

groupassets



EDITOR'S NOTE



I returned to my home in Washington DC exhausted and exhilarated from AGPA Connect in San Francisco. I feel hugely fortunate to have AGPA as one of my “professional homes.” I wish this for everyone attending. To this end, I am proud to be part of the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health, AGPA’s fundraising arm that among other things, raises money for scholarships for our up-and-coming group therapists – in hopes that they too will become strong members of our AGPA community and the group therapy field. This is one part of the mission of the Group Foundation.

I also feel it is important to say that the Group Foundation also helps offset the expenses of running Connect. I know it feels like an expensive conference to attend, but few know the many hidden expenses – such as the need to find a hotel willing to clear out over 50 guest rooms to accommodate the Two-Day Institutes. And so, the Foundation helps underwrite the costs with an annual education grant. I invite you to join me in supporting these efforts by regularly donating whatever you can to the Group Foundation. To give you an idea of the impact of your gifts, I’ve interviewed a number of scholarship recipients for this issue to relay their experience of the training that is AGPA Connect. Enjoy.

The Impact of the Gift of an AGPA Connect Scholarship

Maryetta Andrews-Sachs, MA, LICSW, CGP, AGPA-F

It’s my privilege to profile for you some of the wonderful scholarship recipients who attended AGPA Connect this year. The scholarship program increases access to training for the next generation of group therapists, benefitting those seeking mental health services through groups and insuring the future of our field.

These were the questions I asked to assess the impact that attending Connect had on these attendees:

- Do you have a fuller sense of the power and effectiveness of groups?
- Do you have a better sense of your own strengths and weaknesses as a group member?
- Do you have a better sense of the need for good training in groups?
- Do you have a better sense of what a good leader looks like?
- Do you recognize your own potential to be a leader re both running groups yourself – and in our Affiliates and AGPA?
- Are you aware that AGPA is strongly interested in helping you develop your potential and in becoming a leader in our organization on all levels?

Philip Lewis, MA, LMFT, CGP, is a second-career professional who had an excellent group therapy instructor, so he says he “drank the Kool-Aid early on...AGPA Connect simply poured gasoline on the fire.” In the Two-Day Institute, he was surprised how cohesive his group was and how dramatically people changed in such a short period of time. “I have a much better sense of what a good leader looks like.” Also, he feels he shifted from a position of fixing people to being a resource for them. He feels he has a willingness and ability to see the work more clearly now. Once established in his practice, he is aware that there are leadership possibilities for him within AGPA. As a new career professional, he said the scholarship made all the difference in his attending Connect, as he would not have come otherwise.

Rebecca Ming Hammond, MD, was able to attend the full Connect with her scholarship and said she is consequently “completely hooked” on the value of groups. She could only attend the Two-Day Institute last year – and found the full experience this year far more impactful. The title was particularly meaningful to her as it heightened her awareness of what being seen really means to people. She felt she really learned about addressing the social lens in groups.

“I have a much better sense of what a good leader looks like.”

– Philip Lewis, MA, LMFT, CGP

And, seeing many different styles of leadership greatly enhanced her determination to develop her own style. In between last year and this, she started her first group and sought good supervision. She noted her increased awareness of the need for good training, to channel the power of groups, to develop safety and limit scapegoating. “How wrong things can go!” She noted that she learned that good leaders could look many ways. When asked if she realized how interested AGPA is in developing future leaders throughout AGPA, she said she is too busy now to consider that type of engagement, but “now that I think about it, that was said many times.” She witnessed the wonderful community that AGPA is for so many people. Overall, she said she had “a phenomenal experience!” A friend there called AGPA “The Burning Man of Group Therapy!”

Carrie Lydon, AM, MS, LSW, expressed gratitude for her scholarship as she found Connect to be “a transformational experience,” and she could not have attended at this early point in her career without the scholarship. “For someone new in the group therapy space, I got a great education.” Connect made her feel more confident about herself and about the transformational power of group. Whereas she was not interested in groups before, she is now invested in doing more group work. “Connect lit that up for me.”

“It was great to be with a bunch of therapy nerds.”

– Sasha Strong, PhD, LPC, CGP

Amisha Mehtani, LMFT, found the conference very thought-provoking, providing a place to have important conversations, especially with the current realities in this country. She did experience many hierarchies of power at our conference - an opportunity “to notice how big each person’s sword is and how can we better manage our swords.” She loved the mix of didactic and experiential training. She stressed the value of witnessing our gaps in knowledge with the awareness of then making choices

She felt Donna Harris’ Institute set the tone for the rest of the week. She experienced the assumptions people made about her appearance, and the power of these melting when dialogue really occurred. She had her first experience with psychodrama: “I got such beautiful healing out of it.” Overall, she found the conference invigorating with a lot of growth.

“For someone new in the group therapy space, I got a great education.”

– Carrie Lydon, AM, MS, LSW

Sasha Strong, PhD, LPC, CGP, said they were in their element at AGPA Connect and felt they got a better sense of the community landscape. They said, “it was great to be with a bunch of group therapy nerds.” Sasha felt fortunate to have been in a three-year process group during graduate school at Naropa and found that Connect strengthened their belief in the power and effectiveness of group therapy, as well as the need to expand its use. Sasha felt people made space for them as a trans, queer, and neuroqueer person, and that other attendees were ready to listen when Sasha had something to say. Sasha led a Specific Focus Institute entitled “Trans, Queer, and Neuroqueer: Horizons of Possibility in Group Therapy” and loved the experience, including their Faculty Table. They particularly enjoyed moving towards a more interpersonal and relational leadership style during their Institute. Sasha also loved experiencing psychodrama at Connect 2025, in their first training experience in this modality. The Group Foundation scholarship award also supported Sasha in offering a workshop on “Gender-Affirming Group Therapy and Social Liberation: Integrating Developmental Social Justice Skills and the Neurodiversity Paradigm.” Sasha looks forward to more connecting.

