

2019/20 Annual Report

NAMI BI Report for year July 2019 - June 2020.

Mission Statement: NAMI Block Island is a non-profit organization whose purposes are to advocate for mental health services being brought to the island, to enable education about mental illness and wellness in the community and to join others in supporting the families of persons with mental illness.

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1. OVERVIEW

2019- 2020 began with work to formalize the transitions aimed for in previous years. As in the entire world, by February we were aware of the COVID-19 pandemic, and recognized how the needed protections for physical health might affect mental health, as well as some of our plans. To use the phraseology that has emerged, NAMI BI “pivoted” keeping the objectives that could be kept and adapting others to help and co-operate with all in the Block Island community. The information offered by NAMI, and NAMI RI and straightforward communication from RI Governor Gina Raimundo and the work of New Shoreham Town Council, Block Island Medical Center, and the Island Free Library have helped us maintain advocacy for mental health on the island in these unprecedented conditions. Paradoxically, although necessary restrictions have brought stresses, the value of attending to mental health is better known. NAMI BI is grateful for that attention and the positive co-operation within the community.

2. ACTIVITIES

Developments

On September 1st, the Case Manager for the tele-psychiatry service provided to Block island by Butler Hospital, moved to be part of provision at the Block Island Medical Center. NAMI BI is delighted to record this change of location, ensuring that the service has found the most appropriate space from which to operate. Our thanks to the then Medical Director Mark Clark, and Amy Land, finance officer of New Shoreham Town, who worked so co-operatively with Jim Hinthorn, and Pat Tengwall, and Tracy Fredericks of NAMI BI to enable the various bureaucratic changes go smoothly. When COVID -19 restrictions began, the doctor from Butler could not work from her office, so there were technical changes for the clients using the service, but it continued, mainly by telephone from the clients’ homes. Tracy continued to see new clients at the Medical Center in the first instance with required distancing and cleaning. The new service for children and adolescents provided by Bradley Hospital, that NAMI BI initiated, was finally set up. Tracy Fredericks and Alison Warfel, NAMI Board member and Medical Center Operations Chief, liaise with school, but in present circumstances there is no school attendance nor are young people presenting at the Medical Center. Nevertheless, it is a great achievement to have the service available for when need arises.

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As noted in last year’s annual report, early in 2019, NAMI BI became a non-profit 501c organization. Jim Hinthorn, President and Pat Tengwall, Treasurer, then continued work through the formalities of affiliation with the national and state bodies, NAMI and NAMI RI. Following the move of the Case Manager to the Medical Center, they were again involved in seemingly endless negotiations as appropriate insurance was necessary for affiliation, but unfortunately the insurance companies mistook our previous involvement with the Case Manager as meaning that we were providers of mental health services, rather than advocates, and hopefully enablers of that provision.

The invisible work was completed in February 2020. NAMI BI received a Certificate of Affiliation.



Affiliation enables NAMI BI to attend to BI specific needs, and also access the provisions of the parent organization. As it happened, in March, COVID-19 brought restrictions, but also online help, webinars, information, etc. shared from state and national NAMI.

Affiliation required that NAMI BI amend its Bylaws, and we thank Elliott Taubman for generously agreeing to redraft the document. The mission statement was amended to make it clear that while NAMI BI advocates for mental health services it cannot provide them. With a few other small changes, such as updating attendance at Board meetings to include virtual attendance by telephone or electronic means, the new Bylaws were accepted at the AGM in June 2020, which was itself a Zoom meeting.

Activities, before and after COVID-19 ‘Pivot’.

From July 2019, until March 2020, successful activities included the summer program at the Island Free Library, the August Fun Run (with the Medical Center) and the continuing monthly meetings of the Family Support Group. NAMI BI joined with the Senior Advisory Committee in meeting representatives from PACE (Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly, over 55). Finding that the program may be suitable on the island, SAC continues the co-operation. NAMI BI has also given support to the SAC senior ride service.

