

General Meeting



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

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

Wednesday, November 15

6:15pm Reception
6:45pm Entertainment
7:15-8:30pm Program



NAMI Thanksgiving

Please join us for our traditional Thanksgiving celebration, focusing on GRATITUDE. Enjoy **live music** and a few words from **Ian Adamson**, Family Assertive Support Team; **Pastor Tom Waddell**, Presbyterian Church, Pacifica; and **Rocio Comejo**, peer and family member. Bring your family and friends to enjoy camaraderie and pie! Everyone who supports NAMI's mission is welcome and encouraged to attend. As always, it's free! RSVP TO 650-638-0800. We want to be sure we have plenty of pie! (Note this meeting is on the 3rd Wednesday of the month because of the holiday).



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 illness and their families.

Like us on Facebook



<https://www.facebook.com/namismc/>
and



follow us on Twitter
<https://twitter.com/NAMISMC>

4 Ways to Mentally Prepare Yourself for Holiday Mayhem

The holidays are here and it's going to get a little hectic before it gets a little exciting! Find out how to deal with the madness and mentally prepare yourself before you freak out just a little.

Control your reaction to the situation

You can't control every situation you encounter in life, but you can most certainly control your reaction! Before you even start to get wrapped up in holiday mayhem, remind yourself that you are in control of your emotions and that you'll be able to get through any curve balls that this crazy (yet amazing) season throws at you!

Expect to get stressed

We all get a little bit stressed during the holiday season. Between the gifts and the holiday parties, it's no wonder we even make it through with a smile on our faces! But if you go into the holiday season expecting to expect the unexpected and expecting to run into a few roadblocks, it'll help soften your fall a bit.

Remember to stop and smell the peppermint

You know the phrase "remember to stop and smell the roses"? Well, it applies to the holiday season as well. Sometimes we get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of the season that we don't even stop to really appreciate the exciting things that come along with it. If you go into the season reminding yourself to stop and enjoy the little things in the midst of the mayhem, it'll help you prepare mentally and let you know that everything will work out a-ok.

Forgive yourself for any mistakes you make

We all beat ourselves up a little bit more during the holiday season. Whether we're disappointed in ourselves because we couldn't find the perfect gift for our loved ones, or we're upset that we couldn't pull off that holiday dinner like we expected, we need to be forgiving of our imperfections. We're all under a lot of pressure around the holidays, so give yourself a break!

—Chryssy Callahan

Other articles about taking care of yourself during the holidays:

- <https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/November-2015/Tips-for-Managing-the-Holiday-Blues>
- <https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/August-2017/Lessons-We-Missed-as-Kids-Practicing-Mental-Health>

September General Meeting Review

On September 27, **Dr. Nancy L. Morgan**, MS, PhD, Director of LifeMoves, Behavioral Health Program, presented *The 7 Qualities Most Desired in a Therapist*. Dr. Morgan shared her research over the past ten years with NAMI SMC members and guests. Attendees were surveyed about their favorite qualities and the results were inline with research: the most desired therapist qualities are someone who **1) Listens**, and is **2) Compassionate**, **3) Competent**, **4) Respectful**, **5) Accessible**, **6) Empathetic** and **7) Encouraging**. These qualities were chosen from a list of 38 adjectives, with more added by the group that clearly merited recognition.

Dr. Morgan very much appreciated the thoughtful and engaging questions presented by attendees, and the "Never Give Up" framed print given to her by NAMI SMC.

Quarterly Advocacy Forum



Thursday, November 2 • 6:00pm – 7:30pm
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
1300 El Camino Real, San Mateo

Our first Advocacy Forum will focus on:

- Do you or a loved one deal with serious mental health challenges?
- Do you want to have your voice heard, receive answers, and help advocate for services?

Then please join us for food and conversation! The main topic at this evening's forum: **What Is Supported Housing & Why Is It So Hard to Find?** Our panel will include a parent, housing managers from Edgewood & Caminar, and other mental health housing partners.

For more info contact: Cindy Robbins-Roth at Edgewood 415-725-0755, cynthiar@edgewood.org; Leanna Harper at Caminar (650-393-8976, leannah@caminar.org); or Helene Zimmerman at NAMI SMC (650-638-0800, hzimmer@namisanmateo.org).

To All Our Volunteers!

~ THANK YOU ~

We couldn't do it without you!

