



# nami

# Southern Arizona

National Alliance on Mental Illness

SINCE 1983



**FIND HELP.  
FIND HOPE.**

**November 2025  
Volume 42 Issue 2**

## SAVE THE DATE:

**Saturday, April 11, 2026**



**Gene C. Reid Park**

800 S. Concert Pl

Tucson, AZ 85716

**Fundraising Goal:**

**\$250,000**



As a young woman living in a time with extreme use of technology, which has created false ideations of how we should be living, thinking, or even false pursuits, it's difficult to remain grounded and rooted in our mental health. A quote I live by is that, "We all don't have mental illness, but we do ALL have mental health." Regardless of our age, we all have created an echo chamber within our phones and our "for you pages" that are just recycling information and beliefs that are only tailored to ourselves and not towards being empathetic to others around us. More than ever, we've reached a point of disconnection and isolation between one another. As someone who is passionate about building the gaps between our youth and adults, it felt good to be a part of this podcast with Mark McLemore from AZPM Radio.

It felt good to be around an adult who's trying their best to understand my generation and not just see us as "softies" or "less than," but is willing to seek our strengths and what we have to offer to the world. We are the generation that was chosen to confront the stigmas of mental health that our parents and grandparents chose to ignore. At a young age, we were forced into isolation that forced us to confront ourselves. If we chose to use that time for greatness or not, it was still forced upon us. Mental health is going to become the new "trend" sooner than later. We're all going to collectively agree that the phones and immense scrolling couldn't help us — that it's time to finally work inward toward mental health. If you are not taking care of yourself physically, there will eventually be signs. However, it is different in the brain. You can look and present yourself the best to the world, but internally you are fighting a battle no one could imagine. **It's time to invest in resources, people, and places that are willing to help others with their mental health.** We'll never be able to escape or detach our brains, but I'm willing every day to work toward a better atmosphere internally — that I can pass down to my future children. -Jayden De La Rosa

## HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 - 3** - NAMISA Staff Letter, Meet Bella Freeman, 2026 NAMI Walks, Family Support Group & NAMI Connection Support Group Information
- 4** - ETS and IOOV Programs, Advocacy
- 5** - Volunteer Spotlight, NAMI Southern Arizona's Outstanding Volunteers
- 6** - NAMI Family-to-Family & NAMI Basics Programs, El Tour de Tucson
- 7** - Young Author Ranjit Nair Gives Back, My experience at NAMI National, Peer-to-Peer Programs, NAMISA Staff



Jayden De La Rosa & Rocio Castellanos

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**Contact Us**

[namisa@namisa.org](mailto:namisa@namisa.org)  
[www.namisa.org](http://www.namisa.org)

## NAMI Southern Arizona Staff Letter

Dear NAMI Southern Arizona Friends,

As we approach the end of 2025, all of us at NAMI Southern Arizona want to take a moment to thank you. Whether you're a volunteer, donor, partner, or supporter, your compassion and commitment have helped strengthen our mental health community in countless ways.

Because of you, we've been able to provide support, education and advocacy to individuals and families facing mental health challenges. Your time, generosity, and kindness have made a meaningful difference and your support continues to bring hope to those who need it most.

The holidays can be a time of both joy and struggle. Please know that your care and contributions help ensure that no one has to face mental health challenges alone. You are a source of light and strength to so many.

As we look toward the new year, we wish you and your loved ones safety, good health, and peace. Thank you for being such an important part of the NAMI Southern Arizona family.

With gratitude,  
*The NAMI Southern Arizona Team*



### Meet Bella Freeman, NAMI Southern Arizona's New Community Outreach Specialist and Volunteer Coordinator!

We're excited to welcome Bella Freeman to the NAMISA team. Bella brings a passion for community engagement and a strong background in volunteering. She enjoys running, music, and giving back to the community. With international experience living in Europe, Italy and Germany, Bella brings a global perspective and a deep commitment to making a positive local impact. We're thrilled to have her on board! If you are interested in volunteering, contact: [bfreeman@namisa.org](mailto:bfreeman@namisa.org)

Creating a **NAMI Do-It-Your-Way** fundraising page is a fun, interactive way to support our cause. When you fundraise for NAMI you can use your unique skills, interests and creativity to raise awareness for NAMI Southern Arizona. For more information or to register, visit our official URL: <https://doityourway.nami.org/southernarizona>



