

Break wall of silence

On a beautiful sunny day, Sept. 26, over 2,000 people gathered for the third annual NAMIWalk. The NAMIWalk was about raising awareness of mental illnesses. That's nice, you might say, but is there a need for a walk on this issue. NAMI says now more than ever. People live with their symptoms an average of 10 years before seeking help and the life expectancy of someone living with a serious mental illness is the same as someone living in Bangladesh.

The walk was for all those who have faced stigma, injustice and discrimination due to mental illness. Everyone who walked was saying that mental illness should be treated as any other medical condition, people should be treated fairly and that it takes courage and determination to face this illness.

This walk is about walking shoulder to shoulder with those who have been given a cold shoulder, it's about walking arm in arm with those who feel disconnected, it's about walking hand in hand with those who have never been

offered one. It's about speaking out together, breaking down the wall of silence surrounding mental illnesses.

The first full week in October is Mental Illness Awareness Week, a time to celebrate the one-year anniversary of passage the Mental Health Parity Act and to recognize that we have much more work ahead of us. NAMI asks that everyone take a moment to reach out to someone they know who has faced a mental illness — schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, anxiety, borderline personality disorder, PTSD — acknowledge the courage and determination it takes to face this illness and offer to support them. Every action you take is about ending the indifference towards people with mental illnesses and about bestowing dignity and hope.

It takes small steps to create a road to change. We hope that you will help us build a road to recovery and acceptance.

Sue Abderholden, MPH
executive director of the
**National Alliance on Mental
Illness (NAMI) of Minnesota**

