



President's Message

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Editor:
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Welcome to our New Year in ACEG!

This year, we will complete the transition of name change from Association of Counselors and Educators in Government (ACEG) to Military and Government Counseling Association (MGCA). It is truly a big step forward for our organization! Your Board has spent the past few months working together and with ACA to transition into our new name, with all new By-Laws, and new and progressive committees that have set worthy goals and have met with much success! Our new name and By-Laws will be presented to the ACA Governing Council in March, 2015, at the ACA Conference in Orlando, FL. After passage, our new name, MGCA, and By-Laws, will take effect July 1, 2015! Thanks to everyone who worked so very hard to make this a reality!



Lynna Meadows Morton,
MS, SLPC, NCC
President, 2014-2015

ACEG AWARDS:

Professional of the Year & Notable Achievement Award

Every year ACEG recognizes members who have served our profession in an outstanding way. During the next ACA annual conference March 2015, in Orlando, FL, at our ACEG Luncheon, two member will be formally recognized for their dedication and significant contributions as counselors and/or educators.

Your help is needed so we can choose the best! Please take the time to help us recognize some worthy people. Any member may nominate one or more candidates for the ACEG awards. Nominees must be ACEG members.

The award for Professional of the Year is based on outstanding achievement in any or all of the following:

- 1) Day to day counseling activities leading to positive improvement in client progress;
- 2) Specific and innovative contributions to the operation of a counseling or education related organization;
- 3) Counseling or support activities in a situation requiring effort above and beyond the norm (e.g. public disaster or emergency);
- 4) contributions/efforts leading to improved environments for counselors, educators, and clients;

President-Elect's Message



I want to take a short detour from quoting General Patton to focus on leadership development. For that, I will focus on General John A. Wickham, Jr. who was Chief of Staff of the United States Army under President Reagan – “Leaders are made, not born.” As you may guess, I’m targeting this article more toward our graduate students and new professionals. However, let’s add another General Wickham quote – “I’ve been a great believer in mentoring; helping younger people grow, and counseling them. I don’t think we do enough of that in our society today.” Ergo, this is also a call to those members who are currently leading ACEG or have led the association.

A “low impact” way to move into ACEG leadership is to volunteer to serve on a committee. This does not necessarily take a lot of time – just commitment. Most committees meet for a short time and a specific item of business. Two examples immediately come to mind (and both need members) – the Awards Committee and the Nomination Committee. The Awards Committee is currently working to find nominees within the membership who could be honored with either the Professional of the Year or Notable Achievement Awards. Since these awards will be presented at the ACEG PDI in March, this committee can use your support. On July 1, Lynna will be forming the Nominations Committee to select a slate of officers for the ACEG board. This committee’s work is finished by October 30. You need not be an expert on the topic – just willing to serve and be mentored into leadership.

Two committees that work all year long are the Publications Committee and the Public Policy and Legislation Committee (PPL). You do not need to be an APA expert to serve on the Publications Committee; however, we could use members who are versed in social media and website design and maintenance. The PPL is responsible for working in conjunction with the ACA PPL and Government Affairs office. If you are a political wonk or see yourself as an advocate – this is the committee for you. ACA has been working for years to increase legislative visibility for Veteran and military mental health. Some may think ACA does not do enough in this regard and part of that issue is ACEG does not have an active PPL to speak to the topics. Another issue I want to get on ACA’s legislative radar is commissioning of LPCs in all branches of the military (to include the Coast Guard).

Final word to the graduate students and new professionals – you are the future of ACEG. You have a lot to offer the association, so I ask you to get involved. To our older members – we need you involved also – if not in an elected office, then on the committees. If you are interested in serving ACEG in any capacity contact me (Benjamin.noah@capella.edu) or Lynna (lynnameadows1@gmail.com). Remember, you do not need to be an expert just willing to serve.

Opportunity for Veteran Leadership Development

Team Rubicon

Clay Hunt Fellowship

www.teamrubiconusa.org/programs/clay-hunt-fellowship

Team Rubicon is a visionary organization that empowers veterans to continue their commitment to service by partnering with first responders and deploying on emergency response teams. TR routinely deploys teams both nationally and internationally. The Clay Hunt Fellowship program provides an opportunity for selected veterans to gain additional training in the emergency management field while also developing leadership skills and gaining key mentorship from community leaders.

ACEG Newsletter Spring Edition Deadline

April 2

Desired articles:

Spotlights on training opportunities, key organizations, new professional/graduate students, short research articles.

Please contribute to your newsletter!

carterc@wfu.edu

President's Message (cont)

5) Participation in programs of professional development training - either as organizer, participant, or presenter; and

6) Publications related to any of the above.

