I recently returned from a remarkable sharing of cultures and work experiences with about 100 esteemed Egyptian colleagues from Cairo, Alexandria, and surrounding areas. With the guidance of Dr. Mona Rakhawy and her colleagues at the Egyptian Association of Group Therapy (EAGT), I was invited to train 75 colleagues in couples and group therapy in a workshop sponsored by EAGT; to teach about 30 residents and senior faculty about group therapy at a major addictions treatment center in Cairo; and to give three informal talks on positive psychology at three locations of a popular bookstore chain in Cairo and Alexandria. It was a bit like going “back to the future” in the sense that I was more immersed in international training earlier in my career, and it was exciting to do it again.

I trained 55-75 colleagues for 18 hours over three days, using both video and simultaneous translation to insure clarity of understanding. Of course, many workshop participants spoke English, and some had been trained at the American University of Cairo, so they were quick to understand, enabling deeper learning.

I combined Power Point presentations with audience questions, role-playing, visual imagery, and the construction of a mock couples group that spoke Arabic while I led in English. Little by little, as we came to understand each other deeply, the enthusiasm of the audience became palpable. The mental health professionals were eager to learn how to help the high percentage of couples who are considering divorce. Some, who were trained as marriage counselors, were interested in learning basic communication skills to teach couples. Others, who were senior level academic and clinical psychiatrists and psychologists, were more interested in learning how to work with couples in groups. I felt I could offer them several alternatives to meet their diverse needs. There was clearly a strong common desire to provide service to clients needing help, which overcame any barriers to effective communication, and we all learned from each other in this spirit.

The level of knowledge about group therapy in Egypt is both global and technical. The global focus encompasses their vision that to live better lives, we must all learn from each other. This was clearly demonstrated as our vision that to live better lives, we must all learn from each other. This was clearly demonstrated. The level of knowledge about group therapy in Egypt is both global and technical.

The professional home for many of us. Home can mean a family group or a safe place. As in any family group, along with attachment come disagreements and occasional injuries. However, my experience when this occurs—this year being no exception—is the existence of a strong commitment within AGPA to talking things through. We are an organization committed to process. It is what we teach and what we do.

The past 75 years have included enormous social changes. When I read the history of AGPA over its 75 years, I am impressed with how we have continued to adapt to outside forces and events. Its early leaders were all white males, mostly psychiatrists. Then leadership changed to include psychologists, social workers, as well as other disciplines, then women, gays, and now we are working hard to have a more multicultural organizational leadership and membership. At the New Members Breakfast during the Annual Meeting, I noticed that everyone at my table was a person of color.

I want AGPA to feel like a safe place for everyone. Our organizational values include integrity and respect for each other. Prior to this year’s Annual Meeting, all faculty, board, and staff were asked to participate in diversity training. The Board and Annual Meeting Committee will be looking at ways to continue and heighten sensitivity to difference so that no one feels injured or marginalized for any reason.

And speaking of the Annual Meeting, it was fabulous! There was the usual rich array of educational offerings; its early leaders were all white males, mostly psychiatrists. Then leadership changed to include psychologists, social workers, as well as other disciplines, then women, gays, and now we are working hard to have a more multicultural organizational leadership and membership. And speaking of the Annual Meeting, it was fabulous! There was the usual rich array of educational offerings; its early leaders were all white males, mostly psychiatrists. Then leadership changed to include psychologists, social workers, as well as other disciplines, then women, gays, and now we are working hard to have a more multicultural organizational leadership and membership.

At the opening of the 2017 Annual Meeting, I was pleased to welcome our many first-time attendees. I then said, “Welcome home!” to everyone else. I meant that AGPA is a professional home for many of us. Home can mean a family group or a safe place. As in any family group, along with attachment come disagreements and occasional injuries. However, my experience when this occurs—this year being no exception—is the existence of a strong commitment within AGPA to talking things through. We are an organization committed to process. It is what we teach and what we do.

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Dear Editor:

I wanted to briefly comment on the newly designed Group Circle. I think it looks great. I really like seeing pictures of people being acknowledged for their contributions to the field of group psychotherapy or to AGPA. Having a face (in color no less) to go with what’s in writing helps bring life to the words, and feels much more related. I think that will motivate more people to read the Group Circle as it appears to be more reader friendly.

Scott Fehr, PsyD, CGP - Hollywood, Florida

FROM THE PRESIDENT

President Connie Concannon’s hilarious interview of our CEO Marsha Block, CAE, CFRE.

CC: So Marsha, do you have any plans to retire?

MB: I thought I’d take a lesson from my group therapist friends and die at my desk. Or maybe I’ll run for public office.

CC: Do you have any thoughts about who should replace you as CEO?

