



METROSCOPE

FALL 2011

VOLUME 29

NUMBER 4

CELEBRATING METRO'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY



Past Presidents Celebrate METRO's 40th Anniversary AT OUR Annual Awards Dinner

UPCOMING EVENTS

Coming in April 2012
Metro Full Day Conference
@DC 37
Information to Follow

METRO Membership and Renewals

Until recently, membership ran from January 1st to December 31st of each year. Renewal applications were sent out in December for the January 1st start date. In June 2011, this changed. There are now two start of membership and/or renewal dates. They are January 1st and July 1st. So, if you are currently a member, your renewal period will either be January 1st or July 1st. Those joining in between these months will be moved to the month nearest your joining. For example, if you join in April 2012, you will be on the July cycle and your renewal date will be one year from July 2012 (July 2013). If you did not receive your renewal form or if you would like to join METRO, you can download an application from our website. Anyone who is unsure of their status or has questions, can email us at our website <http://metro-recreation.com>

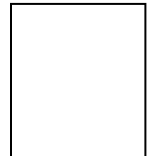
The Metropolitan NY Recreation & Park Society, Inc.

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The Metropolitan NY Recreation & Park Society, Inc.
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DOWNSTATE CONFERENCE

By Fran Gilstein

On November 16, six organizations including HVLSA, LILSA, NYSRPS, NYSTRA, WRAPS and METRO hosted their 17th Annual Conference at The Westchester County Center in White Plains.

As part of the planning committee METRO Board Members Theresa Hernandez-Ward, Brenda Torres and Dorothy McNamara did a great job including attending extra meetings, creating signage, answering endless e-mail and phone calls, sitting at the registration table, and handling the many details that accompany a major event.

METRO members were also well represented as presenters including Board Members Linda Dianto, Jeremy Cash, Fran Gilstein, and Gail Levine. Other speakers included Vincent Bonadies, Robin Kunstler, and Nick Skira.

METRO Board Member Michelle Bracco arrived from Kingsborough Community College with a busload of students sponsored by the KCC's Rec Club and METRO.

Taking advantage of the diverse and informative sessions were METRO Board members Galina Podluzskaya and Kathy Wang.

Thanks to METRO member Fred Gilstein for manning the METRO table.

A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL!

AN OPEN LETTER FROM GAIL LEVINE ON THE OCCASION OF HER RETIREMENT

To: My Colleagues in Recreation/Therapeutic Recreation,
Students and former Students,

"I beg you...to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without ever noticing it, live your way into the answer...."

(Rainer Maria Rilke)

Beginning the Journey: Starting Out

Looking back at the 15 year old, pony-tailed Assistant Camp Counselor I was in 1958, how could I have ever guessed, let alone, known, that my work that summer and my life-long association with the Social Worker who was the Camp Director, Daniel Ginsberg, DSW, who would become my role-model, would lead me along the journey I've been on for 44 years? For myself, it was not a straight path but every detour along the way has been enriching. It's been an incredible journey along paths that have led me to discover and to develop my talents and strengths; to meet many wonderful people with whom I've developed great working relationships and personal friendships and to realize a sense of meaning and purpose through my work, knowing that I have made a difference in so many people's lives. But how could I know THEN what I, looking back all these years later, can see so clearly NOW?

Early Influences: Nature and Nurture

I can see that the values I assimilated from both of my parents were important in shaping the choices I would make about activities to pursue (including aquatics and outdoor recreation); the value of helping others by giving service; of self-expression through all the Arts and of a holistic view of Wellness. My parents were terrific role-models and it was from them that I developed my love of singing and music, camping and outdoor recreation, language skills (including writing poetry), learning foreign languages and aquatics.

Being a teen-ager during the era of Peace marches; the era of Civil Rights and the anti-War movement and during the Kennedy years of idealism, it was natural that a field like Recreation Therapy would appeal to me. I actually wasn't aware of its existence as a separate discipline until I had already graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology/Political Science. The idea of changing the world one person at a time and of making it possible to help people enjoy happier lives tapped into my youthful idealism.