Criteria for the Notable Achievement Award are similar to the above. However, this award may be given to an individual or to an organization that has provided outstanding service or benefits to counseling professionals and clients.

To make a nomination, send an email with an attached word document summarizing the accomplishments or actions of the nominee that warrants consideration. Please limit your narration to two pages, typed and double-spaced. Please send your nomination so it will reach the awards chair by January 30, 2015.

Send your Awards Nominations to the Awards Chairperson, Sharon Guild-Stitt at ssees1@msn.com.

Again, please send your nomination by January 30, 2015.

DID YOU KNOW?

Most of you are aware of the Wounded Warriors Project: woundedwarriorproject.org

I have worked with many veterans who have been involved with this great organization, and all have nothing but accolades for the help and support they have received through contact with them. Their latest "project" is called The **Warriors to Work** program. The following is taken from the WWP website:

The Warriors to Work program provides career guidance and support services to WWP Alumni interested in transitioning to the civilian workforce. We match your skills and experience to the needs of hiring managers. These services are also open if you are registered with Family Support.

Our specialists can help you:

Set attainable goals,
Build an effective resume,
Prepare for an interview,
Network with local employers.

In addition to tools provided on the website for Veterans, there are also tools for Employers who are encouraged to hire Veterans connected with the Wounded Warriors Project. Check out their website!

Have a great 2015 and hope to see you in Orlando!

Lynna

Lynna Meadows Morton, MS, SLPC, NCC
President, Association of Educators and Counselors in Government (ACEG)

Past President's Message

ACEGers Unite !!!

As the holidays pass and the reality of winter sets in, I begin to consider future events that elicit within me some sense of enthusiasm. Thankfully, the ACA conference and more specifically the ACEG Professional Development Institute (PDI) is an annual event that seems to do the trick. This year's conference and PDI taking place in sunny Orlando, FL have much to offer related to effectively supporting military service members, veterans, and their families.



Seth Hayden, PhD
Past President 2014-2015

For those of you unfamiliar with these events, the ACEG PDI will offer specific presentations on the various needs of military members and veterans. Accomplished professionals in the field will discuss such interesting topics such as the grief experiences of young recent war widows, the implementation of an innovative tool to reduce stress for veterans, and group interventions for military members and veterans experiencing co-occurring PTSD and TBI. In relation to the broader ACA conference, ACEG is sponsoring several presentations addressing important topics of building partnerships with the VA and the DoD, addressing the growing prevalence of suicide for veterans, and a description of the deployment experiences of Army wives. Both the PDI and sponsored sessions offer a wealth of information on relevant topics for military service members, veterans, and their families. More specific information on the presentations can be found at: <http://acegonline.org/conference>. Register for the PDI at <http://acegonline.org/conference/pdi-registration>.

The PDI provides a great opportunity to connect with like-minded colleagues to process our shared interest in supporting this population. I have found significant benefits in connecting with fellow ACEG members to discuss our work gathering both practical strategies to intervene and names of appropriate professionals to assist with various present and future concerns.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the ACA conference and ACEG PDI. As it is taking place in the "happiest place on earth", I hope to share with you the excitement of connecting with passionate professionals committed to serving those in need.

Regards,

Seth

Research Participants Requested...

Attachment Style, Likelihood of Self-Disclosure, and Marital Intimacy in Iraq War Veterans

Cheryl Mark, MA, LPC, NCC, DCC,
Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) Doctoral Student
Walden University

Repeated deployments to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) have burdened United States (U.S.) service members and their families (Monson, Fredman, & Taft, 2011; Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013) and contributed to increases in marital strain (Riviere, Merrill, Thomas, Wilk, & Bliese, 2012). In addition, the wounding experience of war impairs intimacy (Satcher, Tepper, Thrasher, & Rachel, 2012). Service members have returned from deployments facing continuing battles on the home front, and service members and veterans struggle to reintegrate and recover from the effects of war. Many service members and veterans have received a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and during the OIF and OEF wars, suicide levels were the highest reported in 26 years (Mendenhall, 2009).

According to Gordon, Heimberg, Montesi, and Fauber (2012), intimate relationships contribute to well-being and improved psychological functioning, providing benefit in studying marital intimacy. Males comprise 83% of Iraq war veterans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014) and 84% of active duty military forces (Belasco, 2014). In addition, over half of all active duty service members are married (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014). Therefore, studying married male veterans to better understand marital intimacy in Iraq war veterans is beneficial.

The purpose of conducting research in the proposed study is to understand any relationship between attachment style, self-disclosure, and marital intimacy among married male U.S. OIF veterans. A reason cited for high suicide rates in the U.S. military is fear of losing a close relationship (Mills & Turnbull, 2011). The goal of the proposed research is to better understand marital intimacy, finding ways to strengthen intimate relationships in hopes of combating suicide among troops and veterans. The results will provide additional understanding of marital intimacy in Iraq war veterans. My hopes are that the findings will contribute to evidence-based treatment models to strengthen military marriages before and during deployment, and throughout the reintegration process.

