

# E-REPORT

# MGCA

A Division of the American Counseling Association



## Volume 5, Issue 1 Winter Edition

### ACA/CCA Conference

How to get the most from your ACA conference experience.

Tips from MGCA Experts, [p. 2](#)

### The ACA Graduate Student Experience: A Personal Letter

Hello all,

My name is Katie Wix and I am a Counselor Educator at Governors State University, located in the southern suburbs of Chicago. This is my first time writing for the newsletter, and I must say that the process is a bit intimidating because I am a relatively new member of the Military and Government Counseling Association (MGCA), and I am sharing my personal thoughts and reflections on the 2015 Professional Development Institute (PDI) and the 2015 American Counseling Association (ACA) Conference with a community of individuals I respect and admire. [read more...](#)

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31 March  
2015

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Questions, comments, or to submit to the newsletter ? Email us at [legreen@wtamu.edu](mailto:legreen@wtamu.edu)

View the MGCA Journal here: <http://acegonline.org/wp-cont.../2013/02/JMGC-Vol-3-Is-2.pdf>

# **ACA/CCA Conference: Tips from the Experts**

## **Network!**

Speakers expect to be approached at a conference and welcome it. Try to have questions thought out relating to work they have published or what they presented about. If you know of a presenter you would like to meet ahead of time, contact them beforehand to set up a time and place. It is advisable to provide a specific reason why you would like to meet with them.

Poster sessions are a great opportunity to meet students and professionals, alike.

Follow up with people after the conference.

## **Plan ahead**

It might be easier to plan out which sessions you would like to attend before the rush of the conference begins. This is helpful when conferences are held at large and varied convention centers/meeting places.

## **Pack Wisely**

This might seem like common sense, but pack laptops, posters, etc in your carry on and not your checked luggage, if you are flying.

Keep snacks and a sweater with you.

Pack sensible shoe for walking.

## **Get a taste of everything**

Step outside of your comfort zone and check out presentations that you might be familiar with. Vendors often provide pamphlets, freebies, etc. This can also be a great networking opportunity. And speaking of tastes...

## **Have Fun!**

Build in time to check out Montreal and grab a proper croissant and café au lait.

# The MGCA Graduate Student Conference Experience

Additionally, I hope to encourage everyone reading this to attend the 2016 PDI and ACA Conference in Montreal. So without further ado, here my reflections, reasons you should go, and what to expect!

I would like to start by saying that I have been a professional counselor for ten years, and I have been selective in regards to which conferences I attend based on relevance of topics/workshops offered, cost, location, and whether or not I was presenting. Furthermore, I strongly believe that conferences are crucial to my professional development and counselor identity, and provide opportunities for intentional networking. For me, major motivators in attending professional conferences are the learning components, activity and involvement, and research in the field. I chose to attend the 2015 PDI and ACA conference for the first time, which provided a multitude of occasions for me to network with counselor educators and professional counselors who share interests in helping military service members, veterans, and military-connected families.

As I reflect on the 2015 PDI, I recall friendly faces, energy, partnership, and collaboration. The PDI provided helpful knowledge and advanced skills I can use when working with my clients and students; thus enhancing my professional identity as a licensed counselor and counselor educator. I also recall the immediacy of belonging. Each MGCA and NECA member took the time to introduce him or herself, made connections, and several individuals took the time to encourage further involvement and leadership opportunities. The content of the PDI was particularly pertinent to my interest in working with military service members, veterans, and their families as well as my evolving identity as a counselor educator. Prior to arriving, I prepared a list of professionals I hoped would be in attendance to connect with, which served as a reminder to seek these individuals out, introduce myself, and follow up with each person after the conference. If you are looking for opportunities to collaborate and dialogue with others in the profession, this is the conference for you! Personally, I will attend again to learn more about the unique needs of our service members, how to become a better helping professional, and learn how to address these needs when preparing counselors-in-training.

MGCA and NECA hosted an outstanding reception the night before the conference commenced. The reception was fun, energetic, and a prime time to collaborate and network with other professionals. I strongly encourage counselors, counselor educators, and graduate students to attend these receptions and participate in professional dialogue. My attendance allowed me to make meaningful personal and professional connections where I discussed standards in working with our military and professional conduct for providing services to our armed service members and families. My hope is that more people consider joining MGCA and actively recruit peers and colleagues to raise awareness to create a silo for counselors interested in working with our military families.

