

# NSPA NEWS

The Voice of Psychology in Nevada

May 2006

[www.nevadapsychologists.org](http://www.nevadapsychologists.org)

## Upcoming Events

- **May 19th, Ethics CE Program, Annual Business Meeting & Student Research Fair in Reno**
- **May 20th Strategic Planning Meeting– North 9am-1pm UNR Family Medicine Clinic**
- **June 10th– Strategic Planning Meeting– South 9am-1pm Home of Abraham Amaya**

**FOR MORE INFO OR TO RSVP CONTACT NSPA'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:**

**David Velasquez  
(702) 650-0870  
[give942@katelbg.com](mailto:give942@katelbg.com)**

**or visit**

**[www.nevadapsychologists.org](http://www.nevadapsychologists.org)**



**Please help us bid farewell to our Executive Director, Marilyn Etkoff**

**and**

**Welcome our new Executive Director, David Velasquez**

## President's Message Michelle Carro, NSPA President

As this will be my last newsletter contribution as President I'd like to express my deepest thanks to all of those individuals who have been devoted contributors to the organization this year - the executive board members, regional board members and committee members. We've worked hard and it shows.

This was our first year trying something new with regard to providing CEs. We started our 4 program per year calendar. This effort was successful on a number of fronts: we succeeded in generating more steady revenue for the organization; we succeeded in collaborating with other professionals in related disciplines; and we succeeded in providing varied and quality continuing education North and South in treating addiction, putting the mind-body connection into clinical practice, and ethical decision-making. I look forward to this next fiscal year where we will aim to provide programs focused on child and adolescent treatment issues.

NSPA has worked hard to carry out programs that will raise awareness regarding how psychology plays a meaningful role in every person's life. For example, this year marked the first annual Nevada Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award.

Three companies were recognized for best practices in promoting the mental health of their employees. The public education campaign regarding Mind-Body Health is also taking hold. Mind-body health is gaining greater exposure in our communities and psychologists are poised to jump in with our long-standing expertise in this area. I'm so excited that NSPA has been working to promote wholeness in health through this campaign.

On that note, NSPA has been very involved in ongoing discussions with other stakeholders in Nevada's Health Care System. This has been at the request of our legislators. And, I believe that we have been consciously included because of our commitment to and support of legislators who support mental health. Moreover, we have represented our science and practice well in the legislature providing thoughtful and evidence-based testimony and input on a number of issues both "guild"-related and not.

Finally, I'd like to recognize our efforts at building bridges between and among all of the various psychologists (and psychologists in training) represented in Nevada. Our student members (undergraduate and graduate) represent UNLV, UNR, and Fielding Institutes. Students have become an integral and valued force in our organization. Our Diversity Committee partnered with UNLV in promoting to our members talks given by leading researchers and writers in the areas of diversity and multicultural competence. We worked at changing the language in our brochures, membership applications, and website postings to be sensitive to and embracing of all psychologists - those in private practice, in public service, in administration, in academia and so on. And, we made some small movement toward developing a rural health coordinator program in Nevada. I look forward to continued bridge-building through more social events and other activities emphasizing collaboration and relationships in the upcoming year.

Speaking of the upcoming year, please remember that NSPA could not carry out its agenda to promote psychology - your practice and science- without each and every member. The new membership year is upon us (June 1!). I hope you will continue to support NSPA through your membership dollars, listserv contributions, and volunteer time. We do meaningful work and I am proud to have served you as President this year.

# BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY

**Judy Phoenix, Ph.D.**  
**NSPA President 2006-2007**

I am pleased, honored and a little anxious about becoming your new President of NSPA. It's so easy to have big ideas and not so easy to accomplish them. I have, however, such wonderful role models on how to do a great job, and that is reassuring. As you can see from the title of this column, I have chosen to emphasize building community as my focus for the year. I see that as "through diversity" because it is our diversity as a profession, as professionals, and as people that enriches our organization. It is all too easy for our differences to become divisive, rather than strengths. I want to build on our strengths. I

also look forward to NSPA continuing to work with our colleagues in the mental health field to build a larger mental health community that will benefit us all.

