

Not an AARP member? **Join today and experience great value!**

AARP | Auto Insurance Program from **THE HARTFORD**

AUTO INSURANCE

EXCLUSIVELY FOR DRIVERS 50+



START YOUR QUOTE >



96% of AARP customers recommend The Hartford - based on 21,612 reviews

NAMIWalk Alabama: Be 'stigma free' on mental illness

Shannon Heupel, Montgomery Advertiser | Published 7:29 p.m. CT Sept. 15, 2018

The 2018 NAMIWalk Alabama will be held Sept. 22 at Blount Cultural Park in Montgomery



(Photo: NAMIWalks)

There are countless hashtags online, but one that the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Alabama wants to make viral is #StigmaFree.

"We want people to not be afraid to talk about mental illness," said Wanda Marshall Laird, who is serving as the walk manager for the fourth annual NAMIWalks Alabama fundraiser.

The walk will be held Sept. 22 at Blount Cultural Park in Montgomery, starting off at a balloon arch.

"We do not want people to feel that they are alone," Laird said. "We have support groups not only for the individuals who have mental illness, but for their family members as well. We have educational programs for family members."

Buy Photo



Alabama head football coach Nick Saban is the state honorary chairperson for NAMI Alabama. (Photo: Julie Bennett / Advertiser)

Alabama head football coach Nick Saban, who is the state honorary chairperson, said in a statement, "Mental illness impacts so many families across our country, and we appreciate all that NAMI does to help provide the support and education to those who suffer from mental health disorder. Hopefully, NAMIWalks Alabama will create more awareness and generate the necessary funds vital to the health and well-being of our state."

The 5K event's purpose is to raise funds to carry out NAMI Alabama's mission to educate and support individuals and their family members whose lives are affected by a brain disorder, Laird said.

The walk is a partnership with NAMI, NAMI Alabama and their NAMA affiliates, Laird said. Guests can be part of a team, or walk as individuals and help NAMA Alabama raise it's goal of \$75,000. "We are certainly hoping to surpass that goal," Laird said. "Right now, we're at \$66,000."

There are currently about 35 teams signed up to participate in the NAMIWalks Alabama, Laird said.



The theme for NAMIWalks 2018 is #StigmaFree. (Photo: NAMIWalks)

Mental illness impacts the lives of at least one in five individuals across the United States, according to NAMI. That's about 65 million Americans. Mental illness drains the U.S. economy of more than \$80 billion every year. One-fourth of all social security disability payments are for individuals with mental illness, according to NAMI.

"Our promise is to build better lives for Alabamians affected by mental illness," said Robin DeMonia, who is serving as the NAMIWalks Alabama Chairperson.

Registration for the 5K walk begins at 8 a.m. on Sept. 22, and a short program will be held from 8:30-9 a.m. with several guest speakers, door prizes, and awards. The walk begins at 9 a.m.



NAMIWalks t-shirts for participants. (Photo: NAMIWalks)

There will be face painting, balloon twisting, food trucks, and music from Justin Billingsley (DJ B). There will also be plenty of water on hand, courtesy of Chase Holmberg of BodyTrac Health & Fitness.

After the walk, there will be several prize drawings.

"We could not do this without the help of local businesses and volunteers," Laird said.

There is no registration fee to participate. "We want everyone to join us in fellowship and enjoy the day," Laird said.

But if you're unable to attend the walk, you can still help.

"People can be virtual walkers," Laird said. "They can donate online if they cannot be present."

Visit www.namiwalks.org (<https://www.namiwalks.org/index.cfm?>) or www.namialabama.org (<http://www.namialabama.org/>) to serve as a sponsor or join a team.



NAMIWalks Alabama is Sept. 22 at Blount Cultural Park in Montgomery. (Photo: NAMIWalks)

NAMIWalks cheer

Before the walk begins, with the help of Montgomery Biscuits Big Mo, participants will give a special cheer:

NAMIWalks! NAMIWalks!

2018!

This is the way to be!

Go NAMIWalks Alabama!

Read or Share this story: <https://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/news/2018/09/15/namiwalk-alabama-stigma-free-mental-illness/1322784002/>