**Save the Date! NAMIWalks Southern Arizona**  
**April 11, 2026 at Gene C. Reid Park**

If you have never experienced the power and community of NAMIWalks, now is the time! Mark your calendar for **April 11, 2026**, and join us for NAMIWalks Southern Arizona, our largest and most impactful mental health awareness and fundraising event of the year. This year, with the incredible support of our community, we raised over \$164,000 to support mental health! To everyone who walked, donated, volunteered, or cheered us on, thank you. Your involvement helps sustain our free programs, education, support groups, presentations, and advocacy efforts that serve thousands across southern Arizona. Every step you take helps us continue offering no-cost mental health services to individuals and families in need. Together, we are creating a more compassionate, stigma-free future for mental health. Let's make 2026 NAMIWalks a great success, and keep the momentum going. **Help us stomp the stigma and walk toward hope, healing, and change. Together we are NAMIWalks.** Register as a participant and/or fundraise at: <https://namiwalks.org/southernarizona>



**Family Support Group**



**A Heartfelt Thank You**

**We extend our deepest gratitude to the Family Support Group and NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group volunteer facilitators.** Your unwavering support, compassion, and dedication have made a lasting impact on countless lives. Because of you, individuals and families feel seen, heard, and empowered on their mental health journeys.

***HELP NAMI'S FUTURE GROW***

**Planned giving** provides a way you can remember NAMI Southern Arizona through a will, a beneficiary designation on a financial asset, a charitable trust or a charitable annuity. It is an additional source of funds for NAMI Southern Arizona so that the programs and services that NAMI provides will continue to be available in the future. Please visit: <https://www.namisa.org/planned-giving/>



**Thank you to our new 2025 NAMIWalks sponsor, Alkermes!** Your generous support helps us take strides toward better mental health for all. We deeply appreciate your commitment to our mission.



**TUESDAY**

**3<sup>rd</sup>** (Every 3rd Tuesday of the month) St. Phillip's in the Hills Episcopal Church, 4440 N. Campbell Ave, West Gallery. 6:00-7:30 pm. In person.

**4<sup>th</sup>** (Every 4th Tuesday of the month) St. Pius X Catholic Church, 1800 N. Pio Decimo, Kino Room. 5:30-7:00pm. In person.

**WEDNESDAY**

**2<sup>nd</sup>** (Every 2nd Wednesday of the month) NAMI Southern Arizona office, 6122 E 22<sup>nd</sup> St, Conference Room. 5:30-7:00pm. In person.

**3<sup>rd</sup>** (Every 3rd Wednesday of the month) **Zoom**; 6:30-8:00pm.

**THURSDAY**

**1<sup>st</sup>** (Every 1st Thursday of the month) Friends in Deed, 301 W Camino Casa Verde, Room A. **Green Valley.** 10:00-11:30 am. In person.

**1<sup>st</sup>** (Every 1st Thursday of the month) Northwest YMCA, 7770 N. Shannon Rd, Conference Room. 1:30-3:00 pm. In person.

**3<sup>rd</sup>** (Every 3rd Thursday of the month) St. John's Evangelist Church, 602 W Ajo Way, **(Spanish)** 6:00-7:30 pm. In person.

For more information or to obtain the **Zoom** link, please contact: [supportgroups@namisa.org](mailto:supportgroups@namisa.org)

**Peer Support Group**

**NAMI Connection** - For individuals with a mental illness. Every Monday, HOPE, Inc., 1200 N. Country Club Rd. 6:00-7:30pm. In person.

**NAMI Conexión en Español**  
Cada miércoles de 5:30-7:00pm. Virtual.  
Contactar a Yazmín Garcia a [ygarcia@namisa.org](mailto:ygarcia@namisa.org) para obtener el enlace de Zoom.



Give to NAMISA



Include NAMISA in Your Tax Credit Plan

NAMI Southern Arizona is an Arizona Qualified Charitable Organization (QCO 21027)



Become a Member

NAMI Southern Arizona is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. EIN 86-0450977

*Thank you for all your support, help & hope. Together, we are stronger. Happy Holidays!*

### **Ending the Silence:**

A no-cost, 50-minute presentation designed to give students an opportunity to learn about mental illness through discussion and short videos. Presentations are also available for school staff and parents to learn about the early warning signs of mental illness as well as suicide and substance use prevention in youth. Each trained presentation team includes two leaders: a lead presenter who shares an informative power point presentation, and a young adult living with a mental health condition who shares their journey of recovery.

So far, since January we have had 94 Ending the Silence presentations.

### **In Our Own Voice:**

A public education program in which two individuals share compelling personal stories about living with mental illness and achieving recovery. It is a no cost; 90-minute presentation in which leaders with lived experience provide a personal perspective of mental health conditions as they talk openly about what it's like to have a mental health condition.

