

Better Late Than Never!!!

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VACES Spring/ Summer 2007

Thoughts From The President

I found myself staring at a blank computer screen, unable to put words to paper for the "President's Column" of this newsletter. In reflecting upon why the task seemed so difficult, I considered whether it was the grief and sadness around the incident at Virginia Tech that lingers and the incredible respect I feel for two of our Board members, Gerard and Nancy, or was it my own grief about my "endings" with the VACES leadership team and thoughts of next year's retirement, or simply my disappointment in what we couldn't accomplish – in spite of what we did accomplish.

I know it is the interplay among all of these considerations.

We can all take comfort in Gerard's words that were published in the June, 2007 issue of *Counseling Today*: "That's (the support received) going to help us as we move forward. At the end of the day, the students, alumni, faculty, and staff at the university are going to take charge of how we want to be remembered. ...When people look back, they are going to see what it really means to be a Hokie. We will not be defined by this tragedy". We will continue to stand with Virginia Tech and we will celebrate



VACES President
Kathleen May, PhD

their compassion and resilience as they grieve as a community and move forward as a community.

Serving as VACES's president has been an honor and a privilege; the rewards far outweigh the frustrations. I am so grateful to the Board and friends of VACES for
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Summer Sabbatical by Joyce Wagner, Regent University

What's the best part about school? I work in a college setting and when I ask undergrad students this question I usually hear (without pause) – 'break'!! Breaks are one of the best parts of being a student, they mean a breather from schoolwork, more time to spend with family and friends and an opportu-

nity to get some much needed rest and restoration before heading into the next leg of the journey.

I wonder if you asked a few Counselor Educators what their favorite part of academia is if some might answer - 'sabbatical'. Really, this is just a fancier word

that implies a longer break; the dictionary refers to it as a period of rest (Sabbath) meant especially for respite. It strikes me that, as future Counselor Educators, we might take a cue from our seasoned mentors and turn these next few weeks into our own, mini summer sabbatical.
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LOOK At This!!



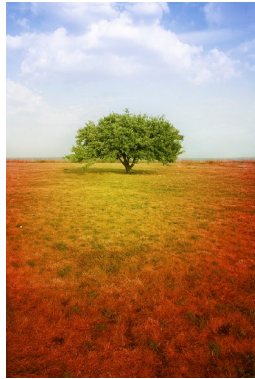
♦ ACES 2007

Columbus, Ohio

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A Fool For Counseling by Lennis G. Echterling, PhD, James Madison University

April Fool's Day is an intriguing holiday tradition. As a naïve child, I would typically fall, year after year, for the same old gags of my playmates, while most of my feeble and obvious attempts to fool someone else would fail. Nevertheless, for some inexplicable reason, I enjoyed the silly revelry. In today's Washington Post, Marc Fisher gave some examples of creative stories that radio announcers have perpetrated on the unsuspecting public in honor of this occasion.



National Public Radio, known for its respected journalism and cultural programming, annually presents on this day one preposterous story. One year, a normally serious reporter, with tongue firmly in cheek, announced that the U. S. Postal Service would now be allowing people who were moving to a new city to take their old zip codes with them. Another time, a commentator claimed that a new software was now available that would translate dog barks into human language. Apparently, many listeners called the stations for information on how they could equip their home computers to engage in meaningful dialogues with their pooches. On a recent April 1, Robert Siegel reported that low carbohydrate diets had led to such a dramatic drop in the demand for syrup that Vermont farmers were no longer tapping the trees for their sap. Consequently, the maple trees throughout the woods were exploding under the unrelieved pressure, causing syrup-covered hikers to run in panic.

As I read the many accounts of April Fool's pranks, I recalled a time in which this day actually played an important part in the healing process. The experience also taught me an important lesson in counseling. One day in March a few years ago,

the principal of a small, private Christian school contacted me to offer some crisis counseling to a group of second graders. One of their fellow classmates had been dealing with cancer throughout the entire academic year. The little boy had endured both chemotherapy and radiation treatment, leaving him weakened, frail and hairless. During these months, he attended school whenever he was able and the other children in his class had been amazingly supportive. They ran to his defense if older children would call him "Baldy." They included him in their games, making special rules to accommodate his fatigue. When the boy was unable to attend school on the day of their Christmas party, the other children saved treats for him and made cards to be taken to his home.

Before I met with the second graders that spring day, the principal told me that the prognosis looked grim for the boy. He had not responded well to treatment, his health was deteriorating rapidly, and he may have only a few months to live. As I joined the circle of young and lively children, I wondered if I could be of any help in preparing them for the loss of a comrade. I remembered how shocking and painful it was for me to suffer the loss of a friend and classmate when I was in college. But these were children no older than seven years. They should be learning how to read and solve simple math – not having to sort out such painful lessons of life and death.

