

# Group Assets

The Newsletter of the  
Group Foundation  
for Advancing Mental Health

Spring 2014

## First Steps on the Journey to AGPA

Connie Concannon, LCSW, CGP, DFAGPA, Editor, *Group Assets*

All those who attended the AGPA Annual Meeting in Boston experienced the vibrancy and the palatable excitement that was alive at this conference. It was one of the best-attended meetings, exceeding our projected registration, and we received great evaluations. The vibrancy and energy can be attributed to a growing number of new faces that represent the students and new professionals who are filling our Institutes, Workshops, and Panels. And the Friday night dance was kicked up a notch by those new attendees, who made the event look like something out of *Dancing with the Stars!* Our new additions to membership are bright, focused, and involved, and they can break out some awesome dance moves.

As you know, the growing number of new faces is a direct result of the Scholarship Program, which started with very limited awards in 1982 but blossomed after 2001. The Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health has built up the program, now giving more than 140 scholarships annually. Collectively, we have awarded more than 2,000 scholarships since the program's inception. The letters that scholarship recipients write about their experiences at the Annual Meeting are appreciative and glowing testimonials. Many have reported that coming to the Annual Meeting was a turning point in their professional lives, strengthening their knowledge and belief in group psychotherapy. In the words of one

scholarship recipient, "To say that it was a remarkable experience would be an understatement, for it was nothing short of professionally and personally transformative."

Something even more exciting has taken root out of our initial scholarships. Over the last 12 years, the new faces have become familiar faces and are now a committed part of our community. They are part of the faculty, the governance, and even the contributors to the Scholarship Fund where they got their first introductions to AGPA and group psychotherapy training. They are in the large groups, the small groups, the special interest groups, and they have a clear voice and a strong presence in all of them.

One of the recipients put it this way, "It's a great experience to attend AGPA Annual Meetings. I am very grateful to the Group Foundation and AGPA for providing me the scholarship. Attending the AGPA Annual Meeting opens a door for me to enter into the group therapy field, to get the most advanced training, and to establish relationships with American and international colleagues. From these relationships, we developed group psychotherapy training programs in Shanghai, China, working with Professor Priscilla Kauff, PhD, CGP, DLFAGPA, Professor Jeffrey Kleinberg, PhD, CGP, DFAGPA, and Nina Thomas, PhD, ABPP. Also at the AGPA Annual Meeting, I encountered

the International Association of Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes (IAGP) and became the member of its Board of Directors. Because of all these encounters and relationships, we had the opportunity to organize the Ninth IAGP Pacific Rim Regional Congress in Beijing in 2014. My experience, and also my colleagues' experiences, in the AGPA are so helpful, not just for our personal growth, also for the development of group psychotherapy in China."

What a remarkable testament to how far reaching the gesture of providing this experience is. We are not only providing training for the students but in a real way supporting the development of our future leaders.

I, like many of you, am deeply touched by what has been shared by all of these participants, and it is gratifying to know how much they get and ultimately give back to AGPA and the Group Foundation. It made me wonder how they started down the road to AGPA knowing it is such an important first step in a life-long journey. Some of the letters referred to where they heard about AGPA and who encouraged them to make the first step. Many introductions came from their residency training programs, graduate school training programs, and from supervisors who suggested that they take advantage of this opportunity. Interestingly, more and more of our scholarship recipients are hearing about AGPA from fellow

*continued on back*

## Honoring My Mentor: Morris Goodman, PhD

Jeff Brand, MA

*The Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health is pleased to present the winning entry of the 2014 Honor Your Mentor Essay Contest. This essay and all other essays submitted are posted on the AGPA website. Please consider making a contribution in honor of your mentor and perhaps even submitting an essay for the 2015 Honor Your Mentor Essay Contest.*

"You get the group you deserve," Morrie said.

