

Ohio Counseling Association

Volume 39, Issue 4
Fall 2013

GUIDELINES



IN THIS ISSUE

Call for Submissions

Attention professionals, students and counselor educators! Please consider submitting your papers, ideas or proposals to *Guidelines*.

Each issue strives to provide information on legal/ethical issues, advocacy, current trends, student perspectives, and articles from professionals in the field. All submissions are given consideration. Submissions can be directed to the editor, Jared Rose, at OCA.Guidelines@gmail.com

Guidelines is published by the **Ohio Counseling Association**, a branch of the American Counseling Association. The opinions expressed in the articles and advertisements within this newsletter are those of the authors and not the association. Direct questions, suggestions, and comments to the editor, Jared Rose, at OCA.Guidelines@gmail.com

Contact Information

Ohio Counseling Association

8312 Willowbridge Place
Canal Winchester, OH 43110
614.833.6068
OCAOhio@yahoo.com

OhioCounseling.org



DEPARTMENTS

- 3-4** **President's Message**
Meghan Fortner, LPCC-S
- 5** **The Ohio Political Action Committee**
Carrie VanMeter, PhD, LPC, LSC
- 14** **Legislative Update**
Gregory Pollock, MEd, LPCC-S

FEATURES

- 6-7** **Multicultural Development through Facilitating Support Groups For International Students**
Kyoung Mi Choi, PhD, LPC, NCC, Anne M. Cadle, Ruthie Madden, & Ronald A. Markowitz, Jr.
- 8** **Dancing Mindfulness: An Ohio-Based Practice Growing on a National Level**
Jamie Marich, PhD, LPCC-S, LICDC-CS & Ramona Skriiko, BA, CT
- 9** **Positive Reinforcement for Students**
Agenda Bonner & Jordan Fahr
- 10-11** **Experiencing Uganda**
Staci Buckingham, Liz Casali, Brittany Reed, Michelle Rocca, Will Maxon-Kann, MEd, LPCC-S, & Carrie VanMeter, PhD, LPC, LSC
- 12-13** **The Changing Landscape of Appalachia**
Cassandra G. Pusteri, PhD, NCC & Amanda M. Davis

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members of OCA,

As we approach the holiday season, I think of so many things to be grateful for as a counseling professional who has had the opportunity to serve the members of Ohio Counseling Association (OCA) in a leadership role. The first six months of my term as OCA President have brought about many positive challenges and exciting events that have allowed me to test my knowledge, seek support, and develop relationships with other professionals throughout the state. For these things, among many others, I am grateful for being a member and leader in OCA.

While reflecting on the last six months, I see the many faces and smiles of people who worked diligently to plan the All Ohio Counselor's Conference (AOCC). **This year marked the 30th year of the AOCC** and it has proven to be a successful event year after year, with this year's conference adding to that history. The ongoing growth of the conference is due to the continued work of so many individuals and organizations, as well as you, the members of OCA and the Ohio School Counseling Association (OSCA). **I would like to take a moment to thank all AOCC registrants for supporting the conference, presenters for providing well-developed and researched workshops, volunteers for their dedication and time, and the team at the Hilton for providing a beautiful venue for our event.** In addition, I would like to thank the **conference planning team** for the tireless efforts to make the conference a success:

Sara Williams, OSCA President,

Shawn Grime, AOCC Technology Director, and

Tim Luckhaupt, OCA Executive Director.

This team worked tirelessly to continue the tradition of high-quality, cost-effective CEU's at AOCC, while enhancing the conference experience through the addition of tri-fold program schedules and a conference electronic application. In addition to these changes, many more exciting new ideas are in the works for next year's conference that will surely aid AOCC in having many more years of success.

In addition to having such a successful conference, I find myself being thankful for OCA member benefits. One continuous benefit includes the work done by our lobbyists. **Carolyn Towner and Amanda Sines of Towner Policy Group**, work tirelessly every day to represent the interest of Counselors across the state. They meet and greet legislators, review bills, read the fine print, and consult with OCA on a regular basis.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

OCA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (2013-2014)

President

Meghan Fortner

President-Elect

Victoria Kress

Past-President

Christine Suniti Bhat

Treasurer

Connie Patterson

Secretary

Emily Herman

Parliamentarian

Tom Davis

Executive Director

Tim Luckhaupt

Webmaster

Shaun Renato

Journal of Counselor Practice

Rachel Hoffman

Guidelines Newsletter

Jared Rose

Awards

Varunee Faii Sangganjanavanich

Bylaws & Political Action Comm.

