NAMI Connection
National Alliance on Mental Illness RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUP

Newsletter

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## Announcing the New Director of NAMI Connection!

We're proud to announce that Candita Wacker will be the new director of the NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group program.

In her role as national project manager for this initiative, Candita has devoted the last two years to organizing every aspect of this rapidly expanding program, gaining an enormous amount of expertise in deploying scores of rollout trainings in addition to assisting states in taking over the program on their own.

We hope you'll join us in congratulating Candita on her well-earned promotion.

## Introducing NAMI Connection's New Field Manager, Deanna Green!

"It's hard for me to get out of bed in the morning." "My thoughts race and it's hard for me focus." "I have problems with my family and other relationships." "I'm confused about my faith." "I was taken to the hospital by the police." "I have a mental illness." I thought to myself, 'Wow! I can relate.'

These were some of the first words I heard from another human being expressing what their lives were like living with mental illness. As the second speaker spoke, I was blown away. Here were two people who were having the exact experiences that I had for most of my life and were talking openly about it! For the first time, I considered mental illness to be a legitimate medical condition; a brain disorder. It was January 2004 when I heard these life changing words. I was taking a human services course in Baltimore, Maryland after a fourth hospitalization. The folks who spoke, belonged to NAMI and were conducting an In Our Own Voice: Living with Mental Illness presentation. I'd never heard of NAMI and immediately educated myself and became involved. I was trained as an In Our Voice presenter a month later and began doing presentations. It was liberating; I began to feel comfortable with my illness and spoke freely and without shame about my mental illness with my family. Soon after, I was trained as a Peer-to-Peer mentor and NAMI C.A.R.E. facilitator.

In July 2004, I moved to Columbia, Maryland and was hired as a part-time Consumer Program Coordinator for NAMI-Howard County. I began speaking regularly to various audiences about my mental illness through the In Our Own Voice program and recruited other consumers to do the same. I immediately assembled a second Peer-to-Peer class for NAMI Howard County and when I was trained as a national trainer for the NAMI Connection program, started Howard County's first Connection Recovery support group. All programs have yielded an increase in NAMI-HC's consumer membership in addition to volunteers, mentors, presenters and support group facilitators.

I've learned several important things in the last five years. First, my faith is a pertinent part of my recovery. Secondly, there is no organization that could've provided me with the education and support or even the idea of growth and recovery I've received from NAMI beginning with that first In Our Own Voice presentation. As a result, I'm well enough and feel comfortable that I will continue to excel in my new role. Lastly, but not in any way the least, there is no greater medicine or tool for recovery that comes close to the healing I've received as a result of talking to and growing with my peers. It is, undoubtedly, the launching pad for anyone seeking wellness and recovery. No one knows intimately the experience of living with mental illness except those who live it. I couldn't be more thankful for the support group.

It is fitting that I'm now a part of the national team for the program that supports, in my opinion, the greatest path to recovery. My motto: NAMI for life!

## Testimonials

*Connection has helped me personally by really allowing me to realize a dream I had, one that I was not sure could be accomplished. It has opened doors for me by being able to use abilities I did not know I had.*

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*NAMI Connection has helped the community by simply offering hope where there is none.*

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*If I had one word to describe NAMI Connection, it would be: Amazing.*

## Training Progress:

Facilitator Trainings: 72

Total Facilitators Trained: 1,283

Total Support Groups: 272

## 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

## NAMI Connection Welcomes 16 New States into the Program

- Alabama
- Alaska
- Hawaii
- Kansas
- Minnesota
- Nevada
- New Hampshire
- New Jersey
- New York
- North Carolina
- Oklahoma
- Oregon
- Rhode Island
- Vermont
- Wisconsin
- Wyoming

# We Need Your Input!

**NAMI Connection in Spanish**

The NAMI Connection program will be translated into Spanish in 2009. We are looking for Connection facilitators and trainers who are currently running or who would like to run a Spanish-speaking group. We will be gathering a focus group together on a conference call in February to discuss your ideas on how to make NAMI Connection in Spanish the best it can be. If you are interested in giving us your thoughts, please contact Anna Goodwin at agoodwin@nami.org or 1-866-446-8433.

**NAMI Connection for Veterans**

We are looking for Connection facilitators and trainers who are also Veterans currently running or who would like to run a Connection Veterans support group. We will be gathering a focus group together on a conference call in February to discuss your ideas on how to make NAMI Connection for Veterans the best it can be. If you are interested in giving us your thoughts, please contact Harriet Kronick at hkronick@nami.org or 1-877-400-2092.

## SPOTLIGHT: Royal Riddick—NAMI Connection National Trainer, Baltimore, MD

I was born and raised in Baltimore, Md. I served my country twice. Once in the Marine Corps as a Vietnam veteran and once as a V.I.S.T.A. volunteer (Volunteers In Service To America) as a career counselor and regional coordinator for the Talent Search academic program in the Alaskan bush. I worked with high school kids and people up to the age of 27 matching them with academic programs that fit their interest and finding financial aid. My base of operations was in Nome, Alaska. and the 17 Eskimo villages of the Bering Strait region. Most of my organizational alliances were with the school districts and Native non-profits.

