Featured letter by Michael Francis Smith, Ojai

Many Ojai Valley families could benefit from mental health group forming

Ojai is known to be a caring community, where many of the families are struggling to get help for family members suffering from mental health disorders. People enjoying Libbey Park have occasionally been frightened off by the presence of people suffering from severe mental illness. Many of these apparently homeless people have families right here in Ojai who are concerned for their loved ones’ lives and need support and direction.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), “…25 percent of all adults in the United States experience a mental health disorder every year.” It can happen to any family — even yours. Families are often isolated and left to fend for themselves — yes, even here in Ojai. What is needed is greater understanding and education about mental illness. Ojai families deserve our support and understanding when helping a family member with mental illness.

NAMI family support groups are supported by people with loved ones suffering from a mental illness coming together for support and sharing valuable information on how to be and how to care for their family members.

A small group has assembled to form an official NAMI Family Support Group here in Ojai. We need to have 15 foundational families signed up. Are you interested in signing up? Do you know anyone who could benefit from this?

The NAMI Family Support Group will be held by two facilitators who have been trained by NAMI California in a two-day training. Facilitators are trained in the skills necessary to create and maintain a group that provides a safe space to express feelings, frustrations and victories in the long job of helping a family member confront to services.

The support groups will be held on Wednesdays from 7 to 9 p.m. locally, twice a month. Please contact me at michael.frances@gmail.com for further information and to sign up for our e-mail list if you are interested in attending a NAMI Family Support Group in Ojai.

For more information on NAMI, please go to NAMI.ORG.

* Although the article was about pets and animals I see zero humor in the title and find it in very poor taste.