President’s Message
Becky Schumacher

Closing One Chapter – Continuing the ASGW Journey

As I wrote in the 2012 Summer-Fall issue, 1973 marked the first step in ASGW’s journey. For four decades now the Association has worked hard to support professionals involved and interested in group work as well as advance the uses of group work. I hope the events and accomplishments of this past year have contributed to these goals. Many people and events shaped this year. Much thanks and gratitude is deserved to the Executive Board, Executive Director, committee chairs and committee members for your dedication and hard work. Thank you to all! It has been an honor to have worked with such skilled and knowledgeable professionals, and kind and caring individuals.

In the winter newsletter edition, a general preview of the ASGW events scheduled for the ACA Convention was described. Here are some of the highlights from ACA –Cincinnati. Despite the cold temperatures (at least for folks from the south), the Convention afforded times to reconnect with our professional friends – make new ones too, refuel on professional knowledge and skills, reenergize about the importance of our work, and have some fun times. ASGW’s schedule and events were quite extensive. Preceding the start of the Convention, the executive board met for two days and our governing council representative, Carolyn Thomas participated in two days of governing council meetings where much of the business is conducted for running ASGW and ACA.

Many people provided such hard work for organizing and contributing to successful ASGW events. Four ASGW featured content sessions, presented by Deryl Bailey, Sherlon Brown and Bogusia Skudrzyk, Ed Jacobs and Chris Schimmel, and Sam Steen and Sheri Bauman had strong attendance and interest. A large number of participants attended the annual ASGW Awards luncheon that featured Jerry Corey, keynoting on the development and emergence of group work. Thank you Jerry!!!!… and, a hearty thank you to Lorraine Guth and Kelly McDonnell for their leadership for all the awards. And last, a very special note of thanks to Taylor and Francis for their sponsorship of the luncheon and journal editorial board meeting.

Other functions included the Fellows Symposium, which featured the 2013 Fellow, Carmen Salazar’s fascinating presentation. Two receptions provided opportunities for conversations and connections with our colleagues; one a joint-reception of ASGW, ACES, and ACC, and the other reception was our ASGW recognition of members, the ASGW Member Appreciation Networking reception. And finally a huge round of appreciation to the Graduate/New Professionals Committee Chairs - Chinwe Williams, Tara Gray, and their members for the selection of this year’s graduate student helpers for the suite and booth, and hosting a reception for our graduate students/new professionals. Thank you student volunteers… your help in the ASGW suite and booth was very much appreciated.

One of the annual events at ACA is the membership business meeting for the association that reviews the status of the association. Allow me to provide a description here of the points discussed.

continued on page 2
By-Laws revisions were completed and passed this year. Thank you to Alicia Homrich and Kurt Kraus (Co-Chairs) for your tireless work on this long project.

Membership continues to be a challenging issue. Since ACA’s re-structure of membership a few years ago when division membership was no longer required, ASGW (and we are not alone in this phenomenon) membership has diminished from the numbers we once had. The good news is that there is NO dues increase for ASGW for 2013-2014. Also, this year we moved from paper to being “green” with renewal, lapsing, and new member information electronically sent. Thanks to Kristen Fielder for her work on the system design for “going green”.

Governance is an area that the board continues to move to a policy governance model.

Financial status is strong and healthy. Much of our financial wellness is due in part to boards over the years maintaining fiscal responsibility, and a dramatic increase in marketing and media.

Globalization is an area that the International Committee Co-Chairs, Anna Puig and Yesim Saatci, continue to develop through outreach to international colleagues, and the special issue of the ASGW journal on international group work.

Media products and productions developed this year are extensive. Lead by Co-Chairs, Trey Fitch and Jenny Marshall, and Janice DeLucia Waack, their creativity and work have been extraordinary. We have books on Kindle, Amazon streaming, closed captions developed for all dvds, increased products and items sold at the booth this year (which by the way, if an award for “best booth” was given, ASGW would have won this award hands down). We currently have four books and four dvds available on the online store, along with ASGW products you may find of interest. For this coming year, much more development is underway to publish new books and produce new dvds. Stay tuned…

Executive Director, half time position, filled by Janice DeLucia Waack has proved to be exceptionally beneficial for the Association. With her long history of involvement in ASGW, her creativity and visions for what is possible for this Association, has resulted in extraordinary outcomes for ASGW. Thank you Janice!!

