



## Mental Illness Awareness Week Idea Book

Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) is NAMI's premiere public information and outreach activity. Held each year during the first full week of October, MIAW is when NAMI leaders across the country engage in activities to promote mental illness awareness.

As summer begins, this book is intended to help NAMI affiliates develop ideas and begin planning activities for Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW), October 4-10, 2009.

NAMI is serving this year as national outreach partner for two PBS-TV documentaries, one or both of which will be airing during MIAW. The first is *When Medicine Got It Wrong*, the story of NAMI's grassroots origins and founding as a national organization. The second is *Minds at the Edge*, a "Fred Friendly Seminar" about current issues in the mental health care system. Additional information will also be available in August to help promote the PBS broadcasts and use them as tools for public education.

This MIAW Idea Book is intended to support NAMI's dedicated grassroots leaders in planning activities by offering ideas to inspire and support NAMI leaders during MIAW, including:

### Activities and Special Events

NAMI leaders can raise awareness of mental illness, treatment and research during MIAW by hosting special events and partnering with local businesses and organizations. This book offers examples of events that have taken place in communities all over the nation, organized by state and local NAMI affiliates. Choose an event from this guide or plan something new and be a part of Mental Illness Awareness Week where you live!

- Traditional MIAW Events
- Innovative MIAW Events (developed by NAMI state organizations and affiliates)

### Media Tools

NAMI National offers a wide array of technical assistance opportunities to state and affiliate organizations in support of MIAW activities. In August, 2009, three additional tools will be added to MIAW on-line resources: a model press release, model letter to editor and sample "op-ed."

- Online: [www.nami.org/miaw](http://www.nami.org/miaw) offers resources and information on MIAW activities.
- By phone: contact the NAMI Center for Leadership Institute to inquire about MIAW support and technical assistance.
- In person: Look for MIAW workshops at the annual NAMI National Convention.

### Working with the Community

NAMI leaders and members work with community groups to host events during MIAW. Volunteers from NAMI state organizations and local affiliates—as well as other like-minded groups (Depressive and Manic-depressive Association, your local psychiatric society, local community mental health center, Mental Health America, mental health coalition partners)—can work together to plan MIAW activities. Joining together with



other mental health groups will strengthen efforts and build a winning community ready to take action. There is power in numbers! When a community bands together, the message is heard loud and clear. However, a small group of individuals is enough to help end stigma and raise awareness about mental illness during this week and throughout the year.

Make sure your events are inclusive of *all* members of your community. While all MIAW activities will be open to the public, if you have not reached out to diverse communities before, and if these communities do not know NAMI, they may not participate in any of your MIAW activities. Reach out by purposefully targeting diverse communities as part of your MIAW marketing activities or organize events that specifically target these communities.

### **MIAW Traditional Events**

#### **Display Posters and Brochures**

Mental Illness Awareness Week materials are available online at [www.nami.org/miaw](http://www.nami.org/miaw). One to two weeks prior to MIAW, place posters and brochures in high-traffic areas within the community, including libraries, churches, schools, and universities, hospitals, etc. Be sure to obtain approval from the facility manager prior to displaying materials in each location.

#### **Candlelight Vigil**

For many years, MIAW candlelight vigils hosted by NAMI affiliates have been held all over the country. Beginning MIAW with a candlelight vigil sends a message of hope for reclaimed, full lives that once struggled with mental illness. Host the vigil at an easily accessible site to get the most exposure and participation. Below is a list of volunteer positions that make this event manageable and well-organized:

- Speaker Coordinator: responsible for reserving a location (including filling out necessary paper work for permits, confirming candles are allowed) and contacting speakers.
- Publicity Coordinator: responsible for advertising the event, including making and hanging posters, contacting area hospitals and other organizations.
- Logistics Coordinator: responsible for event supplies (i.e., transporting and setting up sound equipment, drinks or food).
- Affiliate Leader: to inspire, educate and recruit NAMI and community members to attend the event.
- Central Contact: responsible for inquiries about the event and triaging callers to the appropriate volunteer leader.

