

General Meeting



**100 S. San Mateo Drive
San Mateo**

Hendrickson Aud. / Mills Health Center
Free evening parking in front

Wednesday, March 23

6:30pm Reception
7:00pm Program

CIT and PERT

Jason Albertson, LCSW
San Mateo County BHRS
and

Jim Coffman,
Detective, San Mateo County Sheriff

The Psychiatric Emergency Response Team is an innovative, cooperative approach to provide followup and a linkage to care for people who come to attention of law enforcement in unincorporated San Mateo County and areas that contract with the Sheriff for police services. One of the first cop/clinician teams in Northern California, PERT goals include attempting to reduce risk in order to prevent tragic outcomes. Jason and Jim will detail their program and explain how CIT in San Mateo County evolved into PERT.



NAMI San Mateo County General Meetings are free and open to the public. We welcome all who support our mission to improve the quality of life for people with mental illnesses and their families.

Your present circumstances don't determine where you can go; they merely determine where you start.

- Nido Qubein

March's 2016 Notice Of Annual Meeting

The March 23, 2016 General Meeting serves as NAMI-SMC's annual meeting for election of 2016 officers and board members. During the business portion of the General Meeting, prior to the featured presentation, all members in good standing will be asked to vote on the slate of officers and board members. Please plan ahead to attend this meeting. Current candidates for the NAMI San Mateo County board are:

President: Jerry Thompson, RN | Vice President: Sharon Roth, RN
Board Members: Ann Baker, Carol Goshu, Mark Hansen, Christopher Jump, Bill Kerns and Armando Sandoval.

Appreciation Luncheon

On Friday, February 12, we hosted our annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon as a THANK YOU to the many members and friends who contributed to our success—with major donations and volunteer efforts—during the previous year. Predominantly a volunteer and membership driven organization, you make it happen. We couldn't do it without you!

Held at the Poplar Creek Grill, Coyote Point, it was an opportunity for attendees to relax, mingle with old friends and make new ones. Participants included family and friends, staff from BHRS, the California Clubhouse, Mateo Lodge and Heart and Soul, along with our many support, peer and education program group leaders.

Helene Zimmerman, our executive director, emceed the luncheon and together with Debi Mechanic (Volunteer Coordinator), and Lee Nash (Education Coordinator), arranged the beautiful orchid centerpieces (from www.amosorchids.com) and decorated the tables with an assortment of Valentine-themed chocolates.

In-between courses, Helene gave an update on our activities from 2015, and talked about plans for 2016—including the possibility of two new programs, if additional grant funding can be secured. Sharon Roth, SMC Board Member, Criminal Justice Chair & President of California Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), reviewed the successful CIT training in San Mateo County public service departments, noting 3 CIT trainings will be held in 2016. NAMI jewelry was for sale at the event and is available on our website, www.namisanmateo.org, click on NAMI Jewelry Store.

Helene thanked the NAMI SMC board, and education, support and peer group leaders for all that they do, and asked them to stand and be recognized. The Support Group Leaders were each presented with a San Mateo County Resolution outlining the many ways in which their volunteerism supports NAMI SMC and our community.

The centerpieces were given to the person at each table who had been a member longest, with the remaining orchids being raffled off. Helene closed the luncheon by proposing a toast to the continuous and improved health and well-being of our loved ones with mental illness for whom we would move heaven and earth to have as easy and enjoyable life as possible, and thanked everyone for all that they do.



Cake cutters are volunteers Lisa Kenney & Mary Beth Sandoval, Mateo Lodge.

Exhibit at NAMI California Conference in Burlingame

NAMI California invites you to participate in the 2016 NAMI California Annual Statewide Conference scheduled for August 26 & 27 in Burlingame. (San Francisco Airport Marriott Waterfront Hotel)

Due to continued growth and increased interest in the 2016 event, show space has expanded for larger exhibits and opportunities to promote products or services, offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

To review conference details and exhibit opportunities visit www.namica.org or <http://conference.namica.org/>.

Please note that in order to include a company in promotional materials, signed applications and payment must be received by July 15, 2016.

Please contact Marcel Harris if you have any questions or would like an Exhibitor Form to be sent to you: (916) 567-0163 Ext.107 or marcel@namica.org.



