The mission of NAMI Metro Suburban is to improve the quality of life for individuals, families and communities who are affected by mental illness. We achieve this goal by providing advocacy, support and education (free of charge) within the communities of west suburban Cook County.
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Message from Carey Carlock and Kimberly Knake

Dear Friends,

NAMI Metro Suburban knows when Peers help Peers, the results are astounding. John is a living example. Now in his fifties, John cycled for years between jobs and unemployment due to untreated mental illness and alcoholism. His family, frustrated and exhausted, abandoned him because he wouldn’t seek help or, if he did, not for long. After multiple hospitalizations, intermittent bouts of isolation, deep depression, and housing insecurity, John sought help from the Living Room in LaGrange, IL, as was recommended in his hospital discharge plan.

At the Living Room, he worked with a Peer Counselor who had travelled a path similar to his own. John came to the Living Room to meet with his Peer Counselor—he did not need to worry about insurance, unavailability, cancellation fees, or being judged for his illness. John and his Peer Counselor bonded over their common experiences and developed a trust that blossomed into hope for John. In time, John sought professional integrated treatment as referred by his Peer Counselor. Today, John has been sober for 8 months, is employed, and in secure housing.

John’s story is a familiar one at the Living Room. It is the power of Peers helping Peers; Peers who share similar experiences and have found recovery, Peers who have made it their life’s work to help others find their own path towards recovery. In light of the success of the LaGrange Living Room, NAMI has partnered again with Community Memorial Foundation and now, Proviso Township, to open a second Living Room in Broadview, IL in collaboration with Healthcare Alternative Systems.

Looking to the next generation, in fiscal 2018, NAMI Metro Suburban took another significant leap towards addressing the increase in untreated youth mental illness. In collaboration with local school partners we provided student, teacher and parent mental health awareness and education. NAMI’s Ending the Silence program is now being adopted by more schools, as part of their curriculum to address the social emotional needs of their students. The education program, which includes young adults sharing their journey to recovery (the future of Peers helping Peers), is key to helping students understand the early signs of a mental health condition and how to reach out for help for themselves or a friend in need.

Underpinning our efforts this year we have brought on seasoned leadership to develop new fundholder relationships and advance financial oversight. Our Board of Directors made up of mental health professionals, community members and individuals aligned with our mission continues to grow and provide guidance to our current and future strategic plans. We want to thank all who have made an investment in NAMI Metro Suburban and to the residents we serve in the west suburbs of West Cook County for their support. We are grateful to our fundholders, community allies, school partners, volunteers and all of those that have collaborated with us to promote recovery, resiliency, well-being and hope in our communities.

As an organization, NAMI Metro Suburban is building our collective voice to advocate for improved mental health resources in our community. If you are not a member already, we encourage you to join NAMI Metro Suburban this year to be part of the grassroots movement wherein Peers help Peers, Families help Families and recovery is within reach.

With gratitude,

Carey Carlock, President
Lia Daniels, Treasurer
Jackie Aumann, Secretary
Diana Alejandro
Jason Allington
Anthony Ambrose
Theresa Blomquist
Nicole Cavaliere
Kathe Dellacecca
Meredith Onion
Reyna Santillian
Emily Smith
Mary Stimming
Mental Health Education
Fiscal 2018

Parents and Teachers as Allies

541 EDUCATORS REACHED
Mental health education and suicide prevention presentation for educators to recognize signs and symptoms and assist their students.

Ending the Silence

6,120 STUDENTS REACHED
Mental health education and suicide prevention presentation for middle and high schoolers which helps students to recognize signs and symptoms and how to seek help for themselves or a friend.

Education and Advocacy Series

74 COMMUNITY MEMBERS ATTENDED PRESENTATIONS
Health and Wellness topics presented at the Oak Park Library free to the community.

Recovery Education Classes

412 INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILY MEMBERS ATTENDED CLASSES
Courses such as Fear to Peer, NAMI, Family to Family, and Basics help individuals with lived experience and their loved ones understand mental illness and how to move toward recovery.

Mental Health First Aid

868 COMMUNITY MEMBERS TRAINED
An 8-hour evidence-based class, presented in collaboration with NAMI DuPage, helps the public to recognize signs and symptoms of a mental health condition and how to assist someone who is struggling or in crisis.

Community Wellness Center Classes

425 COMMUNITY MEMBERS ATTENDED PRESENTATIONS
Health and Wellness topics presented at the Community Wellness Center free to the community.
LaGrange Highlands is *Ending the Silence*

Highlands Middle School, just a few miles from NAMI’s Community Wellness Center in LaGrange, IL, is a great example of how a school with highly-engaged teachers and above average resources has the need for mental health awareness and education for their students and faculty. Principal Mike Papierski’s vision, to “ensure every child reaches his/her potential”, includes equipping both teachers and students with the skills to recognize and address the early signs of a mental health condition.

