

2008 CONFERENCE WRAP UP INDIANAPOLIS, IN

NAPSW's thirty second annual conference began on Wednesday, May 7, 2008. Conference co-chairs Kathy Johann and Rasa Ragas did a fantastic job of bringing together a great planning committee, challenging speakers, and providing an opportunity to network with perinatal social workers from all over the United States and Canada. The theme, "Start Your Engines and Refuel Your Spirit: The Race Toward Perinatal Excellence" lived up to its hype and offered an abundance of quality plenary sessions and workshops as well as fun activities in the exciting city of Indianapolis, Indiana. It was also a great time to connect with colleagues, renew friendships and a chance to start new ones!

Wednesday evening kicked off the conference with a cocktail reception followed by a welcome banquet. Keynote speaker and psychologist Madeleine Van Hecke offered us valuable anecdotes to burnout. Her presentation was both educational and entertaining, and provided practical tips for handling stress, dealing with difficult situations at work and also how to deal with the critic in ourselves. Her humor and warmth were refreshing.

Thursday was a packed day filled with interesting and varied workshops. Our morning began with our first General Session, University of Washington Infant specialist JoAnne Solchany, PhD., ARNP, RN provided a presentation on "Feeding Disorders and Infant Mental Health". Her session focused on early identification of feeding disorders and methods of intervention. Her easy style and knowledge of this subject were not only interesting to listen to but added a great skill set to our daily practice base.

Morning and afternoon workshops included such topics as Adoption Law, Managing Medical Futility, Perinatal Services to Latina Women, Parent Education and Shaken Baby Syndrome, Perinatal Loss, and Disaster Preparedness for families of chronically ill children.

Thursday was capped off by the annual evening out, organized by our conference co-chairs, Kathy and Rasa. There was a terrific tour of the city of Indianapolis by bus where we were treated to the sites of the city. The tour ended with a deliciously traditional mid-Western meal at the Iron Skillet, a local favorite. What a great chance to play and have fun with our colleagues. And a wonderful way to see Indianapolis!

Friday began with our second General Session, a stimulating presentation by Birdie Gunyon-Meyer, RN of Postpartum Support International. Her information on Perinatal Mood Disorders shed some new light onto an issue that many of us encounter so often in our practice. She continued her presentation in one of our morning workshops following this presentation and focused her information on recovery components.

Other workshops featured throughout Friday included such topics as Research and Social Work, Legal Aspects and Lawsuits in Adoption, Denied Pregnancy, Working with

Military Families and Perinatal Loss. There were also presentations from the March of Dimes Parent Support Program and Caring Bridge which gave us a glimpse into these innovative and unique programs providing support to NICU families.

Look for some of these informative presentations in future FORUM issues.

One of the highlights of the conference is always the Awards Luncheon. In 1988, NAPSWS established the annual Award of Excellence in Perinatal Social Work. This award recognizes outstanding achievement in the field of perinatal social work from within the membership of NAPSWS. This year's Award of Excellence was awarded to Sharon Williams MSW, LSW. Sharon is a perinatal social worker in the NICU at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. It was tremendous to honor Sharon's hard work and dedication not only to NAPSWS but also to families in the metropolitan Cincinnati area.

Following this presentation our annual business meeting was held, along with the election of new officers and Board Members. The various committees within the NAPSWS organization also gave their annual reports to inform and update members of the events of the past year. This is always a great chance to see what is happening within the organization and to become involved in supporting our membership and planning for our future directions.

Co-chairperson for the 2009 conference, Judy McCord, presented us with details for next year's annual conference, to be held in Philadelphia, May 6-9, at the Hyatt Regency Philadelphia. The theme is a fitting one for Philadelphia: "Liberty and Justice: Choices and Equity". Philadelphia promises not only great sites for us to see but a great faculty of speakers, drawing most of them from the plethora of expert social workers in the Philadelphia area.

Our final General Session included a breakfast and presentation by staff chaplain R. Stanley Jones from Clarian Health Partners in Indianapolis. He not only made us all laugh out loud, but his presentation underscored the importance of physical laughter in counteracting the effects of stress and the appropriate use of humor in the clinical setting. An excellent way to end an enjoyable time.

See you next year in Philadelphia!!!!