

Interaction

ASERVIC

Volume IX, No. 1

Fall, 2005

President's Address Cheri Smith

The opportunity for ASERVIC members to connect on the national level will take place soon at the ACA Convention in Montreal. Members are welcome to attend the following events:

- ▶ Friday (3/31): Board Meeting and New Board Member Meeting
- ▶ Saturday (4/1): Town Meeting, Luncheon, and Graduate Student Meeting
- ▶ Sunday (4/2): Catholic Mass, Interfaith Service, Past-Presidents' Meeting, State Presidents Meeting, and our Reception

ASERVIC will also have a booth in the convention hall. Please be sure to check the conference program for event locations. Also, be sure to check our web site again for the latest information before you leave for the convention.

ASERVIC is also sponsoring the following educational programs: ACA's New Ethical Guidelines: Evaluating the Past and Present Role of ASERVIC; Altruism and the Counseling Profession; Graduate Students' Perceptions of the Need for Spiritual Discussion and Religious Values Education in Counseling; The Intersection of Faith and Sex: Integrating Developmental Models to Help GLBT Clients Develop a Healthy Identity; Using Spiritual Interventions for Self-Care: Tools for Competent Practice. Please check the Montreal conference program for days, times and locations.

Opportunities to connect at the state level continue with a division retreat and the formation of a new state division. The Pennsylvania State Division of ASERVIC is sponsoring a Spring Retreat May 19 – 21, 2006. The retreat will be held at Mountain Dale Farms, Beaver Springs, PA. Topics to be covered include: Effortless Meditation; Convergence of LGBT and Spirituality; Introduction to Reflexology and Dream Retreat. Retreat participants may earn up to 10.5 CEUs. For more information please contact the Pennsylvania ASERVIC Division President Joanna Castro-Shaffer at adadelbosque@msn.com.

West Virginia is in the midst of working toward chartering a state



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division. If you are interested in becoming involved in a future West Virginia ASERVIC division please contact Darlene Daneker daneker@marshall.edu.

I look forward to seeing many of you in Montreal!

Fall Meeting Minutes Lisa Jackson-Cherry

ASERVIC's Fall Meeting Executive Committee of the Board of Directors Was held September 15-18, 2005 at the Convent of St. Birgitta, Darien CT. Executive Board Members present were: Dr. Cheri Smith, President 2005-2006; Dr. Tracey Robert, Past President 2004-2005; Dr. E.H. Mike Robinson III, President-elect 2006-2007; Dr. Grant Hayes, Treasurer; Dr. Lisa Jackson-Cherry, Secretary; Sr. Faith Okerson, Board Member; and Dr. Fannie Cooley, Board Member.

President's Report: Dr. Cheri Smith

Dr. Smith discussed the *tentative* schedule and activities for the 2006 ACA Convention in Montreal. See the related article on page 7.

Past President's Report: Dr. Tracey Robert

Leadership Transitioning. Ideas to improve the process of transitioning from experienced to new leaders included:

- ▶ A transitional meeting in June/July including the President, Past-President, and President-elect, with conference calls during the interim.
- ▶ Including the President elect-elect in discussions at ACA and in conference calls.
- ▶ Implementing an Assistant Treasurer to be appointed by the President-elect or a treasurer designee in the third year with a proposed a two-year term that would allow someone to become familiar with the Treasurer's job. Motion to be made at the ASERVIC Board Meeting at the 2006 ACA Convention since it involves a change in the current policies and procedures.

Nominations. Nominations for 2007-08 candidates for the Board and for President-elect are being solicited.

Web-site.

- ▶ A motion was made to move the account from Earthlink to Yahoo. Motion passed unanimously.
- ▶ The Media Committee will determine who is permitted to post on the website.
- ▶ State Presidents will be listed on the web site.

Budget. The ASERVIC budget was approved one month after the 2005 ACA Convention.

Treasurer's Report: Dr. Grant Hayes

Management fees reports were received and \$50 in attorney fees to

President:

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B. Grant Hayes
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Secretary:

Lisa Jackson-Cherry
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Barbara Anderson, the ASERVIC legal consultant, were paid.

CACREP Report: Submitted by Dr. Craig Cashwell

This is the last year for a CACREP representative from each division. Revised multicultural competencies will be reviewed at ACES.

