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The Voice

The Newsletter of NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 19, Issue 2 June 2015

Dramatically Expanding Mental Health Education

NAMI Southwestern PA certifies, trains and educates more than 1,500 people in FY 2014-15

nowledge is power. The staff of NAMI Southwestern PA are leading the charge to educate people about mental illness and the treatments and supports that lead to recovery and hope for the future.

"More than 61 million Americans – including 20 percent of our youth ages 13 to 18 – experience mental illness in any given year," explains NAMI Southwestern PA Associate Director Debbie Ference. "And 50 percent of individuals begin to experience symptoms by age 14, yet the average delay between

onset of symptoms and receiving treatment is 8 to 10 years. We are advancing our education efforts in a wide variety of areas to increase awareness, battle stigma and connect individuals and families to the best available mental health resources."

NAMI Southwestern PA is reaching greater numbers of participants with its successful, long-standing programs such as the nationally-recognized NAMI Family-to-Family Education Course and recovery presentation *In Our Own Voice*. Newer education courses such as NAMI Basics and NAMI Smarts, as well as *Ending the Silence*, have quickly gained momentum as interest in these initiatives skyrockets. NAMI is also providing education through innovative partnerships that support programs like Mental Health First Aid.

"Our grassroots efforts to reach a diverse audience about mental health issues have positioned us as a local leader in providing high quality, helpful information in uniquely personalized formats," says NAMI Southwestern PA's Education and Support Specialist Susan Harrington. "We're now reaching many more individuals with mental illness, their families and loved ones, health professionals, teachers, government



officials and other members of our local communities than ever before."

The staff of NAMI Southwestern PA are driving this focus on education by investing significant time and resources into earning certification as trainers for NAMI's programs:

- NAMI Family-to-Family State Teacher Trainers - Debbie Ference; Chris Michaels
- NAMI Basics State Teacher Trainers
 Debbie Ference; Julie Trbovich
- NAMI In Our Own Voice State Presenter Trainer – Susan Harrington
- NAMI State Support Group Facilitator Trainer Chris Michaels

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From the Desk of the Executive Director

Christine Michaels, MSHSA Executive Director, NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania

bout six months ago, we had the realization that FY 2014-2015 was turning into a phenomenal year for us in terms of our educational programs, trainings, presentations and conferences. When you are in the throes of the day-to-day, it is difficult to grasp

the magnitude of what the organization is actually producing. For the staff at NAMI Southwestern PA, we watched and experienced our dedicated efforts in terms of our mission come to fruition. Education and our education programs are fundamental to the NAMI movement. Individuals and family members who are educated about mental illness are empowered to recover and to support recovery in their loved ones. The greatest weapon in our arsenal to fight stigma is education and understanding.

We did indeed have a dramatic year. Please read our cover article, *Dramatically Expanding Mental Health Education: NAMI Southwestern PA Certifies, Trains, and Educates More Than 1,500 People in FY 2014-15*. Allow me to emphasize over 1,500 people and offer a fuller picture of what that number entails: 66 days and 330 hours of Family-to-Family classes; 12 days and 150 hours of NAMI Basics; 10 days and 80 hours of Mental Health First Aid/Youth Mental Health First Aid; and over 25 different presentations, lectures and panels. Amazingly, we were able to accomplish this depth of educational activity with a dedicated cadre of volunteers and only 6.5 FTE staff, who each wear multiple hats. Our three main educators are Associate Director Debbie Ference, Education and Support Specialist Susan Harrington, and Children and Family Manager Julie Trbovich, who work in the office by day and teach at night and on Saturdays and Sundays.

A few years ago we adopted a strategy to grow our NAMI education programs and develop customized curriculum for the schools. Education was moved under Debbie Ference, who has an accomplished background in professional continuing education and university level curriculum development. Under Debbie's leadership, several NAMI Southwestern PA staff have been trained not only as instructors but as state level trainers able to train and certify teachers. Having the in-house capacity to train teachers enables us to expand our programs throughout the region, including teachers from West Virginia.

