



Introduction to our Quarterly Community Advocacy Forum

Leanna (Caminar), Helene (Exec. Director of NAMI-San Mateo) and Cindy Robbins-Roth are parents of young adults trying to figure out what life-long well-being looks like for them. And our organizations are dedicated to working toward holistic support of each individual as a full person.

We have banded together to create this quarterly community advocacy forum focused on the big topic:

“How can we support improvement of services and supports for our loved ones living with life-long mental health challenges – especially truly supported housing and a wide range of services for folks?”

These forums are following a progression from “education” to “action steps.” Some of our goals for community members, “provider world” folks, and other key county figures at these forums:

- Networking across the community AND connecting our invited panelists to others in the community who could support their ideas and programs
- Increasing community knowledge and involvement
- Helping folks evolve and build their skills in advocating effectively

We take notes during the discussion, and moderate the panel. The **end result** will be key points the audience would like to pursue in the next Forum OR outside of the Forum. We will invite participants to be part of the planning process for that next meeting and will send out the charted notes to all attendees (or folks who have signed up to get this info).

The first Forum, this past November, focused on the hot topic of why it’s so hard to get truly supportive housing in our county, and what should be part of an effective holistic well-being program for adults with serious mental health disabilities. Our panel kicking things off included Carolyn Shepard – parent; Marie Adorable – Community Housing Manager at Edgewood TAY; Alex Martinez – Director of Supported Housing at Caminar; Ohevet Fotofili – Board & Care manager; and Melissa Platte, Executive Director of Mental Health Association – San Mateo County.

We had a packed conference room, with community members from ages 23 to 83 all participating in a lively discussion. Folks from the county mental health agency were present, along with folks from various community non-profits.

One spin-off from the conversation was the creation by community members of a “sub-committee” of folks specifically interested in pursuing the idea of banding together to privately fund a “co-op” house for young adults who are wanting to be out in the world, while still needing on-site support.

The second Forum on Feb. 1st is designed to support a conversation about how our diverse community can collaborate to create new business models for integrated care, and funding models beyond the basic “ask the county – and a few donors – to pay for it” approach.

Our panel:

- Alan Cochran, peer advocate and NAMI-San Mateo board member will lead our intro panel.
- Dr. Frank Lee is a long-time biotech entrepreneur, business innovator and parent. He and Cindy have been talking for the past several years about how to apply what they learned in biotech to creating new models for holistic care delivery in mental health.
- Bill Lowell, experienced financial officer, past Director of San Mateo County’s Dept. of Housing and currently the Coordinator for the county’s “Home for All” initiative.

The invited speakers will talk about topics including: 1) Creating new business models to provide holistic services; 2) ideas for new ways to finance services and infrastructure; 3) building networks with the corporate foundations based in our community.

The audience would be invited to be part of a Q&A discussion following the panel’s introductory comments. We are inviting members of the board of supervisors as well as field reps for Jerry Hill and Kevin Mullin.

We feel the existing system has generated programs that are trapped in the county’s three-year funding cycle, and dependent on what the county decides to put into the Request for Proposal. We believe there is an opportunity to grow beyond those limits.

And yes: dinner is part of the deal.

For more information, and to get on the invitation list, contact:

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