

NAMI Far North 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

“Let’s celebrate hope and progress in the treatment of serious brain disorders; be respectful, and reject stigma”

2016 for NAMI Far North was a year of beginnings and outreach. We created an Advisory Board, started North Idaho Crisis Services, and were visibly present in our community.

Advisory Board: 14 members of our community in Bonner and Boundary Counties agreed to become the first NAMI Far North Advisory Board. The basic responsibility of these members was to be available to NAMI Far North in their area of expertise, should we need to call upon them. We kept them up-to-date on our activities and meetings throughout the year, and called upon some of them for help with issues as they came up. We were assured that they were supportive of NAMI Far North in the community.

North Idaho Crisis Services: January 1, 2016, we began this innovative project. Staffed by 7 licensed mental health professionals, it is a free, confidential service that offers contact by phone to Bonner and Boundary Counties from 5:00 pm to 8:00 am weekdays, and 5:00 pm Fridays through 8:00 Mondays. It offers phone crisis intervention; phone assessment and referral to appropriate provider(s) based upon insurance/payment source; referral to local services; access to The Northern Idaho Crisis Center located in Kootenai County. The goal of this service is to help people in distress and prevent suicide. It is open to individuals in crisis, as well as the people who care about them. In 2016, this service received 158 phone calls and answered 78 of them; 88 occurred outside of operating hours.

Currently this vital service is restricted by time because the therapists answering the phone do so outside of business hours. We hope to expand it to 24 hours, 7 days a week, for support to people throughout the day as well.

Transportation to The North Idaho Crisis Center in Coeur d’Alene: We are proud to continue this service, begun in December of 2015, when the NI Crisis Center opened. In 2016 we provided funding for transportation for six (6) people to the Crisis Center.

Membership: From its initial 5 members in 2007, NAMI Far North had 19 active members in 2016, and our Board of Directors grew from 7 members in 2015 to 10 members.

All members of the Board of Directors of NAMI Far North are people living with mental illness, have family members who are individuals with mental illness, or are therapists in our community.

SERVICES

Meetings: Every third Wednesday except during the month of December, NAMI Far North conducts Educational and Support Meetings in the classroom at Bonner General Hospital in Sandpoint. Special guest speakers at these meetings include Veterans services; therapists discussing treatments; issues related to income, employment and benefits for persons living with mental illness; signs and symptoms of mental health disorders. They cover topics of interest to consumers and their families. We continue with the lending library of books, DVDs and essays on mental illness, and this is maintained and promoted by a member of our Advisory Board, who features a book or publication at most meetings..

Support Groups: NAMI Connection, the support group for individuals with mental illness, meets after general meetings, as does the Family Support Group, for those who care about the individuals with mental illness.

Monthly support meetings also were held in Bonners Ferry, facilitated by Gini Woodward and Candi Kelly, with those unable to travel to Sandpoint.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH:

Family-to-Family Class: In the spring class of Family-to-Family, 19 people received information, insight, understanding and empowerment for dealing with their friend or family member with mental illness. The positive focus of this group helped to bring several new members into NAMI Far North, and one new member to our Board.

Access to Provider Directory: NAMI Far North teams with Sandpoint Community Resource Center, SCRC, and its website which keeps up to date lists of therapists, therapy organizations, and other pertinent information for the public. Our website refers any inquiries about mental health providers to the SCRC website.

In Our Own Voice: Our representative for “In Our Own Voice” continues to be a valuable resource to reduce the stigma of mental illness in our community.

Crisis Intervention Training for Law Enforcement (CIT): We supported a Bonner County Law Enforcement officer with funding to attend CIT International, to bring back to our community the latest information for CIT training.

NAMI Idaho/NAMI National Relations: A representative of NAMI Far North Board attended the NAMI National Convention in Denver, CO in June. She reported on the convention and innovations she learned about later at NAMI Far North’s monthly meeting. This Board member also is our representative to NAMI Idaho.

Local Community Outreach: Our members were actively networking and spreading the word about NAMI Far North at community events throughout the area: In January we gave a presentation to Chamber of Commerce members about our new North Idaho Crisis Services. In April three Board members attended a Sandpoint Community Resource Center symposium, sharing ideas with therapists about how to better serve those with mental illness in our community. In May, we scheduled “A Walk in the Woods, Reduce the Stigma” walk; it was cancelled however, because of inclement weather. The City Council proclaimed May as Mental Health Month for Sandpoint. In August NAMI Far North had an information booth in the Bonner County Fair. September 1, two Board members manned a booth at Priest River Middle School as students and parents came for free haircuts, immunizations, clothing and books. September 4, NAMI Far North members participated in “Walk for HOPE” (Hang On Pain Ends), an organized walk of 200+ people, across the Long Bridge and back, to raise awareness of childhood suicide. Not only did we walk, but we also had a table with NAMI Far North information, and we talked with participants about NAMI and NI Crisis Services. In October we placed brochures and information in the Panida Theater lobby for “Resiliency,” a free movie for high school children, about mental health and community and school support. In December two Board members met with school counselors and other staff in the Lake Pend Oreille School system and other members of the community, in ways we could all offer resources and support for our school children and prevent childhood suicide.

Conduit of Care: We continue our support for those hospitalized in The State Hospital North in Orofino by supplying gifts of hope and comfort to people in crisis. In 2016 we allotted moneys to be spent for replacement of Frisbee Golf baskets in January of 2017.

Region I Behavioral Health: This organization was created two (2) years ago to address mental health issues in North Idaho. It meets monthly. We continue to keep abreast of the progress made with this group, which advocates for services for those with mental health issues.

Facebook Page: Our Facebook page offers information about our organization and provides a daily link to mental health resources.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Pietz

Lynn Pietz, President of NAMI Far North