

## 2020/21 Annual Report

### **NAMI BI Report for year July 2020 - June 2021.**

*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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*For convenience, throughout the report "we" refers to the NAMI BI Board.*

#### **1. Overview**

In 2020/21 necessary restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic have brought new stresses, and changes to work patterns for NAMI BI as well as for everyone. One unsought consequence is that the value of attending to mental health is better known. We are grateful for that attention and the positive co-operation within the community. It is a real paradox that the restrictions and uncertainties that have been necessary for physical health are injurious to mental health, but have brought the need for understanding and responding to emotional needs into the fore in places previously unreached. From the external crises of fear of illness, economic stresses, and the ever-more-present climate emergency, NAMI BI along with others of our community, are aware that individuals and the community may suffer ill health, 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.

In April 2020 we pivoted in response to the pandemic, changing the pattern of our activities. As the year continued, we looked at difference as opportunity and engaged in a way of working that fits our unique community. As Block Island people know, those who are active within the community often wear more than one 'hat', having a professional role as well as serving on one or more Boards or Committees. The clarification of information from other groups helps so much in thinking about the mental health of the community, helps so much in collaboration, that rather than silos or competitive positions being taken, community working togetherness has taken place to the benefit of all. Members of NAMI BI Board, alert to mental health stressors and needs, have enacted their roles in other places in ways that show the common ground of our aims. Their accomplishments can be visible or invisible and are sometimes small everyday coping actions, sometimes longer term sustainable developments. Co-ordination is sometimes planned but at other times we just come together with our different skills, roles, etc, and the people involved know their common purpose already, the wellbeing of the community, and they offer each other support and stimulus to act. There has been much good will, as well as good work.

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With sadness we record that in August 2020 a young visiting worker on the island took his own life, and in May 2021 an island resident who had been here for five years also suicided. These tragic events were responded to by the Rescue Squad, the Medical Center and the Island Free Library, with support from NAMI BI. We thank those involved in addressing the grief in our community with sympathy and sensitivity. We recognize the collaboration required in setting up counselling and community meetings. We regret that previous Suicide Awareness workshops that we offered on the island through the QPR prevention organization had not had sufficient reach to prevent these deaths. We have taken on a lead in what is called “*postvention*” response (allied to *prevention*) as described further below.

Although the year has been remarkable in both good and bad ways, NAMI BI has developed and strengthened in its capacity to adapt and respond to the uncertain future ahead.

### **2. Collaborative Conversations, Advocacy**

As well as the obvious fact of change due to the pandemic, Block Island has experienced very important changes of personnel in its anchor institutions: in the spring of 2020 Maryanne Crawford became Block Island’s new Town Manager; in May 2020, Dr Warcup took up the post of Director of the Medical Center; in November the elections brought a new Town Council with Andre Boudreau as First Warden; and in April 2021 the Police Department got a new chief, Matthew Moynihan. At NAMI BI we remember with gratitude the relationships forged with previous incumbents, especially Dr Mark Clark, Ken Lacoste and Vin Carlone. We imagined the plethora of demands on the time of each new person, especially Dr Warcup, beginning his role facing the pandemic. We began light touch conversations so each could know who we were, and how we work within the community, in hopes to ease rather than add to the numerous demands. For example, in an initial brief conversation NAMI BI president had with Maryanne Crawford, she was aware that she did not yet understand much of the way several groups in BI worked to enable social needs, asking: “Who are Helping Hands, who is NAMI BI etc.?” and hopefully the answers, as well as the information about multiple hat wearing of individuals in those groups, helped with making connections. The results of these and other invisible actions with each of Block Island’s anchor institutions are recorded in this report without the trail of interconnection being spelt out.

A very important relationship is that with the Medical Center and the services accessed through the Block Island Medical Center [BIMC]. NAMI BI does not itself offer any mental health services, but has in the past acted as catalyst to enable services provision, and to site these within the BIHS alongside physical health and wellbeing. NAMI BI Board member Tracy Fredericks is Case Manager for the Telehealth services located and accessed within BIMC. The adult telehealth service is provided by Butler Hospital and that for children and young people by Bradley Hospital. Tracy is also Rescue Squad Captain. Alison Warfel, also a NAMI BI Board member, is Chief Operating Officer, Block Island Health Services, also working at the Medical Center. Alison can attest that counselling and psychotherapy services both on and off island can be accessed through the Medical Center, for both children and adults. Tracy has reported that the adult telehealth service has continued with a full schedule throughout the pandemic using phone and working from home, and was also able to take on new clients. When face-to-face contact was not possible she was aware that some might lose touch and was able to reach out by phone.

