The holiday season is here! We are all excited to stuff holiday gift bags! Every December, we provide 150 Holiday Bags to peers who are working to regain stability in our NAMI SW WA region who are in critical in-residence mental health and substance use facilities. Often, these bags are the only holiday gift they will receive.

We need donations to make this event a success! Donations like warm woolen gloves and hats (without strings or long tails, please no scarves), and trial size personal care products (like unscented shampoo, body wash, or lotion), and lots of wrapped fun-sized chocolate. Our Expressive Arts Group will be hand decorating the bags for a personal touch.

We appreciate anything you might donate. Join us for our Holiday Bag Party on Monday, December 17 starting at 5:00pm in the classroom at our Vancouver office, 5411 E. Mill Plain Blvd, Suite 4, Vancouver, WA. We will put the bags together and then deliver them to the facilities during the remainder of the week. Thank you and Happy Holidays!

**Donnelly Walk Update**

The 7th Annual Donnelly Walk Fundraiser was a success! We exceeded last year’s donations toward NAMI SW WA programs. Thank you to everyone who participated and donated to our organization! A special thank you to Ann and Mike Donnelly for organizing this wonderful event. We also appreciate our sponsors: Invest West Management, LLC, Realvest Corp, Granite Wealth, and ITS (Integrated Tax Services).
Dear Members and Friends,

As the year draws to a close, NAMI SW WA seems to get busier and busier. Right now we are completing our Signature class presentations, both in our Vancouver and Longview offices. Our support groups and socialization activities will, of course, take place as scheduled, so see our respective calendars at the center-fold of this newsletter.

Last weekend we held our first Trauma Informed Care training for all NAMI SW WA and Behavioral Health staff, Board members, and key volunteers. Almost 50 people attended the program that Janet Ragan, MA, LMHC and Director of our Behavioral Health Services, created based on the training developed by the National Council for Behavioral Health (NATCON). While we have been talking about the impact of trauma for almost four years, especially though our SEE ME programs, we are pleased to know that almost every person who works on our behalf with the public is now informed about the effects of trauma and has some new thoughts about how we, as an agency providing over 60,000 individual services each year, can make sure that we are not adding to the trauma we see every day affecting the people who come to us for help and hope.

In addition to our regular programs and activities, we are also approaching our 40th Anniversary. In 1978, a group of families came together in Vancouver and founded the Schizophrenia Support Group of Clark County; they had the foresight to incorporate as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Families in Cowlitz County followed in 1979. The objective for these families in SW WA and in other cities and towns across the United States came about because there was evidence, for the first time, that with the help of newly developed medications those diagnosed with serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, and other conditions that often caused people to be placed in state mental facilities for life, could get into recovery. These family members wanted that for their loved ones. These groups were in contact with one another through long-distance phone calls and letters...there was no email, texting, or free long-distance phone calls back then. Then they decided to meet together in Wisconsin. At that meeting, they decided to form the Alliance on Mental Illness. The next step was to make it national so from these small non-profit support groups came the National Alliance on Mental Illness...NAMI. In 2013, NAMI Clark County and NAMI Cowlitz County joined forces and included Skamania County since these three counties represented Southwest Washington Behavioral Health Regional Support Network.
(SWBH RSN). In 2016 Cowlitz County left this region, leaving Clark and Skamania counties to become Southwest Washington Accountable Community of Health (SWACH) when the RSNs disappeared and the ACH system came into being. Cowlitz County, in the meantime, became part of both the seven county Cascade Pacific Action Alliance and the five county Great Rivers Behavioral Health Organization (BHO) which asked NAMI SW WA to add Wahkiakum County to our service area in 2017. SWACH has asked us to add Klickitat County to our region beginning in 2019 since this county is joining our ACH at that time. So what seemed quite stable for 35 years for NAMI Clark and NAMI Cowlitz counties (small organizations that offered education, support, and advocacy, at no charge, for anyone who came to these organizations for help and hope), things began to speed up significantly in 2013-14. Many changes have taken place including the fact that we applied for and became the only NAMI in the nation to be licensed by a state to open behavioral health services (counseling, peer support, group support and other services) to those receiving Medicaid disability. We did this to ensure that all those who wanted to see a counselor quickly could do so. We are still able to do intakes and make the first counseling appointment within five business days. Come celebrate our 40th Anniversary with us at the many events we will hold.

