

Association of Humanistic Counseling

InfoChange

February 2016

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President's Letter

Dear AHC members:

When I last wrote, the season was Thanksgiving. And now the season is "Almost ACA Conference Time." I hope that many of you can be there. We have a strong set of AHC events at ACA for you to watch for and participate in as you are able.

Throughout the ACA Conference are our **AHC sponsored Counselor Wellness Sessions**. See Mark Scholl's article in this newsletter for more info, dates and times. Decades ago our 2016 Humanistic Impact Award winner, Sonya (Sunny) Vassos created AHC's Day of Wellness at ACA. Over the years, AHC's Day of Wellness was held as a full-day of experiential workshops for counselor wellness in a single, big room. The wellness workshops have always drawn large capacity crowds, with some attendees making it their yearly full-day of wellness renewal.

As ACA has grown, it has become too cumbersome for ACA to provide single room and day for our wellness workshops or the extent of workshop hours that divisions used to have. But because we in AHC know well and value highly the importance of therapeutic relationship and the wellness of the counselor for relationships, we continue to follow Sunny's model and use all of our division program slots at ACA for counselor wellness. Mark and I will be documenting attendance and your view on the value of our wellness sessions to promote a new joint project with ACA for coming conferences, perhaps building a new co-sponsored Wellness Center.

Also, throughout the ACA Conference we will be making collections for the **AHC Empty Plate Project**, also created by Sunny Vassos and colleagues decades ago (starting to see why Sunny is our 2016 Humanistic Impact Award winner? ☺). The charity we collect for this year is the United Hearts of Mercy. See Fred Hall and Rebecca Pender's article in this newsletter for more info on our Empty Plate Project.

AHC will co-host our **reception on Friday evening, April 1st, 6:00 to 8:00pm**. Our division co-hosts this year are ASERVIC and IAAOC. The goal of Presidents Elizabeth O'Brien, Leigh Holman and myself hosting is to build connections within and between our divisions. This will

be a time in which members and interested persons can easily find organizational leaders, meet new people with like interests, and reconnect with old friends. We have a group of volunteers from our divisions working hard to make this an excellent networking opportunity, with "get-to-know-you" games, prizes, and of course time to mingle over tasty canapes and hors d'oeuvres. Check the ACA Conference program guides for room assignment.

Our AHC Town Hall and Awards Ceremony is Saturday, April 2, 10-11:30am. This will be a time for me to provide an update briefly from the year, for our upcoming President Linwood Vereen to orient you to the coming year, and to learn of and congratulate our 2016 grant and award winners. Each year I am impressed to hear of the work of our grant and award winners. It is exciting to hear of our outstanding member accomplishments. Check the ACA Conference program guides for room assignment.

And our annual **AHC Business meeting is Thurs, March 31, from 1:30 to as late as 5:30**. The AHC Business meeting is open to all members, with committee chairs particularly encouraged to join us and Executive Board members present. We will hear the finance and committee reports, review potential candidates for the upcoming year, consider our next AHC conference city location, as well as discuss a range of issues important to our division. The Board and I want your input! Check the ACA Conference program guides for room assignments.

So for those of you who are able to join us at ACA this year, I look forward to seeing you at as many of our events as possible. And for those of you that cannot attend this year's ACA Conference, know that AHC is maintaining a vital presence at ACA and that we look forward to seeing you at our AHC 2016 Conference in Portland, May 27 to May 29, and at our AHC events at ACA next year in Nashville!

Many thanks for all your good work,

Jeff

Jeff L. Cochran, AHC President
2015-2016



P.S. At my time of writing, the news is just in that Martina Moore is elected, with her term as President-Elect starting July 1, 2016 and her term as President to follow, starting July 1, 2017. Congratulations Martina!

AHC Programs at ACA 2016 in Montreal

By Mark Scholl, Day of Wellness Coordinator

The AHC programs (formerly referred to as the AHC Day of Wellness) will take place on three consecutive days beginning on Friday April 1st. In keeping with the vision of Sunny Vassos, the original founder of the AHC Day of Wellness, the four humanistic programs highlight wellness theory and practice. The four programs selected include one 90-minute session, one 60-minute session, and two 30-minute poster sessions.

