

The Coalition

www.wacoalition.org

Advocates for Ethical Mental Health Care

Spring 2007

Editor's Corner

Peter N. Moore, Psy.D.

As Spring begins to tease us with the stirrings of new beginnings, we offer you a look back at the Coalition's accomplishments over the last ___ years. You will find a compendium of our "greatest hits" as a special pull out. We made this easy for you to access for two reasons. One, it is good reminder of all the ways the Coalition has helped protect and improve either your practice or your mental health service. Sometimes in the flotsam and jetsam of life we forget where we have come from and what we have accomplished. Sue Wiedenfeld spearheaded this effort, which is an expanded version of her talk at our annual meeting last November. I invite you to take a few moments to review our accomplishments. If you are like me, you will feel be reminded of the value and importance of supporting the Coalition.

The second reason we made the insert a pull out is so that you can help us publicize the merits of

Editor's Corner cont'd on p. 5

2007 Legislative Update

Laura Groshong, Coalition Lobbyist

I hope everyone is having a great 2007. This legislative session that started January 8 and will end on April 20, unless a 'special', extended, session is convened. This is our 'long' session of four months, which alternates each year with our 'short' session of 2 months.

Usually there is more legislative activity in long sessions, and this year is no exception. There are about 100 bills that I have reviewed which could impact mental health practice oin Washington, sometimes several on a given topic. I summarize the bills impacting our mental health community that I think have the most chance getting out of committee.

1. Mental Health Parity (H.B. 1460 and S.B. 5446) – these bills will expand the mental health parity bill which passed in 2005 for big business (companies of more than 50 employees) to small business and individual insurance plans. This is a big step in the individual insurance market which currently does not offer ANY plans with mental health benefits. There is widespread support for these bills which should pass and create comprehensive mental health parity which will make Washington's parity law as strong as any in the country. You may recall that the mental health parity bill, which passed in 2005, was a "phase-in" bill, which will not be completed until 2010. These new parity bills would be put on the same track so that the phase-in period for all insurance plans would be completed by 2010.

INSIDE THE COALITION

1	Legislative Update
3	Travels with Sue
4	Calling All Scribes !

Who Ya Gonna Call !?!?!?!?

Coalition Helpline: 206-444-4304

Who's My Legislator: 1-800-448-4881 (State and Federal)

Legislative Hotline: 1-100-562-6000

2. Disciplinary Bills for Health Care Professionals –About 10 bills that will change the way complaints against health care professionals are handled. This is mainly the result of some high profile cases in which physicians and registered counselors (in several separate incidents) were found guilty of sexual misconduct. In the case of the physicians, action was not taken to sanction, even though there were several complaints. Some other physicians were aware of the malpractice and did not report the incidents. Registered counselors are a group of 19,500 people who are allowed to practice mental health treatment independently without any training or supervision (see below) that have the third highest complaint rate as reported by the *Seattle Times*. There will very likely be some legislation passed which will require more reporting by health care professionals who are aware of misconduct on the part of other health care professionals, more oversight of boards and commissions by the Secretary of the Department of Health, and significant changes in the way Registered Counselors are allowed to work (see below.) I will keep you posted on the bills, which emerge and may ask you to help with emails and calls.

3. Registered Counselor Changes (H.B. 1494 and H.B. 1993) – the Governor formed a Task Force last spring (I was a member) to review the lack of standards for the 19,500 Registered Counselors. This category was formed back in 1987 with the intent of providing some oversight for people who were doing some kind of mental health work – some in agencies, some pre-certification, some independently – but did not meet the standards for certification, now licensure. The category only required 4 hours of HIV/AIDS training and a fee of \$40 to become registered. The bills seek to divide the RC classification into several categories. Both bills give registered counselors that are new Master’s graduates a separate title under their licensure laws, and give agency counselors a new title and new regulatory agency, as opposed to Department of Health, for the standards of practice of their employees. HB 1494 allows registered counselors to continue practicing independently if they have a Bachelor’s degree in a mental health field and get supervision. HB 1993 requires all current registered counselors to become licensed within 8 years and ends the continued ability of people to become registered counselors.

4. Children’s Mental Health Coverage (H.B. 1088) – Rep. Dickerson has sponsored an excellent bill on expanding mental health funding for children’s mental health by \$30 million through Medicaid and the Basic Health Plan. This is a tremendous effort on her part and I hope anyone in her district (36th) will let her know how much you appreciate it (dickerson.marylou@leg.wa.gov). This bill would give children at least 20 sessions a year, with extended treatment available. Emails and calls will be requested.

