40th Anniversary!
NAMI SW WA is celebrating our 40th year of serving people in our communities!

Helping People Since 1978
Dear Members and Friends,

It is hard to believe that we are moving toward the end of the year already; the nice thing about the upcoming Winter Solstice is that in just three weeks the days will begin to get longer and, although we are moving toward months of rain, I welcome the fact that there will be more daylight. If you have not seen the swans on the wetlands around the county, check them out. They bring a great sense of joy and peace to many of us.

We have big things going on at NAMI SW WA. First, we are welcoming Angie Cruz, MAE, LMHC, MHP, R-DMT as our new Director of Behavioral Health Services. She started her work here on November 19th. There is a short article by Angie on pages 4 and 5 in which she tells our members and friends a bit about herself. Please stop by our Vancouver office to meet her!!!

Janet Ragan, MA, LMHC ended her service with us on November 29. This is Janet’s second retirement. Her first was from Columbia River Mental Health Services prior to the time in 2015 when she chose to come to NAMI SW WA as a volunteer. Within the first year of her volunteering we had begun talking about the need for a different sort of Behavioral Health Service especially for those individuals who could not do well at the large agencies. Out of these discussions came NAMI SW WA Behavioral Health Services. During Janet’s tenure she has trained four interns and one newly credentialed counselor. We are grateful for the amazing time and effort that Janet has offered to create and grow this program, and we wish Janet the very best in this new phase of her life. We will all miss her very much.

All of this is coming together just at the time of the celebration of our 40th Anniversary. See the article on page 6. This is the first in a series of articles celebrating this anniversary. As you will read, we are actually older than both NAMI and NAMI WA; some of our founders were present at meetings of people from across the nation who formed and named both of those organizations. We thank all those family members who participated in this founding for their desire to help their children and other family members who were diagnosed with some of the serious mental health disorders with which they would possibly be forced to live the remainder of their lives in a state mental hospital. These family members wanted more for their loved ones and advocated and fought for them in their local neighborhoods, towns and cities, states, and the nation. Since the founding, NAMI affiliates across the nation have been known for the education, support, and advocacy that we each provide in our communities. Our founding has
been part of a very successful grassroots effort!

Please join us on December 17th at about 5 p.m. as we pack the holiday bags that are given to those who are staying in local mental health beds, are participating in some intensive out-patient programs and dealing with serious mental illnesses. The bags will contain socks, hats, gloves, toiletries, and many treats and will be delivered during that week. All are welcome to the bag packing party where we will have some light refreshments, and music by our regular and very talented volunteer, Sam, the son of our SW WA Ombuds, Melanie Maiorino. This is a drop-in event; all are welcome.

Have a great December and join us as we welcome in the New Year.

Peggy
NAMI SW WA’s new Director of Behavioral Health: Angie Cruz

Angie comes to NAMI/BHS with 13 years of experience in the mental health/social services field, and a lifetime of experience with mental wellness. She earned her Master’s degree in Mental Health Counseling and Expressive Therapies from Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After undergoing post-partum depression after the birth of her second child, she spent a year as a consumer of the mental health industry. She experienced what she called “The Black Void.” After a year of treatment and soul-searching, she decided to valiantly rediscover who she was, before the role of wife and mother. She had to remember what brought her joy (besides loving her family). For Angie, it was dance! She enrolled in a local junior college and signed up for a dance class and psychology class. Rediscovering her love of movement, coupled with her fascination with the brain, she wondered if there was a way to “marry” these two interests. Angie then discovered the field of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) or Movement Psychotherapy. After recovering from her post-partum depression, she felt a deep calling to assist other people living with mental illness, to help them out of their “Black Voids” as well.

In 2005, Angie sold her home and relocated to Massachusetts with her family to pursue her career. She completed a practicum working at the Perkins School for the Blind (where Helen Keller was a student), and three internships working with several populations from adolescents with dual diagnosis to adults with severe and chronic mental illness. During her internship at Mclean Hospital and Waverly Place (a clubhouse model driven by Peers), she quickly deviated from the medical model on mental illness to a more holistic approach towards mental wellness. After all, the difference between “illness” and “wellness” is “we.” It is through a collaborative approach that we heal.

Angie has worked her way up from an intern, clinician, licensed mental
health counselor, supervisor, program manager and now has accepted the position as Director of Behavioral Health Services at NAMI SW WA. She has worked with populations from age 3 to 64 and has worked with a wide variety of diversified people from all walks of life. She is bilingual in English and Spanish and enjoys integrating the arts, spirituality, and nature into her daily living. Angie lives in Vancouver with her two children and three cats.

