



AMERICAN GROUP
PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION
GROUP FOUNDATION
FOR ADVANCING MENTAL HEALTH
INTERNATIONAL BOARD FOR
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For Immediate Release

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GROUP FOUNDATION FOR ADVANCING MENTAL HEALTH ANNOUNCES THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SMITH GIESBRECHT CANADIAN SCHOLARSHIP IN MEMORY OF DAVID SMITH GIESBRECHT

NEW YORK, November 1, 2024—The Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health is announcing the establishment of a new scholarship, funded by long time AGPA Member Joan-Dianne Smith and her husband James Giesbrecht in memory of their son, David Smith Giesbrecht. The Smith Giesbrecht Canadian Scholarship will support a Canadian therapist (with preference to those involved with the Toronto Institute for Group Studies) who demonstrates a commitment to group therapy as a life-long career focus. It will include two sequential years of attendance at AGPA Connect, travel support, and a stipend for supervision and/or consultation during the interlude between the two conferences.

David Smith Giesbrecht died suddenly of a brain aneurysm in 2024 at age forty-two. Although David was not a group psychotherapist, he exemplified the motivation of a natural life-long learner. Living with learning disabilities, David was no stranger to hard work and perseverance. He learned for the enjoyment of discovery in areas that inspired him. He was also deeply committed to attachment and connection. Because of this, his parents have chosen to honor his memory with this scholarship that will be given to a group therapist whose career centers these attributes that were so very important to David during his life.

At the heart of the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health and AGPA is the desire to enhance the number and quality of effectively led therapeutic groups internationally in the public and private sectors. To accomplish this, we reach out to students, early career professionals, and other mental health professionals, and offer them scholarships to assist them in attending the AGPA Connect Annual Training, where they receive exposure to safe and stimulating group experiences and an opportunity to learn from the most experienced and talented group therapists. The Smith Giesbrecht Scholarship will be an important addition to this program, including the added value of the two-year continuity and year-round consultation support. The application is now available for AGPA Connect 2025 in San Francisco, CA [here](#).

“We are honored that Joan-Dianne and James have chosen to honor David’s memory with this fund through the Group Foundation,” says Darryl L. Pure, PhD, ABPP, CGP, AGPA-F, Chair of the Group Foundation Board of Directors. “Learning to enhance group therapy skills is an important part of the mission of the Group Foundation and it is our privilege to work with them to make it possible for those dedicated to the group therapy profession.”

For more information, contact the Group Foundation at (212) 297-2143 or via email at dfeirman@agpa.org or visit www.agpa.org.

About the Group Foundation and AGPA

The Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health is a philanthropic organization that is committed to the fact that “Groups Change Lives” and believes in the power of group interventions to improve people’s quality of life. The Group Foundation supports group psychotherapy education, research, training, and information dissemination for the benefit of the public and professional communities. Among the Foundation’s most vital roles is the recognition of excellence, promise, and vision by honoring those individuals and groups who have demonstrated these qualities with awards and scholarships.

The American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA) is the foremost professional association dedicated to the field of group psychotherapy, operating through a multi-organizational structure: AGPA, a professional and educational organization; the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health, a philanthropic arm; the International Board for Certification of Group Psychotherapists, a standard setting and certifying body; and the Affiliate Societies Assembly representing 21 local and regional affiliate societies providing continuing education, consultation, and support for group therapists across the country. AGPA represents over 2,000 mental health professional members, including clinical psychologists, clinical social workers, and psychiatrists, as well as mental health, family, school, and pastoral counselors, many of whom have been recognized as specialists through the International Board for Certification of Group Psychotherapists. AGPA members are experienced licensed mental health professionals who lead psychotherapy groups and/or various non-clinical groups. Many members are organizational specialists who work within the corporate world, non-for-profit organizations, and other groups to help them improve their functioning and delivery of services.

AGPA is committed to supporting the dignity and psychological safety of every individual without discrimination regarding race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, or disability. Central to our mission is a belief in the power of groups to treat mental illness, heal the scars from traumatic events, and enhance the well-being of adults and children in their families, schools, corporate settings, and communities.

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