



National Alliance on Mental Illness

The Voice

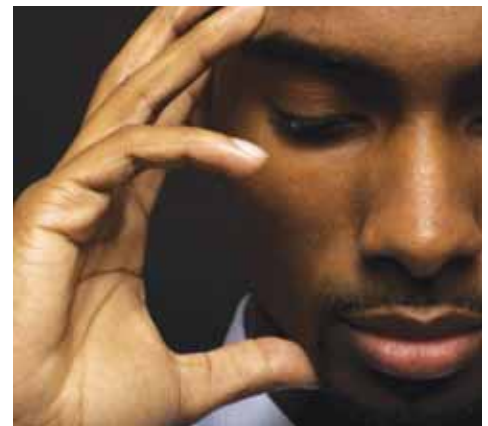
The Newsletter of NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 14, Issue 4 December 2008

Mental Health Issues of Veterans Recognized

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Veterans Affairs, Pennsylvania is one of only six states with more than one million veterans. They range in age from elderly World War II veterans to teenagers of 19 now returning from Iraq or Afghanistan. It is estimated that approximately 30 percent of U.S. troops develop serious mental health problems within three to four months of returning home after a tour of duty, ultimately affecting hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvania veterans and their families.

Every branch of the military trains its personnel to survive in combat by any means necessary, and official studies have documented that those who have been exposed to combat long-term won't just "get used to the fighting," but will eventually suffer its effects both physically and mentally. In many cases, when veterans return home they are altered in some way, and they often face significant readjustment issues into their homes and communities.



Imagine you are a veteran coming home to a spacious, secure house after living for weeks or months in your vehicle because it's safer than a tent. Try to take a relaxing hot shower or sleep restfully through the night in a warm queen-size bed after more than a year of rushing through these activities under the threat of attack. Could you readily enjoy a leisurely five-course dinner by candlelight after months of waiting in lengthy chow lines with just minutes to eat? Would you mind heavy rush-hour traffic after dodging roadside bombs? How would you feel as a parent, seeing dramatic changes in your children that you missed while you were away?

veterans must face after months or years of reacting to and coping with the circumstances of combat. The veterans themselves don't expect the adjustment to be so difficult, and they often feel out of place in their own homes and communities.

In addition to the mistaken expectation that combat veterans should quickly readjust to civilian life, today's veterans often have to face other significant challenges. They are trying to process all the difficult experiences they have been through, often without support from others who have been through similar circumstances. They may suffer from chronic physical injury and impairment, including traumatic brain injury and cognitive impairment. They may also develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a mental illness caused by their exposure to life-threatening combat

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From the Desk of the Executive Director...

As I write, Thanksgiving Day has passed and the holiday season is upon us. Having been schooled by nuns, I learned to be thankful in life at a very young age. I speak for all of us at NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania when I say "thank you" to all of you who came out for our NAMI Walk on October 5, 2008. We are humbled by your generosity and financial support. A very special heartfelt thank you to everyone who raised funds on our behalf. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Being thankful in life makes us notice and appreciate our many blessings. It makes us notice the things and people taken for granted. Our returning military men and women—our veterans—are sometimes forgotten and not appreciated for their service. There is a growing population of veterans who need help, and improving their care is the focus of our feature article.

The military is not equipped to meet the needs of returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan with traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. Our thankfulness for their service must be transformed into action and assistance providing mental health care and services to veterans and their families.

At the beginning of the holiday season, Thanksgiving and thankfulness linger for awhile. Folks appear to be happier, kinder and more compassionate. Ending one year and looking to the future stirs the anticipation, promise and hope for a new beginning that a new year brings.

The beginning of this particular New Year, 2009, will be historic when president-elect Barack Obama is sworn into office. A change in president—in administrative leadership—is an exciting and inspiring time that the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness will be positively changed in a most meaningful way.

On a personal note, I remain thankful in life, appreciative and grateful for the goodness in my life. I regularly offer a prayer of thanksgiving for my family, my friends and my work.

In closing, I send out my warmest wishes for a safe and happy holiday season and great New Year!

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christine".