Membership:

- ▶ Discussed membership and retention. There has been a slight drop in membership.
- ▶ Although ASERVIC has historically required ASERVIC members to also join ACA, it does not have to. President Smith will contact ACA regarding a fee structure for non-ACA members who are interested in ASERVIC membership.

Media: Sr. Faith Okerson

The Media Committee, in conjunction with the Membership Committee, will initiate a member survey to new members for retention purposes.

Speakers Bureau: Dr. Cheri Smith

It was suggested the Speakers Bureau could use the survey results as a way to develop a list of major speakers and that doctoral students could attend sessions and provide write ups for the newsletter.

New Business:

Spirituality Book. Dr. Craig Cashwell was contacted for permission to use ASERVIC's spiritual competencies for a text. Permission must come from the publisher, ACA Press.

ASERVIC'S Theme. Discussed the current focus of ASERVIC and the idea of exploring a differing focus: religious values in counseling.

DVD: Smith proposed the development of a DVD training module product for counselor educators and incorporating multiple panel discussions with various religious/spiritual perspectives addressing major religious and spiritual issues in counseling.

Graduate Students:

- ▶ Graduate students will be presenting a poster session at the ACA conference.
- ▶ Robinson will make a motion at the 2006 ACA Convention Board meeting to establish an ad hoc committee for graduate students.

Leadership Development:

The group discussed how to incorporate and include leaders at the State level, generating the following ideas:

- ▶ contact State leaders who attended the luncheon and ask them about being more involved;
- ▶ implement a form at the ACA booth and Town Meeting to include name, contact information, and committee interest.
- ▶ Robinson and Robert will collect names of ASERVIC members interested in serving on committees.

State Branch Organizations:

Spice, President, and President-elect were charged with contacting State Chairs to determine interest in a listserv. Smith was charged with contacting Spice to coordinate this effort.

ASERVIC is a division of American Counseling Association (ACA). Neither ASERVIC nor ACA discriminate on the basis of race, gender, age, religion, creed, sexual/affection orientation, disability, ethnic origin or any other basis.

Best Practices: Spirituality & Well-Being

As professional counselors, we know that spirituality and religious practice are not exclusive of one another. Nor, do they automatically reside simultaneously in an individual. The counseling literature has presented useful distinctions between spirituality and religion. For example, spirituality can be characterized as universal, ecumenical, internal, affective, spontaneous, and private, while religion may be considered denominational, external, cognitive, behavioral, ritualistic, and public. Religion, then, is one form of spirituality. In a national poll, conducted by Princeton Survey Research, 24 percent of respondents described themselves as “spiritual, but not religious” (*Newsweek*, August 29, 2005 issue). People who think of themselves as spiritual, rather than religious comprise a highly eclectic and disenchanting population creating a cultural shift with social and religious dimensions says Dr. Richard Kyle, professor of history and religion at Tabor College and author of *The New Age Movement in American Culture*. The increasing decline in participation with institutions of religion and organized activities has contributed to more private expressions of spirituality and increased exploration toward personal well being.

Research has found support for the impact of religion and spirituality on health outcomes. Disciplines such as epidemiology of religion, psychology, sociology, nursing, and counselor education have produced beneficial descriptive, process, and outcome based research. For example, religious affiliation has been shown to promote healthy behaviors and lifestyle and buffer the effects of stress and isolation. Most of this research, however, is primarily on those who participate in exoteric religion (e.g., organized denominations, religious services, officially sanctioned prayers and beliefs, and accepted ways to channel one’s faith) and with high-risk groups (e.g., heart disease, hypertension, and cancer). Although research on esoteric spirituality and spiritually induced states of consciousness and well being has been conducted, these studies have been primarily within other disciplines such as applied psychophysiology and biofeedback, complementary and alternative medicine, and parapsychology says Dr. Jeff Levin epidemiologist and author of *God, Faith, and Health: Exploring the Spirituality-Healing Connection*. Kenneth Pargament and colleagues at Bowling Green State University have proposed that individuals who take different spiritual, religious, and secular pathways may differ from one another in a variety of ways detectable through empirical research (*Journal of Personality*, 1999). More research in counselor education, therefore, is needed to investigate the esoteric expressions of spirituality on well being among people whose spiritual quest may not take place within a religious context. Now that counselor education has generated a



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Best Practices (Continued)

literature base for the importance of spirituality and religion in the therapeutic process and counselor education curriculum, the time is ripe to expand our research population base.