When asked what Angie would like to see incorporated into BHS at NAMI, she replied, “I would like to integrate aspects of NAMI SW WA with BHS. I hope to create a culture of change that will embrace mental wellness rather than pathologizing people and reinforcing the stigma of mental illness. I would love to reinforce health, wellness, the arts and nature into our program, in any way possible. While there is no way I can ever replace Janet Ragan, our current Director of BHS, I hope to make her proud by building upon the program that she built from the ground up. I am saddened to see Janet and Melinda retire, as during the little time I have had the pleasure of working with them they have been instrumental in welcoming me and training me, and I have the utmost respect for them. I wish them both a happy retirement and hope that Peggy and I will keep our programs growing and thriving. I look forward to working with everyone here at NAMI SW WA/BHS and am grateful for the privilege of leading others towards mental wellness and joyful living.”
In the late 1970’s, across the United States, parents were forming support groups to help one another as they learned to deal with loved ones diagnosed with serious mental illnesses. Many of the groups, as here in SW WA, were called Schizophrenia Support Groups. In Clark County, a group was founded and then licensed by WA State as a 501 c (3) in 1978; in Cowlitz County this occurred in 1979. In 1979, many parents from these two groups and others from around the nation met together in Wisconsin. At this meeting it was decided to form an alliance so the groups could work together on the many issues they were all facing. Some of these included:

- Is there anything that we can do as family members to help our loved ones live in our homes/communities while they are dealing with serious mental illness or will they need to spend their lives in state mental hospitals that are not providing the services we would like to see for our loved ones?
- There is recent data, showing that new medications being developed by the pharmaceutical industry really helpful for our loved ones and could this lead to their recovery?
- Is there such a thing as recovery from a serious mental health diagnosis?
- If state mental hospitals are closed, what will happen to our loved ones when they cannot remain in the community because of their behaviors?
- How do we work with law enforcement when our loved ones are arrested because of behaviors caused by their illness?

These thorny questions are still central to all who support their loved ones living with any sort of mental illness, by the individuals themselves, and by those who work in this field or others related to it.

However, back in 1979 those who gathered together in Wisconsin decided to name this alliance, the Alliance on Mental Illness (AMI). States could add their name to the front of that so in WA State we had WAMI and in Clark and Cowlitz County these groups added the County name to the AMI. Later, the AMI group decided they needed a National group and this became NAMI.

In 2013 to build a stronger position for our small groups in Clark and Cowlitz County, we decided to join forces and form NAMI SW WA. At that time we were part of the SW WA Behavioral Health Regional Support Network that included all the pro-
Farewell

FAREWELL TO TWO INTEGRAL PLAYERS AT NAMI SW WA!

We want to thank you for your service to NAMI SW WA for several years. Melinda McLeod is retiring from her executive assistant position after 3 1/2 years. We are also saying farewell to Director of Behavioral Health Services, Janet Ragan who worked for NAMI SW WA for 3 years.

Janet Ragan can turn any training into an entertaining and interactive experience. She is intelligent, thoughtful, and gentle. Her peace surrounds the office in a reassuring and supportive hug. Janet Ragan came to NAMI SW WA as a volunteer in 2014 after her first retirement from Columbia River Mental Health. She became an employee in 2015 when we asked her to help us get licensed for offering counseling for individuals on WA State health care (Medicaid).

Melinda McLeod is an avid game player and artist who binds her own journals and knows a lot about different media in the creative landscape. She is an amazing person who is bright, smiles easily, and whose laugh is infectious. She created an efficient and organized environment and can answer, operate, and locate anything before you can finish your question.

These two amazing women will be missed as they embark on the next chapter of their lives. We hope to see them around NAMI SW WA on occasion for visits and hugs. Thank you for your service and contribution to the growth of our organization.
Deanna Davis was a costume designer for a small stage theater in Newberg, OR for six years. She has a BA in theatre technology and design from George Fox University. She loved the design aspect but didn't have the resources for a costume team, so she became burnt out constructing costumes by herself. Theatre taught Deanna how to roll with the punches and work in a team. “The community and camaraderie are uplifting, and I greatly miss that. I have one dog, Spencer, who is a 16-year-old Lhasa-Poo (Lhasa Apso/Poodle mix). He is a grumpy old man who loves sleeping.”

Deanna volunteered at NAMI SW WA at the front desk for several months before stepping into the Executive Assistant/Office Manager role starting this month. She needed to complete some community service while unemployed, and NAMI SW WA jumped out at her. She loves dogs but felt a true connection with others struggling with a mental wellness diagnosis would be more suited to her skill set.

Deanna participated in the Portland DBT program for two years at the beginning of her recovery from a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder. She worked hard to become stable and continues to maintain through self-reflection, therapy, group therapy, and learning from others.

