



## Why I Walk by Tracey Yokas

Monday, March 25, 2013, late afternoon.

I remember the date exactly because it was my husband's birthday. We'd spent the previous 19 hours in the ER at Los Robles with our daughter, waiting for a bed to open up in any psychiatric facility located somewhat nearby. She was 14 years old, and had hurt herself again. The crisis intervention team wouldn't let us take her home.

When a bed finally became available at Vista Del Mar, my husband and I sat in the lobby there and waited for someone to tell us what was going to happen to our daughter. I was shell-shocked, exhausted, still in my clothes from the day before, and hadn't slept in 36 hours.

We told our story to a social worker and when it was time to go home the social worker said I should grab a NAMI flyer on our way out, so I did. That was the last I thought about NAMI until my daughter was well on her way to recovery. I wish I'd understood NAMI's mission sooner.

When the tsunami of effects from my daughter's mental illness started to recede from our lives, I felt as if I tumbled, rolled, and bobbed my way along with it out to sea. But one day I realized the tumult had stopped. For the first time in ages I could feel the sun on my skin and could take comfort from its warmth. That's when I knew I needed to get involved. That's when NAMI came into my life.

In the time between then and now, I've taken the Family to Family class, trained to teach that class, and am co-teaching it for the third time. I sit on the program panels for Parents and Teachers As Allies and Ending The Silence. I've done the walk, and I've been a top ten fundraiser for the walk two years running. I plan to be one again this year. I don't do this volunteer work because I'm so great. I do it because I'm desperate.

I'm desperate to remember that I'm not alone, that there are many people in this world who understand perfectly well what my family and I went through, and what we continue to go through: the challenges we face, the obstacles we overcome, the successes we achieve, and the

*(Continued on page 2)*



## Greetings Team Captains and Walkers!

Everyone that chooses to support NAMI Ventura County has their own reasons. What's yours? How has your life been

impacted? What life changes have you or your loved one experienced because of your involvement?

When we explore these questions, we find the answers for our commitment, motivation and passion and that is the foundation of our success as Team Captains and Walkers.

Mental Illness is no respecter of persons and knows no boundaries; it affects the rich, the poor, the scholar, the academically challenged and all ethnicities. So whether you are a consumer, family member, and friend or professional, you have or will eventually be impacted by mental illness because it affects 1 out of 4 people.

This means that you probably know more people than you realize that have been affected by mental illness in one way or another; your mailperson, grocery clerk, dentist, tax person, babysitter, bank teller, hairdresser or barber, mechanic, pharmacy

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(Why I Walk, Continued from page 1)

setbacks we endure. I walk because I learned a lot about what it takes to get a family through this kind of crisis, and I want to share the information with as many people as I can. I walk because, during the course of my daughter's illness, I determined that I wanted to become a better person and being of service is one of the best ways for me to achieve that goal. I walk because I'm afraid I'll forget where we were and how far we've come. I walk because gratitude is a practice. I walk because of the hugs and the tears and the nods when someone comes up to me and says, "You understand."

"You are not alone," I say, as much to myself as to the other person, to remember that I'm not alone either, and I never was.

If you're looking for a great organization that needs all the support it can get to spread the word about the realities of living with mental illness, to fight for a better mental healthcare system, and to bust the stigma that surrounds talking about mental illness, NAMI is for you.

Please walk with us!

Read Tracey's Blog at [www.traceyyokas.com](http://www.traceyyokas.com)



## Anatomy of a Winning Team

By Linda Heckendorf



I became a part of NAMI when a friend, Linda Geary, called us and asked if we wanted to attend a Family-to-Family class with her and her husband. Our family member had been diagnosed 4 years before, but we had never attended a Family-to-Family class. A funny thing happened while we were all learning about mental illness, medications, stigma and recovery. Our class bonded. And then NAMI Ventura County's Executive Director, Ratan Bhavnani, hit us up with Advocacy! Beside many individual commitments, we decided to form a NAMIWalks team and

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# NAMIWalks ART EXHIBIT

National Alliance on Mental Illness

This year's NAMIWalk will include a beautiful Art Exhibit. If you draw, paint, sculpt, make jewelry or any other type of art, you can exhibit and/or sell your art at the Walk.



Be proud of who you are and what you can do!

Help NAMI by donating 25% of the sale price of your art.