Also featured in this edition of the newsletter is the 15th Annual Education Conference, *Game On: Tackling the Stigma of Mental Illness* featuring NFL All-Star Brandon Marshall. Brandon is an education ambassador presenting at conferences and seminars across the country because he is committed to public education about mental illness in the challenge to Stamp Out Stigma. Folks are still talking about this year's conference!

Please remember that, with knowledge and information, we are empowered—empowered to be hopeful! Have a safe and relaxing summer and remember that NAMI Southwestern PA is always here for you.

Christine Michaels, MSHSA

Chris

Executive Director, NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania

Public Policy Updates

PA General Assembly Adopts People-First Language

On June 16, both the PA Senate and House of Representatives unanimously passed resolutions (S.R. 113 and H.R. 305) to



use people-first language for people with disabilities. These resolutions urge the Commonwealth to use positive and respectful language when referring to individuals with disabilities. The Disability Rights Network (DRN) reports that these resolutions are "the first of their kinds in Pennsylvania and perhaps nationally."

Medicaid Expansion in PA

The Wolf administration is ending Healthy PA and expanding regular medical assistance (MA). Healthy PA enrollments

ended on April 27. Individuals enrolled in the Healthy PA Private Coverage Option will transition into regular MA in phases. The total transition to regular MA should be complete by Sept. 1.



PA State Budget 2015-2016

Gov. Wolf's first state budget was announced on March 3. Mental Health funding included \$4.7 million for a 90-bed CHIPP (Community Hospital Integration Projects Program),

\$18.3 million for onethird restoration of the 10 percent cuts in 2012, and \$2.5 million for heroin and opioid addictions initiatives.

Non-profit organizations with county contracts have been advised to



anticipate a budget not being passed by June 30. Without an approved budget, the counties are unable to process monthly contract funds.

NAMI Southwestern PA joined the new Advocates for Community Employment (ACE) coalition formed by the DRN. NAMI signed onto a letter to the legislature supporting full funding for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). Pennsylvania's H.B. 400 is the Work Experience for High School Students with Disabilities Act that would require the OVR to serve high school students while they were still in school.

Ted Dallas was appointed as the new Secretary of the PA Dept. of Human Services.

National News

Reps. Tim Murphy (R-PA) and Eddie Johnson (D-TX) introduced the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2015 (H.R. 2646) with bipartisan support. H.R. 2646 is a revised version of H.R. 3717 from 2013. Once again, NAMI Southwestern PA acknowledges support for many positive provisions as well as negative provisions that are opposed. We are completing our analysis and look forward to working with Congressman Murphy and advocating for revisions.

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania Mission Statement

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness through recovery focused support, education and advocacy.

"What's exciting to us is the number of individuals who, after completing one of NAMI's education courses, volunteer to become teachers and facilitators," Ference describes. "Key to the success of our education initiatives is that they are all led by people who have experienced firsthand the effects of mental illness. The ability to share their personal stories provides help and hope."

"I took the NAMI Family-to-Family class in the fall of 2014. I recognized right away that the more you know, the more you can help others," explains Beth Buzzelli. "I gained so much from that experience, and I want to pass the knowledge on." Beth participated in NAMI Southwestern PA's Family-to-Family Teacher Training this past March with another graduate from her class. The pair are preparing to teach their first course this September.

NAMI is also teaching in our schools. NAMI Southwestern PA is now training area teachers and staff through the Youth Mental Health First Aid course, in addition to presenting *In Our Own Voice* and *Ending the Silence* to students through classroom education and group assemblies.

"Mental health awareness is often overlooked in school curricula," explains Ference. "Learning how to recognize and appropriately address symptoms early can aid in successful recovery. NAMI is filling this gap in education."

Another gap NAMI is addressing is the need to educate and support parents of very young children, as well as those parenting adolescents and teens. NAMI Basics, a program launched in the region within the past year, provides knowledge about mental illnesses and resources to support caregivers of children as young as three who struggle with mental and emotional difficulties.

