The path to NAMI is as diverse as the people who find it. The individual may be a consumer, parent, sibling, spouse, or friend. The need may be due to a horrific event like suicide, being jailed, failed hospitalizations, or the shutdown of a board and care home. All these paths have one common thread: a porchlight ready to welcome and never judge.

Peter Newman found his way to NAMI-SCC while attending a mood disorders presentation at Stanford University. He learned about the soon-to-be launch of NAMI’s Peer to Peer program. Peter who openly talks about his bipolar disorder, said, “Education formed a very important part of my own recovery so I participated in the first Peer to Peer mentor training course.”

Navah Statman, former president of NAMI-SCC and the presenter of that Stanford event, struggled to find care for her daughter’s mental health condition. Twenty years ago, group programs focused on substance abuse, not mental illness.

Community support services fell short. Her daughter’s psychiatrist suggested the family go to NAMI.

The referral path by doctors, hospitals, therapists, and county services to NAMI has helped families gain understanding and cope, as does calling the NAMI-SCC Warmline. In 2019 Warmline calls increased 24 percent compared to 2018.

One local mother learned about NAMI through a friend in Southern California whose daughter showed early symptoms of bipolar disorder. Another mom spotted a flier at a hospital kiosk, while the compassion of church members steered another family to NAMI.

For John and Gini Mitchem, long-time NAMI advocates and instructors of the family-to-family class, a psychiatrist helping their daughter said, “Get Dr. E. Fuller Torrey’s book *Surviving Schizophrenia* and reach out to NAMI.” After that, the Mitchems “jumped in with both feet.”

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**Suicide and Legislation**

(Extrapolated from an article by Katie King in SJ Spotlight, July 26, 2020)

Sept. 6-12, 2020 is Suicide Prevention Week and World Suicide Prevention Day is observed on Sept. 10 to promote worldwide action to prevent suicides. Various events and activities are held to raise awareness that suicide is a major preventable cause of premature death.

Suicide is a public health crisis that is often overlooked. Santa Clara County has an average of 150 people die from suicide each year. Given a range of suicide prevention measures, a helpful one is legislation (federal, state, regional, and local). This year the U.S. Congress is considering several standalone bills or an inclusive package of legislation. Writing your representative a supporting letter would be helpful.

(Congresswoman Anna Eshoo chairs the Health Sub-Committee, part of the Energy and Commerce Committee (ECC), where new bills originated.)

Victor Ojakian, a suicide loss survivor and co-president of NAMI-SCC explained, “When someone dies from suicide, countless others are affected by the loss. Family, friends, neighbors, classmates, co-workers and church members all share in the sorrow; the pain ripples throughout the community and remains for years to come.”

That grief casts a wide net in the U.S. Recent data from the National Center for Health Statistics shows that suicide has ranked as the 10th leading cause of death for all ages each year since 2008. But some lawmakers in Congress are taking steps that they hope will save lives. The ECC just passed three bills related to suicide prevention. These bills include the Campaign to Prevent Suicide Act (would launch a national media campaign to raise awareness; the Suicide Prevention Lifeline Improvement Act of 2019 (would enhance the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline); and the Suicide Prevention Act (would establish two grant programs to help hospitals/health centers identify and support at-risk patients. Rep. Eshoo said legislative action is even more urgently needed due to COVID-19. “The state of mental health for many has only worsened since the beginning of the pandemic.”

Ojakian said that change will come in increments. “We have a hill to climb because there’s been decades of negativity around mental health…But it’s changing — these bills are indicative of that.”

If you or someone you know is having difficulty with suicidal thoughts or intentions, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255) and/or SCC’s Suicide and Crisis Services hotline (855-278-4204).
NAMI Conference October 12-13, 2020

NAMI California decided to move its annual conference to a virtual platform—just as NAMI National did in July. And just like National, there is no fee. The dates and theme are the same: October 12-13, Driving the Change.

NAMI’s virtual conference presents an opportunity for meaningful discussion, as well as the ability to reflect and connect with peers statewide. NAMI California hopes that the virtual event reaches new members within the community and creates opportunities for engaging discussions within the virtual platform.

All workshops will be recorded and available a few days after the conference has ended, so you will be able to view any missed concurrent sessions.

For anyone who registered in advance and paid a fee, know that the fee will be refunded. This also applies to hotel rooms that were reserved in advance.

Here is a link to registration and other information: www.namica.org/conference

Faith Communities Can Be Powerful Allies in Mental Health Work

By Cindy McCalmont

Paul Boehm is a member of Good Samaritan United Methodist Church in Cupertino. In July 2019, Paul was instrumental in getting an “In Our Own Voice” presentation set up for his congregation. After that presentation, Paul and two other church leaders came to the NAMI-SCC office to discuss how Good Samaritan United Methodist Church could be more involved in mental health work.

“After I retired,” Paul says, “I volunteered cleaning up creeks and that’s when I came face-to-face with homeless encampments. I’ve been trying to learn as much as I can about serious mental illness and what we can do about it ever since.”

October 12 General Meeting

Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services

We’re starting our Fall lineup with the Interim and Deputy Directors of SCC Behavioral Health Services and Valley Medical Center’s COO—Behavioral Health Services. They will discuss how COVID-19 has affected the mental health system and its programs, and how they are working together to improve systems of care.

