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NAMI Santa Clara County

March 2021



**nami**  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

**NEWS**

## Latino Families Find Answers on NAMI Español Webpage

By Moryt Milo

NAMI Español extends a mental health lifeline to Latino families, especially in Santa Clara County where 25 percent of the population, or 500,000 people, make up the Latino community.

Having a Spanish option within the NAMI-Santa Clara County affiliate provides a comforting voice to those in need of mental health assistance. **Lourdes Robles-Velazquez**, who serves as the Community Peer Program Director, has been at the forefront of broadening Spanish-speaking services to the NAMI Latino community since 2015.

Like so many others who found their way to NAMI, Lourdes needed help for herself and her daughter. She took the Family-to-Family class, which at the time was only offered in English. The Spanish coordinator asked Lourdes to assist with the translation and from there her role with NAMI grew.

Lourdes works closely with **Juan Perez**, a NAMI-SCC board member serving as Vice President of Latino Outreach, with the shared goal of reaching as many Spanish-speaking individuals as possible.

When Juan wanted to use WhatsApp as a communication tool for the Wellness Recovery Action Plan program (WRAP), Lourdes saw immediate crossover value. For many, coming to the NAMI office was difficult and this presented an easy way to connect families already familiar with the app. The idea caught on quickly, especially as isolation and mental health issues exploded during the pandemic.

After Governor Newsom put COVID stay-at-home orders into place last March, connecting with a Spanish-speaking NAMI employee became even more critical. Within two weeks, NAMI-SCC had its Latino support groups online. Demand became so strong that groups went from monthly to weekly meetings. Today, close to 30 people work in various capacities with the Latino programs.

As the pandemic forced changes, Lourdes and her counterparts at other California affiliates expressed an urgent need to NAMI National for the revised Family-to-Family curriculum manual to be translated into Spanish. Lourdes and Spanish-speaking facilitators countrywide teamed up with National to complete the translation. The Spanish version should be available within a few months.

NAMI-SCC also launched a NAMI Español webpage for the Latino community. And Lourdes is far from finished. "I hope to build a stronger nationwide network of facilitators to support each other so our Latino population can have the same support and help as every other community has."

To learn more about NAMI Español, go to <https://namisantaclara.org/nami-santa-clara-blogs/>

## Slate of Board Officers 2021-2022

All of our Board officers have agreed to serve one more term. Here is our slate for 2021-2022:

Co-Presidents: **Victor Ojakian, Beverly Lozoff**

VPs: **Juan Perez, Harold Brown, Uday Kapoor**

Treasurer: **Steve Wade**

Secretary: **Peter Newman**

The slate of candidates will be voted on at the March general meeting and the installation of officers will take place in April.

In addition, our Board has three members-at-large positions and we are looking to fill one of them. If you would like to learn more about this position, please contact Beverly at [blozoff@namisantaclara.org](mailto:blozoff@namisantaclara.org)

# NAMI-SCC Explores Bedlam's Central Issues



On February 15, NAMI-Santa Clara County screened the film *Bedlam*, watched by more than 200 viewers. The event included a post-film panel that focused on the documentary's central themes including housing, treatment, incarceration, and the pandemic. The panelists included former California State Senator **Jim Beall**, Momentum for Health CEO/President **David Mineta**, *Bedlam* documentarian **Dr. Kenneth Rosenberg**, and NAMI peer mentor **Allison Murray**. The panelists provided insight on these issues. During the panel, an engaged audience posed questions within the chat feature that enhanced the conversation.

If you'd like to watch the film, it is available on various platforms including [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org), YouTube, and Amazon Prime. Be sure to google *Bedlam the Documentary*.

If you'd like to see the panel discussion, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZ2iYbpnmrw>

## SCC County Seeks Public Comments on Innovation Project

### Community Mobile Response Program

A number of Santa Clara County mental health nonprofits, led by the Behavioral Health Contractors' Association (BHCA), have been working for months on a crisis response model that is truly community focused. The program seeks to address crisis in a way that doesn't result in unnecessary policy contracts, incarceration, or emergency involuntary treatment.

The Draft Plan of the new MHSA Innovation (INN) project-15: Community Mobile Response (CMR) Program is now available on the Behavioral Health Services Department (BHSD) website:

[www.sccbhsd.org/mhsa](http://www.sccbhsd.org/mhsa) The Draft Plan's public posting continues until March 14, 2021. The Draft Plan document also includes notes from the planning input sessions that were held from Dec. 2020 to Jan. 2021, as well as the recent presentation BHSD provided at the February 10, 2021 MHSA Stakeholder Leadership Committee (SLC) meeting.

