



Support Department Quarterly Newsletter

Support ♥ Education ♥ Advocacy ♥ Community ♥ Hope

24/7
Living
Room

MORE HOPE
MORE SUPPORT
A STRONGER
COMMUNITY



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Hope Happens Here ♥

NAMI DuPage is excited and honored to announce the expansion of our Living Room Program, funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services, to **24-hour, 7-day-a-week access!** This Support will help us continue providing a welcoming, safe space for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. We would love for you to join us at our Ribbon Cutting/Open House on September 30th from 12-2 pm. Please register [HERE](#).

In this issue, we celebrate important milestones, recognize the dedication of our staff and volunteers, share stories of hope, highlight upcoming events, and provide resources to help keep our community informed and connected.

Thank you for being part of the NAMI DuPage community and for supporting our mission of hope, recovery, education, and advocacy.

Support Department Team



Congratulations to our JUNE 2026 GRADUATES!



 *We appreciate each of you so much!* 

Congratulations to our Graduates!

Today we celebrate the dedication, perseverance, and accomplishments of everyone who completed the Peer Recovery Support Specialist Training. Your commitment to learning, growing, and supporting others reflects the heart of peer support and NAMI DuPage's mission.

Thank you for the passion and compassion you bring to our community. We wish you continued success as you carry hope, encouragement, and recovery into the lives of those you serve.

- ♥ Gustavo Maravilla-Hernandez
- ♥ Rain Rodriguez
- ♥ Leslie Paprocki
- ♥ Najeeb Khan
- ♥ Margo Poole
- ♥ Paul Meccia
- ♥ Casie Alexander



- ♥ Niaz Mohammed
- ♥ Trevor Herbst
- ♥ Brittany Tischler
- ♥ Jennifer Jennings
- ♥ Hailey Netzel
- ♥ Jessica Uriostegui
- ♥ Marketa McCoy

*Thank you for being part of the NAMI DuPage family.
Your impact matters.*

Designed by:
Jessica Uriostegui ♥



Recent Fun

Cookies



for a

Cause





NAMI DuPage Living Room



We are excited to announce that, starting **October 1st**, our Living Room will be **open 24/7!**

That's **24 hours** a day, **365 days a year!**



Support starts here

Experiencing a mental health crisis?

Receive immediate, peer-led support in a safe and welcoming space.

Not sure where to start?

Our team will help you find the care and support that's right for you.



FREE

Walk-Ins welcome!

No appointment needed



117 N County Farm Rd., Wheaton, IL



namidupage.org

A
NAMI DUPAGE
FUNDRAISER

Crafting for a Cause:
**CREATIVE MINDS,
CARING HEARTS**

Where Creativity Meets Compassion

OCTOBER 9 – OCTOBER 11

Hyatt Regency – Lisle, Illinois

10/9, 4PM TO 10/11, 2PM

- Your own 8-ft table
- Access to electricity
- A weekend of uninterrupted crafting!
- Hear personal stories from NAMI clients
- Some meals provided

**Join us for a weekend of creativity, connection,
and compassion—all to support NAMI DuPage!**



*For more details and to register,
scan the QR code or visit:*

namidupage.org/crafting

**BYO
PROJECT &
CRAFTING
SUPPLIES**



National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI | DuPage



Days to Remember

Upcoming events, opportunities, and moments to look forward to!

SEPTEMBER
24TH
THURSDAY

7pm – 8:30pm

NAMI DuPage – Wheaton
117 N County Farm RD

A Celebration of Life and Love

Join us for a Remembrance Ceremony honoring the lives of those we've lost to suicide. An evening of connection, comfort, and community.



SEPTEMBER
30TH
WEDNESDAY

12pm – 2pm

NAMI DuPage – Wheaton
117 N County Farm RD

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for 24/7 Living Room

Join NAMI DuPage for a ribbon cutting celebration, celebrating the Living Room's expanded availability. Now open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.



OCTOBER
1ST
THURSDAY

OPEN 24/7

NAMI DuPage – Wheaton
117 N County Farm RD

24 HR “the livingroom” – Official Day

A safe welcoming space for connection, support and resources



OCTOBER
9TH – 11TH
FRI – SUN

10/9 4pm – 10/11 2pm

Hyatt Regency Lisle
1400 Corporate Drive

Crafting for a Cause

Get creative and give back! A fun event supporting our mission.