Since January, we have had 40 In Our Own Voice presentations in the community.

For more information on Ending the Silence and In Our Own Voice, contact: Rocio Castellanos  
[rcastellanos@namisa.org](mailto:rcastellanos@namisa.org)


**NAMI** Ending the Silence  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

**NAMI** In Our Own Voice  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

### **Thank you to The ACTIVE 20-30 CLUB OF TUCSON!**

The Active 20-30 Club of Tucson held it's 3rd Annual 20-30 Classic event on October 25, 2025, at Sewailo Golf Club. The fundraiser raised awareness for suicide prevention and funding for NAMI Southern Arizona's much needed Ending the Silence program. Ending the Silence is an early intervention program that engages students in mental health education and discussion. Presentations are also available for school professionals, parents, and agencies working with children and adolescents.

### **Advocacy Department: A Note From Lisa Cole, Advocacy Manager**

On any given month in the Advocacy Department, we help anywhere from 80 to 100 people. Many of these individuals seek help on a consistent basis while other individuals require short-term help. The Advocacy Department helps our community with a broad range of concerns; mainly Peer Support as well as advocacy within an individual's existing care/support teams. In addition, the Advocacy Department assists individuals with addressing basic needs such as locating housing and navigating the procurement of public benefits. **The Advocacy Department's main goal is to ensure that a person's voice is being heard and that they are getting the mental health services they are entitled to.**

For this month's newsletter, we would like to acknowledge and celebrate the Advocacy Department's volunteers. Barbara Harnett's support has been especially invaluable; she has contributed a considerable number of hours to NAMISA, working alongside Lisa Cole, the Advocacy Manager, three days a week since May 2025. We have also welcomed Cameron Alexander Felton, Frankie Lerma, Lyn Leiby, and Derek Oaks to the team. Cameron has helped in the Advocacy Department; he also assists in facilitating NAMISA's Peer Support Specialist Certification classes. Frankie has assisted with Spanish Advocacy and he will soon begin shadowing to become a Peer Support Specialist Certification class facilitator. Lyn has been shadowing Lisa and will soon begin taking Advocacy calls. Derek is the newest member of the Advocacy team. He began volunteering in July of 2025.

Support from the Advocacy Department is available in many forms. Individuals may call us, email us, meet virtually or meet in person. Walk-ins are welcomed; appointments are preferred. We can be reached by calling NAMISA's main number 520-622-5582 or by emailing us at [lcole@namisa.org](mailto:lcole@namisa.org) or [resourcespecialist@namisa.org](mailto:resourcespecialist@namisa.org). We look forward to hearing from you!

# volunteer SPOTLIGHT

## Barbara Hartnett

We are thrilled to recognize **Barbara Hartnett** as our Spotlight Volunteer! Barbara generously dedicates 24 hours a week to supporting our mission, and her commitment

is nothing short of inspiring. Originally from Isleton, California, Barbara is a proud mother of three sons and a loving grandmother to eight grandchildren. She is currently engaged to her wonderful fiancé, Jim Fagan. Barbara is bilingual and shares her talents at NAMI Southern Arizona as a Recovery Support Specialist and Advocate, playing a vital role in our efforts to support mental health and recovery in our community. Outside of volunteering, Barbara enjoys the art of quilling, a unique and intricate paper craft that reflects her patience and creativity. Her personal goal is powerful, to help make the world a healthier place. Through her work, she's doing exactly that. **Thank you, Barbara. Your heart and dedication are truly helping to**



We are proud to announce that Barbara is now a NAMISA Staff member.

## NAMI Southern Arizona's Outstanding Volunteers Make a Difference



**Eddie Smith**

I first heard about NAMI after going through the University of Arizona's Job Development Peer Support class. At the time, I was feeling very isolated and not engaging much with my community. I was living in a semi-independent home for individuals with Serious Mental Illness (SMI), and I knew I needed to make a change. That's when I decided to start volunteering with NAMI.

Volunteering as a receptionist and an In Our Own Voice (IOOV) presenter, has helped me grow in so many ways. It has given me the chance to use the coping tools I learned in class and share my story with others who may be going through similar challenges. The support and welcoming environment at NAMI have been outstanding, and I'm incredibly proud of myself for taking this step.

