

# NAMI Walks for the Mind of America Walkathon

Welcome! This packet includes a lot of tools to help get you started in this year's 4th Annual Walkathon to be held on Sunday, April 29th at Centennial Park, Ellicott City.

You will find:

1. Walk Interest Form for pre-registration
2. Basic Information for Walkers and Tips for a successful letter/e-mail campaign
3. Sample letters targeting family and friends and businesses
4. Team Strategies for Business-Based Teams and Strategies for Family-Based Teams
5. Team Captain Time-line and Tips about Team T-Shirts

Thanks so much! Please note that most of these resources are also located on our web site at:

[www.nami.org/sites/namimetrobaltimore](http://www.nami.org/sites/namimetrobaltimore)

## Basic Info for Walkers

**Please pre-register your team or yourself as a walker by:**

- ✓ filling out the Walk Interest form attached and e-mailing, faxing or mailing it to NAMI Metropolitan Baltimore (this form is also available at the bottom of our home page ([www.nami.org/sites/namimetrobaltimore](http://www.nami.org/sites/namimetrobaltimore)))
- ✓ you can also pre-register on-line at [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org) – just click on NAMIWALKS on the left, then MD and then follow the directions—this will give you access to a lot of useful tools, including your own team home page, walker page, Metro Baltimore's team page, electronic sample letters and much more!

**Here are some handy tips!**

- Set goals for the number of people you will contact and the total amount that you hope to raise in pledges.
- Target the people that you would like to ask to pledge to support your walk – Feel free to ask them to walk too—they can pre-register on-line also. Your top prospects can include:
  - \_ You and your spouse or significant other
  - \_ Your children
  - \_ Parents and grandparents
  - \_ Brothers and sisters, and brothers- and sisters-in-law
  - \_ Cousins
  - \_ Aunts and uncles
  - \_ Your closest friends from work and outside of work
  - \_ Members of your professional and community organizations (take your pledge forms to meetings!)
  - \_ Members of your faith community
  - \_ Former co-workers
  - \_ Neighbors
  - \_ Anyone else you think might be interested
- After the Walk let everyone know (or write them a thank-you letter) that tells the fundraising results for your team and, if the results are in, for the entire Walk. Include pictures from the day if you can.
- Relax and be proud of the important role you and your family and friends are playing in NAMI's efforts to provide support, education and advocacy for all Marylanders with mental illness and their families!

## **Email/Letter Writing Instructions**

### 10 Key Steps in a Letter Writing (Or Emailing) Fundraising Campaign

1. Write your letter/email. Say what you are doing for the 2006 Walk and why you are doing it. Tell your personal story and make it clear why supporting the Maryland NAMIWalks for the Mind of America walkathon is important to you and your family.
2. Include in your letter some information on the important work being done by NAMI.
3. State your personal and team fund-raising goals in your letter. The higher the better!
4. Be sure to say that all donations are tax-deductible and that checks should be made payable to NAMI or the National Alliance on Mental Illness-MD. You should write NAMI-Metropolitan Baltimore on the memo. Or offer the handy use of your personal web link for donations. [Get one by registering at [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org): Click on “NAMIWalks” logo, and follow the instructions to register—Be sure to list your team as your own team or NAMI-Metropolitan Baltimore and your local affiliate as NAMI-Metropolitan Baltimore. You will get an email with a personal link and additional helpful information!]
5. Also be sure to say that you would like the donation given to you before or by the date of the Walk so that you can turn in the donation by Walk day (April 29th). Enclose a return envelope if possible. (Donations should be returned directly to you so that you can keep track of your supporters and personally thank everyone after the Walk.)
6. Mail/email your letter to family members, friends, and co-workers (try using your holiday card mailing list) 3 to 10 weeks before the walkathon.
7. Consider including on your mailing list any vendors, consultants and associates with whom you or your spouse work. Business people tend to make larger donations since they often will make them from a business checking account rather than from a personal checking account.
8. It is important to send thank-you notes after the Walk to everyone who sponsored you.
9. Remember that the more people you mail your letter to, the more money you will raise to support the education and advocacy programs NAMI provides to Marylanders dealing with mental illness, their families, as well as the general community.
10. NAMI thanks you for every time you mail a letter, knowing the time and attention you are giving in making NAMIWalks the success it will be!

## Email/Letter Writing Sample Letters

March 2006, NAMIWALKS Family Team Chair

Dear Friends:

Several years ago my family experienced the painful shock and gut-wrenching devastation that surround severe mental illness. Our personal account involves someone we know and love, who very suddenly becomes a complete stranger. Our story is about someone full of life and desire, whose focus and direction suddenly become unclear.