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The young people's telehealth service, newly set up last year, has not yet had clients. Now that face-to-face working can resume NAMI BI has raised awareness about the service within the

**Mental Health Services for Children and Adolescents**



It is healthy to know there is stress  
Earlier is Better  
No shame No blame No Stigma

Tele-psych access through Tracy Fredericks,  
Case Manager (207-229-6349)

This is a free service. Tracy will talk with parents, family and young person, and arrange connection to the practitioner at Bradley Hospital for initial process of assessment for the best way forward.

 Bradley Hospital  
Lifespan. Delivering health with care.

 **NAMI** | Block Island  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

community, via conversations with Block Island School and the Island Free Library, and the issuing of a postcard sent to all parents.

NAMI BI is pleased that previous years' advocacy work has enabled the variety of services which are now available to all on the island, residents and visitors. However we are aware that mental/behavioral illness is in general not well understood so there is still much to do, particularly with regard to changing the view that

illness is due to personal weakness, when it can be a consequence of external or environmental circumstances not within the individual's control.

### 3. Community Communications

A Covid-19 and Mental Health communication was prepared weekly and sent to the Block Island Bulletin Board [BIBB]. Socha Cohen attended the Rhode Island virtual Family-to-Family training and has since sent selected excerpts from the NAMI's Family-to-Family Manual 2020 to BIBB each week. The Block Island Times published an article following interviews with the NAMI BI president and vice president. We have valued these and other contributions made by individual board members and organizations to bring social communication to all, often via Zoom or other online platforms during restrictions. In particular the liaison between the Island Free Library and the Senior Coordinator has been phenomenal in developing programs that all have been able to join. Kristin Baumann of IFL joined Alison Warfel to produce island podcasts, and Elspeth Crawford created a Zoom Coffee chat.

NAMI BI recognized that as well as real risk of physical illness, and economic downturn, there is anxiety and further risk of mental stress, not because individuals are ill, but because anxiety is fed by uncertainty and fears. Rumours, not unique to Block island, have abounded everywhere about disregard of safety, unfair distribution of tests, then vaccines, and these rumours are scary, feeding more anxiety. We congratulate the Medical Center for the regular bulletins that distinguished rumour from fact, the Rescue Squad for their management of testing, and took it upon ourselves as responsible individuals to share what we heard informally with those who needed to be informed: the Medical Center, the Town Council, others, so that clear communications could be made to workers and employers, including communication about the kinds of support available. We do not own this 'real news, not fake news' approach, we are glad to have been part of it on BI.

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### 4. Activities Cancelled or Suspended

Given how valuable social contact is to wellbeing, we regret that many of our regular events and activities had to be cancelled because of COVID-19 regulations. These were:

- The Spring Conference usually held in May which is Mental Health Month, did not take place in 2020, and in 2021 has been postponed until October;
- The Ross Campbell Award to honor and thank those who enable mental health in Block Island is presented annually during Mental Health Month, during the NAMI BI Spring Conference. The presentations for 2020 and 2021 have been delayed;
- The Fun Run, organized jointly with BIHS in August each year did not take place in 2020, is planned for 2021, and should happen on 7<sup>th</sup> August, Covid-19 permitting;
- Some prevention programs that might have been held with BI School could not take place as school suffered a variety of lockdown restrictions and are to be congratulated for the ways in which they managed that;
- BOAT, a prevention awareness program for business and shop owners was usually held at the beginning of the season in June in conjunction with Vin Carlone, now retired from the Police department has not taken place;
- There were no TED talk discussions held, a social event held bi-weekly in summer where a 15 minute talk of mental health interest was viewed, then open discussion facilitated;
- The Family Support Group did not meet. The latter is particularly regretted, however the facilitators felt that their training had been for a face-to-face format and they did not think it appropriate to proceed with open to all sessions as possible care needs of attendees might not be safely addressed in online context.

### 5. Activities Enacted and Ongoing

During the year Board meetings were held monthly through Zoom, actions planned then completed through email contact.



**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESOURCES  
NEED HELP NOW?**

Behavioral Health-LINK:  
<https://www.bhlink.org/services>  
Kids-LINK:  
<https://www.lifespan.org/centers-services/kids-link-ri>  
Gateway Crisis Intervention:  
<https://www.gatewayhealth.org/>  
Anchor Recovery:  
<https://anchorrecovery.org/>  
Text hotline: 741-741  
ME Psychotherapy: [www.mepsychotherapy.com](http://www.mepsychotherapy.com)

Please remember you can always reach out to the Medical Center: (401) 466-2974

#### 5a: One-off actions:

A postcard with details of behavioural services available was produced and sent to all boxholders;

A request to Town for the location of a “Josh Yellow Bench”, a suicide awareness project, has been granted, so NAMI BI will provide and site the bench at the location chosen;

Masks with NAMI BI logo were produced, then given to the BI School, Medical Center and others;



