

Annual Report 2008  
30 Years as Your Voice on Mental Illness



## Our Mission

**The National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City, Inc. (NAMI-NYC Metro)** is a grassroots organization that provides support, education, and advocacy for families and individuals of all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds who live with mental illness. As one of the largest affiliates of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, we work collaboratively with our state and national affiliates and other stakeholders in the community to educate the public, advocate for legislation, reduce stigma, and improve the mental health system.



# Message from Wendy Brennan, Executive Director

## 30 Years of Community Service



In 1979, a handful of New York parents met around a kitchen table and spoke about a challenge each one was facing: the serious mental illness of their child and its impact on their family. These parents were faced with a society and a medical establishment which blamed them for their child's illness, and provided no resources or support. But parents at that table were determined to work together to improve their circumstances. Through these meetings, the parents came to understand the power of mutual support and shared wisdom. They learned to deal with the impact of mental illness on their lives and families, and to understand that they were not alone and not to blame. These first meetings were the beginning of a community that would become NAMI-NYC Metro.

Over the next thirty-years, NAMI-NYC Metro helped transform the mental health system in New York City into one that includes the family and consumer voice in treatment. Through our support, advocacy, and educational efforts, many in the New York medical community and the general public understand that mental illness is biologically-based, not the product of poor upbringing or personal moral failings.

Today, NAMI-NYC Metro is one of the largest affiliates of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the nation's leading grassroots organization for families and their loved ones affected by mental illness. Offering support and the hope for recovery to tens of thousands of New Yorkers each year, NAMI-NYC Metro continues to believe in the power of personal stories, collective wisdom, and advocacy to make a difference and improve the lives of families living with mental illness.

NAMI-NYC Metro offers a broad array of free volunteer-led services to families and mental health consumers. Each month we serve close to a thousand families and individuals through our evidence-based signature psychoeducation courses, support programs for parents of children and adolescents, and educational events. Over the years, our advocacy efforts have helped to improve services and insurance coverage, and have contributed to the ongoing effort to create a mental health system that is more responsive to the needs of families and mental health consumers.

2008 was an extraordinary year of growth for NAMI-NYC Metro. We successfully expanded our established programs and services, and developed a number of new initiatives to respond to the diverse needs of communities across the city. Among our achievements, NAMI-NYC Metro:

- Doubled the number of NAMI's signature Family to Family and Peer to Peer psychoeducation courses offered and quadrupled the number of graduates;
- Was selected by NAMI National and the U.S. Veterans Administration to assist veterans and their families with a Family to Family course at the Manhattan V.A. Hospital;
- Undertook a qualitative evaluation of Timothy's Law, New York State's mental health parity law, to determine if the law is living up to its promise to improve access to quality mental health treatment;
- Led nearly 2,000 advocates across the Brooklyn Bridge in our second annual NAMIWalksNYC;
- Was named Outstanding Local Affiliate of the Year by NAMI National from among 1,100 local NAMI affiliates across the country.

Undoubtedly, 2009 will be a challenging year. However, in these uncertain times, NAMI-NYC Metro will continue to work to improve the mental health system to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness and to improve the lives of our families and communities.

# Support Services

## 30 Years of Supporting New Yorkers

Since its inception, NAMI-NYC Metro has developed a broad array of supports for mental health consumers and family members. Whether one seeks insight from another family member, advice on benefits, or a connection with a peer who has been there, support takes many forms at NAMI-NYC Metro.

The NAMI-NYC Metro **Helpline** is a telephone-based resource that provides mental health consumers, family members, and health care providers with a trained volunteer who can give crucial support, information, referrals, and advice on how to best navigate New York City's mental health system. Often the introduction to NAMI-NYC Metro, the Helpline offers callers—over 3,800 in 2008—a knowledgeable and caring adviser who “gets it.”

“Working on the Helpline is probably my most meaningful activity. When people call, they are often out of sorts. There are times when, by the end of the call, the caller's resourcefulness shows up and the caller's attitude is positive. There is no salary that provides that kind of compensation.”

– Ed



Helpline volunteer Thomas Kranidas

NAMI-NYC Metro's 25 **support groups** serve over 250 people per month. Addressing the diverse needs of friends, family members, and mental health consumers, our support groups connect individuals with others who live with similar challenges, and offer creative and practical solutions to specific problems or concerns.