February 2014 ASGW Conference is well underway with the expert guidance of Theresa Coogan (Conference Coordinator) and Alicia Homrich (President-Elect). Please see future section(s) of this newsletter about the conference and also visit the website for updated information as February 2014 draws closer. An announcement for the 2016 ASGW Conference site is coming soon too.

Overall, ASGW is a thriving association and one that continues to create, develop, and contribute to the advancement of group work and support group workers.

We bid a heartfelt thank you to two people leaving service to the board. They are Niloufer Merchant, Past-President, and Amy Nitza, Secretary. Niloufer and Amy have dedicated an incredible amount of service and hard work to ASGW, serving three years as board members. Their diligence, leadership, good sense, and vision leaves ASGW in such great shape. Thank you Niloufer and Amy – it has been an honor to work with you. Thank you for your support this year.

Further, I want to welcome the incoming Board members, who begin their terms July 1. They are, Jonathan Orr as President-Elect, and Chinwe Williams as Secretary. Both will serve three year terms as Board members. Welcome!

Additionally, I want to thank Alicia Homrich (President-Elect), Deborah Rubel (Treasurer), Carolyn Thomas, (ACA Governing Council Representative), Sam Steen (Newsletter Editor), and Janice DeLucia-Waack (half-time Executive Director) for your dedication, support, guidance, and leadership this past year. Working with you each has been a privilege. And to Christine Bhat, much appreciation and thanks for keen observations and process comments as our Process Observer.

Thank you to all. Until we meet again, my best wishes to each of our members for safe journeys in the coming months, and a happy summer season.
A Message From the President-Elect

Alicia Homrich

THE ESSENCE OF ASGW IN ONE WORD

In the last issue of the Group Worker, I invited members to submit one word that represented the essence of ASGW from their experience. This built upon a list developed by Board Members at the fall 2012 Executive Board Meeting. Our 21 words that described the “feeling” of ASGW was enhanced by original contributions from four members that offered unique additions to the list.

As you can see, this collection represents both action words and terms that reflect the spirit of our division. This is appropriate to our mission that values “the creation of community” accompanied by establishing standards, promoting research, sharing knowledge, and developing skills of and for our membership. ASGW endeavors to create models of effective group practice and practitioners…and so much more!

So, if you wanted to describe our Division to a colleague, student, supervisee, or prospective member: What word would YOU use to describe the essence of ASGW?!

YOU use to describe the essence of ASGW! Please come to our biannual national conference in February to experience the essence that these words represent in action and in spirit!

See you there!

THE ESSENCE OF ASGW

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Now Available from ASGW

School Counselors Share Their Favorite Group Activities
Edited by Louisa L. Foss, Judy Green, Kelly Wolfe-Stiltner and Janice L. DeLucia-Waack

This book is a compilation of over 65 group activities that represent a variety of types of school counseling groups on topics including career awareness and planning, grief and loss work, school transition, diversity promotion and many others.

Groups for elementary, middle, and high school are included to provide plenty of creative ideas for conducting effective school counseling groups. Members of the Association for Specialists in Group Work have shared many of their favorite group activities in this useful volume.

For ease of use, activities are arranged by age as well as by stage. Introductory chapters highlight selection, use, and processing of activities, as well as ethical issues inherent in working with students in the schools. Each activity contains specific directions, goals, materials, and suggestions for adaptation. Suggestions for creating a supportive environment for groups are also included.

