A Message from Muguette

As usual, we keep a busy schedule at NAMI Seattle.

In May, our team members Katie Mahoney, Jeremiah Bainbridge and Faarah Misbah led a training on Addressing Mental Health in the Workplace at the Washington State Nonprofits Conference. This was so well received that we are now offering the same workshops to non-profits and for-profits. We’ll have more information on this soon.

In June, we welcomed NAMI affiliate members from all over the country to NAMI’s 40th annual convention in Seattle. Over 1800 people came together to talk about what we achieved in the past, to honor the people who helped us along the way, and to plan for the future. The NAMI Seattle team walked away from the convention with determination and clarity.

Many people have been responsible for the success of NAMI in the last 40 years. Eleanor Owen, founder of NAMI and Seattle resident, has been advocating on behalf of people living with mental illness for over 50 years. She founded NAMI in 1978 because families did not understand what to do with a mental illness diagnosis, or how to support their loved ones, or navigate the healthcare system. Eleanor walked so that we could run; even at 98, she continues to advocate for our communities. She is a force of nature. Thank you, Eleanor!

Happy Summer!
2018 marked NAMI Seattle’s 40th year! Thank you to everyone who has supported us along the way - we would not have come this far without you.

Last year, we were able to re-launch our Peer-to-Peer program, and launch the first ever Family-to-Family program in Spanish in our state. For more information, check out our Impact Report on our website or request a physical copy here.

Save The Dates for Fall 2019

Seattle City Council Candidate Forum on Mental Health
NAMI Seattle will be moderating a public forum with Seattle City Council Candidates to discuss mental health issues. This event will take place in early September. Location and time TBA.

Ice Cream Social
NAMI Seattle Office will be opening our doors to any and all who are curious about learning more! There will be ice cream, a presentation, and good company.

NAMI Seattle Office
802 NW 70th St Seattle WA 98107 - September 19, 4-6pm.

Depressed Cake Shop
It’s that time of year again! The time of year when local bakers whip up tasty treats that are sad on the outside, with a cheery hopeful filling.

Optimism Brewing Company
1158 Broadway Seattle WA 98122 - October 12, 11am-2pm

All three events are free and open to the public.

For more information on upcoming gatherings, check out our calendar: namiseattle.org/events
Gravity Payments:
What happens when a company prioritizes mental health?

Gravity Payments offers a culture that allows employees to feel secure and comfortable with the idea of mental illness, and they are striving to find more way to make it easier for employees with mental illnesses to not feel anxious about opening up to their co-workers. Our writing professor, Laura Umetsu, mentioned to us how Gravity Payments is starting to look for ways to use knowledge from NAMI Seattle to provide mental health training to their HR staff to improve the company’s mental health support system for its employees who may be living with a mental illness. We were excited to hear of this because specialized HR training in mental health is training that we've not heard of in many other workplaces.

Another reason that Gravity Payments is so unique in terms of employee wellness is how committed their employees are to giving back to their communities through their philanthropic program, Gravity Gives. Gravity Gives finds creative ways to give back to the communities in which employees reside. Each year, Gravity Payments will give each employee at least $500 to donate to the charity of their choice, along with plenty of volunteer opportunities. We were impressed by this initiative, given the multitude of studies that show that giving to charity increases individuals’ positive social connections and overall mental wellness.

James Pratt [VP of People Development] has been at Gravity Payments for 6 months and says that he loves the transparent, purpose-driven culture. For example, Gravity Payments’ conference rooms are designed to look like clients' businesses: Thai restaurants, hair salons, and bike shops. This interior design provides a constant reminder to the employees that they are serving someone every day. Pratt appreciates the cultural and financial emphasis Gravity Payments places on mental health – every employee earns at least $70,000 annually. Gravity Payments believes their employees can lead healthier and more productive lives without worrying about money.

To read more about Gravity Payments, check out our writers' two-part series on the NAMI Seattle Blog.
DE FAMILIA A FAMILIA
BY JORGE VARGAS

How did you get started with NAMI, and what inspired you to be a part of the family to family program?
I found out about NAMI after I knew by coincidence about my nephew’s mental illness. During the process of me and my wife helping my nephew with his mental health issues, I was part of the stigma that our society is still going through, so my wife who is a registered nurse and treats people with mental illness as a profession, she was the one who eventually referred me to NAMI, so I could start educating myself about mental illness and leave the stigma I was living in. My first ever class I took was Family & Friends, and the class was so powerful that I wanted to learn more. When I asked if NAMI had any classes in Spanish that I could take with some of my family members I was told that the classes were not available. At that time, I was looking for a place to volunteer and start giving back to society, then I thought it was a good idea to start working with NAMI, so we could start a Spanish program in Seattle. Today I am so proud that after all the hard work from my colleagues and me, I was able to get training in Yakima to become an instructor. A few months later after I received training, we were finally able to offer our first Family to Family class in Spanish in WA State!