Newsletter Mailing: Patrick McErlain, Clancy Stein

General Meeting: Lily Arapeles, Patrick McErlain, Bill Nash, Kathy Stern

Office Support: Eveline Coffman—Accounting, Joan Dower, Helen Greggans, Audrey Kemp, Patrick McErlain, Michael Rodrigues

Special Projects: Sulu Kome, Patrick McErlain, Kathy Stern

All of our Support Group Leaders!

Newsletter production: A special acknowledgement to Ruan Frenette, Gregg Hardin, Kim Nobles and Pat Way—our newsletters wouldn't be possible without you!

ACA Open Enrollment for 2018 Coverage

The open enrollment period for Covered California or the Affordable Care Act (ACA/Obamacare) for next year, 2018, starts on November 1 and ends on December 15. Please spread the word about the shortened enrollment period. If you experience certain life changes, you can enroll at any time of the year by applying for special enrollment. Medi-Cal enrollment is year round. You can use the same application for Medi-Cal and Covered California.

7th Annual IN CONCERT with Caminar

Saturday, November 11
5:30-7:00pm Cocktail Reception Heavy hors d'oeuvres
7:00-9:15pm Welcome & Concert
SFJAZZ Center, 201 Franklin Street, San Francisco

A special evening of music celebrating the Service of Veterans. Grammy honoree and Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee Booker T in concert with Grammy nominee Mindi Abair and friends. Seating is limited. Cocktail attire. Valet parking provided. Event proceeds support programs that empower vulnerable members of our community to reach their potential and thrive.

Learn more and ticket info: <https://www.501auctions.com/inconcertwithcaminar2017/tickets>.

Legislation

Gov. Jerry Brown has signed [Assembly Bill 1315](#) into law—a groundbreaking measure that aims to shift the paradigm for mental health treatment in California from one centered on late-stage crisis care to one in which the emphasis is on early detection, prevention and intervention, before a brain illness becomes disabling.

We also became the third state in the country to shield residents' ABLE accounts from Medicaid repayment when Governor Brown signed [Senate Bill 218](#). This bill provides that a Californian's CalABLE account will not be subject to recovery by Medi-Cal or the state.

Governor Brown signed [Assembly Bill 462](#), which allows the Employment Development Department (EDD) to share employment data with the MHSOAC to better assess employment outcomes for people with mental health needs. "Mental health services must be focused on recovery and there is no better measure for recovery than employment," said Toby Ewing, Executive Director of the MHSOAC.

Congratulations, Everyone, on the Success of NAMIWalks Silicon Valley 2017!

The hard work of our Team Captains and walkers is very, very much appreciated. This year—together with NAMI Santa Clara—over 1,400 people participated in a Walker/Donor capacity! So many people made the event possible. A big thank you to them, and to Santa Clara for having us join them.

Don't forget: You can still fundraise through Monday, November 6 and you can still win prizes!!

Warm Line Training

Thursday, November 9 • 10am
1650 Borel Ave, #130 San Mateo

This training is devoted to giving peers and family members an opportunity to learn and help those that call our office in need of resources, classes, support groups and general information.

If Warm Line work is of interest to you and if you would like to volunteer in our office 2-3 hours per week this would be an opportune time to get acquainted. The meeting should last no more than 2 hours.

Please let us know if you are able to attend or have any questions! (650) 638 0800 nami@namisanmateo.org.

New Additions to the Library



Please visit the library at the NAMI San Mateo County office - we have books and videos available to check out! Watch for our latest additions below. If you have read a book related to Mental Health issues that you believe would benefit others, please email the office with the title and author.

Gorilla and the Bird: A Memoir of Madness and a Mother's Love by Zack McDermott

The story of a young man fighting to recover from a devastating psychotic break and the mother who refuses to give up on him.

Zack McDermott, a 26-year-old Brooklyn public defender, woke up one morning convinced he was being filmed, *Truman Show*-style, as part of an audition for a TV pilot. This was it - his big dreams were finally coming true. Every passerby was an actor; every car would magically stop for him; everything he saw was a cue from "The Producer" to help inspire the performance of a lifetime. After a manic spree around Manhattan, Zack, who is bipolar, was arrested on a subway platform and admitted to Bellevue Hospital.

So begins the story of Zack's freefall into psychosis and his desperate, poignant, often darkly funny struggle to claw his way back to sanity, regain his identity, and rebuild some semblance of a stable life.

Written with raw emotional power, humor, and tenderness, *GORILLA AND THE BIRD* is a bravely honest account of a young man's unraveling and the relationship that saves him.

