

MSPPP *rapport*

DECEMBER 2003

President's Message

In the life of an institution there are a number of key events. This September, MSPP had such an occasion with the inauguration of its second president. While this day is a special one for the person who holds an office, the fact that it occurs has most to do with the work of others, while carrying implications for higher education, mental health practice and social policy.

The inauguration provided an occasion to thank the founders of our school, who labored to create the novel program; those early graduates who risked their professional reputation to give MSPP life; Dr. Bruce Weiss who served for nearly 30 years as program director, dean and president; and Dr. Ethel Magidson and a dedicated group of faculty, administrators and staff who generously gave their time and talent to train several generations of professional psychologists. The story of the birth of MSPP is pictorially displayed in the lobby of our school, but the energy, devotion and spirit of the institution is contained in the people, relationships and stories of these dedicated women and men.

A professional school is less occupied with the discovery of new psychological knowledge than with the application of what is known. The inauguration offered an opportunity to review how much is known about the nature and treatment of depression; the prevalence of mental health problems presenting to medical practitioners; the incidence of bullying and violence with its disproportionate and tragic impact on the African-American community; and the normality of homosexuality. Yet, in spite of scientific discoveries with significant findings, a great deal of what is known has failed to be applied to meet the needs of individuals, communities and organizations.



Sharing a light Inaugural moment.

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Spirituality Enhances Relaxation Response

Says Mind/Body Pioneer Herb Benson

Focusing on a spiritual idea, word or relationship during meditation enhances the impact of “the relaxation response”, according to Herbert Benson, MD, a cardiologist and pioneer in the field of mind/body medicine. Benson recently discussed his work and current thinking at the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology.



Herb Benson

Benson, the director of the Mind/Body Medical Institute in Chestnut Hill and an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, presented “Emerging Issues of Mind and Spirituality” to an audience of more than 100 students, faculty, alumni, friends and members of the general public. The event launched the school’s new forum on Psychology and Spirituality, an initiative designed to explore and appreciate the importance of spirituality and religion in human life and in the healing process.

Renowned for his insights into the power of what he has named “the relaxation response” and for his best-selling books and numerous scientific publications, Benson has, in recent years, become interested in the relationship of spirituality and faith to health and healing. Spiritual practices, Benson told his MSPP audience, share many of the attributes of the relaxation response. And, he added that recent research at the Mind/Body Medical Institute indicates that belief in a spiritual being or connection to that being can intensify the effects of the relaxation response.

The relaxation response occurs when a person engages in a repetitive prayer, word, sound or phrase and at the same time gently dismisses intrusive thoughts. Benson’s landmark research on the relaxation response showed that these types of activities result in decreased metabolism, heart rate, rate of breathing and slower brain waves.

Benson coined the phrase “relaxation response” because these physiologic changes are the opposite of those induced by stress, and this widely used

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Center for Mental Health and Aging Opens at MSPP

Spurred by her passionate commitment to the psychology of aging, Erlene Rosowsky, PsyD, has taken on the leadership of the newly formed Center for Mental Health and Aging.

A field placement in geropsychology has been created and has already "placed" one student, with possibly more students and additional practica and internships in the coming years.

In addition, a Mental Health and Aging Track within the Continuing Education Program at MSPP has been developed, offering a range of gerontology courses and workshops. A fourth annual gerontology conference, in conjunction with the Health Psychology Institute, is planned for May 14, 2004. Stellar speakers have been invited to present on themes and challenges of doing psychotherapy with older adults. The conference is suitable for all mental health disciplines and offers continuing education credits.

Optimistic on the issue of aging, Rosowsky excitedly speaks of professionals being "hooked" on the psychology of aging once introduced to it. "It's terrifically rewarding," she says, adding, "you learn how to age better yourself, and intellectually it's a fabulous field because it draws from so many disciplines."