**You must call or email the event coordinators by April 15th** to reserve a spot at the Walk to display your art and to find out all of the important details.

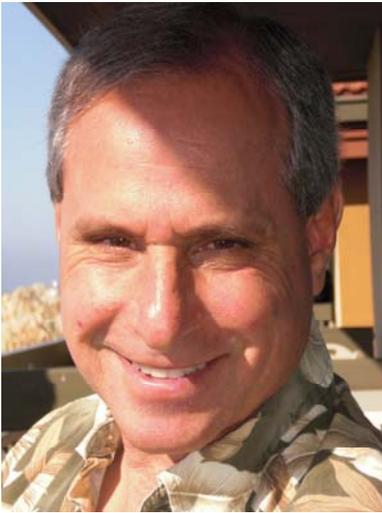
EVENT COORDINATORS:

Bobbi Yablow, (818) 645-4592, [bobbyablow@gmail.com](mailto:bobbyablow@gmail.com)

Barry Yablow (818) 645-3807, [barry.y@sbcglobal.net](mailto:barry.y@sbcglobal.net)



## David's Desk



The NAMIWalks event in Ventura County will take place this year on Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup> at the Promenade in Ventura. We use the term NAMIWalks because we are part of the national effort that occurs all across the United States as different NAMI affiliates hold their walk events to raise funds, to raise awareness about mental illness, and to let the public know that we have resources available to help people. We want everyone to know that family members and friends who have a loved one with mental illness can access resources for themselves and for their loved one.

We also want to help erase the stigma that is still often associated with mental illness. We live in a society where people are not stigmatized for diabetes or for having a heart condition yet we regularly observe that people who have mental health challenges are treated as though there is something wrong with them beyond the fact that they have that challenge. They are stereotyped and labeled in

ways we would never consider applying to other people who have other medical issues. We know that one in four people experiences some level of mental illness. It may be a diagnosis at the more moderate end of the spectrum or it may be something more severe, but in any case this is a common challenge that many people will experience. Some people with mental health issues manage their daily lives fairly well but their quality of life may be low. For others they may need assistance to manage their activities of daily living. However, no one should be defined by their mental illness. They are unique individuals who have something to offer to the world and it is important that they have every opportunity to do just that.

At NAMI Ventura County we get calls every week from people who have a loved one who needs help and they themselves are looking for guidance and support. Our classes, services, and programs are designed to meet those needs to the greatest extent possible. The NAMIWalks event raises funds so that we are able to offer all of our services at no cost. We encourage people to go to our website to get a detailed description of all we do. We also need your help to get the word out about NAMI Ventura County. While many people know about us, there are still many people in need who are not aware of the fact that NAMI can offer them information, resources, and support. Our hope is that anyone in

Ventura County who might need our services would know that we are available to help them. So please spread the word about us and don't hesitate to call us with questions if you have any. One of the things that those of us who work in this field are privileged to witness is people making progress in their recovery and ultimately improving their overall quality of life. Recovery is possible! It takes place at different levels and on different timetables but it does happen! NAMI is also the voice for people who are disenfranchised from the mainstream and we advocate for them to get the services they need so that they will eventually have the best chance of returning to mainstream activities. NAMI Ventura County is a strong voice at the policy table in our county and we represent family members and their loved ones at the highest possible level. We also encourage you to get involved in our advocacy efforts! Attend our General Meetings which take place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month. Go to our website for updates and information and please let others know to do that as well.

We look forward to seeing you on April 30<sup>th</sup> at the Promenade in Ventura! Registration starts at 9:00 am, the program begins at 10:00 am, and the Walk will start at 10:30 am. This will be a special and fun day for all! There will be families, individuals, children, and dogs all in attendance. We want to see you there too!

*(Letter from Regina, Continued from page 1)*

clerk, the list is endless!

I am one of those 4 affected by mental illness and I want to THANK YOU for your commitment to support NAMI Ventura County by being a Team Captain or Walker. The dollars you raise will make it possible to reach those who need awareness, education and support and my favorite REDUCE STIGMA against mental illness.

I encourage you to use all the tools available in your team captain packet and don't forget to use all the social media resources.

To change up what the Emperors of the Ancient Greece would say at the start of Olympic Games "let the games begin" .... I say to you... You can be an Olympic Team Captain or Walker and you are a Gold Medal winner, because you are making a difference in the lives of those affected by mental illness.