Christine Michaels, MSHSA
Executive Director, NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania MISSION STATEMENT

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania is a regional grassroots organization dedicated to helping families and individuals affected by mental illness achieve lives of quality and respect, through education and advocacy that supports recovery.

Recovery-Oriented Service Planning

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania champions the reality that treatment works and recovery is possible. Recovery-oriented service planning principles, such as the ones provided below by the Allegheny County Coalition for Recovery (ACCR), encourage individuals and families in recovery to take an active role in making their desired changes in life. It is the ACCR's intention that these principles promote partnerships that create hope and increase opportunities for change and growth.

Allegheny
County
Coalition for
Recovery



Recovery-Oriented Services Planning Principles

- The person in recovery drives the recovery planning process.
- Service planning and the planning system must be constructed in such a way that encourages independence, develops natural community supports and provides for a choice of services.
- Individuality should be recognized, respected and used in constructing an effective plan for change and growth.
- A wide variety of methods should be explored for developing an effective plan for change and growth.
- Successful working relationships are based on trust, which is gained by communicating honestly and respectfully.
- A person's strength must be identified before setting goals.
- Plans should be in easy to understand language that helps everyone work together.
- The individual's chosen support network should be involved whenever the individual decides it may be helpful.
- Ideas for progress toward goals must be tested within reasonable timeframes and viewed at regularly defined times.
- Service plans should belong to the person(s) in recovery and be in a form that can be built upon and carried from one service provider to another.
- The service plans should promote wellness for the whole individual. Plans should reflect ways to make healthy and personally meaningful choices for body, mind and spirit.

Family-to-Family Education Program

Free education and support for families who have relatives with serious mental illness.

The NAMI Family-to-Family Education Program is a free 12-week course for families and friends of individuals with brain disorders called serious mental illness. The course is taught by trained family members who have lived with this experience. **All course materials are furnished at no cost to you.**

Many family members describe the impact of this program as *life changing*. Join thousands of families just like yours who have gained information, insight, understanding and empowerment.

Pre-Registration Required – space is limited and classes fill quickly! Call now to be put on the session's waiting list. The next series of classes will begin in March at various locations in the South and North Hills, Squirrel Hill, Washington, Beaver, and Butler counties.

To inquire about upcoming classes, contact NAMI Southwestern PA at (412)366-3788 or email questions to info@namiswpa.org.

Visit our website periodically for updates on class dates and locations at www.namiswpa.org.

A Tribute to our Friend and Colleague, Lynn Brown

Lynn...our dear friend and colleague,

Knowing the lives you have touched and the cancer you've fought,
Has left an ache in our hearts but inspired our thoughts.

You avoided the spotlight but you stood out in the crowd.
You faced every challenge and made everyone proud.

You loved your family—Charlie, Laurene and Heather,
We always knew you were a phenomenal wife and mother.

You baked delicious blueberry and strawberry-rhubarb pies,
Created Halloween costumes and made quilts that won first prize.

We remember with a smile, your jokes and dry sense of humor,
And how you always came to work with a Cappuccino!

We went to the movies and ate out often,
You loved tomato bisque and the dark Linder's chocolates.

You became a Snow Bunny at the age of fifty,
And left with the NAMI WALK as your legacy.



We said goodbye and shed many tears,
But know our love for you
will last throughout the
years.

Thank you Lynn for
all the good times...
you are deeply missed.

With Love
~the staff of NAMI
Southwestern PA



A Look Back At...



2nd Annual NAMI Walks for the Mind of America
Sunday, October 5, 2008
SouthSide Works & Three Rivers Heritage Trail



2,000 People Walked to:

- Raise Awareness
- Erase Stigma
- Promote Treatment
- Champion the Reality that Recovery is Possible!



Oh, What a Walk!

Nearly 2,000 people gathered at the SouthSide Works on the morning of Sunday, Oct. 5 for the 2nd Annual *NAMI Walks for the Mind of America*.

The air was cool, the energy was high and the momentum was undeniable. DJ Sean Russell revved up the crowd with his lively music. Children danced to his tunes, jumped in the moonbounce and ran about with temporary tattoos and painted faces. Walkers laughed and mingled as they visited sponsor booths, sipped hot coffee and enjoyed refreshments from our food tents. Teams wearing matching T-shirts—each one more creative than the next—gathered for photos on the steps of the Cheesecake Factory. Iceberg the Penguin did the moonwalk while Mike the Balloon Guy kept us smiling with imaginative balloon art.