The programs were selected by a committee composed of Elizabeth Hancock, Stephen Lenz, Sunny Vassos, and Mark Scholl. The committee faced a daunting task as we were only able to select four programs from a sizable number of high-quality submissions. All of the selected programs have salient humanistic themes and wellness principles. In addition, all of the selected programs emphasize the application of wellness practices to work with clients and/or to counselor self-care. The programs are listed below along with the names of the presenters, the room location of each presentation, and a brief description of the content. If you plan on attending, remember to check the program addendum as room locations may be subject to late minute changes.

AHC Poster Sessions:

Friday, April 1, 2016

11:00 am - 11:30 am

AHC Session

Program ID #709, Room 210E, Poster 9

Cultivating Authenticity Through Mindful Movement

30-Minute Poster Session

Zvi Jeremy Bellin

Authenticity is a key characteristic of psychotherapy from any theory orientation. Given its importance, it is surprising that the literature is nearly silent about cultivating authenticity. This session will deconstruct counselor authenticity. You will be invited to engage in a practice of mindful movement as a way to cultivate authenticity. Finally, the session will explore how the cultivation of authenticity can serve as a wellness practice for counselors in and out of the office.

Friday, April 1, 2016

3:00 pm - 3:30 pm

AHC Session

Program ID #758, Room 210E, Poster 10

Discovering Wellness Through the Use of Guided Imagery

30-Minute Poster Session

Katie R. Gamby, Mansi Brat, Carla McGhee

Counselors who are stressed, distressed, or impaired are unable to offer proper counseling services to their clients. Consequently, counselors who have found ways to ensure their own wellness have a better chance of meeting the needs of their clients. Guided imagery can be used to explore the possibilities available to the counselor specific to his or her individual wellness. These same techniques can be used to empower the counselor to help clients create a "well" lifestyle.

AHC Education Sessions:

Saturday, April 2, 2016

5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

AHC Session

Program ID #337, Room 516C

Laughter Yoga: Removing Layers of Inhibition To Find an Infinite Ability To Laugh

60-Minute Education Session

Coralis Solomon, Shainna Ali

Laughter yoga is a unique exercise routine that combines unconditional laughter with yogic breathing. This practice promotes emotional flow and the release of negative thoughts. Attendees will learn skills to teach their clients to find an infinite ability to laugh by removing roadblocks and layers of inhibition created by self, family, and society. Be aware that this workshop could be hazardous to your misery!

Sunday, April 3, 2016

8:45 am - 10:15 am

AHC Session

Program ID #418, Room 511C

Meditation for Counselor Self-Awareness and Well-Being

90-Minute Education Session, Advanced

Jeff L. Cochran, Nina D. Morgan

Attendees will practice mindful meditation (being with self), then experience and compare to a parallel counseling practice (being with other). Great humanistic counseling is conceptualized as a meditation in itself, centering and grounding the counselor. Attendees will gain instruction and resources for ongoing practice both for personal wellness and greater effectiveness with clients.

As a committee, we are proud and excited to be able to announce four outstanding AHC Wellness programs. Traditionally, our programs have been attended by capacity audiences, and we expect the audiences attending our AHC programs in Montreal will be no exception. We strongly encourage you to attend these highly engaging programs!



Empty Plate Project

By Dr. Fred Hall and Dr. Rebecca Pender Baum, Empty Plate Project Co-Chairs

Donate...Give Generously... We Need Your Help... or whatever language you use, the truth of the matter is charities and non-profit organizations need our help now more than ever. In these difficult economic times, charities and community based organizations are struggling to obtain and manage the resources that they need to operate many necessary social programs in various communities.

Like a Knight in shining armor, The Association of Humanistic Counseling’s “Empty Plate Project” comes to the rescue. The Association hosts an annual gathering of professionals committed to the uplifting of mankind through volunteerism and charitable donations each year at the American Counseling Association conference. Each year, members of the association work together to identify a needy charity and initiate a plan to meet in the host city of the conference and coordinate fundraising efforts on behalf of the identified charity. The charity keeps 100% of the monies collected from the conference fundraiser. The fundraising is done primarily through the conference luncheons and meetings where people give donations to the charity directly.

The Association of Humanistic Counseling is a leader in developing and spear-heading projects that aim to empower and recognize the value of others and their contribution to our world. Historically, a group of AHC members noticed that a large number of homeless persons were in close proximity to the conference site despite the seemingly indulgence of so many of the conference attendees. Sunny Vassos and other founding members started what is known as the “Empty Plate Project” in Boston MA in 1989. Since that time, the Empty Plate Project has benefited numerous charities and citizens lives.

