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From the President's Pen

By Barbara Riggs, PhD

As we move into fall and see the changes taking place in nature, I am reminded of the many changes going on around us. We don't have to go far to see the impact the ailing economy has had on both businesses as well as families. We, as well as our clients, bear the brunt of the shrinking dollar.

But there are other changes around us as well. Most of us have become very familiar with hand sanitizer to ward off the flu. We all watch as gas prices seem to fluctuate without rhyme or reason. We don't have to drive very far before running into a detour sign as road construction starts wrapping up for the winter. And the changes being proposed in Congress can make your head swim.

As an organization, we are seeing changes as well. The national organization is in the middle of a strategic plan which will guide the organization over the next 10 years or so. It is here that I would like for you to spend some time considering some questions I will pose.

Organizations such as AAMFT tend to be primarily either content based or constituency based. A primarily content based AAMFT would focus on research, on furthering the profession of marriage and family, legislative efforts, etc. A constituency based AAMFT would exist to serve its members and their needs. While these both exist in successful organizations, one is more prevalent than the other.

This brings me to my first question to ponder. What do you want AAMFT to look like in the future? What should its primary purpose be?

Another thought to mull over is how to bring people into the organization that do not have the credentials and education you have, but have a deep interest in or even see mostly couples or families in their practice. The challenge as well as the question is how to keep the value of clinical membership high but open up the organization to other interested individuals such as other licensed mental health professionals, family attorneys, family physicians - any one with an interest in strengthening families. Should we broaden our membership base? How does that affect the profession of marriage and family therapy?

I was part of a conversation this past week with a couple of long-time MFTs discussing Brownian theory, differentiation and some of the new neurobiology findings. As ideas were thrown out and grappled with, there was an obvious excitement in the room. It had some of the feel that being an MFT in the 70s and 80s did. This brings me to my last thought which is perhaps more troubling. How do we maintain our distinctness - or do we? Does it matter? Are we really different than our cousins in other mental health disciplines?

I know how I would answer each of these. My intent in asking you is to begin some dialog in our division around these questions. Over the next several months, you will be asked similar questions by the AAMFT Board. We all know change is inevitable. The difficulty is making the right changes. Everyone has heard of the nine dots problem and how the solution involves "thinking outside of the box." I leave you with the challenge to "think outside the box" regarding change and a quote from Paul Watzlawick in which he refers to the 9 dot puzzle:



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President's Pen - (Continued from page 1)

Almost everybody who first tries to solve this problem introduces as part of his problem-solving an assumption which makes the solution impossible. The assumption is that the dots compose a square and that the solution must be found within that square, a self-imposed condition which the instructions do not contain. His failure, therefore, does not lie in the impossibility of the task, but in his attempted solution. Having now created the problem, it does not matter in the least which combination of four lines he now tries, and in what order, he always finishes with at least one unconnected dot. This means that he can run through the totality of the first-order change possibilities existing within the square but will never solve the task. The solution is a second-order change which consists in leaving the field . . .

October 1, 2009

Dear IAMFT Member,

It is with deep regret that I am emailing you today. I have accepted a new position with an agency in Missouri and will be relocating there this month. Therefore, I have resigned from my Region 1 Representative and Board Member position with IAMFT. I have certainly enjoyed serving IAMFT and the Region 1 Members over the past year.

I wish you continued success in your professional endeavors!

With Warm Regards,

Marilyn Steinberg, MS, LMFT
AAMFT Approved Supervisor

Graduate Student Reflects on Fall Conference – Cassandra Nelson

I so much enjoyed attending this year's IAMFT conference. As a first time attendee, I was really struck by the amount of information that was packed into one day! I found the seminar pertaining to family law and MFT's interesting, and took back to some of my student colleagues at CTS the tips I learned around deciphering legal documents and being a "good witness." It lessened my anxiety about testifying considerably! I also learned some helpful tips from the marketing presentation such as learning that you will probably make many mistakes before you will see results of your marketing efforts. This is not easy to stomach as a (recovering) perfectionist but I'll work on it! Other presentations were so helpful in opening up dialogue around the gray area of ethical dilemmas. It is nice to know that no matter how long you have been in practice, you can (and need to) ask peers for support when dealing with ethical issues that come up in and outside the therapy room. I appreciated the warmth of everyone I met and the spirit of camaraderie I witnessed as people caught up with old friends and made some new ones. I am excited and honored to be part of such a knowledgeable and supportive group of marriage and family therapists.

Cassandra Nelson is a graduate student at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis.

AAMFT Annual Conference - Call for Abstracts

“Marriage: Relational and Societal Perspectives”

September 23 - 26, 2010

Atlanta, Georgia

SUBMISSION PROCESS

The AAMFT utilizes an online abstract submission process designed to increase the accuracy of the information obtained for each abstract. This process requires that abstract submissions have ID numbers for all presenters. [Click here](#) for frequently asked questions.

Online submissions will be taken until 11:59pm, December 1, 2009

OBTAINING AN ID NUMBER

AAMFT Members should use their Member ID numbers. Please make sure all of your information (address, phone numbers, email addresses) is current. You can check your information in the "Members Only" section of the AAMFT web page by clicking on "Update Your Contact Information." For information on logging on to the "Members Only" Section [click here](#). If you have questions email central@aamft.org, or call 703-838-9808.