At 10 a.m., Honorary Chair Michelle Wright, News Anchor of WTAE-TV, stood beneath the start line (a huge,

brightly colored balloon arch) and counted down “3-2-1!” before leading thousands of people on a 3.1-mile walk along the Three Rivers Heritage River Trail. The WTAE-TV camera captured the moment and aired it on the evening news, reaching over 350,000 households!



Honorary Chair, Michelle Wright,
WTAE Pittsburgh

It was the perfect day for a brisk walk and a celebration that treatment works and recovery is possible. Thank you to our sponsors, volunteers, staff, team captains, walkers, vendors and donors for making NAMI Walk 2008 a traffic-stopping, festive occasion! 🌍

Top 10 Teams

Our #1 team raised more money than any other team in NAMI Southwestern PA's walk history and will definitely be The Team to Beat next year! Congratulations and thank you to Western Psych!

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Western Psychiatric Institute & Clinic
Team Captains: Denise Macerelli & Vicky Dix
\$7,422.20 | 6. Mercy Behavioral Health - Consumer Team
Team Captain: Graceanne Stafford
\$3,313 |
| 2. Jim's Jocks
Team Captain: Jim Ehrman
\$6,405 | 7. Team Laura's Mom
Team Captain: Laura Miller
\$2,906 |
| 3. Community Care Empower Rangers
Team Captains: Deb Wasilchak and Debbie Duch
\$5,101 | 8. NAMI Southwestern PA
Team Captain: Darcey Garda
\$2,125 |
| 4. South Hills Stampede (NAMI Pgh South)
Team Captains: Barry & Carole Berman
\$4,146 | 9. GO CART!
Team Captains: Alan Corn & Brian Rayne
\$1,401.45 |
| 5. Leo's Team
Team Captains: Harriet Baum and Ray Baum
\$3,766 | 10. NAMI - North Hills Support Group
Team Captains: Mary Lou & Tom Zemaitis
\$1,375 |

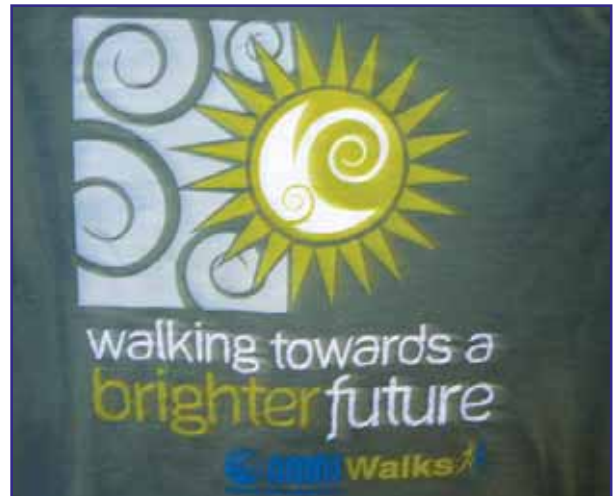
The top 10 teams are chosen by highest fundraising totals as of Oct. 31, 2008.

And the Winner Is...

At the Walk, teams expressed their creativity and ingenuity through colorful and inspiring t-shirts. It was a difficult decision, but a winner has been selected.

The winner of the 2008 Team T-shirt Contest is
COMMUNITY LIFE

With its attractive design, muted color tones and inspirational message—plus the inclusion of the NAMI Walks logo—the Community Life team T-shirt wins top honors for best T-shirt this year. The prize is a \$50 gift card to a business of the team captain's choice. Community Life has also earned a chance to win national acclaim in NAMI National's T-shirt Contest plus a \$250 cash prize. Congratulations Community Life!



The Community Life Walk T-shirt caught NAMI's eye with its message of hope.

Top 5 Fundraisers

These are the shining stars of NAMI Walk 2008. They are the top five individual fundraisers, who singlehandedly raised THOUSANDS of dollars for NAMI. Thank you!!!