My introduction to NAMI was through my case manager. She informed me about the first training of the Living With Schizophrenia and Other Major Mental Illnesses program at NAMI Metro Baltimore in 1998. We went through the training together. Later I became the coordinator of the program for my affiliate and was trained as a state and national trainer in 2000. I went to the first training for Peer-to-Peer mentors and after that was trained as a NAMI-C.A.R.E. facilitator. In 2002 I was honored to receive the Maryland Schizophrenia Service Award.

When I first heard about the NAMI Connection program, I jumped at the chance to train as a national trainer. I love training; it gives me a sense of giving back and I love to see the transformation of the trainees during trainings.

I manifest my spirituality through Taoism. Taoism quite often uses water metaphorically. Part of chapter 34 of the Tao Te Ching states:

*The myriad things depend on it for life, but it never stops*
*It achieves its work, but does not take credit*
*It clothes and feeds myriad things, but does not rule over them*

Just like water, we nurture other people without needing to take credit or exert influence over them. Water gives because that is its nature. Likewise, we give because its natural for us. We attach no conditions, want nothing in return, and require no praise.

That, in a nutshell, is how I feel as both a Connection facilitator and a trainer.

## Are you interested in being a champion for NAMI Connection?

In every community, NAMI is looking for Champions to help ensure that NAMI Connection becomes a successful and flourishing program.

**Champions can:**

- Work with facilitators and local affiliates to distribute NAMI Connection marketing materials to agencies, mental health centers, and other local locations
- Identify sites for NAMI Connection support groups, such as churches, clubhouses, drop-in centers, and hospitals.
- Identify and recruit potential champions and support group facilitators.

**Who can become a champion?** Champions are consumers, family members, peer support specialists, mental health professionals, former affiliate board members; anyone who is interested in making NAMI Connection succeed in their local area.

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a champion, contact your state office or email **connection@nami.org** for more information on how to help!

## Interested in becoming a Connection State Trainer?

NAMI Connection is gearing up for our 3rd Train the Trainer Event in St. Louis, Missouri the weekend of April 24 -26, 2009. Twice a year we hold trainings for Connection state trainers from states entering the second phase of the roll-out. States that have already had their roll-out trainings provided by National are asked to select outstanding certified facilitators to become their state trainers. These individuals attend a 3-day training in St. Louis and learn about what qualities make effective trainers, practice effective training techniques, take on the role of a trainer and practice training the other trainees, and are introduced to the important elements of training that happen outside of the training rooms.

To be considered for this important post, facilitators must be certified and have run a Connection group for a *minimum of 5 months by the training in St. Louis*. State NAMI Connection Trainers are volunteers – each state has the option to pay the trainers if funds are available.

For this April TT, NAMI National will fund the cost of training the three initial state trainers from the following states: AR, AZ, CA, LA, MA, MD, ME, MT, NE, NM, PA, SD, TX, UT, VA, and WA. States that have three state trainers trained with the costs covered by National may send additional facilitators to be trained at the state's expense. The registration fee is $350. Travel expenses are not included in the registration fee.

The deadline for facilitators to send their application to their state NAMI office is February 27, 2009. (Deadline may vary from state to state.) For more information, contact your state NAMI office or contact Anna Goodwin, NAMI Connection Training Manager at agoodwin@nami.org or 1-866-446-8433. Those state trainers for whom National covers training expenses will receive information on how to arrange their travel after the state has registered them for the TT.

Thursday, April 23rd will be a travel day.

## Upcoming Facilitator Trainings:

- NC (Charlotte): February 20-22
- MN (Minneapolis): March 20-22
- NY (TBA): March 27-29
- CA (Los Angeles Metro Area): April 3-5
- KS (Topeka): April 17-19
- OK (Oklahoma City): April 17-19
- NJ (TBA): May 1-May 3
- NH (Concord): October 16-18

For the most up-to-date listing of upcoming trainings, check out the latest news section NAMI Connection website.

## Monthly Facilitator Calls

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

IL, MI, MN, SD, UT, WI
- Anna Goodwin, 1 (866) 446-8433 or agoodwin@nami.org

AL, NC, OK, RI, VT
- Deanna Green, dgreen@nami.org

AK, CO, KS, MA, NH, NJ, NY
- Harriet Kronick, 1 (877) 400-2092 or hkronick@nami.org

CA, HI, MT, OR, NV, WA, WY
- Beth Gould, 1 (866) 461-4569 or bgould@nami.org

AR, CT, DE, FL, GA, LA, IN, IA, KY, MD, ME, MS, MO, NE, NM, OH, PA, SC, TX, VA
- Gretchen Anglin, 1 (800) 985-2958 or gmeyer@nami.org

*Please note that your state may now have a different field manager.

## Do you want to contribute to the next NAMI Connection newsletter?

We want to hear from you! We're looking for people to contribute to the NAMI Connection newsletter and share their successes, tips, and creativity.

Including:
- Poetry
- Articles about local/state involvement in NAMI Connection
- Personal stories
- Artwork
- Spotlight suggestions
- Anything else you want to contribute to the newsletter!

For more information or to submit your piece, email connection@nami.org.