Carrie VanMeter

Ethics & Professional Identity

Kelly Kozlowski,

Stephanie McGuire-Wise

Finance

Angie Cameron

Government Relations

Gregory Pollock

Monica Ross Reider

Media & Public Relations

Cheryl Eresman

Membership

Mia Hall,

Julie Williams

Mentoring

Sarah Dronen

Professional Development

Kara Kaelber

Lobbyist

Towner Policy Group

OCSWMFT Board Liaison

Matthew Paylo

Counselors are often too busy working with clients, teaching, supervising, mentoring, and documenting services to be able to keep track of all the issues going on at the state and federal level. If it weren't for our lobbyists, we would be in the dark. With all that is going on in health care at this time, I am very thankful for Towner Policy Group and the work they do for Counseling Professionals.

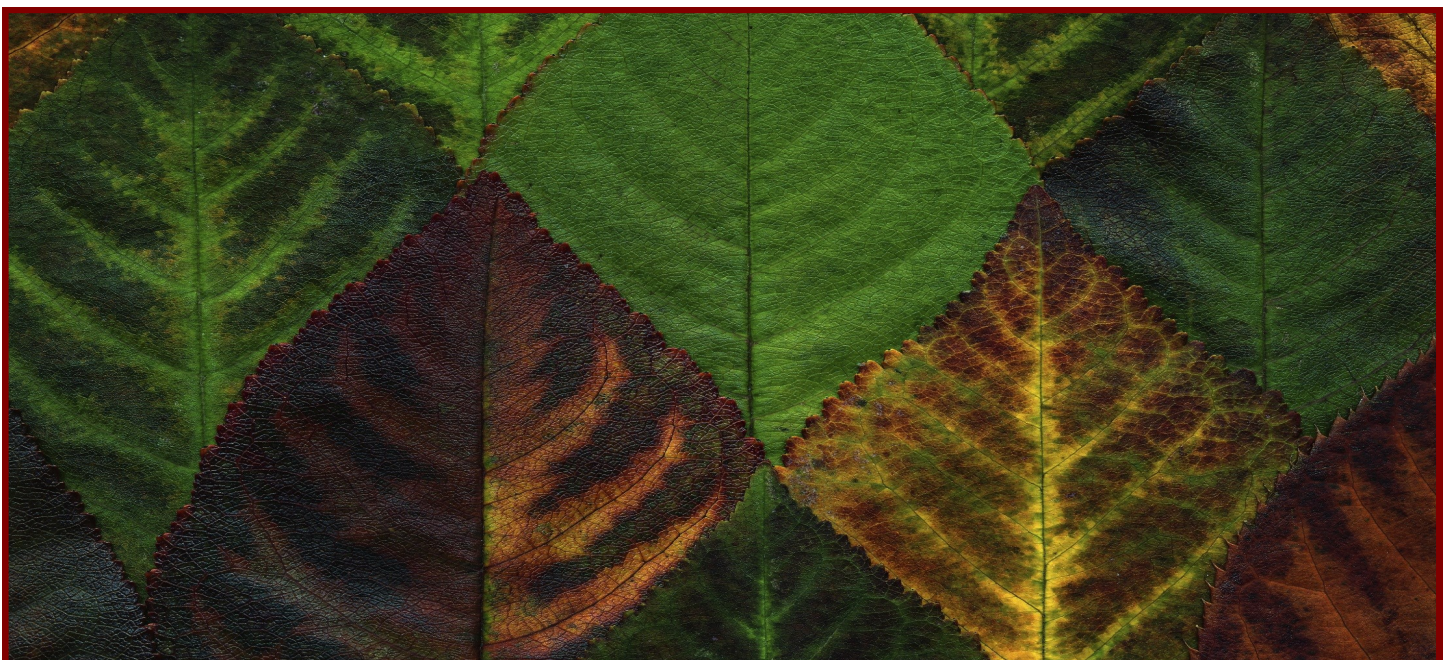


I would be remiss if I did not identify how grateful I am to the OCA Executive Council and Committee Chairs.

OCA has so several committees that work with great enthusiasm to enhance member benefits. These committee chairs and members behind the scenes as volunteers to ensure member satisfaction. Their enthusiasm and willingness to “do what it takes” is often overwhelming. I am thankful for their efforts, and I know that as we close this fiscal year, many OCA members will see the benefits of their hard work. Their efforts aim to enhance membership communication, educate the public on the work of counselors, provide education for private practitioners regarding the private pay sector, develop an OCA fellow program to engage new leaders and increase OCA member access to the board and our lobbyists.

