



RECOVERY IN MOTION



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January 2026 Edition

He's Not a Criminal, He's in Crisis

by Alisa, NAMI Blog Article, March 17, 2021



I facilitate a peer-led support group called the NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group for Black men. The men who attend the group have all been accused of felonies. They also have all been diagnosed with a mental health condition, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, PTSD and depression.

Some do not believe they have a mental illness, and if they do, they will not admit it in front of the group. I tell them it does not matter if they have a diagnosis — we are all here to get mentally healthy.

In addition to the support group, the men participate in a mental health court program to avoid serving time in jail and to potentially get their records cleared.

Even though I am a Black woman with mental illness, I do not have much in common with these men. I had to work hard to adjust my perception of people who commit felonies and find commonality so we could work together. I used to think that if a person was arrested, they must have done something wrong — but I was wrong.

These men should have never been involved with the police in the first place.

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Help, Not Arrests

Through listening to my group participants' stories, I've noticed a common theme: they were having a mental health crisis and the police were called. This is exactly the problem. The police expected to detain criminals, not to deescalate a mental health crisis. Families or neighbors who call 911 want care for their loved one or friend. There is no other number to call, so they reach out to the only choice they have. Too often, this ends in arrest or unnecessary violence.

In the same county where my group members attend mental health court, an officer fatally shot a man with mental illness in March 2015 — a man who was naked and unarmed at an apartment complex at the time. The property manager called 911 three times out of concern for the man's safety when she saw his erratic behavior. She wanted help for someone experiencing a mental health crisis, not to have him killed.

From what I have seen, it seems that people with mental health conditions are arrested at a disproportionate rate. They are automatically seen as a threat and arrested when other, more appropriate options, should be available. If all police had training on working with people with mental illness, such as Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training, these arrests could potentially be avoided.

Mental Health Care, Not Jail

Mental illness is not a criminal offence. And even when officers understand the need for care instead of arrest, they need better support to make it possible. It is reported in my county that officers take people to jail instead of the treatment center because it is faster and requires less paperwork.

The situation tends to be worse for Black and Brown people who have less access to health care — and that includes mental health care — than their white counterparts. We are often under- or misdiagnosed even if we do have access to mental health care. There are also not enough practitioners with culturally appropriate training, not to mention a disproportionately smaller number of Black practitioners. And while Black people are underrepresented when it comes to accessing quality mental health care, Black people and people with mental health conditions are overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

Additionally, the lack of socioeconomic privilege that underserved communities face leads to many stressors, such as poverty and an increased risk of homelessness — which can then lead to instability and a greater likelihood of mental health crises.

Crisis Response, Not Policing

Just as medical professionals respond to medical emergencies, mental health professionals should respond to mental health emergencies.

The police are trained to protect the population from criminals. They are not medical professionals and, unless they have had very specific training, like CIT, they do not know how to deescalate a situation and make sure a person gets the mental health care they need. It takes a special skillset to calm and treat someone experiencing a mental health crisis, and the police are often not equipped for that kind of response.

The police have been charged with addressing these mental health needs, and that is not working.

It is possible for us to work with law enforcement to bring about change. They are allies in this work. However, the main premise of policing as we know it needs to be evaluated and the systems that perpetuate abuse in policing need to be dismantled. And we can do it with the will of all people — White, Black and Brown, and our leaders. We must not give just lip service to change. We must act with conviction and speed.



**Thank you to our valuable
partner in mental health, NAMI
Texas Panhandle for providing
the Angel Tree Gifts!**



New Warmline Hours



806-678-9699

Hours of Operation:

Monday – 6:00pm – 10:00pm

Tuesday – 6:00pm – 10:00pm

Gifts From The Heart

Author: Barbara Myers

Each little poem is a gift from the heart

And from God's grace I hope you will never part

Each little poem is a treasure you see

A treasure for you and a treasure for me



As you read each one

Think of God the Father and the Son

Think of sunshine and rainbows

And summer days and light bug glows



Little poems for you to read

I hope they always help you in your times of need

I put this book together just for you

I hope it always helps you when you're sad and blue

I hope each one puts a smile on your face

And fills you with Gods loving grace

I know each poem will touch your heart

And from God's grace you will never part

Monday Classes, 2:30 - 3:30 & Wednesday Classes, 2:45 - 3:45
Art supplies provided
(Home lessons by reservation only, call 335-5896)