To meet the changing needs of the community, we regularly create new support groups. Over the past year we expanded our popular **Saturday social support groups**, and NAMI-NYC Metro now offers at least one support group every weekend. These groups combat the social isolation that frequently accompanies many in the mental health community by providing a place to share a meal, common concerns, and mutual interests.

“NAMI-NYC Metro gives me a way to feel empowered in the face of a disease that by its very nature strips away power. It's an organization that has given me the insight I need to know how to access help for myself and my daughter.”

– Patti

# Programs for Families

## 30 Years of Helping Families

For over three decades, NAMI-NYC Metro has recognized the power of families helping one another. We have created a number of programs and services that specifically address the concerns of parents and caregivers of children under 18 affected by mental illness.

At the heart of our services for young families is the telephone-based **Parent Matching Program**. This evidence-based practice, pairs a trained, experienced Support Parent with the parent or caregiver of a child who is newly diagnosed or going through a challenging time. A series of four calls over a two month period reduces parents' feelings of isolation and shame, and helps them cope more effectively with their child's mental illness. This program has grown from four parent-to-parent matches per month in 2005 to a record of 28 matches in October 2008. Many of the parents who initially seek help through a parent match become Support Parents themselves—an unexpected, but wonderful development that allows for the expansion of the program.



Transition from School to Adult Life – Advocating for Your Child Workshop

In addition to one-on-one support, NAMI-NYC Metro has also created a noon-time conference call series—**Your Child's Mental Health**. These toll-free calls provide parents and providers with a 30 minute presentation on a mental health diagnosis, treatment, or community resource led by a mental health expert, followed by a 30 minute question and answer session. Now offered in English and Spanish, the calls have covered topics such as ADHD, depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder, the Home and Community-Based Waiver Services Program, and the role of medications in children's mental health. Parents can access a recording of each conference call via telephone for free up to a month after the initial

call date, and all recordings are permanently available for parents to borrow from the Kenneth Johnson Memorial Research Library.

Additional resources include a bi-weekly Saturday **support group** where parents can share problems, information and coping strategies, and learn to appreciate the importance of self-care and relaxation techniques such as yoga and deep breathing exercises; and a comprehensive **resource list** of child and adolescent mental health services in all five boroughs of New York City developed by the NAMI-NYC Metro Helpline.

Plans for 2009—funded by a generous grant from the New York Community Trust—include the launch of programs and services aimed at meeting the needs of youth 18-24 years of age and their parents. Referred to as transition-aged youth, these young adults often face a void in mental health services as they “age out” of programs developed for adolescents. To help this community, we will expand the Parent Matching program to include parents of transition-age youth, host a conference call series addressing the specific concerns of young adults and their parents, and add two new support groups—one for parents and one for young adults.

# Education

## 30 Years of Educating the Community

From its earliest days, NAMI-NYC Metro has strived to provide the community with the most up-to-date and accurate information about mental illness and the problems confronting mental health consumers and family members. Thirty years later we have expanded this educational mission with an extraordinary assortment of courses and original education programming—all free of charge to the public.

Our two signature psychoeducation courses—**Family to Family**, developed for family members, and **Peer to Peer**, developed for mental health consumers—have grown immensely. Created by NAMI National, both multi-week courses are taught by trained family members or mental health consumers, and provide participants with essential information about living with mental illness. Since 1991, we have expanded from two Family to Family courses a year and 18 graduates to ten courses (including a course specifically for the families of veterans) and over 73 graduates in 2008. In the six years that we have offered Peer to Peer courses we have doubled the number of graduates from 20 in 2002 to 40 in 2008.

“As a Family to Family teacher I know first-hand that this course has inspired so many families with its practical educational skills. I’ve heard many graduates claim ‘I wish I had known about this course years ago!’ I always remind my class that even if you cannot help your ill relative, you can help yourself. To this day, Family to Family graduates are still helping each other through support and advocacy.”

– Pamela

By sharing the stories of mental health consumers, our **In Our Own Voice** presentations have enriched audiences’ understanding of how those with mental illness cope and reclaim rich and meaningful lives. In 2008, these presentations reached over 880 individuals in 52 settings throughout New York City. This year we also introduced a Spanish language version of the program, *En Nuestra Propria Voz*.

