

Thanks to Our Volunteers for an Extraordinary 2009

Due to the wonderful efforts of our large corps of volunteers, who contributed 20,000 hours of their time, 2009 was a year of extraordinary accomplishments by NAMI SCC. In the area of formal courses we taught 4 sections of our Provider Course and 13 sections, including two in Spanish and two in Mandarin, of Family-to-Family. Our 7 sections of Peer-to-Peer included one in Spanish and included participants referred to the course by Judge Manley of the Mental Health Court and others referred by the Veterans Administration. We were one of the first NAMI affiliates in the country to teach Basics, a course for families whose school-age child has a mental illness. We introduced the NAMI Parents and Teachers as Allies program to help in alerting teachers to the possibility that they might have a student with a mental illness. Together with the San Jose Police Department, Santa Clara County Office of Sheriff and the Santa Clara County Mental Health Department, we had 5 Crisis Intervention Team Academies as well as 5 mini-academies with the Sunnyvale Department of Public Safety.

On the advocacy and anti-stigma front, our most important activity was the successful battle to protect as much as possible of the County Mental Health Department's 2010 budget from cuts. Our volunteers met with all 5 individual supervisors and/or their staffs, wrote letters, and attended County meetings.

A prominent anti-stigma event was needed because a new donut shop opened in the community that promoted stigma and discrimination against people with mental illness. After much effort, we, in coalition with other organizations, were successful in convincing the owner of the shop to make substantial changes in their marketing and operation. Our volunteers spent numerous hours representing consumers and families on the County Mental Health Board and at the many County meetings to plan the continuing wise use of MHSA (Prop. 63) funds. Our volunteers regularly lobbied on the state and national levels on mental health issues.

We continue three excellent special events for those with severe mental illness and their families. Our participation in the NAMIWALK San Francisco Bay Area is a very important fund raiser. It and the accompanying Kickoff Lunch are also important outings for our membership and others and are valuable in bringing our message to the public. The annual summer picnic was a fun occasion for families and consumers, and the Holiday Gift Drive was again successful in reaching out to hundreds of consumers, many of whom have limited contact with their families.

Our Peer PALS Program is doing well with a growing demand for its services and with excellent evaluations of its effectiveness from the participants. The Program has the goal of increasing the mental and spiritual wellness for those with a mental illness through the support and friendship of their peers.

In addition to continuing our family support groups in English, Spanish, Cantonese and Mandarin, we now have a very well attended weekly consumer support group facilitated by trained consumers. Our consumer art workshop meets at the NAMI office on the 4th Sunday of each month. The monthly general meeting and our 20-hour per week warm line and front desk support continue to meet important needs in our community. In fact, the front desk/warm line is so well used by the community that we now have two volunteers staffing each weekday. We staff a similar helpdesk at Barbara Arons Pavilion. The appreciation of our newsletter, written and published by volunteers, and our website administered by volunteers continues to grow. Our lending library is an excellent source of valuable information about mental illnesses.

One of the highlights of the year was the extraordinary Mental Health Evening at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Palo Alto. We joined with the VA and the Santa Clara County Mental Health Board to present the thought-provoking, prize-winning PBS video "Minds on the Edge."

Our volunteers distributed thousands of newsletters and brochures to facilities throughout the County to bring our message of support, education and advocacy to the wider community. We regularly represent NAMI at health fairs, Kaiser San Jose, Stanford bipolar and schizophrenia education days as well as at various churches and synagogues. We worked with the faith community as they set up their mental health programs. We moved into a new office which is bigger, nicer and better located than our old office and is less expensive.

And because of your volunteer efforts all of the above activities were available free of charge to everyone.

Thank You, All!

John Mitchem, Immediate Past President NAMI SCC

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