



The Iowa Marital & Family Therapist

A Bulletin of the Iowa Association for
Marriage and Family Therapy

A Letter From the President

by Matthew Burch, Ph.D.

It is hard to believe that summer is nearly here. I can still vividly remember the planning and excitement of our 2002 Coaching for Life & Work Conference here in Pella. Reflections about the conference bring back positive memories of reconnecting with colleagues, seeing familiar faces, and enjoying the professional camaraderie that we so much enjoy as mental health professionals. Sometimes I wish that we could bottle the satisfaction of the experience and take a monthly dose to remind us of who we are and the value of what we bring to families, marriages, individuals and our communities.

In retrospect, the conference was a success because of your participation and interest. There were nearly 60 in attendance on Friday and close to 90 in attendance on Saturday. Our combined effort to open our conference to business professionals drew 30 extra business registrations for Saturday, which gave our profession positive exposure as well as provided helpful information to those who attended. The feedback from the information sheets shared

positive comments about the site, setting, food, content, and overall experience of the conference this year. The Dutch heritage that is so much a part of Pella provided a unique blend of education and enjoyment for those who attended. We hope that this conference generated an increase in interest and momentum for the overall direction that Iowa Association for Marital and Family Therapy is going. Your feedback is invaluable. When your board hears from you and receives constructive information, we are appreciative and eager to implement changes that will be helpful.

By the time you receive this newsletter the board will have already met to re-evaluate our goals and objectives for the organization for 2002-2003. Our purpose for this special board meeting is to discuss in depth, the most salient needs of our organization and develop time-bound action plans to responding to these needs. Although our conference went fairly well this year, we are not deceived into thinking that we can rest on the

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The Iowa Marital & Family Therapist

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Display advertising must be submitted camera-ready (unless exclusively text, then it must be typed and double spaced) and pre-paid at the following rates:

Price	Type	Size
\$25 (\$20 members)	Classified listing	5 lines
\$50 (\$40 members)	Business card size	2x3 1/2
\$90 (\$72 members)	Quarter page	3 9/16 x 4 3/4
\$150 (\$125 members)	Half page	7 1/2 x 4 3/4
\$300 (\$200 members)	Full page	7 1/2 x 9 1/2
FREE for IAMFT members	Job Postings	—

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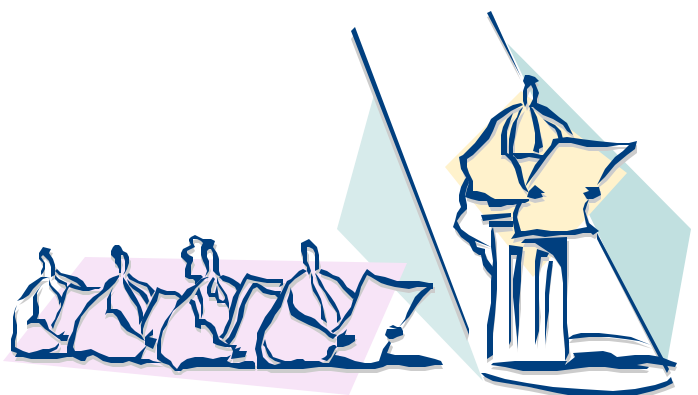
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Student Spot Light: IAMFT

by Daniel Morales, M.S.

As a student in the Ph.D. program at Iowa State University, I have been impressed with IAMFT's commitment to its student members. I have had the honor of serving as the current student representative for IAMFT and it has been refreshing to be part of an organization that actively seeks to provide students with a voice. In addition, IAMFT continually provides a forum for students to present research and promote professional interaction with mental health professionals at its annual conference.

In continuing its commitment to student development IAMFT recently sponsored the First Annual Student Research Conference held at Iowa State University May 30th through June 1st. Through IAMFT's support students and faculty presenters from Texas Tech, University of Minnesota, Kansas State, Virginia Tech, Purdue, and Iowa State came together to promote the field of Marriage and Family Therapy. Without the support of IAMFT, this would not have been possible. Thank you IAMFT for your support and dedication to our future.