1. **Jim Ehrman**, *Jim's Jocks* - \$4,610
2. **Barry & Carole Berman**, *South Hills Stampede* - \$4,476
3. **Raymond Baum**, *Leo's Team* - \$2,831
4. **Graceanne Stafford**, *Mercy Behavioral Health* - \$2,400
5. **Denise Macerelli**,
Western Psychiatric Institute & Clinic - \$1,875

The Team to Beat!!!



**Our Top Fundraising Team:
Western Psychiatric Institute & Clinic**

Did you know that 65 volunteers and 10 NAMI staffers helped make Walk Day go without a hitch? We'd like to extend our heartfelt thanks to each and every one of these dedicated day-of volunteers!

Special thanks to the early-morning Set-Up Crew, the Volunteer Captains, the Planning Committee, Tom Baxter from Friends of the Riverfront, the Girl Scouts of America, Sewickley School of Nursing and Pamelyn McMahon of Soffer Organization. We couldn't have done it without all of you!

Walk Planning Committee 2008

MaryAnn Bezuk
Bob Boyer
Philip Dutch
Jim Ehrman
Darcey Garda
Carol Kirk
Violet Ludwig
Marilyn Micknowski
Amanda Santmyer
Graceanne Stafford

Sincere Thanks to our generous NAMI WALKS 2008 Sponsors



Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic
of UPMC

McHolme Builders, Inc.

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Dollar Bank

Janssen

Pepper Hamilton

Staunton Farm Foundation

Allegheny HealthChoices, Inc.

AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals

Value Behavioral Health of PA, Inc.

Bristol Myers Squibb

Eli Lilly and Company

Gateway Health Plan

Mercy Behavioral Health

The Testoni Family

Bookminders

Eckert Seamans

General Nutrition Centers, Inc.

Jefferson Regional Medical Center -
*Inpatient & Outpatient Behavioral
Healthcare Services*

Kaufman House

McCrorry & McDowell, LLC

Peer Support & Advocacy (PSAN)

R.G. Johnson Company

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Charma D. Dudley, FPPR-
Licensed Psychologist

Cynthia Stewart

Family Resources of PA
HSAO

Healthcare Foundation

Kenneth Goldsmith

La Prima Espresso

Nickles Bakery

Pittsburgh Psychiatric Society

S'Eclairer

Secure TeleHealth - Video Conferencing

TEVA Pharmaceuticals

Trader Joes

United Way of Westmoreland County

Wesley Spectrum Services

Whole Foods



Please visit
www.flickr.com/photos/namiswa
for more Walk pictures!



Mental Health Issues of Veterans Recognized

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situations. It may be difficult for many of them to accept or acknowledge that they suffer from PTSD for fear they will be perceived as “weak,” the opposite of how they were trained.

Tom Shade is the NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania (SWPA) Washington County affiliate president and a

member of the NAMI Veterans Council. A former NAMI board member, Shade is a Marine Corps veteran who fought in the Korean War. His son, who served with the 82nd Airborne Division of the Army, has schizophrenia. “I think many people are under the mistaken impression that once you’re a veteran, you’re always taken care of,” Shade explains. “With many physical disabilities, this may be the case, but it’s not happening as effectively with regard to mental illnesses.”

Shade goes on to say, “It’s now widely recognized that greater attention must be paid to the mental health of veterans. Organizations like NAMI, through the Veterans Council, need to advocate for legislation at the state and national levels to protect and support veterans with mental illnesses.”

NAMI SWPA acknowledges that, as increasing numbers of combat veterans return from tours of duty in Iraq, Afghanistan and other unsettled regions, communities need to have adequate resources and support systems in place to help these veterans and their families.

NAMI SWPA and its local constituents champion the reality of recovery from serious mental illness, which has given hope and the possibility of a future to many. Shade says, “Today, I see significant passion and motivation from people on the local level who want to bring about an evolution in the provision of mental health services for veterans. I believe NAMI’s efforts will bring significant, positive change for our service men and women across the state and the nation in the future.”

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), according to the National Institute of Mental Health, is an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. Traumatic events in addition to military combat that may trigger PTSD include violent personal assaults, natural or human-caused disasters and accidents.