Since De Familia A Familia became available to our Spanish-speaking community, what has been the response? What do you notice within the program that folk have found helpful or illuminating?
I started working very hard with my colleague Kyle Samuels and Katie Mahoney on the logistics to offer our first De Familia a Familia class, and since we knew the Spanish program was non-existent, we did not expect to get a quick response right away, but luckily after many efforts we were able to register enough people to attend out first class. The people who took our first class was so grateful and engaged, that more than half of our class are willing to volunteer, or become teachers in the near future when we offer our first Spanish State training in Seattle which it will allow us to start expanding the Spanish program more and more.

Looking forward, what’s exciting to you about the future of De Familia A Familia?
My goal as an instructor and state trainer is to help NAMI Seattle expand the Spanish program all over nearby counties and in WA and to make this Spanish program available just like the programs available in English. Eventually I would like to take my knowledge and possibly teach in Mexico, as many people there live with the stigma of mental illness which is keeping many people that have a mental illness, in the shadows.

For more information about De Familia A Familia, check out our website: namiseattle.org/programs
For a long time I just went with the flow of things. If I was with people who weren’t Muslim, I’d act a very particular way, but when I was with Muslims, I’d act very differently. When I was with people I knew weren’t understanding of a particular aspect of my identity, I would check that piece of me at the door; I was code switching all over the place. But when you’re constantly code switching, who even are you? Who am I when I don’t have to check anything at the door?

I’ve been advocating for mental health awareness for a while now, but in the context of these discussions I had been avoiding some conversations with myself, like “how much” Pakistani can I be, or “how much” American can I believe myself to be as an immigrant and “how much” Muslim can I get away with being without getting called an extremist? These were and are difficult questions to explore.

And when you add a mental health condition to the mix that makes it harder and harder to just do basic things, you have a huge mess. One of the biggest challenges in my mental health has been a question of how and where I can be ALL of me.

I can go into the Pakistani vs American identity issue and write an entire novel on it, so right now I am only going to go into the Muslim aspect of myself (not that I can’t write an entire novel on this too), because the Muslim Mental Health conference in Tempe, Arizona I went to addressed this in particular.

Not being able to discuss spirituality and religion can have a huge effect on people who depend on their relationship with God as an aspect of their identity, so this issue is a very relevant issue for Muslim immigrants. I attended a workshop lead by Salma Abugideiri MEd, LPC where she emphasized that any attempts at helping an individual who is Muslim and not analyzing their relationship with God and its role in therapy can be futile because it is integral to their identity. Iman Khatib who has a Master’s in Art Therapy talked about a case where a young girl who was a Syrian refugee with war trauma would make Dua’a (Supplication) to Allah in order to feel safe and help herself calm down.

Another workshop that showed exactly how powerful this connection can be was led Dr. Lori Zoellner, a Professor of Psychology at the University of Washington, who developed (right here in Seattle!) a treatment for Posttraumatic Stress disorder that incorporates Islamic principles in order to help Somali refugees. The format looks like a support group and is led by trained peer facilitators (and similar to NAMI programs those facilitators can later train more facilitators). Ahmed Roble and Farhiya Roble, two of those facilitators, also led the workshop and talked about how the support groups involves relating traumatic experiences to stories of the Prophets in Islam and then ending with a Dua’a to Allah to reconnect and heal through connection with Him.
I Did A Thing: Why creativity and art are critical to mental health

Let me tell you why art matters.

A long time ago, or so the story goes, an aristocratic family in Cheshire had a lion on their crest. This family commissioned a painting of their crest, as was common for families of this status to do, but what they received was rather uncommon. When their commissioned painting was finished, the lion didn't look like a lion at all; it looked like a cat with a creepy smile.

This painter, whoever they were, did a fantastically bad job. Their name is lost to the annals of history.

How can Muslims take back this narrative? By telling our story; without interruption, dismissal, or further erasure.

But the problem is that Muslims can't be comfortable practicing the spiritually of our religion. I can talk all day about the social and political struggles of being Muslim and Seattle is GREAT at accepting and discussing these issues. I can even discuss my spirituality, but I can't discuss a relationship with God. It scares people and immediately makes them uncomfortable.