In addition to our courses, each month we offer original and innovative **educational programming for the public**. In 2008, we presented 21 educational programs that reached over a thousand New Yorkers. They included conversations with leading mental health professionals such as Dr. Michael Hogan, Commissioner of the New York State Office of Mental Health, who discussed his view on how to improve the New York State mental health care system, and a presentation by Elyn Saks, the award-winning author of *The Center Cannot Hold: My Journey Through Madness*, who shared her powerful personal narrative of recovery, achievement, and living with schizophrenia.

The highlight of 2008 was **The Lives They Left Behind: Suitcases from a State Hospital Attic**, an exhibition held at the New York Public Library’s Science, Industry and Business Library (SIBL). This poignant exhibition—an attendance record-breaker for SIBL—showcased the belongings and documented the personal stories of long-term residents of the now closed Willard Psychiatric Center in upstate New York. The exhibition also presented a unique perspective into the ways that the treatment and hospitalization of those with mental illness have (and have not) changed over the past 50 years.



Invitation to The Lives They Left Behind exhibition

Photo by Lisa Rinzler

# Advocacy

## 30 Years of Making Your Voice Heard

Advocacy on behalf of mental health consumers and their families has been a key component of the NAMI-NYC Metro mission from the very beginning. Central to our advocacy efforts to raise awareness and chip away at the stigma associated with mental illness is the hugely successful NAMIWalks NYC.



“I walk because I think NAMI-NYC is one of the most incredible organizations I have ever been associated with. Through the Peer to Peer and In Our Own Voice programs I have been able to work on my recovery and preventing relapse. Such gifts from NAMI-NYC are priceless. The Walk gives me an opportunity to give back.”

– Michael

Held on Saturday May 10, 2008, the **2nd Annual NAMI-Walks NYC** brought nearly 2,000 walkers out to the South Street Seaport. Our message to end stigma rang loud and clear as we crossed the Brooklyn Bridge. In only two years, we have doubled the number of walkers and participants, and created an on-site health and wellness fair that offered free yoga classes, massage, and health screenings. The fair provided NAMIWalks NYC with the perfect opportunity to examine the critical connection between mental and physical health. The fair was so successful, that NAMI National is working to adapt the model for all NAMIWalks across the country.

Our belief that “the larger the crowd, the louder the voice!” was crucial in making NAMIWalks NYC the most successful of over 70 NAMIWalks in the country for the second year in a row!

NAMI-NYC Metro thanks all of last year’s walkers, donors, sponsors, and volunteers who made the Walk such a tremendous success, especially the generous support of our Presenting Sponsor Pfizer, and the partnership of our Co-Chair St. Luke’s –Roosevelt Hospital. With funds raised from NAMIWalks NYC, we will support the Network of Care NYC website.

We look forward to an even larger crowd and another exciting wellness fair at our 3rd Annual NAMI-Walks NYC on Saturday May 9, 2009!

### *NAMIWalks NYC 2008 Major Donors:*

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# Kenneth Johnson Memorial Research Library

## 30 Years of Sharing Knowledge

Since its beginning, NAMI-NYC Metro has enabled New York's mental health community to find and share knowledge about mental health issues. In 1996, Patricia Warburg Cliff founded the **Kenneth Johnson Memorial Research Library** in memory of her son Kenneth. Housed in the NAMI-NYC Metro offices, the library offers books, videos, and computer service to individuals and family members seeking to learn more about mental illness. Its diverse collection contains hundreds of books and videos ranging from memoirs, how-to, and history books to young adult novels. Four computers with high speed internet allow visitors access to a directory of websites dedicated to medical, mental health, and legal issues. Visitors, some who may have no other access to the internet, use the computers for a multitude of other purposes, including job searches, résumé writing, as well as sending and receiving e-mail. The library also serves as a meeting place for our book, poetry, and movie clubs.

Each May for the past ten years, the library has hosted the **Ken Book Awards**, which honors books of literary merit that have contributed to a better understanding of mental illness. Winners of this prestigious award include Kay Redfield Jamison, Wally Lamb, Jane Pauley, Garry Trudeau, Sherwin Nuland, Eric Kandel, Madeleine Blais, John Katzenbach, Elizabeth Swados, Harold Koplewicz, Simon Winchester, Rick Moody, Sylvia Nasar, and Andrew Solomon.



