

With more than 1,200 affiliates, NAMI is America's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to improving the lives of all individuals affected by mental illness.

## Inside This Issue

Welcome New Leadership Team Member...	2
Donation from Jack and Jill.....	2
NAMIcon 2020 Now Virtual.....	3
Taking a Cue .....	3
Evolution of the Mental Health Movement...	4
You Are Not Alone.....	5

## NAMI Columbus

P.O. Box 8581  
Columbus, GA 31908  
(706) 320-3755 (leave a message)  
Website: [namicolumbusga.org](http://namicolumbusga.org)  
E-mail: [info@namicolumbusga.org](mailto:info@namicolumbusga.org)

## Leadership Team:

Stephen Akinduro  
Tristen Hyatt  
Molly Jones  
Doris Keene  
Sue Marlowe  
Shelley Reed, Ph.D  
Phil Tirado  
Vanessa Vivas

## Newsletter Editor:

Teri Owens

## Georgia Crisis & Access Line

Single Point of Entry to access mental health, addictive disease and crisis services 24/7/365  
Adults, Children & Adolescents  
1-800-715-4225

## Peer Support "Warm Line"

1-888-945-1414 (toll-free)  
The Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network operates a state-funded, consumer-directed "warm line" for anyone struggling with mental health issues, 24 hours a day

## Columbus ACT Team

AmericanWork, Inc.  
706-641-9663

# Meetings & Classes

**Due to continued concerns related to COVID-19, all in-person NAMI support group meetings are cancelled at this time.**

## NAMI Columbus CONNECTION Recovery Support Group Virtual Meetings

Although in-person support groups are still cancelled, NAMI Connection Support Groups will meet virtually. Details below.



The graphic features a central white box with a yellow border, set against a colorful, abstract background of green, orange, and blue shapes. Inside the box, the Zoom logo is at the top, followed by the text "Into". Below that is the NAMI Connection logo, which includes the NAMI logo and the text "NAMI Connection" and "National Alliance on Mental Illness RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUP". The main text in the box reads: "We may be socially distant, but we can still make a social connection by attending a virtual NAMI Connection Support Group meeting." Below this, the meeting schedule is listed: "Saturdays - 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm" and "Thursdays - 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm". The contact information "Email: Vanessa.M.Vivas@Gmail.com" is provided, along with the instruction "for an invite (link) to either group." and a note "(Please email at least 24 hours prior)".



# Vanessa Vivas

The Leadership Team of NAMI Columbus would like to introduce our newest member. Vanessa Vivas was voted onto our Leadership Team in May. She has been a member of NAMI since 2009, having found NAMI while working on her law degree in Jacksonville, FL. After receiving her law degree, she moved back to Columbus and has been working on her recovery. Vanessa feels gratitude toward NAMI and says that our organization saved her life. If you hold a conversation with her, you'll find her engaging, warm, and welcoming and someone who has a deep sense of social justice. We are grateful that Vanessa and Teresa O'Donnell recently worked on bringing NAMI Connection meetings to our membership via Zoom. (You'll remember that several years ago, Teresa began our Thursday night NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group at Pierce Chapel UMC.)

Please join the Leadership Team in welcoming Vanessa to a leadership position for NAMI Columbus.



## Jack and Jill of America, Inc. Makes Generous Donation



Pamela Watson, President, (left) and Dolly Baker presented the donation to NAMI Columbus' Molly Jones.

The Columbus chapter of Jack and Jill of America, Inc. recently made a very generous donation to NAMI Columbus. Jack and Jill partners with NAMI on a national basis, and we're thrilled to partner with them on a local level, too!

Jack and Jill of America, Inc. is a membership organization of mothers with children ages 2-19, dedicated to nurturing future African-American leaders by strengthening children through leadership development, volunteer service, philanthropic giving and civic duty. For more info on the organization, visit <https://jackandjillinc.org/>

A huge THANK YOU to Jack and Jill of America, Inc. – Columbus chapter!!





# NAMICon 2020 Transitions into Virtual Event

NAMI has made the decision to transition NAMICon 2020, which was to be held in Atlanta, into a virtual event. Because of this change, NAMI is refunding all paid registrations for the Atlanta event.