OCTOBER
20TH
TUESDAY

6:00PM – 8:00pm

Virtual

W.R.A.P. (Wellness Recovery Action Plan)

This 8-week course, to build your knowledge and confidence. Learn wellness tools and create your personal plan for recovery.



APRIL
17TH 2027
SATURDAY

6pm

Chicago Marriott – Naperville
1801 N Naper Boulevard

NAMI DuPage Gala

An evening of dinner, dancing, live entertainment, silent and live auctions, and raffles to support local mental health programs and advocacy.



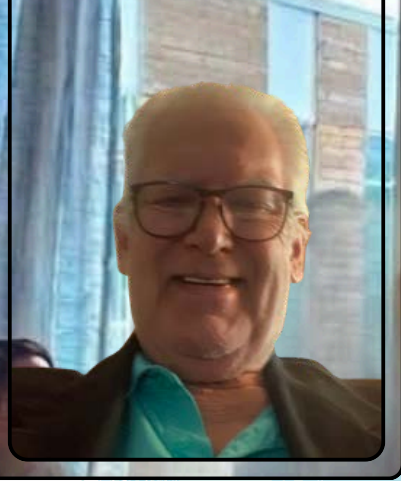
We hope to see you there!

For NAMI DuPage News & Events scan
the QR code



Designed by:
Jessica Uriostegui

NAMI STORIES OF IMPACT



In this issue, NAMI DuPage's CRSS Mark Wronkiewicz shares how NAMI DuPage has supported his recovery and impacted his life.

Q: How did you learn about NAMI DuPage?

I first learned about NAMI DuPage while researching support groups for a college assignment at the College of DuPage. After contacting Michelle Nothvogel, who warmly welcomed me, I attended a Wednesday night Connection Recovery Support Group. Listening to people of different ages share their experiences with mental health challenges opened my eyes to conditions I knew little about. That experience inspired me to learn more and left a lasting impression that I carry with me today.

Q: What would you like to say to the NAMI DuPage team who helped you get here?

Grateful is what I would say to all. From the very first day I walked through the doors of NAMI DuPage I knew I was home. The love and support that I have received from everyone involved has been second to none. Everyone understands my issues and knows how to get the best out of me for our clients.

Q: How has your life changed since your involvement with NAMI DuPage?

Being able to meet and touch the lives of so many people with all different kinds of mental health issues has been truly incredible. To be able to see a twinkle in someone's eye or a smile on somebody's face where there was none before is a heartwarming experience. To think that my shared story could help support someone is a blessing. The support that I receive from my supervisors, staff and fellow interns of which many were classmates of mine at COD has been outstanding.

Q: What are your aspirations in the next 3-6 months?

I would like to reach out and touch the lives of as many people as I can. To be able to understand what they are going through and to be able to give them the resources and support that they need is what I can do for them. We never know where we are going to go or whose lives we are going to affect, but it is my intention to be able to support as many people as possible. That's what all of us do at NAMI DuPage.

Thank you for sharing your story Mark. Interview by: Margo Poole



In the Spotlight:

Leslie P., RSS Intern



Why did you choose to do your internship at NAMI DuPage?

I picked NAMI DuPage as my internship site because the organization has such a strong reputation for mentoring and developing emerging peer support professionals.

How would you describe your internship experience at NAMI DuPage?

The vibes are immaculate! I am learning so much in so many different areas of mental health support and recovery.

What drew you to work in the human services field?

My professional life has always been geared towards teaching and mentoring, across a ton of career fields. The human services field, and peer support roles in particular, give me a chance to continue to develop my skills and also bring my own lived experience to the table to support other humans in this thing called life.

What's your favorite experience at NAMI Dupage?

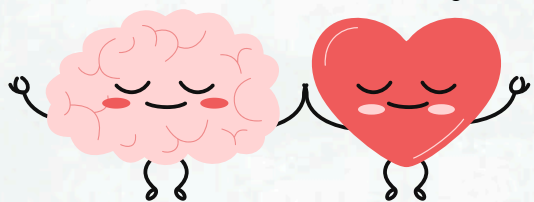
So far, Cookies for a Cause has been the highlight! I think I personally baked close to 50 dozen cookies during the weekend.

How do you manage stress that comes with a demanding workload?

