

Looking Ahead with Gwen Lewis



By Gwen Lewis

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me to serve as your President. This organization has meant so much to me over the last ten years. NAMI Tri-Valley has provided resources to assist me and many others. Those of you that have been members for a while know this to be true.

We continue to provide Support, Outreach and Education as well as meaningful collaborations with many mental health agencies and organizations and are meeting the needs of our communities.

I look forward to our future endeavors such as maintaining the vitality of our signature programs, continuing to seek funding opportunities through grants and donations and greatly increasing involvement in legislative advocacy.

Please join NAMI Tri-Valley as a member (or renew your membership) today. Your membership is the catalyst that keeps NAMI Tri-Valley engaged in our community.

Suicide Prevention Workshop for Family Caregivers: Saving Lives

By Kelley Thorpe Baker

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Tri-Valley, the Family Education and Resource Center (FERC), and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention hosted the 5th Annual Suicide Prevention Workshop for Family Caregivers on Saturday, August 18, 2018. It was a very successful workshop, training over 40 family members and caregivers.

Mark Rahman, Retired Family Advocate for FERC, opened the day with a video presentation by Kevin Hines, entitled "Cracked, but Not Broken", and concluded with statistics about suicide.

He was followed by Leslie Baker, Owner and Director of Therapy2Thrive of the Ruby Hill Marriage and Family Counseling Center. Leslie's presentation, Understanding Factors in Suicide, centered around warning signs and protective factors for students and youth.

Lynn Gardener, Program Manager, with Horizons Family Counseling, delivered a compelling presentation on Adolescent Development, with a focus on depression and suicide.

The day was wrapped up by Brian Lawrence, Associate Marriage and Family

Therapist, and retired Lieutenant with the Pleasanton Police Department for 32 years. Brian discussed mental health calls, through the eyes of 911 dispatchers and police officers.

Special thanks to Mark Rahman and Jeff Caiola, mental health advocates, for sharing their personal and touching stories.

Marsha McInnis, Founder and President of NAMI Tri-Valley, stated, "We did this workshop because too many families have lost their loved ones to suicide. One loss is too many. This is an area that must be addressed, and we must provide supports to educate and empower families who are struggling."

For additional information, or to pre-register for our next Suicide Prevention Workshop, contact Marsha at marsha@nami-trivalley.org, or call (925) 980-5331.



McInnis Appointed to Alameda County Mental Health Advisory Board

Alameda County Supervisor Scott Hagerty of District 1 has appointed Marsha McInnis to the Alameda County Mental Health Advisory Board as a family member. Marsha has served on the board in the past, from 2003 to 2005 she chaired the Adult Committee and from 2005 to 2007 as Chair of the Board.

"It is important to have that voice, to keep Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services aware of who we are and what our needs are in District 1. I look forward to serving again on the Board," stated McInnis.

Each county in California is required to have a mental health board. The board

members are comprised of professionals, consumers and family members. Each appointee hails from the district they live in.

In Alameda County, there are 5 districts that are governed by elected officials, our county supervisors. District 1 includes Dublin, Livermore, most of Fremont and unincorporated areas of East Alameda County.

Local boards are responsible for reviewing community mental health needs, services, facilities and special problems, and serve in an advisory capacity to local governing bodies and local mental/behavioral health directors per California Welfare and Institutions Code 5604.2.

Embrace the Ride

By Mark Voegelé

Imagine you are in a long line with hundreds of people. You serpentine through aisles of staggered barriers of metal rails. In the distance you hear the clack, clack, clack, clack, clack, of metal on metal. Then there is a brief silence followed by the sound wheels rolling on metal rails accompanied the cacophony of dozens of people screaming. The line moves toward the sound as you anticipatly await your turn to get on the roller coaster.

Before you got in this line you may have gained some perspective first. Perhaps you walked to the fence around the amusement ride and reviewed the rise, the fall, the twists, the turns, the rolls, and the loops. Maybe you are more of an adventurer. Once you heard almost everyone tosses their cookies on this ride you jumped in front of the train (proverbially speaking) to get your adrenaline dose and to test your mettle.

Since this newsletter and this column has its foundation in living with or caring for people with mental illness, I'm willing to bet that you've already made a connection with a lived experience and where this article may be going. All of us who live with or care for someone with mental illness have roller coaster stories that are more terrifying and genuinely threatening than the amusement park variety. Without a doubt, not one of us got in this line voluntarily.

This roller coaster does not afford us the fence side preview that Great America or Six Flags offers. The twists, turns, rolls, loops, ups, and downs are unpredictable. Only on the rarest of occasions do you even get a sense that you are close to boarding the train for another unplanned, unwanted, unpredictable ride.