## **Cancellation Information**

### ***Will My Registration Fee Be Refunded?***

Yes, we are refunding 100% of your registration fee, including any administrative fees. We will begin processing registration refunds as soon as possible, but due to the high volume, please allow at least 30 days for your refund to take effect.

### ***How Can I Cancel My Hotel Room Reservation?***

If you had a room reserved at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis, the hotel will automatically be canceling all rooms in the block. We ask that you do not contact the hotel to cancel your reservation. The hotel will cancel all reservations and send confirmation notices to the email addresses they have on file.

### ***Are You Refunding Flights Or Other Travel Costs?***

Please contact your carrier directly as soon as possible regarding a refund for any booked travel. Each carrier has its own policy regarding cancellations and whether refunds or credit will be issued. If you purchased travel insurance, please contact your provider for information and next steps.

For further information, please go to <https://namiga.org/namicon-2020-transitions-to-a-virtual-event/>



## **Taking a Cue from Those with Mental Illness During this Pandemic**

By Julie Benn

Today we distance ourselves from others. We have for a while now. But long before that, some of us were already isolating. Instead of the government, our brains laid down the orders. And we stayed home and away and lived in isolation while still trying desperately to escape ourselves.

Today we live in fear that something bad could happen. That it is lurking behind every corner and countertop. Something that could invade and alter or kill our lives forever. Some of us have felt this way for decades — way before a pandemic made us all afraid.

We take things by the moment now, not knowing what will happen from one day to the next. How we will act, where we will go, what is allowed is always in question. Yet, for 1 in 5 of us, we've always faced this uncertainty. One day we can take on the world, the next we cannot get out of bed. In flux is our way of life.

COVID-19 has altered daily existence dramatically, but, for many of us, it's simply globalized a way of life that was already all too familiar.

Mental illness affects [about 20%](#) of people, and the symptomology resembles the new reality that the whole population is now experiencing: the isolation, the nagging fear, the obsessive worry, the fluctuating energy and motivation levels. Before COVID, many of us simply called this life as usual.

Those who have lived with mental illness are in a unique position to, dare I say, deal with our "new" global reality perhaps even better than others? We come equipped with decades of handling the emotions/feelings/circumstances that may feel new to those who've not been plagued before by depression, anxiety, OCD, PTSD and the like.

We get this. It's our stomping grounds. We know what it's like to be okay one day and not able to move from the couch for the next five. It's in our wheelhouse to be immersed in fear and panic, yet go on putting one foot in front of the other day after day after day. The world is just now experiencing our norm.

Yet it is also in our repertoire to heal. We understand what it feels like to give each other grace, to be easy on ourselves on harder days, to adjust our expectations, to be tender with our symptoms. We have things like coping skills and therapy and medication to combat the loneliness and obsessive fear of a life beyond our control. Yes, we have been a population marginalized in the shadows for the way our minds function. But, maybe, now is our time to light the way.



## The Evolution of the Mental Health Movement

By Jessica Walthall

As we enter a new decade, it's important to remember that early NAMI pioneers were up against a society that didn't understand, let alone talk about, mental illness. People with mental illness and their families were left in the dark, afraid that sharing their experiences could negatively impact their careers, relationships and lives.

In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, NAMI advocates had little to work with when it came to spreading awareness. There was no email, no Internet, no social media. But what they did have was a grassroots effort intent on challenging the status quo. Armed with fax machines, phone trees and hand-stuffed packets sent through the mail, these champions began setting the stage for the next 40 years of mental health advocacy.

What initially helped them propel NAMI into the public discourse was the media. NAMI advocates went to traditional outlets such as Newsweek, The Washington Post, television news programs, anything that could help get the word out. In 1984, NAMI's first-ever public service announcements, "Shattered Dreams" and "Scrapbook," aired across the country.

A handful of trailblazing celebrities also became influential during this time, including Mike Ferrell, actor of "M.A.S.H." fame, "60 Minutes" news anchor Mike Wallace and actress Patty Duke. They gave the public its first taste of storytelling through the eyes of people with mental illness. As respected veterans in their careers, the trio opened up about their personal experiences with mental illness, bravely accepting the potential ramifications. By sharing their stories, these advocates showed the public that anyone can have mental illness — even the famous faces Americans knew and loved.

