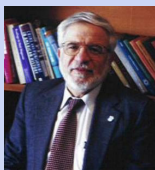


# The Normative Times

## The NAFI/NFI Community Newsletter

### Dr. Bakal's Corner



*"You're either part of the solution or part of the problem."*

This slogan was first used by various radical groups during the 1960's to enlist members into their causes. Since that time, it has been used as a way to engage people, to motivate them and to remind them that we are all, "in it together," and that no one is free of responsibility. A community's members are all interconnected and we can either choose to help one another or we can bring about the destruction of each other.

In Normative Communities, we engage people to be partners in creating a sense of community and to see themselves as responsible members of that community. But what does this really mean? What are the implications of setting our individualistic loyalties aside and putting the mission and the greater good first?

One strong implication in our programs is that staff take on a sense of responsibility to the program, to fellow staff and to the clients even after their shifts have ended and no one is, "watching them." Even when on their own and not being observed by management, we find that NAFI/NFI program staff still make the decision to do what is important and in the best interest of the common good. In a well run program, the notion of something being "not my problem," or "not my responsibility," is nonexistent. No one is simply a bystander. Our staff see themselves as true community members and when that happens, we feel responsible and accountable at all times and expect the same from our fellow community members.

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### An Evolution - New Software System Purchased

By Chris Gagnon, NAFI Comptroller & Kristina Boldebuck, Director of Research and Quality Management, NFI MA

As most of you are probably aware, NAFI/NFI has purchased and is in the process of implementing a new client data management and billing system called Evolv-CS, which was developed by Defran Systems. I would like to update everyone about how we got to this point and what the next steps in this project are going to be.

In August of 2005, at the NAFI/NFI IT User Forum, discussion began around how our existing software, still in use today, did not adequately meet the needs of NAFI/NFI. It was decided that a committee would be created including representatives from each of the NAFI/NFI regions. These individuals would be responsible to search for potential software, to find the best products available and to report their findings to the larger group and to the Executive Team for evaluation. A formal Software Selection Committee (SSC) representing all five regions was born in late November 2005. The first tasks were to identify the purpose of the committee, ensure appropriate membership, set expectations and goals and formulate a plan. In addition to these agency representatives, over 40 additional staff members from all regions participated in corporate workgroups. The SSC spent a considerable amount of time designing the process of software selection from proposal writing and information gathering to detailed evaluation systems and plans, always ensuring full committee participation. The committee developed guidelines for all major components of the process (proposal review, proposal evaluation, reference check questions, live demonstration guidelines, etc). The timeline and processes were all well thought out and inclusive of voices from all corporations. All of this work resulted in the creation and dissemination of a 38-page Request for Proposals (RFP) that was released to 27 potential vendors on June 1, 2006.

The SSC conducted an initial review of each response to the RFP and created summary guides for comparison purposes. Each region then formed a subcommittee to read and evaluate each proposal. Each subcommittee was comprised of at least one of each of the following: a program/clinical representative, an administrative representative, a billing representative and

an additional person whose focus was on quality management, outcome or staff development, information technology or human resources. Many regions had additional members. Members were given the SSC created summary guides to aid in their independent review of each proposal. These subcommittees then met to discuss the proposals and rank each of the eight responses to the RFP that were received. A recommendation to the SSC committee about who to invite for the next phase (live software demonstrations) was then made based on those rankings. During this time period, the SSC members also made reference calls to organizations currently using the vendor's software. Both the NAFI/NFI IT User Forum and MindShift, NAFI's contracted network administrator, were relied upon as a technical resource throughout the RFP writing and proposal review process. They developed the technical piece of the RFP, evaluated the proposals and provided both clarification and guidance to committee members during review.

Based on this review and additional web demonstrations, it was decided that Netsmart Technologies, Askesis Software, and Defran Systems, would be invited to demonstrate their software for the Committee. The live software demonstrations took place across three days in late September at our corporate headquarters in Danvers, Massachusetts. Detailed planning ensured best use of time, as guidelines were provided to the demonstrating vendors and to the 33 attendees representing all NAFI/NFI regions. An evaluation document was created to be utilized during the demonstrations and participants wrote down "parking lot"/unanswered questions that were given to the vendors a few days after the demo and returned to the larger SSC for review.

Netsmart and Defran were evaluated as extremely competitive products. In terms of scoring, Netsmart edged out Defran. However, Defran came off as having more general capabilities in the comments section of the feedback forms. The SSC held additional WebEx demonstrations with the two vendors that focused on the weaker aspects of the software products and were able to inquire in depth about our concerns. We also conducted additional *continued on page 2*

## Defran Evolution *continued from page 1*

in-depth second round reference checks with two new organizations for each of the products and formed a finance sub-committee. This group met on many occasions to dissect the pricing component of the two proposals and begin clarification and negotiations. Also, a site visit to an existing customer who is similar in size and complexity was performed.

