

## MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH – YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

Each year millions of Americans face the reality of living with a mental illness. During May, NAMI Ohio and its affiliates joins the national movement to raise awareness about mental health.

This year, across the United States, due to the COVID-19 situation, this year, like no other year, it is important for the mental health community to support one another and know that we are in the fight together – we are not alone – you are not alone – no one should ever feel alone! There is help and there is hope.

NAMI KNOX LICKING COUNTY is in the fight. Each year (and all year long) we work to fight the prejudices and discrimination of mental illnesses, provide support, educate the public and advocate for policies that support people with mental illness and their families.

### **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!**

The above are our guiding principles and our fight is ongoing. Awareness month's purpose is to remind the millions affected by mental illness that you are not alone in your fight. We also ask that others in our community join us as we advocate for a better understanding of mental illness. Having a mental illness is no one's fault.

***Do you know your NAMI – how we serve – and why?***

**NAMI affiliates are across the country – in big cities or small urban/rural communities like ours. We are here to help through education, support, and advocacy.**

To find a NAMI near you got to <http://www.nami.org>

**Why Education?** In our fight against prejudices and discrimination, we believe that education about the condition or disease (What causes it? What treatment is recommended? And how do we manage it – what are my resources and alternatives?) is vital to recovery for both the individual and the loved ones who support them as well as the public which certainly includes our coworkers, schoolmates, and our faith community.

NAMI signature programs – the evidenced-based Family to Family Education Program and NAMI Basics come highly recommended for parents and other loved ones to learn how to cope with the illness of their loved ones: People with lived experience helped to write the curriculum. People with lived experience teach the curriculum.

**Family to Family** is an 8-week curriculum for parents, spouses, and others of an adult (18 and over) living with a mental condition such as Depression, Bipolar, Schizophrenia, etc. (*Our next Family to Family class will start on September 9. To register - (<mailto:nnamiklcoho@embarqmail.com>)*)

**NAMI Basics** is a curriculum designed especially for parents and others of a child 18 and younger; its curriculum is much the same as the Family to Family but includes the process of working with school systems and even the justice system in some instances.

**Why Support?** Our mission is to make life better for the mentally ill and their families. NAMI facilitates support groups for both the individual and families. Though each illness is unique, there is *power* in sharing experiences with your peers when it comes to coping with a mental illness. Facing the challenges that a mental illness presents can be overwhelming and frightening.

Our NAMI Connection Wednesdays support group offers individuals the opportunity of meeting and sharing with others having the same experience. We meet every Wednesday, currently during the Pandemic situation we are holding ZOOM meetings online at 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Our NAMI Family to Family Tuesday group meets the second Tuesday of each month. Currently those meetings are online as well. Please contact us for information.

Contact us to join a group, <mailto:namiklcoho@embarqmail.com> or for information. Please specify your interest - NAMI Connection or Family Group.

***Why Advocacy? Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*** – Margaret Meade

Advocacy is nothing new to NAMI. The Spring 2020 issue of the NAMI Advocate (national's quarterly publication that comes with your NAMI membership) presents the story of NAMI from 1970 through 2019. NAMI's formation in 1979 was inspired by the many small support groups gathered over the country in seeking answers and treatments for their loved ones affected by mental illness. One group in California transformed a small gathering of families into an organization called "Parents of Adult Schizophrenics," a nonprofit association that eventually changed its name to the Alliance for the Mentally Ill of San Mateo.

"This local coming together helped spur a national movement", as NAMI writers describe it, "... that grew into a *tsunami* of organized trailblazers advocating for more research, greater support and broader public awareness."

The journey continues – it's the goal of NAMI and its families to continue the movement into the future advocating for the mentally ill and for a better understanding through education and support, research to advance treatment, and better resources for care. We advocate for better laws that govern insurance and the cost of prescription drugs and access to care.

Approximately one out of every five adults in America have a mental illness. Just like many NAMI affiliates across the United States, NAMI KLCO advocates, listens and supports those individuals and their families through our NAMI educational classes, and support groups, other non-NAMI educational workshops and activities. We are all connected to our communities – we are not alone! Please join us in raising awareness – together we can make a difference!

