

NEWS BY YOU

NAMI walk combats stigma

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

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is dedicated to breaking down stigma and making mental illness a topic no one is afraid to discuss. Stigma is dangerous because it breeds misinformation and often leads those facing challenges to suffer in silence. They are ashamed of how they feel and are afraid to seek help for fear of being isolated from their family, friends, and even society.

NAMI's Maricopa Affiliates partnered with Magellan Health Services of Arizona when it began managing Central Arizona's public behavioral health system more than six years ago. Together we have developed several ways to break down stigma and raise awareness about how people can — and do — recover from mental illness.

Our partnership has resulted in incredible growth for our annual NAMI Valley Walk. This year's walk is coming up on Saturday, Oct. 19. It brings hundreds of families and friends together to walk for those challenged with mental

illness, to raise awareness about mental illness and to reduce stigma.

This year's event is at the State Capitol Grounds, 1700 W. Washington St., Phoenix and begins with registration at 8:30 a.m. The short 2.9 kilometer walk makes it easy for people of all physical-ability levels to participate and show their support for those who are impacted by mental illness.

The funds raised support NAMI programs and services to raise awareness about mental illness and reduce stigma.

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

That leads me to another innovative way we have raised awareness about mental illness. This is through our joint organization's Extraordinary People information campaign. Visit www.onein-four.info to read stories about people in recovery that are leading productive and happy lives.

Details: www.namivalleywalk.org