5. GA-U Mental Health Funding (Budget) – the General Assistance – Unemployable (GA-U) fund has long needed a mental health benefit. These are folks who usually have multiple problems, including medical, food and shelter, income, and emotional. The lack of access to mental health services has been a long-standing concern of mental health agencies and professionals. The goal for this year is to start with 25 sessions a year, as a pilot project in King and Pierce Counties, and expand after the results come in. Emails and calls will be needed.

I will be sending updates on how these bills, and other issues affecting mental health, progress. Please feel free to contact me with any questions at lwgroshong@aol.com



Travels with Sue: My Adventures Abroad

Sue Wiedenfeld

Eds. Note. Our President, Sue Wiedenfeld, spent last year on sabbatical with her husband, Al and son, Hadley. They traveled all over the world. Here are Sue's reflections on her year abroad.

The year of traveling flew by. When we came home, people invited us to their homes but we didn't want to go. We didn't want to be guests anymore-- we wanted to **have** guests. The year has blurred memories: baguettes in France by the Eiffel tower, walking on the wall of the city of Dubrovnik, our little cottage in Italy, dolphins, whales and puffins in Alaska, amazing animals in the Galapagos and Africa.

Alaska was our first destination and it took us 3 months to get there and back at seven m.p.h. in the boat we bought for the trip!

We came home to plan the next part of our year which turned out to be three trips: Central and South America, then New Zealand, Veitnam, Hong Kong and finally Africa, Israel, Greece, Eastern and Western Europe.

Few people talk about the culture shock of returning to America after being away for an extended period, but it is very real. Somehow, having been changed by being away, the fit into the old life isn't quite the same. I joke to people that I have to be retrofitted into my old life. The good part is that I got to look at my life from a distant perspective that I have never had, and in returning, perhaps make more conscious choices of where to spend my energy, time, and focus.

My husband, myself and my eleven year old son had the adventure together. Mostly 24/7 for a year is a lot of togetherness!! Although we had our rough days, in general a new and deeper bond evolved. I found our places to stay, Al drove and navigated our itinerary and Hadley kept us having fun.

The question, "What was your favorite country?" is hard to answer. We do have a top 5 list, nevertheless. We all loved our visit to Hong Kong where a dear friend of mine and her family were living last year. My son (truthfully, Al and I, too) adored the Ocean Park Amusement park with its' roller coaster extending out over the ocean 1500 feet above the sea!! And the most amazing multistory aquarium I have ever seen

Another top spot was Vietnam. We spent about two weeks between North and South. Hanoi was a bustling marketplace, belying any feeling of communism. We stayed in a charming old French Hotel and spent one night in the countryside in a Thai style house on stilts. The people were generous, friendly and kind. The food was amazing. Vietnamese get everything fresh daily at the market and you can taste its vibrancy.

Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) was equally interesting to me, as my brother was in the Vietnam war. I felt especially interested in the history, the feeling of the people there now, and the feeling of the Vietnamese toward Americans. We spoke at length to a guide who had lived through it all, including 5 years in a "re-education" camp. My experience was deepened by reading two true life stories of Vietnamese women who described their life during the war.

New Zealand was fantastic and exquisitely beautiful. We love the accent and have friends there so felt a touch of home. We traveled the Islands for a couple of weeks and the diversity of scenery and terrain amazing. We enjoyed glaciers and forests as well as endless stretches of pristine beaches. It was their summer so we treasured the extra hot weather (in our winter). One lucky

day a pod of Orca whales swam between our beach and the swim platform 40 feet away, a true highlight.

Africa was mind-blowing. Even though I have seen many photos of animals and many African zoo animals, the feeling of driving around expansive plains in search of animals was incredible. We went looking for animals within dormant volcanoes, in canoes down rivers to see hippos, and even in a hot air balloon above the Serengeti. I fell in love with giraffes and dik-diks; Al fell in love with warthogs. One day we had 5 female lions leaning against our car because it offered shade in the heat. They were less than 18 inches below my window and intensely amazing. The next day we watched several lionesses devour a warthog alive, just a few feet from our vehicle. It was shocking.

Greek culture at Easter was a surprise. Easter is THE main holiday for the Greek Orthodox; more important than Christmas or New Year. My son got an incredible chance to get involved with another religion and culture. The Greeks had several midnight services and processions lasting into the wee hours. Whole families came and restaurants stayed open until 4 a.m. People of every age walked the cobblestone streets to see biblical scenes re-enacted by the locals. Two other lasting memories: Everyone painting white, yellow, blue in preparation for high season and unbelievable sunsets that are more amazing even than they are reputed to be. The food was delightfully delicious. I had moussaka every chance I got and grew to love eggplant.