Peggy
Board Member Spotlight—Kim Schneiderman

Kim Schneiderman is the President of the NAMI SW WA board after being board President for NAMI Oregon. “I held that position for 6 years and was lucky enough to be involved in helping a small struggling organization become the powerhouse that it is today,” Kim replied. “I believe that my experience in both the non-profit and for-profit worlds allow for a unique perspective that is beneficial. I have watched NAMI grow and change over the years and am familiar with the roles of the affiliates having both served on a state and a local level.”

Kim also has experience with government and mental health agencies, the department of corrections in many forms, state and local hospitals, residential providers, substance abuse providers “and the many other things that can impact a person dealing with their own or a loved one’s illness.”

She spent almost 20 years at PayLess Pharmacy then moved to Geneva Woods Pharmacy which merged with Rite Aid. Kim has two daughters, one lives locally and the other lives in Nevada. Kim has plenty of experience and time working in mental health services and has several family members who have severe mental health conditions. She attended the first NAMIWalks NW when 500 people went, now attendance is up to 7,000.

Kim’s philosophy in her own words, “I believe that nobody really knows what goes on in another’s mind. We are all unique individuals and hold thoughts and beliefs that are particular to us. It’s when those thoughts and beliefs cause distress/pain to ourselves or others that it needs to be addressed. We need to give people the ability to find their own place of recovery, be there for them when they need us and in cases where someone is in absolute distress have compassionate ways to protect them.”

To maintain mental wellness, Kim likes to walk, play with her dog and cat, disconnect from the world with a good audiobook and listen to music.

Kim adds, “I appreciate most of all that with all the good that NAMI does, it’s the only place that helps family members when they feel lost and forgotten.”

Art Therapy by Teryl Gallagher

There are smells in the air of paint and glue
The smell of a clean new project beginning
People are laughing
They are wearing paint-smattered aprons with uncontrolled splashes that would make Picasso proud.
These aprons cover shirts and sweaters that once were smattered with tears.

The hands that once held a bowed and sorrowful head now hold a paintbrush, a sewing needle, a latch hook. They have a feeling, a sense of joy in what they are now creating. In other groups we work on ourselves, but in art therapy we work for ourselves. If only for one hour we are free of the pain that brought us here and we are the smell of the clean new project beginning.
Volunteer Spotlight—Lyssa Orelli

Lyssa has been with her high school sweetheart for over 30 years. She has two children, a son and a daughter. Lyssa has been in education since 1994; she has a Bachelor’s degree in history and a Master’s degree in Education. She first started attending Family and Friends then Family to Family classes and from there began participating in the Family Support group. She first came to NAMI SW WA to get help with the struggles of a loved one who lost three friends to suicide. She now co-facilitates the Family Support Group at NAMI SW WA on Fridays.

Lyssa shares her experience in her own words:
“I believe my experience helps others because the group is filled with people like myself that love someone that has struggled with their mental illness. I empathize with them. I have walked in their footsteps and have learned a few things that I can share to help them through their crisis. In helping others, I also help myself.”

She is a gardener, food preparer (canner, dehydrator and meat processor), and loves learning; she is currently teaching herself how to draw and knit. Lyssa also scrapbooks and quilts. She enjoys yoga, camping, walking, kayaking, and fishing with her family. Lyssa has a Support dog she loves spending time with. “As I get older, I am really enjoying giving back to my community.” Lyssa adds.

“My philosophy on mental health is that we all have mental health and just like our physical health we need to spend the time to maintain it. I maintain my mental health by constantly keeping myself updated on medical advances. I use different therapy methods such as yoga, arts and crafts, support group, and my favorite method to maintain my mental health—Mother Nature.”