Newsletter production, mailing & delivery:

Monique Baur, Joan Dower, Ruan Frenette, Silvana Garetz, Kim Nobles, Gina Olinger, Polly Rich, & Pat Way

Warm Line & Office Support:

Diana Casey & Diane Warner

Basics Teacher: Claudia Sagese

**To all our volunteers, THANK YOU.
We couldn't do it without you!**

Contact Debi to volunteer at nami@namisanmateo.org or 650-638-0800.

California Clubhouse Needs a New Home

California Clubhouse is asking for community connections as their lease is up June 15. There's urgency so please contact Juliana Fuerbringer, Board President, at 650-342-5849 or julianafuer@gmail.com ASAP.

They need potential locations available to lease or to be donated.

- With 3500-5000 sq feet
- Within ¼ mile public transportation
- Suitable for combined kitchen & clerical space

They're also looking for contractors who can help with tenant improvements if needed.

California Clubhouse is thriving! Membership is 60 and growing. Here are some accomplishments:

- Operating a work mediated environment daily 8:30am-5pm
- Hosting multiple, social and recreation activities monthly
- Celebrating all major holidays on the actual day observed
- Embracing cultural diversity through activities and materials that promote global inclusion
- Our programs are expanding! Just since January, we have launched a Young Adult Program; begun Transitional Employment (TE) Development; added a technology department to our daily program to engage member IT skills; and initiated a Lunch & Learn health and wellness program.

Once moved, they will be in a better position to serve more people and continue with program expansion. More than just scaling, there will be more space for the varied activities that are part of long range planning.

<http://www.californiaclubhouse.org>

Check out *Wellness Matters*, the SMC BHRS newsletter
<http://smchealth.org/wm>

Save the Date! - 2016



- **July 6-9 NAMI National Conference 2016** will be held at the Sheraton Denver Downtown in Denver, CO. The Super Saver registration fee of \$215 is available to members until March 31. Contact Hanem Ali at 703-524-7600 or go to www.nami.org. For complete registration info, go to www.nami.org/convention.
- **August 26-27 NAMI California State Conference** will take place at the San Francisco Airport Marriott Waterfront, 1800 Old Bayshore Highway, Burlingame. For details, email Eugenia@namica.org or call 916-567-0167 or visit www.namicalifornia.org to register, or send a check to NAMI California, 1851 Heritage Lane, Suite 150, Sacramento CA 95815.
- **September 17 NAMI Walks** - This year's NAMI Walk will be held in conjunction with NAMI Santa Clara at the San Jose Guadalupe Park's Arena Green West. More information as plans evolve.

FAST: Family Assertive Support Team

650-368-3178 or 650-371-7416 (pager)
24-hours, 7 days-a-week

Call FAST when you are concerned about a family member who may be showing signs or symptoms of serious emotional distress - FAST for prompt and caring support!

We Come to You!

See a full article about FAST in our November 2013 web version newsletter at www.namisanmateo.org.

Two New Antipsychotics: What Do We Know about Them?

In the second half of 2015, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved two new antipsychotic medications for oral use in the United States. Both are simply “me-too” drugs and do not add anything useful to the list of antipsychotics already available.

The first of these is brexpiprazole (trade name: Rexulti). The conception and birth of this drug makes an interesting story. It is manufactured by Otsuka Pharmaceuticals in partnership with Lundbeck. Otsuka also manufactures aripiprazole (Abilify), approved and heavily promoted for the treatment of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression and autism. Sales of Abilify from mid-2013 to mid-2014 totaled \$7.2 billion which, according to the research firm IMS Health, made Abilify the most profitable drug in the U.S.

When Abilify Went Generic

Unfortunately for Otsuka, Abilify’s patent expired; in 2014, a generic version was introduced. This means that, over time, the price of generic aripiprazole will fall sharply, along with Otsuka’s profits. So what did Otsuka do? It simply introduced a chemically slightly altered version of aripiprazole, tested it against a placebo as the FDA requires, and presto---brexpiprazole (Rexulti) is being marketed as a new drug ... and sold for the treatment of schizophrenia and depression at about the same high price as Abilify was originally sold for. This is all perfectly legal. Since brexpiprazole has never been compared to aripiprazole in any published trial, it is not known whether it is any different at all.