MB: Well, I hear Hilary Clinton is available.

CC: Hasn’t she suffered enough?

The 75th Anniversary was in evidence all week with historical and happy birthday! AGPA videos played in the registration area, our new 75th Anniversary logo on all paperwork and the Annual Meeting app, and a commemorative poster that is still available in the AGPA online store. For me, the anniversary celebration was a meaningful blend of past, present, and future.

The past was well represented by several historical videos and by two awards. Irvin Yalom, MD, DLFGPA, received our first Lifetime Achievement Award. This giant in the field of group psychotherapy is still writing and thinking about group therapy and is preparing to write a 6th edition of his classic book The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy in collaboration with Molvyn Lestz, MD, COP, DFAGPA. In addition, Norman Neiberg, PhD, CGP, DLFAGPA, a Past President, was honored with the Harold S. Bernard Training Award for over 60 years of serving on training agencies. A preliminary draft is now under review.

This year’s successful Annual Meeting and 75th Anniversary celebration was the work of many, many people. The Annual Meeting Co-Chairs and their Committee, the faculty, and the 75th Anniversary Task Force and their members all deserve our great appreciation. However, I’d like to give special recognition to the AGPA staff for their hard work not only during the meeting week but also during the weeks in advance. Navigating some staff turnover made for extra challenges, and these professional women shouldered a lot. A big thank you to all!

As always, I welcome comments about this column and anything else. EleanorF@Counselman.com.

Miriam Iosupovici, MSW LMFT - Imperial Beach, California

ADVERTISING RATES

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Call Nicole Millman-Falk at 201-652-6817 for further details.
On Friday, May 5, Cecil Rice died peacefully at his home. Cecil had known his death was coming from the cancer he fought but could not defeat, and like so much in his life, he accepted it without anger or self-pity. He was known for his wisdom, kindness, and humor. The latter two are all the more amazing given the traumas he and his wife Shirley endured throughout their lives.

As a small child, Cecil endured the bombing of his hometown, Belfast, during WWII. He reported that he referred to the Germans who bombed him as "germs," so that he "could hate them." Later, he lived through The Troubles in Northern Ireland, where neighbors killed neighbors.

In 1963, Cecil and Shirley, and their two-year-old daughter boarded a tramp steamer and spent 10 rough days at sea immigrating to America. Cecil said that interacting with the small and very diverse group of passengers on that ship was "my first group experience." Cecil came to America to get his PhD at Boston University School of Theology; that doctoral program exposed him to group therapy, which became his lifelong passion.

Though he lived in America most of his life, his lilting Irish accent never left him. Indeed, after one of his teaching sessions, a foreign-born student (for whom English was her second language) turned to a colleague and said, "I know what he's saying is brilliant, but my English isn't good enough to understand him." Her colleague replied, "I'm a native born American and I can't understand him either. But, you right, he's brilliant!"

Coming to America did not end his trauma; they became even more personal, as his only daughter and only two grandchildren were murdered. Rather than living a life filled with anger and blaming, which he had every right to do, Cecil turned his professional life to helping others deal with trauma. Somehow he remained loving, optimistic, and giving. In the face of all that he suffered, all who knew him emphasized him as a truly remarkable man whose inspiration of others will surely outlive him.

Across numerous decades, Cecil made many significant contributions to AGPA, the field of group psychotherapy, and to a great many of us individually. He will be greatly missed.

J. Scott Rutan, PhD, CGP-R, DFAGPA

Cecil Rice, PhD, CGP, DLFAGPA

LEARNING FROM TEACHING IN EGYPT

had sufficient motivation to pursue further training for advanced work with couples needing help. The class I taught at the Cairo Center for Addiction, founded by Dr. Yehia Rakhawy, was also a delight: Advanced work with couples needing help. Time flew as we discovered compatible ways of conceptualizing work with groups of residential patients.

I approached the bookstore talks with some trepidation. Would people show up? Would they speak English? Would they have interest in academic positive psychology? The answer to all three questions was a resounding "yes!" More than 65 adults of all ages turned up to discuss how to have deeper happiness in 2017. They asked discerning questions and contributed their own experiences to the talk, which created an international forum for all in attendance. A major Cairo newspaper covered the event, effectively bringing mental health research to the public.

If all this professional stimulation were not enough, add the dimension that I was personally escorted to some of the remarkable wonders of our world that Egypt, with its rich history and visually compelling landscape offers all who live there or visit. From my camel ride around the pyramids and the Sphinx to the midnight stroll among the brightly lit shops of old Cairo, to the Roman ruins that greeted me in the exquisite city of Alexandria, to the gala thrown in my honor, the warmth and good humor of my Egyptian colleagues created an unforgettable training experience.