CREATIVEWRITING FOR WELLNESS
Every Friday
From 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm
What is Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

The criteria for diagnosing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the Fifth Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) are as follows:

Criterion A: You were exposed to one or more event(s) that involved death or threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or threatened sexual violation. In addition, these events were experienced in one or more of the following ways you experienced the event:

1. You witnessed the event as it occurred to someone else
2. You learned about an event where a close relative or friend experienced an actual or threatened violent or accidental death
3. You experienced repeated exposure to distressing details of an event, such as a police officer repeatedly hearing details about child sexual abuse

Criterion B: You experience at least one of the following intrusive symptoms associated with the traumatic event:

1. Unexpected or expected reoccurring, involuntary, and intrusive upsetting memories of the traumatic event
2. Repeated upsetting dreams where the content of the dreams is related to the traumatic event
3. The experience of some type of dissociation (for example, flashbacks) where you feel as though the traumatic event is happening again
4. Strong and persistent distress upon exposure to cues that are either inside or outside of your body that are connected to your traumatic event
5. Strong bodily reactions (for example, increased heart rate) upon exposure to a reminder of the traumatic event

Criterion C: Frequent avoidance of reminders associated with the traumatic event, as demonstrated by one of the following:

1. Avoidance of thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations that bring up memories of the traumatic event
2. Avoidance of people, places, conversations, activities, objects, or situations that bring up memories of the traumatic event

Criterion D: At least three of the following negative changes in thoughts and mood that occurred or worsened following the experience of the traumatic event:

1. The inability to remember an important aspect of the traumatic event
2. Persistent and elevated negative evaluations about yourself, others, or the world (for example, "I am unlovable," or "The world is an evil place")
3. Elevated self-blame or blame of others about the cause or consequence of a traumatic event
4. A negative emotional state (for example, shame, anger, or fear) that is pervasive
5. Loss of interest in activities that you used to enjoy
6. Feeling detached from others
7. The inability to experience positive emotions (for example, happiness, love, joy)

**Criterion E**: At least three of the following changes in arousal that started or worsened following the experience of a traumatic event:

1. Irritability or aggressive behavior
2. Impulsive or self-destructive behavior
3. Feeling constantly "on guard" or like danger is lurking around every corner (or hypervigilance)
4. Heightened startle response
5. Difficulty concentrating
6. Problems sleeping

**Criterion F**: The above symptoms last for more than one month.

**Criterion G**: The symptoms bring about considerable distress and/or interfere with a number of different areas of your life.

**Criterion H**: The symptoms are not due to a medical condition or some form of substance use.

**DSM-5 PTSD Diagnosis**: In order to be diagnosed with PTSD according to the DSM -5, you need to meet the following:

- Criterion A
- One symptom (or more) from Criterion B
- One symptom (or more) from Criterion C
- Three symptoms (or more) from Criterion D
- Three symptoms (or more) from Criterion E
- Criteria F through H
Taking Care of Yourself While Loving Someone with PTSD

Historically called nostalgia, irritable heart, battle shock, shell shock, war strain, war neurosis, combat exhaustion, gross stress reaction, Vietnam combat reaction, post-Vietnam syndrome—just as “a rose by any other name, is still a rose”, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) by any other name is still post-traumatic stress disorder (see “What is PTSD?” in this newsletter). It is not exclusive to returning military. It may affect individuals who have experienced physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse in childhood or adulthood, rape, and serious medical illness or disease including disabling conditions, loss of function, and invasive and distressing procedures. Whatever we call it, whatever the age, social status, profession, culture, or gender of the individual, families and loved ones of those individuals experiencing PTSD have struggled throughout the centuries with its effects. Feelings of frustration, hurt, anger, and rejection arise, and relationships can become seriously strained. If you are experiencing some of these challenges resulting from the symptoms experienced by someone close to you, here are some action steps which might be helpful.

Educate: Educate yourself, family, and friends about PTSD.

Listen: Listen to your loved one with no expectations, no judgments, and no advice (unless asked).

