

groupassets



EDITOR'S NOTE

Connie Concannon, LCSW, CGP, DFAGPA
Editor, Group Assets

As we move into the fall season, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you, your family, and community a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday. At the Group Foundation, we have a great deal to be thankful for. Our fearless leader Karen Travis, LCSW, BCD, CGP, FAGPA, in her article 75 Years of Healing Through Groups reflects on how far we have come and highlights what we have accomplished by working together through our professional community. We are truly blessed to be a part of such a great organization that fosters connections in an educational environment and that excels in training. The article by Eleanor Counselman, EdD, CGP, LFAGPA, on Creating the Lorelle H. Machen, Ph.D. Scholarship is a wonderful example of the generous, thoughtful spirit that is alive in our membership. This spirit supports our outreach work and provides scholarships for the next generation to keep the fire of the power of group work burning. I'm grateful, and I know they are too!



Creating the Lorelle H. Machen, Ph.D. Scholarship

By Eleanor Counselman, EdD, CGP, LFAGPA

I've always thought it strange that there is no English verb to describe the relationship between an aunt or uncle and a niece or nephew. We speak of "mothering," "fathering" or "parenting" to describe those relationships, but our language neglects the powerful, active, and ongoing influence that some aunts or uncles have. My aunt, Lorelle Machen, in whose honor the Machen Scholarship was created, was a powerful influence on my life and fundamental to my choice of becoming a psychologist.



Growing up, I was fortunate to spend a lot of time with my aunt and her three children. She was my mother's younger sister, worked as a psychologist, and was the first professional woman I got to know. She was smart, funny, attractive, and had both a career and a family, which was unusual in that era. She had gone to college in California, which I, growing up in staid old Baltimore, Maryland, thought was idyllic. For breakfast, she had coffee and a cigarette (my mother served us oatmeal). I thought she was incredibly cool and wanted to be just like her! I majored in psychology in college, and after a summer of working for her in her office, my career path was set. I accompanied her to my first APA meeting.

The eldest of my cousins sadly developed severe mental illness as a young man. He was hospitalized on multiple occasions and eventually settled in a halfway house program. My aunt became a board member for the program, using her knowledge as a psychologist in this role, and through her, I learned about the importance of such settings to support the mentally ill. I also learned about the impact of severe and chronic mental illness on a family and the need for support. Unfortunately, now several decades later, treatment for the severely mentally ill and their families is even less accessible than it was back then.

My aunt died in 2010, and as I became more involved with the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health, it occurred to me that creating a scholarship to support clinicians who work with the severely mentally ill would be a wonderful way to honor her and so much of her life's work.

I talked to my cousin Leslie Machen Vestrich, her daughter, who was not initially familiar with AGPA. After I described all that we do and the purpose I had in mind for this scholarship, she was on board. We funded the scholarship together, and it was awarded for the first time in 2015. Since then, it has been awarded each year, and I have the privilege of sitting with each year's recipient at the Group Foundation luncheon. It is always interesting to learn of their settings: all working with difficult and underserved populations.

I recently received an email from the first recipient. "A few years ago, I received the first scholarship your family had sponsored. I had the wonderful opportunity to learn, as well as meet you and other amazing people. I wanted you to know the training continues to impact my work... There are many trainings I have attended but few are as impactful... I just wanted to make sure you knew there is an extension of your work and family working hard to serve the hospital-based population. I thank you and your family."

Creating a scholarship to honor a loved one is a wonderful living memorial. For further information, please contact Diane Feirman, CAE, Public Affairs Senior Director, or Marsha Block, CAE, CFRE, CEO, at 212-477-2677. 📞



75 Years of Healing Through Groups

Karen Travis, LCSW, BCD, CGP, FAGPA
Chair, Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health

Greetings to all. I am delighted to have the opportunity to bring you up-to-date on the Group Foundation's three-year campaign, 75 Years of Healing Through Groups, in celebration of the AGPA's 75th Anniversary.

When the Group Foundation embarked on the campaign in 2017, we set forth goals around strategic program directions supporting the field of group therapy, and not only money. We wanted to do the campaign for the AGPA because, for 75 years, AGPA has served as the voice of group therapy for mental health clinicians and the public-at-large, both nationally and internationally, providing vital information on group psychotherapy and global access to group psychotherapy education and professional development, research, and outreach services.

