

# ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY THERAPISTS OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2010

## AFTNC COUNCIL RETREAT AND OUR ORGANIZATION'S MOVEMENT FORWARD

### President's Column

This has been a very productive year for the AFTNC. After the new council was assembled, we reinstated the annual retreat where the council met for six hours discussing our visions for the future of AFTNC and what the first steps are to get us there. We focused on three main areas: Organization, Education, and Community.

At the retreat, we dis-

cussed the organization of the AFTNC and how we can increase transparency and accountability to our members. We've decided to review and update the bylaws, which we will be sending out to the membership for review in March and will be voted on at the Membership Meeting in April when we have JoAnne DiPetro's event, "Family Systems: Past, Present, and Fu-



W. Keith Sutton  
AFTNC President

ture". In 2009, we were able to reinstate voting for the council positions of President, President-Elect, Treasurer, and Secretary.

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## EDITOR'S COLUMN

The AFTNC has been going through a lot of changes since Keith Sutton has taken on the presidency. He has enlivened this organization with fresh ideas and newly inspired passion about the impact that AFTNC has on our community. If you haven't already, please read his president's column so that you can keep up with all the efforts that the AFTNC is making to promote interaction and community among our members. This is a ripe opportunity to get involved in AFTNC and to promote family therapy in the Bay Area. In my spare time, I am an instructor of an introductory family therapy



course at JFK University. Each fall that I teach this mandatory semester-long class full of second year psychology graduate students, my dedication to family therapy is invigorated. This invigoration is propelled by the apparent fact that the use of family systems ideas and family therapy techniques is under-emphasized in graduate training programs and so the interest of students who want to expand their knowl-

edge in this area falls heavily on organizations like AFTNC who promote systems ideas and practices. AFTNC fills a gap that exists in the educational community and I have found it invaluable for me personally and professionally to become involved in such an organization that is so passionate about family therapy. I have encouraged all of my students to attend AFTNC events and they were heavily in attendance at the November AFTNC event: Making Room for Dads: Encouraging Positive Father Involvement is Good for the Whole Family with Philip Cowan, PhD & Carolyn Cowan, PhD. Their write ups about this event left me feeling very good about our organization because of the quality of the events and of the presenters, and of the friendliness of our community members. The presenters at this event, Dr. & Dr. Cowan, do research at UC Berkeley and have developed an interest in increasing father involvement in family therapy. Increasing therapist's interest in getting fathers involved in family therapy and giving them opportunities to think about how to go about doing this is so exciting for me because I cannot alone inspire students to become interested in family

models of treatment. If AFTNC was not in my life, I would have to work extra hard to find opportunities for myself and my students to become involved in these kinds of events and participate in the discussions that happen at these events.

Because we are all excited about our work with families and systems and to discuss issues related to family and couples work, it is important for us to share our excitement with one another. I am privileged to have this council position as AFTNC newsletter editor as it is so much fun to see the newsletter submissions that come to me for publication for the January and July newsletter editions. Exposure to each other's ideas also invigorates my interest and dedication to systems ideas and I would like to encourage each AFTNC member to consider sharing their ideas with our community. We all have work that we are proud of, ideas we are interested in, workshops we have attended or lead, and articles and books we have read or written. What better place to share than in the bi-annual AFTNC newsletter? I know that our community would love to hear from you and get excited about what your interests and endeavors. Please email me if you would like to submit an article for any future AFTNC newsletter at:

[alenaschabes@hotmail.com](mailto:alenaschabes@hotmail.com)

### THE AFTNC MENTOR PROGRAM

The AFTNC's mentor program has been running for the past four years. Recently, the council has renewed its commitment toward this program. The program provides an avenue for students to become involved with the organization and to find guidance in their development as family therapists. At the same time, it's a great way for more experienced members to give back and get inspired by their mentee's excitement about the field.