Dr. Robert Smith, past ACA President, called counseling professionals together to connect through education, inspiration, and fun. The 2015 MGCA PDI and ACA Conference did just that! Educational sessions and poster presentations promoted exploration of new ideas, integration of prior knowledge with new knowledge, and allowed for conversations that advance conceptual thinking and framework surrounding current topics pertinent to our field. When I attend professional conferences, I am intrigued by the selection of keynote speakers. Actress Mariel Hemingway and Drs. Richard Balkin and Jeffrey Kottler were chosen to be keynote speakers for the 2015 ACA Conference. As I sat and listened to Mariel Hemingway speak she said, "We are not one size fits all. We all have a language that is so unique to ourselves." Hemingway's quote resonated with me because it is a reminder that each of us (counselors and/or educators) is unique, our clients/students are unique, and the work we do is unique.

Counselors are gifted with opportunities to create safe, deep, and meaningful relationships with vulnerable individuals. We must remember that each of our clients/students is different and experiencing life each moment of every day. Dr. Balkin and Dr. Kottler were inspirational while discussing the power of these special relationships. Dr. Kottler said, "We have a mandate to be the kind of person we want our clients/students to be." I could not agree more. We are passionate about our work, encouraging clients/students to grow. Therefore, we must hold ourselves accountable and grow through our experiences. We, as counselors, must create opportunities for growth, leadership, collaboration, and advocacy.

I would like to end by saying that I strongly believe anyone who chooses to attend the 2016 PDI and ACA Conference will not be disappointed. The MGCA PDI and Conference committee have put together a promising program with pertinent topics, and ACA President Dr. Thelma Duffy is calling us to collaborate and share our creative resources to help those in need. You will be surprised by the vast number of receptions, functions, activities, and professional opportunities. Additionally, you have the opportunity to create meaningful relationships with other professionals, join interest groups, and discuss future prospects to publish in respected journals such as the *Journal of Military and Government Counseling*. Whether you are looking for leadership opportunities, current information pertaining to military and government personnel, or seeking opportunities for personal and professional growth MGCA is the division for you. I look forward to getting to know each of you and hope to see you in Montreal!

# **Welcome ALL MGCA members to the Montreal 2016 Conference**

As you make your travel reservations please consider what your membership in the Military and Government Association will provide for you on 31 March 2016:

## **FREE Professional Development Institute**

CEUs on military and employment related topics

0800-1700

## **FREE Brunch and Awards program**

We want to help you develop your knowledge and skills as you work with military population and their families

31 March 2016 at 1100

## **FREE networking with researchers and counseling professionals at the social**

1 April from 1800-2000

## **FREE information at the MGCA booth in the Exhibit Hall**

**FREE opportunity to become involved** in the  
2017 MGCA Professional Development Institute at the ACA Conference in Nashville, TN

Please email President-Elect Judith Mathewson (jjmathewson@att.net) if you plan on attending the PDI and Awards Brunch, held in collaboration with National Employment Counseling Association (NECA).

# MGCA Conference Agenda

MGCA & NECA Professional Development Institute (PDI)

*Employability and Life Skills: Successful Solutions for Veterans*

Located in the Palais des Congres de Montreal / Montreal Convention Center

0800-1700, 31 March 2016

The Military and Government Counselors Association and National Employment Counseling Association (NECA) are co-chairing the *Employability and Life Skills: Successful Solutions for Veterans* 2016 pre-conference event! MGCA and NECA teamed up to present skills to work with transitioning military members, their families and timely employment issues. Join us for free CEUs about relevant topics for your clients.

## MGCA (VETERANS & FAMILY) Morning Sessions (0800-1045)

### **Reintegration and the Military Success Model**

(Dr. Neil Duchac & Dr. Catherine Stower) Post re-integration is now the most difficult aspect of the deployment cycle for military members and their families. While utilizing the Military Success Model, attention is focused on the need to incorporate additional discussions regarding next steps to accommodate next steps within the military community.

### **Family-Based Play Therapy for Families Pre-and Post-Deployment**

(Dr. Franc Hudspeth & Dr. Adaris Pickett) This workshop will discuss attachment and a child's circle of security in terms of how they are impacted by deployment and reintegration. It will discuss and provide participants with a foundation for how to use family-based play therapy to mend attachments pre- and post-deployment to bring stability back to the family system.