Order #: 72885, $45.00
ACA Member: $35.00

ACA Order Services
www.counseling.org 1-800-422-2648, ext. 222
Past President Award
Niloufer Merchant

Presidential Award
Amy Nitza

Outstanding Branch Award
Awarded to VASGW
Ellissia Price - Co-President

Vickie E. Bowman Outstanding Graduate Student Scholarship
Kimberly Volz

ASGW Fellow Award
Carmen F. Salazar
(Congratulated by Dr. Rebecca Schumacher, ASGW President)

JSGW 2012 Outstanding Article Award
“Application of Focal Conflict Theory to Psychoeducational Groups: Implications for Process, Content, and Leadership”
Julia Champe and Deb Rubel
2013 PEG CARROLL SCHOLARSHIP

Katy Schroeder

It is with gratitude that I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Carroll and ASGW for this award. I am honored to be a co-recipient of the 2013 Peg Carroll Scholarship and look forward to being actively involved in ASGW as I continue my professional development in the field of group work. I would also like to thank my mentor, Dr. Daniel Stroud. His passion for group work and willingness to support my interest in the emerging field of Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP) inspired me to reach for goals I had not imagined possible.

Prior to my graduate studies in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program at Oregon State University-Cascades Campus, I was an instructor with a nonprofit therapeutic horseback riding center for youth and adults experiencing a diverse range of special needs. Sharing my knowledge of horses in a way that facilitated the empowerment of others to make positive changes in their own lives inspired me to learn the professional helping skills necessary to support and encourage the growth I witnessed taking place in this unique environment.

During my clinical internship experience, I advocated for the opportunity to apply Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP) to the treatment of posttraumatic stress. EFP is an experiential approach utilizing the unique attributes of horses and their sociability to enhance therapeutic outcomes. Under Dr. Stroud’s supervision, I designed and co-facilitated two pilot EFP groups for women survivors of domestic violence and women veterans with PTSD related to military sexual trauma. I was especially interested in a group psychotherapy format, as I think it is a powerful method for helping individuals correct negative thought and emotional patterns, while increasing social support. As a facilitator, I noticed the incorporation of equine activities also provided a safe environment for group members to practice managing physiological symptoms of distress. I was also encouraged by the results of these groups: all participants demonstrated improvement qualitatively and quantitatively.

I am excited to continue my research in this area, and I hope to generate grant funding to advance this specialized approach to group work, and increase accessibility, as it is important to me that underserved populations are able to participate in these experiences. I also look forward to contributing to the development of group work best practices and training standards specific to group work with equine assistance. Again, thank you to Dr. Carroll and ASGW for this scholarship. I am thrilled to be a member of this organization!

Siti Rozaina Kamsani

I would like to give my heartfelt appreciation and thankfulness to Dr. Peg Carroll for her kindness in presenting this scholarship to me. Her passion for group work and for providing a great opportunity, not only for professionals, but also students to learn more about this field. I am honored to be one of the recipients for this award, and as an International student, this award is one of encouragement for me to promote the group work within and across my cultural background and my country, Malaysia.

In addition, I would like to thank all my professors, Drs. Kimberly Asner-Self, Julia Champe, Muthoni Kimemia, and other faculty members at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) who encouraged and supported me to go above and beyond my own comfort level. Last, but not least, my gratefulness goes to my former mentor, Mrs. Norizawati Zamin.

My first experience in group work began when I was a first year student at International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). I enjoyed being with this group even though it took all my time and energy. Beginning in the group member role, I felt I learned many things from this experience, especially from all the group members and the group leader. I continued my group journey when I was appointed as a college counselor at the International College Malaysia (IIC). Professional training in group work continues to be one of my career goals.

Currently, I am enrolled as a doctoral student in the counselor education program at SIUC and working to design a group module for orphan teens in Malaysia. My focus is working with orphan teen females. These orphans have been perceived negatively and suffer considerable stigmatization from society. The community seems to neglect and give insufficient attention to this population especially towards their futures. I cannot change the world, but I can change how the orphans see themselves.

My passion for group work encourages me to continue to gain more experience in this country (United States of America). This is a golden opportunity for me before I continue my journey in Malaysia. I hope this experience will be helpful for me to set-up a branch for specialists in group work in my country, Malaysia.