Long drives, midday naps, Animal Crossing, and fairy lights.

Is there something you'd like to accomplish in the future related to your CRRS credential or your work with NAMI DuPage?

I'd love to use my combined experience with my work at COD, my classes at ECC, and my internship at NAMI DuPage to create and offer some professional development opportunities that are specific to the learning and growth needs of early-career CRRS professionals.



Thanks for Sharing your Story, Leslie P.,
Interview done by Margo B. Poole, RSS





"A New Chapter Begins"



A Farewell Interview with Eric Metcalf by Margo Poole

Margo:

Eric, thank you for the privilege to interview you today. We wanted to get your insights as you move on to your next chapter. If you could put it into words—I know that is a lot to ask—how would you describe your experience with NAMI over the years?

Eric:

This October marks five years with NAMI DuPage. NAMI DuPage has been life-changing for me.

The first reason is that I started with NAMI DuPage right after receiving my first mental health diagnosis. I had never had a diagnosis in my life, so my first job after receiving that diagnosis was with NAMI DuPage.

NAMI's mission is centered on support, education, and advocacy. Those three components have helped me tremendously. First, NAMI keeps a mirror in front of my face and makes me ask myself, "Am I prioritizing my own mental well-being?" That is first and foremost.

Second, the educational component has given me a great deal of knowledge about symptoms, diagnoses, and coping strategies. Third is the advocacy component. I have been privileged to speak in Springfield before legislators, which is something I never imagined myself doing. I have also had the privilege of speaking before doctors at Loyola University and before judges and lawyers here in DuPage County.

Margo:

Amazing.

What has brought you the most joy when witnessing the growth of those under your mentorship or the people you have seen come through NAMI's doors?

Eric:

The greatest joy I experience is when an individual comes in, perhaps on a Wednesday night for a support group, and you can see the pain in their eyes. You can see their anxiety and the trepidation they feel about entering the room and possibly sharing something about themselves.

Then, you see them move from that place to leading a group. After that, they may become a recovery support specialist who helps other peers through their struggles. They may then obtain a position as a contractor, become a program manager, and eventually become a director.

You could not pay me enough money to miss witnessing that. It is incredible to see someone grow and develop into a leader in this field. I have been honored and privileged to witness that.

Margo:

Excellent.

What would you hope for NAMI in the future?

Eric:

As we continue to grow, I hope we never forget about the person who is standing or sitting directly in front of us. We need to preserve that as the very essence of who we are and what we do. We are here to support individuals who may find themselves in challenging situations.

I love the growth, the expansion, and all the new opportunities, but I do not want us to forget the reason this organization was started.

It was started to eradicate stigma. It was started so that we could have a seat at the table. We belong.

As long as we preserve the essence of that mission, we are going to be all right. We are going to be great.

Margo:

What are you looking forward to most as you move forward into your future?

Eric:

There are many unknowns because I am transitioning out of this particular career. However, wherever I go, I take myself with me. This is my purpose. This is what I do.

I could be in the hills of Thailand, and if somebody is hurting, I would want to help because human beings hurt everywhere.

I do not feel as though I am going to stop doing this work. I simply do not know what it is going to look like.

I am excited. There is also a little bit of fear, but that could be good. It could be a good thing.

I am excited about the future. I am very excited.

I thank NAMI from the bottom of my heart because, right now, I truly consider myself to be at the optimum level of my mental performance. By "optimum," I mean the ideal point.

I have never been this mentally aware, this lucid, or this mentally healthy in my life—in my entire lifetime—and I am 60 years old.

That is a lot of life.

It is a huge statement for me to make, and I can say it honestly.

Margo:

Thank you, Eric. Those are all the questions I have for you today.

I think I speak for everyone here at NAMI DuPage when I say that we wish you love, peace, joy, and success in your future.

New
Adventures
Ahead

Different place
Same amazing you!

Messages for Eric



Wishing you new adventures
and continued success.



Thank you Eric!

Eric,
has been one of the **BIGGEST** mentors coming into this field. From training to be a facilitator to a peer support specialist. You were always there. Thank you for your empathy towards others and the team. No matter what you listened to anything we all had to say. You helped us figure things out if we had some questions.
Thank you for your reassurance with me and helping me understand I can do this and guiding me. This is something I have always struggled with but you made me see the light under the tunnel.
Thank you for being inspiring. You have a way that helps others to do this work that we do. You have the knowledge that is amazing to hear and learn from you. You make me want to keep going in this field, and makes me feel I'm in the right place.
Thank you for being caring in me during my trainings, classes, on site training and even meetings. I felt that caring feeling that I have never had in a place of work. The team environment you created is truly amazing caring.
Thank you for everything.