You may be tempted to ask yourself, "How do I get off this ride?" I submit you should ask this instead, "How do I embrace this ride?" Your loved one may not admit it, but they are counting on you to be ready for the ride. They need you to be ready for the ride as much as you need you to be ready for the ride.

Step one: Acceptance. The ride can happen. The ride is likely to happen. Assume the ride will happen. Do not be anxious about it. Do not imagine it is happening when any tiny subtle, undesirable change

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occurs in your loved one's behavior or patterns, but don't throw caution to the wind either. There is simply nothing to gain from worrying about it or fearing it. Let preparation replace fretting.

Step two: Prepare Documents. There are proactive things you can do. Have papers ready that you can give to mental health professionals. The papers should include some medical history, behavioral history, current medications, current treatments, recent changes in medications and treatments, personal observations, anything that helps the person new to your loved one as a patient to understand them like you do. Always have a current AB1424 form. NAMI CA website has a link for every CA county's version of the form (<https://namica.org/resources/criminal-justice/information-forms>).

Step three: Prepare Support: Identify family and friends that can support you in the event of a crisis. Perhaps you have other loved ones that need care while you tend to the demands of a crisis. Plan support in advance. Who can you call to come to the house to look after the other kids on a moment's notice? Have you made arrangements with your employer or even

told them of the kinds of things that could pop up without notice? In my career I've had more manager changes than job changes. I sat down with every one of them and educated them on mental illness and life as a caregiver. Every one of them was very understanding, supportive, and family-first oriented.

Step four: Prepare Yourself. By "prepare yourself" I mean mentally, emotionally, and purposefully. Take the time to sit down and talk to yourself about possible events. Write down the rational things to do in the event of a crisis. What will you do if you find out there's a crisis while you are at work? What if you find out while you are driving in commuter traffic? What if you walk into a room and find your loved one, cutting themselves, on the floor from an overdose, or you are suddenly assaulted? Plan your responses while you're rational. Rehearse them mentally from time to time. Know that even if you fail to follow those plans to the letter, you've already created a rational plan to get back to as soon as you can check your emotional responses.

Crises are NOT inevitable. In many cases they are probable. In some cases, they seem highly improbable. Whatever your situation, do not wait for a crisis to form ideas about what to do. Plan like you expect it to happen. Pray that it never does.

SUPPORT NAMI TRI-VALLEY

NAMI Tri-Valley Donations Can Now Be Made Online

We are excited to announce that NAMI Tri-Valley donations can now be made online at www.nami-trivalley.com.

The process is simple and streamlined, allowing for donors to give to this worthwhile organization via credit card.

All donations are tax deductible (Tax I.D.# 72-1610675). Thank you in advance for your continuing support of NAMI Tri-Valley! We can't do this work without you.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Monday, November 5, 2018

In Our Own Voice:

A Presentation About Living Well with Mental Illness

7:00pm - 8:30pm

Livermore Public Library, Community Room B

1188 S Livermore Avenue

Contact: Rosemarie Thorne 925.487.8766

romiegt@aol.com

SUPPORT GROUP CALENDAR

NAMI Connection Recovery Group

Meets every Wednesday*

*We will NOT be meeting November 21 or December 26

7:15pm - 8:45pm

St. Clare's Episcopal Church

3350 Hopyard Road, Pleasanton, CA

Contact: Kelley Thorpe Baker 714.296.3444

me@kelleythorpebaker.com

Family/Caregiver Support Group - Livermore

Meets 2nd Monday of each month:

Monday, October 8, 2018

Monday, November 12, 2018

Monday, December 10, 2018

7:00pm - 8:30pm

Livermore Library Board Room

1188 S. Livermore Ave., Livermore

Contact: Marsha McInnis 925.980.5331

marsha@nami-trivalley.org

Family/Caregiver Support Group - Pleasanton

Meets 4th Monday of each month:

Monday, October 22, 2018

Monday, November 26, 2018

Monday, December 24, 2018

7:15pm - 9:00pm

5674 Stoneridge Drive, Suite 114, Pleasanton

Contact: Marsha McInnis 925.980.5331

marsha@nami-trivalley.org

Parent Resource & Support Group - Pleasanton

ON HOLD UNTIL JANUARY 2018

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.

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



Membership Application

Name _____

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E-mail _____

NEW

RENEWAL

INDIVIDUAL (PER PERSON): \$40.00

HOUSEHOLD: \$60.00

OPEN DOOR: \$5.00

The Open Door rate is available to those whose economic circumstances require it, and entitles you to the full rights and privileges of NAMI membership.

Donation

\$_____ In Memory Of In Honor Of:

Your dues include membership in NAMI Tri-Valley, NAMI California, and NAMI National. Membership dues are tax-deductible renewable 12 months from initial application. Membership also entitles you to receive NAMI Tri-Valley Newsletter Brain Storm 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.

You may also donate online at www.nami-trivalley.org.