

2006 VEGAS HIGHLIGHTS:

Experiencing the Power of Perinatal Social Work

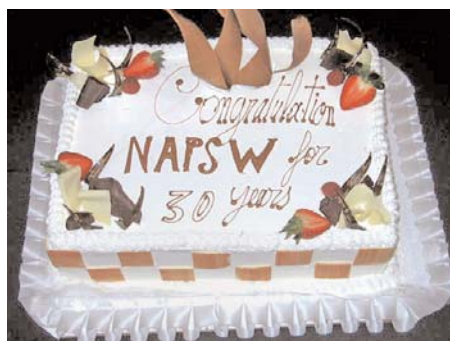
Las Vegas was the perfect setting for our 30th annual National NAPS W Conference. This stimulating four-day event took place April 19 through 22 at the Flamingo Hotel/Casino in the heart of the Las Vegas strip. Our days were filled with interesting speakers, topics, and conversation with peers, while our nights offered opportunities for gambling, dining at the world-renowned restaurants, shopping and taking in the shows.



Keynote Speaker Greg Risberg

After a welcome from NAPS W President Dawn Raadt and a wonderful dinner, the conference opened on Wednesday, April 19, with our keynote speaker, Greg Risberg. His talk, "How to Stay Energized in a Changing World," caused the room to fill with laughter while serving as a lighthearted start to a full schedule of interesting speakers. The pins that were given out at Mr. Risberg's talk were worn proudly throughout the conference. It was nice to see people wearing statements like: "Hug-A-Social-Worker" on the elevator at the end of each day.

Dr. Ira Chasnoff spent an entire day presenting a very informative workshop, "Drugs, Alcohol, Pregnancy and the Growing Child." He discussed in depth the difference in substance abuse screening instruments and field assessment, as well



as how communities in Louisiana, New Jersey, and California have implemented the SART model for successfully treating maternal substance abusers. (SART stands for Screening, Assessment, Referral, and Treatment.) Dr. Chasnoff emphasized the need for a universal approach to screening to avoid racial bias and stereotyping. He also encouraged screening in prenatal care settings with social workers, who can then link patients with appropriate resources.



NAPS W Officers and Directors: (Front row, l to r) Treasurer Kay Ammon, Vice President Judy McCoyd, President Dawn Raadt, Secretary Barbara Menard; (back row, l to r) Directors Angelia Brignole, Debby Segi-Kovach, Past President Anne-Marie Hallman, Directors Mary Denato, Alison Tiedke, Linda DeBaer, Rasa Ragas, and Laura Dillard. Not pictured: Directors Kathy Johann, Melissa Bennett, Heather Sloane, and Pam Cleary.



During his seminar, Dr. Chasnoff shared new data regarding a pediatric study being conducted at the Regional Center in San Bernadino County, California. For more information please visit the website: www.childstudy.org.

On Thursday morning Deborah Calvert, one of several workshop speakers, presented on "Field Instruction: The Integration of Theory into Practice." Participants discussed the challenges of taking students into practice, and were given practical ways to teach and assist students in today's perinatal settings.

Later in the day, Amy DiRamio and Kelly Duheme presented a workshop about "The Mommy Project," a very creative and helpful model providing prenatal education to pregnant teens.

Dr. Neha Mehta discussed the myths and risks associated with Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS). Shaking that causes SBS is a violent



WEDDING BELLS— Stacey Langley with fiancé Jason Hilstadt. The couple married in Vegas Saturday night after the Conference.



...AND BIRTHDAYS: Beth Warren, with husband Bob, celebrated her birthday in Vegas the first night of the Conference.



Closing Speaker Lisa Cooper

act, and outcomes vary greatly depending on force. Outcomes include: mild to moderate mental retardation; seizures, blindness, cerebral palsy; or death. She reported that there is a 50 percent increased risk for SBS occurring in households where a non-relative male resides.

She said that infants with gastrointestinal issues, such as colic, are at great risk of being abused because caregivers grow frustrated when the newborn cannot be soothed. Dr. Mehta also outlined reasons why prematurity is a risk factor for SBS because some parents become detached from a baby that has to stay in the NICU, and some parents are simply not up to being able to care for a newborn with special needs.

Diane Hakes, LCSW and Kim King, RN, presented on *“Post-Partum Depression: What do you know? What do we know?”* Research indicates that 10 to 15 percent of all women, regardless of culture, experience clinical depression either during or after pregnancy. Diane and Karen identified common themes that we as social workers in the perinatal field can use to help us identify women most likely at risk for post-partum depression. These include: traumatic births, multiples, feeling overwhelmed, poor support system, financial stressors, history of mental illness, and moms with low self-esteem.

A widely used post-partum scale for accessing these risk factors is the Edinburgh Postnatal Scale, which comes in English and Spanish. Also,



Jean Kollantai and Dr. Beth Pector

hospital care coordinators at St. Luke’s Regional Medical Center in Boise, Idaho, have developed a unique Post-partum Risk Assessment tool that is culturally sensitive and emphasizes the needs of Latino and Native American families.

On Thursday evening many of the conference participants were able to get together for the night out to see the **Cirque du Soleil performance, ‘Mystère.’** Those that went described the event as fascinating, beautiful and unusual.

Friday opened with all participants coming together to hear **Elizabeth Pector and Jean Kollantai** share their personal stories of loss and multiple-birth. Both discussed how these personal experiences influenced their professional lives and shared the stories of the families they work with every day that face multiples and the loss of one or all of their children. The talk included moving photographs and helpful recommenda-

tions for social workers working in NICUs.

The rest of the morning was filled with business meetings and committee meetings and re followed by the always-anticipated awards luncheon. There wasn’t a dry eye in the room as **Margery Pentland** accepted the award and letters from her children were read to the group.

The workshops continued after lunch, including a very interesting talk by **Lisa Baker** encouraging perinatal social workers to participate in evidence-based practice. She discussed the increasing pressure on social workers to show that the interventions they use everyday with patients and families is vital to the medical team.

After breakfast on Saturday morning, **Lisa Cooper**, director of March of Dimes NICU Family Support, talked about alternatives to hospital clinic work where perinatal social workers can still utilize their well-earned skills and experience.

The weather in Las Vegas was beautiful all four days, and most participants had at least one chance to sit by one of the palm tree-lined pools. The flamingos and African penguins located at the hotel were also a treat.

This was the first year that the



Conference Co-chairs Rasa Ragas and Andrea Graves

national conference did not have a local planning committee. **Andrea Graves and Rasa Ragas** organized the conference using NAPSW members from around the country. The conference was a huge success and the number of attendees increased quite a bit from previous years.

—Heather M. Sloane and Angela Brignole