What a delight it was to have these conversations with some of our scholarship recipients! Our future looks bright when I consider them as developing group therapists and AGPA leaders.

PLEASE CONSIDER YEARLY DONATIONS TO THE GROUP FOUNDATION SO THAT WE CAN CONTINUE TO EXPOSE SUCH TALENTED PEOPLE TO THE POWER OF GROUP!

Group Foundation Honors Scholarship and Award Winners

The Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health, the philanthropic arm of the AGPA, celebrates its 2025 scholarship and award winners. A myriad of awards that support the training of group therapists and the use of group in communities to effect change are distributed through the Foundation. Those recognized included:

- The **Alonso Award for Excellence in Psychodynamic Group Theory** was given to Dana Azani Sadka, Neta-nel Zingboim, Phillip R. Shaver, and Mario Mikulincer for their article, "Security-enhancement Processes within Group Settings: Revising Insecure Working Models of Attachment During Playful Group Interactions," published in Volume 74, Issue 2 (2024) of the *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*.
- The **Robert H. Klein Social Responsibility Award** (newly named this year in honor of Dr. Klein) was given to Drs. Bonnie Buchele and Haim Weinberg.
- The **Humanitarian Award** was given to Reginald Dwayne Betts, Founder and CEO, Freedom Reads.

You can read more about the Social Responsibility and Humanitarian Award recipients and their work in the Winter 2025 Issue of *Group Assets*.

Group Foundation Scholarships enable the attendance of those who demonstrate great potential in the field of group

psychotherapy. Endowed scholarship recipients honored at AGPA Connect were as follows:

- Anne Alonso Scholarship: Margaret Wilmot Francis
- Donald T. Brown LGBT Memorial Scholarship: Jacob Glickman
- Barry Bukatman, MD Memorial Scholarship: Karla Rosario
- Chuck Dachis Scholarship: Yuxi Zhang
- Barbara and Albert Dazzo Scholarship: Abidemi Onabadejo
- Durkin-Glatzer Scholarship: Kim Anh Nuyen
- Howard & Barbara Goldstein Scholarship: Michael Murray
- Sally B. Henry International Scholarship: Sowmya Holehodu Srinivasamurthy
- Ruth Hochberg Scholarship: Amisha Mehtani
- International Scholarship: Yanfeng Kong
- iScholarship: Helen Chao
- Lorelle H. Machen, PhD Memorial Scholarship: Jessica Monsour
- Red Well Theatre Scholarship: Keshav Rai Goud

- Kathy and Kent Rider Scholarship: Dajah Park
- Saul Scheidlinger Scholarship: Justin Collier
- Smith Giesbrecht Canadian Scholarship: Melissa Gansner
- Southwestern Scholarship: Marina Arnaud-Rathjens
- Mary M. Tanenbaum Scholarship: Shaundrella Gandy
- Josephine M. Cunningham Tervalon Scholarship: Ciera Lewis
- Karen Travis Scholarship: Jyotsna Dhar
- Kathleen Hubbs Ulman, PhD Scholarship: Phuong Nguyen
- Robert E. White, MD and Sara Jane White, PhD Scholarship: Thomas Ittoop

In addition to these endowed scholarships, another 200 scholarships were provided thanks to generous donors to the Education and Scholarship Fund who are listed below. The impact of this support is immense - the scholarship program increases access to training for the next generation of group therapists, benefitting those seeking mental health services through groups and insuring the future of our field.

EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP FUND DONORS

Our appreciation to the Education and Scholarship Fund donors whose gifts make possible the Group Foundation's support of AGPA Connect through a grant supporting the meeting, as well as scholarships for 200 attendees.

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Behind the Circle: Group Therapists Share Their Journey A Special Interview Series Benefitting the Group Foundation!

This series features one-on-one interviews that take a deep dive into how someone became a group leader. Not the usual sessions, these armchair chats among colleagues and friends will explore one person's journey to group therapy and the life experiences that inform their approach. All sessions are recorded and are available year-round. You can register for individual sessions (\$75 each) or the series in full (\$225). If you register for the full series, a bonus episode is included from the prior year, so five interviews in total. Special consideration rates are also available at registration.

Interviews are as follows; all have been conducted by Maryetta Andrews-Sachs, MA, LICSW, CGP, AGPA-F.

Macario Giraldo, PhD, AGPA-F

Donna J. Harris, MA, LCSW, CGP (upcoming on June 8)

Molyn Leszcz, MD, FRCPC, CGP, AGPA-DF

Ayana Watkins-Northern, PhD, CGP, AGPA-F

Elliot M. Zeisel, PhD, LCSW, AGPA-DF

You can register on the website www.agpa.org or email dfeirman@agpa.org

We also express gratitude to our sponsors who made this program possible:

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We appreciate the provisions these planned gift donors have made for the Group Foundation.

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