It was 1968 and it was an exciting time to come on board in the New York City Dept. of Parks and Recreation. The Kennedy Foundation had recently offered start-up funds to initiate Recreation programs for youngsters with Developmental Disabilities. NYC Dept. of Recreation accepted the grant and launched a 5 Borough program called "REACH" (Recreation, Education, Arts and Crafts for the Handicapped). I was hired to direct the program in Brooklyn which was called "The Sunshine Club" and "Camp Sunshine". I drew upon my background as a Camp Counselor and everything I had learned from working with Dan Ginsberg, the Director of the HES (Hebrew Education Society) Day Camp for the past 3 years. The NYC Dept. of Parks & Rec. also provided some training workshops for me and the six other new REACH Directors (which also included Dr. Fran Stavola Daly). In actuality, it was "Learning by Doing". We were working in community-based settings but were conducting Special Recreation Programs

On The Road: 1968-1981 ACCESSIBILITY and INCLUSION

Those years in the NYC Dept. of Parks and Recreation (1968-1981) became the forge in which my awareness of the needs of people with disabilities was shaped. "Community Integration" was a major focus of my program design. I wanted to make sure that all of my campers received the benefits of community services like everyone else so, I arranged for our campers to have plots in the Children's Gardening Program of the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens. I linked our camp with the Brooklyn Museum's Art Appreciation program for school-age children and I had our youngest groups attend Story-telling sessions at the Brooklyn Public library. I wanted our teens to be part of the mainstream and since social dancing was a main feature of "Teen Culture" of the 60's, I contacted a Dance Studio and arranged for them to offer free dance classes to our Teen group. I wanted our kids and Teens with disabilities to be able to enjoy the same experiences and activities that any other child or teen enjoys. This was "Normalization" and "Inclusion" in action!

In 1976, I was asked by the Commissioner of Recreation, Mike Nixon, to assume the role of "504 Coordinator" for the Agency (i.e. NYC Dept. of Parks & Rec.). I began to move the agency towards modifying its facilities and programs so as to make it possible for more people with disabilities to participate. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 has been called "The Bill of Rights of People with Disabilities:: Working with Adrienne Bresnan, an architect with the Dept. of Parks & Rec who had an interest in "Universal Design" and who has an interest in what is called "universal design", for the sake of accessibility. I was able to implement accessible parking spaces in Parks Dept. parking lots. We measured doorways to bathrooms and spaces in locker rooms in DPR Centers that had swimming pools. I had been working closely with members of community groups as well. They made me aware of the importance of being able to drive into a park to get as close as possible to a facility where a concert was taking place so, I developed the "Parking Permit for the Handicapped" which is still in use today Since my original major in college was Political Science and Sociology, I was getting a first-hand education in how laws get implemented. Working with community groups including parents' organizations I got involved with community organization, advocacy and the whole "Empowerment Movement that was growing among organizations for individuals with disabilities themselves.

Looking back, I can remember having to manually lower and lift some of my BIG campers into and out of swimming pools. Believe it or not, I can remember pushing their wheelchairs over the sand at beaches and lifting them into the water at Brighton Beach. WHY? It was because I wanted them to be able to have every experience that any other kid their age enjoyed; to feel the thrill of the spray of the waves against their skin and the feel of the tide pulling away from their feet. And when I say, "I", it wasn't just Me doing this. It was my wonderful, dedicated crew of Camp Counselors and staff who put their Hearts and Souls every day into making sure that EVERY kid had a great time EVERY DAY! I have kept in touch with my former staff of Camp Sunshine and Camp SMILE over the past 38 years and most of them developed careers in Special Education; Social Work and Health Care Administration as well as the Arts.

A Body/Mind/Spirit (Holistic) Framework

Having been a vegetarian, Yoga practitioner and "Health Conscious" person from my 20's on, I integrated a Holistic (Body/Mind/Spirit) Wellness orientation into my work with the Developmentally Disabled and later on, in my work with psychiatric patients (1983-1994). I introduced Relaxation Training and meditation onto the

Medical Psychiatric unit I worked on at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center. The remarkable benefits my patients experienced and which I observed became the basis of my Doctoral dissertation Research. My other areas of interest in Nutrition and Fitness, I brought to my patients by implementing Cooking and movement groups.

