

## LACDMH GETS READY FOR NAMIWALKS 2012

By Helena Ditko, LACDMH



The annual “Kick-Off Lunch” for NAMIWalks was held on Thursday, August 9<sup>th</sup> at the California Endowment. The luncheon serves to recognize the Department’s team captains who give their time and energy to initiate our fundraising efforts for NAMI. NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is a grassroots organization dedicated to improving the lives of those affected by mental illness.

This year’s theme for NAMIWalks is “Changing Minds One Step at a Time”. All the proceeds from the walk support NAMI programs, and are committed to assuring families and consumers receive ongoing support, education, advocacy and research. The programs in the community are free to the public with the goal to educate and reduce stigma about mental illnesses.

This year’s luncheon included inspirational speakers who provided the audience with tips on how to form teams, raise community and Department awareness of the upcoming walk, and creatively seek donations. One of our very own DMH staff, Cathy Williamson, inspired those present by sharing her annual fundraising event held at her home where both food and a silent auction have resulted in generous donations for NAMIWalks. Along with other NAMI walkers, we heard from Wayne Baldaro, the Walk Manager for Los Angeles, as he offered door prizes and some humor.

So let’s get ready, DMH! This year the challenge is for Service Areas to adopt a local NAMI affiliate, supporting the affiliate with fundraising activities and encouraging staff, consumers, families and our communities to get out and walk for NAMI on October 6, 2012! Rumors are circulating at headquarters that one of the Systems of Care is challenging Dr. Southard’s Team to see who can raise more funds. Get your walking shoes on to get some exercise, give support to NAMI programs, and raise awareness that there is Hope, Wellness and Recovery!