With those highlights (I promised Peter an article, not a book) I will say I learned something very important this last year. We do not sleep enough!! My whole family was rested over this year in a way we never have been before. Since our return, we all sleep more and make it a priority. I really think I have (and many most Americans) lived in chronic sleep deprivation for many years.

Another important lesson is about simplifying and getting along with less. We had small carryon suitcases and had plenty to wear. Packing was simple. Hair was simple (I just wore it up all year). And everything, somehow, always worked out.

We also developed a saying, "How is this bad luck, good luck?" as over and over again what appeared to be unlucky led us to something we truly enjoyed and never would have found otherwise. We learned to go with things as they evolved, even if it had not been in our plans.

We are in culture shock and it's not really a bad thing. It feels good to re-think priorities, to sleep more, to find the places into which our changed lives fit. Perhaps to try to hold onto those "changes" and, to notice the past patterns that just do not fit.

We realize we are so lucky to live in such a beautiful city and country. It is safe to use an ATM here, there are many options for buying healthy food without a worry of disease (spinach aside), and our infrastructure is solid. We value our country and the way it operates, appreciating it more than ever as it protects us yet offers freedoms. We're settling in. And to tell you the truth, we're not, in spirit, quite back yet –but that's ok with us for now.

I feel I came back a little simpler. Perhaps a bit more honest. Perhaps more gentle with life. And very, very grateful.

Do I have any advice? I would humbly borrow from Goethe, " Whatever your dream is, begin it. Begin it now." It was a blast to live our dream of traveling for a year.



Calling All Scribes !

Peter N. Moore

The Coalition will soon need a new editor by June when I hang up my quill. It can seem like a daunting task but if you have any interest in writing, editing, or just being creative, putting our little periodical together can not only be rewarding but relatively painless.

More years ago than I care to recall, our previous editor and Board member, Judy Roberts (who, regular readers will know, was our annual meeting keynote speaker last year) announced that she was moving on. She had convinced me to write a piece or two for the newsletter and so I had a taste for the news business. I had also once been an editor for my high school's "alternative" school paper (I could not abide by the pabulum that posed as the "official" school newspaper. With a faculty sponsor we could make the administration squirm !). Ok, sorry for the parenthetical autobiographical digression. But, hey, see, when you're an editor you can throw in stuff like that !

I have to admit. I was a little worried at first. Judy had made the newsletter into a snazzy little rag. She used, I think, Publisher. I had no idea how to use that software and I did not want to take the time to learn its intricacies. So, I've gone with what I know best – MS Word. Fortunately Word then as now comes with oodles of templates. I found this one and have made it work for the past several years.

I will be happy to show you how to use the newsletter template. The format is all there. I just use a previous issue, rename it and voila ! I have all my pages and text boxes and tables set to go or modify. If you have a lot of experience with Word great or you know Publisher, fantastic ! Then you can make this august journal more visually interesting than I have been able to. But if you have only a basic knowledge of word processing software (as did I) it's easy to get the basics of formatting a newsletter and I will be glad to show you the ropes. You also get help from other members of the Board. Some issues Laura Groshong practically writes herself with news from Olympia. Others will help you proofread. And with a little arm twisting they will even write a piece for you just as Sue Wiedenfeld did for this issue.

The Coalition is a vital part of our organization. While the Web and e-mail alerts are methods the Board is using increasingly to communicate to you, the newsletter continues to be the primary source for information. In these pages, you have learned about evidenced based practice, NPI, parity legislation, how our members rate insurance companies, the continuing threats to confidentiality, what the insurance commissioner is up to and a many, many other important issues affecting you.

So come on down and lend your energy to *The Coalition*. Perhaps you have some new ideas to help freshen it up. Perhaps some interviews with movers and shakers. Maybe start a letters column. Find pieces in other professional newsletters to share in ours. Add some pictures. We need someone soon; how about you !

Editor's Corner con'td from p. 1

belonging to the Coalition. When someone asks you about us, you'll be prepared ! We hope that you can use it to encourage your friends and colleagues to join you in protecting ethical mental health care.

The Board thanks you for your continued support.

The Coalition of Mental Health
Professionals and Consumers
PO Box 30087
Seattle, WA 98103

Join or Renew Your Commitment to Protect Mental Health Care

Name: _____

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Member: \$65

Willing to help with specific tasks: YES _____

Student: \$15

Consumer: Free

OK to publish information in a directory ? YES _____

Organization: \$124

NO _____