Another important turning point occurred when Congress declared the 1990s as the "Decade of the Brain," a period of national recognition of brain research and public education, and established Mental Illness Awareness Week in October due to NAMI's tireless advocacy. The initiative bolstered NAMI's efforts, culminating in our first official public awareness campaign, the *Campaign to End Discrimination*.

The campaign, established in 1996, was fueled by the public's newfound understanding of brain science and developments in psychiatric medication. The narrative became about treating mental illnesses as the legitimate medical conditions they are — and that treatment works. With this message, NAMI called on legislators to end discriminatory practices for people with serious mental illness in insurance, housing and employment.

Throughout the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, NAMI engaged in public battles with companies, entertainment networks and other entities, calling them out for insensitive portrayals of mental illness. The initiative ultimately became known as Stigma Busters. NAMI used these opportunities to continue shaping the story of people with mental illness — that they shouldn't be represented by sensationalized characters in horror movies or the target of tactless jokes. NAMI successfully pulled inappropriate ads from the air, sent stigmatizing television shows into hiatus and even secured funding for future anti-stigma efforts.

Decades of fighting to medicalize mental illness and admonishing those who got things wrong were critically important to NAMI's success. However, as movements are ever-evolving, NAMI switched gears around 2010 to our signature positive storytelling approach. Advocates began to realize that prioritizing personal experiences was an even more effective way to amplify NAMI's message and resonate with those who needed to hear it.

*You Are Not Alone*, NAMI's first paid awareness campaign, used the Internet and social media to ask for stories directly from those who wanted to share them. Through this campaign, NAMI illustrated mental illness in real life — examples of hope and recovery and support — from people who looked like you, your brother, your best friend. No matter who you were, where you lived or how mental illness impacted you, you could share your story and become part of the mental health movement. NAMI has continued this momentum through recent campaigns such as *StigmaFree*, *CureStigma* and *WhyCare?*

The methods and mediums may have changed over the years, but the story of people with mental illness and their families has always been at the heart of NAMI's work. And after 40 hard-fought years of raising awareness, these stories have finally found their way into the light.

# You are NOT ALONE

Millions of people are affected by mental illness each year. Across the country, many people just like you work, perform, create, compete, laugh, love and inspire every day.