Community outreach is an important facet of the center, and following Rosowsky's lead, MSPP intends to offer programs on aging to the community. For example, fire and police, emergency medical personnel and other first responders might be invited to a program designed to assist them in identifying elders at risk because of dementia.

The daughter of a Boston centenarian father who lived until nearly 103 years of age, Rosowsky divides her time between clinical practice with Needham Psychotherapy Associates, and professional and community education. A faculty member at MSPP, Rosowsky is also an assistant clinical professor in psychology in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. She is a specialist in aging disorders with a major research interest in personality and old age. A prolific writer, Rosowsky is currently publishing her second book on this topic, serves on the editorial board of *Generations*, and writes a regular column, "Speaking of Aging", for the *Journal of Retirement Planning*.

For further information, please contact erosowsky@mspp.edu. ▶

More than 100 Participate in Second Annual Lucero Memorial 5K Run/Walk

Cold weather didn't dampen the enthusiasm of more than 100 runners and walkers who participated in MSPP's Second Annual Dr. Cynthia Lucero Memorial 5K Run and Walk on November 9.

Commemorating the life and ideals of the school's extraordinary student, the late Dr. Cynthia Lucero, the event encompassed a five-kilometer (3.1 mile) run/walk through nearby Millennium Park, music, an awards presentation, a raffle and a hearty pasta luncheon for all participants.

Dr. Cynthia Lucero had just completed all her doctoral work and was a few weeks shy of MSPP's commencement when she collapsed during the Boston Marathon in 2002. She died several days later of hyponatremic encephalopathy, a condition where excessive fluid intake reduces blood sodium levels and results in fatal brain swelling.

Lucero's sudden death rocked the MSPP and Massachusetts psychological communities. She is remembered to this day as an energetic, high-achieving professional who cared deeply about her patients and her community.

The Lucero Memorial Run and Walk was carefully designed to honor the missions and organizations Lucero valued. More than \$14,000 was generated from the event, including a very generous donation of \$10,000 from McNeil Specialty and Consumer Pharmaceuticals. All proceeds benefit MSPP's Dr. Cynthia Lucero Center for Health Psychology, which includes a special springtime lecture in her name. With this recent gift, MSPP will also be able to award the first Dr. Cynthia Lucero Scholarship next fall. The creation of this scholarship was the most rapid in the school's history and owes special thanks to Cynthia's sister (Dr. Alex Stirling), Rick and Lori Muhr and the team of MSPP students,

staff, runners and supporters who are the Friends of Cynthia Lucero. (The next issue of *Rapport* will include details on the spring lecture.)

Lucero had an acute appreciation of the psychological impact of cancer on its victims and their families, and she used her dissertation as an opportunity to examine how marathons can facilitate the grieving process for runners who have lost loved ones to cancer. In addition, Lucero used her marathon running skills to raise money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. As a tribute to her fight against cancer, information about the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society was available at the event.

Lucero also strongly supported organ donation, and after her death, her parents made sure her wishes in this matter were fulfilled. To help spread the word about the importance of organ donation, a representative of the New England Organ Bank spoke at the awards ceremony.

The Second Annual Lucero Memorial Run and Walk was the culmination of weeks of volunteer work by MSPP students, staff, alumnae and friends. MSPP is proud that Dr. Cynthia Lucero's mother, sister and running coach were able to attend. Overall winner in the men's division was Joe Heaney of Arlington, and the overall women's winner was Julie Donohoe of West Roxbury. Top men's MSPP finisher was second-year student Rowell Levy, and the top women's MSPP finisher was first-year student Jennifer Gentile. The run was covered by Boston television stations Channel 5 and Channel 25.

MSPP extends special thanks to all who helped plan and organize the event. MSPP also thanks Marathon Sports for providing event supplies, and WROR Radio and West Roxbury Home Depot for their event donations. ▶

At West Roxbury High School, MSPP Students Provide Vital Care to Adolescents in Need



January marks the first anniversary of MSPP's Community Service Training Program at West Roxbury High School, a unique and ambitious initiative that provides much-needed psychological support to adolescents while

training MSPP interns. Working under the close supervision of school guidance counselors and MSPP faculty member/training site director Robert Dingman, EdD, the seven MSPP interns at West Roxbury High each carry a workload of approximately seven cases. The high school is one of three new MSPP community-training sites launched in the Boston area over the past year.