We have some challenges to address in the new year. We'll be starting with Strategic Planning meetings to help us get on track for this year with your input. I hope I see many of you there. The northern meeting will be 5/20/06, 9-1, at the UNR Family Medicine Clinic. The southern meeting will be 6/10/06, 9-1 at Abraham Amaya's home. Please plan to come.

## Farewell from our Executive Director, Marilyn Etcoff

As I step down from the position of NSPA'S Executive Director, I'd like to take a moment to thank a lot of very nice people I've had the opportunity to meet and work with over the past four years as your Executive Director. First, I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Louis Mortillaro who asked me to apply for this position. Lou was the first President I worked for. A more generous psychologist you won't find. Whenever NSPA was in a fix Lou came through and kept us on our feet by donating very generously. Lou was singularly responsible for soliciting the single largest donation to our annual conference. His leadership kept us in the black. Dr. Bill Danton ably took the reins from Dr. Mortillaro. Bill developed one of the best annual conferences NSPA ever had. Gary Lenkeit, the third president I served under was and has been one of the most committed and influential psychologists in the area of legislative affairs. He has testified before the state legislature more than any other Nevada psychologist. Gary has been active for years and years as one of our lead-

ing representatives to the APA. Finally, Dr. Michelle Carro has been a joy to work with. Organized, rational, committed and knowledgeable, Michelle has been a true leader.

With the help of our Boards of Directors who have given their time and hearts to professional psychology, and Nevada psychology in particular, NSPA has evolved over the past four years. We developed a Political Action Committee during Dr. Mortillaro's tenure, and have raised thousands of dollars in contributions allocated to Nevada's legislative leaders under the deft guidance of Mr. Bryan Gresh, our dedicated lobbyist. Bryan has provided articulate leadership that has educated our Board and members in the political process. The respect Bryan has in the state legislature makes his representation of NSPA effective. Psychology now is listened to by legislative leaders as never before.

I am particularly proud of my work in the area of administration. I spent many hours placing NSPA

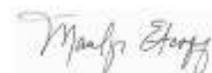
into the 21<sup>st</sup> century by placing our organization onto the computer, keeping membership and financial data, and helping to develop and administer our own website. During my tenure our CAPP grants have increased as has our membership. We have marketed and conducted increasing numbers of successful CE programs giving our members inexpensive and convenient access to quality APA- approved continuing education programming.

I have enjoyed building relationships on the telephone with potential patients, sponsors and psychologists who called NSPA for help.

In closing, I want to wish Nevada's psychologists the very best in the future. It was an honor to serve as your Executive Director.

Thank you so much.

Sincerely,



Marilyn Etcoff

# GETTING WELL TAKES TIME

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## News from the North

### Catherine J. Neighbors, President, NSPA North

Our team in the North is collectively taking a deep sigh of relief after successfully providing a 3-credit CE workshop about collaborating with community resources in Northern Nevada. The event was held on Friday, March 3, and was entitled: The Best You Can Be: Optimizing your Collaborations with Mental Health Resources in Northern Nevada. All of our speakers volunteered their time, and I would like to thank: **Hon. Peter Breen**, Washoe County Mental Health Court; **Pam Becker**, Children's Cabinet; **Dacla Gibson**, Suicide and Crisis Hotline; **Kambiz Alaei, Ph.D.**, Northern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services; and **Duane Runyan, Ph.D.**, Carson-Tahoe Hospital Behavioral Health Services.

