Breaking the Silence
How a Small Rural County Got Talking

Christa Thompson, MSW, ACBHS
Janet Caton, NAMI Amador
Nina Machado, First 5 Amador
Kaybee Alvarado, MHANCA
Presentation Overview

- A few years ago, Amador didn’t really talk about mental illness or stigma.

- We’re going to show you how all that changed...
Presentation Objectives

- After this session, you will be able to:
  1. Recognize the challenges facing small counties when implementing stigma reduction strategies.
  2. Describe effective ways to work effectively within a fiscally conservative environment.
  3. Identify potential community partners and opportunities for collaboration.
  4. List innovative approaches to stigma reduction that can be replicated in other counties.
Where We Were…

Amador County Behavioral Health Department
“I CARE” Stigma Reduction Campaign

Concept
Mental illness doesn’t mean you’re crazy. Many struggle with bouts of depression, anxiety, or difficulty managing their emotions. Most all of us have a loved one who is struggling with some form of mental illness. Do you? We are asking you to wear this ribbon as a gesture to say to your loved one, “I CARE.” Together, we can show all of our loved ones—and everyone in our community—that it is OK to seek help when they are in crisis.
What Happened Next...
A Little About Us…

- Amador County is a small rural county with isolated communities of just over 37,000.
- Fiscally and politically conservative; small government is an important concept.
- Concerns, “if you build it, they will come”
- Strong beliefs that social services can be provided by community (i.e. churches)
- Also misplaced fears that talking about suicide, etc. increases risk
A Little About NAMI...

- Who NAMI Amador is and what all they provide:
  - Family Support, Family to Family, Peer to Peer, Connections
  - Annual editorials, radio, & local TV
  - Documentary screenings
  - Advocacy
NAMI Amador’s FB Page

The mission of this organization shall be to provide support, education and advocacy for persons with serious brain disorders, i.e., mental illnesses and... READ MORE

http://www.namiwalks.org/northerncalifornia

The day isn't over yet! Give a gift for #GivingTuesday and then share an #UnSelfie with your friends and ask them to make a gift as well.

Hope starts with you. www.nami.org/NAMIEffect

I support NAMI because they save lives

#UnSelfie
#GivingTuesday
What Changed…

- ACBHS Management Overhaul in 2012
- MHSA Programs Reworked in 2013, and:
  - Targeted Veterans, Stigma in Contracts
  - CalMHSA Community Dialogue Grant
  - Participation in Recovery-Focused PIP
  - Increased Focus on Consumer Goals
How First 5 Responded...

- When contract was updated to require messaging and outreach to decrease stigma, First 5 responded by:
  - Utilizing Social Media & 400 Facebook Friends
  - Posting Positive Messaging EVERYWHERE...
  - Weaving in Stigma-Reducing Messaging into County Fair Booth—Which Won 2\textsuperscript{nd} Prize!
  - Speaking Statewide About Collaboration
  - Spearheading Maternal Wellness Initiative
First 5 Anti-Stigma Campaign

[Image]
First 5 Anti-Stigma Campaign

From a nearby county:
“Last week, at the First 5 Summit, I attended the Mental Health Service Act Joint Funding Efforts workshop and...got to hear about the great work that you and your team have been doing in Amador County... I remember that you had a couple of books on your table from Each Mind Matters, a mental health and a fatherhood version. Do you have more information or know where we can go to get more information on these books?”
How Others Responded...

- “Know the Signs” started showing up everywhere, even in the men’s bathroom 😊
- ATCAA (and later Nexus) partnered with NAMI, MHA, and First 5 at county events
- ACBH partnered with ACCF to offer a new Human Services Scholarship Program
- A $10k contract was approved to market The Friendship Line for Older Adults
We went from NO Marketing to...

**TV Ad:** Pep Rally at a High School; focuses on one cheerleader: “You know what? No one would care if I was gone. Forever.” If someone with suicidal thoughts could share this easily, they would.
The Big Event...

- CalMHSA funded mini-grants for small counties to host community dialogue events
- NAMI & AC BHS applied to host: “EMM: Rural Reflections on Community Mental Health”
  - Kicked off w/ a Anti-Stigma Stroll—50 attended!
  - Included a dinner to view & discuss the “New State of Mind” Documentary—70 attended!
- Targeted the faith-based communities
Stroll & Dinner Event Pics...
NAMI’s Perspective…

- Working with the Faith-Based Community
- Reaching out to the Media, Others
- Reaction to the INCREDIBLE Response
- The Follow Up Dinner Hosted by Retired MD
- Subsequent MHFA Training
  - 4 Training Dates Since Then
  - All Full Within 2 Weeks
CFA’s Experience...

- The Importance of Stigma Reduction
- “The Infamous Meeting”
- The AC BHS Mgmt Team
- The Advancing Recovery Collaborative & PIP Team
- Collecting Stories of Hope
Quotes of HOPE

- “My therapist talks to me and listens to me, and I like it when someone listens to what I am going through in life.”

- “I feel much better and able to talk to people more. Staff always encourages me to keep positive and makes me feel there is always support when I need them most.”

- “The services helped me to get out of my house more and I have people to talk to now. I don’t feel as lonely.”
More Quotes of HOPE

- “My kids are my hope. Knowing that the behavioral health team is there for me is also an inspiration for me to be here.”

- “My words of advice to others who may be struggling with their mental health: ‘It is a hard road to go through but please don’t give up. You will get the right treatment and therapy. It can take many years to get the right combo. I feel like I am a miracle.’”
Where We Are & Where We’re Going

- Focus on Milestones of Recovery
  Scale & strength-based clinical tools
- 2nd & 3rd Annual Stroll to Stop Stigma
- 1st Mental Health Month Celebrations
- Much more MHFA training & discussion about mental health
- Lots of bracelets and ribbons 😊

Panel: anything to add?