So far this school year, in partnership with District 106, NAMI has educated and certified over 90 teachers in the nationally-recognized Mental Health First Aid. NAMI’s Education Department also presented on Self-Care skills to 72 Highlands teachers as a way of helping them model good mental wellness and set a tone in their classrooms.

To better equip students, NAMI Metro Suburban presents a nationally recognized program, *Ending the Silence*, to middle and high school students throughout the areas served. Ending the Silence is an evidence-based program shown to changes teens’ attitudes towards mental health. Research has confirmed experiencing the program reduces stigma surrounding mental health, increases awareness of mental health conditions, and increases help-seeking behaviors in youth. It includes not only information and instruction but also the opportunity to hear from a young adult living with a mental health condition who started experiencing symptoms at a young age and has since found the way to recovery.

When asked to comment on NAMI’s Ending the Silence program, LaGrange Highlands Principal, Mike Papierski, shared his opinion that, “Ending the Silence is an effective way to heighten our students' awareness of school anxiety and mental illness. The information shared with our students is vital to their overall health and wellness. Mental illness can be a very difficult area of discussion for students, yet the Ending the Silence presentation brought our students a sense of security to help themselves and others who are struggling with anxiety/mental illness. We appreciate the genuine delivery of the presenters. Our students are very interested in hearing actual stories from a young adult.”
NAMI Partners with Healthcare Alternative Systems to open the Broadview Living Room

After two years of successfully supporting guests at the Living Room in LaGrange, NAMI Metro Suburban partnered with Healthcare Alternative Systems to open a second Living Room in Broadview, IL. The Living Room is a peer-led alternative to the hospital emergency room for people experiencing an elevation in mental health symptoms. It is a comfortable, non-clinical space that provides a calm and safe environment in which guests can resolve crisis without more intensive intervention. NAMI’s Executive Director, Kimberly Knake is pleased to help bring this innovative mental health program to Broadview. “After two years in LaGrange, we know this model is very effective in helping people not only find stabilization but a path towards long-term recovery.” One guest recently commented that the Living Room and her Peer Counselor has “literally saved her life.”

Greg DiDomenico, CEO of Community Memorial Foundation (CMF), was part of the original discussions which led to the opening of NAMI’s first Living Room in LaGrange. The support provided by CMF is based on their understanding of the importance of increasing awareness of good mental health in their region and to do this in partnership with local organizations which share their mission. Fruits of this vision include the CMF partnership with NAMI Metro Suburban and Pillars to open the first Living Room in LaGrange (2016) and, most recently, the partnership with NAMI Metro Suburban and Healthcare Alternative Systems to open the Living Room in Broadview.

According to Greg, the idea to open a Living Room in the western suburbs grew from a conversation during a Chicago Community Trust On the Table event with police chiefs who had been trained in Mental Health First Aid. The chiefs shared their frustration at relying on hospitals for residents in need of mental health assistance. Their desire for an alternative prompted CMF to conduct a needs assessment that resulted in the LaGrange Living Room. Further data collection indicated a significant need to address psychiatric alternatives in the Broadview area too. Greg praises NAMI Metro Suburban as “an excellent collaborator” whose work with schools and police forces stands out for “empowering our neighbors.”

Along with Greg DiDomenico, Jesse Rosas, Executive Director of Proviso Township Mental Health Commission, was instrumental in bringing the Living Room to the Broadview area. Through Proviso’s efforts against substance abuse, Jesse was familiar with the success of peer-to-peer programming. Thus, he was enthusiastic about the opportunity to bring the first peer-to-peer mental health program to his
service area. Even better, he says, NAMI’s partnership with H.A.S. (Healthcare Alternative Systems) at the Living Room offers stabilization and transition to treatment at one location. “**The work NAMI does is second to no one!**” exclaims Jesse, and he is proud to be an essential part of extending that work within Proviso Township.

Regarding their partnership with NAMI, Marco Jacome, CEO of Healthcare Alternative Systems (H.A.S.) indicated that when the opportunity arose to partner with NAMI Metro Suburban’s Living Room in Broadview, he was “thrilled” because “the work is extremely important” and NAMI Metro has a “proven record” of effective mental health education, intervention, and support. Marco is confident that the Living Room and H.A.S. partnership will offer many a critical entry point to mental health stabilization and substance abuse treatment . . . and, ultimately, to recovery.

## The Power of Peers Paying it Forward

In 2013, I chose to put recovery first for the first time in my life. I bought myself a one-way plan ticket to a residential treatment program in North Carolina in an attempt to finally get a grasp on my anxiety, depression, and eating disorder. Because an insurance company decided it was time for me to step down in care, I returned in December of that year seeking to continue to use the skills I had learned.