I can understand this. Conversations like these can be minefields, because you don't know when someone will go “oh just pray the pain away” or “if you trusted God you would be more patient.”

But the fact of the matter is that for me as a Muslim, having discussion about mental health but not being able to talk about the core of my religion was preventing me from resolving some real big issues.

Showing and being ALL of ourselves and having a space to shine is how we heal.
What remains, however, is that cat. This abysmal painting of a lion birthed the colloquialism “grinning like a Cheshire cat” which would eventually be brought to life by Lewis Carroll as the Cheshire Cat who guides Alice through Wonderland. “We’re all mad here,” the Cheshire Cat reminds us. “You may have noticed I’m not all there myself,” the Cheshire Cat warns, without ever losing that quintessential smile. How much did Alice learn from this liminal creature on her journey through an unknowable world? How much can we learn from figures or situations that don’t “make sense”, at least at first?

I don’t know if you’ve tried recently to find anyone who isn’t familiar with the Cheshire Cat, but it’s difficult. The Cheshire Cat is a household name, and we wouldn’t have it if this nameless painter hadn’t done a terrible job painting a lion.

Hi. My name is Maddy. I’m an actor, producer, playwright, musician, stage combatant. I also happen to be NAMI Seattle’s Communications & Outreach Manager. You’ve probably seen a few emails from me recently, a Facebook post here or there – thanks for reading so far.

Dear reader, I confess: while NAMI Seattle is a part of my life, it’s not the whole story by a long shot.

Since I graduated from college, I’ve been making it work in this town with the standard “day job” plus making theatre at night. This life makes for long days and late nights. In 2016 I had gotten a little too busy, so I decided to take a break from my evening activities. It was during this time that my mental health deteriorated, my unhealthy coping mechanisms got self-destructive, and I found what most addicts would recognize as Rock Bottom.

This dark time lead to some serious self-review, reading and subsequently recommending In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts by Gabor Mate ad infinitum, crying in therapy, and eventually building a relationship with myself that was sustainable.

Turns out, I take care of myself by making art. Who doesn’t love a plot twist?

Onstage, I get to shapeshift. Left to right: Shakesbeerience, Oh for the Love Of-, She Kills Monsters, Florida Man the Drag Show.

When I perform, I spend my time with the most generous, authentic, curious people. We give our energies, time, heart, and vulnerabilities to a bunch of words on a page and bring stories to life. There’s an energy exchange between the performers and audience members when you’re doing something live. Your audience is listening, or screaming at you "yas queen" or "no please", or hiding behind their program because you’re scaring them - it’s all part of the back-and-forth. That energy exchanged between a performer and their audience has saved my life.
Dear reader, I’m writing to you in my official capacity at NAMI Seattle to announce that my worlds are converging. More specifically, I’m bringing the art world to NAMI Seattle in a new way. This May it was my honor to help NAMI hold two arts-centric events: In tandem with ERC Insight Behavioral Health Center, we produced Head & HeART: Creating Our Recovery at Copious.

“Many of us, and if not us, then our friends, relatives, or neighbors live with mental illnesses. Often times those invisible ghosts and those intangible struggles can be tough to express or articulate through words. Art can be a great way to express some of these tough to explain feelings, and it can help us heal. All across the walls were pieces of art detailing the stories, struggles, and victories of people living with mental illnesses. These personal narratives on the walls, and the heavy stories they bore, some about insecurity, some about anxiety, some about fear, some about depression, some about completely different things.” -Tyler Hearing and Lamar Hendrikse

The week after Head & HeART, we held My One Precious Life: A Poetry As Healing Workshop at the Hillman City Collaboratory.

“I so enjoyed facilitating the NAMI’s Poetry as Therapy Workshop on May 21. I brought a poem that focused on recovery. We talked about the lines and ideas that leaped out for us. Participants then responded some more by writing for ten minutes. I used a retro kitchen timer. When the bell rang, almost everyone wanted to read what they had written. There was so much recovery in the room. The hour and half went by so fast. As a depressed teenager, poems spoke to me like no one else could. Poets like Langston Hughes and Emily Dickinson seemed to have understood the dark places inhabited. After taking a course in Poetry as Therapy in graduate school, I was thrilled to be able to facilitate groups in community mental health settings. I am thrilled at the possibility of leading more Poetry as Therapy groups for NAMI Greater Seattle.” -Naomi Stenberg

Dear reader, we have only begun. I am dedicated to NAMI Seattle continuing to facilitate artful workshops – not just because it’s my life’s work, but because this is how I can best serve the NAMI community. If you’re interested in getting involved or you have ideas for a creative workshop, let’s talk: maddy@namiseattle.org.