"After taking NAMI Basics, I've learned how to really listen to my child, to relate to her and support her," says Peggy H., who took the class with her husband, Jim. "We were empowered to advocate for her at school after NAMI shared with us all the rights that a student with mental health issues actually has. We also gained significant knowledge in strategies that will continue to help her as she grows through these next stages of her life and ages into the adult mental health system."

"Overall, I have a better understanding of my son's diagnosis with respect to it being a brain disorder," says a recent graduate

from NAMI Basics. "I am able to more fully support my son's behaviors in terms of how and in what manner I communicate with him. NAMI is one of the best kept secrets in terms of the plethora of information offered via education and resources. Too few of us in the African American community are aware of the great benefits NAMI has to offer due to the stigma associated with various brain disorders such as ADHD, Autism, etc. All parents from various communities and backgrounds should be aware of NAMI and promote them as a key resource for children with any type of brain disorder!"

In addition to offering core NAMI education courses throughout the region, NAMI Southwestern PA is customizing programs for schools, professionals and communities – as well as presenting tailored workshops for a variety of local conferences. Some of these customized programs include:

- · Anxiety: Signs and Symptoms and Coping Skills
- Early-Onset Mental Illness in Children and Adolescents: Instructional Strategies and Classroom Accommodations
- Mental Health First Aid: What is it? Why is it important?
- Power in Storytelling: How to Craft Your Personal Recovery Story
- Recognizing Depression and Anxiety in Young Children
- Strategies for Families: Helping Your Child Cope with Anxiety and Mental Health Challenges

No matter the course content, all participants agree on one significant theme. "NAMI programs provide such comfort by reminding us that we are not alone," explains Gerry Dugan, President of NAMI Pittsburgh South and a five-year Family-to-Family instructor. "Many people who attend our support group first heard about us at Family-to-Family, and many others enroll in the course because it was recommended at our support group meetings. This interconnectedness and relationship-building is the essence of NAMI: people helping people."

Education forms the strongest foundation for recovery. Through classes and presentations, as well as information shared in dozens of support groups across the region, the education offered by NAMI Southwestern PA is providing accurate information about mental illness to promote understanding and dispel myths, in addition to putting a human face to mental illness. We're raising awareness and building a community of hope, one participant at a time.

NAMI Educates!

AMI Southwestern PA is engaging everyone possible in educated discussions about mental illness, which affects one in four adults – and one of every five youth – living in America today. Contact NAMI at 412-366-3788 for more information about our education programs and how to register for a class, become a facilitator or schedule a training for your group or organization. NAMI can also connect you to support groups in your area that provide information and assistance.

Education Classes



NAMI Basics: Parents and caregivers of children and adolescents ages 3 to 17 who have emotional and behavioral difficulties benefit from NAMI Basics, a free six-week education program that explains the illnesses causing these difficulties and the critical role families play in treatment. A spin-off of this program - NAMI Basics Education Program for Professionals - is now equipping specific groups of professional caregivers with unique insights on the impact that mental health conditions have on youth with mental illness, as well as their families, and how to work collaboratively with families as part of the treatment team.

NAMI Family-to-Family

NAMI Family-to-Family: NAMI's flagship education program, a nationally-acclaimed 12-session course is designed to help family, friends and significant others of adults living with mental illness understand and support their loved one while maintaining their own well-being. Family-to-Family offers a highly structured, standardized curriculum developed and taught by trained family members, including information about many serious mental illnesses, medications, community services and recovery efforts, self-care strategies and advocacy. Family-to-Family is included in SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs.



NAMI Smarts for Advocacy: NAMI Smarts provides step-by-step tools and hands-on practice to help participants

enhance their own advocacy skills and shape a powerful story that will impact policy makers. The program also helps participants understand the important role advocacy plays in improving mental health treatment. The three training modules of NAMI Smarts include:

- Documenting and delivering a concise, compelling personal story to launch individual advocacy efforts.
- Writing emails that get attention, and making phone calls that policy makers remember.
- Accomplishing a successful dialogue during meetings with elected officials.