In closing, **I hope that the season allows for your own growth and reflection** both as a counseling professional and an individual who operates in many life roles. The hustle and bustle of our work, the demands of our clients, students, and others often lead us to leaving our own needs behind. Take the time to appreciate the immensity of the work you and many other counseling professionals do every single day. OCA thanks you for the work you do to assist others through counseling, mentoring, teaching, supervising, advocating and educating. Our profession matters, we make a difference in the world and you are a part of it.

Thank you for all of the work you do and thank you for being a member of OCA,
Meghan Fortner, LPCC-S



The Ohio Political Action Committee

Carrie VanMeter, PhD, LPC, LSC

Donate to the OCA PAC at OhioCounseling.org

As the **Ohio Political Action Committee (PAC)** president, I want to take this opportunity to explain more about the importance of the PAC to all Ohio counselors.

The purposes of the OCA PAC are:

- ◇ To promote and strive for the improvement of government by encouraging and stimulating counselors and others to take a more active and effective part in governmental affairs.
- ◇ To encourage counselors and others to understand the nature and actions of their state government, the important political issues, and the records of state officeholders and candidates for state representative, state senate, and statewide offices.
- ◇ To assist counselors and others in organizing themselves for more effective political action and in carrying out their civic responsibilities.
- ◇ To maintain OCA PAC finances as a separate segregated fund maintained and administered by the Ohio Counseling Association and to contribute to political candidates for state representative, state senate, and statewide offices, and engage in other activities as deemed appropriate by the Committee.



With the help from our lobbyists, Carolyn Towner and Amanda Sines, members of OCA are kept up to date on important legislative and political issues that are occurring in Ohio. **It is important to point out that the dues we pay to be members of OCA are not able to fund our PAC account** which helps us to accomplish the 4th purpose of the PAC. Contributions to the PAC are a matter of public record and this information is easily accessible to our members. Currently our PAC fund has \$1,458.38 which was raised via the 2013 All Ohio Counselors Conference basket fundraiser (\$560) and the gracious donations from 13 out of the 1000+ members of OCA. **One goal for the PAC this year to have at least 30 members donate to the fund.**

To put this into perspective, most associations have PACs. In 2011, the members of the Ohio Psychological Association contributed \$12,935 to their PAC and used \$8,431 to contribute to political candidates for state representative, state senate, and/ or statewide offices. In that same year, the OCA PAC only had \$975 in the fund and was only able to contribute \$415 toward political interests. We are definitely heading in the right direction for our PAC but it will take continued effort from all Ohio counselors.

In addition there are over 7,000+ counselors in Ohio, if everyone just donated \$2 we would have \$14,000 and be comparable with Ohio Psychological Association and the Ohio Social Work Association.

My goal as PAC president is to at least double the current PAC fund and this cannot be accomplished without help from Ohio Counselors. If you want to contribute to the PAC you can do so through the OCA website. Also at the OCAA conference in November there will be baskets that you can win by purchasing tickets, and all the money will go toward the PAC fund.

Thank you in advance for *your* help supporting the PAC fund!

Multicultural Development through Facilitating Support Groups for International Students

Kyoung Mi Choi, PhD, NCC, LPC, Anne M. Cadle, Ruthie Madden, & Ronald A. Markowitz, Jr.

In 2001, I came to the United States as an international student holding a F-1 student visa, which I held until I started teaching at **Youngstown State University**. Being an international student over 10 years has really influenced not only on my values and worldviews but also my personality, interpersonal communication style, and sense of belonging.

Before my arrival at the John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York, 2011, what I knew about American culture was pretty much from popular American television series such as *Beverly Hills, 90210* and *Friends*. I naively believed that was what I was going to experience in America. Obviously, it did not happen. After two months from my first day in the U.S., I witnessed the September 11 attacks through a big screen TV in a college cafeteria. Some of my classmates from the Middle Eastern countries repatriated to their countries without completing their programs. In 2003, the student and exchange visitor information system (SEVIS) was required by all schools and programs in the U.S. hosting international students and scholars to monitor personal information and transits. Visiting home became more difficult for many international students.

In addition to my own first-hand cross-cultural experience, I had an opportunity to learn more about **diverse experiences of international students in a professional setting**. In 2005, I started working at the International Center for Services at Syracuse University as a Graduate Assistant throughout my doctoral program. My role was providing individual and group counseling for international students from 120 different countries and developing various support programs. The stories and experiences shared by other international students have expanded my understanding of the uniqueness and challenge of international students in the U.S. There have been endless social, cultural, and political changes over the years that have affected my cultural adjustment process. However, when I looked back on my cross-cultural journey, I remembered many meaningful relationships, which I was fortunate to establish with my faculty, staff, American and international friends, and local community members. I truly believe that I would not be here without their open hearts and helping hands.