**THE SHOW MUST GO ON...**

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

**DR. OPPENHEIMER**  
(401) 237-0015

**DANA D'ABATE**  
(401) 644-9974

**BUTLER TELEMEDICINE**  
CALL TRACY  
(807) 229-6349

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

**Boxholder  
Block Island, RI 02807**

NAMI BI Boxholder Block Island, RI 02807  
<https://blockislandmentalhealth.org/boxholder/>



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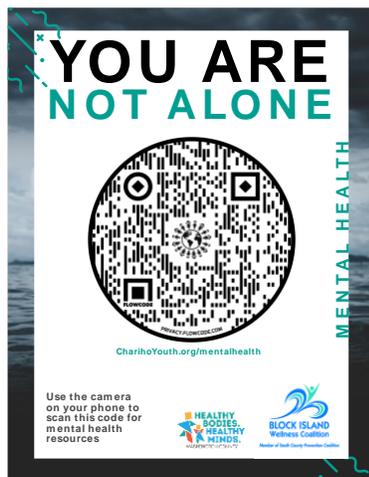
To enable these postings, and also a funding request sent in November, we are grateful to Will Young who took on the arduous and lengthy job of streamlining the Town Hall Property list, removing duplicates and reformatting it so that it could be put into a mail merge and then organizing [with Staples] the print and mailing to over 1000 BI property owners.

### ***5b: Social Media Presence:***

Jill Seppa drew attention to the ways in which prevention and other organisations use social media to communicate with community members and promote their activities. She then presented to NAMI BI Board the options we might consider, with the result that in April 2021 a Social Media Coordinator was appointed part-time. We are excited to record that Christine Peterson has already created NAMI BI presence on Facebook [[see here](#)] and Instagram [[here](#)]. A subgroup of three Board members support and monitor postings and will help her to co-ordinate the various other communications we make, to BIBB, on our website, and to print media, streamlining the work.

### ***5c: Responding to Crisis:***

We have been working for some years on Crisis Intervention Training [CIT]. As recorded last year, knowing that Block Island can experience mental health crises at any time, from residents, workers or visitors, NAMI BI had supported Tracy Fredericks and Kyra Ernst to attend the International Crisis Intervention Training Conference in Seattle. Then, building on learning and networking from the conference, Kyra Ernst and Paul Deane from NSPD attended RICIT training. A subcommittee of NAMI BI was formed to work on how CIT could be applied on Block Island, in our unique circumstances. As has been remarked, the city type CIT intervention of ‘put a social worker in the police car’, is not applicable here. Following principles of protection, prevention and repair in the interventions made, here and elsewhere, thinking has now moved beyond CIT to an adaptive form of response called “Postvention”. This newly created word stands for recognition that crises do happen, in spite of prevention strategies, and that what is done after a happening can be the seed for future prevention processes and ongoing education that brings something positive from the experience of grief.



The saddest and most necessary communications with our community took place following the deaths by suicide already referred above. We did not ask to live out postvention, might wish that we did not need to, but are grateful to Alison Warfel, Kristin Baumann and those who joined them in creating the responses seen and made use of within the community. NAMI BI supported access to grief counselling organized through the Block Island Medical Center to bring social workers from Gateway to the island. The supportive options offered, in two locations with privacy (the medical center and the library) were: 1-1 drop-in sessions accessible to all, teen groups and a community debriefing group, also open to all. BIBB and Social Media have helped to communicate widely, and posters “You are not Alone” which show how to access resources have been placed in strategic locations.

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Following these events, a reflective meeting between counsellors, suicide prevention trainers, NAMI BI Board members and island “stakeholders” ( town, police, school, medical center, library) took place. Further meetings have been arranged, with Town and Police (both headed by people new to the island) and others interested. NAMI BI will take the lead in continuing the development of “postvention” practices in co-operation with all concerned.

### ***5d: Human Services and Request for Town support:***

It is now six years since the Senior Advisory Committee, NAMI BI, Mary D, and other helping groups on BI formed a temporary coalition that resulted in the very part-time appointment of Maryann Seebeck as Director of Public Welfare and Co-ordinator of Human Services. This appointment, and the work of the Senior Co-ordinator, and the support given to the telehealth case manager before her work was relocated to the Medical Center, is the only financial support to Human Services or Social Work funded by the Town, and all are part-time, not even adding to one full-time post between them. When in conversation the new Town Manager, and the new First Warden, asked “What can we do for you, NAMI BI?” we replied that we would not seek direct funding this year, nor had we sought it last year, but we did ask that the need for a Department of Human Services, which was absolutely clear from the work done by Seebeck and the voluntary groups, was formally recognized and supported. We heard that this would be considered in the future, though not in this financial year. We continue to keep this and other conversations open.