Car Donations Accepted!

A free, convenient service for converting that extra car, truck, or RV into a tax deductible donation benefitting NAMI San Mateo County. You can donate online (<http://www.v-dac.com/org/?id=94-2650681>) or call 877-999-8322 to make your donation. Thank You!



Giving Tuesday

November 28



This year, Facebook is partnering with the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) to match up to \$2 million in donations made to U.S. nonprofits on Facebook. Support a friend or loved one and take the pledge at [#iamstigmafree](#) [#GivingTuesday @Namismc](#).

Lived Experience 2.0-Peer & Family Action Summit

Thursday, October 26 saw the Summit in action! With approximately 100 attendees, the event goal was to collectively help define the role that consumer and family members play in the county's design and delivery of services, as well as defining its vision of recovery and wellness. All the suggestions will be presented to SMC's Behavioral Health & Recovery Services new Director, David Young. David and his team will be reviewing the material and seeing how to include them in the County's on-going planning and service offerings.

The event was hosted by the Peer Recovery Collaborative (Heart & Soul, California Clubhouse & Voices of Recovery), in conjunction with the Office of Diversity and Equity; the Office of Consumer & Family Affairs and NAMI SMC.



Organizing committee for Lived Experience 2.0

THANK YOU Polly and Terry Flinn for your many years of dedicated service as NAMI Support Group Facilitators at SMMC. Through your kind and gentle encouragement you have helped so many to never feel alone on their journey!

Bravo! Best wishes on the adventure of your move out of the County. You will be greatly missed.

Special Thanks to Kristy Manuel

In 2005, Kristy Manuel attended a NAMI Support Group and recognized the need for a support group for the challenges of raising kids with mental illness. After expressing interest in creating a group for parents of youth, Kristy attended a NAMI Support Group training with Laura Ziegler, Fely Rodrigues, and others. Shortly thereafter, the three women started the Parents of Youth Support Group (POYG). Suzanne Aubry (former NAMI SMC Board member), who had recently started working for BHRS, collaborated with the three facilitators regarding county resources for youth, and regularly attended the meetings. Kristy has continuously facilitated this vital support group for 12 years. She has guided numerous families on their challenging journey of raising children with behavioral health issues.

One of Kristy's favorite memories is watching the group help each other - the group wisdom is powerful. **GROUP WISDOM:** It's not the I, It's not the you, It's the we That gets us through.

Kristy received the Tony Hoffman Award for volunteer services for starting the POYG. Kristy's bright smile, wonderful listening skills, and warm heart will be missed! The POYG, her legacy, will continue providing group wisdom.

We thank Kristy for facilitating the group for these years, and now wish her and her family the very best on their new adventures in Oregon.

Support Group Leaders Needed

We have openings for Adult and Parents of Youth Support Group Leaders. If you have attended our support groups and would like to "give back," this is your in. To learn more, please contact Helene at hzimmer@namisanmateo.org or 650-638-0800. ***In order NOT to close any support groups, we need your help! Please consider becoming a member of our Support Group Team!***

We are grateful for donations...

... in honor of

Mel and Eva Chiolo
from Howard and Shirley Eng
Randi Green from Elyse Vaysberg

... in memory of

Max Heffernam and John Heffernam
from The Schubiner Family

Terry Walker from
Brian Bennett & Elizabeth De Avila
TT ChenLouie and R Louie
John and Kathy Shea

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

Update on NAMI SMC's Peer PALS Program

Our Peer PALS have enjoyed many outings including tennis games, movies, and shopping. Activities are determined by the pair, each deciding how active, or low-key, their outing is.

Whilst the program is gaining momentum, we still need Peer and PAL applicants in order to meet demands. Please consider applying as a Peer to receive the friendship and support of a PAL. To make a difference in someone's life, call today for information on how to become a PAL. Learn more about this FREE program at <http://namisanmateo.org/about-us/jobs> and/or email PeerPals@namisanmateo.org.

Peers: This program helps decrease loneliness and isolation, increase comfort in social situations and self-esteem, and convey lifestyle habits that promote and maintain recovery.

PALS: First complete NAMI's Peer to Peer class or similar education/mentoring classes through a community service agency or college. To discuss the program, call 650-638-0800. Join us!



NAMI California is resuming monthly California Advocacy Network (CAN!) meetings.