In 2013, my personal and professional passion for reaching out to international students as well as a great support from the Counseling, Special Education and School Psychology department have led me to initiate a collaborative project. The **International Student Support Groups were implemented by collaboration** with the Office of Housing & Residence Life, the Reading & Study Skills Center, the Center for International Studies and Programs, and the English Language Institute at Youngstown State University. Graduate counseling students were invited to become group leaders to facilitate a psycho-educational group for international students once a week throughout Spring 2013 (pilot). **Six master's level counseling students interested in learning about multiculturalism and international students joined the project**. By the end of the spring semester, all group leaders in the project disclosed their growth in multicultural knowledge, skills and awareness and strong desire to continue the project.

During summer 2013, extensive recruitment and collaboration efforts were put into place. In the beginning of fall 2013, The International Student Support Groups became Global Perspectives (GP). The objectives of GP were to: **(1)** provide an opportunity for the students to develop multicultural knowledge, awareness, and skills; **(2)** offer an experiential learning opportunity in which the students apply group counseling skills and techniques; and **(3)** assist international students to make a smooth cultural social adjustment to the U.S. campus. Now, we have three groups running Monday through Thursday with seven group leaders. Four academic workshops have been developed by collaboration with the Reading and Study Skills Center.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Current group leaders have shared their experiences facilitating support groups.

Ruthie, a second year graduate student in Student Affairs & College Counseling

After growing up in a small town and attending a high school with minimal diversity, working with international students became very appealing to me. From my experience being a co-leader of an international student support group, I have found that **I am benefitting from our meetings just as much as the members**. I am learning the norms and traditions of cultures that I may have never been exposed to in my life. It is truly rewarding to witness international students learning about American culture and improving their English just from attending our short, one-hour sessions. In one of our first sessions, a student from Vietnam was talking about the hard time she has had adjusting to American food. She really opened my eyes to an obstacle many international students face. After our meeting, I remembered there was a Vietnamese restaurant close to the university. I emailed the student and provided her with a link to the restaurant's website; she responded with excitement that she would be able to eat her favorite food so many miles away from her home! Overall, it is extremely gratifying to be able to provide international students with resources that will help them to succeed in our country.

Anne, a second year graduate student in School Counseling

I was excited that my group was all from Saudi Arabia because I've read many books and did a project on the country during my undergraduate career. **I'm excited to learn more about their county and culture** and expand my knowledge since I already have some background. I learned that sometimes I focus too much on trying to understand their accent. When in reality if I relax a little bit instead of focusing so hard on how they talk, I will actually be able to understand them. I feel it's going to take a lot of practice.

Ronald, a second year graduate student in Student Affairs & College Counseling

My second semester working with GP is much different than the first. I went into the program last semester with no knowledge of the needs of an international student. I can now happily say that I am leading my own group this semester. **I can actually witness the growth that I have accomplished** over the past couple of months. I thought starting in the program that language barriers would be the biggest problem for me. I have actually come to find out it is the biggest worry for international students too! My co-leader and I have established a group where students feel comfortable talking about these issues and developing solutions with them. The thanks that I get after meetings for simply taking the time to have a conversation about intimidating or difficult subjects makes the effort worthwhile.

Concluding Thoughts

As a result of globalization, the number of students from diverse cultural backgrounds entering schools and universities in the U.S. has been increasing each year. It is crucial for the counseling graduate students to have a good understanding of the unique needs, challenges, and strengths of international students and be equipped to work effectively with them. As the semester continues, I expect to see significant growth among the group leaders in terms of multicultural knowledge, sensitivity, and skills, which can be also transferrable to other social and professional settings.

Dancing Mindfulness: An Ohio-Based Practice Growing on a National Level

Jamie Marich, PhD, LPCC-S, LICDC-CS & Ramona Skriiko, BA, CT

Dancing Mindfulness uses the art form of dance as the primary medium of discovering mindful awareness. Dancing through seven primary areas of mindfulness in motion: breath, sound, body, story, mind, spirit, and fusion (of all the elements), with a respect to the attitudes of mindfulness, participants tap into their body's own healing resources and realize that we all have a unique creativity just waiting to be cultivated! *Dancing Mindfulness* classes, which focus on "coming as you are," are open to everyone regardless of previous experience with dance, yoga, music, meditation, or spiritual practice. If you or your clients have a penchant for cuing up music and just "going with it" at home, **this class promotes that same sense of uninhibited fun and views it as an outlet for achieving the "in the moment" healing of mindful awareness.** The classes are about an hour in length and various forms of music are incorporated. Participants experience the classes as healing, empowering, relaxing, and a great form of stress relief. For those who do not typically see themselves as "dancers," the classes offer multiple opportunities to step outside of one's comfort zone in a safe, supported group setting. *Dancing Mindfulness* strives to honor the safety and integrity of each participant.