Mental Health First Aid USA: NAMI Southwestern PA, as part of the SW Mental Health First Aid Collaborative, offers several modules of the Mental Health First Aid USA courses - Adult, Youth, Public Safety and Higher Education. These eighthour public education programs introduce



participants to the risk factors and warning signs for mental health problems and how to assist an individual who is experiencing a mental health crisis.

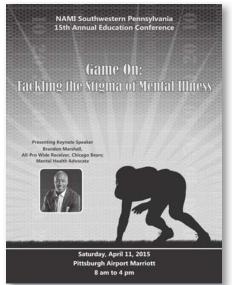
Youth Mental Health First Aid: Participants in this program learn unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health issues in adolescents (ages 12 to 17), building an understanding of the importance of early intervention and how to help a teen in crisis or experiencing a mental health challenge. The class uses role-playing and simulations to demonstrate how to: assess a mental health crisis; select interventions and provide initial help; and connect young people to professional, peer, social and self-help care. The target audience is teachers, school staff, coaches, youth group leaders and parents, and is being tested for appropriateness with older adolescent groups to potentially encourage peer-to-peer interaction.

Educational Presentations



NAMI Ending the Silence: *Ending the Silence* is a free 50-minute mental health awareness program for teens delivered through Power Point and video presentation, along with

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Game On! NAMI Tackled the Stigma of Mental Illness at 15th Annual Education **Conference Featuring NFL All-Star Brandon Marshall**

nticipation filled the hallroom of the Pittsburgh Airport Marriot on the morning of Saturday, April 11. Over 300 attendees

eagerly awaited the arrival of NFL All-Pro Wide Receiver Brandon Marshall as the keynote speaker of NAMI Southwestern PA's 15th Annual Education Conference, Game on: Tackling the Stigma of Mental Illness. Brandon received a standing ovation as he took the stage, along with WTAE-TV news anchor and sports reporter Andrew Stockey.

For one and a half hours, Brandon, who plays for the New York Jets, answered questions from Andrew Stockey and audience members about his diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder. He discussed how and where he began treatment, the stigma he faced being a man and a professional athlete, and his outspoken advocacy efforts – including the \$10,500 fine from the NFL for wearing green cleats during Mental Health Awareness Week.

Brandon insisted that you don't need a platform of thousands



to take a stand against stigma and affect the lives of those with mental illness. He credits the group therapists and clinicians at McLean Hospital in Massachusetts for their pivotal role on his road to recovery. He talked with candor about growing up in Pittsburgh, his family, his football career and, jokingly, why he could not play for the conservative owners of the Pittsburgh Steelers – even

though the audience cheered for and encouraged it.

Brandon's openness in sharing his very personal and inspiring story of recovery encouraged the audience to speak out about their own experiences. He left the stage to another enthusiastic standing ovation and held an exclusive interview for WTAE-TV, which aired on April 16. An article also appeared in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on Sunday, April 12.

Stigma

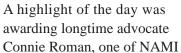
Prior to Brandon's entrance, renowned stigma researcher and professor Dr. Otto Wahl of the University of Hartford gave an excellent presentation on combating the stigma of mental illness. Explaining the history of stigma and sharing plenty of statistics, Dr. Wahl set the stage perfectly for NAMI's conference. "Stigma undermines the possibility of recovery," he told the audience.

Addiction

In the afternoon, Dr. Dennis Daley of the University of Pittsburgh led an in-depth plenary session describing addiction as an illness and what the family can do to help a loved one.



Workshops



member, the coveted Dick Jevon Advocacy Award. Dick Jevon, now retired, was present and also shared a few words.

Southwestern PA's founding members and a former board

Six simultaneous workshops closed the day: Ask the Doctor, Two Tales of Suicide Stigma, NAMI Smarts for Advocacy, Teen Social Media and Mental Health Usage Trends, Anxiety and Depression in Children, and Future Planning for Individuals with Special Needs.

The day ended with incredibly positive feedback and much gratitude to the exceptional presenters and generous sponsors who made the day happen. Thank you to Value Behavioral Health of PA for serving as our Keynote Sponsor of this event.





