



The Iowa Marital & Family Therapist

A Bulletin of the Iowa Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

Presidential Report

by Neal Sheeley

I was reminded of the power of the season recently as I returned to my home from a day spent in Central Iowa. Despite spring-like temperatures in Ames, snow was falling at a steady and accumulating pace as I drove into far Northeast Iowa. It didn't last long. By the afternoon of the next day it was gone.

This experience presented an apt metaphor for the journey we have been on in recent years to elevate the Marriage and Family Therapy profession to the next level. That next level is recognition for MFTs as independent mental health practitioners in the eyes of third party payers. Specifically, we desire status as reimbursable providers through Medicare and Blue Cross-Blue Shield.

Like our winter seems now, it has been a long and challenging journey toward this goal. IAMFT has and continues to address every concern and question presented by the insurance companies and the politicians challenging equitable treatment of our profession. We are blessed with good leadership on the Board. Matt Burch assumed a dual role as President and Conference Chair in 2002 because we needed him, and he did a fantastic job on both counts for two years. Jeff Kerber has persistently reminded our legislators and the insurance industry that we are still experts on families and marriage and we deserve recognition as worthy independent practitioners. Together, they and our Board of Directors give generously of their valuable time to benefit all of us and our clients.

Like in early spring we are seeing signs of a thaw. Blue Cross-Blue Shield does not present any new reasons for not granting MFTs independent provider status; other than the unstated concern about cost. Although this is a considerable concern at a time of escalating medical costs, there is reason to believe that granting independent provider status to MFTs would reduce some other medical expenses. That argument—as well as the rural accessibility issues AAMFT is confronting in Congress over Medicare reform—will eventually carry the day.

But, just like spring needs the power of the Sun to blossom, IAMFT needs all of us to step up and do all we can to see these initiatives through to fruition. With this issue of the Newsletter I assume the Presidency of IAMFT. I have big shoes to fill. I am certain I cannot fill them without you.

In a couple weeks the Division Leaders meet in Washington, DC to plan and coordinate our mutual efforts with AAMFT. We will lobby Congress, learn strategy to reform Medicare and hear what other Divisions did to gain provider status with Blue Cross-Blue Shield. I hope to bring some fresh ideas back to Iowa on how we can do the same. I am counting on you to help with the next steps.

Remember our annual conference is April 2 and 3. Peg O'Rourke and her committee have done a great job planning this year's event for us. Please join us for a couple of days of learning and fun in Pella. I look forward to seeing many of you there.



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The Iowa Marital & Family Therapist

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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
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FREE for IAMFT	Job Postings	—

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Submissions are to be sent directly to the Editor. Please make checks for advertising payable to IAMFT and send to Neal Sheeley, IAMFT Treasurer, P.O. Box 283, Postville, IA 52162

The editor reserves the right to reject, abridge or modify any advertising or other submitted material as deemed appropriate. Opinions expressed by the editorial staff of The Iowa Marital & Family Therapist by articles published, advertisements, and letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of AAMFT, the IAMFT officers and Board of Directors, or the IAMFT membership.

COMING SOON: IAMFT 2004 Annual Conference!

Each year IAMFT maintains its commitment to provide you with convenient and cost effective opportunities to meet your CEU credits and network with colleagues in this great state. As always, our goal is to provide you with the latest and greatest information in the field at a very affordable cost. This year's conference will offer a total of 12 continuing education credits for only \$140.00 and includes lunch on both days! (IAMFT members cost if postmarked on or before March 19th, 2004) This is a wonderful opportunity to reacquaint yourself with your passion towards marriage and family therapy.

This year's conference will be held April 2-3, 2004 at the Vermeer Global Pavilion in Pella, IA. For those of you who recall previous conferences we have hosted in Pella, you will remember just how well a fit this town is for our purposes. Pella is rich with culture and personality. It has a large variety of shops, restaurants, and hotels. Pella allows visitors to experience the Netherlands without having to leave Iowa. Come join us and see why it is called a "European oasis in the heartland". Find more information about Pella on the Internet at www.pella.org.