Developed by Dr. Jamie Marich, a Warren, OH-based clinical counselor and author who travels the country training on issues related to traumatic stress, *Dancing Mindfulness* is a way to more powerfully incorporate the body into coping and healing. After many years of clinical practice, even mastering specialties such as EMDR, Marich found that too much attention in clinical healing was placed on verbal and cognitive elements of the self, yet unresolved trauma typically manifests at the body level. ***Dancing Mindfulness* helps people to release body-based stressors using their own creativity,** and in a typical group class, participants are given the option to "opt out" of whatever parts of the dance practice they do not feel ready to experience. *Dancing Mindfulness* is a community practice, although Marich draws on her expertise as a clinical counselor to help create the safest dance practice possible within community settings. Several clinicians trained by Marich are using the practice as a mindfulness-informed intervention in clinical settings, or as an outlet for activity therapy.

Marich offers facilitator-training workshops across the country. Those who become certified facilitators are often helping professionals, such as licensed counselors, social workers, and nurses; as well as yoga instructors and artists who appreciate learning a new avenue for experiencing mindfulness and sharing it with others. Regular classes in northeast Ohio include weekly Thursday evening classes at The Yoga Room in Niles, Ohio, taught alternately by Marich and Kelsey Evans, MSW, and monthly classes at The Hidden Path in Struthers, Ohio, taught by counselor trainee Ramona Skriiko. Other Ohio-based facilitators are located in the Toledo, Columbus, and Canton-Akron areas.



Dancing Mindfulness

For information about where to find a class in your area, to get a class started with an Ohio-based facilitator, or to get trained yourself, please visit

DancingMindfulness.com

Positive Reinforcement for Students

Agenda Bonner, MA & Jordan Fahr

(Heidelberg University's School Counseling Graduate Students)

Schools are always looking for creative and innovative ways to positively and reinforce their students. **Research has repeatedly found how important it is that schools who have a positive atmosphere, welcoming environment and good overall school climate tend to often be more effective than schools that do not.** One way to encourage a positive school climate is by establishing a rewards or recognition program or system. There are some research-based programs such as Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS), however catering to students' needs and interests is often times more of an incentive for students. It is important that students take an active role in the selection of positive reinforcements. So often, students' voices are not heard, so rewards are not always meaningful (American School Counseling Association, 2003).

One way to positively reinforce students is by way of "behavior bucks." Teachers and their students are encouraged to come up with the value of positive behavior such as lending a helping hand, no "tardies," homework turned in on time, good behavior, etc. Students earn their "behavior bucks," based upon pre-determined tasks and can cash them in for rewards that they have chosen. Such rewards could be: lunch with a teacher/friends, extra recess, free time on the computer, principal helper for the day, or inviting a special guest to lunch.

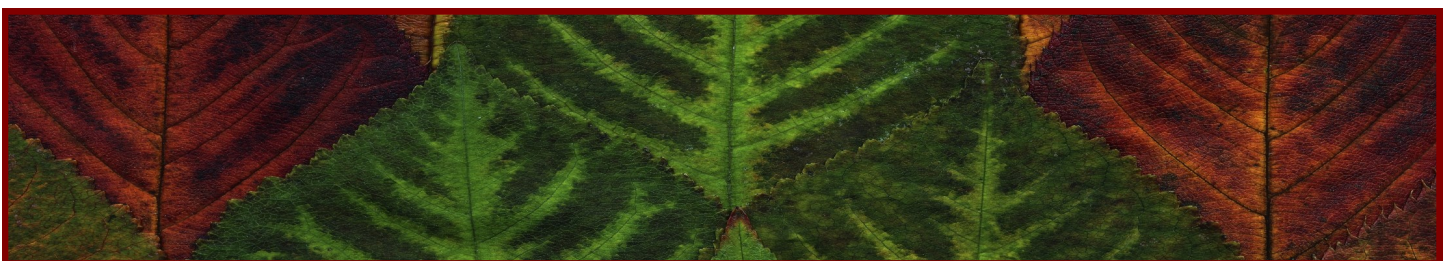
Unfortunately **positive reinforcement often lacks at the middle and high school levels.** Often teachers forget that their students are still children trapped inside adolescent-looking bodies that still strive for positive reinforcement and reward systems that they had when they were younger. One idea is to give out character cards to students caught doing the right thing. Middle school and high school character cards can be given out to students showing good behavior or character in class and can then be turned and entered in a weekly drawing to earn various rewards such as dress down for the day (for schools who have mandatory uniforms), special lunch out day provided by teacher or principal, free admission to an athletic event, etc.