Participants commented that they had learned new information about the services that these resources provide. The workshop was an ambitious undertaking given that we had 5 speakers to coordinate, and our officers all volunteer their time as well. Our team pulled together to get quality speakers; and we huddled during a couple of crunch

times to get the flyers in the mail and to create a workshop brochure in which we offered advertising space. We had about 25 participants, and grossed \$890, which is remarkable given the \$30 registration fee. After expenses, we earned a net profit of about \$650, which will help fund our Annual Student Social in the fall. Thanks to the team in the North for all your effort: **Laurie Drucker, Psy.D.**, Vice President; **John Friel, Ph.D.**, Treasurer; and **Hillary Case, Ph.D.**, Secretary. We were also fortunate to have **Judy Phoenix, Ph.D.**, President-Elect, kick off the workshop with NSPA announcements. And another big "thank you" goes to **Marisa Torch**, who is the UNR Psi Chi President, and one officer that we can count on to help NSPA in a pinch. She helped us with the registration desk, as well as running extra copies at the last minute.

The next formal student event will be the Student Research Faire, which will be a poster session held in conjunction with the Ethics Workshop and Annual Awards Luncheon on Friday, May 19, 2006. Laurie

Drucker will be coordinating the poster session, and she will be sending out a "Call for Posters," which will be distributed to all UNR, UNLV, and Fielding psychology students (both graduate and undergraduate). **Larry Pruitt**, our UNR and APAGS Representative, will help in the distribution of the flyer as well as encouraging students to participate. This has been an excellent, collaborative event in which psychologists have the opportunity to meet students and to hear the latest in the quality research that these students produce.

In terms of nominations for Northern officers for the '06/'07 year, we still need a nomination for Vice President. The other nominations are: Laurie Drucker, President; Peter Frohman, Treasurer; John Friel, Secretary. Nominations are still open, but we'll need to get ballots out soon. Let me know if you or anyone you know would be interested in being nominated for Vice President of the North. Contact me at [CJNeighbors@aol.com](mailto:CJNeighbors@aol.com) or (775) 322-4451.

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## Northern Nevada Student News at the University of Nevada, Reno

### The National Honor Society In Psychology

#### By Marisa Torch

Psi Chi, The National Honor Society In Psychology, has had a successful semester due to the continued support of NSPA and the UNR Department of Psychology. On February 9th, Psi Chi held an introductory meeting where students and officers planned events and prospective speakers, fundraising activities, and other student involvement on campus both within the Northern Nevada Community and the University setting as well as ideas for student involvement in NSPA.

On February 23rd, Graduate Student Erick Dubuque spoke about Americorp and Behavior Analysis. On March 16th Steven Hayes,

Ph.D. presented on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and his work as an internationally known researcher and clinician. On April 7th, Psi Chi and the Psychology Dept. hosted the 2nd annual Meet and Greet Social with Department Chair, Victoria Follette. There was an excellent Undergraduate and Graduate student turnout, with faculty from the Experimental, Behavior Analysis, and Clinical Psychology Programs in attendance.

Psi Chi has benefited from the immense support of Dr. Follette and Psi Chi Advisor, Ramona Houmanfar and their interest in undergraduate student activities. Psi Chi

was very fortunate to have a planning luncheon with Catherine Neighbors, Ph.D. on March 17th and also helped at the March 3rd NSPA Conference on Optimizing Collaborations with Mental Health Services in Northern Nevada.

Psi Chi looks forward to a successful end of the semester, with their continued collaboration with NSPA at the Ethics Conference on May 19th, and looks forward to speakers Dudley Luke, Ph.D., on April 27th and the Semester Induction Ceremony to be held on May 11th.

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2005-2006

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# Carson City Focus

## By Bryan Gresh, NSPA Lobbyist

If you haven't already seen it, you soon will. A letter in the mail asking your financial support for the **NSPA PAC**, the psychological association's Political Action Committee. If you really take the time to read the letter, you will see how important it is for all NSPA members to write a check. NSPA did so well during the last campaign cycle in 2004, our first organized foray in the campaign contribution arena, that expectations are high for us to do even better in 2006. And make no mistake, the campaign season is in full swing.

**What is the NSPA PAC?** It's an opportunity for psychologists, whether you're in private practice, an institutional setting or the university system, to help support the campaigns of legislative candidates who strongly support psychology. By adding your contribution to that of colleagues around the state, we can better help those who share our passion and positions on a host of issues important to all psychologists.