Each month a web-based legislative wrap-up will connect affiliates which share next steps regarding advocacy. The focus is on bills NAMI California tracked during the session and sharing important advocacy updates with members.

To register, please send an email to Marcel@namica.org



EVERY Monday of the month • 7:00-8:30pm
NAMI office, 1650 Borel Place, #130, San Mateo

Connection provides persons with mental health conditions a gathering of respect, understanding, encouragement and hope. The group is led by trained individuals who are experienced at living well with mental illness. **No registration is required.** Just drop by; we look forward to meeting you. Call 650-638-0800 or email at education@namisanmateo.org with any questions.

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

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

- **NAMI Cordilleras MHR Center Family Group**, 1st Mondays (2nd 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. Ginny Traub, facilitator.
- **NAMI Coastside Support Meeting** for family members, 2nd Mondays, 6:30-8pm. El Centro DE Libertad; 225 Cabrillo Hwy South Ste #105d (the bldg next to Coastside MH), Half Moon Bay 650-726-6369. Karina Marwan, NAMI facilitator.
- **NAMI Connection** for persons working on their wellness & recovery. **Every** Monday, 7-8:30pm. 1650 Borel Place #130, San Mateo. Call NAMI SMC 650-638-0800 for information.
- **Cafe para Padres**, ultimo Martes de cada mes. Clinica Shasta 727 Shasta St. Redwood City. Para preguntas contacte a Yolanda Ramirez al 650-599-1047.

MONDAY

- **NAMI Spanish-Speaking Support Group** 2nd Tues, 6-7:30pm, 802 Brewster, RWC. 650-573-2189.
- **NAMI Jewish Family & Children’s Services**, family and friends are welcome. 4th Tuesdays, 7:00pm. 200 Channing Ave., Palo Alto. Contact Navah Statman NAMI Facilitator (408) 253-7623.
- **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). Carol Metzler & Judy Singer, NAMI facilitators.
- **NAMI South County Support Meeting** for family members, 2nd Tuesdays, 6-7:30pm. Men- tal Health Clinic, 802 Brewster, RC, 650-363-4111. Pat Way, NAMI SMC facilitator; Liz Downard RN, MSN. **Park behind building and knock loudly on door.**
- **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, 2092 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 - Sequoia Counseling Services, sliding scale fees apply. Contact Deborah at 650-363-0249, x111.
- **Parent Chat**, for parent/caregivers of kids aged 14-24 with mental health challenges. 2nd & 4th Tuesdays, 7-8:30pm. Orchard Room, Los Altos Library, 13 San Antonio Rd. Info: Trudy 650-208-9116 or Donna at 650-823-0997.

TUESDAY

- **NAMI Stanford** 2nd Wednesdays for **families and friends** / 4th Wednesdays for **spouses and partners**. Both: 7-8:30pm. 401 Quarry Road #2213, Stanford Dept. of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences (parking is between Vineyard & Quarry). Info: 650-862-2886 or Pamela Polos, pamelapolos@comcast.net / Georgia Vouraki, georgiavk@gmail.com.
- **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

- **NAMI North County Support Group** for family members. 2nd and 4th Thursdays, 5:45-7pm, 375 89th Street, Comm. Room, Daly City. Info: 650-301-8650. Co-facilitators: Karen Pyles LMFT and Valerie Nolan, RN.
- **Coastside Dual Diagnosis Group**, development for clients in all stages of recovery. Thursdays at 4-5pm. 225 So. 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 Peers**, 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. Info: Jane Clark 650-464-9033

THURSDAY

- **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.oed-bayarea.com.

SAT

- **Chinese Language Family Support Group** Cantonese/Mandarin. Call Alice at 650-573-3571 for more information.
- **Japanese Education & Support Group**, call (415) 474-7310 for information.
- **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.

OTHER

NAMI Education Programs

To be added to the Wait List, call 650-638-0800 or email us at education@namisanmateo.org

PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED

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.

- ◆ **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**—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 contact us to set up an in-house program for your organization.*

BHRS Family Contacts

Suzanne Aubry
Dir. Family Service
650-573-2673

Claudia Saggese
Family Liaison (habla Español)
650-573-2189

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.

Shopping Supports NAMI SMC

Sign up NOW! Tell a friend!

Together, shopping through any of these mediums makes a real difference. For more information, contact the office at 650-638-0800 or nami@namisanmateo.org.