Library founders Patricia Warburg Cliff and Karl von Frieling



Nobel Prize winner and Ken Book Award recipient Eric Kandel



NAMI-NYC Metro board member  
Diane Lightbourne and Carlos  
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# Our Donors

## Contributors in 2007-2008

NAMI-NYC Metro gratefully acknowledges the generous support of all of our donors over the past year, with special thanks to the following major foundation and corporate donors:

- The New York Community Trust for support of our Parent Matching Program and Workplace Mental Health Project;
- The van Ameringen Foundation for support of our Workplace Mental Health Project;
- Sanofi-Aventis, Phillips-Van Heusen: Calvin Klein, Newmark Knight Frank, and the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc. for general operating support;
- Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, Eli Lilly and Company, and Forest Laboratories for support of our multicultural outreach programs;
- The Laurence W. Levine Foundation, Inc. for its sponsorship of our Family to Family programs;
- The Dextra Baldwin McGonagle Foundation, the Edouard Foundation, Forest Laboratories, Janssen, and the Murray G. and Beatrice H. Sherman Charitable Trust for support of our programs and services.

We gratefully acknowledge the members of the NAMI-NYC Metro community who made over 7,000 donations over the past year.

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene provides continuing support for our programs and services.

### **Donate to NAMI-NYC Metro**

NAMI-NYC Metro depends on the support of our friends in the community. All of our courses, services, and programs are free, and this year your donations are more crucial than ever.

Give to NAMI-NYC Metro: Online at [www.naminyc.org/donate.htm](http://www.naminyc.org/donate.htm), by phone at 212.684.3365, or by mail to NAMI-NYC Metro, 505 Eighth Avenue, Suite 1103, New York, NY 10018.

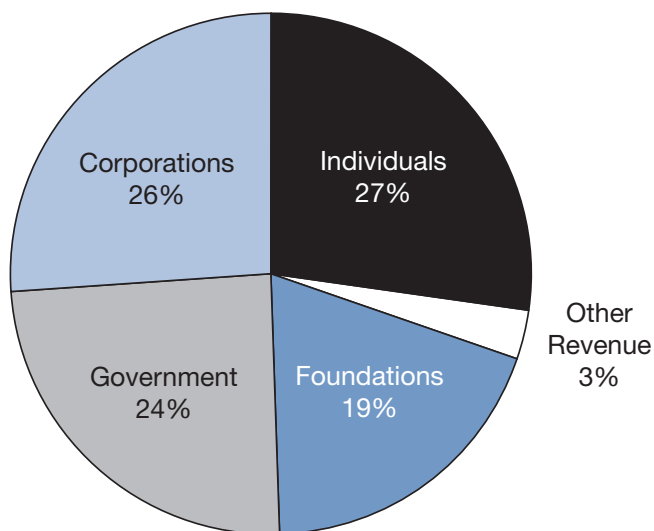
NAMI-NYC Metro is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Every dollar you donate is tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. NAMI-NYC Metro does not receive funding or reimbursement from its national parent organization, NAMI National, its parent state organization, NAMI New York State, or from public programs such as Medicaid and Medicare.

# Financials

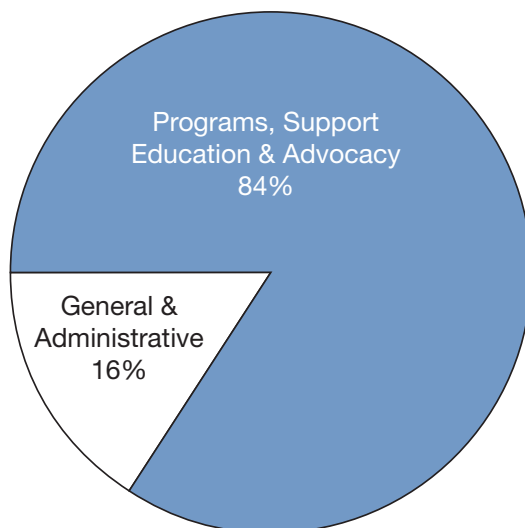
## Fiscal Year 2007-2008

NAMI-NYC Metro's financial statements are annually audited by outside independent auditors. Our financial statements are prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and are free of material misstatement. NAMI-NYC Metro's current accountants are Lutz and Carr Certified Public Accountants, LLP, 300 East 42nd Street, 8th Floor, New York, NY 10017. A copy of our audited financial statements for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2008 and/or our most recent Form 990 tax-exempt income return can be obtained by writing NAMI-NYC Metro, 505 Eighth Avenue, Suite 1103, New York, NY 10018.

Sources of Income



Income Distribution



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The National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City, Inc