NAMI INTERNS: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Our interns are a valuable part of what goes on behind the scenes of NAMI Seattle. As a note of appreciation, we want to highlight some of our 2018-2019 intern’s accomplishments.

Sara Assaad was an intern with us for Summer and Fall of 2018 and has recently been accepted into a PsyD program in Clinical Psychology with a concentration in family/child psychology.

Katie Wyatt was an intern with us for Fall of 2018. She recently was granted a fellowship with Seattle Pacific University’s NAMI chapter and will be working with students on mental health awareness.

Megan Braaten was an intern with us for Winter of 2019 and was recently hired with Seattle Children’s Hospital.

We couldn’t be more proud of our interns and the amazing impact they are making beyond their work with us at NAMI Seattle!
This September NAMI Seattle will hold a mental health candidate forum. We will be inviting all candidates running for the Seattle City council to join us to discuss their positions relating to mental health policy including housing, criminal justice, community-based treatment services, youth mental health systems, and funding for essential services and programs related to mental health. We welcome the input of our members, supporters, and stakeholders as we fight for meaningful and effective mental health policy that focuses on recovery and services that fit the needs of all people affected by mental illness. This forum will be held in the first week of September. Exact time, date, and location will be announced soon. Questions may be directed to Jeremiah Bainbridge at jeremiah@namiseattle.org.

Program Updates
More announcements to come

FALL PROGRAM SNEAK PEEK

NAMI Seattle has started a Book Club! Our first book will be The Eden Express by Mark Vonnegut. There will be two in-person discussion groups and discussion within the Facebook group. To join, click here.

Our Peer-to-Peer and Family-to-Family programs for the fall are being scheduled presently. Be sure to sign up on our waitlist, as these classes fill up fast!

We have a new drop-in, peer-led support group starting up this month in Rainier Beach. This group is open to anyone who identifies as a person of color in need of mental health support (they do not need to have a formal doctor’s diagnosis). This group starts Tuesday, July 23. For more info, email namipocpeergroup@gmail.com.

Our next Cup of Comfort: POC Volunteer Appreciation event is August 17th at MoPOP. For more info, email faarah@namiseattle.org.
Acknowledgements

IN MEMORY OF
Calvin Clark  
*Anonymous*

Thomas Justin (TJ) Farley
Nona Farley
Robert Hassan

Gail Alverson, Mark Hassan, Wendy Hassan, Joan Stewart Ross, Joan Stewart, Carol Trese, Harvey and Carol West

Christine Hunstiger
Nancy and Hoover Hopkins, Melissa Minoff

Bryan Lawrence Johnson
M3, Mary Pint, Lisa Sweatt, Nancy Westrell

John E. Piatt, Jr.

Neil Adams, Adam Dane, Allie Dane, Courtney Dane, Shannon Dane, Alfred Dannhauser, Michael Dwyer, Shanna Ganem, Sarah Grumbley, Debra Gunter, Emmett Hannifin, Pat Hannifin, Brad Huffman, Chad Huffman, Craig Huffman, Judith Huffman, Kyle Huffman, Ryan Huffman, Betsy De Lay, Jack and Carol McCartney, Ellen McGraw, The Novartis MS Team, Orthopedic Residency Group, Brian Piatt, Eric Piatt, Shannon Solt, Julie Standy, Brian J Towns, Katie Wernet, Sheri Wilkins, Diana Yau, Tara Zechman

Kiburi Robinson
Gloria Bassett
Kendall Wilson Robinson
Robert Goodwin

IN HONOR OF
Heather Alder
Life Advantages

Patrick Gibson
David Gibson
Kinsey Grimstad

James Pratt, Gravity Payments

Muguette Guenneguez
Doug and Stephanie Smith

Marilyn Hanna-Myrick
*Anonymous*

Synterra Jones
Daniel Meade

Marsha Linehan
Bridgett Chandler

Ben McKinnon
Ben Harthon

Marisa and Nick
*Anonymous*

Eleanor Owen
Laura Van Tosh

Katherine Rautman
Travis Rautman

Dawn Shimabukuro
Mary Hiney

Lucy Woodworth
Deanna Scheidt