Group interventions create opportunities for healing and personal change, while groups are only as effective as the competency of their leaders. We see this truth at all levels and intersections of society. That's why AGPA has been at the forefront of supporting and helping clinicians develop the skills and empathy to make meaningful and lasting change for our clients and community.

At times, the Group Foundation and the AGPA may seem one and the same, but they are not. The Foundation is a philanthropic organization dedicated to changing lives through therapeutic group work. The Group Foundation supports the advancement of evidence-based group interventions and research, the education and training of effective group leaders, community outreach, and the dissemination of information for the benefit of the public and professional communities. As part of the Campaign,



we sought to increase our support for areas we saw as strengthening your practice and our community of professionals:

- **Scholarships** that provide needed training in group psychotherapy to students, new professionals, military personnel, agency employees, and others with limited options for training.
- **Research** that advances the field by demonstrating the effectiveness of group psychotherapy with a variety of patient populations and diagnoses.
- **Agency Training** to provide in-house, tailored training and consultation to agencies working in groups with underserved populations, often in remote areas where there are limited resources and access to trainers.
- **Community Outreach** programs to provide group-based responses to communities affected by traumatic events, as well as resources in coping with ongoing life challenges to help develop healthy communities.
- **Support to AGPA Affiliate Societies** to help strengthen local infrastructure to provide education, training, and networking opportunities to support group therapists throughout the year.
- **Technology support** to continue to enhance AGPA's online resources for clinicians and the public-at-large, including distance-based training and web resources for the public to find information on how groups can help them and their families, as well as a referral directory to locate a group therapist if needed, quickly and easily.

Doubtless, we are happy to have accomplished many of our program goals with the support of our donors. Through the

Continued on back page

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75 YEARS OF HEALING THROUGH GROUPS

Continued from front page

Foundation's help, AGPA has over the past few years been an increasing presence in responding to national and international traumatic events that affect communities with support by staff, volunteers, and resources on our website. Annually around 200 students, new professionals, and agency staff attend AGPA Connect on scholarship, and we provide a grant to the Local Hosting Society for scholarships at their trainings following AGPA Connect. The Foundation has funded research projects in areas such as groups for Adoptive Parents, Binge-Eating Disorders, and School-Based Resiliency Groups. AGPA's Distance Learning Program is thriving with frequent offerings in real time and as recordings (and these are complimentary to AGPA members).

We have achieved financial goals as well, the biggest of which was to reach a cumulative giving level of \$7.5 million dollars since the inception of the Group Foundation in 1982. At the start of the campaign, we had \$1.3 million dollars to raise to reach this, and I don't mind telling you, this produced a bit of anxiety as the Chair of the Foundation. It was a comfort to know that it would be a team effort to achieve our goal, and I did not feel alone (a testament to groups!).


We reached this goal—the Group Foundation has in its history raised \$7.5 million dollars in support of the field of group therapy and its practitioners—a truly amazing feat!

I wish to thank the Group Foundation Board of Directors for its commitment to the work. I want to take this opportunity to say sincere thanks to all of our donors over the years who have

made this possible. We have had donations in varieties of ways, including annual pledge commitments, bequests, one-time special gifts, tributes, and endowments (please see the accompanying article from Eleanor Counselman for a personal account of a tribute and an endowment). Again, true thankfulness cannot be expressed enough.

It is not too late to become part of history in support of the 75th Anniversary Campaign that closes in December 2018. I invite you to help make this journey continue for generations to come. If you have not taken the opportunity to make a donation, we hope you will join in this special occasion. If you had some question or uncertainty about the campaign, you can clearly see, hear, and hopefully feel the tremendous work that has been done and the payoff for the AGPA.

If you are reading this article, then you are a supporter of the Group Foundation, the AGPA, and/or group therapy as a mode of treatment. The Group Foundation will continue our work helping to strengthen your practice and our community of professionals.

Being Chair of the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health in this historical time of AGPA has been a challenge and leaves me grateful to have found a professional home where I can serve AGPA. Please, take a moment to reach out and let me know your thoughts, whether you have made a gift in celebration of the 75th anniversary of AGPA or are still considering. I would be delighted to hear from you. You can reach me at karendotcom@prodigy.net. 

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