S.H.A.R.E.S goes escrip! Save Mart, Lucky and Foodmaxx have now partnered with **escrip**. Go to www.escrip.com, click on "sign up," follow the instructions to register your grocery cards and your existing credit/debit cards for NAMI San Mateo County. You'll earn up to 3% on qualifying purchases when you check out with your registered phone number. Go to escrip.com/shares to register.



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!

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.

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

Personal Stories of Change & Understanding

It's important for people living around mental illness conditions to know that they are not alone. Sharing a story about your personal experiences with mental health challenges—as an individual with a diagnosis, or as a family member or friend—can help in your own recovery as well as provide encouragement and support to others with similar experiences.

Hi, my name is Franklin. I suffer from depression and anxiety and I'm an alcoholic/drug addict with 17 years of sobriety. My story started 57 years ago when I came to the U.S. at the age of three.

I struggled through elementary, junior high, and high school because I didn't know I was actually struggling with depression and anxiety. I just did not know what was wrong until much later in my life so I continued to try to cope with my illness alone. My efforts of using alcohol and drugs led me down a path of self-destruction which lasted for 30 years. I was successful in beating my depression that way.



My anxiety attacks continued but I became accustomed to them, it was just a way of life. There came a point when I realized that there had to be something going on with me although I still did not know what to do with it and so I continued to live a life of self-destruction. I thought perhaps it was my environment doing all this to me, so I moved to Switzerland.

That move only increased my depression and my alcoholism. I came back to the States where I continued another 15 years of self-abuse. Then came a point where I was so severely depressed that I just wanted to end it all. Psych emergency services helped me through the trial and error process of finding the right meds. I believe today the medication I have is actually helping me very much and helped me become 17 years sober.

It has been almost two years since I had the privilege of taking the NAMI Peer-to-Peer course. I learned so much—everything I learned I implemented in my everyday routine. I highly recommend this course. I learned so much that normal daily struggles are now very minimal. Thank you NAMI!

I found a passion for working with people that suffer from the same illness as mine. Helping others with the same illness takes me out of my own head. We may never be a hundred percent but we can definitely live a better life with proper medication, education, and reaching out and accepting the help that is out there for us. We don't have to do this alone. (Franklin is currently a residential counselor at Cordilleras mental health facility).

To learn more about what writing your story might entail and how we can work with you regarding privacy issues, please contact Helene Zimmerman, Executive Director at hzimmer@namisanmateo.org or 650-638-0800.

Visit www.namicalifornia.org/ to get the latest on legislative activity.
We appreciate your participation in advocacy!

Open Forum On Two Kinds of Homelessness

Why is response to these emergencies so different?

By Amanda Serenyi 10/19/17 SF Chronicle op ed

This past week, smoke stung my throat, keeping the North Bay fires top of mind. It got me thinking about homelessness and our different responses to it.

With friends directly affected, I was eager to do something, so I volunteered at a Red Cross evacuation center in Santa Rosa. I doled out hand sanitizer and listened to stories from residents who had just lost their homes and life's possessions. The center provided toiletries, clothing, and a smoke-free place to rest. Food trucks and famous chefs flocked to the shelters to serve meals. Neighbors have contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars, and volunteers are showing up in droves.

As a San Francisco resident, I see homeless people every day. Three mornings a week I even run with them in the Tenderloin. Back on My Feet, the nonprofit that organizes the runs, uses running as a catalyst for combatting homelessness. Most of our runners have beds and at least one hot meal per day, but their support is temporary. Their bed reservations expire after 90 days — typically not enough time to find a job and permanent housing.

The homeless crisis in San Francisco didn't begin with a catastrophe. It was a slow build attributed to as many factors as there are homeless people. The city recently announced a new five-year plan to address family and chronic homelessness, but I worry it's not enough. When I see a tent set up next to a Homeless Services Building a block away from City Hall, my stomach clenches in the same way it did when I saw rows of tents at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds.

The community response in the North Bay has been instructive. The inn where I stayed offered its vacant rooms to evacuees. Laundromats allowed free use of washers and dryers.

I wonder what would happen if the community of San Francisco treated its homeless crisis with the same level of compassion and urgency. We're seeing that it is possible to take care of everyone after an emergency. Why can't we do it on a daily basis? Are the chronically homeless any less deserving of an all-hands-on-deck response?

I know we can do better than this. We must.

—Amanda Serenyi of San Francisco is a certified public accountant and a writer.

—Thanks to Carol Lamont for sending the article.