I returned to the United States much wiser. I learned from my Egyptian colleagues how to receive a peer with kindness, and humor. The latter two are all the more amazing given the traumas he and his wife Shirley endured throughout their lives.

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I returned to the United States much wiser. I learned from my Egyptian colleagues how to receive a peer with warmth, entertain her, enrich her career by offering assistance in international mental health training, and send her home delighted that she had come. To all my EAGT colleagues, a sincere thanks for an unforgettable experience.
GROUP THERAPY AS A SPECIALTY

AGPA has continued its efforts to get group therapy recognized as a specialty by the American Psychological Association (APA). In May 2015, APA rejected AGPA’s petition. Undeterred by this, the Group Specialty Council, which includes members from AGPA, APA, and the American Board of Group Psychotherapy, (part of the American Board of Professional Psychology), has again submitted a Group Specialty Petition addressing the issues raised in the first review. AGPA members from multiple disciplines submitted supporting comments to APA. The Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology met in March. APA subsequently asked for additional information about group specialty training at the post-licensure level.

The approval of this petition would be significant for AGPA membership since the establishment of group psychotherapy as a specialty might lead other disciplines to recognize group therapy as a specialty. This would help elevate the importance of training and research in group therapy across mental health disciplines. Stay tuned for updates on the next phase of this petition process.

2016 LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS

AGPA’s Public Affairs Committee continues to advocate at the federal level on behalf of our members and their patients on issues pertinent to group therapists, including access to mental health services. AGPA, in affiliation with other national organizations, supported the following legislative initiatives in 2016.

1. Mental Health Awareness Semipostal Stamp Act (H.R. 3640), which recognized the importance of advancing neuroscience research, reducing stigma, and preventing suicide for individuals with mental illness, including substance use disorders.

2. Legislation to expand the Certified Community Behavioral Health Center demonstration program authorized in Section 223 of the Protecting Access to Medicare Act based on the Excellence in Mental Health Act. The legislation expands the two-year demonstration project to 24 states to help increase access to critical behavioral health services for thousands of people, including active duty military personnel, veterans, and their families.

3. The Mental Health Reform Act of 2016, a bipartisan effort authorizing legislation for a wide array of critically important initiatives targeting mental health services and jail diversion programs.

Last year also saw the approval of the first major mental health legislation in nearly a decade—the 21st Century Cures Act, a bipartisan legislation that included significant improvements in the provision of mental health to millions of Americans.

AGPA’s Public Affairs Committee continues to monitor the changing landscape of healthcare in the country. The Public Affairs Committee has promoted grass roots activism by encouraging members to call congressional members when legislation that impacts the mental health of Americans is being considered for a vote. We thank our members for responding to the call for action, as we continue to advocate for our patients.

Why Should I Be a CGP?

Tony Sheppard, PsyD, CGP, FAGPA
Chair, International Board for Certification of Group Psychotherapists

At the recent AGPA 75th Anniversary Meeting in New York, I had the honor of speaking to a number of groups about the Certified Group Psychotherapist (CGP) designation. Interacting with Conference attendees always reminds me of how proud I am to be a CGP, and to be a part of the ongoing work of the International Board for Certification of Group Psychotherapists (IBCGP). When I was invited to write an article about the CGP for the Group Circle, I jumped at the chance to say more about the pride and excitement I feel as a CGP.

So, why should you be a Certified Group Psychotherapist? Being awarded the CGP communicates that you have attained a level of training, group leadership, and consultation that is consistent with AGPA’s recognized standards. It also represents a commitment to keep your training current by earning CE credits in group psychotherapy. You do this every time you attend an AGPA workshop, institute, course, or colloquium at the Annual Meeting, by participating in AGPA’s distance learning program, or by taking a course offered by an Affiliate Society. Having a CGP ensures your clients, trainees, supervisors, and the public that you are a well-trained professional who utilizes the latest interventions and most sound theoretical foundations in your group work.

IBCGP are tirelessly working to preserve the integrity of the work we value so much. We believe that group psychotherapy is much more than a mere service delivery modality. It is a specialized form of psychotherapy, which relies on the latest research and developments in group dynamics and process, and which requires the training, experience, and consultation set forth in the CGP standards. Becoming a CGP means that you join the movement to protect the integrity of our work.

As an individual clinician in private practice, I find the CGP valuable with regard to marketing myself. I’ve often used the example of a Google search of therapists in my zip code. There are several hundred! Having Certified Group Psychotherapist after my name helps to set me apart from the pack. I’ve included it on all my marketing materials, including business cards, brochures, and website. As a psychologist doing group therapy, my CGP helps me to stand out in the eyes of potential clients.