In fact, aripiprazole (Abilify) is only an average antipsychotic when compared to other antipsychotics. In a definitive comparison of 15 antipsychotic drugs published in 2013 in *Lancet*, aripiprazole was rated as only average on efficacy and acceptability, considerably behind clozapine and amisulpride1 (which is sold in Europe, but not in the US).

Bottom line: According to the highly respected Medical Letter of August 17, 2015, “There is no reason to prescribe brexpiprazole over generic aripiprazole, which has a much longer record of efficacy and safety and should soon cost much less.”

Cariprazine (Vrylar)

The other new antipsychotic to come to market in 2015 was cariprazine (trade name: Vraylar), manufactured by Forest Laboratories. Like the majority of existing antipsychotics already on the market, cariprazine has effects on both dopamine and serotonin receptors. There appears to be nothing unusual about it, including its side effects. Approved by the FDA for the treatment of both schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, it can be taken by mouth once daily, with or without food. The recommended dose for schizophrenia is 1.5 to 6 mg. per day and for bipolar disorder 3 to 6 mg. per day.

Consistent with FDA regulations, cariprazine was only tested against a placebo and to date no study has been carried out comparing it to any other existing antipsychotic. Bottom line: There is no reason so far to expect cariprazine to be any better than any of the existing antipsychotics. As a new antipsychotic on patent, it is likely only to be distinguished by its high cost.

—E. Fuller Torrey, MD

Associate Director of Research, Stanley Medical Research Institute

Founder and member of the board, Treatment Advocacy Center

Co-chair, Psychiatric Advisory Board to the Treatment Advocacy Center

* Disclosure: John Davis, MD, the senior author on the *Lancet* paper, is on the staff of the Stanley Medical Research Institute, a supporting organization of the Treatment Advocacy Center, and a member of the Treatment Advocacy Center’s Psychiatric Advisory Board

Register Now for the Early Bird NAMI CA Annual Conference

August 26 & 27, 2016

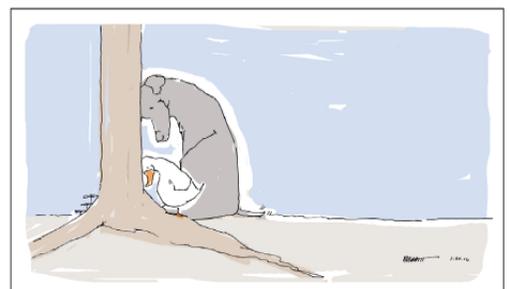
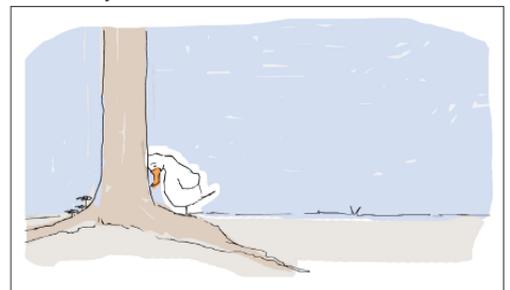
San Francisco Airport Marriott Waterfront
Burlingame, CA 94010

This year's conference theme is "Back to the Future: Building on the Past for a Better Tomorrow," with tracks on advocacy, criminal justice, consumer and family engagement, transitional age youth, and strengthening NAMI—plus inspirational speakers and practical workshops. This is your chance to learn what's happening in mental health in California! Information at <https://41339.thankyou4caring.org/2016-super-early-bird-registration>

Interested in participating in the Color Guard, singing the National Anthem or volunteering at the conference? Contact Email Erik at erik@namica.org.

For additional information regarding registration please contact Eugenia Cervantes at Eugenia@namica.org or call at (916) 567-0163 We hope to see you there!

Melanfolly by L Babbitt





We are grateful for donations...