However, once we began the group, I immediately sensed their compassion, sensitivity and resilience. They shared how they considered their sick friend to be still a member of their class, even though he hadn't attended in weeks. He was their friend and they *knew* that he would be there if he could. They expressed their concern by drawing

get-well cards for him and told me how they sent messages to him on a tape recorder in the classroom. The children talked about what the teacher had taught them about cancer – how it was not contagious and how their friend was being treated for this serious disease. I realized that these children were doing what they could to offer support, make meaning, express their feelings, and cope with this challenge.

Towards the end of our meeting, an idea occurred to me that, since the date was close to the end of March, the children, as Christians, might use the opportunity of the upcoming Easter holiday to cope with this crisis. Offering once again some special support and comfort to their ill friend could be powerfully therapeutic for them. As I sat there on the floor in a circle with these children, I decided to set the stage by inviting them to describe the creative strategies that they had used at the Christmas party.

After they had told me all about the ways that they had shown their concern and compassion, I said, "You know, boys and girls, there's another special holiday coming up really soon. What holiday is that?" All the children immediately raised their arms to answer this obvious question

I called on the boy to my right. "So, tell us all what that day is."

"April Fool's!" exclaimed the boy. "Yeah, April Fool's!" chimed in all the other children. I could barely hide my surprise. As a middle-aged counselor, it had been many years since that holiday had been a special occasion. But before I could catch my breath, they began to plan how they were going to draw funny cards for their friend, tell stories on the tape recorder about jokes that kids would play on each other, and sing him a Happy April Fool's Day song. They were coping in a way that was meaningful and relevant to them.

A Fool For Counseling *continued from p. 2*

stories on the tape recorder about jokes that kids would play on each other, and sing him a Happy April Fool's Day song. They were coping in a way that was meaningful and relevant to them.

The children followed through on these ideas, as well as others as the day approached. They were delighted when they learned how their stricken friend had laughed when he heard their stories and had enjoyed having their cards. A month later, their friend died. The children then supported and comforted one

another as they dealt with their loss with the same compassion and creativity that they had shown in their playful celebrations of special days.

My lesson for that April Fool's Day was that, as a counselor, I am never the all-knowing expert on other people's crises, the wise sage dispensing advice. If I believe in that misguided myth, then I'm the biggest fool of all. Instead, my role is to be fully present in an authentic encounter in which others can explore their own resilience and dis-

Dr. Etcherling is the Webmaster for VACES

cover their unique paths towards meaningful resolutions. Being a fool for counseling involves taking the stance of not knowing and reaching out to truly listen, empathically understand, and genuinely validate our clients. From that humble position, we can appreciate the resourcefulness of our clients as they explore ways to survive crises so that they can go on to thrive in their lives.

VACES Graduate Report *by Amanda Flora, University of Virginia*

We are proud to announce that the 8th Annual Virginia Counseling Graduate Student Conference sponsored by VACES at the College of William and Mary in February was a great success! Thanks to the tireless efforts of Shannon Trice-Black and Kathleen May, Conference Co-Chairs, and many volunteers students and faculty from all over the Commonwealth had the opportunity to join together to share and learn about current issues in counseling. Highlights of the day reflected in participant feedback were having



Amanda Flora
VACES Graduate Student Liaison

the chance to spend time with colleagues, attending a well-organized and convenient event, finding the work of students interesting and impressive, and appreciating the addition of poster sessions this year.. Additional comments included "this was so convenient" and "things were well-organized."

Raffle drawings added some lunchtime excitement! VCA, VSCA, and ACA generously donated memberships, conference registrations, and signature additional items. Additionally, Shannon Trice-Black reminded all

of us it is time to "Start It Up!" Each student was provided a symbolic start up packet, prepared by Shannon, as a reminder to remain active and advocate the future of counseling.

In addition to the presentation, two VACES members received the first ever VACES Graduate Student Research Grants. Dr. Gerard Lawson presented Richard "Charlie" Fawcett of the University of Virginia and Jennifer L. Keith of Lynchburg College. We congratulate them and all of the participants who made the conference such a success!

Summer Sabbatical *continued from p. 1*

If we did – what would it look like?

Theoretically we understand the need to slow down and relax when we have a break but how many of us are intentional about pausing the pace of life in order to manage our stress and truly take care of ourselves? What if we set aside the 100+ reasons that get in the way of putting our feet up and said – just for a short season – we were going to become experts at recreation?

If you feel up for the challenge here are three quick tips to help you get started. Soon, if you practice hard enough, you will be adding your own 'relaxation exercise' to the list:

- Take a vacation from technology – even if it is for a few days
- Clean out the clutter in your mind – do your closets too (if you want)

- Spend time doing nothing – yes absolutely nothing - just for twenty minutes and see where it takes you...

Hopefully by implementing these simple steps we will be ready and re-charged for what lies ahead in the fall.



Joyce Wagner
Doctoral Student in CES

Thoughts From The President *Continued from p. 1*



their tireless efforts in promoting our agenda and serving our members. And the frustrations around not offering “more” disappear when I

think of our multiple identities and multiple commitments. So my sin-

cerest thanks to all for whom you are and what you do.

