25th anniversary annual report
NAMI Texas, bringing hope to Texans coping with mental illness one Texan at a time.

Letter from a Member:
My name is Jennifer Roesner and I am many things. I am a mother, a daughter, a sister, a friend, a wife, a college student, a published author, a baker, a laundress, a maid, a taxi-service, and a walking encyclopedia. Up until September 2009, I was a full-time office manager and surgical assistant for a periodontist here in Austin until I decided to go back to college and become a nurse. I can stretch a pound of hamburger to feed a family of seven while simultaneously shouting out test review questions to my kids. I am fiercely loyal, undeniably optimistic, sentimental, and hard-working. I am a go-getter. I am a leader. And I am sick. In 1990, I was diagnosed with major depressive disorder, panic disorder, GAD and OCD. I was hospitalized twice for suicide attempts. My first hospitalization was at a private hospital and my second (when my parents insurance ran out) was to Austin State Hospital. I went to ASH because my family could not afford anything else. There I got a first-hand look at all different types of mental illness. I met people with anorexia, schizophrenia, and drug addictions. I met people who didn’t fall into a neatly-categorized diagnosis. I met people who were suffering, hopeless, and worn out. And in them, I found my hope, my community. In them, I found myself.

During those months at ASH, I realized that I would have to make a decision. Would I strive for wellness in the capacity that wellness could be for me or would I fall into that oh-so tempting pit of despair and wait for the world to swallow me whole? What I did not realize was that this was a decision I would have to continue to make, sometimes on a daily basis, for the rest of my life. I know, more intimately than I wish to, what it is to live with these diseases. I know what it means to be ostracized by the community when you finally have the guts to tell your boss why you have had to miss too much work. I know what it is to suddenly be fired after seven years of loyalty because of the ignorance and prejudice of others. I know what it is to hate yourself for not being able to be “normal”. I know how it feels to make promises with the full intention of keeping them and then not be able to because of agoraphobia. I know the heart-stopping, life-altering path that panic attacks push you down. I am best friends with fear and insecurity and doubt. I am married to guilt. And yet, every day, EVERY day, I wake up thankful to be alive. Thankful to enjoy hearing the birds sing or being able to taste that perfect cup of coffee. I am thankful and know that I am blessed when I sneak in to wake up my children in the morning and see their childlike innocence still intact and present, no matter how hard they fight it once they are awake. I am thankful to be moved by a piece of music. I am thankful that though I am sick, I am well too. There are days when I wish I lived in ANY-ONE else’s body; there are times I rage internally at the unfairness of it all. There are days when I want to just shake and scream at people who complain about trivial things and who do not even know what a precious gift it is to go through life NOT afraid of everything. To have the freedom to just get in a car and go somewhere without having to perform rituals or bring a talisman. To be able to tell your kids you will eat lunch in the school cafeteria and NOT obsess over whether or not the food is “safe”. To not have to pray every single time you go into a grocery store that panic won’t seize you and make you leave before you finish shopping. To be nervous about taking a test, not because you do not know the material, but because you do not know the material, but because you get claustrophobic in the testing center.

The most important thing that I want others to know who live with mental illness is: there is hope.

The most important thing that I want others to know who live with mental illness is: there is hope.
If we can just take a moment to step outside of ourselves, we can see that there is a beautiful world for us out there.

The most important things that I want family members, spouses, and other supporters of people with mental illness to know is this: our disease sometimes makes us someone we hate. The pain or disappointment that you may feel as a result of our illness is not half of the pain and disappointment we feel inside. Be patient with us. Be kind to us. Try to be understanding that just because we carry no outward disfigurations or scars, does not mean that we are not ill. It is not your fault. It is not my fault. If I could just “snap out of it” don’t you think I would? Have faith in me. Believe in me because sometimes I don’t believe in myself. And perhaps most importantly -- thank you. Thank you for feeding me when I can not feed myself. Thank you for holding me in the night when I do not know why I am terrified -- I only know that I am. Thank you for understanding that I need you to push me sometimes. Thank you for knowing when to listen and when to speak. Thank you for loving me despite my disabilities. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for bearing this burden with me, it makes it so much easier. Thank you, thank God for you.