WTAE's Andrew Stockey and Keynote Presenter, Brandon Marshall.

Photo credit Fanzo Photography



Executive Director, Christine Michaels and presenter, Dr. Otto Wahl.

Photo credit Fanzo Photography

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Dick Jevon Advocacy Awardee, Connie Roman pictured with Dick Jevon. *Photo credit Fanzo Photography*



Dr. Mark Fuller, CEO, Value Behavioral Health of PA and Keynote Presenter, Brandon Marshall. *Photo credit Fanzo Photography*

interactive discussion. In high school and middle school classrooms, and at youth groups, clubs and after-school programs, students are introduced to the symptoms and early warning signs of mental illness, along with resources to help themselves, friends or family members who may be in need of support. Ending the Silence, delivered by a trained, two-person team, also features a personal testimony of challenges and recovery efforts from a young adult living with mental illness.



NAMI In Our Own Voice: *In Our Own Voice* is a unique public education program where trained speakers share their compelling personal stories of living with mental health challenges and achieving recovery. Audiences can include individuals living with mental illness, students of all ages, law enforcement officials, members of the faith community, veterans and service providers. Attendees benefit from the inspirational stories of the speakers by recognizing the impact that the symptoms of mental illness have on a person's life.

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Information & Registration: www.namiwalks.org/swpa

9th Annual NAMI Walk Sunday, October 4, 2015 The Waterfront Homestead



2015 NAMI Walk Chair

Deb Wasilchak

Chief Government Contracts Officer

Community Care Behavioral Health



2015 NAMI Walk Honorary Chair Michelle Wright, WTAE-TV News Anchor/Reporter



In the Spotlight...

NAMI Pittsburgh South

Who is NAMI Pittsburgh South?

One of eight local NAMI affiliates operating in Allegheny County, NAMI Pittsburgh South identifies and addresses mental health issues most important to South Hills residents. NAMI Pittsburgh South and the hundreds of other NAMI affiliates nationwide have a shared goal to free people with mental illnesses and their families from stigma and discrimination, and to ensure their access to a world-class mental health treatment system to speed their recovery. Through the efforts of local affiliates like NAMI Pittsburgh South, we can best reach individuals where they live with the targeted services and support they need.

What resources does NAMI Pittsburgh South provide to your community?

We offer a support group for family members, caregivers and concerned individuals that meets the third Wednesday of every month, excluding August, from 7:30 to 9 p.m. at Southminster House (on the campus of Southminster Presbyterian Church across from the Mt. Lebanon Public Library). We also distribute a monthly newsletter filled with helpful facts and resource contact information. Our members provide guidance and referrals; conduct community education and build relationships with individuals, mental health professionals and the faith community; and offer encouragement to family members and to people with serious mental illness.

What is NAMI Pittsburgh South's most important message?

You are not alone! People who come to our meetings and connect with our organization establish personal relationships and gain immediate acceptance from a

diverse group of people who are learning together how to best navigate our behavioral health system in an ongoing journey of recovery. Through our Care and Share opportunities, those facing current challenges are helped by others willing to impart their experience-based knowledge. Local health professionals and other community stakeholders - as well as people who aren't ready to speak openly - are also encouraged to provide resources and ask questions via our email at nami.south@gmail.com.

How does NAMI Pittsburgh South promote recovery efforts through education?

Many of our members are outspoken advocates who are well-connected in the mental health community. They invite knowledgeable guest lecturers to speak at our meetings. Our newsletters feature educational resources, and we provide a variety of materials at our support group meetings for people to have or borrow. Most importantly, many of us who have benefitted from NAMI education such the NAMI Family-to-Family course, now serve as facilitators, so we can pass that knowledge on to others.

Why is it important for people to feel a local connection to NAMI?

NAMI provides support, education, information, referral services and advocacy at every level - local, state and national - but it's the personal connection that makes all the difference. Recovery is possible, and it happens one step at a time - with every phone call, every answered question, every welcoming gesture, every supportive conversation in the parking lot when a monthly meeting adjourns. We offer a safe place where people feel accepted and understood. Personal outreach is key to providing comfort through our shared experiences, and to passing on our knowledge of how to secure the best resources for ourselves and our loved ones.