Positive reinforcement programs should be a combined effort from students, staff, administration, and parents. According to Pasi (2001), "[a] school's climate can be a positive influence or a significant barrier to learning and achievement for students, and includes the quality of interactions among students and adults and the level of safety, respect, and comfort they feel" (as cited in Wittmer & Clark, 2007). Positive reinforcement is necessary in all facets of life; however it is most important and most needed in school-aged children to help guide the choices they make and the actions that they take.

References

American School Counselor Association. (2003). *Taking your school's temperature: How school climate affects students and staff*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Wittmer, J., & Clark, M. A. (2007). *Managing your school counseling program: K-12 developmental strategies*. Minneapolis, MN: Educational Media Corporation.



Experiencing Uganda

Staci Buckingham, Liz Casali, Brittany Reed, Michelle Rocca,
Will Maxon-Kann, MEd, LPCC-S, & Carrie VanMeter, PhD, LPC, LSC

Walsh University has been involved in an exciting outreach program aimed at promoting mental health training in Uganda for the past seven years. **The purpose of this program is to bring needed mental health counseling expertise to the care professionals of Uganda.** For the past five years graduate students have had the opportunity to partake in this yearly trip to Gulu, Uganda. This past summer two faculty members, Will Maxon-Kann and Dr. Carrie VanMeter, along with four graduate students (Staci Buckingham, Liz Casali, Brittany Reed, and Michelle Rocca), completed another successful training workshop.

For those of you who may not know about Uganda, we would like to share some background information. Located in East Africa, Uganda has been central to “one of the most persistent and deadliest complex humanitarian emergencies” (Betancourt, Speelman, Onyango, & Bolton, 2009). Beginning in the late 1980s, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) has terrorized Uganda. The LRA is a rebel group originating in Northern Uganda that has been the main cause of conflict in a twenty-one year war. This rebel group, led by Joseph Kony, is responsible for killing and mutilating thousands. The LRA has also abducted approximately 75,000 people (including children) to become slaves and soldiers (Pham, Vinck, & Stover, 2009). Most of those affected by the war are members of the Acholi tribe. Although the cause of the war is somewhat unknown, factors have included ethnic dominance, economic disparities, poverty, and political inconsistencies. The LRA could be seen as a reflection of the turbulent political history in Uganda, occurring since the country’s independence was gained in 1962 (Latigo, 2008). To this day, Uganda is still struggling with the aftermaths of the LRA.



The aftermath of what has been happening in Uganda, particularly Gulu, has brought immediate attention to the need for mental health services. The war has left families and communities destroyed. Many of those in the communities affected by the war are unaware of coping mechanisms for dealing with grief and loss. Education, community rebuilding, and self-care are a pertinent focus point. As a struggling country, mental health services have been put on the back burner; as such there are not many options for these survivors.

Many civilians suffer from trauma and PTSD related to the recent war. Traditional everyday problems exist among the civilians as well. With religion playing such a vital role in the communities of Uganda, priests are often left with the responsibility of trying to tend to the mental health needs of the community. While the priests do the best they can, the responsibility can be overwhelming. **For this year’s training workshop we chose to address the self-care of the priests.**



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



The workshop consisted of four days of training designed to introduce priests of Gulu to the concept of, and recognition for, the need of self-care. During the workshop the **priests were given instruction regarding self-care and active listening techniques** and the opportunity to practice these skills in graduate-student run small groups. The priests were very receptive to the new methods learned and expressed great thanks for the opportunity to use these new skills. On the evaluation form one of the priests commented, **“thank you for helping us to discover the hidden wealth in self-care. May the good Lord bless your generosity of hearts that brought you from that fear. It’s my prayer that He grants us more time for further sharing. We shall keep in contact for further sharing and exchanging of ideas and knowledge.”**

As part of the class, the students put together a manual of information given during the workshop to send to the priests in the Gulu Archdioceses. The hope was to help the priests continue using basic listening skills and self-care techniques as well as give this information to those priests that were unable to attend. The manual gave detailed, culturally sensitive information of the aspects of basic listening skills and self-care strategies as well as information on pastoral counseling.