Rebuild: Rebuild trust and safety by expressing your commitment, creating routines, minimizing environmental stress, speaking of hope and the future, and point out loved one’s strengths and capabilities.

Self-care: Get enough sleep, exercise regularly, eat health, and address your medical issues. Take time for friends, hobbies, activities, and seek out a support group. NAMI SW WA has two support groups that may be helpful—Women’s Support Group on Wednesday’s at 10:00-11:30 a.m. and Family Support Group on Thursdays at 3:00-4:30 p.m. These groups are open to anyone in the community at no charge.

Set boundaries: Know your limits, communicate them to the individual, family and friends and keep them.

A traumatic event can have a major impact not only on the one who experienced it, but also on close family and friends. It is important to remember, as much as you love and want to help your loved one, your mental health matters too!

If the person you’re caring for is a military veteran, financial and caregiving support may be available. In the U.S., visit online VA Caregiver Support to explore your options, or call Coaching into Care at (888) 823-7458.
### Schedule

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<td>NAMI Walks &amp; Talks 11:30-12:30</td>
<td>Stitch &amp; Chat 1:30-2:30pm</td>
<td>Women’s Support Group 10:00-11:30am</td>
<td>STRiVE First Steps 3:30-5:00pm</td>
<td>Support Group Creative Writing for Wellness 12:00-1:00pm</td>
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<td>STRiVE First Steps 3:30-5:00pm</td>
<td>Board of Directors’ Meeting 6:00-7:30pm (Third Wednesday monthly)</td>
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<td>Expressive Arts 1:00-4:00pm</td>
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#### Unforeseen circumstances may cause a group or class to be canceled. Please call ahead to confirm.

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**PROVIDERS SUPPORT AND RESOURCES**

CALL 360-695-2823

INFORMATION LINE 9-5 Monday-Friday

CALL 360-695-2823

BY APPOINTMENT

W/ Cindy Falter

### DISABILITY/WORK INCENTIVES COUNSELING

W/ Cindy Falter

### PROVIDES SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

CALL 360-695-2823

INFORMATION LINE 9-5 Monday-Friday

**544 E. MILL PLAIN**

**SUITE 4**

**360-695-2823**

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

**Lost in Plain?**

**360-695-2823**

**FOR INFORMATION CALL 360-695-2823 PROVIDES SUPPORT AND RESOURCES**

**Psychoeducation and tools for a successful and sustained mental wellness. Drop in.**

**Support for friends and family of people who have a mental illness.**

**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 health challenges. Drop in.**

**Disability/Work Incentives Counseling by appointment. Call 360-695-2823.**

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**MONDAY**

**NAMI Walks & Talks 11:30-12:30**

**TUESDAY**

**Stitch & Chat 1:30-2:30pm**

**STrIVE First Steps 3:30-5:00pm**

**WEDNESDAY**

**Women’s Support Group 10:00-11:30am**

**Board of Directors’ Meeting 6:00-7:30pm (Third Wednesday monthly)**

**THURSDAY**

**NAMI Walks & Talks 11:30-12:30**

**Support Group Creative Writing for Wellness 12:00-1:00pm**

**Expressive Arts 1:00-4:00pm**

**FRIDAY**

**STRiVE First Steps 3:30-5:00pm**

**STrIVE First Steps 1:30-2:30pm**

**NAMI Walks & Talks 11:30-12:30**
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- **Office hours:** Monday-Friday 10:00-4:00
- **MONDAY:**
  - 10:00-4:00 Office hours
- **TUESDAY:**
  - 10:00-4:00 Office hours
  - Family Support Group 6:00-7:30pm
- **WEDNESDAY:**
  - 12:00-3:00pm Art Therapy
- **THURSDAY:**
  - STRIVE First Steps 1:00-2:30pm
  - Connection Recovery 10:00-4:00
- **FRIDAY:**
  - Office Closed

**Resources:**
- **Psychoeducation and tools for a successful and sustained mental wellness.** Drop in.
- **Support for friends and family of people who have a mental health challenge.** 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 health.** Drop in.