She enjoys video games and playing card or board games with her family and friends. She also enjoys history, mainly the WWII era and Native American history. Deanna’s parents gave her a wonderful Civil War tour on the East Coast when she graduated college as well. “It was incredible. I love learning about the people that made up the day-to-day life of our past. Mental illness history is a big interest right now; we really have come a long way but still, have so much to change.”

Deanna likes to say mental "wellness" instead of "illness." She was born with a congenital respiratory defect which made her think she wasn't "normal." She learned over the years and came to accept that what she is today is her normal. She is always changing and bettering herself, but she cannot criticize herself for being her.

Deanna maintains her wellness by playing board and card games. “I also let myself feel all my feelings. I take time out of my day, or at least several times a week, to reflect, journal, and check in with myself. "How are you feeling?" "Have you done everything you can? If so, let it go." Cuddles with my dog always helps too.”
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
(Second Wednesday this month)
THURSDAY NAMI Walks & Talks     11:30-12:30   Family Support Group     3:00-4:30pm   Connection Recovery      3:00-4:30pm   Support Group      FRIDAY  Creative Writing for Wellness    12:00-1:00pm   Expressive Arts      1:00-4:00pm
Unforseen circumstances may cause a group or class to be cancelled. Please call ahead to confirm.

Support groups and classes are facilitated by trained volunteers and professionals.

aclassic: Drug in treatment for those affected by mental health challenges. Call to sign up.

Support for families of military personnel who are a mental health diagnosis. Call to sign up.

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.

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

Disclosures and tools for a successful and sustained mental wellness. 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 challenges. Drop in.

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

Provide 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

360-695-2823
Suite 4
5411 E. Mill Plain
On Mill Plain Blvd between Devine and MacArthur. Our entrance is on the West side.

DISABILITY/WORK INCENTIVES COUNSELING

PROVIDES SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

INFORMATION LINE 9-5 Monday-Friday

CALL 360-695-2823

BY APPOINTMENT

W/ Cindy Falter

DISABILITY/WORK INCENTIVES COUNSELING

360-695-2823
Suite 4
5411 E. Mill Plain
On Mill Plain Blvd between Devine and MacArthur. Our entrance is on the West side.
Office Closed

**MONDAY**
- Office hours: 10:00-4:00
- Dual Recovery Anonymous: 1:00-2:00pm

**TUESDAY**
- Table Top Games: 2:00-4:00pm
- Office hours: 10:00-4:00
- STRiVE First Steps: 1:00-2:30pm

**WEDNESDAY**
- Expressive Arts: 12:00-3:00pm
- Office hours: 10:00-4:00

**THURSDAY**
- STRiVE First Steps: 1:00-2:30pm
- Office hours: 10:00-4:00
- Connection Recovery: Spring Group Drop-In

**FRIDAY**
- Office Closed

PROVIDES SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

CALL 360-695-2823

INFORMATION LINE 9-5 Monday-Friday

**1128 BROADWAY**

Longview, WA 98632

DISABILITY/WORK INCENTIVES COUNSELING

BY APPOINTMENT

CALL 360-695-2823

INFORMATION LINE 9-5 Monday-Friday

CALL 360-695-2823

PROVIDES SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

BY APPOINTMENT

CALL 360-695-2823

INFORMATION LINE 9-5 Monday-Friday

CALL 360-695-2823

PROVIDES SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

BY APPOINTMENT

CALL 360-695-2823

INFORMATION LINE 9-5 Monday-Friday

CALL 360-695-2823

PROVIDES SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

BY APPOINTMENT

CALL 360-695-2823

INFORMATION LINE 9-5 Monday-Friday

CALL 360-695-2823
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
Chasing Away the Winter Blues by Angela Swanson

Chasing Away the Winter Blues

The ideal image of the holidays usually involves festive lights, steaming mugs of deliciousness, and laughter among loved ones. Winter itself is the epitome of coziness and warmth while admiring the frosted beauty of the outside world.

So, what happens when instead of engaging in the merriment of the season, you find yourself dreading social gatherings? Instead of enjoying snowfall and winter sunsets, do you long for the summer sun and days that stretch beyond rush hour, and feel isolated, alone, and just plain depressed?

You aren't alone. Major depression with seasonal patterns (formerly Seasonal Affective Disorder), is real and affects an estimated 10 million Americans each year. What was once simply labeled as "Winter Blues," has now been confirmed by doctors and mental health professionals as a major depressive disorder in which episodes occur at the same time each year. Some of the symptoms of the disorder include:

- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Feeling hopeless or sad
- Hypersomnia (oversleeping)
- Weight gain
- Heaviness in the limbs
- Lack of energy
- Avoidance of social situations

And it's no wonder these symptoms are exacerbated by the fact that this time of year is rife with the life stressors coupled with the 'rush' to get a checklist complete, attend parties and family gatherings, often where there are unhealthy food and alcohol aplenty. It's a perfect storm for a depressive episode to rear its ugly head.