Last campaign season, thanks to your help, our fledgling Political Action Committee identified legislative candidates we felt strongly supported the Nevada State Psychological Association. We raised enough to contribute to nine of those candidates: Democrats and Republicans, Senators and Assemblymen, incumbents and challengers. All nine won, and each was a reason we saw an unprecedented 40% increase in mental health funding in the state, to \$515 million during the current two year period. For the **NSPA PAC**, and those who contributed to make it happen, it was a solid start.

As was the case in 2004

and will be again, your Legislative Committee and I and then the entire Board fully vet the list of potential recipients of those PAC dollars. We take the responsibility very seriously and strive to ensure we speak for all psychologists when we endorse, and financially support, a candidate for the Nevada State Legislature.

But you may ask, Why bother giving at all? Why do I need to? Because it's not just medical doctors and lawyers who contribute to political races in Nevada, it's nurses, psychiatrists and a variety of other health care providers, all of whom understand they must become politically proactive or their practice acts will suffer.

Some may ask What has NSPA done for me? It's is a fair question. The answer is simple. Plenty. Just last session alone, NSPA was active in more than two dozen pieces of legislation, a number of which had potential damaging effects to our members. We were successful in preventing two bills from becoming law that would negatively impact the practice of psychology. In the social justice arena, NSPA stood out on Assembly Bill 6, the ban on the juvenile death penalty. We were asked to provide expert testimony. We enjoyed a closer relationship with the governor's office and, of course, we were proud to have been actively engaged with a host of others who were dedicated to improving mental health. The result, unprecedented millions more mental health dollars

Every two years, the Nevada Legislature looks at the field of psychology and determines



whether changes should be made to how we practice our profession and what we do

within our "scope of practice." Each session the battle gets a little more difficult as we fight to maintain the high levels of education and training necessary for those wishing to be called licensed psychologists in the state of Nevada. You worked hard for the privilege of calling yourself a psychologist. We continually work hard to protect that right. Your check to the **NSPA PAC** will help.

Questions or comments about the NSPA Newsletter? Please contact Karen Shelton, Ph.D. at [karenselton@charter.net](mailto:karenselton@charter.net) or (775) 826-1002 x13

The views and opinions expressed in each article of the NSPA news are those of the author and not necessarily shared by NSPA.

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# Sexual Conflict—It's A Good Thing

## John C. Friel, Ph.D. [www.clearlife.com](http://www.clearlife.com)

### Reno, and One Day A Week In Las Vegas Starting May, 2006

That sounds like Martha Stewart in her pre-prison days. But it's true. Conflict is not only a part of each person's everyday life. In long-term committed romantic relationships it is also the raw material that is used to create enduring passion. Imagine a novel or movie with no conflict between characters. But, as we all know too well, conflict is also what can destroy a relationship. Freud captured the interplay between creation and destruction when he borrowed the terms "Eros" and "Thanatos" from the Greeks and used them as central concepts in his theories.

**Gridlock.** A couple is in the middle of an argument about sex. He is angry because he feels she isn't interested enough in sex, and says that he feels closer to her when they make love--that it's a way for him to connect. She is angry because he keeps pushing her about sex when she has repeatedly told him that she needs an emotional connection before she feels like being sexual. They become what David Schnarch calls "gridlocked." Gridlock is a normal stage of all marriages, not just ones that are in trouble, and it usually lasts for years, even decades, before something changes.

There are basically three outcomes once a couple gets into this stage:

They can stay stuck indefinitely, which many do, but with a resulting death of passion and chemistry in the relationship.

They can get divorced.

They can learn how to handle the anxiety and discomfort that comes with having a truly intimate relationship, break through the gridlock, and have chemistry and passion in their marriage "until death do they part."

**Conflict.** One of the more profound, practice-changing ideas that I have embraced over the past 25 years is expressed succinctly by our colleague, David Schnarch:

"...a couple's sexual repertoire grows through conflict rather than compromise. Sexual conflict in marriage is not just inevitable—it's important...[because it]...makes both people grow up." (*Passionate Marriage*, p. 259).