...in memory of:

Joan Condon Paul from Pat & Steve Way

Patricia Rossetto from Pat & Steve Way

Andrea Pursley from Erica Horn

Matthew Anton from Elizabeth Avila

Adam Livingston from Lee & Margie Livingston

...honoring:

Ronnie Michael from Julie S. Allen

NAMI San Mateo County appreciates those who send donations that honor loved ones. Our heartfelt gratitude!

MHSARC Meetings - open to the public

First Wednesday each month • 3:00 - 5:00pm

Time/locations vary, please check with 650-573-2544
or www.smchealth.org/MHSARC
Health Services Building Room 100
225 W. 37th Ave., San Mateo

AGED-FOCUSED COMMITTEES:

Call for location: 650-573-2544

Older Adult Services Committee • 10:30am - 12:00

Adult Services Committee (combined with former CRC)

• 10:30pm - 11:30, 3rd Wednesdays

Children and Youth Services Committee • 4pm - 5:00

Board of Supervisors Meeting

First Tuesday each month • 9:00 a.m.

Board Chambers
400 County Center, First Floor, Redwood City

Board of Supervisors agendas are found at
<http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/portal/site/bos>

Recent Articles

Articles recently published in The New York Times:

- New Plan to Treat Schizophrenia Is Worth Added Cost, Study Says - Feb. 1, 2016
Interactive Feature: Lives Restored *great videos!*
- Scientists Move Closer to Understanding Schizophrenia's Cause - Jan. 27, 2016
- Programs Expand Schizophrenic Patients' Role in Their Own Care - Dec. 28, 2015
- New Approach Advised to Treat Schizophrenia - 10/20/15

Others:

- Reuters: Family Caregivers May Be Sacrificing Their Own Health To Help Loved Ones
Many family caregivers in the U.S. provide unpaid medical aid and other services to loved ones at the expense of their own financial, physical and mental health, a study suggests. Nationwide, an estimated 14.7 million family caregivers assist 7.7 million older adults who live in the community rather than in institutions like nursing homes. These family members often help with daily activities like eating, bathing and dressing. Many also provide medical support such as scheduling physician checkups, managing medications, cleaning wounds and giving injections. (Rapaport, 2/15)
- HealthDay: Helping With Health Care Takes Heavy Toll On Caregivers
Millions of family and friends who help older, disabled adults manage medications and navigate the health system may be sacrificing their own well-being, a new study suggests. Caregivers who provided "substantial help" with health care in these settings were roughly twice as likely to experience physical, financial and emotional difficulties as those who did not provide that help, the study found. (Pallarito, 2/16)

Shopping Supports NAMI SMC

Please sign up!

Together, shopping through any of these mediums makes a real difference. Last year, NAMI SCC received over \$3,000 in merchant rebates! For more information, contact the office at 650-638-0800 or nami@namisanmateo.org.

The **S.H.A.R.E.S.** card will donate 3% of your grocery purchases to NAMI SMC at all SAVEMART, LUCKY, SMART FOODS & FOODMAXX stores! To request a S.H.A.R.E.S card please call our office at (650) 638-0800 or email us at education@namisanmateo.org. Tell a friend!



Remember, always start at **smile.amazon.com** and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases. When you log onto smile.amazon.com please choose NAMI San Mateo County as your charitable organization; from there your shopping purchases will be linked directly to us!

escrip is is easy, quick & secure! Let's  get started! Go to www.escrip.com, click on "sign up," follow the instructions to register your grocery cards and your existing credit/debit cards and start earning for NAMI SAN MATEO COUNTY! Tell a friend!

SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS (for information on NAMI Support Groups call 650-638-0800)

- **NAMI Cordilleras MHR Center Family Group**, 1ST Mondays (2ND Monday if 1st is a holiday), 6:30-8pm, 200 Edmonds Road, Redwood City, 650-367-1890. Penney Mitchell & Julie Curry, NAMI SMC co-facilitators
- **NAMI Parents of Youth & Young Adults** (ages 6–26), 2ND Mondays, 7-8:30pm. 222 W. 39th Ave. & Edison, Board Room, San Mateo. Park in the large lot on west side of building, off 37th Ave. Enter building through the “Hospital & Clinic West Entrance” and follow the NAMI signs to the 2nd floor Board Room W-225. Info: 638-0800. Kristy Manuel and Ginny Traub, facilitators.