I need 270 veterans to participate in the proposed study. The survey instrument will be online, confidential, and anonymous, and will require 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Contact with veterans will be by a web link to access the survey site.

Research (cont.)

The results of this study will be submitted for publication in academic journals, making the information available to mental health professionals who work with veterans and the military population. I am also presenting on this topic at the American Counseling Association's National Conference in March, 2015. My hopes are that the knowledge gained from this study will make a positive contribution in the lives of veterans, their families, and the mental health community who provide services to those who have served our nation. Please pass this information on to anyone you think might be interested in participating or assisting me in reaching veterans for this important study. Please contact me for information on how to participate in study or if you have any questions at

cheryl.mark@waldenu.edu and/ or 816-810-8015 and 816-810-916-4827.

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Student Success

Meet **Debra Rogers**, a graduate student pursuing an MS in Counseling with a concentration in clinical mental health counseling at the University of North Texas in Denton, TX. Debra personifies the eager enthusiasm of an emerging professional with a vision for the future and a desire to impact members of her community. Debra's clinical focus is on military mental health, and she has invested much of her time in recent years learning military culture, finding ways to immerse herself in the military communities of north Texas, and aligning herself with multiple community groups that provide support to servicemembers, veterans, and their families. In a recent conversation with Debra, she shared some of the many projects she is passionate about and her plans for the future as a licensed professional counselor.

Past Success

Moved by the tragic statistics of 22 veterans committing suicide a day, Debra activated community resources to offer Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) to interested veterans. Through her passionate advocacy work with organizations, she secured a donated facility for the training and partnered with an ASIST trainer who provided instruction services for free. Debra proudly shared that 25 veterans from the Dallas/Ft Worth, San Antonio, and Killeen areas attended the training to prepare themselves to respond to those veterans in their own communities who face suicidal ideations.



Veterans who completed the ASIST training proudly display their #22KILL Honor Rings presented to them by Honor Courage Commitment, an organization Debra has found to be helpful in her community advocacy.

www.honorcouragecommitment.org

Spotlight on Training !!!

Upcoming Trainings

Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injuries hosts monthly webinars highlighting various topics

http://www.dcoe.mil/Training/Monthly_Webinars.aspx

Recorded Webinars

Association of Death Education & Counseling

The Impact of Military Loss hosted by Jill LaMorie w/ Bonnie Carroll of TAPS

http://www.adec.org/adec/Main/Continuing_Education/Webinars/Webinar_Details/ADEC_Main/Continuing-Education/We/Webinar_Details_Folder/Webinar_Details.aspx?webinar=WEB0713

Helpful Resources

AfterDeployment– Wellness resources for the military community

<http://afterdeployment.dcoe.mil/>

In an effort to support ACEG membership in their continued education, we hope to highlight high quality training opportunities, both online and in person. Please email training opportunities to carterc@wfu.edu .

Current Involvement

Debra obtained training and passed a certification exam to become a group facilitator with Bring Everyone in the Zone, a Texas based organization that utilizes veteran peer groups to provide support to servicemembers, veterans, family members, and caregivers. The organization particularly focuses on common military trauma concerns such as PTSD, TBIs, and MST. Debra was eager to share about her particular work with integrating art into peer groups as an alternative to the traditional groups. Debra explained,

“When going through the training, I realized that some veterans do not feel comfortable sitting in a circle and discussing curriculum points in round robin fashion. We were accessing the Vietnam population of veterans but not the Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation New Dawn population. As I began interviewing mentor veterans (members of the Military Veteran Peer Network- www.milvetpeer.net - who taught me all about the military culture), I realized that we were not following the military ethos (service to others). Therefore, I wanted to offer the opportunity for both continued service and empowerment through strength based reflection. It came to me that art would be beneficial for this purpose. The art experience allows for individual means of learning a new skill (oil painting abstracts), and sharing perceptions to educate the community with donated art for exhibits (of course, maintaining confidentiality). Donated artwork is exhibited at veteran events, colleges, libraries, and civic events. The art continues service to others by aiding the group in discussion points, and impacting other veterans who view the exhibits. Through the art, veterans in the group and at exhibits realize that there is commonality in perceptions of the military service experience. The artwork has increased participation, introspection, connection, and new perceptions. In addition to serving others, art is a safe supportive environment for finding the words to discuss the curriculum. Safety is achieved because the art allows for distancing from an experience while having it directly at hand for reference.”