Eric I wouldn't be here doing the work we do if it wasn't for you believing in me.

Thank you,
Nicole



Empathy
Reassurance
Inspiring
Caring

Eric has been a great
inspiration to me. I
thank him for
believing in me and
helping me step out
of my comfort zone
to learn new things.

Phyllis Taylor, RSS

Best
wishes
Eric!

**The supervision and support
I received from Eric as a CRSS intern
at NAMI DuPage motivated me to elevate my quality of life
in remarkably sustainable ways. I'd rather have someone
who cares rather than just professionally qualified but
luckily Eric is both. Grateful for this experience.**

#ConstructiveFeedback #DivineFriendship

| 777adventures-Mastwaar

Jerry Joseph



POSTCARD

Eric Metcalf

made an extremely positive impact on me!
He is my mentor in our Level Up classes and has opened
my eyes to life regarding situations he has been through!
I learned so much from Eric and call him
Anthony Robbin's Jr. as he is a tremendous
communicator! I am glad that I have Eric as a lifetime
friend and Battle Buddy!

Gary Safron



I could reach the text limit multiple
times with praise for Eric. Eric is one of only a select
few that could relate to parts of my past because he lived through some of
the same things I did that have taken the life of countless friends and
family. Eric shared parts of his testimony while I was in the CRSS program
and knew at the end of his testimony NAMI DuPage would be where I
applied for my internship. 🙏 I even waited months before I could start in
there but it was well worth it.

Working with and for Eric has been a blessing and a privilege. I sat on
stage with him at the NAMI Illinois state conference and spoke about
men's mental health. He was the driving force behind me being invited to
the NAMI DuPage gala in 2025. We worked together at the DuPage County
jail for the last JUST class of the session and it was powerful to see how he
worked.

Jeremy Werstler



With appreciation,
Your NAMI DuPage family.
Thank you for believing in people,
sharing your knowledge and making a
lasting difference in so many lives.
We wish you and your wife all the
best in your next adventure. 🙏
You will be missed.

Designed by:
Jessica Wiostegui



Connections Corner

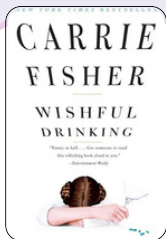
Let's connect, Learn, Grow together.



This Quarter's Icebreaker

What book are you currently reading?

Here are a few great reads from our NAMI DuPage family!



Wishful Drinking

by: Carrie Fisher

Recommended by:
Jennifer Hunter

Why I picked it

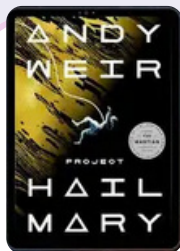
I'm reading it as a requirement for school.

Would you recommend it?

It's an easy read with interesting insights into the author's life experiences.

I'd recommend it to...

Anyone who has or is studying dual diagnosis might enjoy it.



Hail Mary

by: Andy Weir

Recommended by:
Leslie Paprocki

Why I picked it

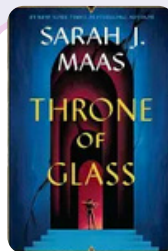
I wanted to read it before I saw the movie, and I loved it so much its my comfort novel now.

Would you recommend it?

"10,000% recommend!"

I'd recommend it to...

Anyone who loves easy to read, genuine adventures with a side of nerdy science. The science is just a side character though! Dont let it keep you from reading!



Throne of Glass

by: Sarah J. Maas

Recommended by:
Jessica Uriostegui

Why I picked it

I was looking for something that would take me away for a little while, and the strong female lead immediately caught my attention.

Would you recommend it?

Yes! It completely drew me in, and I fell in love with the characters.

I'd recommend it to...

Anyone who enjoys fantasy, adventure, strong female characters, and stories filled with resilience, friendship, and personal growth.



CONNECTION CHALLENGE

Recommend a book to a coworker or friend and start a conversation about why you enjoy it!



If you would like to share how it went, we would love to hear from you!