MONDAY

- **NAMI Spanish-Speaking Support Group** for family members. NO MEETING IN MARCH 
Contact Claudia Saggese at 573-2189.

- **NAMI Coastside Support Meeting** for family members, 2ND Tuesdays, 7-8:30pm. Coastside MH Cntr, 225 S. Cabrillo Hwy, #200A, Half Moon Bay, 650-726-6369. Karina Marwan, NAMI facilitator
- **NAMI Jewish Family & Children's Services**, family and friends are welcome. 4TH Tuesdays, 7:00pm. 200 Channing Ave., Palo Alto, 650-688-3097. Sharon & Ron Roth, NAMI SMC facilitators; John Bisenivs, LCSW.
- **NAMI San Mateo Medical Center** for family members. 1st and 3RD Tuesdays, 6:30-8pm. 222 W. 39th Ave. & Edison, San Mateo. Board Room (main entrance elevator to 2nd floor, left to the end of the hall). Terry & Polly Flinn, Carol Metzler & Judy Singer, NAMI facilitators.
- **NAMI South County Support Meeting** for family members, 2ND Tuesdays, 6-7:30pm. Mental Health Clinic, 802 Brewster, Redwood City, 650-363-4111. Pat Way, NAMI SMC facilitator; Liz Downard RN, MSN. **Park behind building and knock loudly on door.**
- **NAMI Connection** for persons with mental illness. 2ND Mondays, 7-8:30pm. 1650 Borel Place #130, San Mateo. Call NAMI SMC 650-638-0800 for information.
- **DBSA Mood Disorder Support Group** for persons with uni- and bi-polar disorders, mania, depression, or anxiety; family members welcome. Tuesdays, 7-9pm, College Heights Church, 1150 W. Hillsdale Blvd, San Mateo. Contact at DBSASanMateo@um.att.com or 650-299-8880; leave a message.
- **Korean Support Group**, a family/consumer group. 4TH Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30pm. Full Gospel Mission Church, 20920 McClellan Rd. (opp. De Anza College), Cupertino. Info: Kyo, 408-253-9733.
- **Individuals Living With Their Own Mental Illness**, Tuesdays, 1-2:30pm. Redwood City - sliding scale fees apply for this meeting. Contact Deborah at 650-363-0249, x111.

TUESDAY

- **NAMI Stanford** for family & friends. 2nd Wednesdays, 7-8:30pm. 401 Quarry Road #1206, Stanford. Dept. of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences (parking is between Vineyard & Quarry). Info: 650-862-2886 or pamelapolos@comcast.net
- **DBSA Mood Disorder Support Group** Wednesdays, promptly 6:30-8:30 pm. Contact: DBSAPaloAlto@gmail.com. Supporters may attend with their consumer. VA Hospital, 3801 Miranda Ave, Hosp Bldg 101, 1st fl Auditorium, Palo Alto.
- **Jewish Support Group** (open to all denominations), for those with mental illness and families and friends. 2nd Wednesdays, 6:15-8:30pm. For info, call Carol Irwin 408-858-1372. Beit Kehillah, 26790 Arastradero Rd., Los Altos

WEDNESDAY

- **Chinese Language Family Support Group** Last Thursdays (but Dec 17, not 24 or 31), 6-7:30 pm, Cantonese/Mandarin. 1950 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo. BHRS main entrance. Info: 650-261-3704 (Maureen) or 650-573-3571 (Alice).
- **Coastside Dual Diagnosis Group**, development for clients in all stages of recovery. Thursdays at 4-5pm. 225 S. Cabrillo Hwy #200A, Half Moon Bay. 726-6369 for information.
- **Body Image & Eating Disorders**, Thursdays, 6:30-8pm, 1225 Crane St, Ste 205, Menlo Park. Open to family and friends. *RSVP required: emlycaruthersmft@gmail.com*. More info: 408-356-1212 or e-mail: info@edrcsv.org.
- **Dual Diagnosis Group for Consumers**, Thurs, 12 noon. 210 Industrial Rd. Bldg. 210, Room 205, San Carlos. 650-232-7426.
- **H.E.L.P. for those with a mental illness and/or in a supporting role**, Thursdays, 6:00pm optional dinner; 6:30-7:30 program, 7:30-8:30 prayer. Menlo Church, Garden Court, 950 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park Contact Jane Clark 650-464-9033
- **North County Support Group** for clients, family and friends. 2ND and 4TH Thursdays, 5:45-7pm, 375 89th Street, Community Room, Daly City. Co-facilitators: Linda Hildreth and Adam Harrison LCSW More info: 650-301-8650.