You see at a time in his life when he should be embracing the passage from adolescence to manhood, my younger brother courageously fights the darkness and loneliness associated with mental illness. So while his childhood buddies celebrate bright futures filled with exciting careers, marriage and family; my brother struggles daily to find peace and tackle the most mundane tasks.

Sadly, my family's story involves a lot of anger, guilt and resentment, as well. As you can imagine, the affects of mental illness reap havoc on the lives of siblings, parents, children and spouses alike.

On a more positive note, our journey thankfully involves a great deal of understanding and acceptance, too. After years of denial, we found the courage to seek out the resources and support we needed to move forward. In short, we found the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). NAMI has had a profound impact on my family and me. The support groups, Family-to-Family education program and other resources have renewed our faith and restored our hope. Quite simply, NAMI has been a lifeline for us. I am happy to say that each of us -- in our own way, and at our own pace -- is becoming an advocate for my brother.

I am writing to you because I am proud to be serving as Family Team Chairperson for the 4<sup>th</sup> annual NAMIWALKS for the Mind of America Walkathon. NAMIWALKS is a fundraiser that will take place in many communities around the country this year.

I am involved with NAMIWALKS for the Mind of America for several reasons. I think this is a wonderful way to increase public awareness about mental illness and raise the funds needed to support NAMI's mission of education, support and advocacy for those affected by severe mental illness.

But on a more personal level, this is a chance for my family and me to honor my brother. It's an opportunity for us to come together and celebrate his courage and strength. I am hopeful that our union and show of support will give him just a little more encouragement for his journey ahead.

On Sunday, April 30th, 2006 Jeff, Jordyn and I will be hosting a pre-walk ceremony and leading hundreds of walkers along the 2.4-mile path. We are expecting my brother, as well as family members and friends from Florida, Virginia and Connecticut to join us in Ellicott City, MD for the walk. To symbolize our unity, Jeff and I will be outfitting our entire walk team with special T-shirts that we are designing in my brother's favorite color--green!

My personal goal is to raise \$1,000 for NAMI. I'd love to see the other members of my team raise a combined total of \$4,000. My entire family is committed to making the walk a success. But I need your help. Please consider:

- 1) Joining our team and walking in honor of my brother on April 29th.
- 2) Forming a team of your own, if you'd like to walk on behalf of someone you know.
- 3) Sponsoring me by making a tax-deductible donation. (If you do, please send checks only, made payable to National Alliance on Mental Illness-- Maryland or NAMI MD. Please send it to me in the enclosed envelope, by April 25th. I will turn it in on the day of the walk.)

If you would like more information about NAMI or NAMIWALKS please call me @ (410) XXX.XXXX or visit [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org). Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Tareaz Pegues, NAMIWALKS Family Team Chair

[You may add: If you wish to make a credit card donation, please visit my personal NAMIWalks link at [insert your link- see email instructions!]]

## **Another Sample Walk Letter**

Dear Howard County Commission on Disability Issues member or friend of the Commission,

I am writing you today to ask you to support our team in this year's NAMIWALKS for the Mind of America, NAMI's signature walkathon. This year, the event is being held in Ellicott City, Md. at Centennial Park on 04/29/2007. I would like to ask you to come and walk with the team or to donate to this great event.

As you are aware, I am on the board of NAMI Howard County. My son suffers from schizophrenia, and I participate with both NAMI and the Commission to help fight the stigma of mental illness and to insure that those citizens with mental illness are supported as part of the disability community.

Visit or cut and paste <http://www.nami.org/namiwalks06/XXX/XXXXXX> to support the team. There you may donate through one of the walkers – right now I am the captain and only walker. Donating on line is fast and secure, and I'll get immediate notification via e-mail of your donation. If you can walk and would like to collect your own donations for the team, follow the links on that page to register to walk with the "Howard County Commission on Disability Issues" team. Feel free to e-mail me for information at XXX. You may also contribute or sign up to walk at our next Commission meeting.

NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is the largest education, support and advocacy organization that serves the needs of all those lives are touched by these illnesses. This includes persons with mental illness, their families, friends, employers, law enforcement community and policy makers. The NAMI organization is composed of approximately 1100 local affiliates, 50 state offices and a national office.

The goals of the NAMIWALKS programs are: to fight the stigma that surrounds mental illness, to build awareness of the fact that the mental health system in this country needs to be improved and to raise funds for NAMI so that they can continue their mission.

NAMI is a 501(c)3 charity and any donations you make to support my participation in this event is tax deductible. NAMI has been rated by Worth magazine as among the top 100 charities "most likely to save the world" and has been given A+ rating by the American Institute of Philanthropy for efficient and effective use of charitable dollars. NAMI has also been given 4 out of 4 stars by The Charity Navigator for short-term spending practices and long-term sustainability. You can find out more about NAMI at their web site [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org).