The mentor program is like a buddy system where students are connected with licensed professionals. Together, mentor and mentee decide the frequency and type of contact together ranging from occasional phone or e-mail contact, to meeting for lunch or coffee every few months, to more frequent meetings. If you're interested in getting involved in this exciting new program as either a mentor or a mentee, send an e-mail to the student representative coordinating the program, Tom Wooldridge, at [tw@gmail.com](mailto:tw@gmail.com).

**PRESIDENT'S COLUMN** *(continued from page 1)*

This year, we will be voting for the Member At Large position and are looking for nominations. We request nominations in January and will review the candidates at the January 31<sup>st</sup> council meeting, then will announce the nominees in February. The Members-At-Large attend council meetings and represent the current membership at large when voting on issues. They are also able to be part of committees.

Another way we are trying to be more accountable to our members is through polling the members opinions. You may remember the poll to learn the preferences for speakers for our annual conference and the poll about how our members feel the listserv should be used and is being used. The highest vote for a conference speaker was Celia Falcov who has agreed to speak at this year's conference. We are still working on a title for the conference, but Celia is best known for her family and systemic work with Latino populations. The listserv poll has led the Council to decide to move to a new listserv where we can have conversations without having to read every email, where we could opt-out of receiving non-AFTNC advertisements and requests for referrals, and where we can have a record of responses to emails when searching for referral information.

Lastly, we've created a Cultural Accountability Committee (CAC), which is currently made up of council members (myself, Theopia Jackson, Erica Torres, and Lety Manzanaras) and general members (Becky Pizer, Samuel Tabachnik, Meredith Porter, Sara Mizban, and Heather Martarella). The CAC is working on the mission of the committee and have been discussing issues related to AFTNC's cultural accountability, which has led to recommendations to the council. The CAC is made up of AFTNC members of minority status as well as cultural allies.

The second area of focus of the AFTNC retreat was the issue of education. We discussed the revival of the monthly AFTNC events and discussed how to promote training and education in family therapy in the Bay Area. We looked at how to reach the new therapists in training and decided to restart the men-

tor program, organize an event for supervisors to obtain their continuing education requirements through a supervision, law, and ethics event (on January 15<sup>th</sup>) focused on family therapy, will be reaching out to community organizations to offer a speaker's bureau so that trainees can be exposed to family therapy theories, and will list family therapy and couples therapy training programs available to PsyD, PhD, MFT, and LCSW students on the AFTNC website. Finally, we have been video and audiotaping AFTNC events, posting them online, and housing them in our library for members that are unable to attend.

The third area of focus of the retreat was the AFTNC member community. What makes the AFTNC a great organization is the community of members who all share similar interests in family therapy. We decided to go beyond the socializing before workshops and offer events where members could bring family. We have scheduled a picnic for members to attend and bring their families and will have a holiday party next year where members can also bring their partners. We hope these events are successful and may become new traditions. Also, the new, more interactive listserv where discussions can occur and where you can upload a photo to your profile will hopefully support a stronger professional connection between our members.

There have been a lot of changes in the past year with the website changing, our membership dues payment process going online, changing listservs twice, and returning to a voting process for the council. We are hoping that this time of growth and change will lead to more transparency, accountability, and a greater representation of our members' needs and values. Hopefully, these changes will help our organization continue to grow and positively affect the mental health treatment being offered in the Bay Area. We strive to promote family therapy by supporting our members to continue to grow their clinical skills as well as introduce family therapy to clinicians not currently utilizing its effective theories and techniques. As always, the AFTNC grows through your input, so please, if you have any suggestions, criticisms, or would like to get involved, please contact me or any of the other council or committee members. We value your input.

