

groupassets



Happy Diamond Anniversary!

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

A 75th anniversary is called the diamond anniversary. It is sometimes referred to as the diamond jubilee and is considered the pinnacle of anniversary celebrations. Diamonds are the strongest substances on Earth, as well as one of the most beautiful and, therefore, represent such an esteemed occasion.

This reflects how I feel about this landmark anniversary for AGPA. AGPA is a gem of a professional organization. It's not the biggest, but it shines the brightest by providing the best professional home for dedicated group clinicians representing diverse disciplines and theoretical orientations.

Our organization was birthed out of the dedication and commitment of our predecessors who came together to deal with the increased need to provide the mental health services for World War II veterans returning home. Out of sheer necessity, the clinicians serving this population began to see them in groups and were able to observe the power of the group. They discovered that group therapy wasn't just a delivery system but a distinctive therapeutic intervention that was both potent and nuanced. They became passionate about group psychotherapy and the potential applications in mental health, in teaching and training, and in organizational psychology. This passion was contagious and has been passed down over the last 75 years.

I know because my father, Joseph Concannon, MSW, was a part of that group who dedicated a large part of his professional life to the practice of group psychotherapy. That passion and dedication clearly got passed down to me. What fuels my passion today is the same excitement that our organization's founders experienced. They discovered that working together as a group to teach, debate, research, write, and govern the organization was a fertile ground for learning that was stimulating and engaging. They discovered what neurobiology has defined as a core tenet: The brain is a social organ, and we learn the most in relationships with others. The vibrancy of this concept shines at our Annual Meetings and has been alive in every conference over the last 75 years.

AGPA's founders were dedicated to group psychotherapy, as well as committed to providing leadership and

governance to our organization. These weren't short-term commitments; they were relational long-term commitments that have spanned over generations. I credit the ability to sustain these long-term relationships as an essential part of the reason that we are celebrating our 75th Anniversary. We were able to navigate difficult times and significant challenges together, making sacrifices, taking risks, ironing out differences, and coming to consensus. We have built a strong base and have created an open space for the next generation, which is vital for our organizational health.

The membership in our organization cannot be solely credited with our success and sustainability. It is shared with our fantastic administrative staff under our CEO Marsha Block, CAE, CFRE. We literally couldn't have succeeded without her leadership. If AGPA is a gem of an organization, it's because we have had a great jeweler in Marsha. Over the last 40 years, she has worked in partnership with our leadership to face our challenges with creativity, perseverance, and courage. As CEO, she has always recognized a "diamond in the rough," whether that be a person or an idea. She has been able to see potential, shape and define the design, and in the end make it shine.

This is evident in her ability to forge partnerships within our tri-organizational leadership. Her partnership with Anne Alonso, PhD, CGP, DLFAGPA, and Ruth Hochberg, PhD, CGP, DFAGPA, changed the course of the Group Foundation and has grown it into a vital organization that has been essential in supporting our sustainability and generativity. Her partnership with K. Roy MacKenzie, MD, CGP, DFAGPA, during his presidency, was instrumental in creating the Certification Board and the Certified Group Psychotherapist (CGP) credential, which has done an incredible job in maintaining a criteria for standards of practice in group therapy. Our tri-organizational model has created an organization that is strong and reflective of the needs of our membership. Three diamonds create a beautiful eternity band. No wonder we are celebrating our 75th Anniversary.

Marsha, as wonderful as she is, has not guided us alone. The administrative staff she has put together over the years is phenomenal. I can't say enough about Diane Feirman, CAE, Public Affairs Senior Director, and Angela Stephens, CAE, Professional Development Senior Director. It has been my pleasure to work with them over the last 25 years. I'm impressed with their competency, grace, and humor. Whatever job I had, I did it better because I worked with them. They have my gratitude and my respect. I consider them my friends and an important part of my community.

It's important to recognize how unusual it is for an organization to have an administrative staff that has served for such long periods of time. Marsha has been here for more than 40 years; Angela has been here for over 30; and Diane for almost 25. Collectively, they have dedicated almost 100 years of service to our organizations. It's hard to wrap your head around that number and

Continues on next page

THE FACES OF OUR FOUNDATION

Paul LePhuoc, PhD, CGP, a recipient of the Anne Alonso Scholarship for the 2011 Annual Meeting, has gone from being a scholarship recipient to being a part of leadership serving as a Director of the International Board for Certification of Group Psychotherapists and a contributor to the Group Foundation. Here he shares his inspiration and his journey in AGPA.



"I applied for my first AGPA scholarship in 2010, while I was a predoctoral psychology intern at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston, Texas. Much of my clinical work that year involved group psychotherapy, but there was little to no mention of group therapy in the internship training curriculum. I'm sure this is a widespread occurrence in clinical training across mental health disciplines.

"I was awarded the Anne Alonso Scholarship, enabling me to attend the 2011 Annual Meeting in New York City, and connecting me to a whole new world of friends, colleagues, teachers, and scholars of group psychotherapy. I quickly learned that the caliber of group training was unrivaled, but moreover, the quality of connections with like-minded professional peers was what immediately attracted me to claim AGPA as my professional home.

"I opened my private practice in 2012 immediately after the completion of my post-doctoral fellowship. Since then, I have started and continue to run two thriving weekly psychotherapy groups. Being a group therapist is central to my professional identity, and I'm thrilled to contribute each year to the Group Foundation, paying it forward so that other trainees and new professionals can experience the transformational power of AGPA."

Paul's story is a wonderful example of the positive impact of our scholarship program. It opens doors for students and new professionals to attend the AGPA Annual Meeting, become members of our community, and, indeed, shapes their professional lives and how they then give back to our organization. Paul's is just one story of the many faces of our Foundation.

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As we approach our 75th Anniversary Annual Meeting, won't you donate to our Scholarship Program, enabling other students and new professionals to begin their professional journey with us? Donate today at www.agpa.org/foundation.



2016 Community of Givers

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ANNIVERSARY

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how we have benefited from that. Their experience, dedication, and competency have shaped our organization in ways that are not always visible.

When I think about what we have accomplished at this 75th Anniversary I'm moved and proud. One of the noblest goals in life is to leave the world in a better place than one you were born in. As I reflect on all the contributions

that generations of members have made in supporting the Group Foundation to make this a better organization and preserve the group psychotherapy field for the next generation, it fills me with hope. Our Scholarship Program is an example of the generosity and thoughtfulness of our organization. This is reflected in the letters of hundreds of scholarship recipients and their stories. We are featuring

one such story in this issue of *Group Assets* as we debut a new format and look in celebration and commemoration of our 75th Anniversary.

Our legacy is one to be proud of and cause for celebration. It makes us shine! Thank you to all of our supporters for being a part of it. I look forward to continuing the journey with you for the next 75 years! 🎉

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EDITOR
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