Budget considerations for hosting a candlelight vigil:

- battery-powered PA system rental
- candles
- advertising, copying costs
- permit for demonstrations
- food and beverages



To strengthen the event, ask the mayor, governor or other elected official to speak about the advancements in treatment of mental illness and the importance of combating stigma.

### **Mental Health Screenings**

Consider co-hosting free depression and bipolar disorder screening days with other mental health groups and mental health professionals at local hospitals, mental health clinics, churches, senior centers, shopping malls, schools and college campuses. Screening for Mental Health Inc. (SMH) first introduced the concept of large-scale mental health screenings with National Depression Screening Day in 1991. SMH programs now include both in-person and online programs for depression, bipolar disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, eating disorders, alcohol problems and suicide prevention. For information on how to become a screening site, go to [www.mentalhealthscreening.org](http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org).

### **Gubernatorial/Mayoral Proclamation**

Originally established by congressional resolution, MIAW has been observed the first week of October since 1983. Receiving an endorsement from the governor or mayor in the form of an official proclamation will add even more credibility to MIAW. Send a copy of the signed proclamation to reporters to gain additional media exposure. Be prepared to answer questions about mental illness and/or bipolar disorder by using the fact sheets enclosed with these materials.

### **Library Donations**

MIAW is the perfect time to donate books to the community (or school) library. Review recent NAMI *Advocate* magazines for ideas on newly reviewed books, and be sure to order your books through the NAMI Web site's *Amazon.com* link for additional savings. Take a photo of the NAMI leader and librarian receiving the donation and send it, along with a summary, to the local newspaper for additional impact.

### **Book Store Displays**

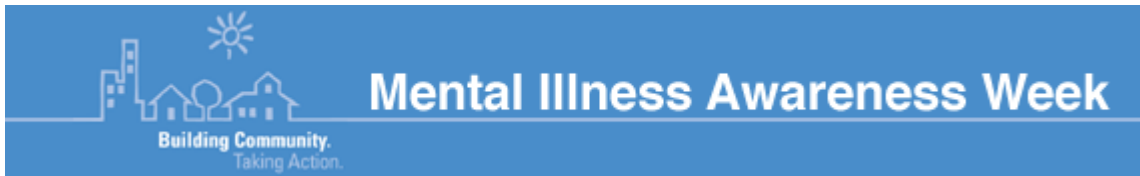
Work with the manager of a bookstore in your community to create a temporary display for MIAW. Assist with gathering a sample of recommended reading on topics of mental illness, recovery, and inspiration. Be sure to use MIAW posters to help promote the display, include a brochure holder of information about local NAMI affiliates and education classes.

### **MIAW Innovative Events**

(Developed by NAMI States and Affiliates)

#### **Creativity Hills: An Anti-stigma, Mental Illness Awareness and Celebration of Recovery**

*Creativity Hills* is an event conceived and developed by NAMI Greater Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It was first organized and held on May 7, 2006, during Mental Health Awareness Month. *Creativity Hills* consisted of a consumer art gallery, including poetry, music and an art auction. The goal was to raise awareness of NAMI by celebrating the creativity of all the wonderful minds touched by mental illness, coming together as a



community for a fundraising event. The end result was new friendships and NAMI members. Contact NAMI Greater Milwaukee at [help@namigm.org](mailto:help@namigm.org) for more information.

### **Many Faces of Mental Illness Mask Project**

This annual event created by NAMI Baltimore is an innovative, accessible outreach and anti-stigma tool that starts community conversations about mental illness. For more information, call NAMI Baltimore: (410) 435-2600.

#### Mask Competition

- Individuals and groups entering the annual NAMI Mask Competition receive information about mental illness, a mask form and an opportunity to express themselves creatively on the theme.
- The winners are honored and the entries are displayed at the annual Winter Carnival.
- Judges include a number of local artists.

