



National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI

Santa Clara County

December 7, 2015

Dear Friends of NAMI Santa Clara County:

My son Ryan was a good student in high school, an All-Star athlete and popular with his classmates. Suddenly in his junior year things fell apart. Ryan started acting strangely as he spiraled out of control. He was hospitalized and diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder. My husband, John, and I felt hopeless; we knew we needed knowledge about what had happened to our son and where we were headed next.

When we found NAMI's first education course for families, our lives changed for the better. Through NAMI Family-to-Family Education Course, general meetings and support groups, we came to understand Ryan's illness. We learned how to get help from the mental health system and, perhaps more importantly, we heard other members' stories and realized that we were not alone.

Ryan continued to struggle; he was in and out of legal trouble and did not accept consistent treatment. There were frequent conflicts even though we and others tried to help him. Despite our despair we stood by him, knowing he was ill, knowing that his illness was neither his fault nor ours. After some very rough years and the assistance of Judge Manley's Mental Health Court, Ryan participated in the NAMI Peer-to-Peer Recovery Education Course after which time he trained to become a teacher and trainer for the course. Ryan also became a Pal in our Peer PALS Program whereby a person who is progressing along the recovery road becomes a pal to a person struggling with mental illness who wants to find that road; the pair meets weekly and talks on the phone for up to six months. Today, Ryan is employed and leading a meaningful life helping others as a Peer Support Specialist outside of NAMI.

NAMI is dedicated to improving the quality of life of people living with mental illness and their families through support, education and advocacy. All programs are free to participants. Our programs include support groups and education courses for families/caregivers/individuals dealing with mental illness and are provided in English, Spanish, Chinese and Korean. We also have a FaithNet outreach program where we give mental health presentations to faith-based organizations. People living with mental illness give In Our Own Voice presentations by sharing their stories of recovery and wellness. We also make presentations in school settings to teachers, parents and students.

We have just started a new mentoring program called Mentors on Discharge. Mentors participated in a 40-hour training entitled The Art of Self Determination and are now working with people in the hospital with the support of hospital staff. The program matches mentors with people coming out of the hospital, assisting them in finding ways to stay out the hospital, learn more about wellness and recovery and community resources, including NAMI programs.

Your gift is needed to support our programs and presentations throughout Santa Clara County. It will strengthen our voice as an organization of peers, those living with mental illness and their families, to expand outreach, as well as peer mentorship to our community. Please consider by giving anything you can today.

Wishing you and yours a peaceful holiday season,

Executive Director

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