And thank God for you, NAMI. Let’s change the world!

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**Kelly Jeschke**, Membership Coordinator/Office Manager  
**Kristalle Jaime**, Staff Accountant  
**August Williams**, Program Coordinator/Trainer  
**Cindy Meyer**, Via Hope Project Assistant  
**Eileen Rosen**, Via Hope Consumer Coordinator  
**Corey Benbow**, Via Hope Youth Coordinator  
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And Then We Found NAMI

My family’s story with NAMI began as it has with so many other families: mental illness striking our son, trying to understand while searching for answers, searching for resources, and finally coming to grips with schizophrenia.

And then we found NAMI, and found hundreds of other families also dealing with the trauma of something we little understood. This was back in 1987, so I guess we were nearly part of the founders of what was to become NAMI Texas. Our whole family got involved with trying to make things better for people living with mental illnesses.

Locally, my husband and I helped to start our local affiliate and I became involved on the state level. NAMI Texas, then TEXAMI, was an all volunteer organization operating out of one room of donated space within the office of the Texas Society of Psychiatric Physicians. It was not until about 1990 that we actually moved into our own office (still one room, but we quickly realized we needed more room, so it became two rooms!)

Operating a non-profit organization with all volunteers does not sound difficult, but none of our volunteer board members lived in Austin. We were essentially operating long distance. Finally the board realized that we must hire an Executive Director and that we had to find the funds to do so! The first TEXAMI Executive Director was hired in 1994 and we finally had a grant to pay for our operations.

But looking back at 1991—this was an exciting time for TEXAMI! Through the hard work of many, many volunteers and with a legislative champion, we achieved the almost unthinkable: successfully legislating parity for serious mental illness within all health insurance for public employees! It was the first parity legislation achieved in the United States.

In 1997, TEXAMI followed up that success through working hard for legislation that extended the parity for mental illnesses in health insurance in the private sector, which affected businesses with 50 or more employees (much as the national parity legislation does today). This would not have been possible without legislative champions!

Through the years, NAMI Texas has achieved much in the area of education through family and consumer programs—Family to Family, In Our Own Voice, and many others. These programs have been successful through the dedication of the hundreds of volunteers teaching others who are searching for answers. I also served several years as a Family to Family teacher, so I know the power of the program to help families.

After 25 years, NAMI Texas has grown; we are no longer that small organization operating out of one room, but have matured into a vibrant, busy organization. But the role of NAMI Texas has not changed: assisting the local affiliates to grow, providing education programs to help families and individuals cope with mental illnesses, and moving forward on advocacy issues. The future is very bright and I’ve been pleased to be one of those many volunteers helping to shape the organization.


Mental Health Act, 1987 - An Act to consolidate and amend the law relating to the treatment and care of mentally ill persons, to make better provision with respect to their property and affairs and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

On average, people with severe mental illness die 25 years earlier than the general population.
Mental Health Act 1990 - The Mental Health Act is the law which provides for the treatment of people with mental illness in hospitals and the community. It aims to protect the rights of people with mental illness or mental disorder whilst ensuring that they have access to appropriate care. This care is required to place as little restriction on the rights and liberty of the patient as the circumstances permit.

In 1996, the federal Mental Health Parity Act was signed into law, providing that health insurers offering mental health benefits may not set annual or lifetime dollar limits on mental health benefits that are lower than any such dollar limits for medical and surgical benefits. State laws that require more favorable treatment of mental health benefits under coverage offered by health insurers are not preempted by the provisions of the federal parity law. Broader parity legislation passed the Texas Legislature in 1997.

Out of 50 states, Texas ranks 49th in Mental Health Spending (Texas ranks 49th in the nation for the amount it spends per person for mental health care. Inadequate state funding puts the burden on local resources, and leads to increased rates of incarceration and higher use of public hospital emergency rooms, homeless shelters, and the foster care system. – Texas Medical Association)

1990

Mental Health Act 1990 - The Mental Health Act is the law which provides for the treatment of people with mental illness in hospitals and the community. It aims to protect the rights of people with mental illness or mental disorder whilst ensuring that they have access to appropriate care. This care is required to place as little restriction on the rights and liberty of the patient as the circumstances permit.