Community input is very important. Please read about the Community Mobile Response Program by going to the links provided above. Then use the following link to provide comments and feedback:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/INN15\\_30daypublicposting](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/INN15_30daypublicposting)

## General Meeting News

### February 9 General Meeting Summary The #SameHere Global Mental Health Movement

**Eric Kussin**, our February general meeting speaker, kept our audience engaged with his enthusiasm and good will for well over an hour. He shared his mission: to normalize society's perception of mental health and make it part of our everyday conversation. To do this, Eric formed a global alliance, The Global Mental Health Alliance. It is comprised of athletes and celebrities along with media members, expert practitioners, advocates, and everyday heroes who have come together to make talking about mental health a common topic for "5 out of 5" of us; in other words, everyone lives through challenging events and more people are talking about them.

Eric also shared his personal story of a very serious depression that kept him in bed for 2+ years. Today, Eric travels around the country and the world presenting to schools (K-12 as well as colleges), corporate offices, military personnel, first responders, and professional sports teams.

To learn more about Eric's nonprofit, go to [www.samehereglobal.org](http://www.samehereglobal.org)

To view Eric's entire presentation, go to this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3kZmjLOLfo&t=8s>

**NOTE:** You can watch past General Meeting presentations by going to our website [www.namisantaclara.org](http://www.namisantaclara.org) under News & Events and clicking on "General Meetings."

### Upcoming March 9 General Meeting "Ask the Doctor"

**Dr. Brandon Bentzley** has graciously accepted our invitation to join us for "Ask the Doctor" where most of the evening provides an opportunity for audience members to ask questions on topics such as medications and treatments.



Dr. Bentzley is a psychiatrist and Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences at Stanford's School of Medicine. His current research focuses on the role of dopamine in economic decisions and developing neuro-stimulation-based treatments for severe depression and suicidality.

Dr. Bentzley received his Bachelor's degree in physics from The College of New Jersey. After graduating, he spent a year conducting plasma physics research in a joint project between Princeton and NASA. He then turned to his interest in neuro-science and began his training in the Medical Scientist Training Program (MD/PhD) at the Medical University of South Carolina. There, he completed his dissertation research studying the behavioral economics and neuro-economics of substance use disorders. Simultaneously, he conducted clinical research on buprenorphine maintenance therapy, focusing on how patient perspectives influence treatment.

# NAMIWalks Silicon Valley

**NAMIWalks SV 2021:** NAMIWalks Silicon Valley 2020 is officially over and we are ready to take the next step forward. In net profits, NAMIWalks SV 2020 raised over \$180,000, the most money NAMI-Santa Clara County has made for this event! This is a true testament to the perseverance of our community and the transition of understanding—people recognize the necessity of mental health and replacing the stigma with compassion and empathy.



The NAMIWalks 2021 theme is Unity. NAMI-SCC stands together and we stand with you for a better place where finding community support

is celebrated, not neglected.

In January, we released a survey to collect the community's impressions of our first-ever virtual event. According to our

findings, the community feels our team was technologically savvy and honestly enjoyed the event. Most respondents also stated that they would not mind another virtual or hybrid event, meaning there would be an option for in-person AND virtual components of the 2021 Walk. It is not too late to share your thoughts. Click on this link for the survey:

<https://forms.gle/if9Ffu9nUoRNKgYa8> OR email [kgalimba@namisantaclara.org](mailto:kgalimba@namisantaclara.org) with your comments.

We are grateful that so many of you gave the virtual event a chance. NAMI-SCC is not possible without you. This year, we will provide the best, most engaging, and most significant Walk that we can. Thank you for your loyalty and patience. Our biggest goal is to reflect your passion and live up to your expectations in 2021.

**NAMIWalks 2020 T-Shirts:** Throughout February, we passed out more than half the T-shirts for all our NAMIWalks Silicon Valley participants who raised over \$100. We will have more pickup opportunities in the months ahead. Clothing can make a statement, and we appreciate your decision to wear your support for NAMI-SCC and its message of unity and understanding.

## NAMI-SCC Legislative Update: SB 1152

**SB 1152** requires hospitals to revise current discharge policies to assist homeless patients in preparing for their return to the community by helping them identify a post-discharge destination, with priority given to identifying a sheltered destination with supportive services.

Prior to discharging a homeless patient, of events, such as offering the homeless patient a meal, screening for infectious disease, weather-appropriate clothing, and transportation to a certain destination within a 30-mile radius. Hospitals must also have a written

plan for coordinating services and referrals for homeless patients with the county behavioral health agency, health care and social services agencies in the region, health care providers and nonprofit social services providers. Each hospital will be required to maintain a log of the homeless patients discharged from their facilities and the post-discharge destinations.



