

## President's Column

### Volunteerism

Gail Karafin  
President, PSCP

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “volunteerism” as the “act or practice of doing volunteer work in community service.” It refers to persons who “voluntarily undertake or express a willingness to undertake a service, render a service, or take part in a transaction while having no legal concern or interest.” What a wonderful concept. Lifetime achievements are built on the altruism and good will of the donors.

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Volunteerism is a win-win concept. It serves to provide the charity to

assist others in times of need or to provide advocacy for the underserved or under-voiced peoples; volunteerism provides a special gift to the recipients. Less attention is given to the benefits of volunteering to the giver. Those who are frequent volunteers experience the intrinsic rewards of their service. This article wants to address those intrinsic rewards.

(cont. on pg. 2)



## Public Policy Update

Julie Meranze Levitt,  
PSCP Public Policy Chair

### Next Steps for Us in a Complicated and Fast-Moving World

I am writing this column because I think it is important to keep thinking and acting in ways that demonstrate our responsibilities as psychologists and mental health professionals to our clients and the public. These responsibilities may include recognizing and responding to topics and

positions that as psychologists, we may have avoided because we believe them too partisan or ones that may besmirch our public images. We need to reexamine our concerns about a stance of neutrality, taken because we believe we need to remain above the fray of public policy discourse. In recent editorials and articles, I have seen a tendency for those in our profession to act in one of two ways: to lash out with heavy duty rhetoric against what others say or to play down differences in political messages because we do not want to alienate and attract public attention.

What I propose to do here is to address how our skills as psychologists make for useful contributions to public discourse and positive change. We can have discussions about responsible journalism and discourses in general intended for professional audiences and the public, or work with law makers and policy setters.

(cont. on pg. 2)

## (Volunteerism, cont.)

Psychologists tend to be nurturers by nature. We entered the profession and spent many years and many dollars for a goal to help others improve their lives and reduce their inner pains. Our satisfactions are partly based on making a difference in others' lives. Volunteering our efforts, whether by donations of material items or by donations of labor, enlarges the ways we can help. Volunteering service to others enhances one's life in the most meaningful ways.

Volunteerism has added benefits that fulfill the Maslow (1943) hierarchy of needs in our lives. Once we establish our basic physiological and safety needs, we are ready to explore our interests and passions to increase the meaning and value and validations in our life. Volunteerism serves to enhance our social needs for belongingness and friendship. We establish a network of colleagues to pursue our goals and validate our purpose. Volunteerism also serves

to enhance our self-esteem. We work together, and in that process we give and receive respect from others as well as develop respect for self. In addition, volunteerism serves to enable personal self-actualization. Our lives are enhanced when we establish goals outside of ourselves, accomplish everything we can do and become the most we can become. Organizational work fulfills all these needs to enhance our own journey in life.

Professional organizations offer a wonderful opportunity to make service to others a commitment in one's life. Individual deeds are geometrically multiplied through organizations larger than ourselves. Individuals are like mere patches in a blanket; when sewn together, they become a beautiful quilt. The dots in an impressionistic painting become a meaningful image when incorporated into a larger picture. Alone we have limited impact; together we can accomplish so much more.

Become leaders in your professional community. Find your passions in life and seek to volunteer in organizations that can help with your mission. Consider the Philadelphia Society of Clinical Psychologists to be a resource for one's self-actualization. PSCP is looking for volunteers to help with its missions: We are dedicated to the practice and science of psychology through service, education, and advocacy.

## References

Maslow, A.H. (1943). "A Theory of Human Motivation." *Psychological Review*. 50(4): 370-96

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## (Public Policy, cont.)

We should not recuse ourselves from entering in the discussions-we are thinkers, problem-solvers, observers, and mediators who are skilled in finding ways to de-escalate conflict and violence by reducing stress, inviting participation and teaching others to listen well, and by offering alternative interpretations and

solutions that help people to think at more complex levels and come to their own conclusions. We also are practitioners who intersect with all kinds of people and are trained in understanding and working with systems—family, community, and governmental ones. Part of our strengths include understanding the circumstances in which people live and make decisions, whether these be single individuals, dyads, families, or communities. In the American Psychological Association Code of Ethics, the preamble addresses basic rights that we in the United States believe are immutable. See <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>, especially General Principle E: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity:

\*Psychologists respect the dignity and worth of all people, and the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination.

\*Psychologists are aware that special safeguards may be necessary to protect the rights and welfare of persons or communities whose

vulnerabilities impair autonomous decision making.

\*Psychologists are aware of and respect cultural, individual and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language and socioeconomic status and consider these factors when working with members of such groups.