Yours Truly,  
Regina Poynter, PSS, Mental Health Advocate  
2016 Team Captain Chair



## **NAMI Walks Ventura County**

**Saturday, April 30, 2016**

**Ventura Beach Promenade**

**9:00 am to 1:00 pm**

**To form a team or register  
to walk visit**

**[www.namiwalks.org/venturacounty](http://www.namiwalks.org/venturacounty)**

*(Anatomy of a Winning Team, Continued from page 2)*

pay back the cost of the class. In 2014 we raised about \$5000, the cost of 2 classes. In 2015, my co-captain Linda Geary was asked to speak at this dinner, we had already had start raising funds, but a few motivating things happened that evening; John Neilson challenged us to raise \$8000.00 and announced that a plaque would now hang in the NAMI office with the top team of each walk engraved on it. Well, it took about 2 seconds for us to tell John that we would raise the \$8000.00, and Linda could taste the Recovery Rocks team name on that plaque! So we set out to do what we do!

We raised almost \$10,500 last year. We raise money personally and with team garage sales. Our team members, gathered donations at work, on the walk website, and on Facebook, through the gracious heart of our family and friends, many of our team members raise over \$1000 individually. BUT, we raise the largest amount of our donations through garage sales. We have been hosting 4 a year, two at Linda's home, two at mine. Linda solicits goods from everyone and everywhere and I try to unhoard my trash treasures. We have friends and family that collect items for our sales throughout the year, we pick up curb alerts and clean up these passed over goods, we pre-sell items on Craig's list. At the sales we sell cheap, because quick turn overs works the best. We feed our dedicated team who all turn out to make these sales as profitable as possible. We have 2 ladies on our team that make our sales so fun while showcasing many of the clothing items, we have a dedicated cashier who is sometimes overwhelmed, sometimes just stuck in the sun,

numerous pricing disagreements of course, and two very patient husbands! We raise \$1-3 thousand each sale, which turn out to be as much a party as a fundraiser. We have raised \$4600 so far.

Additionally, because we hang a NAMI Walks banner, wear our team t-shirts and offer NAMI information, we usually meet at least one person who is tearfully in need of NAMI services. This is most definitely the greatest reward of all our efforts, as each person we touch can make such a difference in bringing awareness, compassion and comfort to a family in need of support. There are times each year when we think why are we doing this? My motives are strictly selfish; how can I not give the opportunity of a Family-to-Family Class to other people? This class that taught me, and bonded me with a group of friends I otherwise would not have had the pleasure to meet, we still get together once a month, we greet with smiles and hugs, we care about each other and our families, and this happens without any Stigma.

NAMI Ventura County, enrolled over 300 people in Family-to-Family last year, at a cost of about \$35,000. Family-to-Family is just one program that need to be supported. So now, I challenge all of you to create a team building fundraiser with your team, put your team name on that plaque, make a difference for Ventura County, and make 2016 the most successful year yet!

Linda Heckendorf is the co-captain of Team Recovery Rocks. Team Recovery Rocks proudly graces the first spot on the Top Fundraising Team Plaque hanging in the NAMI Ventura County office.



# Mental Health, Ventura County Mode

By Gordon Durich



Ventura County carries a colorful history regarding the challenges of addressing mental health.

Despite its controversial closure 20 years ago, Camarillo is still well known to many for the State hospital that housed patients with brain disorders. Today, within the city limits is the

home office of NAMI Ventura County. (The National Alliance on Mental Illness). David Deutsch is NAMI Ventura County's newly appointed Executive Director. "I think what makes Ventura County unique is that we are small enough that nearly everyone in the treatment field knows each other or at least knows of each other. But we are also up to date on the current modalities of treatment in the field and we have highly qualified and experienced people working as treatment providers. We are able to collaborate with people whom we know while still maintaining a high level of understanding about services that are "cutting edge" in the field of mental health treatment. At NAMI Ventura County we are blessed to have a great group of dedicated volunteers who provide classes and support to the members of our community," he commented.

Ventura County has a population of over 823,000 according to the U.S. census. Oxnard is where Recovery Innovations International has established its base for Ventura County services. RI International's mission is "to inspire transformation in people and systems, through education, mutuality, understanding, collaboration and consultation in the pursuit of wellness." Its key units are Crisis, Health, Recovery and Consulting.

