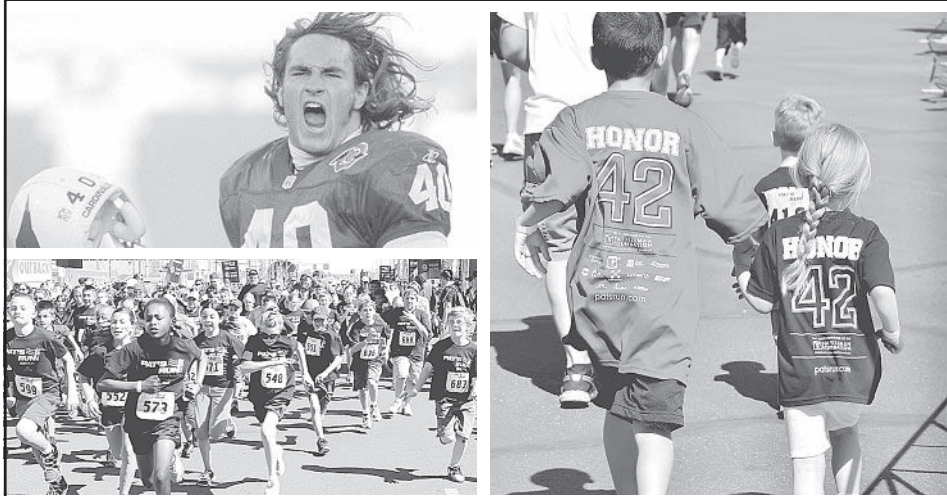


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NEWS BY YOU

Working to lift mental-illness stigma

Submitted by Gloria Abril, vice president of the Phoenix office of the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Eliminating stigma about mental illness is a key focus of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, or NAMI.

Stigma is dangerous because it breeds misinformation and often leads those facing challenges to suffer in silence, ashamed of how they're feeling and afraid to seek help for fear of being isolated from their family and friends and even society.

It's surprising to think how stigma can be such a big part of coping with mental illness, especially considering that people with mental illnesses occupy more hospital beds than those with heart disease and cancer combined, according to statistics from NAMI.

Each year, about 30 million Americans are affected by mental illness, and it doesn't discriminate by race, gender or socioeconomic status. When nearly 17 percent of the population is impacted by mental illness, we're all impacted by mental illness!

This is why NAMI is dedicated to breaking down stigma and making mental illness a topic no one is afraid to discuss. When Magellan Health Services of Arizona began managing central Arizona's public behavioral health system five years ago, NAMI partnered with it in several ways to break down stigma and raise awareness about how people can — and do — recover from mental illness.

One of the most innovative ways is through our joint organization's Extraordinary People information campaign. At www.oneinfour.info, there are stories of real people impacted by mental illness and how they learn to lead productive and happy lives. The stories include those of families and caregivers.

Another way NAMI and Magellan have partnered over the years to raise awareness about stigma reduction and mental illness is through the annual NAMI Walk.

This walk brings hundreds of families and friends together to walk for those challenged with mental illness. To learn more about NAMI or mental illness, please visit www.namiphoenix.org.

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