## Why Are People with Schizophrenia More Likely To Die of COVID-19?

By Lorraine Zeller, MHRS

A study recently released by JAMA Psychiatry reports: "A schizophrenia diagnosis is the second largest predictor of mortality from COVID-19, second only to age. It postulates that adults with schizophrenia spectrum diagnoses may be more susceptible to COVID-19 mortality due to biological factors related to their psychiatric illness or treatment." Unfortunately, an article published in The Philadelphia Inquirer (<https://www.inquirer.com/health/coronavirus/covid-coronavirus-schizophrenia-mental-illness-psychiatric-disorder-20210202.html>) based on the JAMA study shows that stigma is still alive and well as the statements of two leading psychiatrists characterize people with schizophrenia as unwilling or unable to care for themselves.

Psychiatrist Robert Davis noted that poor adherence to medication for underlying conditions may be a factor. He also said that schizophrenia patients often have a harder time following a dietary regimen. As he put it, "Their diets may be less balanced because they have less ability to prepare healthy meals."

David Greenspan, chair of the Department of Psychiatry at Einstein Medical Center, claimed that people with psychotic

disorders tend to be "physically sicker because they don't take care of themselves as well" also pointing out that "the schizophrenia group in this sample had a higher propensity to be male, to be Black, to be in their 60s, and to have almost all the co-morbid conditions that we associate with deaths from COVID."

The JAMA study did not examine the deleterious effects of neuroleptics that lead to many co-morbid conditions that increase the likelihood of death from COVID-19 and their effect on the immune system. Additionally, according to Mark Salzer, Professor of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Temple University College of Public Health, the Inquirer article did not include other causes such as "residential instability, unemployment, diminished social support, and horrific prejudice and discrimination they experience, including by the healthcare systems that presume to care about them." He asks healthcare providers to "start thinking more deeply to save the lives of people we say we care for."



## NAMI National Joins New Coalition

NAMI National has joined with 13 partner organizations in a new coalition to create a unified vision for mental health care in the U.S. The leadership coalition's plan calls for policy, programs, and standards that prioritize mental health care and address the social and economic conditions (including racism and discrimination) that disproportionately impact people of color and low socioeconomic status, and result in inadequate and inequitable access to effective treatment. They offer a viable roadmap for immediate and long-term changes that will lead to "a mental health care system capable of saving our nation."



## Passing of Billie Mechanic

Billie Mechanic's proudest accomplishment and greatest labor of love in life was nurturing, protecting, and teaching her children, two of whom suffered from mental illness. This labor was difficult during a time when mental illness was stigmatized, effective treatments were few, and support groups were yet to exist.



Billie and her husband, Mort, joined a support group called PAMI (Parents of the Mentally Ill), which later became NAMI. In the early days of NAMI-SCC, Billie worked as a Warmline volunteer. She remained a life-long member of NAMI for over 40 years.

## 2020 Holiday Drive

Thank you all once again for making NAMI-SCC's 2020 Holiday Drive possible. It gave us the opportunity to sit with our family members, peers, and other loved ones impacted by mental health issues and remind them that they are not alone.

Here is what one recipient of a holiday gift said: "Thank you on behalf of myself, our staff, and hotel guests. Your gifts of socks, adult coloring books, and crayons were a perfect gift for our guests on a cold, rainy day. Everyone has been so thankful and happy to receive something to brighten their day! NAMI has always been so supportive and amazing to the community!"

### MEMBERSHIP/DONATION FORM

Join, renew, and/or donate to NAMI-SCC

I would like to join:

- ☐ Individual (\$40)
- ☐ Household (\$60)
- ☐ Open Door (\$5)
- ☐ New Membership
- ☐ Renewal Membership
- ☐ My company has a Matching Gift Program: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to donate:

- ☐ \$50 ☐ \$75 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250

Other \_\_\_\_\_

☐ In Honor of: ☐ In Memory of

Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

To pay online, go to [www.namisantaclara.org](http://www.namisantaclara.org) and click on "Join NAMI."

Learn how to include NAMI-SCC in your estate plan by going to "Get Involved/Planned Giving" on our website.

NAMI-SCC welcomes your membership. Memberships are valid for one year. Part of the membership dues enrolls you at NAMI State and NAMI National, which in turn automatically registers you as a member at all levels. Your additional donation helps ensure that we are able to maintain our office, as well as our educational programs. Your membership and donations are tax deductible. **Tax ID #94-2430956**

### NAMI-Santa Clara County Community Resource &

#### Support Center

1150 S Bascom Av #24

San Jose, CA 95128

Phone: 408-453-0400

Fax: 408-453-2100

[www.namisantaclara.org](http://www.namisantaclara.org)

[office@namisantaclara.org](mailto: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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