Email: jessica1.rss@namidupage.org

jessica1.rss@namidupage.org



DID YOU KNOW ?

Reading for just six minutes a day can help reduce stress and promote relaxation.



Community Poll

Which genre do you enjoy reading the most?

- ☐ Mystery
- ☐ Fantasy
- ☐ Romance
- ☐ Sci-Fi / Dystopian
- ☐ Non-Fiction
- ☐ Manga
- ☐ Other (share your favorite!)



Scan the QR code to vote!



Pause & Puzzle

Unwind your mind and find your inner calm. The word search features evidence-based words and actions that encourage mindfulness, reduce stress, and bring a sense of peace to your day.

Take a deep breath, pause, and enjoy the hunt!



W	L	U	F	D	N	I	M	D	N	U	O	R	G
H	P	E	E	L	S	N	A	T	U	R	E	A	W
S	G	A	C	O	N	N	E	C	T	E	C	I	C
O	N	U	S	E	E	H	T	W	N	Y	E	R	H
O	A	R	A	A	E	E	L	N	A	L	M	X	D
T	E	O	U	L	H	P	R	C	A	L	F	S	E
H	S	B	E	U	E	P	E	N	A	E	K	S	U
N	A	R	O	L	Y	U	R	P	P	K	U	K	T
E	C	E	E	U	A	U	A	B	A	B	O	O	
R	C	A	T	O	O	H	O	B	P	A	O	I	T
T	E	T	P	J	C	E	X	H	O	B	B	Y	D
F	P	H	E	A	U	H	I	E	N	U	T	T	H
N	T	E	S	O	E	H	M	U	S	I	C	U	G
H	J	U	L	L	N	A	S	U	W	G	T	C	E

HOBBY
JOURNAL
BREATHE
SLEEP
PAUSE
NATURE
EXHALE
ACCEPT
GROUND
CONNECT
MINDFUL
LAUGH
MUSIC
SOOTH
WALK

Coming next quarter....

Next Icebreaker

What song lifts your spirits, makes you smile or motivates you?

Keep an eye on your email for more details and how to submit your song!



Designed by:
Jessica Uriostegui



Thank you for being part of our NAMI DuPage community.
Together we're building connections - one story, one smile, and one shared moment at a time.





Pet's Corner

Celebrating the companions
who make life brighter every day.



AROUND DUPAGE

Resource ♥ Event ♥ Safety

SAFETY ALERT

Algae Bloom Warning

Keep dogs out of the East Branch
Forest Preserve off-leash training
pond until the warning is lifted.

See DuPage County Forest Preserve
for the latest updates



UPCOMING EVENT

Barkapalooza 2026
 Saturday, Sept. 27, 2026
 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM
 Lisle Community Park

A fun day supporting both
homeless dogs and cats



Scan for resource
Information!

Resource Spotlight

Affordable Vet Care in DuPage

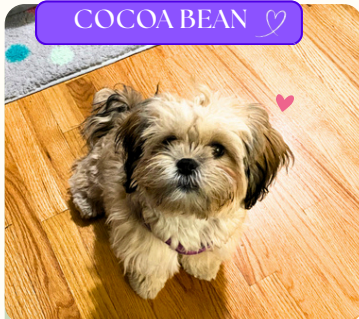
- Low-cost vaccinations
- Microchipping
- Spay & neuter assistance
- Pet food support



Scan for resource
Information!

MEET OUR NAMI FAMILY PETS

COCOA BEAN ♥



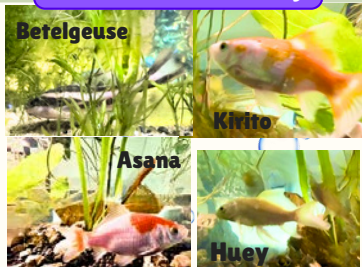
Pet parent: Jessica U.
if I could talk, I'd say...

"Excuse me...
You're in my
space!"

Fun Fact:

When I get home, Cocoa
Bean steals my slipper and
has me chase her all around
my house.

Casie's Fish Family



Pet parent: Casie A.
if we could talk, we'd say...

"Thank you for
creating a safe and
peaceful home where
we can thrive."

Fun Fact:

All the goldfish were 35 cent
tiny feeder fish. Named after
Japanese authors and
fictional characters.

Your Pet Could be Next!



Want your companion
featured in our next issue?