\*Psychologists try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on those factors, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone activities of others based upon such prejudices.

So where do we find ourselves when there are situations in which the rights of groups are degraded or denied? Or when environmental and individual basic rights are minimized, whether this circumstance be in our practices with clients or with and by members of our communities or related to other communities not part of our own?

There are several directions in which we can go as professionals and private citizens. We can reinforce actions taken by the American Psychological Association

and the Pennsylvania Psychological Association that support better practices and respect for humankind.

In addition:

\*We can by becoming informed, doing our own book research, and the share our thoughts with our legislators and political leaders.

\*We can agree to testify in legislative investigations, drawing from our own experience as clinicians and practitioners.

\*We can choose to become more knowledgeable in certain areas in which we practice and present continuing education programs and other presentations in which we inform other mental health workers and the public about different and carefully researched information that allows for nuanced and hopefully better treatment approaches.

\*We can interview people who would like to share their stories, stories that exemplify the kinds of conditions that can lead to further underserving and

undermining and those that bring hope by demonstrating that people can survive, even with limited resources.

\*We can march with others and join rallies where issues of concern are being raised.

\*We can open ourselves up to learning about and from others—when we know others, outside the limitations of our own groups, we cannot as easily disregard or discriminate against them because they are different.

\*We can recognize that cruelty toward animals may be associated with incredible rage, violence or depersonalization embedded within the perpetrators. That once we are sensitive to damming effects of hateful interactions, we no longer can abide cruelty on any level.

\*We can persist in being inquisitive rather than closed to new ideas, dialoguing, listening well and remaining open to alternative ways of problem-solving. We also can be open to sharing our own vulnerabilities and

limitations with trusted others and make working with on these parts of selves to become better people. We can choose to continue engaging in peaceful ways and to find new ways to interact with others that build stronger and positive connections.

\*We can build on the imperative of humility and not see ourselves as privileged, exceptional, and apart from other people who are never-the-less part of the human family.

In this world, today, it is easy to stay in small silos, far removed from the cacophony of voices representing disparate ways to solve the enormous problems of a country as big, populous and diverse as ours. But we instead can identify a niche where we can work for the betterment of humankind aside within and beyond our offices. This is part of our professional obligation and we stand on the shoulders of many psychologists who have come before us. Remember, among us are many, including William

James who was considered the father of peace psychology, Mamie and Kenneth Clark who produced evidence that determined the outcome of *Browne vs. 1954 Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, and Sigmund Freud, who advanced the theoretical constructs of emotions and the human condition.

Please join me in identifying how we may contribute to the needs of humankind at a time when there is such polarization and when degrading of others have become more visible. I am reachable at [julie.levitt@verizon.net](mailto:julie.levitt@verizon.net).



## **Trauma and Resilience: A review of the film 'Lion'.**

*Karyn Scher, Ph.D*

From a psychologist's perspective, the depiction of post-traumatic stress disorder in film has come a long way. From Hitchcockian melodrama in *Marnie*, where sexual abuse was repressed and caused cliched sexual "frigidity," to Manchester-by-the-Sea's Casey

Affleck's pitch perfect character study of adult anger as redirected self-hate and shame for past transgressions, two hour movies attempt to tell stories of lifetimes of actual loss, followed by psychological torment, and in the best case scenarios, followed by healing.

These themes were poignantly illustrated in the film Lion, based on a true story of devastating loss in 1980's India, where conditions of poverty contributed to the unintentional separation of five-year-old Saroo from his cherished older brother Guddhu, his beloved mother, and younger sister. We follow the endearing Saroo as a train carries him 1600 kilometers from his home setting with no known address, no known surnames, and no known roadmarks, to the social isolation of the crowded, bustling city of Calcutta, into a makeshift orphanage where other lost and traumatized children seem to be warehoused. Saroo demonstrates some natural resilience—he is interpersonally appealing enough to some adults to enlist their support, although not all are benevolent. He is also quite a runner, a skill he

learned from his wily older brother, as they roamed their village streets for petty cash and, significantly, watermelons, hitching rides on trains and eluding rather primitive law enforcement. His coping mechanisms are contrasted with peers lacking in such sturdiness, as we watch a school mate react to limits being set with severe self-injurious behavior, making the audience wonder about this child's possible exposure to overtly abusive treatment.

