NAMI Connection
National Alliance on Mental Illness RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUP

Newsletter

Issue 23
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NAMI Connection Mission Statement: There will be a NAMI Connection recovery support group within reasonable traveling distance for every person in America who lives with mental illness, every day of the week.

New Year, New Constant Contact Survey!

Since implementing our new data reporting system in August, we have gotten over 5,000 data responses from facilitators all over the country! Because we are starting a new year of data collection, we created a new survey link (same questions, same format) for Connection facilitators to enter their data in 2011. The new link is below, and will also be featured on the website, as well as in any e-mails you may receive from Candita. Please remember to use this link every time you need to input 2011 data!

http://survey.constantcontact.com/survey/a07e380xv16ghza1pl7/start

Coordinator Spotlight: Jeanette Grasto

What is your current role in the Connection program in your state? I am the volunteer NAMI Connection coordinator for NAMI Alaska.

What are some innovative things you are doing with Connection? We are trying to expand our program to different towns in Alaska. Due to our distances and travel costs, training can be a challenge. We have three trainers located in different geographic regions of Alaska so that in the future we can offer two-day regional trainings at minimal expense.

What do you like best about Connection? I am happy that we can offer a safe, confidential recovery support group to Alaskans as they journey to recovery. I admire our facilitators. Through their dedication, recovery from serious mental illness will increase in Alaska.

Tell us a little about you. What are some of your favorite hobbies or pastimes? I have been a NAMI member for over 25 years. I have served as president of NAMI of Fairbanks and NAMI Alaska. I am the mother of two adult children who both have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. I love Alaska and Alaskans. In my spare time, I like to walk or cross-country ski, do word games or Sudoku and work on quilting projects.

Tell us one goal you wish to accomplish. I would like to see Connection maintained in our existing groups and expand to new locations. NAMI Alaska may want to use the e-support meeting option once it is ready, as many potential members, for one reason or another, are unable to travel to a meeting.

Testimonials

I have learned so much in the past three years since I first stepped in the door as a participant in a NAMI Connection group. NAMI Connection has not just been a tool in my recovery from mental illness and a place to find a support. NAMI Connection is a place I can call home; a place where I am understood. That first meeting in January 2008, I cried telling the group that I am still struggling with the fact that I live with a mental illness. I left that group smiling, feeling a sense of hope. I have been attending a NAMI Connection group ever since. Three months later I was trained as a facilitator. In April 2009, I was trained as a state trainer for NAMI Connection. I currently facilitate a NAMI Connection recovery support group in San Diego, Calif. Three years ago, NAMI Connection helped me in so many ways; now it is my turn to give back, and help others find their way to NAMI Connection.
-Anonymous, California

Want to share a positive Connection thought? Please e-mail testimonials to connection@nami.org

Program Progress

Facilitator Trainings: 185

Facilitators Trained: 2,612

Support Groups: 522

For more information on the NAMI Connection program, please visit www.nami.org/connection or call the NAMI HelpLine at 1 (800) 950-NAMI.

Facilitator Spotlight: Joe Mendoza

What is your current role in the Connection program in your state? In addition to my upcoming role as executive director for NAMI Greater Orlando beginning in January 2011, I rotate as a Connection Recovery Support Group co-facilitator for NAMI Greater Orlando and co-facilitate a Conexion Recovery Support Group. I am also a Connection state trainer for Florida.

What are some innovative things you are doing with Connection? There are a few things that seem to work for our group members. First-time Connection Recovery Support Group (CRSG) participants receive a welcome package. We use first-name tags so everyone can be addressed by name.

NAMI Greater Orlando (NAMIGO) is fortunate to have 10 trained Connection facilitators. We have started using one weekly meeting a month for same gender support groups and co-facilitators. This approach seems to provide our attendees the opportunity to discuss topics they may not feel comfortable raising in a mixed gender group. We also believe this approach provides safe places for people who are heterosexual couples, and both attending groups, to be more open.

We encourage people to form their own bonds and friendships outside of the meetings. We have a periodically updated "Consumer Mutual Support Contact List" that is voluntarily. The information for sponsored consumer activities such as weekly bowling, monthly lunch and a movie, monthly volunteering at Second Harvest, monthly Consumer Council meetings, monthly Craft Group and more is available at each meeting on the resource table.

What do you like best about Connection? The friendships and mutual support that Connection starts which continue into our daily lives. Connection has opened up a whole new world of acquaintances and friendships to me. I also like the camaraderie among facilitators. We have a quarterly meeting that involves a potluck lunch that helps us all be more effective. On a personal level, watching people come to the groups each week and steadily improve in their recovery brings me great joy.

Tell us a little about you. What are some of your favorite hobbies or pastimes? I am a baby boomer who was acutely affected by major depression later in life. I enjoy swimming, bike riding and meditation. I love movies. I love connecting with people; everyone has a story.

Tell us one goal you wish to accomplish. I have adopted one continuing life goal by which I evaluate everything I do: To be a professional human being. Every other goal —self-care, uniting my avocation and vocation, serving my sisters and brothers who live with mental illness and family members, doing my part to eradicate the stigma associated with mental disease, etc., is intended to support my continuing life goal.

Florida Graduates Eighteen New Connection Facilitators!

On Sept. 10-12, NAMI Florida held a training in Maitland, Fla. Eighteen people gained the skills and knowledge to successfully facilitate Connection group meetings. We're eager to see them provide support to their peers, and we're glad to have all of them as part of the Connection team!

Congratulations to NAMI Vermont on training seven brand new facilitators!

From Dec. 3-5, NAMI Vermont held a training in Montpelier, Vt. The weekend training yielded seven new facilitators that will be working with Connection groups in the state. Congratulations, Connection facilitators, and welcome to the NAMI Connection family!

Facilitator Calls

Due to the recent reduction in National Connection staff, we will now have only one facilitator call per month.

Each monthly call will be recorded and available for play-back for 30 days. For those of you unable to make the call, please listen to the recording and send any questions you may have regarding the call to connection@nami.org. You may also submit questions ahead of time by emailing connection@nami.org

The 2011 Facilitator Calls will take place every third Wednesday of the month at 3 p.m. ET

January Facilitator Call:

Wednesday, January 19th

3 p.m. Eastern Time

Conference call number: 1 (888) 858-6021

Conference Pass code: 4294442760

Upcoming Trainings

- Jan. 7-9: Baltimore, Md.
- Jan. 22-23: Ft. Myers, Fla.
- Jan. 23-24: Sparks, Nev.
- Feb. 4-6: Topeka, Kan.
- Feb. 11-13: Waycross, Ga.
- Feb. 19-20: Ketchikan, Alaska
- Feb. 26-27: Las Vegas, Nev.
- March 4-5: Little Rock, Ark.
- March 5-6: Concord, N.H.
- March 5,12 and 19: North Brunswick, N.J.
- March 11-13: Richmond, Va.
- April 9-10: Raleigh, N.C.
- April 15-17: Portland, Ore.
- June 3-5: Peoria, Ill.
- Oct. 14-16: Itasca, Ill.
- Nov. 11-13: Winnsboro, S.C.

NAMI Connection is on Facebook

Check us out and click "like"!!

http://**www.facebook.com/thenamiconnection**

We want to thank everyone who has become a fan of NAMI Connection on Facebook — we have now reached over 730 people who "like" us! Some great testimonials, up-to-date program information and fan photos can be found on the site...

Do YOU Like NAMI Connection?

Have you had any recent **recognition events** in your community for NAMI Connection facilitators and/or trainers? Let us know so we can spotlight the event in one of our upcoming newsletters! E-mail connection@nami.org.