Another helping agency is Turning Point Foundation, a Ventura County community-based agency providing recovery and support services since 1988 to adults disabled by mental illness in the county.

A former Turning Point Foundation employee, Dayzee Chavez is now a Recovery Specialist with Recovery Innovations International. She's part of RISE (Rapid Integration Support and Engagement), a project with Ventura County Behavioral Health. "I never knew a past personal experience I healed from would ever land me with such a unique, rewarding career. As a Peer Support Specialist with Turning Point, I discovered my strengths through the peer role. I enhanced my career by joining RI International, and the RISE team, working alongside Ventura County Behavioral Health. It's a joy to be able to be there for others who may be where I once was, and share Recovery is possible. I am living proof!"

Additionally, there is the private health organization Clinicas Del Camino Real Inc., which offers mental health and other health care throughout Ventura County. Clinicas' team comprises a Ventura County Behavioral/Mental health provider component. For private County mental health patients, Beacon Health Strategies, (a State initiative) has worked to fill treatment gaps for people with behavioral health diagnoses. Beacon's "unique solutions integrate behavioral health professionals with medical teams to deliver care at the right time to patients of all risk levels," states its website.

"One of the main goals I envision for NAMI Ventura County is that we will become a household name in our county and that enough people will know about what we offer that anybody who might need our services will hear about us. The other goal we envision is that we will be able to expand our services to be as relevant as possible to people in the county. That includes being able to help people who may have a loved one who is incarcerated who may have mental illness and also being able to help people to understand the court process for persons with mental illness in our county," concludes David Deutsch.

*Gordon Durich is a proud Recovery Specialist with R.I. International, partnering with Ventura County Behavioral Health's RISE program, to outreach to those who need connection with mental health services, and engage folks as a bridge to wellness.*

**NAMI Ventura County Help Line  
(805) 500-NAMI**

Volunteers and staff can provide information on a variety of resources, including mental health services, housing, legal assistance, support groups, classes for families and clients, etc. Open Monday to Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

If you have a mental health emergency, call the VCBH Crisis Team at (866) 998-2243. Or call police at 911 and ask for a CIT trained officer.

**Acute Care Psychiatric Hospitals**

**Hillmont Psychiatric Center**

*All county residents*  
(805) 652-6729  
200 N. Hillmont Ave., Ventura, CA 93003

**Aurora Vista del Mar**

*Medicare and private insurance only*  
(805) 653-6434  
801 Seneca St., Ventura, CA 93001

**Ventura County Behavioral Health**

If you or a loved one are experiencing a mental health crisis, call the VCBH Crisis Team 24/7 at (866) 998-2243.

Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH) provides outpatient mental health services for children, transitional age youth (ages 18 to 25), adults and older adults.

**For all appointments, call the STAR program at (866) 998-2243**  
(Screening, Triage, Assessment, Referral)

<b>If You Live In:</b>	<b>Your Outpatient Clinic:</b>
Ojai or Ventura (excluding 93004)	4258 Telegraph Rd Ventura, CA 93003
Fillmore, Piru or Ventura 93004	333 W. Harvard Blvd. Santa Paula, CA 93060
Oxnard, El Rio or Port Hueneme	1911 Williams Dr., Ste 110 Oxnard, CA 93036
Camarillo, Thousand Oaks, and Ventura County areas of Agoura, Westlake, Bell Canyon	125 W. Thousand Oaks Thousand Oaks, CA 91360
Simi Valley or Moorpark	1227 E. Los Angeles Ave Simi Valley, CA 93065

**NAMI FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS**

*Please note – These NAMI groups are for family members.  
See below for consumer/client support groups.*

*Support group attendees and other family members are urged to come back so as to help others! Drop in – no need to call ahead!*

*To check the date of the next meeting, go to [www.namiventura.org](http://www.namiventura.org) and select "Calendar". Or call NAMI at (805) 500-NAMI.*

**Camarillo** – Meets at 5:30 p.m., the second Tuesday at Vineyard Community Church, 1320 Flynn Rd, Camarillo.

**Thousand Oaks** – Meets at 7:00 p.m. the first and third Monday of each month at Kaiser Permanente, 145 Hodencamp Rd., Thousand Oaks.