# MGCA Conference Agenda , 2 of 3

## **Achieving Cultural Competence with Veterans: How to Avoid Being in the Majority**

(Keith Myers) Counselors are mandated to be culturally competent when working with clients. However, research suggests that the majority of private therapists are not culturally competent working with Veterans. This interactive session reviews military culture and provides practical knowledge and skills to improve competence with this population.

## **VA and Arkansas Counseling Association Collaborative Grant (CAVES) (Dr. Angie Waliski and Tammy Romines), and Characteristics of Non-fatal Suicide Attempts or Ideations Involving a Firearm as Method of Choice: Preliminary Results – (Dr. Angie Waliski)**

CAVES and the Arkansas Counseling Association (Veterans Affairs and Arkansas State Counseling Association collaborative research) will be discussed. Grant opportunities and benchmark practices will demonstrate numerous successful joint projects.

Additionally, Dr. Waliski's non-fatal suicide attempts presentation provides the results of interviews with Veterans within 48 hours of a serious suicide ideation or attempt that leads to inpatient VA psychiatric care. Presenters will provide antidotal information of assisting with Veterans, service members, and their family members at times of crisis.

## **(1100-1315): Luncheon and Awards Presentation –**

**MGCA & NECA Team**

## **NECA (EMPLOYMENT) AFTERNOON SESSIONS (1330-1700)**

### **The Job of the Jobseeker: Don't Forget your Lunch**

by Seneka Arrington, President, NECA

Finding employment is a tedious process and for some, a means to an end. When done incorrectly, feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and disappointment manifest themselves early. As a result, clients resort to surviving off government subsidies, nonprofit organizations, or family members. Preparation, Structure, and Follow-Up are key when searching for employment. These components require patience, focus, and the ability to think outside the box. For the jobseeker, finding a job is the new 9 to 5.

# **MGCA Conference Agenda, 3 of 3**

## **Wellness in the Workplace – Helping Veterans Transition**

by Michael C. Lazarchick PhD

This workshop explores the parameters of what some experts suggest constitute a good job. We'll look at our health both in and out of the workplace. We'll explore how people make money, the new options available in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the current labor market and ways to help our "customers" find meaningful employment. We'll also explore some experiential processes that utilize various forms of energy that help us stay focused and healthy on the job

## **Veteran Job Training and Employment**

Grey Edwards & Judith Mathewson

What job or training opportunities are available for our military veterans? How can you assist as employment counselors and transition specialists? This presentation will offer ideas and suggestions for veterans and those who serve them as they transition to the civilian world.

## **Retirement Ain't What It Used to Be**

by Carolyn A. Greer, Ed.D, LPC-S

Research shows that the recession of 2013 and instability in the stock market has caused many to rethink whether or not to change their plans for retirement. Due to these factors, many who are already retired are being forced to re-enter the labor market as a necessary step to maintaining their income. This presentation will look at changing economic factors and its impact on retirement planning. What does this mean for those who set their sights on retiring only to discover they no longer can afford to retire? What does this mean for our labor market?

**NECA Reception: 1 April 2016 (For all PDI attendees and Board Members) 1800-2000**

# Goals of MGCA

MGCA's current goals are similar but more inclusive than those developed under MECA. Their current goals are:

- to encourage, deliver, and participate in meaningful guidance, counseling, and educational programs for all members of the Armed Services and their families, whether active duty or retired; civilian employee of the Department of Defense; and employees of other government agencies.
- to encourage, develop, facilitate, and promote professional development activities for administrators, counselors, and educators working with such populations.
- to develop and promote the highest standards of professional conduct among administrators, counselors, and educators working in these environments.
- to establish and maintain full communication networks among such professionals.
- to encourage development of professional monographs and convention or conference presentations by members.  
to conduct and foster programs to enhance individual human development and increase recognition of humanistic values and goals among the members and within the agencies where they practice.



# How to Join MGCA

MGCA is dedicated to serving those who provide services to military, veterans, families throughout all disciplines of counseling.

The Association is currently made up of over 200 members from the following categories:

- Professional 53%
- Regular 2%
- Retired 5%
- Student 27%

Not only do we provide resources for your practice, there are also opportunities to serve on our leadership board!

We will also have a exhibitor table at ACA/CCA where you can learn more about us and how to become a member.

Click [here](#) for a printable registration form.

**The purpose of MCGA 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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[www.mgcaonline.org](http://www.mgcaonline.org)*

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