Katy Schroeder

Kim Asner-Self (Advisor and Mentor) and Siti Rozaina Kamsani
GROUP WORK IN ACTION

By Rachel Vannatta

The Group Work in Action column is dedicated to some of the practical matters of group work. These matters could include things such as ethics, teaching group counseling and models of group work being utilized in the field. The ultimate goal is to explore the intersection of our work in very practical and relevant ways. In light of recent violent tragedies explicated in the media about situations occurring here in the U.S. and internationally, it seems only appropriate to consider a few group counseling models that address crisis situations. We highlight Weinberg (1990), Stepakoff, Hubbard, Katoh, Falk, Mikulu, Nkhoma, and Omagwa (2006), Nitza, Chalisa, and Makwinja-Morara (2010), and Bemak and Chung (2011). These are a few that we found in the group counseling literature below.

Richard Weinberg (1990) provides direction in addressing adolescent victim-survivors when there is a significant trauma in a school community, such as a suicide, school shooting, or accident involving members of the school. The intervention plan includes assemblies accommodating as many as 200 students, coupled with an offering of small groups for 6-12 students. The purpose of the large assemblies is “(a) to describe, normalize, and encourage healthy grief reactions; (b) to identify students who may need more focused attention, and escort them to individual or group counseling; (c) to encourage healthy coping behaviors and discourage unhealthy ones; and (d) to confront the issue of suicide” (Weinberg, 1990, pg. 272).

Crisis intervention groups are utilized for students who require more attention than what is provided by the assembly (Weinberg, 1990). In these group break-out sessions, the leaders begin the group with introductions. Next, the participants are encouraged to describe where they were when they received the news about the event, what their reaction was to the news, and if any of the members saw the event occur, to describe what they saw. Group leaders encourage the students to express their fear and sadness, and leaders particularly focus on support the group members provide for each other. The facilitator also assesses if any of the students are experiencing feelings of guilt, and if so, what the circumstances are that may be contributing to these feelings. After talking about fear, sadness, and guilt, the leader directs the conversation towards healthy modes of coping. Students’ adaptive coping skills are reinforced, while those that are less adaptive or unhealthy are directed back to the group for feedback. The group closes with a deep breathing or progressive relaxation exercise if time allows. Leaders remind the students that counseling is available through the school, and they are encouraged to use some of the healthy coping skills discussed in the group. An important task of the leader is to assess students for higher levels of risk. In the event that there are students who may be likely to experience more serious disturbance, group leaders are encouraged to use their clinical judgment and to refer for a more thorough evaluation as necessary.

Another example of utilizing group counseling to address crises comes from the Center for Victims of Torture, where Stepakoff, Hubbard, Katoh, Falk, Mikulu, Nkhoma, and Omagwa (2006) implemented trauma groups for Liberian and Sierra Leonean survivors of torture and war. The purpose of the program was to provide mental health services to survivors of torture and other war trauma, to improve the community’s ability to address the mental health needs of the survivors and other refugees through training of counselors, and to increase awareness about “torture, war trauma, mental health, and related issues” (pg. 924).

The model implemented by Stepakoff et al. (2006) has psychodynamic, relational/interpersonal, cognitive behavioral, and expressive/humanistic theoretical underpinnings. An important aspect of the intervention is the combination of Western and Western African approaches. The authors illustrate how these groups met in huts made in the traditional style, and the paraprofessional facilitators lived in the camps and helped ensure the group interventions were culturally sensitive. Several elements of West African culture were incorporated into the groups, including “healing rituals, symbols (e.g., offering kola nuts to welcome newcomers), traditional stories, drumming, chants, rhythmic clapping, and song” (pg. 926). The groups met for 10 weekly sessions and for approximately two hours. There were nine to 10 clients in each group. Two leaders facilitate each group, and groups were formed by age, gender, and similarity of trauma experience.

In the beginning stage of the trauma groups, the leaders focused on establishing safety within the groups. It was necessary to establish trust both between members and the facilitators, but also between members. Group facilitators encouraged members to seek out others between sessions, which typically is discouraged in Western group counseling approaches. In order to maintain safety in the group, facilitators set limits about the introduction of traumatic material early in the group, and instead focused on allowing the members to get to know basic information about each other.