1 in 5 U.S. adults experience mental illness

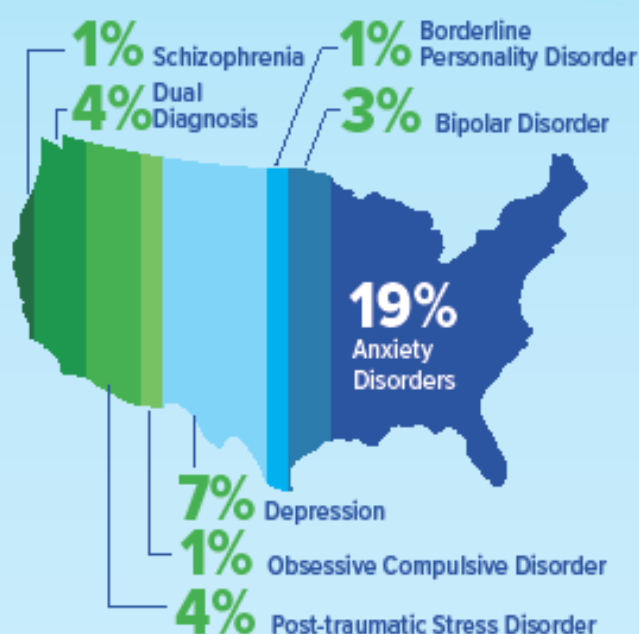
## 1 in 25

1 in 25 U.S. adults experience serious mental illness

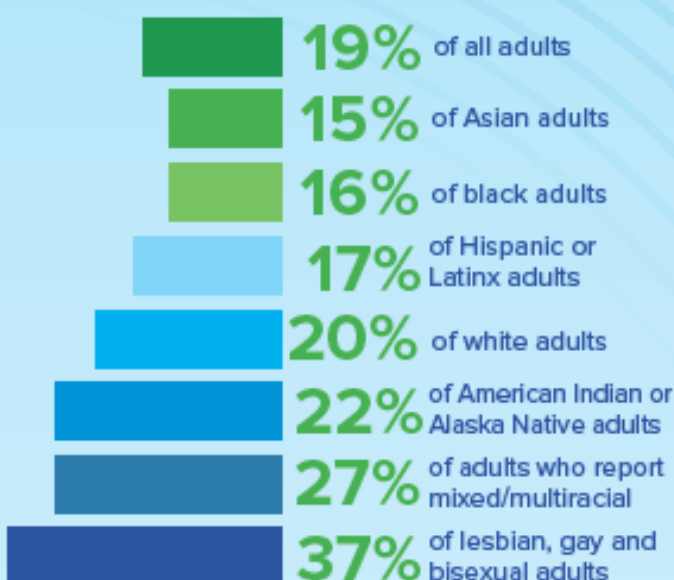
## 17%

of youth (6-17 years) experience a mental health disorder

### 12 MONTH PREVALENCE OF COMMON MENTAL ILLNESSES (ALL U.S. ADULTS)



### 12 MONTH PREVALENCE OF ANY MENTAL ILLNESS (ALL U.S. ADULTS)



### WAYS TO REACH OUT AND GET HELP



Talk with a health care professional



Call the NAMI HelpLine at 800-950-NAMI (6264)



Connect with friends and family



Join a support group

Data from CDC, NIMH and other select sources. Find citations for this resource at [nami.org/nhi/stats](http://nami.org/nhi/stats)

NAMI HelpLine  
800-950-NAMI (6264)

f NAMI

Twitter NAMICommunicate

YouTube NAMICommunicate

www.nami.org

**NAMI**  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

## The NAMI Columbus Mission

We will use **S**upport, **E**ducation and **A**dvocacy to throw out lifelines of hope and help to families and consumers seeking recovery. Our vision is to create an effective and active affiliate which delivers what consumers of mental health services and families need. We work to build an area where leaders and citizens work well together to create a caring, compassionate and educated public that realizes mental illness is a biological illness and is not a character flaw or due to bad upbringing.



# Columbus

P.O. Box 8581  
Columbus, GA 31908  
(706) 320-3755  
**Our Area's Voice on Mental Illness**



Many people find their way to our classes by first attending a support group. If you are a NAMI Columbus "long timer" (we don't want to call you old), please attend either of the two weekly NAMI Connection support groups or the weekly Family support group. Newcomers can use your wisdom and hard-earned experience. Sharing a message of recovery gives the hope they are searching for. Many people tell us that the NAMI motto **"You Are Not Alone"** is the initial feeling they realize at their first meeting. If you are willing to train to be a support group facilitator, let us know!

## I want to support NAMI Columbus and NAMI's mission.

*✂ Please Cut and Mail ✂*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Numbers (do not enter a number if you do not want to be listed in the Membership Directory (members only).  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail (Please include so we can be green and email you our monthly newsletter.)  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Please check type of membership desired:

- ☐ Individual Membership - \$40 Dues
- ☐ Household Membership - \$60 Dues
- ☒ **\$5 Open Door Membership (financial hardship)**  
(All dues are for 1 year and are tax-deductible.)

**All memberships include NAMI National, NAMI Georgia, and NAMI Columbus membership.**

- ☐ I am not joining at this time, but I would like to make a contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_. (Thank you!!!)

NAMI National, NAMI Georgia and NAMI Columbus are dedicated to eradicating stigma and improving the lives of persons with mental illnesses thereby also benefiting their friends, family and community. Catch the wave and be a part of change.

NAMI Columbus is an affiliate of NAMI Georgia, which is a 501(c)3 non-profit charitable organization. Dues and donations are tax deductible. Membership includes a subscription to our monthly newsletter and access to immediate news on advocacy, treatment and support issues from our national, state and local organizations.

Please make checks payable to:  
**NAMI Georgia** & enter **"NAMI Columbus membership"** in the memo field.

Mail your check and membership form to:  
**NAMI Columbus**  
P.O. Box 8581  
Columbus, Georgia 31908

You can also join safely online at [www.nami.org/join](http://www.nami.org/join) .