Not every traumatized person develops PTSD, but those who do may develop symptoms ranging from mild to severe. Symptoms are usually similar to those of a heart attack and usually begin within three months of the traumatic experience, but sometimes emerge years afterward. They may come and go, but symptoms must last more than a month to be considered PTSD. Effective, proven treatments and rehabilitation are available for those suffering from PTSD, and people are most responsive to treatment in its early stages. The recovery time varies from six months to years.

In Our Own Voice (IOOV) is an interactive, mental health recovery education program presented by trained consumers with the purpose of opening minds, changing attitudes and educating the public about what it means to have a mental illness.

In Our Own Voice is an ideal presentation for:

- Consumers
- Family members
- Health Providers
- Law Enforcement Officials
- Faith Communities
- Any Community or Civic Organization

If you are interested in scheduling a presentation, please contact the NAMI Southwestern PA coordinator at (412) 366-3788 or email sharring@namiswpa.org, to arrange the time and place.



In the Spotlight...

Laura Miller, *Team Captain for Laura's Mom's Team, NAMI Walk 2008*



When did you first get involved with NAMI Southwestern PA?

I first got involved with NAMI Southwestern PA when I decided to do a little bit of research on adult children of parents with schizophrenia spectrum disorders. My mother has lived with schizoaffective disorder for nearly two decades. After doing some Googling, I was directed to NAMI's website, where I found a wealth of information and finally felt validated for the experiences and emotions I had as a result of having a parent who lives with one of the most debilitating illness a human body can have.

Why did you decide to participate in NAMI Walks for the Mind of America?

I'm really blessed to have an amazing and beautiful circle of friends, many of whom suffer from their own health problems or know someone close to them who does. As a result, we support each other in any way that we can as we all cope with and manage the ways in which these health problems affect our daily lives. Many of my friends have participated in various walks for their respective illnesses. I knew that I wanted to be a part of such an incredible community of support, to help raise money for such a worthy cause, and to surround myself with other people who are coping with the devastating effects that mental illness can have on an individual and a family.

How did your small family team raise \$3,000 for the Walk?

My friends! They are truly amazing. They're like angels here on earth. They have witnessed the pain and struggle that I've endured as I've watched my mother deal with her disease, and they know the difficulties our family has gone through as a result. So I think that the personal side of the fundraising effort pushed them to do whatever they could to help. Thanks to the internet, we were able to email people and have them donate through the

NAMI Walks secure site, which made it so much easier and safer for all parties involved. I am so impressed with my team members and all of their efforts. Our success is a result of my team's as well as our donors' caring and generous hearts.

Has participating in the Walk helped you as a family member?

On the day of the Walk, I thought about my mom intensely. I also thought about what it would be like if I were diagnosed with a mental illness. So I thought about my mom and dad, who have been married for 34 years, and how they've stuck together despite incredible odds. "In sickness and in health" takes on a whole different meaning in our family. And all I could think about was unconditional love and how important it is that I continue to show that to my mom. By attending the Walk, I was able to feel the unconditional love that all of the people there have for their loved ones who are coping and living with mental illness.

Do you think it's important for other family members to get involved with NAMI?

Oh, my heavens, yes! Just as I would expect with any other serious illness, the family is going to be affected in some way. Being a caregiver can be stressful, but by getting involved with NAMI and learning about all of the ways in which caregivers can be helped, those caregivers will ultimately be of greater help to their ill loved ones. Also, I cannot stress enough the importance of educating one's self about mental illness. Learn as much as possible. Reach out. Get involved. Connect. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. 🌟

The advocacy, education and support services provided by NAMI's staff and dedicated volunteers give hope for recovery and a future filled with promise for the nearly 80,000 people in our region who cope with mental illness. "In the Spotlight" is one way NAMI recognizes those people who so diligently work to promote improvements in our behavioral health system while championing the needs of our constituents. If you wish to nominate someone to be featured in "In the Spotlight," email dgarda@namiswpa.org.