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Dick

## **CORE TEAM BUILDING STRATEGIES FOR BUSINESS-BASED TEAMS**

### Information for Organizing a NAMI Walk Team

*(Note: If you decide not to walk as a team but would like to participate, please remember individuals and groups can always register as members of the NAMI-Metropolitan Baltimore walk team.)*

#### **RECRUITING TEAM CAPTAINS AND WALKERS:**

- Send a memo from the president or other top executive to all staff employees telling them about the Walk and encouraging them to join the organization team and/or sponsor a coworker.
- Highlight the fact that many members are probably touched by mental illness in some meaningful way and will benefit from the organization's participation in the Walk. (One in 5 families is affected by severe mental illness. One in 100 people will develop schizophrenia in their lifetime. The probabilities of developing depression, bipolar disorder, eating and anxiety disorders are even higher!)
- Appoint an overall team captain to lead the team building effort. This person will serve as the main liaison with the NAMI staff and volunteers running the program.

#### **INTERNAL TEAM BUILDING MEETINGS:**

- Arrange for a 10-minute to 15-minute presentation on the Walk at a regular management staff meeting. NAMI representatives will be happy to come to the meeting and speak about the Walk.
- Try to schedule a special presentation about the Walk to reach as many members as possible.
- It is important have a team captain or volunteer touched by mental illness speak at these presentations. NAMI looks forward to assisting you in any possible way.
- NAMI literature will be provided as part of any Walk-related meeting you have with staff members, team captains and senior managers. Try to sign walkers up at the conclusion of a presentation on the Walk.

#### **EFFECTIVE INTERNAL TEAM - BUILDING INCENTIVES:**

- A team T-shirt or other organizational apparel for every walker.
- Posting your team roster poster and general Walk posters prominently – and continuously adding people to your team roster.
- Publishing a "thank-you" list of all the members who participated in the Walk in the organization's newsletter, or in a special thank-you memo.

#### **SET WALKER & FUNDRAISING GOALS FOR TEAM:**

- Recommended team building goal: 10 to 20% of total number of staff employees
- This team goal should include members, family and friends as well as staff employees
- This is an opportunity to provide support, education and advocacy to the families affected by serious mental illness.

## **CORE TEAM-BUILDING STRATEGIES FOR FAMILY TEAM CAPTAINS**

- Set goals for the number of walkers and the total amount that you hope your team will raise.
- Target the people that you would like to ask to walk on your team. Your top prospects should include:
  - \_ You and your spouse or significant other
  - \_ Your children
  - \_ Parents and grandparents
  - \_ Brothers and sisters, and brothers- and sisters-in-law
  - \_ Cousins
  - \_ Aunts and uncles
  - \_ Your closest friends from work and outside of work
  - \_ Members of your professional and community organizations (take your pledge forms to meetings!)
  - \_ Members of your faith community
  - \_ Former co-workers
  - \_ Neighbors
  - \_ Anyone else you think might be interested
- Make sure you complete or collect a walker registration brochure for every walker that you recruit for your team. Pre-register your walkers online at [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org) (list Metropolitan Baltimore as your affiliate if that is correct), or mail or fax their registration forms to the NAMI-Metropolitan Baltimore office at 410-435-0355 so that they are all properly pre-registered for the Walk.
- Keep your Team Roster Poster updated as you sign up your walkers, and display it in a prominent spot in your home (the refrigerator door is usually a good spot) so that you and your family can see your team grow during the weeks leading up to the Walk.
- Make sure all your walkers know why their participation in the Walk is important to you and to the many families in Maryland who are touched by mental illness in some way. Encourage every member of your team to gather as many donations as possible from their own circle of friends, neighbors and colleagues. Keep them as informed as possible about the progress of the team's fundraising efforts during the months and weeks leading up to the Walk.
- Draft and mail (or email) a letter about your family's participation in the Walk to your holiday card mailing list, your present and past co-workers, and any business associates you and your spouse may have. (See the Letter Writing Tips and Sample Letters.) Note: if you register your team online at [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org), be sure to designate your affiliate as Metro Baltimore. By registering online, you can send out an email letter to your potential supporters and get donations by credit card online!
- Design and order team T-shirts or other distinguishing articles of clothing or accessories for all the walkers on your team approximately 2 to 3 weeks before the day of the Walk.
- Plan to have a special pre-Walk dinner or a post-Walk barbecue at your house to help celebrate the day and thank everyone for their support.
- Write everyone a thank-you letter that includes the fundraising results for your team and for the entire Walk. Include pictures from the day if you can.
- Relax and be proud of the important role you and your family and friends are playing in NAMI's efforts to provide support, education and advocacy for all Marylanders with mental illness and their families!