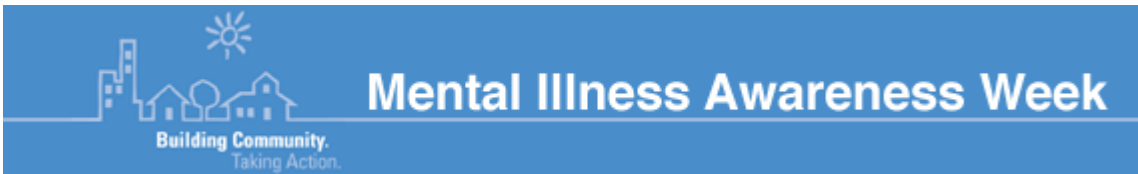
#### Mask Exhibits

The mask entries become part of a growing collection and are used for community education. The new permanent NAMI hallway gallery features a display of masks from past years. Masks are exhibited at a conference of Chiefs of Police in New York City. Masks were integrated into a one-man show, "Hearing Voices: Speaking in Tongues," and were part of a multimedia exhibit at a national conference of pharmacists in the spring of 2006.

### **Celebration of Courage**

The *Celebration of Courage* is an event conceived and developed by NAMI Wake County, N.C. The first installation was organized and held March-April 2005. *Celebration of Courage* is a unique mental illness awareness program. It is actually an installation art exhibit that can be set up anywhere. The concept was to recreate Van Gogh's famous "Irises" painting that he created while institutionalized as a result of mental illness. The iris has been adopted by NAMI as a symbol of hope and courage. The basics of the program are as follows:

- The NAMI state office solicits sponsors for the events by selling sponsorship of flowers.
- Flower sponsorships are sold for a minimum \$20 donation; a \$250 donation includes the name of the donor posted at the events and a \$1,000 donation allows the donor to have an information booth or tent at events.
- There are three flowers that can be sponsored:
  - irises: in honor or memory of people with mental illness;
  - tulips; in honor or memory of family members, advocates and friends; and
  - daisies: in honor or memory of health care professionals or researchers.
- The flowers are garden ornaments made of polyester fabric affixed to a metal stake. They are 45 inches high by 14 inches wide. The flowers that are sponsored are displayed en masse at various events. Examples of places that have been displayed include: the lawn at the state capital for all legislators to see; at the hotel site of the state conference. Imagine hundreds, or even



thousands of flowers in one place symbolizing hope, courage and recovery for people with mental illness.

- They create an impressive site to passers-by who can't help asking what the flowers represent. NAMI Wake County and NAMI North Carolina have offered to share information about this creative and powerful program to other NAMI state and local organization who are interested.
- Contact NAMI North Carolina for more information: [www.naminc.org](http://www.naminc.org)

### **Ideas for More MIAW Activities**

#### **Support "In Our Own Voice" Presentations**

Reaching out directly to members of civic organizations—Kiwanis, Rotary Club, Lions Club or Knights of Columbus—is a great way to raise awareness of mental illness. Affiliates can sponsor an In Our Own Voice presentation and a short presentation on NAMI.

#### **Educate School Professionals about Mental Illness**

The NAMI publication: *Parents and Teachers as Allies: Recognizing Early-onset Mental Illness in Children and Adolescents (P&T as Allies)*, is designed to help raise awareness in the school community about mental illness in children. The publication is very popular with school professionals around the country.

Ideas for approaching schools during MIAW:

- **School Board:** organize a group of parents to meet with school board members. Bring along a copy of *P&T as Allies* and talk about the impact that early onset mental illness has on children, especially on their school and family life. Ask for their support to help educate other leaders in the school community.
- **School Superintendent:** ask a group of parents to meet with the superintendent of the school district. Share a copy of the *P&T as Allies* publication, along with information about mental illness in school-aged children. Brainstorm ideas about how NAMI and schools can work together to best address the needs of students living with mental illness.
- **School-based Health Professionals:** meet with school counselors, social workers, psychologists and nurses, all of whom have the potential to be close allies in raising awareness about mental illness in schools. Ask how everyone can best work together to improve the academic and functional achievement of students with mental illness.
- **General or Special Education Teachers:** find teachers in the community who are also family members and ask for their help in developing stronger alliances with the schools.
- **PTA:** ask PTA leaders in one or more schools about presenting at the next scheduled PTA meeting about mental illness in children.
- Consider presenting NAMI's new Parents and Teachers as Allies In-Service Mental Health Education program for school professionals in the schools in your district. For more information about the in-service program, visit [www.nami.org/caac](http://www.nami.org/caac) or contact NAMI's Child and Adolescent Action Center at (703) 524-7600.