THURSDAY

- **Japanese Education & Support Group**, call (415) 474-7310 for information.
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation of SF Bay Area**, 3RD Saturdays, 1:30-3:30pm, Seton Medical Center, 1900 Sullivan Ave., 2nd Fl. Conf room near cafeteria, Daly City. For more information: 415-273-7273; www.ocd-bayarea.com.

SATURDAY

- **Consumer Support Groups**, Heart and Soul, call 650-232-7426 for days & addresses, or visit www.heartandsoulinc.org.
- **Cluttering & Hoarding** Support Groups, Workshops, and Private Consultations - Groups/programs change, contact Emily Farber, MSW, 650-289-5417, efarber@avenidas.org.

NAMI Education Programs

Call to be added to the Wait List - 650-638-0800

Sign up for the evidence-based education class that fits your need (Support Groups on page 5). Courses are FREE, comprehensive, and popular. Gain skills and understanding in an interactive, supportive environment. Pre-registration is required.

- **Basics**—For parents and caregivers of children and adolescents with mental illness.
- **Family to Family**—For relatives of an adult family member with mental illness. Class meets once a week for 12 weeks.
- **Peer to Peer**—Better living skills for people with mental health issues taught by people with mental health issues.
- **Provider**—An overview program for Mental Health and AOD professionals, para-professionals and all others serving individuals with serious mental illnesses and their families. CMEs pending approval for qualified attendees.
>>Please call to set up an in-house program for your organization.

BHRS Family Contacts

Suzanne Aubry, Dir. Family Service & Support: 650-573-2673
Claudia Saggese, Family Liaison (habla Español): 573-2189

Teachers/Facilitators Needed

We're looking for persons to facilitate our programs! Training is provided to lead our education programs, presentations and support groups - please contact the NAMI office at 650-638-0800 for details.

We are also looking for individuals with lived experience who are interested in telling their story for In Our Own Voice presentations.

Peninsula Veterans Affairs Center

Are you a vet or know one who needs help, is experiencing PTSD and/or other symptoms? Call 650-617-4300 or visit 345 Middlefield Road, Bldg. 1; Floor 1, Menlo Park.

PLAN of California

Planned Lifetime Assistance Network offers two Master **Special Needs trust** plans for California families with funds to bequeath (minimums \$150,000 and \$300,000). These trusts provide for contract with PLAN for oversight (both fiduciary and personal support services) without endangering public entitlements.

San Francisco contact: Baron Miller 415-522-0500
Los Angeles contact: Carla Jacobs 888-574-1258

San Mateo County Mental Health Emergency Numbers

Police: 911

Tell the dispatcher you are calling regarding a person who has a mental illness. Request a CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) trained officer and/or someone who has experience in dealing with the mentally ill. For non-emergency situations, call your local police department.

HELPFUL: Tips to prepare yourself for a 911 call are available on the BHRS website. Download "Mental Health Emergency" at www.smchealth.org/MH911 or visit the blog: <http://smcbhrsblog.org/2015/03/30/mental-health-emergency-materials-aka-family-script/>.

24 Hour Crisis Line & Support Help: 650-579-0350 / 800-784-2433

Calling the local number will get you someone in San Mateo County. Calling the 800 number will get you the first person available. This person may not be in San Mateo County.

Psych Emergency: San Mateo Medical Center: 650-573-2662
Mills Peninsula Hospital: 650-696-5915

Kaiser South San Francisco: 650-742-2511
Kaiser Permanente SMC: 650-991-6455

FAST: 650-368-3178 | 650-371-7416 (pager)

Family Assertive Support Team - When your loved one is in emotional distress. Available 24x7.