NAMI Support Groups

Visit www.namiswpa.org for additional information regarding support group meetings

Allegheny County

NAMI Pittsburgh South, Mt. Lebanon
Contact: Donna Maher (412) 653-2476

NAMI Pittsburgh North, Ross Twp., Contact: (Day) Dick/Sarah Focke (412) 367-3062 or (Eve) Pete/Candy Venezia (412) 361-8916

NAMI Pittsburgh East-FAMILIAS, Churchill
Contact: Anne Handler (412) 421-3656

NAMI Spouse Support Group, Churchill
Contact: Mim Schwartz (412) 731-4855

NAMI Sewickley Family Connections Support Group, Sewickley
Contact: Kathy Monahan (412) 749-7418

NAMI McKeesport, McKeesport
Contact: Cindy McHolme (412) 754-0998

NAMI Western PA Borderline/Personality Disorders Family Support Group, North Hills, Contact: Rose Schmitt (412) 487-2036

Minority Families of the Mentally Ill, Oakland
Contact: Wilma Sirmons (412) 320-0601

NAMI W.P.I.C. Family Support Group, Oakland
Contact: Merle Morgenstern (412) 246-5851

NAMI CONNECTIONS, Monroeville
Meetings 1:00-2:30 p.m., Saturdays, Monroeville Public Library
Contact: (724) 327-7575

NAMI CONNECTIONS, Millvale
Meetings: 7:00-8:30 p.m., United Presbyterian Church
Contact: (412) 366-3788

Beaver County

NAMI Beaver County, Rochester
Contact: Diane Watson (724) 843-1593

NAMI-CAN Beaver County, Beaver, Contact: (724) 775-6304

NAMI-C.A.R.E. (Consumers Advocating Recovery through Empowerment), Beaver, Contact: (724) 775-6304

NAMI CONNECTIONS, Rochester
6:30-8:00 p.m., Mondays, Mental Health Association, Beaver County
7:00-8:30 p.m., Thursdays, Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
Contact: (412) 366-3788

NAMI CONNECTIONS, Beaver
Meetings: 1:00-2:30 p.m., Thursdays, Aurora Psych Rehab
Contact: (412) 366-3788

Butler County

NAMI PA Butler County, Butler, Contact: Butler NAMI Office (724) 431-0069 or Sandy Goetze (724) 452-4279

NAMI CONNECTIONS, Butler
Meetings: 2:00-3:30 p.m., Center for Community Resources
Contact: (724) 431-0069

Fayette County

NAMI Fayette County, Uniontown
Contact: Carmella Hardy (724) 277-8173

NAMI-C.A.R.E. Fayette County, Uniontown
Contact: Carol Warman (724) 439-1352

Indiana County

NAMI Indiana County, Indiana, Contact: (724) 357-8105

Lawrence County

NAMI Lawrence County, New Castle
Contact: Sandi Hause (724) 657-0226

Washington County

NAMI Washington County, Washington
Contact: Tom Shade (724) 228-9847

Westmoreland County

NAMI Alle-Kiski, New Kensington,
Contact: Mary K. Slater (724) 335-4593

NAMI Mon Valley, Monessen & Irwin,
Contact: Harriett Hetrick (724) 872-2186

NAMI CONNECTIONS, Mt. Pleasant, *No Smoking
Meetings: 4:00-5:30 p.m., Tuesdays, Reunion Presbyterian Church
Contact: (724) 516-4623

NAMI Southwestern PA : Join Today – Let Your Voice be Heard!

Annual dues include access to our regional lending library, resource and referral information, newsletters, conference information, and membership in NAMI Pennsylvania and national NAMI.

- Individual/Family/Friend \$35.00 Professional \$50.00
 Consumer (minimum of \$3.00) \$_____ Additional Contribution \$_____
 Restricted Income (minimum of \$3.00) \$_____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ COUNTY _____

PHONE (H) _____ PHONE (W) _____ FAX _____

E-mail _____ Number of family members in membership _____

- I would like my copy of the Voice electronically. (provide email) _____
 I am interested in receiving Call to Action alerts via email and participating in legislation and policy advocacy.
(provide email) _____

Please make check payable and mail to: NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania, 105 Braunlich Drive,
McKnight Plaza, Suite 200, Pittsburgh, PA 15237

Membership is tax-deductible. Official registration and financial information of NAMI Southwestern PA may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling toll-free within PA: 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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