

# The Lean on Me Project & NAMI Announce New Collaboration/Partnership

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### MERGING MENTAL HEALTH & EDUCATION

**SARASOTA, FL:** The Lean on Me Project (LOM) and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

The Lean on Me Project (LOM) and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Sarasota/Manatee Counties Chapter have announced a new partnership together. This partnership allows more school communities including parents, administrators, teachers, support staff, and students, to access community resources and education related to mental health along with academic support.

“Since the mission of LOM is to heal education,” says Amy F. Weinberger, MEd, Co-Founder of LOM and the mission of NAMI is to improve the lives of individuals with mental illness, the collaboration offers a natural bridge between the academic and the mental health wellness worlds.” The benefits of this new partnership include specific no-costs initiatives tailored to individual school communities. We know the adult stakeholders in schools need support as much as the students, and peer support through NAMI offers a unique and holistic approach to mental wellness. It still takes a village to raise a child/teen. It also takes a village to support each other while raising our children/teens.

Each year the LOM project focuses on a different school community population. For example, 2019 focused on the *Year of the Student* while 2020 has focused on the *Year of the Teacher*. 2021 will be the *Year of the Parent/Caregiver*. Initiatives for students have included a drop in lunch program at Brookside Middle School and a Peer-2-Peer Mentor Training for 5th graders at Tatum Ridge. Teachers have benefited from The Professional HeadShot Initiative, Pay It Forward Lunch Project, a book circle that focused on *Healing the Wounded Educator*, and food trucks on in-service days. The Parent/Caregiver community can also look forward to innovative initiatives in the coming months.

“Offering support is critical to bridging mental health wellness and academics,” said Colleen Thayer, NAMI Executive Director. “We see this collaboration as a natural extension of the current support and education we offer through NAMI and are excited about the new and ongoing initiatives LOM offers and how we can enhance each other’s programming.”

The benefits of this new partnership include expanding the already dynamic free educational resources that NAMI offers into school-aged communities. From NAMI Basics to NAMI Family-to-Family to NAMI Peer-to-Peer and the LOM Parent Academy, the community can access a variety of conversations that support healthy relationships and conversations.

**About LOM:** [The Lean on Me Project](#) is a no cost initiative-based program that supports five groups: schools, teachers/school personnel, students, families, and the community-at-large. We form relationships that inform us how to bridge the gap between academics and mental health wellness.

**About NAMI:** [The National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) is the nation’s largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI Sarasota and Manatee Counties and dedicated volunteer members and leaders work tirelessly to raise awareness and provide essential education, advocacy and support group programs for people in our community living with mental illness and their loved ones.