In a popular strength-based wellness model, researchers Myers, Sweeney, and Witmer (*Journal of Counseling & Development, 2000*) defined wellness as "a way of life oriented toward optimal health and well being in which body, mind and spirit are integrated by the individual to live more fully within the human and natural community." A wheel with spokes depicts the model with spirituality located in the center. The emanating spokes represent the seventeen tasks of wellness (see Myers et al., 2000 for definitions of wellness tasks). These life tasks are important characteristics of healthy persons, and interact dynamically with other sociocultural forces. Changes in one task of wellness affect other tasks, in both positive and negative directions. Because this model views spirituality as integral to holistic functioning, a wellness orientation may help us comprehend how spiritual experience and development fosters personal growth for those who identify with non-mainstream esoteric spirituality.

In a recent pilot study conducted in Northeastern Ohio, Dr. Louis Busacca used the counseling wellness model to gain a picture of people who self-identify with esoteric spirituality. Esoteric spirituality was defined as the use of alternative spiritual activities for the purpose of self-development that fall outside of the purview of traditional religious institutions. These activities comprise practice domains such as divination, alternate reality, energy healing, spirit communication, psychology, bodywork, meditation, earth-based practice, Paganism, martial arts, medicine and creative arts such as drama/art/dance therapy, poetry, myth, and metaphor. Affiliated with Cleveland State University, this study represents the first phase of the *Alternative Spirituality and Wellness Project* designed to develop an empirical research foundation on the psychological health and well being of a postmodern spiritual community. A summary of the results follow.

The majority (63 percent) of the 126 participants in the current study identified themselves as affiliated with non-mainstream spiritual groups (e.g. New Age, Pagan, New Thought). New age was defined as an "individual eclectic approach to spiritual exploration." Pagan was defined as a "polytheistic and nature-based approach to spirituality." New Thought is considered distinct from traditional religious movements and includes denominations such as Unity, Religious Science, and Divine Science. The remaining participants had a primary affiliation with a mainstream or indigenous religion. 94 percent of the total participants engaged in at least one alternative spiritual activity once per week.

Results indicated that participants in general appear to be at a healthy state of well being on many of the wellness tasks. Participants

Best Practices (Continued)

expressed well being in the areas of sense of worth, sense of control, emotional awareness and coping, intellectual stimulation, sense of humor, self-care, gender identity, leisure, friendship and love. Lower well being was expressed on realistic beliefs, nutrition, exercise, stress management, cultural identity and work. When examining sex differences, females tended to show a higher state of wellness than males in the areas of sense of worth, emotional awareness and coping, nutrition and leisure.

Results also showed that spiritual wellness appears to fortify overall well being. The wellness model defines healthy spirituality as the personal and private beliefs that enhance one's life, hope and optimism, purpose in life, values, and sense of oneness with the universe. More specifically, Ingersoll (*Counseling and Values*, 1998) has proposed specific dimensions that contribute to spiritual well being. For example, present-centeredness "reflects one's willingness and ability to be aware of the present moment." Spiritual freedom is related to "one's capacity for play, experience of life and the world as safe, sense of freedom from internal and external coercion, and one's willingness to make a commitment." The results of this study indicated that the healthier one's state of spirituality, present-centeredness, and spiritual freedom, the greater one's perceived and overall well being.

This study suggests that this sample of adults, who engage in alternative spiritual activities, appear to be in a healthy process of making choices toward greater well-being on many of the life tasks. In addition, if one's state of spirituality is healthy, it is likely that a firm foundation will be provided for achieving well being with other tasks of wellness. This study does not inform us of what spiritual activities relate to well being or the therapeutic effects of spiritually induced states of consciousness from application of these practices. Further quantitative and qualitative research is needed. Counselor educators, however, can still expose students to diverse spiritual and religious beliefs, values, and phenomena as part of their preparation process to help meet the unique needs of their clients more effectively (Myers & Williard, *Counseling and Values*, 2003). In practice, counselors may help clients create a personal wellness plan to explore how one can self-perpetuate a balanced wheel of wellness, from an ecumenical therapeutic stance, as clients continue their quest toward spiritual development.

Dr. Louis Busacca is a counselor in private practice and is on the Board of Directors of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. This study was supported by Mind-Body-Spirit Connected, Balanced Living Magazine and Angel House Center for Art and Creative Life Change. Dr. Busacca is seeking a co-researcher for phase II of the Alternative Spirituality and Wellness Project. Contact him at lbusacca@hotmail.com or visit www.drbusacca.net/page7.html.