For example, in New Orleans, Empty Plate supported a shelter for victims of domestic violence and collected \$6000. Last year in Orlando, Empty Plate partnered with a charity that assisted families in meeting the basic needs of home ownership and furnishings. They raised nearly \$2446.


This year the Association looks forward to partnering with the United Hearts of Mercy organization in Montreal Quebec. The organization is dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities to fulfill the social, economic, and physical needs by reducing the cause of injustice and poverty.

We look forward to seeing our friends and new partners in Montreal. We ask that you give generously and consider how we can collectively change communities all over the world through your financial donations and service.

Past “Empty Plate Project” Partnerships



The Mustard Seed
• A New Beginning •
www.mustardseedfla.org
2015, Orlando FL



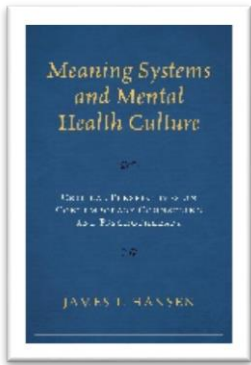
Courage House Hawaii
 Hale O' Mana'o i'o
 COURAGE WORLDWIDE
2014, Honolulu HI



**FREESTORE
 FOODBANK**
 FOOD • CONNECTION • HOPE
2013, Cincinnati OH

James T. Hansen has Authored a New Book

By James T. Hansen



My new book, *Meaning Systems and Mental Health Culture: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Counseling and Psychotherapy*, was written with humanistic counselors in mind. Humanistic counselors place the highest value on the personal and cultural meaning systems that emerge in the helping relationship. Although strongly supported by empirical, anthropological, and philosophical evidence, an appreciation for meaning systems in the counseling process has increasingly become a minority position in contemporary mental health culture. Against all evidence, objectifying ideologies, such as the medical model and symptom-based diagnostics, have been widely adopted by talk therapists, a situation that makes humanistic counseling a small oasis of reason in an ever expanding cultural desert of objectification.

In *Meaning Systems and Mental Health Culture*, I draw upon historical, philosophical, anthropological, cultural, and empirical perspectives to defend the values of traditional humanistic counseling. My goal is to raise awareness of the vital importance of honoring meaning systems in the helping process, even while operating within a culture that disregards them.

If you would like additional information about the book (including reviews), please visit the following website: <https://sites.google.com/site/meaningsystemsbook/>
Also, feel free to contact me - jthansen@oakland.edu

I appreciate the opportunity to share this information with my many good friends and colleagues who are a part of the Association for Humanistic Counseling.

Hansen, J.T. (2016). *Meaning systems and mental health culture: Critical perspectives on contemporary counseling and psychotherapy*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. ISBN: 978-1498516303

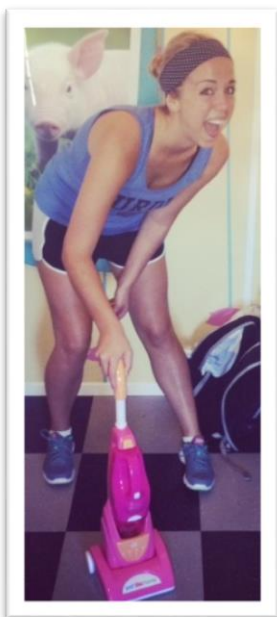


Student Perspective: Magnified

By Natalie Maines

My time spent in the Magnify Program at Purdue University, a service learning experience that provides small group counseling to at-risk youth, has challenged my personal growth in ways that I never perceived possible.

I began my Magnify experience with the hope that I would help encourage young women with difficult pasts and who were currently facing obstacles to build self-esteem, self-respect, and dignity for their futures. Coincidentally, during the time that I was working with these young women, I was simultaneously growing in my own ability to self-reflect in a manner that builds up rather than tears down my sense of self-worth. As I began realizing that my own growth in the topic area was helping facilitate movement in each session, my ability to empathize with the girls in the group became easier and more genuine.



Being able to model self-actualization within myself and to be honest about my areas of growth helped the girls in the group become further aware of opportunities for growth in themselves, opportunities that they would have otherwise been unaware of or disregarded. It was the ebb and flow of the group process that led me to see the similarities between the dynamic as a whole and my personal process of becoming. I developed the courage to start taking risks and stepping out of my own counseling comfort zone.

