

Brain Storm

Our Mission

NAMI Tri-Valley, in collaboration with other community agencies and organizations, is dedicated to improving the quality of life for those whose lives are affected by mental illness, by providing support, resource information, education programs, and advocacy.

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CalABLE: Providing People with Disabilities Greater Financial Security

By Rosemarie Thorne, NAMI Tri-Valley 2nd Vice President

California Achieving a Better Life Experience (CalABLE) is a new program that will allow people with disabilities to establish a tax-advantaged ABL account that allows them to save up to \$14,000 (currently) per year and up to \$100,000 in total without losing vital public benefits such as SSI or SSDI or Medi-Cal. Earnings in these accounts are not subject to federal income tax or California state income tax, so long as the earnings are spent on Qualified Disability Expenses.

In 2014, President Obama signed the Stephen Beck, Jr. Achieving a Better Life

Experience Act (IRC Section 529A).

Prior to the federal ABL Act, a person with a disability receiving support from public benefit programs was not able to save more than \$2,000 without their SSI being suspended and any other asset accumulated would have been counted against them.

In 2015, the California State Legislature created the California Achieving a Better Life Experience Board (CalABLE or the Board) to implement the ABL program in California. The Board is currently seeking input from its future participants in the development of CalABLE

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Cal ABL Informational Meeting

NAMI Tri-Valley will proudly host a special informational meeting with a CalABLE Director on **January 18, 2017 @ 6:15pm** at the Livermore Public Library. We hope you can join us.

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accounts. The program is anticipated to open for business by summer 2017.

Who is Eligible to Open an ABLÉ Account? An individual who has been diagnosed with a disability before age 26 may qualify by meeting one of the following:

- Is eligible to receive benefits based on disability, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).
- Has a disability certification, including a copy of the diagnosis signed by a physician.

An Eligible Individual, the parent or legal guardian of an Eligible Individual, or the holder of a power of attorney for an Eligible Individual can set up an ABLÉ Account.

What is a “Qualified Disability Expense”?

An expense is qualified if it relates to the person’s disability and helps them maintain or improve their health, independence, or quality of life. Qualified Disability Expenses are not restricted to just medical expenses. They can include basic living expenditures such as expenses for education, housing, transportation, employment support, health, prevention and wellness, assistive technology, financial services, home improvement and funeral services.

For more information:
www.treasurer.ca.gov/able

President’s Column

Welcome to “Brainstorm”, NAMI Tri-Valley’s quarterly newsletter that originally published in 2005. After a few years, we were on a search for volunteers to help us continue the publication. This year, we found our editor, Joyce Lombardo, who has offered to help us make our newsletter a reality again.

We will focus on many topics such as the latest research, events within the NAMI Tri-Valley organization and featuring our youngest writer, a high school student who will highlight youth and mental health issues.

Some of NAMI Tri-Valley’s community activities will include our 4th year collaborating with other mental health organizations to provide a free workshop: Suicide Prevention for Family Caregivers. The support groups will continue as well as our General Meetings.

We always appreciate input from our readers and encourage contributions to our publication. We also have openings for volunteers who love to write. Come help us make our newsletter the best!

So, welcome again to our new (old) publication.

Best Regards,
Marsha McInnis,
President, NAMI Tri-Valley

Winter Quarter Guest Speakers:

FEBRUARY 6, 2017
A PUBLIC FORUM:
CHANGES IN COUNTY
CRISIS SERVICES

Kate Jones, RN, MS
Division Director Crisis Services, Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services

MARCH 6, 2017
Beverly Bergman
Family Caregiver Advocacy Specialist
Mental Health Assn. of Alameda County

Francesca Tannenbaum
Patients' Rights Director for Alameda and San Mateo Counties
Mental Health Assn. of Alameda County

Membership Dues to Increase in July 2017

The NAMI National Board has decided to increase the dues for Regular and Open Door memberships.

All of these changes will become effective as of **July 1, 2017** as outlined below. The dues are renewed annually from the date that you initially paid.

Household Membership (New category)	\$60
Regular Membership	\$40
Open Door Membership	\$5

Mental Health & Youth . . . Points of View

Why Are We Afraid of Mental Illness?