I'm truly thankful for the opportunity to volunteer with NAMI. **It's helped me reconnect, rebuild, and feel like I'm making a difference.**



**Brandi King**

During a period of my life where I felt lost and needed to feel a sense of community, NAMI Southern Arizona helped me truly make my roots deeper. I am a transplant from Georgia, and it took me a long time to truly feel at home here in Tucson until I finally connected with NAMI. I started volunteering at NAMI in early 2025, hoping to get back into school to pursue a master's in social work, and hoping to get some exposure by volunteering. I never expected to be surrounded by the most inspiring group of people who brighten my day every time I see them.

I started to volunteer three times a week as a receptionist. I also became inspired to pursue training to become a Family Support Group Facilitator. I received my certification in June 2025. Having struggled with my own family members, I found working with other facilitators healing. I have been in awe of all of the other people I have met in our support groups who work tirelessly to provide a sense of community to others. I came ready to volunteer my time, but I never expected the short time that I've been with NAMI to be as transformative as it has been. I have learned so much about fostering support for those in crisis. I have even been able to apply what I've learned to my own life. **NAMI has given me a sense of efficacy in my life by showing me that I am not alone in my struggles, and that I have the ability to give that same support to those around me.**

Although I have been with NAMI Southern Arizona for only a few months, I intend to truly become a part of this organization for years to come.



Daniela Peralta & daughter, Montserrat holding hands.

### NAMI Family-to-Family & NAMI Basics is Deeply Needed

The NAMI Family-to-Family program is a free, 8-session educational course designed to support family members, caregivers, and loved ones of individuals living with mental health conditions. Taught by trained family members who have personal experience, the program offers valuable insights into mental health, coping strategies, and self-care techniques. Participants gain knowledge about various mental illnesses, treatment options, and resources available in their communities. The course also emphasizes the importance of self-care for caregivers and provides tools for effective communication and problem-solving. Graduates often report increased understanding, reduced stress, and a stronger sense of empowerment in supporting their loved ones. Recently, a group of eight dedicated individuals completed the NAMI Family-to-Family course, marking a significant milestone in their journey toward better understanding and supporting their loved ones with mental health conditions. Throughout the program, these participants engaged in weekly sessions that included presentations, discussions, and interactive exercises. They learned about various mental health conditions, effective communication techniques, crisis management, and the importance of self-care. They shared experiences and mutual support within the group fostered a sense of community and understanding among participants. Graduating from this program signifies their commitment to personal growth, and their dedication to being informed and compassionate supporters for their loved ones. The completion of the NAMI Family-to-Family course by these eight individuals not only reflects their personal growth, but also contributes to a broader movement of awareness and support for mental health. By sharing their experiences and knowledge, they become advocates and resources within their communities, helping to reduce stigma and promote understanding of mental health issues.

Their graduation is a testament to the power of education, support, and community in navigating the challenges associated with mental health. I am deeply honored to have been selected by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to share my personal journey through their national platform. This opportunity allowed me to film and record my story, shedding light on the challenges and triumphs of

supporting a loved one grappling with various mental health conditions. By sharing these experiences, my aim is to offer hope and encouragement to other families navigating similar paths.

Reflecting on my journey, I realize that the foundation for this advocacy began with the NAMI Basics program. NAMI Basics is a free, 6-session education course designed for parents and caregivers of youth (ages 21 and younger) who are experiencing mental health symptoms. This program provided me with essential knowledge and tools to understand my daughter's condition, navigate the mental health care system, and advocate effectively on her behalf. Through NAMI Basics, I learned about the impact mental health conditions can have on the entire family, different types of mental health care professionals, available treatment options, and how to prepare for and respond to crisis situations. The program also emphasized the importance of self-care for caregivers, which has been crucial in sustaining my ability to support my daughter.

Throughout this process, I was able to reflect on the profound impact mental health has had on our lives. From the initial diagnosis to the ongoing journey of treatment and support, each step has been a testament to resilience and love. By sharing our story, I hope to inspire others to continue advocating for their loved ones, to seek support when needed, and to never lose hope.

This experience has also been a powerful teaching moment for my daughter. Together, we've learned the importance of empathy, understanding, and the strength found in vulnerability. By sharing our story, we not only honor our journey but also contribute to a larger conversation about mental health, breaking down stigma and fostering a more supportive community for all.

I am grateful to NAMI for providing a platform to amplify our voices and for their unwavering commitment to supporting families affected by mental illness. **This experience has reinforced my belief in the power of storytelling to heal, connect, and inspire change.**

For more information on Family-to-Family and NAMI Basics, contact: Yazmin Garcia [ygarcia@namisa.org](mailto:ygarcia@namisa.org)



### NAMI Southern Arizona at El Tour de Tucson!

We're excited to share that **NAMI Southern Arizona** participated in this year's **El Tour de Tucson** on **November 22, 2025! Special thanks to Happy for sponsoring us.** Your support makes a difference! This was a fantastic opportunity to support mental health in our community while participating is one of Arizona's most celebrated cycling events. Thank you to all our riders. By riding for NAMI Southern Arizona, you help raise critical funds that allow us to continue offering **no-cost** education, programs, advocacy, and support groups for individuals and families affected by mental illness.