A Letter From the President

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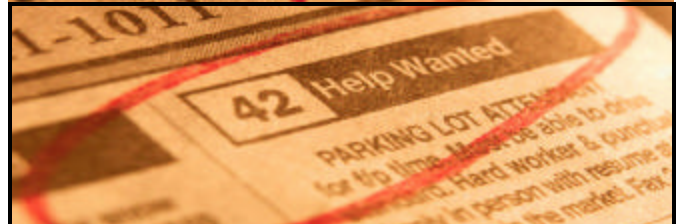
laurels of a “good time” and coast. If ever, now is the time to address issues concerning strategic planning, member retention, student membership and placement, third party reimbursement, and member involvement. We also would like to create a greater capacity for immediate connectivity through the use of the website. Our sensitivity to member views and foresight about what is happening in our profession both combined are at the helm of our decision making process.

Our Executive Director, Jeff Kerber and I recently returned from Washington, D.C. for the National AAMFT Leadership Conference. Currently, there are two main issues that AAMFT is targeting for all the divisions. First, is to improve access to Medicare-covered mental health services by including marriage and family therapists among the list of providers who can deliver covered mental health services and pay for those services at the same rate as clinical social workers. And second, is the inclusion of MFT’s in the IDEA. Family Therapists, as a core mental health discipline and integral part of the mental health care delivery system, need to be recognized under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to be a part of the Individual Education Program Team. As a member of this team, MFT’s will be able to assist disabled children and their families with the development and implementation of a comprehensive individualized learning program. The problem is that Federal law currently recognizes MFT’s to provide early intervention services to infants and toddlers under IDEA. However, MFT’s are not specifically authorized to develop Individual Education Programs (IEP’s) for children with

disabilities. Allowing MFT’s to be a part of the IEP team will provide greater inclusion of MFT’s and increase greater continuity of care for children. Additional information on local lobbying efforts will follow this article. Jeff will share more with you in the “legislative update” about the current status with our organization and Blue Cross/Wellmark.

In close, my next letter will spell out more concretely the proposed changes, strategy, and action steps to address the above-mentioned issues. In the meantime, please call your board members and state your recommendations, concerns, and requests.

Shalom,
Matthew - Division President



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Executive Director's "Perspective"

Jeff Kerber, PhD., LMFT

Greetings - You may note I have taken the liberty to change the title of my routine contribution to the newsletter from "Report" to "Perspective." I've done so attempting to be less sterile and to motivate myself to push beyond "just the facts" and include my perspective of the issues facing Iowa Marriage and Family Therapists. If next time I write just a "Report" again, you'll know it didn't go so well.

Mental Health Parity

There are a number of issues that are important to MFT's. We have continued to work with the Mental Health Advocacy Coalition to pass a good Mental Health Parity bill. Unfortunately, no mental health parity bill was passed this legislative term. In spite of significant efforts by many interested groups and their lobbyists - the Republican leadership effectively killed the bill with unusual bravado essentially taking their ball and going home when it looked like they might not win. President of the Senate - Mary Kramer deferred a promising bill on the Senate floor - leaving no chance for the bill to come out of the Senate and into the House where support was strong.

Some of you will know that Governor Vilsak signed into law on May 9 Senate File 2318, a bill reducing Iowa's insurance premium tax rate. This bill replaced, by an amendment, the front running Senate parity bill. Although the Lt. Governor has assured us the administration is dedicated to attaining a mental health parity bill - the Governor is signing this insurance industry bill instead of a parity bill in part due to money. Seven Iowa insurers have pledged \$60 million of their tax savings under the new bill to investments in Iowa - based venture capital. In addition, the insurers have also pledged \$10 million for Iowa education quality programs. With the severe budget problems facing the state

such fiscal decision making is understandable although still unacceptable.