Sherrri Terao, Interim Director, Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services Department (SCCBHSD)

Sherrri Terao has worked for SCCBHD for 10 years. She has held roles in the Children’s System of Care as Division Director and Deputy Director prior to being appointed Interim Director of the Department. Before joining Santa Clara County, Sherrri worked as Program Director and Chief Program Officer for FIRST 5 Santa Clara County. Sherrri has held roles as a clinical provider of mental health services for children and youth in foster care, has developed and directed child and family serving prevention and treatment programs in community-based organizations and has conducted evaluation and outcome research at the University of Chicago.

Todd Landreneau, MSW, Ph.D, Deputy Director, Managed Care Services, SCCBHD

Dr. Todd Landreneau has been employed by Santa Clara County for about six years during which time he has held numerous Health and Hospital System leadership positions. Over the past 25 years, Todd has held a number of positions in healthcare settings—both as a clinician and healthcare management consultant. In addition to his employment at SCC and Kaiser, Todd has held positions at Stanford Hospital and Clinics and WebMD.

Dr. Curtis Ohashi joined SCVMC in January with over 25 years of executive leadership experience, with a strong operational background in both mental health and substance abuse programs and services. With a Ph.D in Clinical Psychology and having served as CEO at various acute psychiatric facilities in both the public and private sectors, with experience in managing inpatient and outpatient services for diverse populations, Dr. Ohashi brings a wealth of knowledge in advancing Valley Medical Center’s ability to better serve patients & families.

Upcoming October 13 General Meeting

Personalized Treatments for Mood Disorders

Our speaker will be Dr. Leanne Williams, Ph.D, Professor of Psychiatry at Stanford
On June 30, Kyle Galimba became NAMI-Santa Clara County’s new Assistant Events and Fundraising Coordinator. He’s excited to use his experiences to advocate for mental health awareness and is learning as fast as he can to provide the best content and events. Kyle feels very welcomed at NAMI and is working hard to make NAMIWalks Your Way as good as it’s ever been!

Kyle has been managing the social media pages to include more motivational, educational, and multilingual posts as well as NAMI-Santa Clara County updates. He coordinated the entertainment (with the editing help of Cynthia Woods) for the Picnic, NAMIWalks Kick-Off Event, and NAMI-SCC’s 45th Anniversary on August 9, and has been amazed at the passion and talent in our community. He met a lot of NAMI folks when he passed out lunchboxes and he’s excited to meet more!

Kyle wants to thank everyone for welcoming him into the NAMI family and tell you that if you ever see a post or email with a lot of exclamation points, it was probably from him!

In his free time, Kyle reads manga and writes standup comedy. And he has a six-year-old rabbit named Morello.
Thank You To Our Donors!

NAMI-SCC is so grateful to our many generous supporters. We’re able to provide all of our programs free of charge because of this support.

If you are interested in finding out how to support us, go to www.namisantaclara.org or email our Executive Director at rnimbalkar@namisantaclara.org

We would like to thank:

- The Valley Foundation: $40,000 for our Community Peer Program
- Emmett Cervelli & Harold Brown: $30,000 (with match from Apple)
- Keith Skinner: $5,000, in memory of Cathy Boorsma
- Mei Susuki: $500
- Heshmati & Raeissi Charitable Trust: $500

Each year NAMI CA hosts advocacy days to provide a platform for advocates to engage with lawmakers on important policies to improve the quality of life for people with mental illness. NAMI CA is inviting people to join in on Thu, Sept. 10, 8:30 A.M.-1:30 P.M. The meeting will take place via Zoom. To register, go to: https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYrde6pqz4jGdNACOD5sAMNVkTnyNbsRmdKb

Questions? Contact Alex Fuentes at intern2@namica.org

Shining Stars Event

Momentum for Health’s 23rd Annual Shining Stars Event will take place on Friday, Oct. 2. For the first time, the event will be virtual. This year Momentum will be honoring Sara H. Cody, MD, Health Officer and Director, SCC Public Health Department for her tremendous leadership during the pandemic. The event will run both on Zoom and livestream; links will become available closer to the event. For the most current info about the event, go to http://shiningstars20.givesmart.com

MEMBERSHIP/DONATION FORM

Join, renew, or donate to NAMI-SCC (also at www.namisantaclara.org)

Name: _________________________________________________________________

Street Address:  ________________________________________________________

City:_____________________   State: ____   Zip: _________

Phone: _______________________  E-Mail Address: ___________________________

(You will receive your newsletter via email.)

Please accept my annual individual membership at the following level:
Please check one:  □ New   □ Renewal
□ $60 Household Membership   □ $40 Individual/Regular Membership   □ $5 Open Door

Please accept my additional donation(s):  □ General Fund _______________

□ Education Program ___________   □ Other____________

□ In Memory of _________________________   □ In Honor of _________________________

Total Amount Enclosed: $________________
(Make checks payable to NAMI-Santa Clara County)

To pay online, go to //www.namisantaclara.org and click on “Join NAMI.”

Donate a vehicle today. To find out more, call 800-240-0160 or go to www.namisantaclara.org

NAMI-SCC welcomes your membership. Memberships are valid for one year. (Part of your membership dues enrolls you at NAMI State and National, which, in turn, automatically registers you as a member at all levels.) Your additional donations help ensure that we can maintain our office, as well as our education programs. Your membership and donations are tax deductible. Tax #94-2430956

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Phone: 408-453-0400  
Fax: 408-453-2100  
www.namisantaclara.org  
office@namisantaclara.org

Office Hours: 10 A.M.-6 P.M. M-F  
To reach our Warmline, call 408-453-0400 Option 1;  
after hours, press Option 4.

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