After completing a sound process with active involvement across the agency, the SSC recommended to the NAFI/NFI Executive Team the purchase of Evolv-CS, the software developed by Defran Systems.

Defran has a rich, 20+ year history as a leading innovator in the development of comprehensive and scalable client, case and fiscal management information systems for human service organizations. Their customers range from some of the nation's largest non-profits and government agencies to smaller community-based service providers operating a wide spectrum of human service programs and serving a variety of populations. Additionally, Defran offers a wide array of technology and human service industry consulting and educational services.

With the addition of NAFI/NFI to its growing client roster, Defran Systems now has a presence in 30 states in the continental US.

The SSC was dissolved and the Software Implementation Team (SIT) was formed using the same all-inclusive structure. An all-agency team was formed and began the task of collecting information needed for the implementation. The first step was gathering information from each program about their procedures and required paperwork. This information was presented in flow charts identifying who was involved in the process, what the major steps are, and when each of the required forms need to be completed.

From that beginning point, the System setups began. Once again, the core group began meeting on a regular basis to work through defining a system that will work for all regions. Defran Systems has a very structured and detailed implementation plan. This standard plan was modified to fit with NAFI/NFI's diverse service mix and large geographic service area. The resulting plan calls for the base system setups being completed for all regions first, and then the more program specific setups being split into two Rollout Groups. Roll-

out 1 includes NFI MA, NFI North and NFI Vermont. Rollout 2 will include the NAFI regions in FL, MD, NY, RI and VA, as well as NAFI CT. Representatives from all regions have been invited to participate in Rollout 1 setups, so the Rollout 2 process, scheduled to begin at the completion of Rollout 1, will benefit from the work that has already been completed. Each region has established its own workgroup, and these groups are providing the necessary detail to complete the system setup work.

This brings us to where we are in the process today. The details of the system setups are being defined and entered into the system. A vision of how the software will be used on a daily basis by staff is being created. Each of us has a role in defining this vision. We would encourage everyone to become involved in any way you can to help bring this system to life. We have every confidence in the Agency leaders who have committed themselves to the process and are impressed on a daily basis by the dedication of the core group and the regional workgroups. There is much work to be done, but together we will define this powerful tool to enable NAFI/NFI to serve clients more effectively for years to come.

## Dr. Bakal's Corner *continued from page 1*

Unfortunately, most groups in the larger community put their self interests first. It is a rare occurrence, for example, that police or doctors break the code of silence and openly confront their colleagues if they witness wrong doing or questionable behavior. The Normative Community Approach strives to reverse that norm and bring belief in the importance of the common good back into the forefront by putting emphasis on mutual accountability and responsibility in all of our communities. What people learn is that when we put our community first and we are all vested and responsible members, holding each other to certain expectations, we *are* being loyal to our friends and to ourselves. The two sides need

not be mutually exclusive.

Another societal pressure we see emulated in our program communities is the notion of "no snitching." Many of our adolescent clients come from backgrounds where enormous amounts of distrust and exclu-



[A group of students hold a group at one of NAFI/NFI's programs](#)

sion exist. Many of our youth put loyalty to themselves or

friends first out of a need for self-preservation. What they don't see at the beginning is that adhering to this no snitching mentality only adds to much of the violence they've experienced; and that these destructive actions are in fact the glue that perpetuates a gang culture or mentality; where each member is asked to sacrifice themselves in order to be loyal to their "leaders." This type of behavior never puts the common good first and very rarely even has the best interest of its own members at heart.

We strive to address this issue at our programs by observing the progress youth make as they spend more and more time in a Normative community environment. We can see



[Confrontation and feedback](#)

their willingness to confront their peers in front of staff increase over time, as does their use of language that emphasizes "we" and "the community/group." One of the greatest joys is to visit one of our adolescent programs and see this phenomena developing first-hand.

Slowly but surely, with fidelity to our approach and with loyalty to our mission, we can bring community loyalty back into the forefront.

## Notes From All Over—Updates, News and Announcements from the NAFI/NFI Landscape

**Connecticut:** We recently held our 4th Annual Conference. This year's event was at the Nathan Hale Inn, on the UCONN campus. The theme for 2007 was "Learning to Listen, Listening to Learn," and as always was an enormous success. The Conference is an opportunity to recognize the hard work and dedication of NAFI CT employees and the following awards were presented:

**Program Director's Choice Award**—Rosina Daniels, Angie Jacques, Rosaina Rivera, Katie Holland, Antonio Vasquez, Troy Wolcott, Cathy Callaghan, Bernadette Howard, Bryan Roberts and the O&T program received the Team Award for Ongoing Dedication.