### **Host an “Ask the Doctor” Educational Session**

Host a seminar and have a health care provider—psychiatrist, psychologist or psychopharmacologist—discuss the latest treatments for specific mental illnesses. Follow the presentation with an open microphone question and answer session with attendees.

### **Participate in Faith Outreach**

Many churches and synagogues have weekly or monthly bulletins announcing events in the community. Submit MIAW activities for publication along with a short piece on the importance of ending stigma against people with severe mental illness. Stress the challenges people with severe mental illness face and the ways others can provide spiritual support. Ask if information about Family-to-Family or a local NAMI affiliate can be placed in the church or synagogue resource area. For additional resources targeted to the faith community, visit NAMI FaithNet: [www.nami.org/namifaithnet](http://www.nami.org/namifaithnet). For more resources, go to: Mental Health Ministries—[www.MentalHealthMinistries.net](http://www.MentalHealthMinistries.net)

Additional faith-based ideas:

- Ask clergy to include mental illness in a sermon, pastoral prayer or other liturgies.
- Invite a speaker from the community to give a presentation on a mental illness. Contact groups like NAMI, DBSA or MHA to provide educational material on mental illness.
- Place an insert in the worship bulletin. Mental Health Ministries has sample bulletin inserts on their Web site in the “resources and links, other resources” section.

### **Advertising on Billboards, Subways, Buses and Taxis**

While advertisers typically pay for the signs that appear on billboards, subways, buses and taxis, many times the spaces remain empty. Billboards, in particular, go vacant due to lack of business, so approach local billboard operators about running ads for MIAW.

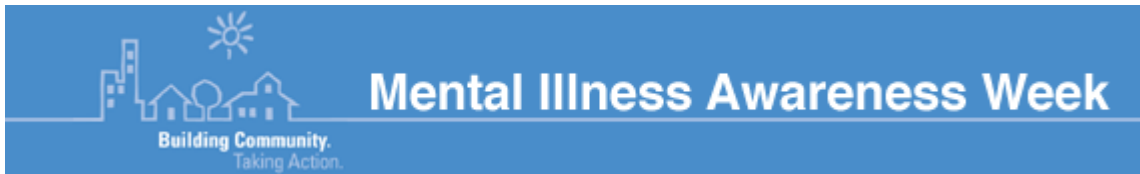
### **Host a Movie Night**

Screen a film where mental illness is a central theme at a local school, church or community center and invite students, teachers and the general public. After the screening, discuss what it would be like to have a mental illness and some of the myths about mental illness by arranging a panel of families and consumers to share their experiences. Some good choices for movies include:

- *A Beautiful Mind*
- *The Aviator*
- *The Hours*
- *When Medicine Got It Wrong*

### **Host a Dinner and an Education Event**

Combining dinner with an education program always means higher attendance! Discussions about the type of medications that are used to treat bipolar disorder should also be included, and the opportunity for consumers to share their experiences on how medications and talk therapy work together to enhance recovery.



### **Plan a Veterans' Event**

NAMI affiliates are encouraged to contact recovery and/or suicide prevention coordinators at local Departments of Veterans Affairs. Trying incorporating some of the ideas listed in this book at the VA facility, such as screening a movie, or setting up panel presentations and recovery booths. It is always good to schedule early to obtain space and a possible announcement in the employee newsletter and employee e-mail the VA sends out. For more information and to find your local VA facility, visit [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov). The VA also has a Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center, where you can find useful tools to combine with MIAW efforts. Visit [www.mirecc.va.gov](http://www.mirecc.va.gov).