The middle part of the group focused on “emotional, cognitive, and verbal processing of traumatic memories” (pg. 928). During this time, members narrated their trauma stories and experienced a full range of emotion within a contained environment. Loss and grief were also key themes addressed during this phase of the group.

In the final stage of the group, the facilitators focused on helping “survivors redefine themselves in light of their traumatic experiences, place these experiences in the broader perspective of their life story, and reinvest in life and the future” (pg. 930). Group leaders focused on identifying strengths and coping strategies used in the past and available for use in the future. Members were often interested in performing a ritual to signify the end of the group, including sharing
cultural stories, planting a tree or flowers, taking group photos, or crafting something unique as a group. A common closing ritual was sharing a meal together, as it is often believed that people who have eaten together will not betray each other in the future. Members often remained in touch after the group experience concluded, and were able to continue to provide support to one another.

As a third example, we will provide a description of an HIV/AIDS prevention model for adolescent girls in Botswana, presented by Nitza, Chalisa, and Makwinja-Morara (2010). The goals of the group were to help members to “(a) examine and deconstruct dangerous cultural practices and traditions that influence girls’ sexual decision making; (b) develop efficacy, skills, and strategies for dealing with barriers that impede members’ success; and (c) develop a supportive peer network for coping with present and future challenges” (pg. 107). The groups were intended for adolescent girls between the ages of 12 and 17. Due to a limited number of professional counselors in Botswana, groups were often led or co-led by paraprofessional counselors. Additionally, the authors recommend that at least one facilitator be fluent in Setswana, the language students often use when conversing informally. The authors also recommend male and female co-leadership when possible.

In the initial stage of the prevention group, the facilitators focused on developing an empowering group climate that includes safety and cohesion. The facilitators strove to balance honoring members’ cultural backgrounds with addressing some of the ineffective cultural messages the members have absorbed. The leaders used dyads, the talking circle, and non-verbal movement activities during this initial stage.

During the working, or middle stage of the group, the facilitators used interventions focused on both collective and individual change processes. One of the main objectives was to help heighten the members’ awareness of the messages of male domination that have been passed down through generations. Activities such as Makungulupeswos (breaking up the myth), storytelling, and skill building were used during the working stage with the goal of empowerment of the group members.

In the final termination stage, members were encouraged to consider how they might apply their new sense of empowerment to the oppressive environment they would return to. Facilitators help members identify risks posed by family members, predict obstacles to implementing changes, and identify support networks. An important activity during the termination stage is for the group to write a proverb, story, or song that incorporates their new conceptualization of gender roles. A final consideration is the way termination of the group is handled, as the practice of termination used in Western counseling styles would clash with members’ worldview. Members may consider leaders and each other as family. As a result they may desire for their connections to remain ongoing. Leaders may handle this by conducting follow up sessions or otherwise demonstrate ongoing support through attending and creating important events for members to attend.

A final example of using group work in crisis situations can be found by Bemak and Chung (2011). The authors provide a model for a post-disaster group with a social justice perspective, titled Disaster Cross-Cultural Counseling (DCCC). The DCCC model is a five-phase model, where Phase I includes helping group members to explore their existing coping strategies and to start to develop psychological safety within the group. Phase II focuses on developing new coping skills to handle some of the realities of the disaster. During Phase III, members are encouraged to combine their old and new coping skills. As a result, the hope is that group members will feel a sense of “hope, purpose, and mastery” (pg. 9). During Phase IV, members experience a deeper integration of old and new coping skills, psychological stabilization, a sense of acceptance of the new realities and the loss experienced, and an increased sense of hope. Group members gain a greater sense of meaning and begin to think about short-term and long-term goals during Phase IV. Phase V is the “overarching dimension and foundation” (pg. 10) of the model. The focus of Phase V is group supervision. Group supervision ensures the facilitators are utilizing appropriate interventions, and it also allows the leader to acknowledge how the disaster has impacted them. Group supervision is an area that our field needs to consider in crises situations and more broadly in our training and preparation programs.