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In August, 2019, NAMI BI supported Tracy Fredericks and Kyra Ernst to attend the International Crisis Intervention Training Conference in Seattle. Block Island can experience mental health crises at any time, from residents, workers or visitors. Building on learning and networking from the conference, Kyra Ernst and Paul Deane from NSPD then attended RI CIT training in September. A subcommittee of NAMI BI has begun working on how CIT can be applied on Block Island, in our unique circumstances. It was also decided that the Spring Conference 2020 held in May, Mental Health Month, would be about Crisis Intervention, promoting understanding in the community. Work proceeded and by February the conference format had been decided and speakers found. With regret, in March the decision was taken to cancel, as it became clear that restrictions on gathering would still be in place in May.

Other plans cancelled by the pandemic were support to the BI Film Festival, the 2020 Summer Program, and the 2020 August Fun Run. At its meeting in April 2020 the Board decided on several actions in response to the pandemic, and shared out tasks among the members.

- Contact with other organizations in the community would be kept up, especially support to the Medical Center. Their weekly updates in English and Spanish were made accessible on the NAMI BI website.
- Contact was made with the Mary D fund, with an offer of funding help, as Mary D is probably the first place from which island residents seek non-medical help.
- A Covid-19 and Mental Health communication was prepared weekly and sent to the Bulletin Board, which was very much welcomed.
- Senior needs were kept in mind by regular contact with SAC
- An informational post card was prepared and sent to all BI Post Office box holders.



THE SHOW MUST GO ON...

BIHS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
Your visits might look a little different, but please continue to see your regular provider.

BUTLER HOSPITAL TELEMEDICINE
CALL TRACY FREDERICKS
(207) 229-6349

DR. OPPENHEIMER, PhD
(401) 237-0015

DANA D'ABATE, LCDP, LMHC
(401) 644-9971

Questions?
Or to make a new appointment:
CALL ALISON: (401) 466-2974 ext. 19

OTHER ON-ISLAND RESOURCES:
Kerri Gaffett, LMHC, LCDP: (401) 752-9504
Ed McGuiri, LCDP: (401) 447-2227
Human Services Director:
Maryann Seebeck, RN (401) 603-8600
Block Island Medical Center: (401) 466-2974 ext. 3

National Alliance on Mental Illness-BI
Box 1719 Block Island, RI 02807
blockislandmentalhealth.org/nami-bi/



*****ECRWSS***

P.O. Box Customer
Block Island, RI 02807

Other activities continued, using online platforms, for example a chat group, and, as the tourist season begins, the B.O.A.T. program from South County Coalition for employers and employees learning about management of substance abuse prevention strategies will be offered through Zoom. RI Family to Family training is being offered virtually and has been taken up, which is actually easier for Block islanders as travel is not required.

3. FINANCE AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

Since our inception all the work of NAMI BI is voluntary, and aided by funds raised, or grants for which we make application. The Treasurer's report of income and outgoings are in an appendix to this report. NAMI BI's work needs financial strategy, and fund raising, in order to progress its aims. The developments described above required changes in the ways NAMI BI

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managed its finances, both in the way that funds were raised, and in their disbursement. Many thanks to Pat Tengwall, treasurer, for untangling issues, and keeping the Board up-to-date, so that others could contribute as well as giving him more to do. The issues ranged from relatively minor, but time consuming, such as creating a new bank account for the newly created 501c organization and then moving money and card numbers etc. in transparent fashion, to re-negotiating necessary insurance policies, and especially, enabling the Case Manager's remuneration to go to her, in line with her new location in the Medical Center. NAMI BI has also made changes in the process of seeking funds from donors.