### **Engage in Multicultural Outreach Activities**

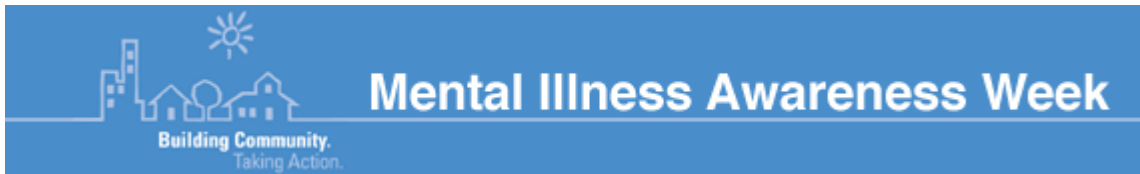
There are several approaches you can take and activities you can plan:

- host an In Our Own Voice presentation in a minority-specific setting (target a local African American community center, a Latino church or a GLBT organization that could host you);
- host an “Ask the Doctor” session focusing on a specific community, issues such as ethnopsychopharmacology or cultural competence in treatment;
- strategically target locations frequented by diverse communities to display posters and brochures (e.g., a Latino clinic or a Korean-American Church);
- plan a mental health screening and have your screening instruments available in other languages;
- donate mental health-related books to your library and include community specific books like *The Seven Beliefs: A Step-by Step Guide to Help Latinas Recognize and Overcome Depression* (in English and Spanish), *Black Pain: It Just Looks Like We're Not Hurting, No Estoy Enfermo, No Necesito Ayuda (I Am Not Sick. I do Not Need Help)*, in Spanish) and *Standing in the Shadows: Understanding and Overcoming Depression in Black Men*;
- partner with multicultural organizations to plan and host your events; and/or
- target multicultural media outlets.

### **Host a NAMI “Sharing Hope: Understanding Mental Health” Presentation**

“Sharing Hope: Understanding Mental Health” is a new toolkit-based initiative intended to educate African American congregations about mental illness and address stigma in that community. The initiative consists of a 60-minute presentation by a team of three presenters—a person with mental illness, a family member and a faith leader—who not only share information on mental illness, treatment and recovery but who also introduce NAMI and its education and support programs as a resource. The toolkit provides a step-by-step guide on how to successfully reach out to African American congregations, how to implement Sharing Hope, the presentation script along with other useful resources. To learn more about the initiative and to access the toolkit, visit [www.nami.org/sharinghope](http://www.nami.org/sharinghope) or e-mail [sharinghope@nami.org](mailto:sharinghope@nami.org).

### Community Involvement



Involve community members in order to ensure that plans are relevant, responsive to the community's needs and as culturally meaningful as possible. One of the most important parts of developing an outreach plan is deciding on the major focus of activities. This should include education, ethnic-specific family support groups, recruitment of community members and advocacy. A particular outreach program can include one, several or all of these components.

Consider ways to inform people about the planned activities. Pay close attention to how each community hears about programs and what is being offered. Utilize minority mental health professionals and mental health treatment programs serving predominantly diverse communities. Additional target groups for dissemination are local community organizations such as churches, ethnic clubs, sports facilities and public educational institutions.

Don't forget to pay particular attention to those media outlets that are frequently used by members of the target community. Advertising with culturally appropriate media will ensure that information reaches the right audience. NAMI National's Multicultural Action Center has many resources designed to assist with outreach efforts to diverse groups. For some of the many resources available for multicultural outreach, visit [www.nami.org/multicultural](http://www.nami.org/multicultural).

## **Media Tools**

### **Get Maximum Exposure by Working with the Media**

Prepare for MIAW by initiating new relationships—as well as strengthening old ones—with the media. The media can be the best vehicle for communicating your messages to the general public.

Media efforts help educate and influence local officials, lawmakers, business leaders, teachers, police officers and other people in a community. Through the media, you can reach people who many need help but don't know where to turn.