Presenters who are not members of the AAMFT should contact AAMFT Member Services (703-838-9808 or central@aamft.org) to obtain a "Guest ID" number. Please provide name, address, phone number, and email when requesting a Guest ID.

NOTE: All presenters must have an accurate and current email address on file in the AAMFT. Failure to provide an email address will result in your abstract not being processed. All correspondence between the AAMFT and presenters will be by email.

CONFERENCE THEME

Marriage: Relational and Societal Perspectives

Marriage is a critical element in the lives of most clients. It has also become the subject of passionate public debate in recent years. The concept of marriage, and indeed the very use of the word marriage, is imbedded in the profession of marriage and family therapy—both in the MFT license and in the name of the association that represents the field, the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.

Yet, MFTs hold very diverse and deeply held opinions about marriage—from the role of the MFT in preserving marriage, to the question of who can legally marry. This conference is unlikely to alter our opinions and beliefs, but we can engage in civil discourse and seek to understand perspectives that may differ from our own.

In addition to exploring the MFT's beliefs and opinions about marriage, this conference will address the social context of marriage. We know that the structure and functioning of marriages have evolved through history. What was once “typical” or “average” is no longer the norm. At present many couples are in long-term relationships without marriage—due to choice or the lack of marriage as a legal option. Divorce rates are declining but remain high. Few could argue that the institution of marriage is undergoing considerable changes in our lifetimes.

How will we respectfully incorporate our individual beliefs with our work with clients? How can we respond to a changing social climate, and provide needed services to various couple and family configurations?

In this conference, we will:

- Review how the institution of marriage has taken different meanings, served various purposes, and evolved throughout history.
- Look at best practices in couple therapy.
- Explore research on factors in successful marriages, as well as predictors of divorce.
- Discuss ways in which MFTs can prepare individuals for successful marriage.
- Consider the MFTs role in preserving marriages, and in helping families where marriages have ended.
- Examine cultural perspectives on marriage, and how they impact our clients' expectations of marriage.
- Investigate the challenges for gay and lesbian couples who are newly married, or for whom legal marriage is not an option.

We seek abstracts for presentations that specifically address the theme of marriage—the view from the therapist's chair, the client's chair, and in society at large. We encourage creative workshop formats, such as panel discussions or respectful pro/con presentations to debate perspectives.

If you are unable to submit an abstract online contact the AAMFT Educational Program Administrator at 703-253-0481 or via email (abstracts@aamft.org).

IAMFT Fall Conference 2009



Fall Conference Pictures Continued



Welcome New Members!

Student Members

Aaron Cook
Indianapolis, IN

Terry Coy
Aurora, IN

Kristina Courtney
Dayton, IN

Janet Ditslear
Noblesville, IN

Kristen Fiechter
Indianapolis, IN

Laura Ivey
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Indianapolis, IN

**IAMFT 2009
Newsletter Schedule**

If you would like to submit an article or an ad in the next newsletter, please contact Ann Ninness at 317-484-2630 or ann@centraloffice1.com

4th Quarter - Issue 4

November 15th submission

December 1st publication

Newsletter dates are subject to change. Archive newsletters can be downloaded from the IAMFT website. www.inamft.org

AAMFT - 2010 Call for Nominations

Here's your opportunity to shape our governance and organization by nominating individuals for open Board of Directors, Elections Council, and COAMFTE positions. You can nominate for as many positions as you wish. Terms of office to begin January 1, 2011**.

The Elections Council is looking for breadth of nominations as we increase representation in AAMFT governance. We encourage you in 2010 to look deeper to find that hard-working, dedicated member who could well represent the AAMFT in national governance.

For more information visit the website below:
http://www.aamft.org/members/About/call_for_nominations.asp

Possible IAMFT Election Announcement Here

Earn CEU's

Did you know that you can earn CEU's for your license by serving on the IAMFT Board? Those meetings that board members attend earn them. We have the following positions open:

- Awards Committee Chair
- Historian Committee Chair
- Marketing Committee Chair
- Election Committee Chair

If you are interested in serving please contact Linda Wark, IAMFT Past President. (warkl@ipfw.edu)

Questions??

Do you have a question that would be helpful to IAMFT members? Ask it and we'll answer it in the next issue.

Email Barbara Riggs, IAMFT President 2009
 barbara.riggs@indwes.edu
 or
 IAMFT Central Office
 ann@centraloffice1.com

Contributions to IAMFT

IAMFT accepts contributions from members just like any nonprofit organization. Our nonprofit status is 501 (c) (6). Contributions to the scholarship fund (to help graduate students attend IAMFT conferences) cannot be used as charitable deductions on your taxes. However, contributions of goods or money as a co-sponsor of our conferences can be used as charitable deductions. Finally, 68% of your dues to AAMFT are deductible. Contributions can be made payable to IAMFT and mailed to IAMFT Central Office.

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- **PRESIDENT'S PEN**
- **REGION 1 REPRESENTATIVE MESSAGE**
- **FALL CONFERENCE REFLECTION**
- **AAMFT - CALL FOR ABSTRACTS**
- **FALL CONFERENCE PICTURES**
- **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!**
- **AAMFT NOMINATIONS**

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