

## **MIAW Idea Book**

Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) is NAMI's premiere public education and community outreach activity. Held each year during the first full week of October, NAMI Affiliates across the country sponsor events to promote mental illness awareness, put an end to stigma and advocate for support for treatment and recovery.

MIAW's theme this year is "Changing Attitudes, Changing Lives." This book is intended to help NAMI members plan events and press outreach strategies during early summer to create community awareness and discussion.

Advance promotion of events or programs to the public should begin **by** September. NAMI National offers a wide array of technical assistance opportunities to NAMI State Organizations and NAMI Affiliates in support of MIAW activities 1 (877) 387-6938 with any questions.

Volunteers from NAMI State Organizations and NAMI Affiliates—as well as like-minded groups such as your local psychiatric society, local community mental health center or 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 still enough to help end stigma and raise awareness about mental illness during MIAW 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 about NAMI, they may not see the opportunity to participate in MIAW activities. Involve diverse community members in order to ensure that plans are relevant, responsive to the community's needs and as culturally meaningful as possible.

Browse the ideas in this book and adapt them to meet your needs. Find an idea that fits your affiliate and your community in order to reach the broadest possible audience to "change attitudes, change lives."

## **Activities and Special Events**

NAMI leaders can raise awareness of mental illness, the importance of scientific research and available treatment and support during MIAW by hosting special events and partnering with local businesses and organizations. This book offers idea suggestions and real examples of events that have taken place in communities all over

the nation, organized by NAMI State Organizations and NAMI Affiliates. Activities from past MIAW events held by NAMI State Organizations and Affiliates are marked with an asterisk (\*). Choose an event from this guide or plan something new and be a part of MIAW where you live!

## **Art Exhibit, Concert or Other Creative Events\***

Organize an art exhibit, art installation, concert, poetry slam or other creative event displaying the talents of people who live with mental illness.

Tap your NAMI members and MIAW team for ideas. Do any of them paint, draw, sew or sculpt? Is anyone in a band, choir or orchestra? Perhaps someone works in the creative industry. Can one of your members donate time to teach a pottery or silk-screening class? The possibilities are endless! Here are some examples:

- Creativity Hills: An Anti-stigma, Mental Illness Awareness and Celebration of Recovery, created by NAMI Greater Milwaukee, consisted of an art gallery, a poetry reading, music and an art auction. The goal was to raise awareness of NAMI by celebrating the creativity of people living with mental illness, coming together as a community for a fundraising event. The end result was new friendships and new NAMI members. Contact NAMI Greater Milwaukee at [help@namigrm.org](mailto:help@namigrm.org) for tips and information about the event.
- The Celebration of Courage, created by NAMI Wake County, N.C., is an installation art exhibit that can be set up in most public spaces—in planters or on lawns—and was inspired by Van Gogh's "Irises" masterpiece that he painted while institutionalized as a result of mental illness. Just imagine hundreds—even thousands—of flowers in one place symbolizing hope courage and recovery for people with mental illness. Contact NAMI North Carolina at [mail@naminc.org](mailto:mail@naminc.org). Here is how NAMI Wake County organized its innovative idea:
  - Solicit 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" high x 14" wide.
  - Sponsored flowers can be displayed en masse at various locations, such as the lawn at the state capital for all legislators to see, the hotel site of a state conference, in front of city hall or in a popular central park.

- This display creates an impressive site to passers-by who can't help asking what the flowers represent.
- An art-based “competition” is a great way for your community to begin conversations about mental illness. Individuals and groups entering NAMI Baltimore’s annual NAMI Mask Competition receive information about mental illness, the form of a mask to decorate and an opportunity to express themselves creatively. The winners, judged by local artists, are honored and the entries are displayed. The mask entries become part of a growing collection and are used for community education. A permanent NAMI exhibition in Baltimore features a display of masks from past years. One year, the masks were exhibited at a conference of Chiefs of Police in New York City. They were also integrated into a one-man show performed by Michael Mack ([www.michaelmacklive.com](http://www.michaelmacklive.com)) and entitled, “Hearing Voices: Speaking in Tongues.” Call NAMI Baltimore at (410) 435-2600 for more information and tips.

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

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

### **Book Store Displays and Library Donations**

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. Pick some of your favorite titles, or browse the online e-Advocate archives at [www.nami.org/advocate](http://www.nami.org/advocate) for book suggestions (Check the NAMI Bookshelf section).

MIAW is a great time to donate books to your local library. A photo of a NAMI leader presenting books to the librarian makes for great publicity in the local newspaper. Donating mental health-related books to your library and including 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* (Spanish translation of *I Am Not Sick. I do Not Need Help*) and *Standing in the Shadows: Understanding and Overcoming Depression in Black Men* is ideal for embracing diversity. Most of these titles are available through [www.nami.org/amazon](http://www.nami.org/amazon).