Deborah Merriam, EdD, is one of the West Roxbury High School guidance counselors overseeing the MSPP students. A school psychologist and a member of the West Roxbury staff since 1980, Merriam is well versed in the difficult issues confronting high school students and sees first hand how the MSPP interns are helping these adolescents in need. "How are they doing? The MSPP students are amazing," she says. "They have strong skills and incredible natural talent. They demonstrate appropriate empathy when working with the youngsters and work very well with the parents too. We see their successes here every day. I walk down the hall and see a student smiling, who before counseling, was always sad. Students who were performing poorly before are now doing better."

Like other MSPP field placements, the West Roxbury students are carefully matched to their assignments according to skills and interests. The group working at the high school consists of first- and second-year students who tackle a range of counseling issues – depression, punctuality and social and academic adjustment.

The need for these types of services at the 1,320-student West Roxbury High is enormous. The high school has many inner city students who come from homes of limited economic means and have endured many hardships. In addition, the school has a high turnover rate, the result, says Merriam, of students changing schools mid-year because of disruptions at home, parents' job loss, or the death of a parent.

The school's combined guidance counseling and student support programs assists hundreds of youngsters annually and having an extra seven professionals to help is a great benefit. Says Merriam, "This program is absolutely helping us. The MSPP interns are giving one-on-one counseling to kids who otherwise wouldn't receive it."

One of the MSPP interns, first-year student David Stein, says the placement is fulfilling because it provides him with the opportunity to help adolescents who are struggling with tough life issues. "I see a lot of great kids dealing with dire poverty, violence, sex, drugs and all sorts of problems at home. I'm working with one student now who has many different challenges and it's wonderful to watch him making big strides. What's even more fulfilling is how appreciative students are of the help."

Second-year MSPP intern Angela Forsberg tells a similar story. "Many of the adjustment issues have such heart-breaking stories behind them I forget I'm working with a 14- or 15-year-old. I work with a lot of depressed and anxious students who are dealing with a host of cultural and environmental stressors. They are very grateful for the help, though, and it is amazing the positive reaction you'll get from them."

Dingman describes the program as very successful and a wonderful "win-win situation." He points out that the work of the students as well as his work (which includes consultations to the high school's faculty) are provided at no charge to West Roxbury High. In addition, he says, MSPP students are gaining strong basic counseling skills.

At the West Roxbury High School, faculty and administrators enthusiastically support the efforts of their seven MSPP interns. Says Don Pellegrini, the school's Headmaster, "The MSPP interns are great people, helpful and positive. They provide a wonderful opportunity for our students, who are very needy, to communicate with adults in a positive and constructive manner."

The West Roxbury High School program and other components of MSPP's Community Service and Training Program have been made possible by generous gifts from a few major donors to MSPP.

If you are interested in supporting this program or other similar programs for communities of need, please contact Martin Tannenbaum at mtannenbaum@mspp.edu.

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We know that 75 percent of those who seek treatment for anxiety and depression turn to their primary care providers and not to mental health providers. We know that an African-American male has the same probability of death by violence as a Vietnam-era soldier, yet there are few violence prevention and treatment programs available. We read daily of pronouncements from politicians and church leaders whose prejudices preclude them from integrating psychological research to create what is politically and ethically right for gay and lesbian persons; and the Surgeon General declares:

"there is a dearth of child psychiatrists, appropriately trained child psychologists and social workers.