**Contact:**
- **Call 360-695-2823**
- **Information line 9-5 Monday-Friday**

**Address:**
- 1128 Broadway
  - Longview, WA 98632
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

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
What Is the Treatment for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

Following are several approaches to treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Psychotherapy

- Cognitive Processing Therapy: This type of therapy addresses the negative thinking and self-blame symptoms that may come with having PTSD.
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR): Uses measured exposure to traumatic memories with alternating stimuli (eye movements are one of several options).
- Exposure Therapy: A skilled practitioner helps people safely face what they find traumatizing, so they can learn to cope effectively.
- Group Therapy: Meeting with others who are also dealing with PTSD. Helps build resilience, lessen shame, and provides support.

Medications

- Antidepressants: Some medications have been approved by the FDA for treatment of adults.
- Other biological interventions
  - Marijuana: It has been legalized in many states and there is an indication it may be helpful, but there has not been a randomized controlled trial on its effectiveness.
  - Methyleneoxymethylamphetamine (MDMA): Research is underway to assess MDMA’s effectiveness for treatment of PTSD. It is currently not legal in the U.S.

Alternative Treatments: Some health care professionals have found the following helpful:

- Yoga
- Aqua Therapy
- Acupuncture
- Peer Support Groups
- Massage Therapy
- Pet or Equine Therapy
- Energy Processing
- Hypnotherapy
- Trauma and Recovery
- Mindfulness and Meditation
- Neuro-Linguistic Programming

If you are considering treatment, consult with your primary care doctor or your health care plan for referral information to a professional who is experienced in treating PTSD.
A Word About Veterans by Heidi Bjurstrom

“The simple act of caring is heroic.” Edward Albert, Actor

Veteran’s Day is a time for thanking our country’s heroes. No matter from which vantage point we view the political landscape, or the reasons that our country is or has been engaged in conflicts around the world, we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the brave women and men who have served in the U.S. military. While each November 11th we celebrate those who took an oath, put on a uniform and went off to serve, that is only part of the story.

According to the U.S. Census, around 4 million veterans are living with a service-connected disability in the U.S. I count myself lucky to be married to one of those disabled veterans. As a spouse of a proud U.S. Army veteran living with physical and mental health disabilities that came from his military service, I have learned a lot about what it means to serve. I have learned from him about honor and sacrifice, brotherhood and camaraderie that come from being a member of the military.

I have also learned about what it means to serve as a spouse of my disabled veteran-husband. I have learned that PTSD rarely rests, that the persistent memories, flashbacks, and frightening dreams haunt him. I have learned that the stress of managing some basic life-tasks can feel so overwhelming to him at times that it can make him want to give up... though as a soldier he was taught never to surrender. I have learned that it takes a fine balance between supporting, pushing, backing-off, and kicking-butt to help him remain well physically and mentally. I have learned about honor and sacrifice, love and commitment.

On this Veteran’s Day, please take time to honor and thank our nation’s heroes. Not only those who stood up for our country, but also those who stand behind our veterans every day to help mend their visible and invisible injuries. To all veteran family members and caregivers, thank you for your service.

NAMI’s newest signature program, NAMI Homefront, is a six-week class to help family members of veterans living with mental health disorders learn to help and support their vet. If you are interested in NAMI Homefront, contact Heidi Bjurstrom (heidi.b@namiswwa.org) for more information.

8-WEEK CLASS

Peer-to-Peer

Building recovery and mental wellness skills for people with mental health challenges interested in establishing and maintaining their wellness.

- An 8-session 2 hour educational program
- Taught by a trained team with lived experience
- Create a personalized relapse prevention plan
- Understand the impact of symptoms on your life
- Develop confidence for making decisions and reducing stress
- Learn skills to begin advocating for yourself and how to interact with others
- Registration is required
Hello Friends!
Welcome to the Cowlitz Corner.

