

Group Assets



The Newsletter of the
Group Foundation
for Advancing Mental Health
Spring 2013

Giving In Celebration

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

There are many ways that we can support the good work of the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health by fund raising. We are most familiar with the annual donations that go into our Leadership Fund to support community outreach, research, and the daily operations of the Group Foundation and the Scholarship Fund that gives new students, new professionals, and those in need the ability to attend AGPA's Annual Meeting. Letters of appreciation received from scholarship recipients can be viewed online at www.agpa.org/foundation/Thank%20you%20letters%202013.pdf. If you attended the Annual Meeting Luncheon, you couldn't help but be impressed by the numbers of attendees who stood up to be recognized for their scholarships. We saw the faces of many of the next generation of therapists who were fully engaged in the experience of our Annual Meeting. You may have met them in workshops and institutes and may have heard what I did—an appreciation of what they were learning, as well as a heartfelt appreciation of the generosity evident in AGPA that allowed to them to be part of the Annual Meeting. If you went to the Friday night dance, you could see the spirit of celebration, connection, and energy that they brought with them as the week ended.

It is gratifying to see all that we have done to encourage our new professional colleagues and how they were flourishing in what they learned and in being part of our wonderful community. It reminded me how satisfying it is for all of us, not just the “newbies,” to feel recognized and supported by our professional community.

Recognizing this, the Foundation instituted the Honor Your Mentor Award. This program encourages members to submit an essay about impact that their mentors had on their lives. The essays are moving and remind us of how much many of us contribute to our field both in and out of AGPA. This year's winning essay (which appears on page 2 of this issue) was done by Clifton August, Jr. in recognition of his mentor Scott Fehr, PsyD, CGP. I had the opportunity to talk to Scott and Cliff. They were both moved and gratified by the acknowledgement of this special relationship and connection.

This year, I too had the distinct honor of being recognized for my contributions to AGPA by receiving the Distinguished Fellowship Award, along with my dear colleagues and friends, Patricia Barth, PhD, CGP, DLFAGPA, and Elliot Ziesel, PhD, LCSW, CGP, DFAGPA. Beyond giving my acceptance speech

and sharing my heartfelt gratitude to all of you, I was moved by the spontaneous gifts of contribution to the Foundation that were given in my name to celebrate my receiving this award. I know Pat and Elliott felt the same way. It has so much more meaning to me than other personal gifts. Knowing that these gifts would support the work that I believe in, and the organization that I love, added even more to this honor. It brought home to me the concept of celebration and contribution in a meaningful way, and I will never forget it.

This theme continued when Elliott Ziesel was feted in celebration of his Distinguished Fellowship with an event that raised \$15,000 in his name for the Foundation. I heard it was a wonderful event that everyone enjoyed and supported a worthy cause. This kind of celebration contributes to the cohesion of our community and the viability of our organization, and takes this award to another level. Congratulations to both Elliott and the Foundation for having such a successful event.

Beyond AGPA, many members have distinguished themselves in their local communities and their professional disciplines with causes for celebration that we often don't even hear about. A good example of this was the news that I heard at a Group Foundation Board Meeting when Karen Travis, MSW, LCSW, CGP, FAGPA, let us know that in 2012 she was named the Social Worker of the Year for the State of Louisiana. While I wasn't surprised that Karen's enthusiasm, leadership, and dedication reached well beyond our organization, I was impressed. As a fellow social worker, I felt a sense of pride that one of our own had achieved this recognition. I marked the occasion by making a donation in her name and other Group Foundation Board members joined me. I know that this gesture meant a lot to her.

It occurred to me that if I wasn't on the Board with Karen, I may have never known about this achievement. I wondered how many others in our professional community have had these types of recognitions large and small that most of us have never heard about or celebrated. As group psychotherapists, we encourage our group members to own and express what they have accomplished and share their excitement with their group community. We do that because, even at the risk of evoking envy, we know that it's a good thing to encourage others to celebrate with us and build on the positive intentions and actions in a collective way. I hope

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Foundation Celebrates Scholarship and Award Winners

During the American Group Psychotherapy Association's (AGPA) 70th Annual Meeting in New Orleans, the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health sponsored a luncheon honoring more than 170 scholarship and award winners, as well as the generous contributors who made 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, were distributed through the Foundation.