For additional non-emergency numbers relating to Mental Health issues, access www.namisanmateo.org.

Please Become a Member of NAMI San Mateo County

1650 Borel Place, Suite 130, San Mateo, CA 94402

- Regular Member (\$35 to \$99)*
 Sustaining Member (\$100 to \$499)*
 Patron Member (\$500 to \$999)*
 Benefactor Member (\$1,000 or more)*
 Mental Health Individual (\$10)
 Renewal or New Membership Amount Enclosed: \$_____

Change Address (print new address below, include bottom half of page with old address)

* A portion of your membership donation is sent to National NAMI and to NAMI California

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____ E-mail _____

Pay by: Check Visa MC Credit cards charged to billing address.

Credit Card# _____ Expires _____ 3 Digit code _____

Amount \$ _____ Signature _____

How did you hear about NAMI? _____

Please check all that apply: I/we am/are Family Consumer
 MH Professional Business or Agency Friend

Your membership in NAMI San Mateo County is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Our Tax ID number is 94-2650681. *Thank you for your support!*

General Meeting

March 23 - see page 1

NAMI Jewelry FOR SALE!



Whether you're searching for that perfect gift for that special someone, or you just want to treat yourself...



Mike Warner, the owner and designer of Wild Bryde Jewelry, has created a beautiful assortment of earrings, necklaces, bracelets and pins—especially for NAMI featuring the signature “grass roots” symbol. Pure and simple! Affordably priced! All pieces are available in two finishes:

14k gold-plate and rhodium and a non-tarnishing silver alloy.

Some designs feature Swarovski crystals! Visit www.namisanmateo.org and click on the NAMI Jewelry Store link and purchase a gift today. All proceeds go directly to NAMI SMC. Ordering is easy and secure!

NAMI San Mateo County
1650 Borel Place, Suite 130
San Mateo, CA 94402
650-638-0800 / FAX: 650-638-1475
nami@namisanmateo.org
www.namisanmateo.org
Office open: 9am-3pm, M-F (or by appt.)

Board of Directors

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Sharon Roth - Co-Vice President
Carol Gosh - Treasurer
Christopher Jump
Ann Baker
Bill Kerns
Mark Hanson
Armando Sandoval

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Lee Nash - Education Coordinator
Debi Mechanic - Volunteer Coordinator

News Staff: Ruan Frenette - Producer
Kim Nobles, Pat Way - Editorial Assistants

NAMI San Mateo County
1650 Borel Place, Suite 130
San Mateo, CA 94402

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Time Value

Got news?
email nami@namisanmateo.org

See more articles in our web version of the newsletter at www.namisanmateo.org/

Touched with Fire Offers a Look into the Often Difficult Relationships Within Families

By *Brendan McLean* / www.nami.org/blogs / 1/19/16

Paul Dalio's new film, **Touched with Fire**, walks a tightrope. A tightrope strung between two platforms 50 feet in the air. And on that tightrope, there are two characters: Carla and Marco. Sometimes they work with one another to reach the platform at the end. At other times, it seems as though each is trying to throw the other off. Set to be released on Feb. 12, *Touched with Fire* takes Dalio's personal experiences with bipolar disorder and uses Carla, played by Katie Holmes, and Marco, played by Luke Kirby, as muses to contrast the different emotions he has felt toward bipolar in his life. The tightrope is figurative, but the life-and-death nature of balancing the extreme emotions of bipolar is not.

The movie itself put me on edge as I watched; it made me uneasy. At times, it seemed as though bipolar was being romanticized, only to have that person ultimately come crashing down. For example, there is one scene in the film related to the threat of suicide that may trigger some viewers.

One of the biggest themes throughout the film is the relationship that the two main characters must manage with their parents. Not-so-spoiler spoiler: Neither is able to navigate their relationship perfectly. The glimpses into each person's actions are what I ultimately found most captivating and thought provoking. I spoke with the director of the film to shine some light onto his story and the film's story.

You have a personal experience with mental health, whereas the actors in the film might not have. How did you work with them to create something that you feel was ultimately a true representation?