1991

In 1991, Texas mental health parity legislation covering state government employees passed.

1994

Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Act of 1994 passed

1997

In 1996, the federal Mental Health Parity Act was signed into law, providing that health insurers offering mental health benefits may not set annual or lifetime dollar limits on mental health benefits that are lower than any such dollar limits for medical and surgical benefits. State laws that require more favorable treatment of mental health benefits under coverage offered by health insurers are not preempted by the provisions of the federal parity law. Broader parity legislation passed the Texas Legislature in 1997.
NAMI Connection
These free weekly support groups offer a casual and relaxed approach to sharing the challenges and successes of coping with a mental illness.

Total Participants – 1330 Total

Gender
- Males
- Females

Race
- White
- African-American
- Native American
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Other

Age
- 18-25
- 25-35
- 35-45
- 45-55
- 55+

Diagnosis
- Bipolar 1 or 2
- Schizophrenia
- Major Depression
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Schizoaffective
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Borderline Personality Disorder
- Other

Supporting the Public

71 Calls (Professionals)
711 Calls (Consumers)
1,271 Calls (Family Members)
2,053 Total Calls

These free weekly support groups offer a casual and relaxed approach to sharing the challenges and successes of coping with a mental illness.

Supporting Texans
Educate

In Our Own Voice
Two trained In Our Own Voice speakers share compelling personal testimony of living with, and overcoming the challenges posed by mental illness.

Peer to Peer
This course is a free nine-week experiential education course on the topic of recovery for any person with serious mental illness who is interested in establishing and maintaining wellness.

Family to Family
This free course provides insights into, and resolution of, the profound concerns experienced by families, close relatives and friends as they strive to cope with the realities of their loved one’s serious mental illness.

Visions for Tomorrow
This free course addresses the needs of younger families who have children and adolescents with a mental illness.

Great Minds Think Alike
NAMI Texas has a new free recovery-based curriculum for youth, ages 12 to 17, who have been diagnosed with a mental illness. Great Minds Think Alike (GMTA) is a program designed to provide youth with the skills necessary to take a leadership role in their own recovery and to aid others who suffer from the symptoms of mental illness.

2,529 total audience for 134 presentations
In April, 2 presenters were trained as Trainers. 3 trainings trained 45 new presenters.

51 total participants from 10 Peer to Peer classes offered by 4 affiliates

541 total participants from 41 Family to Family classes offered by 41 affiliates
NAMI Texas hosted 6 teacher trainings, 1 in Spanish, training 67 new teachers.
Three Texas teachers were trained as State Trainers.

91 total participants from 12 VFT Family Workshops
Texas held 2 VFT Teacher Trainings resulting in 17 new teachers trained.
Texas held 1 VFT Professional In-Service Presenter Training resulting in 9 presenters trained.
One VFT Pro-In-Service Presentation was held reaching 10 participants.

31 total new teachers from 2 GMTA Trainings
A special thanks to Shire for providing the funds to make Great Minds Think Alike possible.
Advocacy

NAMI Smarts: Telling Your Story

NAMI Smarts is a skills building training that teaches individuals how to tell their story to public officials in a clear, concise and effective manner. Exercises help instruct participants how to make an “ask” to your state representative and provides participants with the tools they need to become strong advocates. In efforts to have participants walk out the door ready to advocate, NAMI Smarts is interactive and leaves ample time for individuals to practice the skills learned in training.

In 2009, follow-up trainings were completed in Austin and Amarillo, and several strong advocates came from these two regions. Many of these Advocates told their story to their state representative during the March 4th event. Participants are encouraged to think outside the box while practicing their skills after the training. For example, three participants created an awareness program for public television in Austin, one spoke out regarding open access for medications, and several wrote articles about a variety of advocacy issues.

During 2009, both Houston and Longview received the first of two trainings in NAMI Smarts. Through those trainings, 42 Texans learned the skills and were empowered to advocate for themselves and others.

NAMI Smarts training in Texas is funded by a grant from the Texas Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Jan. 7 & 8
Amarillo

Jan. 28 & 29
Austin

March 4
Austin

May 16
Austin

August 27
Houston

Nov. 7
Longview

Number of Texans trained through NAMI Smarts to advocate for themselves and others

42

Over three years, NAMI Texas will provide advocacy training and develop advocacy activities for six regions in Texas.