Debra described with great passion the progress she has seen as veterans tap into their experiences and begin to process them in a new way. As a peer-led support group, Debra stated that she is clear with her group members that the work they do is not “art therapy” per se, although it may be therapeutic. Likewise, she has partnered with local mental health agencies who have provided counselors to be available for group members who need additional professional support. To further empower the veterans, group members decide what information should accompany the art (i.e., the message conveyed) and where donated funds should be placed if exhibit viewers request to donate out of appreciation for the art exhibit. In continued service, veteran peers chose Gold Star families (families of fallen heroes) as recipients of appreciation.

Cont. on p. 11)

Future Goals

Currently, Debra is connecting a team of individuals representing universities and organizations in applying for grants to provide mental health services to National Guard families and trainings in military mental health to civilian mental health and medical providers. Debra stated that after graduation she plans to pursue licensure as a Licensed Professional Counselor while also seeking continued training and possible certification in art therapy. She said she looks forward to the day that more counselor education programs will offer formal training in military mental health.

Debra is a wonderful example of how mental health professionals (including students!) can partner with local agencies to creatively meet the needs of our servicemembers, veterans, and family members.

When asked what advice she would give to those hoping to expand their work into the military mental health realm, she quickly responded, "Be real, be humble, be authentic, and be teachable."

Debra can be reached at dlynnr1@gmail.com.



Debra Rogers (right) with her veteran mentor, Lt Col (retired) Ginger Simonson showcasing some of the veteran artwork donated for exhibition.



March 12-15, 2015

ACEG Sponsored ACA Education Sessions

90 minutes – Angie Waliski, PhD, LPC, NCC and Lynna Meadows Morton, MS, SLPC

Counselors Assisting Military Veterans Engage in Services: Building a Partnership with the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense. WE NEED YOU! Are you a counselor, a Veteran, a military service member, or family member of a Veteran or military service member, a friend of a military service member, Veteran, or family member. If so this presentation is for you. This ACEG sponsored and led presentation will identify their strategies to advocate for counselors as mental health providers within the VA. This presentation includes several leaders of ACA division and branches to all counselors to unite for the recognition of our clinical abilities and expertise.

60 minutes – Dixielynn Johnson, MA, CMHT

Embracing the Suck of Combat: Suicide in the Ranks. Military suicide numbers are increasing to one suicide every 65 minutes; however, prevention programs are not targeting veteran's life experiences to heal their anguish. Therapists must change their way of working with vets. This session creates a framework for counselors to help our nation's veterans.

Poster Session

Jennifer Sztalkoper, PhD and Benjamin V. Noah, PhD, LPC, NCC, NCCC, ACS – *Left Behind: Army Wives' Afghanistan Deployment Experiences.* Army wives describe their personal experiences during an Afghanistan spousal deployment and the supports that they use in order to cope during the spousal separation.

Our PDI will be a joint effort with the National Employment Counseling Association (NECA). Thus, ACEG will provide half of the sessions and NECA the other half. We will be having an Awards Lunch. More information and registration details will be posted as it becomes available.

PDI Sessions

Tami Frye, PhD, LMSW – *Grief Experiences of Young Recent War Widows and How Effective Current Counseling Strategies Meet Their Needs.* Widows between 18-25 who were widowed as the result of wars in Iraq or Afghanistan are resulting in higher numbers than any previous wars. Prior research on widows was with much older women. Our counseling theories driving grief counseling is not adequately meeting the needs of widows at these stages of development. More research and a change in strategies is necessary to adequately help these women.

Judith Mathewson, MEd, MS, RMFT-I and Emily Hain – *Introducing i-Rest as a Stress Reduction Tool for Veterans.* Counselors will experience an adjunctive therapy to assist veterans with combat trauma symptoms. I-Rest is a simple tool for *healing*, creating deep relaxation and meditative practices that release negative emotions and thought patterns, calms the nervous system, and a positive capacity to meet distressing circumstances.

Leigh Green, PhD, LPC, NCC and Laura Dawson, PhD, LPC, LPCDC – *Group Interventions for Military Members and Veterans with PTSD and TBI.* Group counseling is an effective and efficient modality to provide counseling interventions for military members with TBI and PTSD. This program will share and demonstrate group therapy techniques with this growing population.



The purpose of ACEG is to encourage and deliver meaningful guidance, counseling, and educational programs to all members of the Armed Services, their family members, and civilian employees of State and Federal Governmental Agencies. Encourage development of professional monographs and convention/conference presentations by any of these agencies. Develop and promote the highest standards of professional conduct among counselors and educators working with Armed Services personnel and veterans. Establish, promote, and maintain improved communication with the nonmilitary community; and conduct and foster programs to enhance individual human development and increase recognition of humanistic values and goals within State and Federal Agencies.

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*Visit us on the web at
www.acegonline.org*

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