While the experience was rewarding for the priests, it also made **a significant impact on the graduate students and faculty remembers conducting the training**. Graduate student **Brittany** noted, “While hearing some of the traumatic stories told by priests, it increased my desire to work with those who have been traumatized. I know I fully allowed myself to connect with the culture and those we spent time with. I knew this because of the sadness I felt when saying goodbye.” **Michelle** said, “They were always thanking us for the opportunity to speak when they were sharing stories with us. I also noticed that they are a great deal more appreciative of all of the little things that we were doing with them.” **Staci** was emotionally taken aback when presented with an Acholi name in a ceremony concluding the workshop, saying, “They showed us gratitude for hosting our workshop; I love getting our Acholi names.” **Liz** was moved profoundly by this experiencing saying, “To this day, I still do not think I can convey how moved and touched I was by this experience, and I am okay with that. It serves as a special experience that only I understand, making it even more special. The question of whether I will ever return remains unclear, but there is no doubt that a piece of my heart will always remain in the city of Gulu, Uganda.”

If you would like to find out more about the needs of the wonderful country of Uganda more information can be found at the World Health Organization (WHO) website, **Who.int**.

Photo: Lake Victoria, the start of the Nile River.

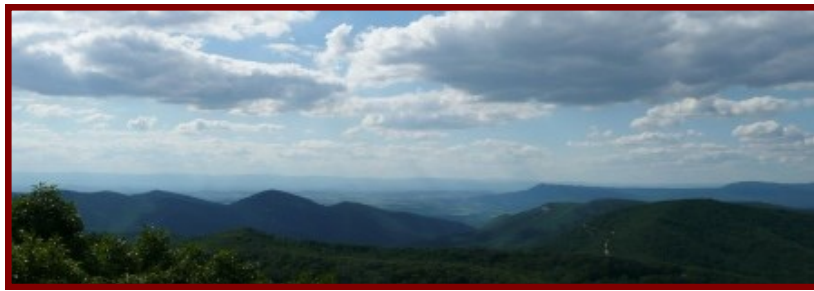
From left to right: Staci, Brittany, Liz, and Michelle



The Changing Landscape of Appalachia

Cassandra G. Pusteri, PhD, NCC & Amanda M. Davis

Appalachia. As the word resounds in your mind, reflect for a moment on some of your initial thoughts. You might see the stereotypical images of the mountaineer, hillbilly, or redneck. You might hear the dialects unique to the region. You might think about a television show that attempts to depict Appalachia and natives to the area. However, there will be some of you that see the one characteristic that Appalachia is internationally known for – the Appalachian Mountains. The Appalachian region is characterized as a geographic area that extends from northern Mississippi to southern New York and includes sections of Ohio (see “The Appalachian Region” at ARC.gov/Appalachian_Region/TheAppalachianRegion.asp).



Cassandra’s Thoughts about Appalachia and Mountaintop Removal

From birth to the present, the Appalachian Mountains have played an important role in my life. Although I am not currently residing in the mountains, I can still close my eyes and see the multitude of colors that paint the mountains in the fall, the flowers that bloom in the spring, the flap of a hummingbird’s wings in the summer, and the snow topped peaks in the winter. Presently, I find myself yearning for a visit to the Appalachian Mountains every two to three months. In **the presence of their greatness, I find balance, strength, solitude, and peace.** However, most importantly, the mountains remind me that my life, regardless of where I go, will always be tied to the culture and landscape of Appalachia.

As with other cultures, natives of Appalachia can differ in their worldviews. However, a common cultural characteristic is a deep connection between the individual and the land or mountains. Speaking from personal experience, changing my geographic location has affected me on emotional, physical, and social levels. For other natives of Appalachia who currently reside in the mountains, the landscape is changing in drastic, detrimental ways. Mountaintop removal is claiming mountain after mountain, stripping the region of what is a sacred piece of Appalachian culture. The term **“mountaintop removal”** may be a new term for some of you, therefore I want to take a moment to explain what it involves. Mountaintop removal is a form of coal mining and includes inserting explosives into the mountain to create greater access to the coal seams underneath. The blasting of these mountains as well as the dumping of waste has created safety and health concerns for inhabitants of the region (see “What is mountaintop mining?” at EPA.gov/region3/mtntop). As a native of Appalachia and a current counselor educator, I can also state with certainty that **the emotional well-being of those affected by mountaintop removal suffers as a result.** Imagine for a moment, a mountain or significant piece of land that has been in your family for generations, blasted for the resources underneath and left barren. For many, the mountainous landscape that played a significant role in their development and cultural identity is now only a memory.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