There are some fairly recent perks that have been added to the AGPA website for members with CGPs. We now get an enhanced listing under the Find a Certified Group Therapist tab on the homepage of the website! This impressive and very robust listing means that CGPs are searchable to anyone visiting AGPA’s website. As an example of this feature, I invite you to view my profile. You can search using my last name, and on a related note, AGPA Connect (the new name of our Annual Meeting) faculty who are CGPs now have a hyperlink to their CGP profile in their online listing in the Annual Meeting program. As people read workshop descriptions, they are able to click on your name and view your CGP profile!

If you’re already a CGP, I hope this article inspires you to get the most out of your certification. Highlight it in your marketing, educate people about what it means, and complete your online profile.

If you’re not a CGP yet, I encourage you to complete your application today. For more information, visit the CGP Certification tab on the AGPA website. If you’d like to be matched with a CGP Advisor, contact Leah Flood, Membership and Credentials Director at leahflood@agpa.org. Your advisor can help answer questions and guide you through the application process. I look forward to welcoming you as a new CGP!
Congratulations New Fellows

Jay Erwin-Grotsky, LCSW, CGP, FAGPA (Austin, TX), an AGPA Member since 1990 and a Clinical Member since 2016, was on the Austin Group Psychotherapy Society (AGPS) Board of Directors and served as its President. He is on the Austin Group Foundation Scholarship Committee and the AGPA Affiliate Societies Assembly, where he was awarded the Affiliate Societies Award in 2015. A member of the AGPA and AGPS Institute Faculties, he has lead workshops on co-leadership and humor in groups. Mr. Erwin-Grotsky Co-Chaired AGPA’s Co-Leadership Special Interest Group for four years. In private practice since 1992, he counsels individuals and couples dealing with relationship issues, sexual orientation, grief/loss, HIV/AIDS, childhood abuse, substance abuse, and spiritual and developmental issues. Mr. Erwin-Grotsky was an Adjunct Professor at the University of Santa Monica and an Adjunct Professor at the University of Texas School of Social Work, where he taught Masters level courses on Differential Diagnosis, use of DSM-IV-TR through the lens of Spiritual Psychology, Development across the Lifespan as related to Erikson’s Developmental Stages, and Theories and Methods of Intervention. He is a Clinical Supervisor for LCSW licensure and a Field Instructor for Social Work Interns, University of Texas School of Social Work.

Kurt White, LICSW, LADC, CGP, FAGPA (Brattleboro, VT) has been a Clinical Member since 2010, the same year he became an AGPA Member. He is Co-Chair of the Mental Health Agency and Institutional Settings Special Interest Group and a member of the Joint Board. He was recently appointed to the Joint Agency Survey Task Force. Mr. White has delivered three workshops for AGPA and one workshop for the Northeastern Society of Group Psychotherapy (NSGP), where he also has trained faculty. He was involved in the Local Hosting Annual Meeting Task Force Marketing Subcommittee for the 2014 Boston AGPA Annual Meeting. He is Co-Editor of the NSGP Newsletter and Founder and Co-Chair of the NSGP Research Committee. Mr. White is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the Smith College School of Social Work in Northampton, Massachusetts, where he teaches group theory and practice. He is also an Adjunct Faculty member at Antioch University New England, and Director of Ambulatory Services at Brattleboro Retreat, where he is a Training Group Leader. There he serves as a therapist, the Manager of Intensive Outpatient and Partial Hospitalization Programs, and an Addiction Board Member. He previously taught at Albany Medical College, Albany, New York. Mr. White is President of the Vermont Association of Addiction Professionals and Treatment Providers, previously serving as its Treasurer. Mr. White has published in the Schizophrenia Bulletin in addition to delivering over 24 presentations in his various organizational involvements.

Vicki Tidwell Palmer’s, LCSW, CSAT, SEP, first book—Moving Beyond Betrayal: The 5-Step Boundary Solution for Partners of Sex Addicts—was the best-selling book for Central Recovery Press in 2016, and its number one new release in sexual health recovery and substance abuse recovery. A Huffington Post blogger, she is certified by the International Institute of Trauma and Addiction Professionals as a Sex Addiction Therapist, and certified by the Somatic Experiencing Trauma Institute as a Somatic Experiencing Practitioner. Ms. Palmer offers online courses, an online forum for partners of sex addicts, family of origin trauma intensives, and group psychotherapy. Her clinical specialties are sex and love addiction recovery, relational trauma, personal/couples boundaries, and mindfulness.