Above please find a few examples of group work targeting crisis situations. This work has been in development for a number of years. It appears that in these volatile days more and more emphasis could be placed on how the counseling field engages in such tragedies. We have highlighted a few examples, but are most certain that there are others out there making significant, yet often unnoticed, progress in their respective professional circles. Please share the group work activities you are embarking upon related to these challenging and emerging trends. There is strength in the collective voice. Indeed we are interested in hearing about your experiences as a counselor, counselor educator, or counselor trainee in group work as a response to crisis situations. What are important areas of research that need to be pursued? In what way do you feel prepared (or unprepared) for using groups to handle crises? Have you utilized prevention groups before, and if so, in what capacity? Please share your experiences with your fellow group workers by emailing us at: sammiysteen@hotmail.com and/or Vannatta@gwmail.gwu.edu.
First, did you know that Vatican City is the smallest country in the world at 0.2 square miles and a population of less than 1,000?

In the last issue of the Group Worker (Volume 41(2)), we wrote about the Julea Ward Freedom of Conscience Act, which gives pre-service counselors the right to refuse working with clients who have goals or exhibit behaviors that are contradictory to their sincerely held religious belief without fear of disciplinary action from the student’s program or school. Our initial request was to share how this legislation may potentially impact your research, training, and/or practice efforts.

We are excited to continue a critical discourse on this issue. Therefore, we’ve asked Dr. Sandra Terneus (Professor at Tennessee Tech University and Editorial Board member of the Journal for Specialists in Group Work) to provide some of her thoughts and considerations on this important issue. Dr. Terneus expressed an endless stream of enthusiasm and insight because of the emerging implications of this legislation on the counseling field in general. More specifically, I reached out to her because of the amount of passion she exhibited in relation to this issue following a session at the ACA conference in Cincinnati, OH March 2013. Dr. Terneus shares the following:

I am an alumna from a CACREP program, and the training and supervision bestowed upon me allowed me to have the awareness of the boundaries of my values and my client’s values in a therapeutic relationship. I was able to learn the pure meaning of being there for the client as a nonjudgmental counselor, regardless of the beliefs of that client and regardless of the actions imposed by that client onto others.

Currently, I am a faculty member in a graduate counseling program located in the Bible Belt. [which upon further clarification from her can be defined as a term to denote an area of the United States known for strong Christian fundamentalism]]. The issues and definition of “sincerely held religious beliefs” have been circulating among my colleagues within various professional organizations such as professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, social workers, psychologists, and school counselors, etc. I have heard comments from colleagues who hold joint memberships in Christian counseling associations in which they support the Freedom of Conscience Act and intend to refer out gay clientele [in particular]. In addition, I have heard from one of my colleagues who stated that he was advised to increase his liability insurance due to his role as an educator as a result of litigation that has taken place in the area of freedom of conscience. Yet, I haven’t heard too much about this issue within the context of group work.

Dr. Terneus is extending an invitation to the ASGW membership, counselor educators who teach group counseling classes, and group workers who are in the field, to share their professional reactions and positions on this issue and other issues which may emerge from these recent developments.

In an effort to help facilitate this call we propose the following questions:

In what ways have you as a group facilitator, counselor educator, or counselor trainee faced a situation where the Freedom of Conscience Act has impacted your work?

Does Freedom of Conscience look different for group workers than for individual counselors?

I am an alumna from a CACREP program, and the training and supervision bestowed upon me allowed me to have the awareness of the boundaries of my values and my client’s values in a therapeutic relationship. I was able to learn the pure meaning of being there for the client as a nonjudgmental counselor, regardless of the beliefs of that client and regardless of the actions imposed by that client onto others.

Ideally we would love to hear your feedback via email at: sammyls-teen@hotmail.com or Vannatta@gwmail.gwu.edu.

Thus far, we have received little input from our readers in reaction to the columns in the Group Worker, and we are eager for your thoughts and feedback. If this issue has come up in classes you teach, groups you lead, or conversations you are having with your fellow group workers, please reach out to us and let us know how this issue is impacting your work as a group leader or counselor educator. We imagine this legislation plays a unique role in group counseling because we are not only balancing one client’s worldview with our own, but rather balancing the intersection of multiple worldviews all at the same time. Your thoughts, questions, and reactions are welcomed.