In many respects, the need for trained professionals to provide mental health services for individuals, communities and organizations is as acute as when the school began in 1974. MSPP will continue to provide innovative, attentive, culturally sensitive, community focused training in its various degree and specialty training programs. We have experienced a "New Beginning", but what has been well-formed will continue to grow and develop. 📌

Nicholas A. Covino, President

Interest in Unique Organizational Consulting Program Continues to Exceed Expectations

In November, MSPP's newly established Institute for Organizational Consulting Psychology offered a highly successful seminar examining the organizational consultant's role as an agent for change. With nearly 70 psychologists and other mental health professionals attending, interest far exceeded expectations, says Gerard Donnellan, PhD, the Institute's director.

Blending a case presentation with small group analysis, "The Organization Consultant As Change Agent: What We Imagine and What Is Real," gave participants the rare opportunity to discuss real-world issues for a Boston-area company. Says Donnellan, "Two human resource professionals from a mid-sized corporation presented their organizational challenges. During the workshop, participants interviewed the HR representatives to gain further information on the company's issues, and – under the direction of the panelists, Jerome Abarbanel, PhD; Joseph Raelin, PhD; and Susan Wheelan, PhD – to assess possible approaches to the firm's morale and communication problems."

According to Donnellan, organizational consulting has struck a chord with today's psychologist and the seminar's success is yet another reflection of interest in the burgeoning field. "We assured attendees that many may already possess some of the skills necessary to function as an organizational consultant," he adds. "This program is an excellent way for psychologists, social workers, counselors and psychiatrists to develop the additional consulting skills and competencies for the organizational setting."

MSPP's Institute for Organizational Consulting Psychology (OCP) is distinguished as the sole educational program of its type in New England. It offers three certificate programs: The Respecialization Certificate in OCP for Doctoral Psychologists, the Certificate in

Internal Consulting for Human Resource Professionals and the Certificate in OCP Consulting for Consultants. The program has grown under the guidance of the Steering Committee: Lew Stern, PhD; Jennifer Ash, PhD; and Michael Madera, PsyD, MSPP alum. The program has attracted an exceptional faculty and a roster of nationally renowned senior advisors, including Harry Levinson, PhD, of the world-renowned Levinson Institute; Diane Coutu, MA, senior editor of the Harvard Business Review; James Hunt, DBA, of Babson College; MSPP alum Christopher Newell, PsyD, senior vice president at Parametric Technology Corporation; and Joseph Raelin, PhD, leader of Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Practice-Oriented Education.

Upcoming spring courses include Introduction to OCP, How Businesses Work, Interpersonal and Group Dynamics in Organizations and Organizations: Strategies, Structures and Management. To learn more please visit the website: www.mspp.edu/ocp or call Dr Donnellan at (617) 327-6777, x 244. ▶



Presenters for MSPP's November seminar in organizational consulting. From left: Joseph Raelin, Susan Wheelan, seminar moderator Gerry Donnellan, and Jerome Abarbanel.

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technique has been demonstrated to be an effective therapy for a number of diseases, ranging from hypertension to chronic pain.

During his talk at MSPP, Benson also discussed the importance of forgiveness within the realm of spirituality and health. Guilt and resentment can exacerbate health problems, he said, adding that studies now indicate that the act of forgiveness can result in less anxiety, less depression, and increased self-esteem. Like spirituality in general, forgiveness elicits the relaxation response and its associated benefits.

The MSPP audience then had the opportunity to experience first hand the feeling of well being evoked by the relaxation response, as Benson led a guided meditation exercise for attendees.

Following Benson's remarks was a panel discussion moderated by Paul Lipsitt, PhD, of the school's board of trustees. Panelists included MSPP President Nicholas Covino, PsyD; MSPP faculty member Hilary Bender, PhD; and MSPP doctoral student Rev. Natalie Wimberly.

A true medical visionary, Benson has written and co-authored more than 170 scientific publications and eight books, including the 1975 bestseller, "The Relaxation Response," and this year's highly acclaimed "The Breakout Principle."

MSPP will sponsor programs in psychology and spirituality each semester. For further information, contact Dean Abby at dabby@mspp.edu. ▶