NAMI developed a comprehensive media toolkit called "Public Relations 101," available at [www.nami.org/publicrelations101](http://www.nami.org/publicrelations101) that can help support MIAW activities. Some of the resources in the toolkit include:

- Targeted media lists: a how-to on creating a list of editors and news reporters
- Media resources: Tools and samples of materials that can be included in a press kit to help promote MIAW, as well as get the media exposure you want, are downloadable at [www.nami.org/miaw](http://www.nami.org/miaw). Below is some media lingo to help you get started and familiarize yourself with terms:
  - Media Advisories: notifications to the media that briefly explain the event—news conference, candlelight vigil, rally, luncheon, etc. They are always one page and single-spaced, and are usually shorter than the average news release. The body of the advisory includes the "who, what, when, where and why" of the event. Photo and interview opportunities also should be noted on the advisory.
  - Pitch: a compelling introduction explaining why you are contacting the reporter/editor, who you are and the significance of your event/activities to the local community. A pitch can be done by letter, e-mail, fax or phone.



- News Release: announces something new—an event, activity, survey results, the organization’s stand on an issue, etc. The first paragraph (known as the “lead”) should summarize the news you’re announcing: the “who, what, when, where and why” of your news. Releases must be double-spaced, no more than two pages is ideal.
- Fact Sheets: designed to provide reporters with additional information that puts your story into context and helps them fill out their reports. You can prepare fact sheets on an array of issues: national and/or local statistics about the prevalence of mental illness, scientific breakthroughs in the treatment of severe mental illness, individual brain disorders categorized by illness, your local NAMI, and relevant area support groups, etc.
- Brochures: printed educational and outreach materials and pamphlets. NAMI National and many state and local affiliates have developed a wide array of brochures about different illnesses and local services. If you are unable to send brochures to media because of costs, condense the most important information into a fact sheet.
- Pitching tips
- Op-ed articles: are essays that run “opposite the editorial page” and are frequently written by people not on a newspaper’s editorial staff. Local editorial pages provide yet another platform from which to advance your messages on a given issue. Typically, op-ed articles should be 500–700 words, however, contact the editorial page department to learn about exact specifications before writing and submitting an op-ed.

Some other strategies you may want to keep in mind and/or research include:

- Letters to the Editor: these differ from an “op-ed” and are the letters to the editor that appear on the editorial page or the last page of the first section of the newspaper. Keep the letter to 300–500 words, but contact the editorial page or letters to the editor to learn about exact specifications. Often reporters will write news stories after reading an especially compelling op-ed or letter to the editor.
- Editorial Board Meetings: prearranged meetings between NAMI leaders and other mental health partners and editorial staff at newspapers. While securing meetings with editorial staffs can be difficult, this influential group at your local newspaper plays a critical role in ensuring that MIAW and other mental illness messages are included in the publication’s editorial coverage. Prepare your message points and supporting background materials and then call the editorial page editor to pitch your idea for an editorial board meeting. Link your issue to a breaking story, emerging trend or existing need. Once you secure that coveted editorial board meeting, assemble a small group of experts from the local community such as a consumer, family member, psychiatrist and a business leader. Be sure to prepare in advance, have materials to “leave behind,” debrief afterwards and follow-up with the editorial staff lead.
- Public Service Announcements (PSAs): pre-recorded or live-read announcements on radio or television usually 30-60 seconds in length. Consider approaching the public affairs directors at your local media outlets about using PSAs during MIAW to help promote the activities you have planned. Radio stations will air PSAs in a 30–60 second format, and accept written text, audio



## Mental Illness Awareness Week

tape, and compact disk. A live-read PSA is the easiest and least expensive. This is where you write out your material and the announcer or disc jockey reads it live, on the air. Remember, when you submit your PSA as live copy, there is always the chance that the public service director or even the announcer will edit or change it. NAMI's own PSA Initiative launches June 8, details will be in the downloads section at [www.nami.org/miaw](http://www.nami.org/miaw) from that date on.

- Talk Radio: many markets have community focused call-in radio shows. These are excellent opportunities to share NAMI's message for a prolonged period of time. While conducting media research, take special note of those radio stations that have a "talk radio" format. Call the station's producer and pitch your topic as a possible call-in topic. Also, offer yourself or other affiliate leader as a guest for the show.