Award recipients honored included:

- Cele Keeper, MSW, CGP, FAGPA, who received the Social Responsibility Award for her long and outstanding history of community service and volunteer leadership in the mental health and social justice arenas;
- Les Greene, PhD, CGP, FAGPA, who received the Alonso Award for Excellence in Psychodynamic Group Therapy for his work “Group Therapist as Social Scientist, with Special Reference to the

Psychodynamically Oriented Psychotherapist;”

- Charley Vance, who received the Aaron Stein Memorial Award for the creative use of groups in non-therapeutic settings to benefit the community for his work with The Tangipahoa Parish Talented Theater Movie Project; and
- Clifton August, Jr., who won the Honor Your Mentor Essay Contest for his essay in honor of his mentor, Scott Fehr, PsyD, CGP.

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Honoring My Mentor: Scott Fehr, PsyD, CGP Clifton August, Jr.

The Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health is pleased to present the winning entry of the 2013 Honor Your Mentor Essay Contest, submitted by Clifton August, Jr., in honor of Scott Fehr, PsyD, CGP. This essay and all other essays submitted will be posted on the AGPA website. Please consider making a contribution in honor of your mentor and perhaps even submitting an essay for the 2014 Honor Your Mentor Essay Contest.

While working at a gym, I met Dr. Fehr. He was working out in the local gym I managed in Hollywood, Florida. At that time, he had just returned from vacationing in Costa Rica, and I had just peeled myself off of my bed, a friend's couch. I can remember several things during that time: hating to see the sun glaring through the blinds in the morning, my mother and I were best "girlfriends," I was a complete flake, highly seductive and used sexuality as a means of relating. So I asked Dr. Fehr for his help and listening ear.

Dr. Fehr immediately decided not to accept me as a client, during our initial visit, but as a friend. After several painful conversations and many personal

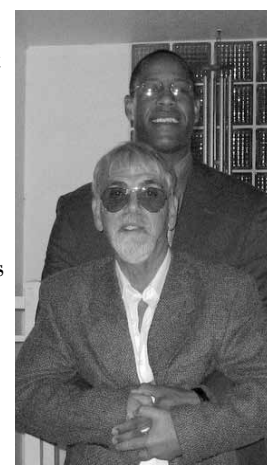
disclosures, I expressed a desire to return to school. Considering that Dr. Fehr had previously seen the environment I called home, he and his wife, Ellen, decided to open the doors of their home to me. This not only would allow me an opportunity to focus on my academics, but would provide me the chance to continue to grow into the man that I didn't know existed and the one he hoped I could become.

Dr. Fehr gave much of his available time to me and my aspirations in order not to recreate a tumultuous past in academia, which was a heartfelt gift as he has a private practice (which has been thriving for the past 33 years), recommitted himself to the classroom (teaching in Group Psychotherapy in the Master's and Doctoral College at Nova Southeastern University) and is presently contemplating writing a sixth book. He continues to maintain and provide a very loving example of a husband with Ellen and models the man, therapist, educator and friend, I aspire to be.

Dr. Fehr has provided me with innumerable conversations, where we process, share emotional dialogue and present all of the day's events. He has stood up

for me in ways and moments when my own parents could not muster the courage to defend their son. He has walked me through some of the toughest times of my adult life as he is focused on changing a very tattered past of mine. Dr. Fehr has single-handedly saved me from my own demise as the road I traveled, alone, before meeting him, was leading to the very pits of existence most therapists, mentors and friends only hope to aid anyone from. Scott is my friend, my very first friend. He is my champion that is there to cheer at all of my life events. He even revels in the smallest occurrences in my life. For him, the promotion I recently received, allowing me to work second shift instead of third shift, is celebrated by a gold watch, literally.

It is with great pleasure and excitement I offer my mentor for this honor.



Giving in Celebration

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we all do more of this with each other.

Celebration through contribution is also a meaningful way to acknowledge important events that mark our lives, like births, marriages, graduations, anniversaries,

and the end of life. From the beginning to the end and all that goes in between, it is important to allow people in our community to celebrate with us and to give to us in ways that feel good and enduring. The celebration and the acknowl-

edgement of these events builds strong connections and is truly healing. The contribution is the icing on the cake and an enduring gift. Thank you for your celebrations and your contributions. Let's do more of both.

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