SaraKay Smullens’, MSW, BCD, CFLE, CGP, personal papers as a researcher, author, and psychotherapist were recently organized and made ready for release at the Goucher College Special Collections and Archives. Ms. Smullens has dedicated her life to social work, especially in the areas of gender, family and family violence, and group psychotherapy. She also dedicated her career to reforming social policies that were detrimental to families and communities. Her papers include decades of outreach to policymakers and her involvement with various public and private organizations, drawing attention to the complexities of family violence and the need to support family life education. Her most recent book, Burnout and Self-Care in Social Work, was published in 2016. Her extensive research on emotional abuse highlights the ways abusive situations can be passed to future generations and have a dramatic impact on communities and societies at-large. Some of her papers have also been collected at the University of Pennsylvania and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

Martyn Whittingham, PhD, CGP, FAGPA (West Chester, OH) has been a Clinical Member since 2011, the same year he became an AGPA Member. He worked with other Executive Committee members to re-found the Tri-State Group Psychotherapy Society (GSP) in 2009. A Past President and a former Conference Chair, he is currently a member of the Tri-State GSP Executive Committee. Dr. Whittingham is also a member of the International Board for Certification of Group Psychotherapists, AGPA’s Science to Service Task Force, the Editorial Board of the International Journal of Group Psychotherapy, the Joint Agency Survey Task Force, and the APA Group Specialty Council Application Committee. Until recently, Dr. Whittingham was Chief, Clinical Integration and Research, Behavioral Health Institute, Mercy Health, Cincinnati, Ohio. He was an Associate Professor at Wright State University, School of Professional Psychology. While there, he developed his Focused Brief Group Therapy model, a semi-structured, integrative interpersonal brief group approach to treating interpersonal distress. He has researched the approach, and trained and supervised students in the model. Dr. Whittingham presented workshops on his model at the Tri-State GSP, AGPA and other conferences regionally, nationally and internationally, including for the Yalom Institute in Beijing, China. He has written seven book chapters, two journal articles, and four newsletter articles. Dr. Whittingham served on the Association for Specialists in Group Work’s National Research Committee and as its Co-Chair. He was APA Division 49 (Group Psychology and Group Psychotherapy) Student Chair and received the 2010 Group Practice Award from the Association for Specialists in Group Work.

Lorraine Wodiska, PhD, ABPP, CGP, FAGPA (Arlington, VA) has been an AGPA Member since 1987 and a Clinical Member since 1994. She is the incoming President of the Mid-Atlantic Group Psychotherapy Society (MAGPS) and was an At-Large Board Member. She has been on the AGPA Open Session Conference Committee, and is its current Co-Chair. She is also Chair of the MAGPS Conference Committee, has been on the MAGPS Conference Faculty, and was a Small Group Leader. She has presented workshops as Conference Faculty at the AGPA Annual Meeting. Dr. Wodiska has led short-term drug treatment groups and a dual diagnosis group, a long-term process group and a long-term couples group; she currently co-leads two long-term process groups in her private practice. Dr. Wodiska was an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Counseling and Human Services at Johns Hopkins University, where she taught basic and advanced group techniques, engaging students in experiential processes as well as clinical experiences. She was Adjunct Professor at the University of Maryland and a Group Facilitator at Fordham University/Center for Personal Growth where she co-facilitated monthly process groups.
The Atlanta Group Psychotherapy Society (AGPS) held its annual spring workshop on May 20. Using Pesso Boyden System Psychomotor (PBS) for Healing Attachment Wounds and Trauma: An Experiential Workshop for Therapists was led by Gus Kaufman, Jr., PhD, a clinical psychologist who works with individuals, couples, families, and groups, as well as provides clinical supervision and training. PBS is a powerful, yet flexible method for changing old, dysfunctional patterns. This workshop presented PBSP theory and helped participants tune in to body signals and witness healing of deficits and wounds. The primary tool for this was having participants role-play ideal parents who would have provided the client with the right input at the right age. Visit www.atlantagps.org.

The Austin Group Psychotherapy Society’s (AGPS) Intermediate Institute, On The Fringe: Working with Feelings of Being an Outsider in Group, was led by Patricia Florence, MA, LCSW, CGP. The program was designed to help therapists work with group members’ feelings of being an outsider. AGPS held its spring workshop on May 19. Finding Words for our Neurobiological Responses: Establishing the Foundations of Emotional Connection in Group, led by Joseph Acosta, MA, LPC, CGP, FAGPA, explored developmental and functional aspects of the human nervous system and how they may affect the capacity to engage emotionally in group. Key interpersonal neurobiology concepts were presented. The workshop included a demonstration group, followed by an opportunity for all participants to talk about their experiences. Visit www.austingroups.org.