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I am excited about the compilation of work presented in this newsletter. In part, this is due to the a-ha moment that came when Rachel (my co-editor) and I dialogued about the title of this outlet. “The Group Worker!” Yes, the Group Worker. Make no doubt about it this newsletter is moving and quite frankly going through a transition just like many groups do throughout the duration of their existence. Current transitions that are happening relevant to us include movement in the counseling field more broadly and movement in the field of group work in particular. More specifically, ASGW is undergoing major transitions internally with our board as well as externally by capitalizing on the emerging interests of a new vanguard of members and affiliates.

In the midst of these current and ongoing transitions, the Group Worker will continue to ensure academic agility, promote fresh perspectives, use a bit of humor, and create a platform to express complex issues in simple and user-friendly exchanges. I am literally extending the Group Worker from us to you in hopes that you’ll keep the dialogue and group that we are all a part of moving. I believe your feedback, reactions, and responses provide valuable and necessary input on the issues we chose to highlight. This input creates a stronger outcome for us all. You will see us reach out to you for pictures and artifacts (highlighted by our president elect) and your thoughts on any number of issues we raise in this edition. These columns are a bit shorter, but provide just enough to encourage you to voice your perspectives. The Group Worker transition is well underway and the invitation is extended for you to embrace this process.

Further, it is important for you to know that as the current editor of the Group Worker, I am so committed to this work that I received two speeding tickets when driving from Washington, DC to Cincinnati, OH for our last board meeting during the ACA conference. I chose to drive because I failed to make a plane ticket in a timely manner. Truth is, I ended up owing $350 for the tickets and was still 30 minutes late, as is alluded to in some of the pictures highlighted from our board meeting above. Ironically, I could have purchased a plane ticket with the violation charges alone and if you include the money for gas I’d have some cash left to spare. Nonetheless, I hope you are able to see my life-threatening driving behavior to get to the board meeting as an illustration of how much I am committed to my role as editor of the Group Worker.

In closing and more importantly, I’d like to offer that I learned my lesson about slowing down on the road when driving my vehicle. But as the driver of the Group Worker, I have no plans to slow down this process anytime soon. Groups can handle transitions quite well. Ofentimes these transitions lead to significant growth and positive outcomes. I am most certain ASGW is well suited to do the same and the Group Worker is here to capture some of this movement. In the meantime, drive safely!
How many times do I need to ask that we add The Ends Policy Process to the agenda. (Niloufer Merchant, Outgoing Past President) I’m wondering if Janice has the receipts for those fancy shirts? (Deb Rubel, Treasurer)

I’m afraid we are going to have to make some changes to the Board members. (Becky Schumacher, Outgoing President)

Seriously...you already want to take another break. (Alicia Homrich, Incoming ASGW President)

It has been a long journey. But I’m pleasantly surprised that newsletter didn’t fall apart when I passed it along. (Amy Nitza, Outgoing Secretary)

Which camera should we look at? Jerry Corey and a few groupies are wondering!

a modified version of air guitar inspired by Janice DeLucia-Waack, Executive Director

mixed messages...

international flair

serious.
by Stacey Karpen

Doctoral Student, George Washington University

As I sat down to first read, “Empowering Teen Peers to Prevent Bullying: The Bully Busters Program for High School,” I noted my initial skepticism. I suspect I am not alone, although many may not publicly admit it, in feeling a hint of “bullying” fatigue, a regrettable response to the emergence of this cultural buzzword. Bullying has become a ubiquitous term, bandied about far too casually in the news and other media outlets. Let me be clear, as a counselor I am by no means numb to the severity of this problem and its traumatic and, at times, fatal consequences. I am, however, fearful that in our strident efforts to “end” bullying we may have, despite our best intentions, allocated too much attention on the power of cruelty with little emphasis on the power of compassion. Upon reading the first few pages of the book, I realized that my skepticism was unwarranted. Despite a name too juvenile for high school students, the Bully Busters program offers a refreshing, group-based peer counseling program that empowers high school students to combat bullying in their own schools by creatively engendering empathy, trust, and understanding.