**Ventura** – Meets at 6:30 pm, the first and third Tuesday at Bible Fellowship Church, 6950 Ralston St (use entrance from Johnson Drive), Building 300, Room 302, Ventura.

**Simi Valley** – Meets at 6:15 pm, the first and third Thursday at Cincas, 1424 Madera Rd., Simi Valley, CA 93065.

**GRUPO DE APOYO**

*For Spanish-speaking family members*

**Oxnard** – Meets at 6:30 pm, the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays at The Wellness Center, 2697 Saviers Rd. Oxnard, CA 93030. For information in Spanish, call: Dolores (805)443-0760 or Adriana (805)612-0495

**PEER SUPPORT GROUPS**

**NAMI CONNECTION**

*Please note – These NAMI groups are for clients/consumers only.*

A recovery support group program, for adults living with mental illness, which is expanding in communities all across the country. These groups provide a place that offers respect, understanding, encouragement, and hope. NAMI Connection groups offer a casual and relaxed approach to sharing the challenges and successes of coping with mental illness. Each group meets weekly for 90 minutes, is offered free of charge and follows a flexible structure without an educational format.

First and third Wednesday of each month, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm  
NAMI Ventura County Office, 5251 Verdugo Way, Suite K., Camarillo

**PEER SUPPORT GROUPS**

**DEPRESSION AND BIPOLAR SUPPORT ALLIANCE**

**Ventura:** DBSA Support Group meets every Tuesday, 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm, Bible Fellowship Church, 6950 Ralston Street (& Johnson Drive), Building 300, Room 301, Ventura. Park in the lot off Johnson Drive. No registration required. For more info, call (805) 253-3289.

**Ventura:** DBSA Support Group meets 1st and 3rd Saturdays, 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm at The Wellness Center, Turning Point Foundation, 1065 E. Main Street, Ventura. For more information, call (805) 671-5038

**Oak Park:** DBSA Conejo Valley Depression Support Group meets Mondays at 7:00 p.m. at Church of the Epiphany, Room 6, 5450 Churchwood Dr. (Kanan & Churchwood) Oak Park. No registration required. For more information, call Carol at 818-991-0143.

**In Memory of NAMI Ventura County Board Member  
Joshua Newstat**

August 13, 1976 to March 15, 2016



Joshua E. Newstat dedicated his entire legal career to protecting the rights of others, including the disabled and the accused. Prior to becoming a co-founding partner of the firm, Lessem & Newstat, Joshua spent five years as a deputy attorney in the Ventura County Public Defender's office.

Joshua worked as a tireless advocate for the rights of the accused, the injured and the mentally ill throughout his career. As a result, he received an award and special recognition from the Ventura County Criminal Defense Bar Association for his outstanding contributions to the criminal justice system. He also served for six years on the Board of Directors of NAMI Ventura County, where he volunteered his time unstintingly to help families during their time of difficulty.



**NAMI Ventura County  
Contact Information**

**Mailing Address:** P.O. Box 1613, Camarillo, CA 93011

Office: 5251 Verdugo Way, Suite K, Camarillo, CA 93012

**Helpline: (805) 500-NAMI**

Phone: (805) 641-2426

Fax: (805) 275-2188

e-mail: [info@namiventura.org](mailto:info@namiventura.org)

Website: [www.namiventura.org](http://www.namiventura.org)

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Program Coordinator: Joan Wiggins

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**NAMI VENTURA COUNTY**  
**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

*Become a member, renew your membership or donate by filling out the form completely, and mail with card info or check payable to: NAMI Ventura County, P.O. Box 1613, Camarillo, CA 93011-1613, or at our website, [www.namiventura.org](http://www.namiventura.org)*

Check One:  New Member  Renewal

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership level, *one year* (check one):

Sustaining  Gold (\$100)  Silver (\$50)\*  General (\$35)  Open Door (\$3)\*

Sustaining Member: \_\_\_\_\_ per month (Mental Health Hero)

Membership Dues: \_\_\_\_\_

Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

Total : \_\_\_\_\_

**Go online now to [www.namiventura.org](http://www.namiventura.org)  
 To Become a Member or Donate!**

Please bill my credit card:  Visa  MasterCard  American Express  Discover

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ CVV Code \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

\* An open door membership is available to anyone who is unable to pay full membership.

Dues and donations to NAMI Ventura County are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.