We need to recognize and appreciate support from both sides of the aisle - Democrats Fiegen, Shearer, Dennis Black and Mike Gronstal were particularly instrumental - Republicans Maddox, Tinsman, McKean and long time supporter - Mary Lundby were all very helpful. Business leaders are also stepping to the plate including the Vice President of Musco Lighting - Diane Crookham-Johnson, who was recognized at our spring conference in Pella. Ms. Crookham-Johnson was tireless in her support for parity legislation citing her own company's experience evidencing no cost increase and improved employee quality of life and productivity resulting in part from parity in their insurance plan for the past 5 years.

The conclusion of many experienced lobbyists and other interested groups is that until there is a fundamental change in legislative leadership this effort will not succeed. How clear can the writing on the wall be... the voters need to do what the current Republican leadership is refusing to do at the urging of private insurance carriers and many (not all) business leaders. We must continue to educate the public, business leaders and not least important legislators regarding the long-term best interests of ending discrimination against mentally ill persons and their families.

Marriage Policy Reform

In past issues you have read about the efforts of politically conservative groups to forward legislation establishing "covenant marriage" here in the state. Support for such policy is growing - largely because it is a nice idea with broad appeal - after all, who wouldn't support policy claiming to strengthen marriage and slow



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Jeff Kerber, PhD., LMFT

down divorce rates? Personally - I'm in favor of strengthening marriage for those who choose marriage and also doing what can be done to slow down the divorce rate. The IAMFT is supporting marital legislation not by designing different types of marriage and re-introducing fault divorce - rather, by working with legislators to develop a sound policy endorsing pre-marital education with significant follow up incentives (e.g., substantive tax credits), based on well researched curricula and provided by qualified professionals.

We have extended a hand of collaboration to the primary supporting group driving the covenant marriage initiative. It is our hope to convince such interested groups to work with good science as well as good intentions. This issue should not be reduced to simple bipartisan politics. Our hope is to engage in good faith dialogue with conservative political groups as well as other interested mental health provider groups and clergy to put a new and well-researched option on the table for lawmakers to consider.

Everything Else

Due to space limitations and my own verbose style of thought and speech - I must summarize other key issues:

Third party reimbursement will always be a central part of our association's business. We have continued what is to some a 20-year discussion with Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield regarding LMFT's being directly reimbursed under their managed insurance products. We are engaged and will not disengage the discussion until we have satisfactory results - look to the web site for updates this summer and fall.

Ethics education as mandatory CEU's is going to happen. When? Not sure yet - but it is going to happen. We are working with rules changes to

include a requirement for all LMFT's to complete a minimum of 3 continuing education units in ethics and/or professional issues every two years. Such changes strengthen our profession and our license while protecting the health and welfare of our clients.

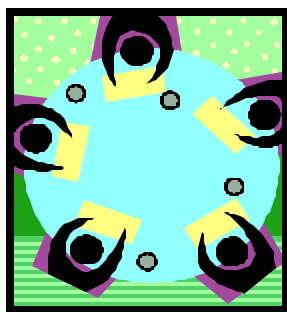
Medicare Part B reform with congressional leaders. MFT's descended upon Washington D. C. on April 12 (Matt Burch and myself among them) to meet with Iowa Senators and Congressmen advocating for inclusion of MFT's under part B Medicare reform. When passed, such legislation would provide incentive for MFT's who train in Iowa to stay in Iowa and practice in rural settings and to elderly beneficiaries of Medicare (see May/June issue of Family Therapy Magazine for details).

Finally, a reminder that nurturing this profession happens at the grass roots level. We all need take responsibility for a small portion of our woes and our success. Please support your IAMFT Board members and President for the hard volunteer work they do - say thanks and don't just complain about what isn't happening. We are all in this together and we need each other to make it work - thank you and have a great summer.



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