### ***5e: The Impact of Climate and Mental Health:***

NAMI BI is aware that COVID-19 is not the only global crisis, as warming has already impacted other communities across the world. Like but unlike COVID, the climate emergency brings a variety of unlooked for events. On BI sea level rise and an increase in storms have already had some impact. We are connected to the wider world with its increasing uncertainty. What the future impacts will be are not known, what is known is that mental unwellness is likely to be exacerbated by the stresses experienced, stresses originating outside our control. Further information is available on the [NAMI BI website](#). Board member Elspeth Crawford has been trained as a facilitator with the Climate Psychology Alliance and in the future will offer online Climate Cafes, safe spaces for listening to our own and others feelings and opinions on “Climate”.

## **6. Governance and Finance**

Since the previous annual general meeting in June 2020, NAMI BI has been aware that our president this year, Jim Hinthorn, would be resigning his position in June 2021. Three other Board members, Kyra Ernst, Beth Gaffett-Tengwall and Socha Cohen, also resigned during the year (for reasons of study and health) and the treasurer Pat Tengwall stated his intention to step down from that post, although he would remain on the Board. We thank all for the contributions they have made over several years, not just for competence and hard work, but also for the friendship and care that has developed.

During the year attention was paid to succession planning. Although all such plans were subject to election at the AGM, we were delighted when Will Young agreed to become the next President, and very happy that Kristin Bauman and Elspeth Crawford would remain as Vice-president and Secretary respectively. Wondering what to do about a treasurer, and a Board numerically depleted, we turned to BIBB and asked the community to help. This is a lesson in wellbeing, try asking,

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rather than moaning. We are utterly delighted to report that we were answered by Bill Penn who was willing to serve as Treasurer, and by Corrie Heinz and Shannon Morgan who now join us as Directors on the new Board.

We are doubly grateful as since our inception the work of NAMI BI Board members is voluntary, aided by funds raised, or grants for which we make application. The outgoing Treasurer's report of income and expenditure are in an appendix to this report. NAMI BI thanks Pat Tengwall, treasurer from the beginning of the group, for this work and also (along with Jim Hinthorn) for having steered the organization through the requirements of becoming a 501c last year and this year updating the needs relevant to insurance. In collaboration with Will Young, incoming president, Pat shared the management of funding activity. He leaves a well organised and healthy financial statement for the new treasurer, Bill Penn. NAMI BI is also grateful to Bill for stepping up in answer to our request. Finally, we thank Jim Hinthorn with sincere gratitude, who probably knows better than the rest of us how much work he has done.

### **Conclusion**

This report puts on record that Board members work for NAMI BI in an embedded and connected way in the community, sensitive to others and the different work for which they and others are responsible. Sometimes this forging of relationships is visible, but frequently the action takes place behind the scenes. We are grateful to those who engage with us in what can sometimes be difficult or uncomfortable conversations. We believe that the mental health of a community like Block Island depends on its capacity to be a connected community, not a series of silos where groups work in isolation or competition. NAMI BI is not the sole owner of some activities mentioned but we are proud of our (still developing) grasp of responsive whole-system thinking, and the part we play contributing to Block Island health.

### **Board of Directors for the year of this report, 2020/21:**

*In this list of NAMI BI directors other affiliations of individuals are recorded to emphasise NAMI BI gratitude to them and their other organisations who have collaborated with us, or led us, in enabling adaptation to the events of the year.*

*President:* Jim Hinthorn

*Vice-President:* Kristin Baumann (Director Island Free Library)

*Treasurer:* Pat Tengwall (Manager, Block Island Times)

*Secretary:* Elspeth Crawford (Member, Climate Psychology Alliance)

### *Directors:*

Gloria Redlich (Block Island Senior Coordinator, Working for the Town of New Shoreham through The Senior Advisory Committee); Alison Warfel (Chief Operating Officer [COO], Medical Center); Jill Seppa (Block Island Co-ordinator, South County prevention Coalition); Will Young; Beth Gaffett Tengwall (resigned); Socha Cohen (resigned); Kyra Ernst (resigned).

*Attending:* Tracy Fredericks (Medical Center Telehealth Case Manager, Captain Rescue Squad).

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**Board of Directors elected at AGM June 8<sup>th</sup> 2021 to serve for the following year.**

*President:* Will Young

*Vice-President:* Kristin Baumann

*Treasurer:* Bill Penn

*Secretary:* Elspeth Crawford

*Directors:*

Gloria Redlich, Alison Warfel, Jill Seppa, Pat Tengwall, Corrie Heinz, Shannon Morgan.

*Attending:* Tracy Fredericks.

Prepared by Elspeth Crawford, Approved by Board July 8th 2021.

Treasurer's Report July 2020 – June 2021 is available in an [Appendix](#).  
Details of Minutes and Agenda during the year 2020-21 can be found [here](#)