



NAMI Connection at the 2008 Annual NAMI Convention

Just over a year after the introduction of the NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group Program, we were able to successfully showcase our initiative at this year's NAMI Annual Convention in Orlando, Florida. Taking place June 13-16, several events were held throughout the conference...

To start the festivities, the Connection team hosted a breakfast for all State Executive Directors to talk about successes, challenges and best practices they have experienced with the program. A great mix of both first and second year states were there to share stories, and many leaders from states not yet in the program were in attendance to learn more.

Following the breakfast, we hosted an awesome celebration luncheon for ALL program



participants at the conference. Facilitators, champions, state and affiliate coordinators, and state and national trainers were in attendance. Mike Fitzpatrick, NAMI Executive Director, opened the luncheon by thanking all those involved, and expressing the excitement being generated by this culture-changing program. The Connection Field Managers then expressed what the program meant to them, and shared some of their favorite thoughts about the program. We then turned the microphone over to the participants themselves, and let them tell everyone in their own words about their positive experiences with Connection. The

luncheon had a great vibe... everyone was so energetic and happy about their participation in this program, and looked forward to continuing the good work they have been doing in their communities.

On Sunday afternoon, the very talented Connection Field Managers held a workshop designed to help facilitators improve their communication skills. The workshop included interactive exercises and focused on developing skills that go beyond the verbal aspect of communication.

On Monday morning, a Connection symposium was held. This event consisted of two panels; the first one was comprised of NAMI state and local leaders who shared their strategies in both implementing and growing the program in their communities. The second panel included Connection facilitators, trainers and champions, where personal stories and triumphs were shared with the audience.



Throughout the conference Laura Sweeney, Connection Project Assistant, was hard at work with a video crew filming our very first program outreach video. Many Connection program participants gave interviews and shared personal stories for the video, and we look forward to seeing the finished product this fall.

In addition to these events, we also had a big display in NAMI Land for people to gather more information and get a chance to speak with the Field Managers, and held two Connection support groups each night of the conference. Much interest was generated about the Connection program at this conference, and many states who do not yet have the program expressed their interest in getting involved.



We are proud of the work the NAMI Connection program has accomplished over the last year, and we were happy to share our experiences at the Convention!

Testimonials

The key to being a good facilitator and having a good working support group is to listen and pinpoint the member's main issues; always keeping in mind that we don't give advice but share personal experiences.

I can make a difference.

Recovery is having a safe place to get support from peers and capable facilitators who can make use of the structures, learned skills, strategies and processes. The goals are the Principle of Support.

I don't know where I'd be without NAMI Connection; it literally saved my life. I'm so grateful for my group and now I just want to share this program with everyone living with a mental illness.



Training Progress:

Completed Facilitator Trainings: 48
Total Facilitators Trained: 936
Total Connection Support Groups: 209

For more information on NAMI Connection:

- Visit our website at www.nami.org/connection
- Call the HelpLine at 1(800) 950-NAMI (6264)
- Send an email to connection@nami.org

Introducing the Newest Member of the NAMI Connection Team!

The Connection Team is pleased to announce that Lorener Brayboy, formerly the National Coordinator for the NAMI Peer-to-Peer program, has taken a new position with the NAMI Connection Team as Field Specialist.

Lorener is highly talented and will be bringing her technical assistance skills to NAMI Connection states as the program continues to grow.

Lorener has been invaluable during her three year tenure with the Peer-to-Peer program. Some of her most noted accomplishments include the launching of the P2P class listing system, the rollout of the Persona a Persona pilot, and implementing monthly coordinator and mentor refresher calls.



Lorener has also recently completed her Masters Degree in Social Work. Please help us in welcoming Lorener to the NAMI Connection movement!

I am very excited to work with such a dedicated team of program coordinators, facilitators, and trainers. This is a wonderful opportunity for me to create new caring professional relationships and maintain existing ones. I am eager to learn more about the program and training model, and see how this program will provide support to many consumers across the country.

After working with Peer-to-Peer, I hope to assist states in building more capacity and sustaining a strong foundation for the Connection movement. I am looking forward to working with all of you in the near future.



Spotlight: Anthony Holscher, State

Coordinator for Peer Programs for NAMI Arizona & NAMI Connection National Trainer

How did you get involved in NAMI Connection? I got involved with NAMI Connection when I was asked to become the state trainer for Arizona. Our Program Director saw in me a leader for NAMI Arizona. Little did I know that in taking this training that I was also becoming a National Trainer. Am I disappointed? NO.

How has NAMI Connection aided in your own recovery? Becoming a NAMI Connection facilitator/trainer has helped me to move forward in my life and my recovery in ways that I would never have believed possible. I have become very comfortable in front of audiences, I have found passion in what I am doing, and I am giving back to society in a very positive way. This is very rewarding as I used to be a methamphetamine junkie. I have developed a sense of confidence that I never had before. I am now even a little bit of a thespian. I have even been part of the forthcoming NAMI Connection Outreach Video. And, I know that I have a purpose to participate in and that I am a good person.