The love story between these two characters was definitely a metaphor for my love-and-hate relationship with bipolar: the way they bring out the romance in each other, but also the devastation in each other, and the way they have to reconcile those two things. The journey that I went through that I think a lot of people with bipolar go through is that you get it and you're lost, but then you easily romanticize that fire ultimately to your own destruction. It ultimately takes most people repeated devastations to let go of the mania. What I wanted to do was have that journey of how they learned that they can have real meaningful emotions and sustain them. My hope is that people are able to watch the film and see where Marco and Carla make mistakes and know that they don't have to make them themselves.

How has your family played a role in helping you maintain balance in your life?

The biggest thing that my family did—and it's one of the hardest things—is the constantly talking me out of suicide when I was in a depression. It was very draining on them, but they really struggled to try and give me hope.

The best a family can do is to give hope to their family member, but ultimately it has to come down to the individual. The loss of hope—in my own experience—was the only time I had thoughts of suicide. If I had any hope at all that there was any chance, any possibility that I could be happy and full of creativity, and even better than I was before, which now is the case, I would fight.

What was your goal with the film?

The biggest thing I was trying to do with the film—for the family members and the main characters—is show a truthful situation where there are well-intentioned parents. And the truth is, even well-intentioned parents, they don't always know what to do. They are dealing with a situation that there is no perfect guidebook for. My hope was to create characters that the audience could see themselves in. If there were any well-intentioned parents in the audience, that they could not only see

themselves in the parents, but also through their children's eyes. That they could at least be able to understand their children enough so they could understand where they are coming from so that they can communicate with them.

The title of your film is taken from Kay ReField Jamison's 1996 book, *Touched with Fire*, which explained how many of the greatest artistic minds in history had bipolar disorder. Can you tell me about how she inspired you?

It's easy to be ashamed of something that you're told is a genetic defect. You feel like you're a mistake. That's a hard thing to swallow for someone who's found a place based on how they've come to view themselves. For me, when I came across the book *Touched with Fire* by Kay Jamison, it completely changed my whole perception of myself. Maybe this isn't just a defect; it could be a gift that has devastating consequences if you don't handle it right, but maybe there is something purposeful in this.

How does being labeled bipolar affect the way you view yourself?

Bipolar wasn't always seen as a defect; it was often seen as a gift because it tapped into something that most people couldn't tap into. Framing it that way creates a very different story.

There can be a fear in doctors and in people to romanticize it because they are afraid people will say, "I can go off my meds." That's a legitimate fear, but I don't think you have to have that fear, if it can be conveyed in the right way.

If people can understand that you can have all the magic of your gift and you can have it in a more potent and rich, powerful way if you find a balance with your medication and other healthy habits, then it's something you can fight for. If the story can change, it would be much more helpful.

In addition to medication, what else do you do to keep yourself in control?

That took a lot of time, and that's important for people to know so that they don't feel like they can rush it and get there. Bipolar is like a pendulum: The more recent the swing, the more quickly it wants to swing again, and the consequences of that swing are devastating.

I used to smoke weed, I used to drink. Now I won't even take a sip of alcohol to make a toast. I go to bed at 10 p.m. every night. I go for a 2-hour walk to clear my head and get exercise. I meditate without fail twice a day. I'm also careful about what I eat with things like the amount of sugar I have.

Transcendental meditation, for instance, has really helped me. I met a guy who had been meditating for 20 years, and he said that for that 20 years he had been happy 80% of the time. I couldn't believe it. I had never conceived of that. So I started meditating without fail.

So what does it mean to be happy? What does the word "happy" mean to you?

"Happy" has a completely different connotation than before bipolar. Before bipolar, happiness meant positive emotions that you would experience watching a comedy. It was just anything that was not negative, but it was actually since my experience with bipolar and coming out of it that now, happiness is feeling the full range of meaningful emotions, including the pain and the bliss and the appreciation of the contrast between them. When you go through extreme pain, you're almost forced to bring some sort of beauty to it, some sort of meaning that's aesthetically pleasing. Your appreciation of emotion is much deeper and richer. My sense of happiness feels much richer and deeper than before.

I look back at my previous self, and that sense of happiness was so shallow. True happiness is having an appreciation of the darkest and brightest emotions and being able to experience both of them equally.