As if 1600 kilometers were not an insurmountable distance to overcome to find his family of origin, Saroo's fate takes him all the way to the island of Tasmania, off the coast of Australia, where a childless, but affluent couple are ready to adopt him and create a complete family. Saroo speaks no English and the couple speaks no Hindi or Bengali, so communication as well as a vast cultural divide create another major impasse to overcome. We learn later in the film that childhood trauma was not confined to poverty stricken third-world countries like India; wealthy caucasians like Saroo's adoptive mother, played poignantly by Nicole Kidman, also

understand trauma from personal experience, and choose a healing, resilient, human-service path to recovery.

The audience only glimpses the unfolding of Saroo's later childhood and adolescent development through the device of photographs, and we meet Saroo again twenty years later, played by the dashing and talented Dev Patel. He pursues work in the hospitality industry, makes age appropriate friends and a girlfriend, played charmingly by Rooney Mara, and seems more culturally aligned with his Australian adoptive parents than with his Indian roots, until a friend piques his curiosity about his family with exhortations to use the internet to trace his heritage. The movie effectively reveals Saroo's initial ego-syntonic denial about his past giving way to deeper questions, and later obsessions, about his true identity and background, with episodic flashbacks breaking through his veneer of professed loyalty toward the parents who raised him in affluence. In this segment of the film, we empathize with Saroo's anguish over his early losses as he becomes

unmoored from the safe adoptive family setting which grounded him through his childhood and adolescence. Thus, even a sturdy soul like Saroo suffers deeply from separation and loss, and he identifies with fellow orphans who engage in more destructive behavior and emotional patterns.

According to the American Psychological Association, resilience is defined as “the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors. It means “bouncing back” from difficult experiences.” Lion teaches us the lessons of resilience by visually illustrating the true story of an earnest soul adapting in the face of adversity. While a two hour film may make it seem as if Saroo was “bouncing back,” the power of this tale was in slowly allowing Saroo’s problem solving to unfold, showing his setbacks and periods of self-induced suffering and alienation, his seeking of interpersonal support, his amends for intolerance or rejecting behavior, and his persistence pursuing the obscure needles in the

geographical haystacks of his mother country.

This film is instructive for all age levels, offering much to discuss in families, in schools, and in our psychotherapy sessions!

Note:<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx>



## Creating your Legacy Now and in the Future

*Marcy Shoemaker, Psy.D*  
*PSCP Board of Directors*

In our society, we often believe that only famous people who create inventions, run large companies or are stars can make an impact in the world and leave a lasting legacy. It is understandable that many people share this belief because we usually learn about famous people in school and from various forms of media. But challenge this by thinking about the people who have touched your world and made a lasting impression;

most of them are probably not famous. Creating a legacy does not have to deal only with what you leave behind, but also involves what impact you make in the lives of people close to you and on organizations and charities that are important to you.

Usually, everyday people don’t think about how they can create a legacy. We may not even know that we have made a difference in someone else’s life or believe that we can make a contribution to the world. However, throughout history there are people who have made major impacts that are not remembered or studied in schools. Sometimes we learn about them by chance. We can also think about people in our lives who have affected our beliefs or overall feelings about ourselves.

We can start shaping our own legacy by first learning about people who changed the world because they believed strongly in their convictions and not to be famous or gain recognition. It is surprising to learn about

individuals who made instrumental changes in society and are not widely known or studied today. It is difficult not to hear about the current presidential race without it being noted that Hilary Clinton may change history by being the first female president. But we forget about Edith Wilson who was known as the “secret president” when her husband, President Woodrow Wilson, suffered a disabling stroke. We don’t learn about Grace Aguilar, who during her short life wrote twice as many books as Jane Austen, from popular historical romances to an introduction to Judaism that was used by both churches and synagogues. Also, during the ongoing debate about national healthcare, we forget about Lillian D. Wald who encouraged the concept of national healthcare while starting the Visiting Nurse Service of New York and helping to found the National Association of Colored People (NAACP).

While thinking about the direction of your legacy, it is helpful to think about

everyday people who made a difference in your life. Speaker and writer Amy Hirschberg Lederman speaks about her grandmother, who through her unconditional love was able to convince all of her grandchildren that they were her favorite. She also tells how her grandmother, as a symbol of her legacy as a dedicated mother, wife and grandmother, gave her the family’s Shabbat candlesticks brought from Russia in the short story “My Grandmother’s Candlesticks.” Grandparents, like my own grandmother, can make a major impact on your life through their unconditional love and support.

Now think about creating your own legacy. This is an ongoing process and does not need to wait until your senior years. Maybe your legacy involves contributing to a charity or helping others, either financially or with your time. You can help ensure that this cause will endure into the future through your commitment and by letting others know about

your passion. If you’re unsure of where to start, write down a few things that are important to you. Maybe your list includes spending time with a friend or family member or committing to help a neighbor in need with daily tasks.