**Staff Choice Award**—Angie Lozano, Andres Martinez, Deb Campbell, Maureen Samuels, Amanda Bender, Sue Beaudoin, Laura Pires, Iris Lopez, Jennifer Raleigh, Joel Fulton, Kenisha Farquharson and Andy Torres. Congratulations to all for your hard work!!!

**Florida:** A few residents and staff from **DeFuniak Springs** participated in **FIRST** (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Vex Challenge competition that was held on June 26, 2007. Our team was one of the newest teams and almost won the competition with a 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish. However, the team was awarded the "**Best Designed Robot**" in the competition. This program is designed to create an opportunity for youth to pursue high tech careers related to engineering and technology by becoming a pathway that leads to hope for all youth, with special emphasis on at-

risk youth. **FIRST** allows youth the opportunity to learn life long skills such as planning, research, collaboration, mentoring, and teamwork while at the same time have fun.

**NFI MA: Shelter Care** has received final approval to move to their newly renovated site at the former Lakeside School in Peabody. Renovations are ongoing at the program's original Middleton site and soon, a new NFI MA program will set up on its grounds.

**Mid-Atlantic:** This has been the year for education at the **Egenton House**, a 12 bed residential program for girls in Baltimore. Early this summer, two girls graduated from high school, two completed their GEDs, and one finished elementary school. Further, three staff members received their college degrees. In total, **eight girls and staff achieved educational milestones!!** Keep up the good work! The Juvenile Aid & Volunteer Auxiliary, a local citizens group whose mission is to enrich the lives of our youth, has completed a banner year in their fundraising efforts. Of note, is a great fundraiser held at the very swanky Love's Night Club in DC hosted by Academy Award winner, Jamie Foxx! More than 300 supporters attended this event and **\$8,000 was raised** for our Maryland programs and kids.

**NFI North: Midway Shelter on the Move!**

The planning board of the town of Bradford, New Hampshire voted unanimously to approve NFI's relocation of our Midway Shelter from Manchester to our new

site in Bradford. The program wasted no time with this approval and moved on July 24<sup>th</sup> into our newly renovated facility, complete with 30 acres of woods and fields. The boys have already enjoyed mountain biking, swimming at the local lake and plan to take full advantage of the river that runs through the property for swimming and fishing, as well as the huge green house and barn. The land will also be a wonderful lab for the natural sciences once school is in swing. Many thanks to the staff team for all their hard work in making this move a reality.

**Bradford School Opens for Business**

NFI North's Bradford School opened for business just as the school year was winding down. Summer school though is now in full swing and we already have a growing roster of students for the fall. The staff has done a great job getting the program off to a wonderful start. Kudos to the team.

**NFI North Conference Approaches**

The Training committee has been going great guns to organize the Annual Conference. **The Conference will take place on September 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>** at Attitash Grand Peak Conference Center and represents our 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. This year the theme is "Enhancing Our Game Plan: Standing Out in Our Field." Training topics this year run the gambit from play therapy techniques to communicating with different learning styles. Staff recognition awards will also be presented during the event and there will be plenty of team building activities, not the least of which is the fierce

volleyball competition!

**Rhode Island:** On the home front, the RI Network has created a flag football league this summer, under the direction of **Mark Rhynard**, Director of Oakland Beach and the MASH Team. Over 30 staff have volunteered their time to coach, referee, keep statistics, and guide the cheerleaders. Several fundraisers were held to buy team jerseys, cheerleader uniforms, and equipment. Every Thursday the teams face off. There are 60 residents participating as players or cheerleaders. The playoffs and championship game will be held in late August. Players will be recognized for team and individual achievements at a banquet in September.

**This month, we look forward to our Annual Network Field Day** and a deep sea fishing trip sponsored by a local fishing club.

**NAFI CORP: New long-term disability (LTD) insurance carrier offers enhanced Employee Assistance Program (EAP).**

On July 1, 2007, CIGNA became NAFI/NFI's new long-term disability (LTD) insurance carrier. The transition from one insurance company to the other was seamless. The big news is the significant enhancement to Employee Assistance Program (EAP) benefits, provided within the context of our LTD plan. Previously, EAP services were available by telephone only. The new EAP - called CIGNA'S Life Assistance Program (LAP) - offers services telephonically, online and face-to-face!

Brochures are forthcoming, as well as other valuable information about this comprehensive and exciting new program.