I began working at NAMI Metro Suburban. I was persistent and passionate; I wanted to work alongside other peer mental health advocates to reduce the stigma that surrounds mental illness and offer tools to stay recovery minded. At NAMI, I wore several hats, including Education Coordinator and IPS Employment Marketing Consultant. Through both positions, I learned to use my voice to elevate the message of recovery. I was surrounded by supportive co-workers, who I am proud to call lifelong friends. With their support, I took a leap of faith and applied to law school in the hopes of advocating on behalf of individuals living with serious mental illness to support their recovery journey.

Today, I am proud to say I am a graduate of Loyola University’s Chicago School of Law. I focused my legal studies in health law, public interest law, and compliance. With the generous support of Dentons, I was awarded an Equal Justice Works Fellowship to provide trauma-informed, legal advocacy to justice-involved individuals living with disabling mental illness in Cook County, to promote their reintegration and recovery in the community.

From day one, NAMI empowered me to use my voice to elevate the message of hope and recovery for all who live with mental illness. With my voice, I was encouraged to do more, to have a greater impact for a cause that directly affected my family and me. Without my NAMI family, I am not sure I would have pursued a legal education. Because I knew I would always be supported by such great individuals at an amazing organization, I felt confident pursuing a cause that set my soul on fire—improving the lives of individuals, like myself, who choose a life in recovery and choose to give a hand up to others living with mental illness.
New Partnerships – New Improvements

For over 26 years, NAMI Metro Suburban has operated the oldest free-standing Drop-In Center in the State of Illinois. Through their Drop-In Center, NAMI strives to reintegrate the “whole person” back into the community by utilizing a process wherein each person is invited to build social skills and embrace wellness themes toward the goal of living a more healthy and happy life. Wellness programming promotes life skills, enhances self-esteem and improves the overall quality of life for participants.

Thanks to a generous donation by NAMI’s newest partner, Fifth Third Bank, the Drop-In Center’s kitchen will soon be getting a facelift. The kitchen is where volunteers work their magic, preparing delicious food for Open Mic Nights and full meals to celebrate the holidays. It is also where participants can grab a drink or a sandwich on a daily basis.

Lionel Gomez, Financial Center Manager and Assistant Vice President of Fifth Third Bank in Oak Park spoke about the bank’s decision to support NAMI saying, “Originally when Teresa [Teresa Blomquist, NAMI Metro Suburban Board Member] came to me about potentially sponsoring NAMI, she informed me about the cause that you stand for and I thought it was a really important aspect of life that you focus on and I really wanted to be a part of it. Mental Illness is something that affects almost every family in different ways and different fashions but ultimately, at Fifth Third, we believe in standing up for causes such as this one, specifically helping any way we can to promote mental wellness in our community.”

Join Us as We Make an Impact in Our Community

Each year we fight stigma, provide support, educate the public and advocate for equal care. Each year, the movement grows stronger. Raising awareness on your own, as part of a small group or part of our community can make a difference.

Taking action and raising awareness of mental health conditions can break down obstacles and improve the chance of recovery. Learn how you can make a difference in our community and for millions of Americans across the U.S.

Mental health matters to everyone. Individuals, companies, organizations and others can all get involved to learn more about mental illness, to see a person for who they are and take action on mental health issues.

For more information, please contact us at info@namimetsub.org or call 708-524-2582.
The Path to Leadership

“Before I found NAMI, I got in a lot of trouble. I was hanging out with the wrong crowd and I wasn't taking by medications prescribed by my doctor. Then, as time passed, I knew I had to turn all that around and find a way to get control of my life.

That's when I heard about NAMI and its Drop In Center. They have life skill groups, support and classes for people with mental illness. I went to check it out and was given a tour. They described what it was about, and I thought, this can really help me.

NAMI's Drop In Center has changed my life around. I met new people. I even volunteer for NAMI. I have gotten involved in classes and really learned a lot. The NAMI Drop in Center really helped me a lot these past months and years with support groups, field trips and activities. NAMI really changed my life and made me a better person.”
Fiscal Year 18 Overview

**REVENUE FY18**

- Private, 622,180
- Local Government, 199,251
- Federal, 147,000
- Other, 199,884

**PROGRAM ALLOCATION FY18**

- Living Room/Community Wellness Center, 33%
- Education, 28%
- Drop-in Center, 31%
- Other, 8%
Thank You to our Partners and Donors

708 Community Mental Health
Board of Berwyn Township
CDBG Oak Park Township
Community Mental Health Board of
Oak Park Township
Community Memorial Foundation
Healthy Communities Foundation
Illinois Department of Health
Services
MacNeal Hospital
Oak Park River Forest Community
Foundation
Proviso Township Mental Health
Commission
River Forest Township
Rotary Club of Oak Park
Village of Oak Park
Westlake Health Foundation

Heathcare Alternative Systems, Inc.
Hinsdale Orthopedic Associates
Holly Economos
Huron Valley Gateway Chamber of
Commerce
In Memory of M. Cooper Heinz
Jack Bierig
Jaclyn Borowski
Jacqueline Aumann
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Shaker Foundation
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The D’Arcy Family
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