The Carolinas Group Psychotherapy Society (CGPS) hosted its Spring workshop Race, Sex and Power: The Triangle of Shame on May 20-21 at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The training group looked at issues of race, sex, power and shame. Members gained here-and-now experience working with these feelings, their resistances to these feelings, and gained more experience and comfort with their own feelings of desire, attraction, shame, and power. Yoont Im Kane, LCSW, CGP, a former graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s School of Social Work, was the guest presenter. She is the Founder and Director of a private group psychotherapy practice in New York City and CEO of Everbliss, a platform for HIPAA secure tele-therapy.

The Colorado Group Psychotherapy Society (COGPS) hosted a Large Group Institute, led by Jeffrey Price MA, LPC, LAC, CGP, which offered an opportunity for the membership body to be in a group together and watch one of its senior members at work. COGPS is working with local group leaders to offer sponsorship deals; currently COGPS has sponsored a group on White Privilege, run by Phillip Horner LCSW, CGP, a group on Relationships, led by Marian Salley LCSW, and a Post-Inauguration Discussion Group, led by Price. To sign up for COGPS’s newsletter or listen to its podcast, the Group Dynamics Dispatch with Angelo Gillibert MA, LPC, CGP, visit www.cogps.org.

The Eastern Group Psychotherapy Society’s (EGPS) Annual Conference, Uniting Promise, Uniting Peril: Welcoming Vulnerability in Group, will be held November 17-18, at The Riverside Church, New York City. Over the past two years, EGPS members participating in the Work Group for Racial Equity reading/discussion groups learned about the relationship between racism and mass incarceration. At the end of the year, members had an opportunity to participate in a project to send holiday cards to 160 of the 1,700 men who are warehoused in Sing Sing Prison. Twenty-seven members participated in the card-writing project, dubbed A Small Act of Compassion. Some sent cards, some came together as a group on Martin Luther King Day to write and send cards. Although EGPS didn’t anticipate receiving responses, it rented a post office box for three months, just in case. The Affiliate received 32 letters from incarcerated men discussing their full range of emotions and experiences of loneliness, hope, determination, spiritual solace, and comfort with their own feelings of desire, attraction, shame, and power. Yoont Im Kane, LCSW, CGP, a former graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s School of Social Work, was the guest presenter. She is the Founder and Director of a private group psychotherapy practice in New York City and CEO of Everbliss, a platform for HIPAA secure tele-therapy.

The Group Psychotherapy Association of Los Angeles (GPALA) held its Annual Conference on May 19-20. In What’s Authority Got To Do with It? The Problem and Promise of Power as a Group Leader, conference presenter Kate Griffin MA, LPC, CGP, FAGPA helped members explore, through didactic and experiential methods, the group leader’s relationship to both concepts. It provided an opportunity to understand the transformative potential in groups conducted by leaders who comprehend the effectiveness of authority as creative, generative, and expansive. The risks, both to the dynamism of the group and to the enjoyment of the work by the leader, associated with unacknowledged needs in the group leader for evidence of power, were examined. On June 17-18, Gabriela Kohen, MFA, is bringing her one-woman show—"Decoding the Tablecloth,” a personal story of intergenerational trauma and healing—to Los Angeles for two performances as a fundraising benefit for the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health and GPALA. This riveting experience, along with a Modern Analytic Training and Consultation Group, led by Jeffrey Hudson, MAE, LPC, CGP, FAGPA, the same weekend, will add to an exciting Spring for GPALA. Visit www.gpala.org.

The Houston Group Psychotherapy Society (HGPS) held its Annual Institute in April. Keynote Speaker Susan Gantt, PhD, ABPP, CGP, DFAGPA, FAPA, presented Systems-Centered Therapy (SCT) and its interpersonal Neurobiology: Lowering Scoping and Developing our Social Brains. Thomas Stone, Jr., PhD, CGP, FAGPA, presented a three-hour ethics course on What About When It’s Not Face-2-Face: A Group Dialogue About Ethics in the Virtual World. The Institute also featured several process and special-interest groups. Institute Chair Jamie Cool, LCSW, and Co-Chair Mara Gittess, MA, LPC, and their committee of hard workers organized this event. As Chair of Leadership Development, Elyssa Eink Gortheim, LCSW, organizes key networking events throughout the year, including Meet and Greets and Salons. A January Salon and Open House featured Certified Sex Therapist Emily deVayla, MA, LPC, LMFT, of Revive Therapy, presenting Sex Therapy 101: What Mental Health Professionals Need to Know. Elyssa also organized a team of HGPS members who participated in the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Walk in Houston on May 6. NAMI sponsors walks across the United States to raise awareness about mental illness and to raise funding to support their mission. Connie Moore, MD, LPC, CGP, Training and Education Chair, continues to provide a rich array of advanced group training through HGPS’s Friday Brown Bags. In January, Elizabeth Knight, LCSW, CGP, DFAGPA, and Raymond Lewis, ACSW, LMFT, led the experiential training AK Rice, Group-as-a-Whole, Tavistock…Confusion Abounds. Houston Special Interest Groups (SIGs) Chairperson Tom Carter, PhD, LPC, CGP, reports that the local Jungian SIG, Expressive Arts Therapies SIG, and Diversity SIG continue to be active. Community Outreach Chair Aaron Fink, MD, CGP, FAGPA, is collaborating with the Houston Independent School District to provide services to its teachers and school counselors. HGPS volunteers, including Nadia Leibwitz, LCSW, and Jay Tarnow, MD, will be leading support groups for the teachers. HGPS will also be...
Dear Consultant:

Susan joined my group four years ago. Last year, she got a new job, which requires her to travel quite a bit. Susan was adopted, and has a history of unconsciously inducing people in her life to get rid of her. I decided that as long as she could come when she could, she could stay in the group. In the last few months, the pattern has developed that she comes to group once or twice a month and takes up large amounts of time updating people about the chaotic events of her life. When she is not there, the group sometimes talks about their increasing frustration with this pattern. Other times when she is absent, the group does not even mention her name or ask about her absence, a sign to me that they want to get rid of her. I must admit, a part of me feels the same. It feels like a looming train wreck. Should I ask her to leave the group, or let this pattern play out?

Signed, Conflicted

Dear Conflicted:

This is a challenging situation, so it makes sense that you are feeling torn. It does sound as though there has been an enactment of Susan’s tendency to create circumstances that pull for rejection. While there are several fruitful directions you and your group can take with this, your first priority is to decide what is best for the group-as-a-whole.

First, could there be any counter-transference feelings you are trying not to have towards Susan? Although you acknowledge some desire to get rid of her, feelings possibly induced in you by others in the group, you also hint that you might have some guilt about this. Second, it is important to explore with Susan and the group how much her absence stems from realistic demands of her job, and what portion might be an emotional resistance. Is her travel schedule flexible? Are there any reasons why she may not want to attend regularly? For example, is her absence in reaction to a real or perceived slight in group? Is the level of intimacy overwhelming or unbearable for her? Is she attempting to avoid the pain of anticipated future rejection by making a gradual, preemptive exit? Is she conflicted about being fed, vacillating between emotionally restricting and binging?

In terms of the group, why are they letting her go unchanged when she monopolizes a session? Why do they pretend she does not exist during her absence? Does the group have a capacity to hold on to other group members and keep each other in mind between group sessions, or is there a more general struggle with object constancy or attachment within the group? Does the group share with Susan that she is either ignored when she is not there, or the object of their frustration at other times? Does the group feel abandoned by her? How did group members feel towards her before she started coming inconsistently? How does the group feel towards her? Is she conflicted about being fed, vacillating between emotionally restricting and binging?

Regardless of how the situation with Susan and your group is resolved, the process of working through this dilemma may provide some valuable insights and opportunities for both you and your group. The group may discover: how to be more direct in their emotional communications; how treatment resistances can at times hide beneath credible reality constraints; insights into their own attachment styles; and how a group leader can openly embrace his or her own imperfections and shortcomings, and by doing so, be a highly approachable, good enough parent.

Tom Thorsheim, PhD, CGP
Greenville, South Carolina
teaching a course on group therapy with children and adolescents for the counselors. HGCP continues to provide experimental and didactic group psychotherapy training to students and residents of Baylor College of Medicine and University of Texas Medical School. HGCP Faculty includes Patricia Barth, PhD, COP, DLFAGPA, LMFT; Travis Courville, LCSW, COP, FAGPA; Aaron Fink; Franklin Gittess, MD; Cindy Hearne, PhD, COP; Elizabeth Knight, MSW, COP, DLFAGPA; Jennifer Markley, PhD; Jana Rosenbaum, LCSW, COP; Carol Vaughan, LCSW, COP, FAGPA; and Robert White, MD, COP, FAGPA. Led by Carol Vaughan, several HGCP members honoree Patricia Barth, Elizabeth Knight, and Jeanne Pasternak, LCSW, COP, FAGPA for their many years of leadership in AGPA by donating to name a 2017 AGPA Annual Meeting Workshop in their honor. The workshop, Inspiring Passion for Group Therapy: Imagination and Demonstration, was presented by Robert Bennett MD, Dale Godby, PhD, ABPP, COP, FAGPA and Melissa Black, PhD, COP and others from the Southwestern Medical School in Dallas. HGCP is busy preparing to host the 2018 AGPA Annual Meeting. The Local Task Force consists of Committee Chairs Jana Rosenbaum, LCSW, COP; Helen Chong, LCSW, COP, Aaron Fink, Jeanne Pasternak, Paul LeProuse, PhD, COP, Linda Chase, LCSW, COP, Advisor Patricia Barth, and more than 20 volunteers.