### **Displays and Advertising**

Download and print or purchase MIAW materials at [www.nami.org/miaw](http://www.nami.org/miaw). A few weeks prior to MIAW, place posters and brochures in high-traffic areas within the community, including libraries, churches, schools and universities, hospitals, etc. If your focus is multicultural outreach, target your ads appropriately. Strategically targeting locations frequented by diverse communities to display posters and brochures (e.g., a Latino clinic or a Korean-American church) is key. Be sure to obtain approval from the facility manager prior to displaying materials in each location. While organizations typically pay for the advertisements 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.

## Candlelight Vigil

For many years, MIAW candlelight vigils hosted by NAMI affiliates have been held all over the country. Beginning MIAW on a Sunday with a candlelight vigil sends a message of hope and recovery for people who live with mental illness. Host the vigil at an easily accessible site to get the most exposure and participation. Tuesday during MIAW is the National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness Recovery and Understanding and provides another opportunity for a vigil, in addition to other activities. Below is a list of volunteer positions that can help make vigils 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 referring 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.

## Educate School Professionals about Mental Illness

Here are some ideas for approaching schools during MIAW:

- **School Board** Organize a group of parents to meet with school board members to talk about the impact that early onset mental illness has on children, especially on school and family life. Ask for their support to help educate other leaders in the school community.
- **Superintendent** Ask a group of parents to meet with the superintendent of the school district. Share 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.
- **Health Professionals** meet with school counselors, social workers, and 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 and 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 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. NAMI's *Parents and Teachers as Allies: Recognizing Early-onset Mental Illness in Children and Adolescents* pamphlet was designed to help raise awareness in the school community about mental illness in children. The publication, available in the NAMI book store, is very popular with school professionals around the country and can be a great tool for outreach efforts.

## 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 living with severe mental illness face and the ways others can provide spiritual support.

Ask if information about your NAMI Affiliate and its education and support programs 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). See also Mental Health Ministries: [www.MentalHealthMinistries.net](http://www.MentalHealthMinistries.net)

Additional faith-based ideas include:

- Asking clergy to include mental illness in a sermon, pastoral prayer or other liturgies on the Sunday that MIAW begins.
- Place an insert in the worship bulletin. Mental Health Ministries has sample bulletin inserts on their website in the “resources and links, other resources” section.
- Tuesday during MIAW is traditionally the National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness Recovery and Understanding for spiritually-oriented messages. Invite a speaker from the community to give a presentation about mental illness and spiritual elements of recovery.
- Host a “Sharing Hope: Understanding Mental Health presentation.” Sharing Hope is a tool kit 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 living 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 tool kit provides a step-by-step guide on how to successfully reach out to African American congregations, how to implement a Sharing Hope program and a presentation script, along with other useful resources. To learn more and to access the tool kit, visit [www.nami.org/sharinghope](http://www.nami.org/sharinghope) or e-mail [sharinghope@nami.org](mailto:sharinghope@nami.org).

## **Gubernatorial/Mayoral Proclamation**

An endorsement from a governor or mayor in the form of an official proclamation helps increase recognition of MIAW. Send a copy of the signed proclamation to reporters to gain additional media exposure. A sample proclamation is available is at [www.nami.org/miaw](http://www.nami.org/miaw). Some governors and mayors provide instructions on their websites on how to submit requests for proclamations.

## **Health Fair**

Hosting or co-hosting a health fair will help participants recognize that managing mental illness is a part of overall wellness. People living with mental illness are often at higher risk for other medical conditions such as heart disease—and much of that risk is preventable and reversible.

Partner with health groups, mental health professionals, doctors and nurses to offer free screenings for depression, bipolar disorder, blood pressure or cholesterol at local hospitals, health clinics, churches, senior centers, shopping malls, schools and college

campuses. Educate participants about holistic health approaches to best manage their health. Be sure to have materials about mental illness available; offer them in multiple languages for multicultural outreach.

Contact your local hospital, health clinic or Screening for Mental Health Inc. (SMH) to arrange screenings. 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 sponsor a screening site, go to [www.mentalhealthscreening.org](http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org).

In addition to screenings, be creative and invite a variety of local health professionals, such as a nutritionist, a meditation or positive imagery expert or a local fitness instructor, to set up individual tables where attendees can educate themselves and work with experts to identify their individual health goals. Reach out to local chapters of the American Heart and Diabetes Associations to see if they can send a representative to the health fair and/ or provide informational materials like brochures, fact sheets, etc. Offer an introductory yoga or tai chi class during the fair to engage participants in a fun, non-threatening fitness activity. Set up a television and DVD player to show the NAMI's Hearts & Minds DVD during the fair (the DVD is included with the *Hearts & Mind Facilitator's Guide*, available at [www.nami.org/store](http://www.nami.org/store)). At the same table, display additional Hearts and Minds resources such as fact sheets and sample journals that can be found at [www.nami.org/heartsandminds](http://www.nami.org/heartsandminds).