## **Team Captain “To Do” Timeline**

### **7-9 Weeks before the Walk**

- Attend the Team Captain’s Luncheon in February or any other meetings that will be held at Metro Baltimore and get your team captains’ instruction folder and all the other materials you will need to publicize the Walk and recruit walkers for your team.
- Complete the Walk Interest Form and mail, fax or e-mail it to the office.
- Start to work closely with the staff person & volunteers coordinating the Walk to build your team.
- Be a leader! Be the first person to pre-register for your team (including on-line at [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)) and do all the other things that you are encouraging others to do!
- Schedule a meeting with the highest level manager you can reach (ideally the top manager or official of your company or organization) and ask him or her to participate in the Walk.
- Try to recruit assistant team captains or organize a volunteer committee to help build your team.
- Hold a meeting for your assistant team captains or the planning committee you recruit. Develop a walker recruitment game-plan that includes things like publicizing the Walk within your company or organization, distributing walk materials to all your fellow employees/members, developing incentive prizes for top money-raising walkers and groups/departments, and arranging for a NAMI representative to give a talk to potential supporters about the organization’s mission and the Walk.
- Make sure all the assistant team captains you recruit join you in signing up for the Walk.

### **4-6 Weeks before the Walk**

- Schedule a team building kickoff event for your company or organization employees/members and have a NAMI staff person or volunteer join you in presenting the program.
- Send a team building announcement memo with a NAMIWALKS for the Mind of America walker/sponsor brochure to all employees/members
- Get permission from a senior manager or your organization’s treasurer to buy team T-shirts for the team.
- Sponsor a T-shirt design contest amongst your employees/members.
- Begin collecting walker interest forms and mail or fax them to the Walk headquarters on a regular basis. (You can also register your walkers online).
- Begin sending team building progress reports about the Walk to everyone on your team.

### **2-4 Weeks before the Walk**

- Continue to collect and mail or fax in the walker registration forms for your team and keep an updated list of your walkers.
- Select the winning team T-shirt design and order enough team T-shirts for all of your walkers. (You will probably have to estimate the number of shirts needed since walkers will continue to pre-register even after the shirts are ordered).
- Continue to promote the Walk through memos, emails and newsletter articles.
- Hold a special signup day at work (or a meeting at your club or organization) to recruit more walkers and raise awareness about the Walk.

### **1-2 Weeks before the Walk**

- Make a final push to recruit as many walkers as possible.
- Continue to collect and mail or fax in walker registration forms for all of your walkers.
- Distribute team T-shirts to your walkers either a day or two before the Walk or at the Walk itself.
- Send final reminder to all your walkers about the Walk.

**Day of Walk: Relax and enjoy the walk with your teammates!**

## Walkathon Team T-Shirts Make the Team!

More than any other factor, team T-shirts help build a team prior to a Walk and unite a team the day of a Walk. Here are some key tips to keep in mind regarding team T-shirts....

- They should be bright and colorful so the team wearing them stands out as much as possible in the day of the Walk.
- The designs, logos and slogans on them should be creative and unique as possible so they are conversation piece both before and after the Walk. Team T-shirts are (in effect) walking billboards for your company, organization or family team.
- A great way for a company team of any type to develop creative and unique designs is to have a brainstorming session or to sponsor a T-shirt design contest for its employees or team members.
- Another great way is to tap the talents of the company's PR department staff, or the company's in-house "artist."
- An important thing to remember is that team T-shirts are a very effective WALKER RECRUITMENT TOOL if publicized and promoted by the team captain prior to the Walk. **People love T-shirts, especially unique ones.**
- Good team T-shirt designs almost always include the company, organization or affiliate's name and the MD NAMIWalks for the Mind of America logo.
- A key point to remember is that team T-shirts are paid for by the team so that every dollar raised in the walk will go to support NAMI and its programs.
- NAMI staff is available to assist team captains with ordering and designing their team T-shirts.
- Although creative, unique team T-shirts are the best, having a plain uncreative T-shirt is almost always better than having no team T-shirt at all. Most teams usually get better at designing T-shirts as the years go by. Start with a team T-shirt this year and get more creative in designing it each year!
- Other options for team recognition is to have all team walkers wear the same color clothing, sunglasses, hat/caps, bandanas, sign boards, etc. You can also purchase inexpensive colored T-shirts and decorate them yourselves.
- It's a day to show your team spirit!