My optimism for the future of VACES doesn't diminish the bitter-sweet feelings that come with endings. VACES has been my home since becoming a counselor educator more than 15 years ago. I will miss the friendships and inspiration that VACES always offered. And yet, I smile and know it is time for me to move on and make room for those coming behind me to step up. We have an astonishing number of talented supervisors and counselor educators in the Commonwealth. I

wish them and VACES the very best as they chart our future and continue to work for a more just profession and society for all. Thanks to all for an amazing journey.

Kathleen



The Perils Of School Counselor Supervision

by Suzanne Waterstruss-Salisbury, PhD

School counselors are under stress to deal with increasingly complex situations, yet often receive little to no clinical supervision. Unlike clinical counselors, school counselors often are unable to find supervision which allows them to continue growing and developing their skills. Indeed, for many or even most school counselors, the most recent training they have received related to the field of counseling may have been found in graduate school. Supervision provides the dual role of simultaneously increasing counselor competence while decreasing rates of burnout (Herlihy, Gray, & McCollum, 2002). A common misperception may be that school counselors unlike their clinical counterparts do not need supervision, and the problem is further exacerbated by the delegation of non-counseling related duties which are given to counselors, which further decreases the counselor's sense of professional identity (Herlihy, Gray, and McCollum, 2001). Some have argued that school counselors may not desire

supervision and would see it as an additional duty, while other researchers note the lack of adequately trained counselor supervisors (Herlihy, Gray, & McCollum, 2002).

While most school counselors are not receiving clinical supervision, many have expressed a desire to receive clinical supervision to improve their skills (Page, Pietrzak, and Sutton, 2001). While individual supervision is not feasible because of budgetary or time constraints, peer groups can offer potential solutions to the crisis in supervision (Crutchfield & Borders, 1997). Research supports the potential for counselor growth and supervision support through the peer group supervision models (Agnew, Vaught, Getz, and Fortune, 2000; Crutchfield & Borders, 1997). Proper training can teach counselors how to provide support to each other in a manner that allows them to manage the stress of their work while insuring that they are maintaining standards of care that are appropriate. Partnerships between universities and school systems provide another

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alternative option for supervision services for school counselors. If universities collaborate with practicing school counselors and provide training opportunities that enhance the growth and development of school counselors, then this is mutually beneficial as those same counselors often end up supervising the university's student interns. Creative thinking and innovative strategies can provide some practical support to school counselors, which will enhance the profession of counseling overall.

As an experienced school counselor, here are some helpful tips that might assist other school counselors as they face the challenging demands of the school setting:

1. **Consult, Consult, and Consult:** Never be afraid to ask for help.

Perils of School Counselor Supervision *continued from p. 4*

Asking for help is often the sign of a mature school counselor.

2. **Communication:** Maintain open communication with your building administrator. Remember that what occurs in your building is ultimately their responsibility and you need to be respectful of that.

3. **Continuing Education:** It is your professional and ethical responsibility to update your knowledge, ability, and skills as a school counselor. Attending local, regional, and national school counselor conferences can help you network with other school counselors in your area and around the country.

4. **Self-Care:** You have to take care of yourself. This can involve exercising, playing an instrument, being with friends and family, or taking time in the great weather to go for a walk outside. You need to create a healthy balance with work,

school, family, friends, and leisure.

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ACES 2007 CONFERENCE *Vanguards for Change: ACES and Social Justice*

Columbus, Ohio

Mark Your Calendar for October 10-14, 2007

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VACES MISSION
Fostering the growth,
development and competence
of counselor educators,
supervisors, and students
across the Commonwealth



From The Editor's Desk

by Agatha Parks-Savage, EdD, LPC, RN, Regent University

As the editor for the past year, I want to thank everyone who helped me launch the VACES newsletter. I would like to especially recognize my graduate assistant, Justin Dewberry, for his efforts to make the newsletter become a reality. I could have not done this without Justin's support. I know summer break is a time to recharge yourself for the upcoming fall semester and the VACES newsletter is probably the last thing on your mind!!! I do ask that you consider a possible article submission for the fall/winter newsletter. We are always looking for articles related to counselor education, training, and clinical supervision. The deadline to send me potential article publications will no later than October 17, 2007. Getting published in this newsletter will give you the opportunity to impact others in the state of Virginia!



Dr. Agatha Parks-Savage
VACES Newsletter Editor

Roll Call by Charlie Fawcett, University of Virginia

We want to hear from you!

The VACES Membership Committee is working toward employing a survey for Virginia Counselors to better understand how our organization can serve them. Items of interest may include:

- supervision training,
- ethics CEUs,
- workshops on additional specific topics,
- an electronic bulletin board,
- posting a list of approved supervisors

If you have additional items that should be included in the survey, please contact Charlie Fawcett at charlief@virginia.edu. We look forward to your input in how VACES can better serve you and our community.



Charlie Fawcett
VACES Membership
Development Chair