### Young Author Ranjit Nair Gives Back

At just 17 years old, Tucsonan **Ranjit Nair** has written and illustrated a book titled *“The Weight of Tomorrow”*, which explores the emotional experiences and inner struggles of teenagers. What makes this even more impactful is that Ranjit is donating the proceeds from the book to NAMI Southern Arizona.

His creative and philanthropic efforts not only shed light on the mental health challenges faced by young people but also directly support mental health resources in his local community. Many thanks Ranjit! Keep creating, Keep inspiring. The world needs more voices like yours.



### My experience at NAMI National by Rocio Castellanos

Anita Herron, Senior Manager for Family Education at NAMI National and Gabrielle Montgomery, Senior Coordinator for Family Education Programs chose Daniela Peralta and I to take part in the recording of videos about our lived experience as parents of loved ones living with mental health conditions. Out of more than **600 NAMI affiliates**, two of us were chosen from the entire state of Arizona to take part in this project to record our stories in English and in Spanish. Being able to travel to Arlington, VA to NAMI National headquarters was an honor and a unique experience. To take part in recording videos for NAMI Basics on demand was humbling. It reminded me of the reason why I originally came to NAMISA, and how great of an impact Basics created in my family’s life to be able to advocate and support my son. **NAMI Basics gave my husband and I the opportunity to realize we are not alone in this journey.** I hope that somehow, some way, my story along with the other stories, will create the same impact in the lives of those families taking the on-demand classes; to know they are not alone, and they have support in NAMI.



NAMI Southern Arizona, offers a program called Peer-to-Peer, a free, eight-session educational program designed for adults with mental health conditions seeking to better understand themselves and their recovery journey. We also offer Peer Support Specialist Certification at no cost for those seeking to work as peer support professionals.

### Update on Peer-to-Peer Programs

So far in 2025, we anticipate **38 participants** will have successfully graduated from the **Peer-to-Peer (P2P)** program. There were **20 graduates** from the upcoming **Peer Leader Training** and **20 graduates** from the **Peer Support Specialist Training**. Yazmin has recruited **45 new volunteers** to NAMI Southern Arizona through the P2P program.

For more information on Peer to Peer, contact: Yazmin Garcia, [ygarcia@namisa.org](mailto:ygarcia@namisa.org)



### NAMI Southern Arizona Staff

**David Delawder**

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**Rocio Castellanos**

*Community Awareness Program Manager, Ending the Silence & In Our Own Voice, Family-to-Family/Familia-a-Familia State Trainer, NAMI Basics/NAMI Bases y Fundamentos State Trainer*  
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**Darlene Ollada**

*Ending the Silence Program Support Specialist*  
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## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

November 27 & 28, 2025: NAMI office closed - Thanksgiving

December 18, 2025: Holiday Potluck/St. Cyril /Nicholson Hall

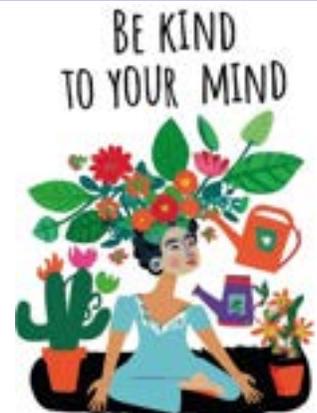
December 25, 2025: NAMI office closed - Christmas

January 1, 2026: NAM office closed - New Year's Day

January 19, 2026: NAMI office closed - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

April 11, 2026: NAMI Walks Southern Arizona/Gene C. Reid Park

\*Stay tuned to your email, event details and the dates are coming soon!



NAMI Southern Arizona **DEPENDS** on you.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP: **BECOME A MEMBER, VOLUNTEER OR DONATE.**

View this newsletter in color on our website at [www.namisa.org](http://www.namisa.org). Has your Address, E-mail, or Phone Number Changed? Call our office 520-622-5582 or send an e-mail to: [namisa@namisa.org](mailto:namisa@namisa.org). However you would like to view your newsletter, be sure to pass it on to someone you know who may benefit from its content!

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**Our Mission: NAMI Southern Arizona improves the quality of life for all those affected by mental illness.**