He notes, as does Bill Doherty, that therapists doing couples work need to be able to tolerate their own anxiety and to be more differentiated than the couple with whom they are working, otherwise s/he will do things to "lower the heat" in the session when it shouldn't be (there are, of course, times when it should be), and thus sabotage each of the partner's growth.

**Specificity.** It is important to remember that the key to working with a couple's sexual conflicts is the principle of specificity—there is little use in talking with a couple in vague, general terms about their sex life. If a couple says this: "We start to make love and half the time it just doesn't work out, and then one of us winds up mad and sleeping on the couch," we should be asking things like this: "Could you take one of these incidents and each tell me second-by-second what was said and done from the time one of you signaled interest to the other, to when one of you was downstairs sleeping on the couch?" And when he or she says, "I touched him/her in a way that hurt—I didn't mean to—and then it was over," we should ask, "Where did you touch him/her, and what was your reaction to that touch?" As uncomfortable as this might seem to

get for the couple, if you are comfortable asking the questions and your non-verbals are telling them that you are interested in helping them solve a problem, the majority of couples will be quite clear and frank.

**Isomorphism.** The principle of isomorphism states that the structure of a couple's conflicts is pretty much the same whether it's about sex, money, kids, in-laws, or anything else. I tell couples that they could take a clear plastic overhead transparency sheet and "place it over" one of those sexual conflicts like the one above, "trace it out or map it out," and then it would fit over nearly all of their other conflicts. The issue in the above conflict isn't that it happened—lovers doing something that unintentionally hurts the other person is quite common. It's how the couple handles it, and how each of the partners handles his/her anxiety, shame, hurt, and fear that determines whether they are able to move out of gridlock or not.

**Equals.** Above all, it is crucial when working with a couple's sexual conflicts to remember that we always pair up with a partner who is equally healthy and/or dysfunctional—equally differentiated—as ourselves. If you find yourself siding with one or the other, with seeing one of the partners as "sicker" than the other, either take the case to consultation, or refer them on, because you won't be of much help to them if you are seeing them that way. This is especially true when one of the partners grew up in a particularly painful family, such as one in which s/he was sexually abused as a child.

**NEVADA STATE PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION**

4560 S. Eastern, Suite 13  
Las Vegas, NV 89119

Phone: 702-454-0050  
Fax: 702-454-0050  
Email: give942@katelbg.com

## **Psychologically Healthy Workplace Awards Update Roberta Fergurson, Ph.D., Chair, BPON PHWA Committee**

Now it's back to business as usual. The Northern committee, which meets twice monthly includes: Deborah Richied, Gwen O'Bryan, Marty Gutride, and John Friel. They are all to be congratulated for the enormous amount of work they have done on this project. We have been invited to partner again with the Southern Nevada Human Resource Association, and have already begun the cycle for the 2006 awards. We have ordered the nationally standardized brochures from APA, printed up our own Nevada brochures and application forms, and are again beginning to contact businesses, corporation and organizations in Northern Nevada inviting them to apply.

In January, we were slated to

make a presentation to the Douglas County HR Association at their monthly meeting; however, a snowstorm hit and Deb, John, and I couldn't get through and had to cancel. Darcy Worms, former president of the group, armed with materials we had sent in advance, made the presentation and distributed the brochures and applications for us. So we were able, with the help of the Carson, Minden, Gardnerville group, to have our program presented in those communities despite the weather.

Our acceptance to partner with the SNHRA will depend upon whether or not we can get more help this year. We certainly appreciated the way Christa Peterson and the site visitors from Southern Nevada pitched in dur-

ing the last days of our program doing the site visits, interviews and summaries; however, we cannot wait until the last minute again this year. To date we have no committee members in the South and are currently recruiting for help from our Southern Nevada members.

This past year it was our good fortune to be able to partner with SNHRA and present an awards program on behalf of all Nevada's psychologists who support health (emphasis on Psychological) in the workplace. We will again apply for a grant from the APA, which helped defray some of the costs incurred by the committee last year; now what we need most is your help.