## **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 (IOOV) presentation and a short presentation on NAMI. See [www.nami.org/ioov](http://www.nami.org/ioov).

You might want to host an IOOV presentation in a minority-specific setting. Target a local African American community center, a Latino church or a gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) organization that could host you and discuss topics such as ethno-psychopharmacology or cultural competence in treatment.

## **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 drama or documentaries include:

- *A Beautiful Mind*
- *Canvas*
- *OC87*
- *Out of the Shadow*
- *People Say I'm Crazy*
- *The Soloist*
- *Unlisted*
- *When Medicine Got It Wrong*

An exception to copyright laws allows DVDs to be shown to audiences for educational purposes provided that is not part of a fundraising event and no admission fee is charged.

## **Veterans Event**

The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) has a Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center, where you can find useful tools to combine with MIAW efforts. Visit online at [www.mirecc.va.gov](http://www.mirecc.va.gov). NAMI affiliates are encouraged to contact recovery and/or suicide prevention coordinators at local VA facilities and, American Legion and VFW posts to talk about organizing joint events. Publicize NAMI's Veteran Resource Center: [www.nami.org/veterans](http://www.nami.org/veterans). For more information and to find your local VA facility, visit [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov). NAMI's posttraumatic stress disorder brochure is also a great education tool. It is available at [www.nami.org/store](http://www.nami.org/store).

## **Media Tools**

Prepare for MIAW by initiating new relationships—as well as strengthening old ones—with news media. They can be the best vehicle for communicating your messages to the general public. Media outreach tools, such as sample op-eds, are available to you at [www.nami.org/miaw](http://www.nami.org/miaw).

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. Don't forget to pay particular attention to media outlets that serve special target communities.

If you are focusing on multicultural outreach, include all culturally appropriate local media to ensure that information reaches the right audience. NAMI'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).

**Don't forget social media!**

Social networking focuses on building relationships between people who have similar interests or backgrounds using a variety of networks that are most often web-based. People interact directly over the internet with each other without relying on conventional media like newspapers. Through social networking, ordinary people, experts, reporters and others can exchange news and ideas, debate issues and motivate others to take action by sharing comments, media links, videos and other information. Using free social networks like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube are great way to educate and engage communities during MIAW and beyond. Visit [www.nami.org/stateadvocacy/socialmedia](http://www.nami.org/stateadvocacy/socialmedia) for tips and resources on using social networking.

NAMI has developed a Public Relations 101 tool kit which can help support MIAW activities. It is available at [www.nami.org/publicrelations101](http://www.nami.org/publicrelations101). (The tool kit will be revised by summer 2012, but even the older material can provide helpful information). Samples of materials to help promote MIAW are also downloadable at [www.nami.org/miaw](http://www.nami.org/miaw).

Some media tools are outlined below. Familiarize yourself with them and learn the media “lingo”:

- **Media Advisories** are notifications to news media that briefly explain an upcoming event: e.g., a news conference, candlelight vigil, rally, luncheon, etc. They are always one page and single-spaced, and shorter than the average news release. The advisory states the “who, what, when, where and why” of the event. Photo or interview opportunities at the event also can be noted or described to catch an editor’s or reporter’s interest.
- **Pitches** are compelling explanations by phone or email to a reporter or editor, about who you are and the significance of your event or activities to the local community. Phone pitches often are made to follow-up on a media advisory. They need to be short (especially if left as a voicemail message) unless the person invites a longer conversation.
- **News Releases** announce 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.” They should include a short quote or two from a NAMI leader. Keeping the length to no more than 400 words is best. They should be sent by email to a prepared “media list” of editors and reporters in your community.
- **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 and many NAMI State Organization and NAMI 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.

- **Op-ed articles** Essays that run “opposite the editorial page” and are usually written by a person 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.
- **Letters to the Editor** differs from an “op-ed” and are the letters to the editor that appear in the editorial section of a newspaper. Keep the letter to about 200 words, but contact the editorial page to learn about exact specifications. Letters sometimes respond to stories that appear in the paper, but also can simply raise an issue for public attention.
- **Editorial Board** are 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 request 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 an individual living with a mental illness, family member, psychiatrist and business leader. Be sure to prepare in advance, have materials to “leave behind,” debrief afterwards and send a “thank you” as well follow-up on any details that are necessary.
- **Public Service Announcements (PSAs)** are pre-recorded or live-read announcements on radio or television that are usually 30 to 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. 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; however, there also is a chance that the station will edit or change it.
- **Talk Radio** may provide in local markets community-focused interview and call-in radio shows. These provide opportunities to share NAMI’s messages for a prolonged period of time. While conducting media research, take special note of radio stations that have “talk radio” formats and the character of specific shows (Avoid “shock jock” type shows). Call the station’s producer and pitch your topic as a possible call-in topic. Offer yourself or other NAMI Affiliate leader as a guest for the show.