The theme of this year's conference is Tough Times, Tough Cases: Understanding our ethics and working with stepfamilies. Friday will

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**DON'T FORGET TO VISIT
OUR WEBSITE
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INFORMATION ON
HOW IAMFT IS
WORKING FOR YOU.**

WWW.IAMFT.COM

COMING SOON:

IAMFT 2004 Annual Conference!

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feature Patrick O'Malley, Ph.D. from Fort Worth, Texas. Dr. O'Malley will present a workshop regarding ethics for everyday clinical practice. He is no stranger to the issues marriage and family therapists face on a daily basis. He served on the AAMFT Ethics Committee from 1994-1997 and was chair in 1996 and 1997. He was a member of the AAMFT Ethics Code Revision Task Force, which produced the latest revisions of the AAMFT code of ethics. Currently, he is a member of the AAMFT Judiciary Committee and is frequently published in Family Therapy News, scholarly journals, and magazines. Don't miss this opportunity to hear Dr. O'Malley's views on every day ethical practices in marriage and family therapy.

Saturday is a very exciting day for IAMFT as we welcome back Patricia Kelley, Ph.D. Dr. Kelley was the president of IAMFT from 1987-1989. She will be sharing her expertise in working with single parents and stepfamilies. Dr. Kelley is a semi-retired professor and former director of the University of Iowa School of Social Work. She has lectured on stepfamilies in eight countries including Hong Kong and Iceland and is scheduled to lecture in Moscow in April. She has over 60 publications including a book, *Developing Healthy Stepfamilies*. We look forward to her return and encourage you to attend.

This is an opportunity you should not pass up. For more information, visit our website at www.IAMFT.com or call (319) 754-8035. We look forward to seeing you in Pella!



Communications Report

Steve G. Kopp, Ph.D.

Let me begin by thanking each of you for placing your trust in me as your new member-at-large in charge of communications. I am excited about the next few years and the future possibilities for our organization.

Currently, our task is to disseminate information to our membership in a manner that is both economic and efficient. Last year, IAMFT moved from hard copy newsletters sent to you via the postal service to electronic postings on our website and emails to your account. This seems to have served us well. We have increased our ability to distribute the newsletter and decreased our costs (both in printing and postage). This new format also allows us to improve the quality of the newsletter without incurring higher printing and postage costs.

My vision for the newsletter is to begin including informative articles about exciting events and developments regarding marriage and family therapy in our state. My hope is to develop the newsletter into a valuable source of information regarding I am very open to your suggestions and feedback. I am also interesting in constructing a newsletter committee. Should you be interested in working with IAMFT on communications to our membership and other organizations, feel free to reach me via email at koppst@genesishealth.com

The next newsletter will be posting in late May or early June. It will review our 2004 conference and provide some great pictures of the attendees, members, and presenters who make our conferences both informative and fun.

We are looking for individuals interested in joining the IAMFT Ethics Committee. This is a great opportunity to get involved with practice issues in our state. For more information, please contact Keith Schrag at keithGS@aol.com



Student Spotlight - Melissa Mahan



I am currently a second year master's student at Iowa State University in Human Development and Family Studies with a specialization in Marriage and Family Therapy. I recently graduated from Iowa State University with an undergraduate degree in psychology in May of 2002.

While in my undergraduate program, I worked with two research projects in the psychology department. In these projects, I worked with participants and collected experimental data in an aggression study and also a study of social comparison. As an undergraduate, I was a member of Psi Chi which is the Psychology National Honor Society and the Golden Key National Honor Society.

During my undergraduate studies, I knew I wanted to pursue a graduate degree in the area of counseling. I was interested in working with many different groups: children, adolescents, married couples, and families. I was looking into various psychology graduate programs, and then discovered the MFT program at Iowa State which seemed to fit all of my counseling and academic interests. Most of all, I was drawn to the program because of the ability to work with individuals, couples, and families.