## TO LPC, CSW, OR MFT: WHO ARE WE AND DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

By Terry Patterson, EdD, ABPP

I have been part of the community counselor coalition advocating for California as the last state not to have a professional counselor license. It is especially absurd that in the other 49 states, MFT clinicians are in the minority, and most M.A. level clinicians are professional counselors. Some states allow for LPCs to add a designation (with advanced training and experience) as a couple or family specialist. Well, VOILA! In October the Governor signed SB88 finally adding the Golden State to the pantheon of states where professional counselors can be licensed as *Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors* (LPCC). For details see <http://www.caccl.org/>

The issue was not that there are too few therapists in California (though underserved areas exist), but that *an entire profession was not being recognized*. Tracing the history of the MFCC (formerly MFT) license in California back to the early 70s, Marriage & Family Therapy was spreading like wildfire and everyone seemed happy to become MFCCs. Practically speaking, the MFT scope of practice has always been a generic one, allowing for the practice of consultation, research, teaching, and individual, couple, group, and family psychotherapy. So wherever you are on the spectrum of whether family therapy is a specialty or a profession, we now have a Master's license which specifies it as a specialty. Basic point: This is a victory

for all of us and despite the protestations of the AAAMFT and CAMFT, couple and family therapy is now a *specialty* in California under the LPCC, not a separate profession, as every other mental health discipline maintains.

The issue is further complicated in that the BBS is now requiring MFT programs to require 60 units and emphasize community mental health and recovery issues, beginning in 2012. In response to my comment last year to Paul Riches, the BBS Executive Director, that the MFT license was becoming more like the LCSW, he said "Yes!". Many programs, including my own, have begun a dialogue about exploring switching to the LPC, and whether it better fits our students' interest and their post-graduate employment as well as our curriculum structure. Beyond training, much work remains to be done politically to make LPCCs in California eligible for third-party reimbursement, employment, and the judicial process, among others.

So the horse is out of the barn. I agree that the impact will be minimal in the immediate future, but in the longer term (5-10 years or less), MFT programs will be forced to "walk the talk", and actually provide concentrated training and focused experience in MFT. The 5 or so AAAMFT-accredited programs in the state already do this, and the rest do it somewhat or very minimally.



Terry Patterson  
Past President

LPCC programs will grow, and some of them will also be working with couples and families.

So in the meantime I urge all who currently hold the MFT or are in training to take advantage of the "grandparenting" provisions the BBS is offering to add the LPC to your credentials. It will expand your future options and add to the "truth in advertising" aspect Robert-Jay Green mentioned in a recent AFTNC communication, and allow you to be licensed more easily in other states (national credentialing of the LPCC is possible also).

This topic will become more prominent as information unfolds, and it would be an excellent topic for a future AFTNC program. I'd also be glad to provide some background articles of mine to anyone who would like them.

*Did anyone think the mental health profession was a simple one?*

## AFTNC ANNUAL CONFERENCE SUMMARY by Ganna Plotkina, M.A.

The AFTNC held its 46<sup>th</sup> annual conference on October 2nd through 4th, 2009 at the Sea Bird in Pajaro Dunes, CA. The featured speaker was Esther Perel, MFT the internationally renowned author of *Mating in Captivity: Unlocking Erotic Intelligence*. The conference was titled the *Paradox of Intimacy and Sexuality*, and the discussion explored why couples often face waning sexual passion as they build greater security and intimacy in the relationship.

The success of the conference was in part due to Esther's approach in presenting her work. Aside from being an engaging speaker, Esther introduces her ideas and body of work as a work-in-progress rather than as absolute truths. She challenges the audience to consider socio-historic and multi-cultural perspectives in the discussion of sexuality between couples in the United States. At times, her work also challenges common approaches and conceptualizations of couples' presenting issues, such as the idea that infidelity is always ruinous for a relationship.

Aside from the presentation itself, the location made for a pleasant environment to learn and relax. Participants stayed in quaint ocean-side condominiums with picturesque views of the beach. Many utilized the time during breaks and evenings to interact with colleagues, take leisurely walks on the beach, or explore nearby trails. In summary, the conference was well organized, educational and stimulating, and members are undoubtedly looking forward to such conferences in the future.