Creating a legacy does not only involve helping others. Writing or recording stories about the past is part of creating a legacy. Another way to create a legacy is to share recipes that will be used for holidays now and in the future. The possibilities are endless! Remember “to make a difference in someone’s life, you don’t have to be brilliant, rich, beautiful or perfect. You just have to care enough and be there.” You may be surprised how everyday things that you consider inconsequential may make a lasting impact on someone else and contribute to your legacy.



## **Starting and Maintaining a Men's Psychotherapy/ Support Group**

*Harry Orenstein, Ph.D*

I have been co-leading men's groups for more than 25 years, always with a close friend/ colleague who makes the experience much more meaningful for me and more engaging for the participants. There have been two co-leaders during running of men's groups. During the last six years, I have worked with Bill Procyson, who is engaged in local politics and a caring soul and devoted father. We have known one another for many years, starting with our long employments at Montgomery County Intermediate Unit. Since beginning to work together as, co-therapist we have grown into a partnership, and have become close friends. Interestingly, and significantly, we have complementary strengths. Bill is a former special education teacher, as well as psychotherapist, who has an incredible memory for detail and is strong in establishing structure. I, on the other hand, am somewhat more creative

and more focused on the search for underlying meaning. At this point, we come to the aid of the other easily when needed. Prior to working with Bill, my co-therapist was Phil Turner, another friend. When he left Philadelphia to move to Vermont, he left an enormous void. Starting a Group and Introducing the Men to One Another In 2012, Bill and I started a second group. (We now have two groups, which meet weekly and for 90 minutes each.) In beginning the second group, we were fortunate to find two men to serve as an "initial core", as we recruited several others over the first six months. Only two of the "others" stayed for any length of time. The group is now in its fifth year and has grown to eight regular members. There is a broad range of ages and it is clearly multigenerational (70 to 32). Many of the group members live in the same general vicinity, having also grown up in the Norristown/Plymouth area. This allows a shared sense of common life experience. The members who did not grow up in the

identified "neighborhood" share their own early experiences. Nostalgia is a theme some evenings. Several of the members were (and are) private practice clients. We have found that the men articulate that they want more friendships, "a club to join", and have few, if any, males with whom they share their difficulties. Still, they generally aren't comfortable expressing feelings when they first join. With prompting, they come to open up within a couple of months. Overall, we are careful to avoid superficial talk, including early in sessions, and direct conversation to look at personal experience. Humor is a significant part of group conversation and enjoyment in being together is apparent. I tend to make jokes and I get graded by one of the guys as to how funny I am. He and I form a subgroup since both of us come from New York and do not fit the Norristown connection. The group has taken on its own personality. A playful tone has grown and there is obvious concern about



how one another is doing. Their caring for one another has been impressive.. (e.g. one of the men in the group was in a competition and another one attended and videotaped his portion for the rest of us to see.). I find their comments to be insightful and they sometimes understand issues better than I do. I enjoy learning as I listen. Still there is lapsing into “reflexive” problem solving (the male thing) . We try to remind the men that the important task is to hold feedback until they are sure that speaker is “done”. This is one area that Bill and I have a definite role. Attendance has been consistent and if someone is missing there is interest in why the man is out. The men are usually conscientious in informing either Bill or myself when they miss. Maintaining The Group The general goal for the group (s) is to help one another get through “tricky” situations. We are in it together and have melded into a “family of men”. As part of this, men’s issues are addressed, both directly and indirectly. How is the

man’s experience different? Women do not have as much difficulty in sharing problems and listening to one another. The feedback we have received from the guys when they discuss why they come, universally pertains to the “one place” where they can really open up. While the emphasis is not specifically on disclosing “secrets”, the purpose of group is to look at personal information not often, if ever, shared. As in all group psychotherapies, the climate and context needs to be right to do this. Trust as an element of group is crucial and confidentiality is stressed. Things get stale and repetitive at times, but this does not seem to last long. Someone almost always comes in with a problem/ crisis which refocuses and reenergizes the group. At least a couple of times a year we have outings to a restaurant or to one of the men’s houses. The outings are almost always a “hit” and allow us to be together in a new setting and to put the emphasis on having fun. The first group I developed was started in 1993 in