For a complete list of NAMI Support Groups, visit www.namiswpa.org and click on the Support tab.

Coming soon! Visit our brand new NAMI website at www.namiswpa.org.



Seeking Focus Group Participants

Has a child in your family experienced an inpatient hospital stay for behavioral health reasons? If so, please join us for a focus group at The Children's Institute of Pittsburgh later this summer to share what went well and what could have gone better regarding that experience. We are particularly interested in hearing from families of children with developmental or intellectual delays. A stipend will be offered. If interested, please contact Darcey Garda at dgarda@namiswpa.org or (412) 366-3788 for more information.



National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI Family-to-Family is a 12-session education program for family, partners, friends and significant others of adults living with mental illness. The course is designed to help all family members understand and support their loved one living with mental illness, while maintaining their own well-being. Thousands of families describe the program as life-changing. The program is taught by trained teachers who are also family members and know what it is like to have a loved one living with mental illness. Family-to-Family is offered at no cost to participants.



Classes begin in September.

Contact NAMI Southwestern PA now for locations, dates and to register for the course.

1-888-264-7972 or email info@namiswpa.org

NAM1 Support Groups...

Visit the NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania website, www.namiswpa.org, and click on the "Support" link at the top of the homepage for a complete listing and meeting dates of support groups.

Allegheny County

NAMI Parent Support Group - Youth and Transition-Age East Liberty Carnegie Library, 5 - 7 p.m. Contact: Linda Thornhill, 412-403-9539 for more information.

NAMI Pittsburgh South - Mt. Lebanon Contact Email: nami.south@gmail.com

NAMI Pittsburgh North - Ross Township Contact: Candy/Pete Venezia 412-361-8916

NAMI Pittsburgh East-FAMILIAS - Churchill Contact: Mim Schwartz 412-731-4855

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

NAMI McKeesport, Penn State McKeesport Contact: Violet Ludwig 412-373-7977

NAMI Western PA Borderline/Personality Disorders Family Support Group - Ross Township Contact: Jo Burkholder 724-776-5974

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

Armstrong County

NAMI Armstrong County - Kittanning, 4th Thursday of the month, Family Counseling Center of Armstrong County Contact: Linda Miller 724-543-4581

Beaver County

NAMI Beaver County - Rochester, 3rd Thursday of each month Contact: Carla Braund at 724-888-6877 or email at carlabraund@namibeavercounty.com

NAMI-C.A.R.E. (Consumers Advocating Recovery through Empowerment) - Beaver Contact: Dr. Suzanne Vogel-Scibilia 724-775-9152

Butler County

NAMI PA Butler County - Butler MHA
Contact: Butler NAMI Office 724-431-0069

Fayette County

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

Indiana County

NAMI Indiana County - Third Tuesday each month, 5:30 p.m., Community Guidance Center, Contact: Autumn 724-422-4718

Lawrence County

NAMI Lawrence County Contact: Sandi Hause 724-657-0226

Washington County

NAMI Washington County - Washington, 4th Thursday of the month Contact: Jim Gleason 724-225-1607

Westmoreland County

NAMI Alle-Kiski - New Kensington, 2nd Wednesday of the month Contact: Thad Kaminski 724-339-1339

NAMI Mon Valley - Contact: Harriett Hetrick (724) 872-2186 for more information regarding the following locations:

- Monessen, 2nd Monday of the Month, 7-8:30 p.m.
- Irwin, 2nd Tuesday of the Month, 7-9 p.m.

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania 105 Braunlich Drive McKnight Plaza, Suite 200 Pittsburgh, PA 15237-3351

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e-mail: info@namiswpa.org www.namiswpa.org

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Annual dues include discounted rates for educational events, resource and referral information, newsletters, call to action alerts and membership in NAMI Pennsylvania and national NAMI.

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	(provide email)	

NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania, 105 Braunlich Drive,

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You may also join or donate via the website at www.namiswpa.org.