## EXPERIENCING THE AFTNC ANNUAL CONFERENCE by Abi Weissman

I found out about the Association of Family Therapists of Northern California 46th Annual Conference: Paradox of Intimacy and Sexuality featuring Esther Perel, MFT from an email sent by the chair of Argosy University's Clinical Psychology program, Dr. Polly Lytle. I was so excited to see that a professional organization in mental health was talking and thinking about sexuality. As a fourth year PsyD student and practicum trainee with an MA in Human Sexuality, I am always interested in how to combine these fields. I was blessed to attend the conference via a Ram Gokul Scholarship and work/study opportunity.

I learned a tremendous amount at the conference. As a graduate student, new to the AFTNC and a first-time conference attendee, I was admittedly a little nervous walking into a space attended by my professors and other licensed professionals. AFTNC members are welcoming and kind as well as inquisitive and knowledgeable. There was many a psych assistant there and familiar faces from my graduate program. Each person I met, whether a seated neighbor or someone I asked to help me move a table, was friendly in a way that felt genuine. It was a nice surprise to feel so welcomed in a group in which I was a newcomer and a student newcomer at that.

There were ample opportunities to learn and develop new skills. Through Esther Perel's excellent and vivacious presentation, I learned about the myths surrounding intimacy and sexuality in couples. I participated in making lists comparing romantic love to lists about sex and sexuality. I learned through making my own list how inviting couples to make their own lists could prove helpful in talking about touchy (pun intended) topics. Not only did Esther Perel show the participants what lists to make, she demonstrated how she would introduce the exercise and what responses she's had when she has done this very activity with couples. We saw videos of couples who Esther Perel had worked with and heard her commentary on the sessions. I learned the difference between wanting (desiring) a partner and needing them and heard specific ways to create or recreate eroticism within a relationship. Through Esther Perel's presentations, I learned numerous ways to be a more thoughtful and helpful couples clinician.

## EXPERIENCING THE AFTNC ANNUAL CONFERENCE by Abi Weissman

*(continued from page 5)*

The conference fosters collegiality and collaboration. Unexpectedly, Esther Perel was able to help me with my dissertation work. At the end of the first day, I approached her and asked her if she knew of any information on Jewish transgender identity. She said she did not personally but invited me to email her for the name and information of her best friend in Israel who was an expert on the topic. I thanked her and off I went. I emailed her a few hours later and was surprised to get a reply within an hour or two. She provided me with the name of her best friend and advised me to use her own name as a reference. My communication with Esther began a fruitful multinational communication for information about my dissertation topic. I feel blessed and grateful for her assistance.

Although I had to leave the conference early, due to some health problems, I heard that the charades game went well as did the next day of interactive activities. I hope that you will join me next year for the full conference experience.

## **AFTNC EVENT** **JANUARY 15th**

### ***Family Therapy Law, Ethics, and Supervision***

***With Dan Taube, PhD, Bart Rubin, PhD, Jim Keim, LCSW, Pamela Parkinson, PhD, LCSW, Becky Pizer, PsyD, Jane Ariel, PhD, & Yvette***

## RAM GOKUL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

*AFTNC has created a scholarship fund in honor of the late Ram Gokul to help support members committed to family therapy who otherwise would not be able to afford to attend the conference. If you are interested in applying for the scholarship fund, please contact*

*Lisa Anderson Shaffer or more information:*

*LisaAndersonShaffer@gmail.com*

## MENTOR PROGRAM

AFTNC Mentor Program matches practitioners in the field with family therapy students from graduate schools in the Bay Area. The program was successfully launched in 2005. Opportunities for mentors and mentees to meet with be planned throughout the year. If you are interested in becoming a mentor or mentee, contact Tom Wooldrige at [tw@gmail.com](mailto:tw@gmail.com)

## VIDEO LIBRARY

One of the unique benefits of being an AFTNC member is the ability to borrow over 100 therapy tapes and DVDs from our extensive collection at no cost, and it's easy! Most videos are still in VHS format, although Keith Sutton is in the process of transferring them to DVD. You can pick up the tapes personally if you wish, or have them sent to you for a two week period. The success of the library relies both on our responsiveness and your promptness in paying the mailing fees and returning the video promptly. You will normally receive it about one week after you call (pickups are faster). To check out a video, just follow these steps:

- Search the video library at [AFTNC.com](http://AFTNC.com)
- Contact Randy Wyatt [video@aftnc.com](mailto:video@aftnc.com) and arrange for pickup or mailing
- Return the video no later than two weeks after receiving it.