We invite you to come and explore all the services we offer to those living with mental illness as well as for the loved ones who support them. Our staff and volunteers are all peers with lived experience, and our office is a safe, inviting, confidential environment for all.

Please remember November 11, is "Veterans Day." This is a day of remembrance and recognition for those who have bravely served our country and enabled us to enjoy the many freedoms we all tend to take for granted. Please take a moment and thank a veteran for their service. If you have the honor of knowing a Vietnam vet, please "welcome them Home." They didn't have the honor of hearing that back then.

My Darling Husband, Ron, "Thank you for your service" and "Welcome Home". I love you!

See you all next month and have a Blessed Thanksgiving!

Jan ~

**Veteran’s Day by Tom Cousino**

As Veteran’s Day approaches, we remember the 100-year anniversary of the end of World War I. Thousands of soldiers died in Europe, but many more came home wounded. The pressing medical issue of the war wasn’t missing arms and legs but was something much worse. The term ‘shell-shock,’ nicknamed by the soldiers themselves, was psychological distress attributed to concussions caused by the impact of shells. Shell-shock symptoms included disorientation, tremors, and nightmares. However, soldiers who were not exposed to exploding shells or weapons experienced the same symptoms.

As military doctors struggled to understand what they were dealing with, the name changed over time. In World War II, it was ‘war neurosis’ and Vietnam it was called ‘combat fatigue.’ Today, it’s called ‘PTSD’ or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Thousands of military veterans come home physically wounded but also mentally. PTSD is responsible for more than 125,000 veterans’ suicides since 1999.

Despite advances in the understanding of the human brain, suicide is still a major issue among the veteran community. On average, 22 veterans commit suicide every day. Through a better understanding of PTSD and reaching to veterans in our community, we can help those who need assistance. As a veteran myself, our motto was never to leave a soldier behind. That still rings true today.

**Peer to Peer**

**Peer to Peer** Building recovery and mental wellness skills for people with mental health challenges interested in establishing and maintaining their wellness. In Vancouver November 6–December 18, Tuesdays 12:30 pm–3:00 pm. Pre-registration required go to namiswwa.org. This class already started in Longview.

**Our Mission:**

NAMI SW WA is dedicated to helping all people affected by mental illness through education, support, and advocacy. We offer HELP for today and HOPE for tomorrow.
**Bulletin Board**

**Holiday Gift Bags** Now accepting donations for warm gloves and hats (please no tassels, strings, or scarves), personal care items such as unscented soap, shampoo, lotion, and fun-sized wrapped chocolates. We provide 150 Holiday Bags to peers who are working to regain stability in Southwest Washington’s critical in-residence mental health and substance use facilities. Take the opportunity to come together to stuff holiday bags for those who need them while recovering. On Monday December 17 starting at 5 pm, we will be filling holiday bags with donations at NAMI SW WA Vancouver Office at 5411 E. Mill Plain Blvd.

**Support Groups in Vancouver**

**Family Support Group** Family members and loved ones gain support in a facilitated environment, Thursdays, 3-4:30 pm.

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

**Connection Support Group** Feel supported and connected to part of a community of others going through similar challenges. Thursdays, 3–4:30 pm.

**Support Groups in Longview**

**Dual Recovery Anonymous** DRA is a twelve step self-help program for individuals who experience both chemical dependency and an emotional or psychiatric illness. All adults with persistent mental illness and addictions are welcome to participate. In Longview every Monday from 1-2 pm.

**Family Support Group** Family members and loved ones gain support in a facilitated environment, Tuesdays 6-7:30 pm.

**Connection Support Group** Feel supported and connected to part of a community of others going through similar challenges. Thursdays, 3-4:30 pm.

**Psychoeducational Class**

**STRivE First Steps to Recovery** 10 sessions provide education and tools for recovery from mental health challenges. In Vancouver Tuesdays, 3:30 -5:00 pm and in Longview Thursdays, 1 – 2:30 pm. Confidential. Drop-ins welcome at any time.
Help support the one in four Americans who will be affected by mental illness this year.

Thank you for being part of the team!