In previous years, the Case Manager payments were made by NAMI BI, from their funds, and New Shoreham Town had enabled this in large part by a grant to NAMI BI of \$10,000 from its Community Support general fund, specifically for the Case Manager work. With co-operation from the Town Finance officer, Amy Land, and Dr. Mark Clark, then Medical Center Director, this money no longer comes to NAMI BI and the transition to payment under the Medical Center was smooth. At the moment therefore, NAMI BI does not receive any funds from Town.

In agreement with other groups in Block Island concerned with Social Care, NAMI BI hopes either to keep open the space for some funding through Community Support, or, would advocate with others that a Department of Human Services/Social Care be formed which would include community mental health. When COVID-19 disruptions occurred, to which the Town has responded magnificently, it was felt inappropriate to continue this kind of negotiation until later, after the crisis needs had passed. NAMI BI needs funds for the promotion of information to the community. For example, COVID-19 prevented any launch of the new telehealth service that Bradley Hospital is providing for children and adolescents. We have therefore applied to Town for help with this, and also thank the Roosa Fund who have offered a grant.

Promotional material, and public relations generally, are a large part of NAMI BI work, some activities raise money, others disburse, some do both, all hold to our aim of enabling and educating about mental health. For example, the Fun Run raises money, but also makes us better known. The Spring Conference, free to attend, is never intended to raise money; it is meant to bring community education and better understanding of a particular topic. We supported the first BI Film Festival and would have done so again, as we collaborate with other groups when aims at least partially coincide. The BI Times and the Block Island Bulletin Board are helpful to public relations, and we thank them, but of course we have to provide the material that they use. Thinking through "promotion" has been part of our strategy.

In 2019, Will Young began the laborious task of creating an electronic data base that was responsive to the community as it is, and so NAMI BI fundraising efforts would hopefully also be more responsive. Through the database platform, ELEO, he worked with Elspeth Crawford who manages the website electronic finance company STRIPE, to create a Donate button for the website that allows us to thank those who use it. The database will also be used to send postal fundraising requests, that should be less wasteful of time and energy as well as funds, than the previous sending of letters had been. We are always grateful for the donations given to us, and hope that now we have a better way to show that gratitude, as well as having added an effective way to receive, and increase our efforts.

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NAMI BI came into being when stress in the community and in an individual made our first president Steve Hollaway act, to bring help. It is with great regret and sympathy that we record that in September 2019, an island resident committed suicide. We express thanks to Alison Warfel of the Medical Center and NAMI BI, and the first responders who attended as well and also those who supported the family. They ensured that communication to all was addressed with care, and that resources were made available in timely way. BI Health Service had open hours and a community gathering was held with various parts of the community such as the school, well represented.

NAMI BI has in the past run Suicide Awareness Trainings, and made information concerning the Crisis Text Line 741741 available, but we know that this does not reach everywhere. We know that work about all aspects of mental health, mental illness is both welcome and unwelcome, as like everyone, we wish that mental illness and distress did not exist among us. When the pandemic has passed by, NAMI BI looks forward to emerging more strongly, more useful in our community, but see the real paradox that the restrictions of the last few months have not been good for mental health, but have brought the need for understanding and responding well into the fore in places previously unreached. From the external crises of fear of illness, economic stress, and the ever-more-present climate emergency, NAMI BI sees that individuals and the community may suffer, possibly more than in the past, hopefully less. We look forward, knowing we are an island resource that helps and informs us all, and will continue to try to enable others to bring or find help when needed.

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Board of Directors:

President: Jim Hinthorn

Vice-President: Kristin Baumann

Treasurer: Pat Tengwall

Secretary: Elspeth Crawford

Directors: Beth Gaffett Tengwall, Gloria Redlich, Socha Cohen, Jill Seppa, Alison Warfel, Will Young, Kyra Ernst, Tracy Fredericks (Medical Center Case manager.)

Prepared by Elspeth Crawford, Approved by Board July 9th 2020.

Treasurer's Report July 2019 – June 2020 is available [here](#).
Details of Minutes and Agenda during the year 2019-20 can be found [here](#).