While the cause of major depression with seasonal patterns is unknown, many health professionals believe people who have it don’t produce enough melatonin (a hormone that helps regulate sleep) and they over-produce serotonin (a neurotransmitter that regulates mood), resulting in feelings of tiredness and depression. Both of these have also been linked directly to the lack of sunlight and exercise, and the kind of food people eat during the winter months. Because really, who

Continued on Page 13
wants to be outside when the sky is gray, the wind is cold, and warm apple pie is beckoning?

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to combat seasonal depression. These include:

- Broad-band light therapy
- Exercising (if it's too cold for outdoor activity, dancing in your living room or walking around an indoor mall counts!)
- Setting boundaries (saying ‘no' to commitments)
- Scheduling time for self-care (small pleasures like buying yourself a funky new necklace or reading a good book can lift your mood)
- Taking vitamin D

Holidays are a special time, for sure, but if your memories of them include loss or loneliness, reaching out to a trusted friend or relative can be the best medicine. Connecting long-distance on Skype or FaceTime, meeting someone for coffee or a walk, these things require little effort but can go a long way in making you feel less isolated. And if you are having a hard time even after doing some of these things, seeking counseling and taking proper medication are always appropriate and should never be seen as weak or unnecessary.

Help Us Create Gift Bags and Spread Some Cheer!

Help us create gift bags for those in critical mental health care. **Monday, December 17 at 5 pm.**

- **Warm Gloves & Hats**
  No strings or tails. No scarves, please.
- **Individually Wrapped Candy**

There will be live music & refreshments.
5411 E. Mill Plain, Suite 4, Vancouver, WA (360) 695-2823

Questions? Contact 360-695-2823
Hello Friends and Happy Holidays to you all!

Welcome to the Cowlitz Corner!

I 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.

We are looking ahead to next year (2019) and hoping to hold another "Family to Family" (10-week program) and "Peer to Peer" (8-week class) beginning in February or March, all at no charge to participants. Please check out our website (namiswwa.org) for information on each of these classes. If you are interested, go ahead and sign up online or give me a call and I will add you to the list. We have limited space so sign up early.

I’m wishing you all Peace, Love and Good Health in this Holiday season. Without you, we would not be here. If you would like to donate to us in this time of giving, we would appreciate it immensely! We are a non-profit, and our doors stay open only because of your donations!

Happy Holidays from all of us in the NAMI SW WA Cowlitz Office!

~ Jan

along with Debbie, Ron, Lee, Zach, LeeAnn, Jim, Tom and Jeannie!

For Sale by Teryl Gallagher

I walked up and down, down and up the street downtown today wearing a sandwich board that said, “Anyone want to be me? Free 30 day trial. No interest due ‘til 3012. Fully guaranteed to last a lifetime!” Not one single taker. Can you believe it? Well I guess I can. I don’t want to be me either.

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** 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. There will be live music and refreshments.

**Table Top Games** Tuesdays 2-4pm, great time and place to relax and just have fun with friends! We supply the board games and you bring the FUN! Bring your favorite game. In Longview.

**Signature Classes**
Classes starting in January in Vancouver and Longview (dates and times to be determined).

**Family to Family** is a twelve-week education course for families with adult family members with a mental health diagnosis.

**Basics** is a six-week education course for parents and caregivers of children and adolescents living with mental health challenges.

**Homefront** is a six-week education course for families and friends of service members and veterans living with mental illness.

**Family and Friends** is a 90-minute presentation that provides information, support, and help for family and friends of a loved one with a mental health diagnosis.

*Sign up online at namiswwa.org or call 360-695-2823 (Vancouver) or 360-703-6722 (Longview) to register. There is no charge to attend these classes.*

**NAMI Training or Support Group Facilitator Training**

Have you attended and benefited from NAMI Support Groups or Education Classes? Would you like to become a NAMI Support Group or NAMI Education class facilitator? NAMI Washington is offering free training to become a NAMI Support Group facilitator or NAMI Education program leader. **NAMI Family Support Group training is January 12-13, 2019.** **NAMI Connection Peer Support Group training is February 2-3, 2019.**

*Please call Heidi at 360-695-2823 if you are interested in becoming a NAMI SW WA program leader.*
Help support the one in four Americans who will be affected by mental illness this year.

Thank you for being part of the team!