



May 18, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact:
Shannon Jaccard, M.B.A.
Communications Director
NAMI San Diego
(619) 584-5564
shannonjaccard@namisd.org

Bettie Reinhardt of NAMI named Mental Health Person of the Year

SAN DIEGO—The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) San Diego is proud to announce that Bettie Reinhardt, NAMI San Diego's executive director, has been named the Mental Health Person of the Year by the San Diego Mental Health Recognition Dinner Committee.

For over twenty years, the Mental Health Person of the Year Award has recognized and honored individuals like Bettie who have provided outstanding service to the mental health system. NAMI San Diego's co-founder Helen Teisher was the first recipient of this award.

Bettie's nomination letter detailed the enormity of her commitment and dedication to serving those in need in the San Diego community. It chronicled her long-standing leadership of NAMI and her role in the development of a myriad of strategic programs and initiatives to better meet family and individual needs. Bettie's work to de-stigmatize mental illness, to speak out at every opportunity and to promote and celebrate recovery was greatly applauded. Her efforts have clearly made a difference in the lives of individuals and their families who are challenged with mental disabilities.

For the past 16 years, Bettie has worked for NAMI San Diego, first as Director of the Crisis Team (now the San Diego County Access and Crisis line) and then as the Executive Director of the organization since 1997. Under her leadership, programs like Family to Family, Peer to Peer, Schizophrenia Education for Families and Caregivers and In Our Own Voice were started, some making their California debut, and continue today as the organization's flagship programs.

When Bettie started with NAMI San Diego, their services were primarily for the families of the mentally ill. As executive director (and mother of an adult child with mental illness), she opened her arms to the client population (those who have mental illness), hiring them as staff and recruiting them to serve on NAMI's governing board. Her aim was to involve clients in decision and policy making as NAMI grew and changed throughout the years.

Bettie said her goal for NAMI San Diego now is to do more of what NAMI does well, better—and in more places. She will receive the well-deserved award on May 29 at the Mental Health Recognition Dinner.

NAMI is a grassroots, non-profit organization started in 1978 to provide education, support services and advocacy to improve the lives of everyone affected by mental illnesses, which, in reality, is all of us.

For more information on NAMI San Diego, visit www.namisandiego.org or call (800) 523-5933.

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