This wasn't always occurring in profound "ah ha!" moments because the girls were open some days and other days were completely closed off. Rather, the process was slow and continuous, but improving nonetheless as I used tools such as congruence and empathy. I learned through leading my first group that the ebb and flow doesn't always speak to my own counseling abilities, but rather to the human experience itself, the same human experience that I had been having all along. This ultimately led me to personally experience the validity of the common phrase "counseling provides the opportunity to help others while at the same time helping oneself".



Member Spotlight: **Cyndi Dennemann**

By Blake Sandusky

Cyndi is a professional counselor living in northern Kentucky and working in the greater Cincinnati area. She works primarily with individuals who have been affected by cancer and formerly homeless persons with severe mental illness diagnoses. She is married and a mother of three children, ages 11, 8, and 2. She loves reading, music, the arts, travel, and playing board games with her children who she described as spirited and competitive.



How long have you been involved with AHC?

I joined only one year ago, though I discovered the journal put out by AHC (formerly C-AHEAD, of course) as a graduate student at Xavier University. It struck a chord with me. One article from James Hansen on “displaced humanists” resonated so strongly that it helped me overcome some second thoughts I was having about entering the counseling profession.

How do you conceptualize or how would you define Humanistic Counseling?

I see humanistic counseling as an attitude that is more inclusive, holistic, and draws from a richer pool of resources than some other approaches in today’s mental health world. I respect and learn from my colleagues who are trained in psychoanalysis. I acknowledge the value of behavioral and cognitive-focused therapies (and indeed I use them where appropriate.) Yet as a humanistic counselor, I feel more inclined to see past the clinical jargon and other structures of the medical model with its focus on pathology. I look to the unique human being before me, who cannot be adequately summarized in any DSM or ICD code, whose story cannot truly be captured even in the most well-written diagnostic assessment form. As humanistic counselors in this age we must be familiar with effective treatment planning and evidence-based interventions, but as I see it we take a larger view. We are client-centered, phenomenological, holistic, and intrepid. With clients, I know that the relationship is the intervention. I know that the counselor’s personhood matters more than the techniques.

What is some advice you would give to current counseling students or practicing counselors wanting to incorporate Humanistic counseling in their practice?

Find kindred spirits. Talking with others who share your view of counseling and of our field can be energizing and validating. If they don’t seem to be around, travel! Attend workshops, network, and keep your eyes peeled. Read widely in professional journals, but also in good fiction and poetry. Don’t be afraid to be authentic with clients. Use self-disclosure and immediacy, but do so with awareness. Never stop learning.

What is something interesting about your life path that has brought you to where you are today?

My brother had a psychotic break in his early 20’s. We had always been close, but his unraveling came as a shock to me. The difficult series of events that occurred during this time led me to question all sorts of assumptions. It alerted me to the complexity and fragility of the human psyche. It led me to encounters with mental health systems and thinking about mental illness. There was a lot of spiritual searching, reading, and attempting to understand what had happened to my brother and why. (13 years later, I still have unanswered questions.) This occurrence, and the questions it spawned, was a big part of my decision to study psychology and seek a career in this field. I find a lot of satisfaction now in counseling people living with severe mental illness, in supporting them and their families, and helping them access (external and internal!) resources and advocate for themselves.

What is your favorite part, memory, or what are you looking forward to being a member of AHC?

When I go to conferences, I know the education sessions associated with AHC will be excellent. I will continue seeking these out. In between the conferences I am able to attend, I always enjoy reading the journals (and *InfoChange!*)

Cyndi was the first member chosen at random from our membership list to be featured in the member spotlight in *Infochange*. Thanks so much Cyndi for sharing with all of us!

Look out for an email from me if your name is randomly chosen to be featured! As always, if you know of anyone who you think should be featured in an upcoming issue then contact me at wbs0008@auburn.edu!



Questions?

Comments?

Contact Us!

“The good life is a process, not a state of being. It is a direction not a destination.”
(Rogers, 1967, p. 187)

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The editorial board for the AHC *InfoChange* are accepting submissions for our May issue. From scholarly articles to perspectives and expressions of art, we want to hear from you! Deadline to submit is Friday, April 29, 2016.

Our May issue is just around the corner! Look forward to information on the upcoming AHC conference in Portland, Oregon.