Why is it so important to spread the word about NAMI Connection? It is very important for me to promote NAMI Connection because I have seen first hand the "AH-HA" moments from many of my peers in that they see how they too can contribute to our society in ways that will only help them in their recovery. I also believe in the vision Connection. It is also a priority to me to help prove the power of the "Consumer Movement." We have so few consumers involved with NAMI that I believe that it is up to those of us willing to be *out there* to prove to the unbelievers that we peers can and do become successful.

What would you tell someone who's never heard of the program before? I would say to someone who has



Anthony with Jane Pauley at the NAMI National Convention in June 2008.

never been to a NAMI Connection support group that this is a strong candidate for helping them to take the steps to finding a possible solution to their issue/s. This is not therapy and we cannot solve someone's issues for them but by way of being facilitators, we can help to present to them possible new options to try. Knowledge is power, and if we are better equipped to take on this battle (having a SMI) we can strengthen our organization, and in the process, ourselves.

What other NAMI programs are you involved in? I am also a Peer-to-Peer mentor/State Trainer, In Our Own Voice Presenter, a Provider Education teacher, I have been part of the Cultural Competence Assessment Team, an original member of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Leaders Group for the Multicultural Action Center, and most recently have become the Peer Program Coordinator for NAMI Arizona.

Do you have any interesting hobbies? My hobbies are simple: instead of using methamphetamine to escape reality, I now use Sci-Fi fantasy books. Bring on the wizards and dragons.



Spotlight: Linda Remsburg, NAMI Connection
Facilitator and NAMI Connection Coordinator for NAMI
Southern Maryland

How did you get involved in NAMI Connection? I read about Connection on the NAMI National web site, and after reading what some of the facilitators said about the program, I signed up for the training.

How has NAMI Connection aided in your own recovery? NAMI Connection has helped me understand that I am not alone in this world as a consumer. I hear other consumers' stories and I realize that there are people in this world that understand me. I get a lot of feedback from others in the group and it's just so much help. I've learned different ways to cope with my problems and learn new ways to deal with the pain that is associated with mental illness.

What do you want others to know about NAMI Connection? NAMI Connection is a great way to be able to talk about your problems and knowing that what you say in group stays in group. After the first group meeting you actually look forward to coming back. Knowing that you will be able to share what has been going on with you relieves a lot of stress.

What other NAMI programs are you involved in? I am going to take the Peer-to-Peer class and I'm thinking about some other programs that NAMI offers. I do a lot of volunteering for NAMI Southern Maryland.

Do you have any interesting hobbies? My hobbies are going camping with my grandchildren, fishing, and having cookouts. I love to help people.



Monthly Facilitator Calls

NAMI Connection Field Managers hold a monthly teleconference call for the facilitators in each state covering a wide variety of topics. Please contact the field manager for your state for more information.

IA, IL, IN, KY, MI, MN, MO, OH, WI, & WV

- Anna Goodwin, 1 (866) 446-8433 or agoodwin@nami.org

AL, AR, DC, DE, FL, GA, LA, MD, MS, NC, PR, SC, & TN

- Gretchen Anglin, 1 (800) 985-2958 or gmeyer@nami.org

AK, AZ, CO, CT, KS, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, TX, & VT

- Harriet Kronick, 1 (877) 400-2092 or hkronick@nami.org

CA, HI, ID, MY, ND, NE, NM, NV, OK, OR, SD, UT, WA, WY

- Beth Gould, 1 (866) 461-4569 or bgould@nami.org

Upcoming



Facilitator Trainings:

- Delaware (Dover): Oct. 17-19
- Missouri (St. Louis): Oct. 17-19
- Virginia (Herndon): Nov. 7-9
- Texas (Fort Worth): Nov. 7-9
- Kentucky (Louisville): Nov. 7-9
- Massachusetts (Springfield): Nov. 14-16
- Louisiana (Baton Rouge): Nov. 14-16
- Utah (Salt Lake City): Dec. 5-7
- South Carolina (Winnsboro): Dec. 5-7
- Florida (Orlando): Dec. 12-14
- Mississippi (Jackson): Aug. 15-17
- South Dakota (Sioux Falls): Aug. 29-31
- Pennsylvania (Harrisburg): Sept. 5-7
- Nebraska (Grand Island): Sept. 12-14
- Washington (Seattle): Sept. 26-28
- Arkansas (Little Rock): Sept. 26-28
- Georgia (Atlanta): Oct. 3-5
- Arizona (Phoenix): Oct. 3-5

Are you interested in being a champion for NAMI Connection?

To find out more about what a champion does and how to become one, contact your state office or email connection@nami.org.

**Training of Trainers:
St. Louis, October 17-19**

If you're a trained facilitator with at least 15 months of experience facilitating a group, you could be a state trainer for NAMI Connection! We're looking for interested facilitators from all states currently in the program. If you're interested in becoming a trainer for your state, contact your state office for more information.