By: Priyadarshini Ramesh

Editor's Note: Priyadarshini is a Dougherty Valley High School Junior who through her own personal experiences strongly encourages others to be open about their struggles with mental illness as a means to promote anti-stigma of psychiatric disorders.

The National Institute of Mental Health author of the article ¹*Any Disorder Among Children*, states that one in five children either currently or at some point has experienced some kind of mental illness. These children, however, are afraid to speak up because of the image that society creates of mental illness.

This is known as stigma against mental illness. Some might say that mental illness makes a person weak and less capable of prospering. Others may believe that mental illness is not a serious enough issue to speak to a professional about it. If people foster a negative stereotype about mental illness in an environment, those with mental illness become afraid to ask for help, which is not a good idea because then one would extend their time with a disabling issue.

If so many children are suffering from a illness, there will be an increase in mental health issues in their adulthood because they never learned how to seek help. If someone is dealing with a mental health issue, they should not have to cope with it alone at all because they aren't in a good headspace. Visiting a therapist or psychologist is essential if we want these children to stop suffering through their lives with depression, anxiety, or another harmful mental illness.

When focusing in on mental illness, we as a community have to think about the

consequences of stigma. Suicide is a major cause of death in adolescents, and it occurs

“We as a community have to think about the consequences of stigma.”

when depressed children feel like there is no way life can get better. These children are in a box and they feel like there is no way out. The stigma is the lid of the box, because it convinces these children that they cannot receive help without facing backlash from people who believe that mental illness is not a real issue. The stigma leaves them completely in the dark, having to fight through their struggles alone.

Parents need to teach their children having a mental illness is completely okay, and it doesn't make a person weak or defenseless. With mental illness, it is very easy to feel like you aren't in control of your emotions, but parents should never convince their children that they will have to always feel like that because they can't get help.

As a parent, if you suspect that your child is struggling with their mind, seek professional help please. Don't let your child fall through the cracks. Therapy or medication does not make them weak or incapable of acting “normally.” It just means that their brain is working a little differently than others and need some help. Don't let you're child suffer for another second because they don't know if anyone cares.

¹<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/any-disorder-among-children.shtml>

NAMI Tri-Valley Support Group Calendar

Family/Caregiver Support Group - Livermore
Meets 2nd Monday of each month:

Monday, January 9, 2017
Monday, February 13, 2017
Monday, March 13, 2017

7:15 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Livermore Library Board Room
1188 S. Livermore Ave., Livermore

Contact: Marsha McInnis 925.980.5331
marsha@nami-trivalley.org

Parent Resource & Support Group - Pleasanton
Meets 3rd Tuesday of each month:

Tuesday, January 17, 2017
Tuesday, February 21, 2017
Tuesday, March 21, 2017

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

5674 Stoneridge Drive, Suite 114, Pleasanton

Contact: Marsha McInnis 925.980.5331
marsha@nami-trivalley.org

Family/Caregiver Support Group - Pleasanton
Meets 4th Monday of each month

Monday, January 23, 2017
Monday, February 27, 2017
Monday, March 27, 2017

7:15 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

5674 Stoneridge Drive, Suite 114, Pleasanton

Contact: Marsha McInnis 925.980.5331
marsha@nami-trivalley.org

NAMI is a non-profit, grassroots, self-help, support and advocacy organization of consumers, families, and friends of people with severe mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic and other severe anxiety disorders, autism and pervasive developmental disorders, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and other severe and persistent mental illnesses that affect the brain.

Brainstorm is published by NAMI Tri-Valley, an affiliate of NAMI National and NAMI California.



Annual Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

NEW RENEWAL

GENERAL: \$35

OPEN DOOR: \$3

Donation

\$ _____ In Memory Of: _____

\$ _____ In Honor Of: _____

Membership dues are tax deductible renewable 12 months from initial application. Membership entitles you to receive NAMI Tri-Valley Newsletter *Brainstorm*, NAMI California publication *The Connection* and NAMI National *The Advocate*. Tax I.D.# 72-1610675. Volunteer and make a major difference in the lives of those affected by mental illnesses.

*Please send this application form
with your check payable to:*

NAMI Tri-Valley
P. O. Box 5563
Pleasanton, CA 94566