## AFTNC ESTABLISHES THE CULTURAL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE (CAC) BY THEOPIA JACKSON AND BECKY PIZER

In 2009, President Keith Sutton extended an invitation to the AFTNC community to come together to discuss and explore issues of culture and implications for the organization and the field of family therapy. The response has resulted in the formation of the Cultural Accountability Committee (CAC), and we wanted to get the word out about some exciting developments and invite more AFTNC participation.

Thus far, the CAC has met twice and our third meeting is scheduled for March (date TBD). Please come and help us explore how we can make the AFTNC more culturally accountable by discussing intersections between culture, accountability, and family therapy and how to ensure this at all levels of our organization. The group represents a wide range of diversity, not only with regard to ethnicity, race, gender, age, etc. but also in terms of our affiliation with AFTNC. For example, students, past and present Council members/leaders, long-term members who hold historical organizational knowledge (respectfully, 'professional elders'), and new members have engaged in lively discussions that have been both personally and professionally enriching.

Some of the topics we have discussed include hierarchy, power, inclusivity, and integrating a cultural focus into every aspect of the AFTNC as an organization. More specifically, we have articulated an expansive understanding of culture

to include various aspects of diversity beyond race and ethnicity (embracing the richness of differences among all of us) and implications for practice, teaching and training in family therapy. In order to sustain these efforts, we have talked about the conference, other events, the listserve, the Council, recruitment, and how the CAC will function within AFTNC. We are authoring a mission statement that will be aligned with AFTNC mission. Other activities include working on the idea of CAC creating structures that promote feedback throughout AFTNC, such as reflecting times during the conference. We are considering how to formally communicate with presenters about the centrality of cultural issues so that they can actively engage with AFTNC membership about family therapy in a larger context. We are interested in hearing presenters' cultural stories of how they got to wherever they are professionally, meaning how they make sense of their journeys within cultural context.

We have had some fruitful discussions about how cultural topics "fit" with family therapy perspectives. A rich variety of ideas came from these discussions, including a proposal for an event in Fall 2010 to promote a larger dialogue within AFTNC. A panel will be recruited to talk about culture and family therapy, and then we will have some time for general comments and reflections from all those who attend. One

question to consider might be: How do ideas about culture, privilege, oppression, and context impact the lives of the families we see and inform our work?

The committee has acknowledged that dialogs about culture can be difficult and there may not be complete "safety" when sharing perspectives on topics that are so intensely charged in western society. It is quite probable that safety may be a byproduct of the effectiveness of our collective efforts. Some of us have commented that the conversations in the CAC have been remarkable in their scope, much more so than similar conversations we have had in other settings. We have made a commitment to keep communication lines open, especially about microaggressions, silencing, misunderstandings, and other common roadblocks to constructive exchange; this is our accountability to ourselves and AFTNC.

Because we are brought together by a shared sense of purpose, without many bureaucratic obstacles, we have a unique opportunity to work together on this project and welcome your feedback and participation as we move forward in this exciting process. Keep an eye out for details about the next CAC meeting: hope to see you there!