The ISU MFT clinic has provided me with a

great opportunity to work with many different clients and to also continue growing in my clinical work. I am currently finishing my coursework and thesis for May graduation. My thesis topic involves comparing conflict skills of parents' marital relationships with parent-child relationships and analyzing the outcomes for the child's romantic relationships. I am also interested in divorce outcomes and the intergenerational transmission of divorce.

I spend most of my free time as the assistant coach for the Iowa State Pom Squad. With coaching, a lot of my time is spent directing practices and attending football and basketball games. Currently, we are preparing for and looking forward to competing in the national competition in Daytona Beach, Florida for the fourth time this coming April. I am also preparing for my upcoming wedding in June and looking forward to joining my fiancé in Detroit after graduation.

Students chosen for this spotlight have been identified by the faculty at Iowa State University. We thank them for their dedication to IAMFT and their commitment to educating these up-and-coming MFTs.



Remembering Greg Gaul

Jeff Kerber, Ph.D. LMFT

On Tuesday, January 27 the late evening news began reporting a double homicide in Johnston, Iowa. Though the reporters could not release the names of the victims, they described them as a white-male, in-home social worker and a young, white-female, recent college graduate. They also talked about a teenage boy, a resident of the home where the bodies were found, who was missing and presumed to have some culpability in the shooting. He was to be considered a “material witness” wanted for questioning and the authorities stated he should be considered “armed and dangerous.” It was surreal, what could have happened, this is Iowa - such events just don’t happen here. A sense of shock was setting in along with some of the typical thoughts that come along with this type of news, e.g., “what is the world coming to?”

On January 28 the names of victims were released during the late evening news – 41 year old Greg Gaul and 21 year old Sarah Dahlke.

On January 29 we also knew the fate of the youth missing and wanted in connection with the crime. He had been found – dead, apparently committing suicide in Colorado. Three lives, three families and countless others affected by their loss.

I did not know Sarah, but the tragedy of a young woman soon to be married with her whole life in front of her is real enough. I did know Greg and that tragedy was more personal. When I heard his name released on the news it was sickening. I knew Greg as a student of mine in Tae Kwon Do – he frequently took the class I teach at a local martial arts school. He and I spoke often after class about the struggles with mental health work, insurance hassles, working “in-home”, finding good referral psychiatrists for

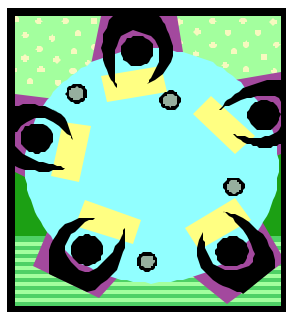
clients, etc. His mood always upbeat but sometimes you could see he was exhausted from the day. Greg was nearing his Black Belt and he was a good marital artist. Greg was a good social worker, who cared about his clients and worked hard to support them through their pain and struggle. Greg was a good man and he should not be gone.

I’m hopeful that people will remember Greg for a long time to come. We can remember and honor him by taking our work with youth and families seriously. We can remember him by loving our own families and savoring the time we have with people most important to us. We can remember by doing something extra, something meaningful for someone else. I will remember him and I hope you will too.

Legislative Report

This month is a very busy one for our Executive Director, Jeff Kerber. As the senate moves into funnel week, Dr. Kerber is busy setting up meetings and corresponding with representatives. We should be very appreciative of Dr. Kerber’s commitment to our organization as this month his wife will give birth to his first child. These are exciting for his family and we share his anticipation and joy. Towards the end of the month, Jeff will be forwarding each of you a legislative update via your email to update you on what has occurred during this legislative bussel. Let us all be thankful for his strong commitment to our organization and his willingness to devote himself to IAMFT even when he has a great deal to balance.





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