Oh...What does it mean then that he described my group as more of a social club than psychotherapy? I had recently assumed responsibility for a long-running group as part of my clinical program at Rutgers University. As its newest member, I was still trying to get my feet underneath me when a twist of fate cost me my co-leader. My supervisor, Morris Goodman, PhD, was the proverbial ground control for

what seemed like my personal space capsule.

By his admission, Morrie does not "do" social graces. Most mornings, he leaves my, "Hey, how are you?" hanging in the air. I initially begrudged his approach to supervision. At times it felt standoffish, but mostly I played nonchalance atop a vulnerable desire for him to be proud of me. Meanwhile, my group bobbed along, huddling together for an hour and a half against the cruel world. I kept wondering what was stopping them from taking more risks? What would it take for them to show themselves to one another? It's like they were stuck, kind of, well, like I was stuck.

And when you realize he's right—that you have led the group to a moment in which you must either hope for a member to do the work of being present in a way that you cannot, or else face the same struggles

as they do—he is there with you.

He is there with you because he has not given away his ability to be there as himself by trying to be something you imagine him to be. He is there with you in a way that allows you to make a choice that is clearly your own, a choice that cannot fundamentally threaten him, or you, or your relationship with him, anymore than it allows you to forget that the choice is yours, what you deserve. It's rare to find a supervisor who is willing to make so many of the hard choices necessary to be there in that way.

What would it be like to really show yourself? Kinda scary, and liberating.

Thanks for everything, Morrie.



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## Group Foundation Honors Scholarship and Award Winners

During the American Group Psychotherapy Association's (AGPA) 71st Annual Meeting in Boston, March 3-8, the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health, the philanthropic arm of the AGPA, sponsored a luncheon honoring scholarship and award winners, as well as the generous contributors who make the program possible. A myriad of tuition, travel and monetary awards, supporting the training of group therapists and the use of group in communities to effect change, are distributed through the Foundation. Those recognized included:

- Kathy Rider, LCSW, CGP, FAGPA, who received the Social Responsibility Award for her sustained, decades-long work in social service organizations that serve the most vulnerable citizens in Austin, Texas, particularly mental health consumers and children.
- Jacqueline Kinley, MD, FRCPC, and Sandra Reyno, PhD, both of whom received the Alonso Award for Excellence in Psychodynamic Group Therapy for their work, *Attachment Style Changes Following Intensive Short-*

*Term Group Psychotherapy.*

- The Boston Gay Men's Chorus, which received the Aaron Stein Memorial Award for its creative use of groups in non-therapeutic settings to benefit the community.
- Jeff Brand, who won the Honor Your Mentor Essay contest for his essay in honor of his mentor, Morris Goodman, PhD.
- More than 140 individuals who received scholarships to attend the meeting, supported through endowed scholarship funds, private donations and corporate grants.

"The Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health is privileged to honor those whose use of groups in clinical and community settings helps people in need," said Phyllis Cohen, PhD, PsyD, CGP, FAGPA, Chairwoman of the Board. "This luncheon was also our opportunity to publicly thank our donors, whose generous contributions make it possible for us to carry out our mission, including the training of those new to the field."

## First Steps

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students or colleagues who received this award and encouraged them to apply for the same. I guess good news travels fast! Others have heard about this program through their local Affiliate Society or co-workers who had received group training and told them about this unique opportunity. Some are even introduced to us by their parents—imagine, second gen-

eration AGPA members! Regardless of the source of the introduction, it is clear that there was an enthusiastic invitation to become more involved in group psychotherapy training for their professional development and that the place to start is at the AGPA Annual Meeting. The fact that the Group Foundation has the Scholarship Program in place made that first step in the journey possible.

Like most first steps, they are

vitaly important. It is vital that we all focus more on those initial invitations and think of ways to identify those who are just starting their professional journey.

I want to thank all of you who have provided the support that has made it possible for so many new professionals to join us in that journey by donating to the program and by reaching out and welcoming our newer colleagues.

## In Memoriam Contributions

(donor is listed in parentheses)

Fern Cramer Azima (Elizabeth Knight, Lisa Mahon & Phil Flores)  
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