Respectfully,  
Theopia and Becky

## **UPCOMING AFTNC EVENTS**

GO TO AFTNC.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION  
ABOUT THESE AND OTHER EVENTS

### **SATURDAY FEBRUARY 27th**

**FREE STUDENT EVENT:  
PANEL ON CAREERS IN  
FAMILY THERAPY**

### **FRIDAY MARCH 19th**

**6:30pm- 9:30pm  
USING COUPLES THERAPY  
TO BRING PLEASURE BACK  
INTO THE ROOM  
with Lonnie Barbach, PhD**

### **SUNDAY APRIL 11th**

**11am-4pm  
AFTNC MEMBER  
FAMILY PICNIC  
IN TILDEN PARK**

### **SATURDAY APRIL 24th**

**FAMILY SYSTEMS: PAST,  
PRESENT, & FUTURE  
A panel with longtime  
members of AFTNC**

### **FRIDAY MAY 7th**

**6:30pm-9:30pm  
ATTACHMENT BASED  
FAMILY THERAPY  
with Bart Rubin, PhD**

### **FRIDAY June 4th**

**6:30pm-9:30pm  
RESIDUALS OF AMERICAN  
SLAVERY FOR BLACKS AND  
WHITES  
with Theopia Jackson, PhD  
and Susan Wilkens, PhD**



## AFTNC EVENT

**Saturday, February 6, 2010**

### **A Good Divorce?:**

**How to Assess, Educate, Screen and Speak with Your Clients  
About Collaborative Divorce**

**Ann Buscho, PhD and Suzan Barrie Aiken, JD**

Half of all marriages end in divorce. But the emotional devastation that often accompanies the end of a relationship doesn't have to be a fact as well. There must be a better way. That is the thinking behind Collaborative Divorce (also called Collaborative Practice). This relatively new branch of Family Law offers couples an alternative to "divorce as usual". Couples agree to avoid court, transparency in communication, and interest- and needs-based negotiations. Mental health professionals, trained as Divorce Coaches and Child Specialists are often part of this process. Each client has an attorney and a Divorce Coach, while frequently other neutral professionals assist in the process in order to achieve lasting agreements, which stabilize the family. The divorcing couple works with their coaches to identify their goals, needs and interests, and to enhance communication skills, self-management and negotiation skills. These skills help make the divorce process more efficient and less overwhelming. When there are children the creation of a parenting plan that best serves the need of their family is central. This presentation by an attorney and psychologist/divorce coach will explain this model to attendees. We will describe the various alternatives, in addition to Collaborative Divorce, that couples can choose to divorce or end a domestic partnership.

**When:** Saturday, February 6, 6:30-9pm

**Where:** North Bay - Location coming soon!

**Cost:** FREE, unless you'd like CE, which is \$15 for 2 hours

**To RSVP:** Shawn Giammattei, Ph.D., [drshawn@questfamilies.com](mailto:drshawn@questfamilies.com) (415) 722-7134

# aftnc

THE ASSOCIATION OF  
FAMILY THERAPISTS OF  
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

[WWW.AFTNC.COM](http://WWW.AFTNC.COM)

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## WHO WE ARE

Founded in 1963, AFTNC is the nation's oldest professional association devoted to promoting family therapy. Our goal is to advance the theory and practice of family therapy while fostering collegial relationships among family therapists. AFTNC is a group of experienced mental health and social service professionals committed to providing quality services to families, couples, and individuals in private and public settings. Our multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural membership includes MFTs, PhDs, PsyDs, MDs, LCSWs and advanced graduate students.

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## RAM GOKUL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

PROVIDING SCHOLARSHIPS FOR AFTNC'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Ram Gokul memorial scholarship fund was established by the AFTNC council in 2005. For the past several years, the council has worked to incorporate cultural perspectives into the training and practice of family therapy in our region. We have attempted to put these

issues at the top of our agenda, particularly in choosing presenters for the Fall Conference. Ram, our friend and colleague, was an inspiration to many of us in that regard. Having come to the United States from Guyana as a young man, he trained in the Bay Area at a time

when few men of color were entering our field. His life and work embodied respect for cultural diversity. When he passed away last summer, we were all caught by surprise, and sought to memorialize his life and promote our interest in culturally sensitive mental health ser-

vices by establishing a scholarship in his name to support the goal of broadening participation in our Fall Conference, thereby creating a more respectful community of understanding and justice.

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