Scan to submit a photo, fun
fact, and what your pet would
say if they could talk...



Scan to
vote!

All pets are welcomed

Dogs ♥ Cats ♥ Birds ♥ Fish
Rabbit ♥ Reptile ♥ other

PAWS & PLAY

PET WORDOKU



	Turtle	Fish	Cat		
	Cat			Fish	Turtle
			Bird		Cat
Turtle	Fish				
		Bird		Dog	
Dog			Fish		Bunny

Word Bank

DOG

CAT

FISH

BIRD

BUNNY

TURTLE

Sit, Stay... Smile ♥

Why don't fish play basketball?
Because they are afraid
♥ of the net!



≡ Daily Check-In ≡



PET POLL OF THE QUARTER



What kind of pet parent are you...
or would be?

☐ Dog

☐ Rabbit

☐ Reptile

☐ Bird

☐ Cat

☐ Horse

☐ Other



Scan to
vote!

Thank you for being part of our NAMI DuPage community.

Together we're building connections - one story, one smile, and one shared moment at a time.

Designed by:
Jessica Urstegui

Creative Corner



How Art Fuels Recovery

Scientific research shows that creative expression directly transforms brain chemistry to support mental health and substance use recovery. Engaging in art activates the brain's medial prefrontal cortex and ventral tegmental area (de Witte et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2026). This triggers a natural release of dopamine, which safely stimulates the same reward pathways previously compromised by addiction (Newton Neuro, 2025). Additionally, just 45 minutes of creative activity significantly drops cortisol levels, instantly calming the nervous system's fight-or-flight response (Kaimal et al., 2016). This biological shift reduces anxiety and stops toxic cycles of mental rumination.

Trauma often locks down the brain's speech centers, making it difficult to process deep pain with words alone. Art acts as a crucial non-verbal bridge, helping individuals safely externalize complex emotions, rebuild impulse control, and construct a stable, substance-free identity (Biri Publishing, 2025; Lone Star Neurology, 2024).

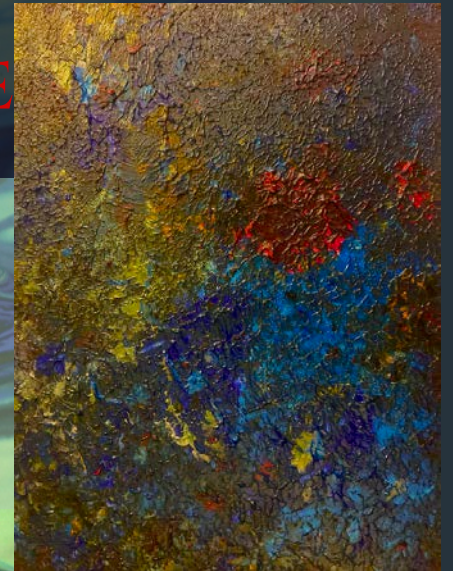
FREE WOMAN



ART BY
BRITTNIE
BERKSHIRE

BRAVE

CRAFTASTIC
EVERY
WEDNESDAY
7-8:30PM



LIONS GATE



Thank You!

Thank you for reading the NAMI DuPage Newsletter. We hope this issue brought you information, inspiration, connection and a smile along the way

Together, we build a stronger more compassionate community

Our Newsletter Team

A huge thank you to our amazing team for their creativity, time and dedication in bringing this newsletter to life!

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| ♥ Rain Rodriguez | ♥ Niaz Mohammed |
| ♥ Margo Poolo | ♥ Jessica Uriostegui |
| ♥ Casie Alexander | |
| ♥ Justin Cominos | |

Special Thanks

Shuchi Srivastava
Director of Peer Support Services

Thank you for your guidance, encouragement and continued support. We appreciate you giving us the opportunity to share our creativity, ideas and voices.

We'd Love Your Feedback

Help us make the next issue even better!
We want to hear your ideas, suggestions and what you would like to see in the future.

- ✓ Topics you would like to see
- ✓ Stories of Hope
- ✓ Helpful Resources
- ✓ Activities & Events
- ✓ Pet Photos
- ✓ Creative Submissions
- ✓ Inspirational Quotes



Other ideas and comments are always welcome. We'd love to hear from you!



“ Hope grows stronger when we share it, and community grows when every voice is welcomed. ”



You are not alone. You are valued. You matter