Social Security Benefits or
Vocational Rehab Questions?
Call Wendy Jordan at 650-802-6482

Jail Chaplain

Spiritual counseling for incarcerated persons - Marty at St. Vincent de Paul Society: 650-796-0767.

Quarterly Advocacy Forum

Nov 2 | see page 2

Warm Line Training

Nov 9 | see page 3

Caminar Concert

Nov 11 | see page 2

General Meeting

Nov 15 | see page 1

Giving Tuesday

Nov 28 | see page 3

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

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Time Value

Visit NAMI San Mateo County at
www.namisanmateo.org to stay in touch,
sign up to volunteer and keep informed about
developments and information within your
local NAMI, the county, and the mental
health arena in general.

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

Please Become a Member of NAMI San Mateo County

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

- Individual Member (\$40)*
- Household Member (\$60)*
- Open Door Member (\$5)*

Additional Possible Contributions:

- Sustaining (\$100 to \$499)
- Patron (\$500 to \$999)
- Benefactor (\$1,000+)

- Renewal or New Membership Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

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

- Change Address (print new address below, please include label with old address)
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NAMI San Mateo County

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You Can Be Scary This Halloween Without Perpetuating Stigma

It's that time of year again. When darkness falls this Halloween, I'll be looking forward to passing out candy and seeing the usual witches, ghosts, Star Wars characters and especially—according to this year's costume experts—superheroes.

Halloween is a great family holiday that has always been one of my favorites. As we take our children out around the neighborhood, we get a chance to reconnect with neighbors we haven't seen in a while through quick conversations against the backdrop of candlelit pumpkins, spider webs, rattling skeletons and other front yard displays.

Unfortunately, though, this is also the time of year when we see costumes and displays that portray mental illness as dangerous and frightening. Just the other day, I was out on a walk in my neighborhood and I saw colorful signs directing trick-or-treaters down a "Psycho Path" toward "Asylum Creek." I am sure this homeowner did not consciously think of the negative messages they were sending, but in some ways that is even more concerning, because these views have been so widely accepted without regard for the damage they can do.

Why does it matter? Isn't it just a little holiday fun? As I have worked with youth in my community and talked to those working with NAMI nationally, we hear that one of the greatest barriers to getting help is the discomfort with acknowledging that you have a mental illness. A young man recently said that he didn't think of himself as "crazy" and didn't want to be associated with those in "that category." This young person was struggling with early signs of schizophrenia, and we now know that he would have had much better outcomes if he started treatment early. So, attitude makes a difference.

Though we have been successful in some of our collective efforts to put an end to some of the negative messages we encounter during Halloween, companies are still producing plenty of costumes and entertainment designed to make us afraid of mental illness and the people with those illnesses.

A quick Google search shows at least 10 companies still making straitjacket and other mental health-related costumes—everything from the "Mental Health Patient Fancy Dress Costume" to a "Psycho Lunatic Mask," which manufacturers describe as "perfect for a Halloween as an asylum patient or twisted killer!" You can also find plenty of "insane asylum" party accessories featuring severed heads and fingers, bloody scrubs, chain restraints and the like.

Conversations are so important to increasing awareness of the stigma around mental health, and beginning such conversations on many levels is a proactive way to increase such awareness.

When you are out on Halloween and encounter costumes or attractions that send a negative message about mental health, make it a teachable moment for children and adults. Children tend to take on even subtle attitudes from their parents, so a gentle expression of concern and an explanation of

why such representations are inappropriate can make a difference. Simply saying something to children, and to unaware adults, can have a powerful and lasting effect.

The conversation extends beyond our neighborhoods. Educating and influencing corporations can also have a great impact and we have seen it make a difference. We have reached out to a number of companies who, as a result, have taken active steps to remove discriminatory displays, and change Halloween attractions to eliminate harmful stereotypes. Advocacy and engagement can be successful to foster solutions that promote both fun and healthy attitudes toward mental illness.

Halloween is a great American family tradition. But when we send out messages that mindlessly equate a person in a mental hospital with a "twisted killer," or facilities that provide care with severed body parts and blood-soaked doctors, we are sending a message to those who need help that there is shame in their condition. Even more frightening than a psycho killer mask or "insane asylum" attraction is the prospect that a person with a mental illness would not seek or receive treatment because of the stigma associated with it.

We can all make a difference and this year, let's drive a stake in the heart of stigma and replace it with messages of hope and understanding.

— **Mary Giliberti**, CEO, National Alliance on Mental Illness