AGPA Community Outreach Expands its Services

Thank you to all of the AGPA members for your contribution to our efforts to provide support to those impacted by natural disasters, mass violence, and school attacks. We have heard first-hand about their experiences and see the impact of unspeakable events on individuals, family, and communities. We are committed to helping those impacted by these tragic events through our Community Outreach Task Force.

In reading the Community Outreach article by Suzanne Phillips, PsyD, ABPP, CGP, FAGPA, and Craig Haen, PhD, RDT, LCAT, CGP, FAGPA, it was sobering to read the accounts of all that has happened this past year. It was equally comforting and inspirational to know all that the AGPA Community Outreach Task Force has done, with the support of the Group Foundation, to respond to the trauma that our national and international communities have experienced. Making our organizational voice known in the issues of human rights affecting immigration and hate crimes has been equally important.

Join me in thanking the Community Outreach Task Force and an extensive list of volunteers for all of the work they have done and for allowing us to feel as individuals and group members that we are making a difference.

Suzanne Phillips, PsyD, ABPP, CGP, FAGPA, and Craig Haen, PhD, RDT, LCAT, CGP, FAGPA, Co-Chairs, Community Outreach Task Force

We have long recognized that following the terrorist attacks and loss of life on 9/11, AGPA expanded its organizational goal from the recognition of group psychotherapy as a unique and effective treatment model with the corresponding training, articulation of standards, and connection of group psychotherapists, to a broad outreach mission to the thousands impacted by the first terrorist attack on American soil.

Since that turning point, there has been no end to the natural and man-made disasters nationally and internationally, and the American Group Psychotherapy Association, supported by the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health, has continued to respond. Armed with protocols, training manuals, and continual development of new materials, our community outreach has demonstrated that people heal in groups.

A close look at the past year (January to December 2018) of the natural disasters, mass violence, and humanitarian crises to which Community Outreach Task Force has responded is both sobering and heartbreaking.

• January: California mudslides
• February: Parkland, Florida, school shooting
• March: Younsville, California, Veterans Home shooting
• March: Harlem, New York, movie fire
• March: Austin, Texas, serial bombings
• March: 106th Rescue Wing loss of four guardsmen in an Iraq helicopter accident (AGPA provides Camp Galaxy for this group every year)
• April: Toronto, Canada, van attack
• May: Big Island, Hawaii, volcano eruptions
• May: Houston, Texas Santa Fe High School shooting
• June: Annapolis, Maryland, newsroom shooting
• June: Zero Tolerance Immigration Policy separates migrant families
• July: Toronto, Canada, restaurant area shooting
• July: Greece wildfires
• September: Hurricane Florence
• September: Massachusetts fires
• September: 9/11 anniversary event, Ground Zero, New York
• October: Hurricane Michael
• October: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, synagogue shooting
• November: Tallahassee, Florida, yoga studio shooting
• November: Thousand Oaks, California, bar shooting
• November: Southern California Fires
• November: Caravan of migrants, results in closing of borders, changes to admission for asylum status, and refused access to migrants applying for asylum
• December: Caravan of migrants continue to wait in Mexico with no determination as to their future status in either the US or Mexico

The Community Outreach Task Force responded to each of these events with messages of support and an offering of resources to those in affected areas; when applicable, local Affiliate Society leadership were involved as well. We followed up with relevant literature, training manuals, website resources, and blogs.

We know that the most important mitigating factor on the impact of an unspeakable event is connection with family and networks of support. We feel we are both family and a crucial network of support for our members. Their responses reflect their experience of the progression will unfold.

It is the ultimate reward for giving to the Foundation and becoming involved in AGPA. It is one of the few places where our money can help others, as well as ourselves. Many of us, who are stuck in our ivory towers or the solitude of our offices and practices, may take for granted the increasing number of new members each year at AGPA. These experiences changed who I was as a therapist. It was rewarding to run groups and see the holding, trust, and eventual unfolding of my patients’ histories. For the new members, who our giving will bring to AGPA Connect this year, and many who will surely follow, that same progression will unfold.

The students are the lifeblood of this organization. Their attendance has to be increased. The best way I know to do this is through our contributions to the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health. Contributions will allow students and newer professionals, who may have very little exposure and support in their communities, to learn to run groups, as well as how to understand how groups run. We serve as their mentors and supporters. It’s truly powerful and satisfying feeling to lend ourselves to these students. Their rapport with the membership allows them to strive further. It increases their motivation to become active members in our organization.

Giving reflects our deeply held love and respect for AGPA. I owe my career and writings to all the institutes and panels I was involved in, all the challenges I faced, all the help I received, and all the colleagues who supported me. These experiences changed who I was as a therapist. It was rewarding to run groups and see the holding, trust, and eventual unfolding of my patients’ histories. For the new members, who our giving will bring to AGPA Connect this year, and many who will surely follow, that same progression will unfold.

LEGACY SOCIETY

We appreciate the provisions these planned gift donors have made for the Group Foundation.

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Lorraine Wodiska
Elliot Zisel & Mary Susillo

I have been a member of the AGPA Faculty for many years, and the one thing that has always impressed me was the students’ zeal. We are the Faculty have grown older and, hopefully, wiser. Our inheritance to you is our Scholarship program, which allow new students to challenge us and to learn. I was taught in medical school, “see one, learn one, and then teach one.”

There are so many moments in my experiences at AGPA where the newer members would ask me questions. This has made me rethink my theoretical models. We would develop, over time, a wonderful, complementary melding of ideas, enthusiasm, and energy to propel both of us forward to examine old truths and develop new ones.

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In the past few years, there have been a number of shootings in places of worship (most recently at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh) that the Community Outreach Task Force has responded to with letters of support and resources. Following an initiative that began with the Pulse nightclub shooting in 2016, we also crafted several public statements for AGPA in response to national crises. In November, a public statement was released that responded to a rise in hate crimes and overall discrimination. In November, an initiative that began with the Pulse nightclub shooting in 2016, we also crafted several public statements for AGPA in response to national crises.

...our hearts go out to those directly affected by the violence, anti-Semitism, terrorism, xenophobia, and racism in our country and around the globe. We at AGPA are deeply connected with the sadness that is directly caused by abuses of power and hate-filled rhetoric....

In response to the immigration crisis and the Zero Tolerance Policy initiated in June and the ongoing humanitarian crisis, a policy was passed in November that responded to a rise in hate crimes and overall discrimination. In November, an initiative that began with the Pulse nightclub shooting in 2016, we also crafted several public statements for AGPA in response to national crises. In November, a public statement was released that responded to a rise in hate crimes and overall discrimination.

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“First and foremost, you say SO MUCH for the thoughtful and thorough vicarious trauma webinar...”

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