One of the many reasons I love being a counselor is **our profession's relentless efforts to be inclusive and respectful of cultural diversity as well as actively fight against social injustice**. I understand that there are several environmental and political stances surrounding the issue of mountaintop removal and, while I welcome you to take a stand if you are inclined, my main objective is not to have counselors choose a side but rather consider in what ways we can increase awareness and provide support. In my opinion, the immediate need is not political activism but rather an **increased understanding of the intersection between mental health and mountaintop removal**.



Amanda's Thoughts about Raising Awareness of Mountaintop Removal

Some of you may be asking, "What is my connection to mountaintop removal?" This is the question I asked myself when I heard about mountaintop removal for the first time. After researching mountaintop removal for my graduate assistantship and learning about the negative impact and devastating effects it has on the people and land of Appalachia, I began to ask myself a new question, "What can I do as a student to raise awareness of mountaintop removal in Appalachia?"

Based on my personal experience, I would like to provide a few suggestions for graduate students who are interested in raising awareness of the mental health needs of individuals affected by mountaintop removal. As students, we have the opportunity to incorporate topics like mountaintop removal into many of our class assignments. For example, we can use classroom presentations, research and publication opportunities, and writing assignments as avenues to raise awareness. We can also enter into discussions with our peers about the definition of mountaintop removal and its connection to mental health. Finally, we can write letters to politicians advocating for changes to current laws and regulations as well as requesting resources to aid in the provision of mental health services in areas affected by mountaintop removal.

I hope current counseling professionals are beginning to ask what they can do to raise awareness about mountaintop removal. My recommendations are a result of reflecting on my future as a counseling professional. Regarding scholarship, counseling professionals could incorporate discussions of mountaintop removal and mental health into conference presentations and professional journal articles as well as attend interdisciplinary conferences where diverse professionals are sharing thoughts and ideas about this issue. Additionally, counseling professionals outside of the areas affected by mountaintop removal can provide consultation to professionals and counseling services to clientele in these areas.

Concluding Thoughts

After reading some of these ideas, we would like you to think about what you, as an **Ohio Counseling Association (OCA) member**, can do to raise awareness among other OCA members about mountaintop removal. We challenge all readers to pick one way to spread awareness about mountaintop removal. If you feel comfortable, we would love to hear your ideas and/or experiences. The issue of mountaintop removal is not one that is specific to only those affected, but rather all of those who advocate for the wellness of all individuals. As members of a profession that embraces and celebrates diversity, advocacy, and wellness; our connection to this issue is clear. Our voice and continual efforts will hopefully produce positive results for the people, culture, and landscape of Appalachia. The connection between the people of Appalachia and the landscape is strong, and we have an opportunity to ensure that this connection remains for generations to come. For more information regarding current grassroots initiatives, please visit

ILoveMountains.org, AppalMad.org, and OHVEC.org.

Legislative Update

Gregory Pollock, MEd, LPCC-S

House Bill 232 has passed in the House and is being referred to the Senate for consideration. This piece of legislation **will require that a graduate degree in counseling be from a CACREP accredited program as of 1-1-2018**. There is a push at the national level to mandate graduation from a Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP) accredited counseling program as is the case with working within the Veterans Affairs network, or within the TriCare network. Many people across the country have questioned the rationale behind these federal programs mandating CACREP accreditation for counselors. **The use of CACREP accreditation puts us in line** with Psychologists and Social Workers who have had longstanding standards related to graduating from nationally accredited programs such those from the American Psychological Association (APA) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW).

This legislation will be the first of its kind in the United States as it relates to counselors, and will **further define and cement our professional identity**.

Medicare Update

Senate Bill 562 was introduced in the Senate. The Seniors Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2013 **would allow counselors to bill independently within the Medicare network**. There currently is no comparable bill in the House of Representatives.



The American Counseling Association (ACA) would like to wait for a Republican sponsor of such a bill due to the republicans being in the majority presently in the House of Representatives. **We are in need of volunteers to pay personal visits or write and send communications asking for support of this important piece of legislation**. Please contact me if you would be willing to participate in advocating for this issue. Keep your eyes open for specific and action updates on this issue in the near future.

Volunteer with Medicare advocacy by **contacting Gregg at glp12@zips.uakron.edu**.