The Illinois Group Psychotherapy Society (IGPS) attends at the AGPA’s Annual Meeting in New York City gathered for their annual dinner get-together. Held at Carmine’s Restaurant, they were able to donate meal leftovers to Rescuing Leftover Cuisine (RLC), a charitable organization that provides food to the homeless and food insecure of New York City and give an additional cash donation. The IGPS will hold its Fall Conference on October 20-21 in Chicago. Katie Steele will present The Promise of Real Play. Real Play Group Psychotherapy engages the inner actor and observer at the same time. In this way, one is able to see deeper layers of their own process, as well as the process of others. The Real Play format is useful in dual relationship environments, such as teaching a group psychotherapy course where the experience of being in a group is a component of the class. Group members can maintain some sense of boundaries with classmates and professors, while still doing work at a meaningful level.

The Mid-Atlantic Group Psychotherapy Society (MAGPS) is continuing a 50-year tradition of providing continuing education and training opportunities for its members. In addition to twice yearly conferences, the Outreach Program and the Cinema Series, MAGPS is embarking on a new agenda. Developed by Education Coordinator Sally Brandel, PhD, COP, and coordinated with newly installed President Lorraine Wodiska, PhD, ABPP, COP, FAGPA, MAGPS is adopting a theme and set of questions to integrate learning for the next two years. The theme will be: The practice of group psychotherapy in times of national upheaval presents opportunities and dilemmas. Questions focus on challenges to ethical and moral values, the role of dissent and disruption on mental health, the concept of the bubble of liberal privilege, and ways to contribute to the healing of national divisions around race, class, gender, religion, and age. A continuing education team will support MAGPS programs in the task of incorporating theme into learning.

The Puget Sound Group Psychotherapy Network’s (PSPGN) 12th Annual Spring Conference was held on May 12-13 in a beautiful new location—the Talaris Conference Center in Laurelhurst. Haim Weinberg, PhD, COP, FAGPA, presented Impossible Groups that Thrive in Leaking Connections. He described how his group therapy with veterans in groups, specific explanation of present centered therapy, and an experiential section about all three perspectives. Attendees were able to experience all three perspectives, as well as a large group discussion about all three perspectives. The IGPS will hold its Fall Conference on October 20-21 in New York, NY 10010.

THE ROCHELLE AREA GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY SOCIETY (RAGPS) hosted Macario Giraldo, PhD, COP, FAGPA, in January. Dr. Giraldo presented The Allure of Affect, or the Lacanian notion that anxiety is the fundamental affect in psychoanalysis, i.e., it is the affect that does not lie. With this idea in mind, the all-day workshop addressed ways for clinicians to listen for, think about, and respond to the multitude of affects evoked in their clinical work. On May 19, Steve Van Wagoner, PhD, COP, FAGPA, presented The Interplay Between Emotion, Competition and Shame: Its Impact on Intimacy in Groups. During this all-day workshop, by means of didactic and experiential learning, attendees explored the ways in which the group therapist, group member and the group as a whole, transform inevitable feelings of envy and competition into a creative and constructive process. The potentially destructive feelings of envy, jealousy, and perceived loss of power were brought to the fore so that group members could move from a state of emotional isolation to one of intimacy and relatedness.

The Westchester Group Psychotherapy Society (WGPS) held a day-long conference on violence, co-sponsored by the Westchester Center for Psychological Education. Hosted by New York Presbyterian/New York Hospital, Westchester Division, Conference Keynote speakers were Robert Klein, PhD, ABPP, COP, DLFAGPA, from Yale, New Haven, and Victor Schermer, MA, LPC, LFAGPA, from Philadelphia. Both have lectured nationally and internationally and have published extensively. They are co-authors of a book on dealing with psychological trauma and several articles on violence and a book (in press) on violence. Additional presenters were Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, ABPP; Richard Beck, LCSW, BCD, COP, FAGPA; and Eliza Dragowski, PhD. Later in April, WGPS held a luncheon workshop on Serious Fun: Spontaneity, Creativity and Play in Group Psychotherapy, also led by Drs. Klein and Schermer.

PLEASE NOTE: Please note: Affiliate Societies may submit new news and updates on their activities to Vanessa Spooner, PsDy, Editor of the Affiliate Society News column, by e-mail to: vanessaspoonerpysd IC@cloud.com.

Visit AGPA’s website at www.agpa.org for updated Affiliate Society meeting information. For space considerations, upcoming events announced in previous issues are included in Group Connections.