## Looking for Arts Funding?? The NAFI/NFI Arts Initiative Can Help By Jay Paris,

**Deputy Director Strategic Planning, Marketing and Training**

If you've been thinking of ways to fund a special arts project at your program, help may be no farther than the Corporate Office.

In 2004, Dr. Bakal launched the NAFI/NFI Arts Initiative to raise funds to assist our clients to express themselves through visual arts, music, creative writing and drama. To date, we have raised over \$45,000 from employees, business partners, and friends of NAFI/NFI who recognize the power of the arts in helping our young people and adults progress in all phases of their lives. The money raised from these ongoing efforts has directly benefited NAFI/NFI programs and services, and has also become a springboard for attracting corporate and foundation contributions and grants.

From the Fund's inception, a governing Arts Initiative Committee (AIC) was formed, made up of NAFI/NFI staff representing every region. Each quarter, the AIC reviews funding requests, seeking to award as many as possible. To maximize the effectiveness of the funds, the Committee encourages submissions of up to \$1,500, although greater amounts have been considered. Currently, over ninety percent of the diverse and imaginative applications have received funding – a very favorable ratio to those seeking support!

A few examples of projects the AIC has funded include helping the Buffalo Mountain School in Hardwick, Vermont, create one of the Green Mountain State's most original bands by underwriting the cost of purchasing Caribbean steel drums; The RI Net-

work received funds to offset costs of a three-week, cross country educational trip for clients and staff (see below); and C.A.M.P. Amesbury, a girls program in Massachusetts, received funding to employ the Actor's Shakespeare Company to help them produce an impressive production of Romeo and Juliet.

As a non-profit social services agency, NAFI/NFI receives the bulk of its funding for treatment programs from state agencies. Unfortunately, the cost of operating NAFI/NFI's arts programs and projects are not allowed in these budgets. But even with these limitations, NAFI/NFI has produced a strong track record of integrating the performing and visual arts with treatment in breakthrough ways. The Committee encourages you to be creative and apply. The schedule for reviewing funding requests is as follows:

- By April 30<sup>th</sup>, for requests received on or before March 31<sup>st</sup>
- By July 31<sup>st</sup>, for requests received on or before June 30<sup>th</sup>
- By October 31<sup>st</sup>, for requests received on or before September 30<sup>th</sup>
- By January 31<sup>st</sup>, for requests received on or before December 31<sup>st</sup>

To receive an application form and guidelines, please write to Shelly Waldman, AIC Chair ([shellywaldman@nafi.com](mailto:shellywaldman@nafi.com)).

## RI Network Travels Another Successful Road to Life

**By MaryAnne McIntyre, Education Director, RI Network**

Three brave students from the ACE Program ventured out on the "Road to Life" again this spring, accompanied by Mary Anne McIntyre, Dana Maguire, and John Basiliere. "RTL 2" was a modified version of the original Road to Life trip, covering two weeks instead of three, and a mere 6000 miles.

Packed tightly into a van, the group set out for Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming on Memorial Day weekend. They took the long way, stopping overnight in Kentucky, Missouri, Kansas, and Cheyenne, Wyoming before finally reaching their destination. Yellowstone never disappoints. They were greeted at the park entrance by a bald eagle, and shared their campsite with several wandering buffalo. During their stay, they also saw a grizzly bear, a grey wolf, herds of elk and antelope and bighorn sheep. The geysers, waterfalls and snow-capped mountains were an awesome backdrop for some unforgettable experiences. From Yellowstone, they traveled through the Black Hills and Badlands of South Dakota, before making a record breaking 36 hour drive back to Providence.

This trip was made possible by the generous support of the NAFI Arts Initiative, and all the staff in RI and throughout the agency who purchased our canvas bags and t-shirts. We are very grateful for so much support.



A group of buffalo enjoy the crowds!



The Road-to-Lifers reach YNP!

### Criteria for Arts Initiative Funding

The Arts Initiative Committee will use the criteria listed below in order to make its funding decisions:

1. Extent to which the request demonstrates the program's/service's commitment to the arts;
2. The impact of the request on all members of the community;
3. The amount of funds being requested from the Committee (not to exceed \$1,500);
4. The amount of matching funds received through the program's/service's own fundraising efforts, if applicable;
5. The value of the program's/service's sweat equity that will be provided in order to achieve its arts-related goal or objective. (To clarify, sweat equity is the non-financial contribution that is made to a project by people who contribute their time and effort.);
6. The funding is not available through other funding mechanisms;
7. The sustainability of the proposed request and;
8. Whether or not the program/service has been the recipient of Arts Initiative funding in the past.