3
Via Hope

Via Hope, Texas Mental Health Resource is a training and technical assistance resource for mental health consumers, family members, youth consumers and professionals. Via Hope is part of the Texas Mental Health Transformation process, and it is a collaboration between Mental Health America of Texas (MHAT), National Alliance on Mental Illness Texas (NAMI), and the Department of State Health Services (DSHS). The project was created to further the mission of transforming the mental health system into one that is more consumer and family driven, as prescribed by the President’s New Freedom Commission Report (2003). In the Texas Mental Health Transformation (MHT) Project, the state is charged with building a solid foundation for delivering evidence-based mental health and related services, fostering recovery, improving quality of life, and meeting the multiple needs of mental health consumers across the life span.

To read more, please visit: www.viahope.org.

Trainings Supported by Via Hope in 2009
Funding Cycle February 2009 through August 2009

May 15-17

**Family to Family**
One 3-day Family to Family training hosted in San Antonio in Spanish for 14 participants

August 8-9

**Partnerships Teacher Training**
A one day Partnerships Training was conducted in Longview for 8 participants on August 15th. 65% of the participants rated the training as very satisfying while the remaining 35% rated the training as satisfying.

June 29-31

**Great Minds Think Alike**
One three-day Great Minds Think Alike was conducted in Dallas for 13 participants on June 12-14. 65% of the participants rated the training as very satisfying while the remaining 35% rated the training as satisfying.

July 29-31

**Visions for Tomorrow**
One three-day Visions for Tomorrow was conducted in Austin for 7 participants on July 29-31. More than 85% of the participants rated the training as very satisfying.

August 8-9

**In Our Own Voice**
One two-day In Our Own Voice was conducted in Ft. Worth for 17 participants on August 8-9. 83% of the participants rated the training as very satisfying, while the remaining 17% rated the training as satisfying.

Staff Paid for by Via Hope:
Cindy Meyer
Corey Benbow
Eileen Rosen
Lisa Yoch
Robin Peyson (40%)
March 4th
On March 4, 2009 the Mental Illness Coalition (Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance of Texas, Mental Health America of Texas, NAMI Texas, Texas Mental Health Consumers, and the Federation of Texas Psychiatry) sponsored a capitol day entitled March 4th for Mental Health. The capitol day program included advocacy training, rallying on the steps of the Texas Capitol, and personal visits with legislators to inform policy makers about issues of importance to the mental health community. The participants focused their advocacy efforts on the Texas Department of State Health Services request for an increase of $88.3 million in funding (Senate Bill 1).

Approximately 300 family members, consumers, and professionals attended the rally on the Capitol steps and heard Robin Peyson, Martha Leatherman MD, Diana Kern, Steve Bresnen, and Senator John Whitmire speak passionately about the need for increased funding for mental health services. The Texas Department of State Health Services requested $88.3 million to expand the crisis redesign initiative. With the training, the rally attendees were prepared to speak on that particular budget request. There was great momentum and excitement as people left the steps to meet with their state representatives. Many mental health consumers and family members reported very positive feedback about their personal meetings with representatives. The Mental Illness Coalition would like to have an advocacy training and rally each legislative session due to the great success of March 4th for Mental Health.

African American Outreach
Over 300 people attended a symposium on mental health in October, 2009, held at Texas Southern University in Houston. It was the fourth such program held nationally and was sponsored by the Black Nurses Foundation. The focus was on Mental Health Policy and Clinical and Spiritual Implications-Engaging Communities to Reduce the Mental Health Stigma. Representative Garnet Coleman introduced the program. Dr. Jocelyn Elders, Dr. Eduardo Sanchez, Dr. Rahn Bailey, Rev. Remus Wright and Robin Peyson participated on a panel addressing these issues.

As a result of such a successful symposium, NAMI Texas is using this approach in other areas of the state. In East Texas, we are collaborating with Community Healthcare in Longview, as well as other partners, to sponsor a panel that will address these same issues and reach out to the African American community. The event is planned for the fall of 2010.