Newsletter Deadlines

We are always interested in articles or information dealing with Ethics, Spirituality, or Religion in Counseling. Please submit any items you may have to the Interaction Editor by e mail at impactcounseling@hotmail.com or by fax at 248/473-0493 by the following deadlines:

Sept. 15, 2005 -
Oct - Dec, 05 Issue

Nov. 15, 2005 -
Jan - Mar, 06 Issue

Feb. 15, 2006 -
Apr - June, 06 Issue

May 15, 2006 -
July - Sept, 06 Issue

ACA Conference Update c. Smith

All ASERVIC members are welcome at any ASERVIC events at the ACA Conference in Montreal. Our schedule for events is:

Friday, March 31

- ▶ ASERVIC Board Meeting: 9 am to 5 pm (ASERVIC Suite)
- ▶ ASERVIC New Board Meeting: 5 pm to 6 pm

Saturday, April 1

- ▶ ASERVIC Town Meeting: 8 am – 9 am
- ▶ ASERVIC Luncheon: noon – 2 pm
- ▶ ASERVIC Graduate Student Meeting: 4 pm – 5 pm

Sunday, April 2

- ▶ Catholic Mass: 7 am – 8 am
- ▶ Interfaith Service: 8 am – 9 am
- ▶ Past-Presidents' Meeting: 11 am – noon
- ▶ State Presidents Meeting: noon – 2 pm
- ▶ ASERVIC Reception: 6 pm – 8 pm.

ASERVIC will also have a booth in the convention hall where we will give away bookmarks and lists of recommended readings and have meditation CDs available for purchase.

Please be sure to check the conference program for event locations. Also, be sure to check our web site again for the latest information before you leave for the convention.

You'll also be receiving a post card in the mail shortly from President Cheri Smith updating you on ASERVIC activities at the conference.

ASERVIC Website D. Daneker

The website for ASERVIC was down recently so we could move it to its new home! We now have a new web server and the website is up and better than ever! The website has areas that describe the history of ASERVIC, a list of the leadership with contact information, information on products available through ASERVIC, guidelines for integrating spirituality/religion into counseling, diversity meditations, a list of recommended reading, and the current and past issues of the newsletter.

New areas to be developed for the website include a page of links to religious/spiritual based websites, publications submitted by ASERVIC members on topics in spirituality/religion, ACA conference information, and updates on the activities of members and board members. Check out the site at www.aservic.org. Any questions can be directed to the webmaster at webmaster@aservic.org.



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Near-Death Experience Jan Holden

Near-death experiencers (NDErs) typically consider their Near-Death Experience (NDE) to have been spiritual experiences and the most profound of their lives. Due to advances in resuscitation technology, millions of Americans have had NDEs. Counselors need to know about these experiences and their implications for counseling clients who have had them.

The Day I Died: The Mind, the Brain, and Near-Death Experiences is an hour-long video produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation in 2002, and is the most compelling, up-to-date video on NDEs produced so far. The program features in-depth case studies of NDEs including a dramatic veridical (verifiably accurate) out-of-body experience, the most recent research studies, and balanced interpretations from research perspectives – virtually everything a counseling professional would need for an introduction to NDEs.

Recent studies of cardiac arrest survivors suggest that NDEs may occur at times when the brain has actually stopped functioning. Drawing conclusions from that research, *The Day I Died* dares to suggest that the mind is not dependent on the brain—and that NDEs may confirm it. "That the mind is located in the brain is just a hypothesis. It's never been proven," says cardiologist Pimm van Lommel. Accounts of NDEs, shared by the people who experienced them, are analyzed by researchers and skeptics alike, providing a balanced look at a theory of mind that, at least in scientific circles, has previously been all but unthinkable.

The Day I Died can be ordered from Films for the Humanities and Sciences (<http://www.films.com/id/11685> or 800/257-5126). A free Viewing Guide to assist with discussion, additional facts, and further resources can be downloaded from the web page by clicking on "related resources."



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From the Editor Suzanne Hamilton

When the previous issue of the newsletter was the first one posted only on the website. We mailed postcards to all members letting you know that the newsletter was on the website and asking you to contact me if you needed a paper copy. Under 10 people did request the paper copy. If you requested it last you don't have to let me know this time. A paper copy is already on its way to you. So far its worked out well. If you are having a problem, please let me know so we can do what we have to to keep this valuable member service coming to you.