The book has three parts: program content and implementation, peer leader selection and training, and the facilitator overview of the peer leader guide. A separate peer leader guide includes a session-by-session outline with group activity descriptions, goals, materials and preparation needed and suggested processing questions. An additional CD-ROM is included, containing the peer leader guide, additional forms, handouts and other materials required to run the program. Together, these tools provide practitioners with a complete start-to-finish manual.

The strength of the program is in its utilization of cross-age interaction as a delivery system, a developmentally appropriate approach for teenagers who are more apt to be influenced by their peers than their teachers or parents. Junior and senior high school students are selected as peer leaders via teacher and staff referral, written applications and group interviews. Once selected, the students take part in a school counselor led 10-hour peer leader training program, ideally divided over a 2 to 3 day period. This training entails learning about group ethics, confidentiality, and when to refer a student to a supervising adult. The curriculum also includes counseling skills training where students learn the tools of reflecting, re-stating, paraphrasing, and open-ended questioning. Through activities and discussion, peer leaders are also exposed to group development theory, group dynamics, cohesion and co-leadership. I was impressed by this curriculum as it mirrored many aspects of my masters level counselor training. In essence, these students are learning how to become effective and responsive group leaders.

The program is designed to be implemented during the school day, although the authors suggest that it can be just as effective after school or within community organizations. After training is complete, peer leaders co-lead weekly discussion groups comprised of freshmen students. Adults, usually a school counselor or social worker, play a secondary role as supervisor, as they do not lead or co-lead the groups. The recommended student discussion group size is 8 to 10 students and two peer leaders. Groups are focused on issues such as trust, empathy, listening, communication skills, conflict resolution, relational aggression, cyberbullying and dating and relationship issues. The book also includes suggested evaluation methods for before, during and after the program. While there has been no empirical research specifically assessing the Bully Busters program, the authors provide a review of a significant amount of theory and evidence based research supporting group work and peer leadership as effective interventions for adolescents. That said, the lack of substantial empirical support may make it difficult to gain approval to administer the program.

The program’s primary goals are twofold: the development of a sense of connectedness among students and the development of the social competence skills necessary to sustain healthy relationships. By building a safe and supportive relational context, Bully Busters uses group work to foster both individual and community growth. The bully, the bullied, and the bystander are provided an opportunity to become engaged and, ultimately, empowered.

The session outlines in the peer leader guide begin with a section entitled, “Why does this matter?” In clear, age appropriate terms the authors communicate the value of each session. In truth, I think this is a question that, as group practitioners, we must continually ask ourselves and our community. Why does this matter? The Bully Busters program matters because it defies an all too easy tendency to define students as either victims or perpetrators. It matters because it provides students about the evils of bullying is simply not enough. Training students to be group leaders is a powerful approach that potentially could not only reduce and prevent bullying, but it could also provide the inspiration for a new generation of group workers.
Calling all Collectors... We want your archives!

Are you a collector of “stuff?” Have you saved past newsletters, conference schedules, luncheon award programs, or other ASGW ephemera? Have you wondered if it is time to clean out?

Please share any and all past ASGW material that you are willing to contribute to our divisional archives. If you can get them boxed and to the post office, we will pay your shipping costs. We can even scan them and return them to you if you aren’t quite ready to “let go” of your ASGW memories.

The contributions of Fellows, Past Presidents and other officers are especially appreciated!

DR. ALICIA HOMRICH, ROLLINS COLLEGE, 1000 HOLT AVE-2726, WINTER PARK, FL. 32789

FIRST CALL FOR PHOTOS OF MEMBERS DOING GROUP WORK

We need photos for a special picture montage of ASGW members conducting group work. They can be digital or prints (prints will be scanned and returned promptly). If you don’t have a photo, please “stage” one that represents the work you do with groups! Mail them to:

AHOMRICH@ROLLINS.EDU OR
DR. ALICIA HOMRICH, ROLLINS COLLEGE, 1000 HOLT AVE-2726, WINTER PARK, FL 32789