Criminal Justice Books
NAMI Texas distributed the Texas Criminal Procedure and the Offender with Mental Illness, 4th edition, written by Brian Shannon and Daniel Benson. One thousand five hundred and ninety three books were requested and sent to over three hundred state agencies.

An attorney in Comstock, Texas wrote to NAMI Texas after receiving a Criminal Justice book and finding it extremely valuable in a current case. He stated that “...in 45 years of practicing law it is the first time I understand the competency issue”.

* A special thanks to the Texas Bar Foundation for the funding to make this distribution possible.
Annual Conference

25th Anniversary, held in Houston on October 23rd and 24th at the Marriott Westchase Hotel, over 300 people attended. Dominic Carter, the keynote speaker spoke about his book, No Momma’s Boy, and the impact learning about his mother’s mental illness had on his life. Over the next two days, conference participants had a total of 26 workshops from which to choose.

Annual award for most growth in membership was presented to NAMI San Antonio.

First gala dinner and dance, emceed by Sharon Melton, co-anchor of ABC’s award-winning morning newscast on Houston’s KTRK.

Our silent auction, with many beautiful items, raised $8,160.

Conference Sponsors:

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Bristol Meyers Squibb
Family Support Foundation for Mental Illness

Texas Star
AstraZeneca

NAMI Texas wants to give a special thanks to our wonderful volunteers! Thank you to ValueOptions for sponsoring our double feature Thursday movie night. Finally, a big thanks to the Sponsors of our 25th Anniversary Conference whose support and generosity made the Conference possible.
NAMI Texas presented many special awards during our 25th Anniversary Gala and Luncheon.

Founders of NAMI Texas were honored for their dedication to mental health and innovative forward thinking. NAMI Texas Founders: Jerome and Hazel Byers, Betty Cobb, John Hoelzel, Carolyn Karbowsk, Jackie Shannon, Patsy Cheney, Genevieve Hearon, Marge Holmes, Carol Shaper, and Bob and Diane Wege.

President George W. Bush received an award for his work in support of mental health, including mental health parity legislation in Texas, and the Presidents New Freedom Commission on Mental Health.

Dedication to the Cause Award
Bobby and Nancy Allen

The Above and Beyond Award
The Gulf Coast Center
For their dedication, bravery and extraordinary service to the consumers and families of Galveston struggling to cope with the impact of Hurricane Ike.


SAVE THE DATE
for our Annual Conference
October 22 & 23, 2010
in Dallas, Texas

The Jackie Shannon Enduring Volunteer Award
Carolyn Hamilton

2009 Charley H. Shannon Advocate of Justice Award
Presented to Judge Polly Jackson Spencer
A Champion for Persons with Mental Illness

2009 Betty Fulenwider Media Award
Presented to the Longview News Journal
For Furthering the NAMI Texas Mission of Educating and Battling the Stigma of Mental Illness
2009 Mental Health Professional of the Year Award
Presented to Herb Bateman
For His Support and Compassion for Persons with Serious Mental Illness

2009 Mark Korenek Consumer Quality of Life Award
Presented to Janet Paleo
For Her Courageous Example that Recovery is Possible

2009 Betty Fulenwider Media Award
Presented to Robert Arnold, with KPRC-TX, Channel 2
For Furthering the NAMI Texas Mission of Educating and Battling the Stigma of Mental Illness

2009 Mark Korenek Consumer Quality of Life Award
Presented to the San Marcos Peer Support Group
For Their Courageous Example that Recovery is Possible

2009 Betty Fulenwider Media Award
Presented to Kim Horner of the Dallas Morning News
For Furthering the NAMI Texas Mission of Educating and Battling the Stigma of Mental Illness

2009 Volunteer of the Year Award
Presented to Fifi Wetherhead
For Her Tireless Dedication to Persons with Mental Illness

Dora Pozzi
For Her Creativity, Hard Work, and Loving Commitment to NAMI Texas

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around. – Leo Buscaglia
The mission of NAMI is to improve the lives of all persons affected by serious mental illness by providing support, education and advocacy through a grassroots network.
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We have made every effort possible to include each individual and company that has graciously donated to NAMI Texas. If your name was not included, please accept our apologies in advance and please let us know so that we can thank you in our next publication.