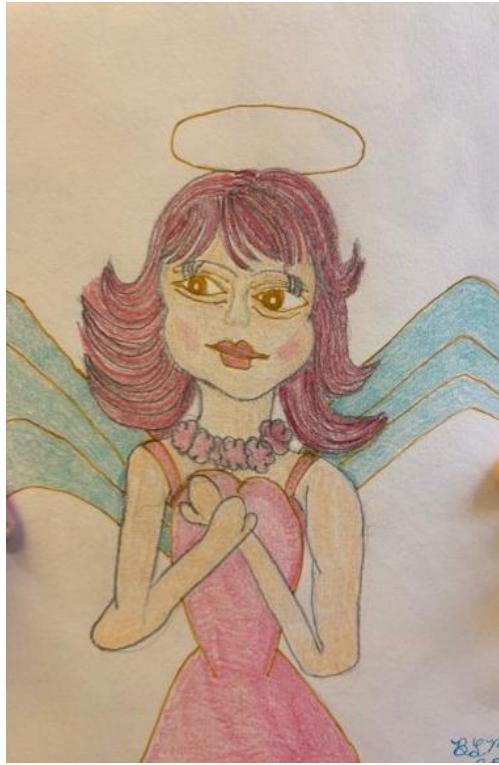
Agape Center Artwork
Real Artwork done by Agape Center Members



It's Okay To Be Different – E.H.



Mythical Creature – C.J.



Grateful Angel – B.M.



The Tree of Confusion – E.V.

January 2026 Calendar

Telegroup Phone Number: 1-(720)-740-9050

\$\$ - Bring money for Social Outings, Red Groups can be done over the phone.

MON 9:30 – 4:30	TUE 9:30-4:30	WED 9:30 – 4:30	THU 1:00-4:00	FRI 9:30 – 4:30
			1 Center Closed	2 Center Closed
5 Beginner's Computer Class <u>10:00-11:00</u> Conflict Resolution Job Skills <u>1:00-2:00</u> Art Class <u>2:30-3:30</u>	6 Advanced Computer Class <u>10:00-11:00</u> Floral Design <u>1:00-2:00</u> Movie Analysis <u>2:30-3:30</u>	7 Consumer Programing <u>10:00-11:00</u> Yoga <u>11:00-12:00</u> NOW SERVING LUNCH Agape Caring & Sharing <u>1:15 – 2:15</u> Art Class <u>2:45 – 3:45</u>	8 Center Closed	9 New Years Resolution <u>10:00-11:00</u> Burgers and Bowling <u>1:00-4:00</u> 
12 Beginner's Computer Class <u>10:00-11:00</u> Principles of Peer Support <u>1:00-2:00</u> Art Class <u>2:30-3:30</u>	13 Advanced Computer Class <u>10:00-11:00</u> Music Analysis <u>1:00-2:00</u>  Board Meeting <u>2:30-3:30</u>	14 Friendly Concerns <u>10:00-11:00</u> Yoga <u>11:00-12:00</u> NOW SERVING LUNCH Agape Caring & Sharing <u>1:15 – 2:15</u> Art Class <u>2:45 – 3:45</u>	15 Center Closed	16 Shopping At The Mall <u>1:00-4:00</u> 
19 Martin Luther King Day Center Closed	20 Advanced Computer Class <u>10:00-11:00</u> Grief Group <u>1:00-2:00</u> Meditation Analysis <u>2:30-3:30</u>	21 GED Class <u>10:00-11:00</u> Yoga <u>11:00-12:00</u> NOW SERVING LUNCH Agape Caring & Sharing <u>1:15 – 2:15</u> Art Class <u>2:45 – 3:45</u>	22 Center Closed	23 
26 Newsletter Assembly <u>10:00-11:00</u> Mindful self compassion <u>1:00-2:00</u> Art Class <u>2:30-3:30</u>	27 Advanced Computer Class <u>10:00-11:00</u>  Food Bank Run <u>1:00-4:00</u>	28 GED Class <u>10:00-11:00</u> Yoga <u>11:00-12:00</u> NOW SERVING LUNCH Agape Caring & Sharing <u>1:15 – 2:15</u> Art Class <u>2:45 – 3:45</u>	29 Center Closed	30 Fear In A Hat <u>10:00-11:00</u> Birthday Bingo <u>1:00-4:00</u> 



AAMHC

P.O. Box 44

Amarillo, TX 79105-0044

Physical location:

1422 S.W. 15th Ave.

Amarillo, TX, 79102

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

AAMHC Board of Directors

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Asst. Treasurer: **Open**

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Angel/Outreach committee Chair: **Anna Derda**

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Member-at-large: **Open**

Member-at-large: **Open**

AAMHC Staff & Volunteers

Executive Director: **Tony Foster**

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Newsletter Creators: **Tony Foster & Aleshia Cardenas**

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