News from NAMI Texas - February 2018

What's Happening - Peer Leadership Council

In 2018, NAMI Texas will be working with our Peer Leadership Council to advocate and bring awareness to mental health issues. Our Peer Leadership Council is comprised of 18 affiliate representatives throughout the state of Texas who will be working together throughout the year on community outreach, public policy, marketing, and fundraising initiatives.

We recently voted in our 4 new Executive Committee members for the council who will each be spearheading one of these projects. The council leadership includes:
- Diane Banks, El Paso, Chair
- Julia Webb, Tarrant County, Vice-Chair
- William Boyd, Abilene, Member-At-Large
- Michelle Mata, San Antonio, Member-At-Large

Leah Thedford, Chair of the NAMI National Peer Leadership Council also serves as an officer on the council.

What's Happening - Partnerships

NAMI Texas executive director Holly Doggett welcomed a group of students from Little Elm High School's HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) to the 2017 NAMI Texas Conference!

What's Happening - Public Policy

NAMI Texas is currently engaged in a process of determining its Public Policy Platform for 2019-20. With the next regular legislative session looming less than one year away from now, it's critical for NAMI Texas to regularly advise policymakers on opportunities for mental health reform and to keep its finger on the pulse of the needs of individuals with mental illness and their families. To that end, NAMI Texas recently surveyed its membership to gather their perspectives and has been utilizing those survey results to inform our ongoing outreach to policymakers. In the Fall of this year, NAMI Texas will publish a 2019-20 Public Policy Platform that reflects the input, perspective, and needs of our members and local affiliate organizations around the state.

NAMI Texas public policy director Greg Hansch provides an overview of the work of NAMI Texas to the staff of It's Time Texas.
Our initial public policy input survey for 2019-20 found that access to supportive housing is the #1 unmet need for individuals with mental illness in Texas. In response to this finding, NAMI Texas successfully advocated for the Legislature to conduct an interim study on this issue. Additionally, NAMI Texas participates on a subcommittee that advises the state health agency on mental health housing policy – through that subcommittee, we are channeling policy recommendations that would increase access to supportive housing.

Another finding of our survey was that mental health providers commonly refuse to communicate with family members about basic information relating to the care of their loved one. Recent HIPAA clarification states clearly that a certain level of communication between providers and family members is allowed for, but state law in Texas is more restrictive. We are currently in discussion with leaders in the Legislature about closing this disparity between state law and HIPAA. Our initial public policy input survey is providing the insights needed to plant seeds with policymakers for the next legislative session, while also informing the Public Policy Platform that NAMI Texas will publish and broadly distribute later this year.

Roses are red, violets are blue
We have a heart for mental health -
How about you?

Show the world that you Have a Heart for Mental Health. Make a donation to NAMI Texas to support our mission of improving the quality of life of all individuals living with mental illness and their families, friends, and support systems, and we will send out a special NAMI Texas Have a Heart card to someone special in your life. Just tell us who you want to honor, and we’ll let them know that you have a heart for mental health - and for them.

What’s Happening - Education and Programs

Congratulations to NAMI Abilene and NAMI Greater Corpus Christi! They are the first two Texas NAMI affiliates that have been awarded a one-time $1,000 ETS Expansion grant! Mrs. Tipper Gore donated $1,000,000 to expand NAMI Ending the Silence (ETS) into new communities throughout the United States. Her gift will span 3 years and is being used to create the new ETS package, develop a blended training process (composed of online and in-person practice) as well as support the NAMI Affiliate and State Organizations in preparing for and offering the presentation in their communities.

NAMI Affiliates (NA) may apply for funding throughout the life of the grant which ends in June 2020. NAMI is awarding grants to 10 affiliates per month. Two of the major criteria to receive Mrs. Gore’s funds are that 1) the NA has successfully completed the SOE reaffiliation process and 2) the ETS presentation is not currently offered by the NA. Each affiliate that completed the SOE reaffiliation was sent an ETS grant application in November 2017. It’s not too late to apply if you do not have ETS up and running in your community! (NAMI has secured funds from a different source for those NAs that currently offer ETS. That application will be released sometime in March 2018.)

For more information, contact Patti Haynes, NAMI Texas Program Director, at education.director@namitexas.org.
Meet the Staff - Deborah Rosales-Ellkins

My name is Deborah Rosales-Ellkins and I serve as a Peer Policy Fellow at NAMI Texas. My lived experience with mental health challenges brings an important perspective to the table as we work on policy to improve mental health. One of my favorite job duties is to serve as a family partner at our local Community Resource Collaboration Group (CRCG). A CRCG is a community group that serves families with children that have Severe Emotional disturbances and gets them connected to the help they need.

CRCG members represent multiple agencies such as school districts, local mental health authorities, juvenile justice, child protective services, social workers, physicians, just to name a few. As a family partner my focus is on making sure the family and child voice is heard and represented. I also make recommendations that have served families who have navigated MH systems in the past. One reoccurring theme we hear from families and the experts in the room is how helpful NAMI education programs are. NAMI Basics is often recommended for families who need more education on their child's diagnosis. It also helps parents find a place to engage with others who understand what they are going through. Mental illness can be isolating for the child and the family caring for them, NAMI education programs is an important resource to support our community.

Meet the Board - Linda Marie Denke

It was 2005, and my oldest son, John, was in his last weeks of law school and my youngest son, James was one-half way through college. I decided my life was grand. As we were preparing for my son’s law school graduation, all hell broke loose. The dream of having a son graduate from law school, soon disappeared when I received a phone call, from the emergency department in New Orleans about my son. The social worker informed me my son was brought to the Emergency Department, he was soon to be admitted to the psychiatric inpatient unit. He said, “Did your son ever have a manic episode in the past?”

When I hear the words, manic episode, my world came tumbling down. I went into a tailspin, and it wasn't long before I lost control of my son and my life all at the same time. My son, who was 6 weeks short of graduating from law school, and instead of a celebration, I was planning how to cope with a twenty-four-year-old son diagnosed with a mental illness!

As a nurse, I knew very little about mental illnesses, and sadly I have to admit I did not want to know about mental illness. Little did I know, this was to be a long and arduous road not only for my son, but for me and my family. I lost all hope for not only him, but for me. It was during his 5th hospitalization, a case worker told me about NAMI. I do know what made me research this organization, but I did and decided to go to a family support group near where I lived.

NAMI saved my life!

You can read more about Linda's story, her commitment to the work of NAMI Texas, and her books, *Breakthrough: Moving from YOUR Mental Illness Diagnosis toward YOUR High Function Outcomes and FOUND: How I FOUND my son and my Life's Purpose* by clicking [here](#)