves better on how to support their loved one. Pre-register online for our next seminar at namiswwa.org.