conjunction with Phil Turner, and three of the members have “stayed” since the early days. We have nine in total. We recently added a new member, but prior to this had not added anyone in at least three years. The group members have been together for many years and are privy to all the ins and outs in one another’s lives. One recent problem is that three of the men are missing a good deal because they travel or have work related pressures. This detracts from sustaining cohesion. We have not found a solution to the problem although adding another man might be useful. There are nights when only five or six attend. Also some of the members live 45 minutes to an hour away which makes attending less convenient. Despite this, the group delves into relationship issues with regularity and shares a sense of camaraderie. The group has done well over the years and has had many compositions. In summary running the men’s groups has stuck out as invigorating and

worthwhile in my professional life. I look forward to the meetings and find I almost always am energized. At times I make personal disclosures but am careful not to become a member. For many of the members, group psychotherapy appears to have promoted as much, if not more, growth than individual therapy. Men who saw us individually often see us much less, or not at all, and rely on the group as a place to get help with problems.. This is extremely satisfying for me and reinforces the value of running men's groups.



## Member Spotlight

*Julia Mayer, Psy.D*

This quarter's Member Spotlight focuses on new PSCP member, Jaime Friedman, Psy.D. She opened her private practice this past summer in Huntingdon Valley, PA. She's a PA licensed psychologist and a certified school psychologist, providing

psycho-educational and psychological testing. She also provides counseling services to children, adolescents and adults with a focus on the treatment of anxiety.

Building her new practice is the ideal arrangement for this mom of twin one year old boys. She's at that point in her career when she can flexibly choose the kind of work she wants to do and still have time with her children.

Jaime first realized that she wanted to be a psychologist while in college at Stony Brook University, in NY. She was working with children in a daycare center and enjoying her psychology courses. School psychology ultimately became a way for Jaime to combine her interests in children and in psychology. She went on to do a Masters degree at Touro College in NYC. After working as

a school psychologist in Connecticut for a year, Jaime moved to PA to pursue her Psy.D. in School Psychology.

While attending PCOM, Jaime met her husband. They married a year after she graduated and settled in Huntingdon Valley. Meanwhile, Jaime was getting plenty of work experience. She started with providing school psychological services in various schools throughout Philadelphia. Jaime also completed clinical pre-doctoral and post-doctoral internships providing both counseling and assessment services to various age groups. She also worked for the Chester-Upland School District for a year, working with children from struggling families and dealing with the daunting challenges of a beleaguered school district. She moved on to the Bucks County IU where she worked with numerous children

diagnosed with special needs within multiple classrooms across several school districts. She did evaluations, re-evaluations, as well as consultative and crises intervention work. After several demanding years with the IU, Jaime took a maternity leave to have her twin sons. Although she returned to the IU, she was beginning to think about starting a private practice.

When Jaime opened her practice in June and began to consider how to network and engage with area psychologists, she recalled her PCOM days when she was on the PSCP graduate student committee. It made sense to her to join PSCP. She not only joined, but is currently on a committee to develop programming for PSCP. We wish Jaime all the best with her new practice in Huntingdon Valley, PA.



## Time to Get Connected!

Research shows that psychologists who participate in a peer consultation group are less likely become involved in a lawsuit, less likely to describe feelings of burnout, and rate themselves more satisfied with their career.

PSCP sponsors a range of peer consultation groups, and we invite you to join!

### Mindful Therapist Peer Consultation

Group in Melrose Park, PA

The Mindful therapists peer consultation group is for mental health professionals, and those in training, who integrate mindfulness into their professional work for self-care and/or client care. A personal daily meditation practice is required of all participants – this can be from a variety of wisdom traditions, including but not limited to, the Buddhist traditions from which MBSR/MBCT are derived. Participants in training must be currently enrolled in a graduate program with a focus on mental and/or physical health. We meet in Melrose Park, PA on the first

Tuesday of each month from 10am to noon. We begin with a sitting meditation practice.

For more information please contact Chris Molnar, Ph.D. at [Chris@MolnarPsychogy.com](mailto:Chris@MolnarPsychogy.com) or 267-287-8347.

### Autism Spectrum Disorders Group

This group will meet monthly on Wednesdays from 9-10:30am at the offices of Drs. Cindy Ariel and Robert Naseef, in Old City, 319 Vine Street, #110. The focus of the group is on the treatment of autism and related disabilities in children and adults, as well as on treatment strategies and support for families/caregivers. Interested participants should contact Dr. Cindy Ariel at [cariel@alternativechoices.com](mailto:cariel@alternativechoices.com) or 215-592-1333.

Peer Consultation Group (Media, PA)

This is a general consultation group that meets in the afternoon on the last Friday of every month, at the office of Dr. Greg Milbourne in Media, PA. Please contact Dr. Milbourne at 610-348-7780 or e-mail him at [Milbourne@gmail.com](mailto:Milbourne@gmail.com)

## Classifieds



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