Anti-Stigma and Community Integration

It was through my work with Psychiatric patients that I became most aware of the issue of stigmatization of those with Mental Illness and their need to be re-integrated into the community following a period of hospitalization. I saw my work as a recreation therapist in the Transitional Day Treatment Program (TDTP) at Roosevelt Hospital (1987-1994) as being integral in helping patients make the transition back into the world when I would facilitate their planning and going on outings. Step by step it was helping them to feel comfortable again about venturing out in public and learning about resources available for their own independent recreation. This included helping them obtain library cards and working out a reduced rate membership for them at a DPR Fitness Center and pool near the hospital. I realized that as a TRS (Therapeutic Recreation Specialist).

I could help psychiatric outpatients develop the leisure interests and social connections that would enable them to make a better adjustment to living in the community. I also became aware that stigma was reinforced and perpetuated by the very act of labeling a patient with a psychiatric diagnosis. I presented sessions on Stigma and Diagnosis as Labeling at TR Conferences to make TR practitioners and other mental health professionals aware of this issue. In my work as a full-time Professor at KCC since 1994, I have been particularly aware of and sensitive to the needs of students with psychiatric disabilities and have worked with students and faculty to help them feel more comfortable in the academic environment and I've helped my colleagues understand how to be supportive of students with a psychiatric disability.

Passing the Torch: 1994-2011, Preparing the Next Generation of TR Practitioners

The highlight and peak of my career in Therapeutic Recreation has been joining the faculty of the Dept. of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (HPER) at Kingsborough Community College (KCC) as a full-time Professor in 1994. I assumed the position of Director of the Program in Sports, Fitness and Therapeutic Recreation (now known as "PERRT") which had been founded in 1968 by Professor

Lester Rhoads. I have viewed my work at KCC in the PERRT Program as the mission of preparing the next generation of TR and Rec. students by passing on my knowledge and skills.

I have brought to my teaching and to the college my Holistic (Body/Mind/Spirit) framework by organizing a major Conference on TR and Complementary Modalities (1997); developed and taught a course in "Holistic Healthcare"; highlighted the role of Aquatic therapy and provided support for adding Yoga courses to our for credit course offerings in the Dept. In addition, I developed a concentration in Physical Education to prepare students who want to become Physical Education teachers. This has proven very popular and is helping to prepare the next generation of Physical Education teachers. I have advised in the development of the new TR/Rec. Program at St. Joseph's College, Brooklyn Campus and have taught courses in their program. Over these years, I have mentored hundreds of students; shared my knowledge and skills by presenting at Conferences and have developed a strong team of Faculty in our PERRT Program at KCC. So, in all these ways, I feel I have helped to set the course for the future generation of TR/Rec. practitioners.

Portents of Things To Come:

I am leaving my full-time teaching position at KCC when our PERRT Program has over 300 majors (Thanks to the hard-working recruitment efforts of our PERRT Faculty) and the St. Joseph's Brooklyn Program is growing every year under the guidance of Dr. Gail Lamberta, Chair and Prof. Jeremy Cash. I will continue to teach in the areas of my expertise and will continue to serve on the Board of METRO and will present at Conferences so, it's NOT "Goodbye".

For You Who Are On the Road:

In these hard economic times, it is easy to get discouraged but I want to tell our young students and new professionals to be ever-positive and proactive by developing the skills that are needed and in demand and that will benefit the populations we serve; to always see THE BIG PICTURE, the important contribution that TR/Rec/PE makes to HUMAN WELL-BEING and to present your work in the Body/Mind/Spirit framework. While we are so much more than "Fun and Games", let's never forget that FUN is what make's life so exciting and motivating. We want to have beneficial outcomes for all of our interventions BUT we also want to make sure that our clients have FUN!! That's what's special about Recreation!

You will need to develop skills in implementing programs in Music; Yoga; Aquatic therapy; Stress Management; Healthy Nutrition through Cooking; Physical Fitness; Creative and Expressive Arts activities; Computer applications; Foreign Languages and.....everything under the Sun! Continue to develop your skills and talents; GROW, GROW, GROW!! And Don't Stop! I'm still Self-Actualizing!

To Everyone on the Road:

To my colleagues, I say, never forget the Spiritual dimension of our work. The vehicle we use may be physical, but we are always aiming to LIFT the SPIRIT; to OPEN the HEART and to Strengthen HOPE and OPTIMISM. Always see the worth of what you do in terms of helping people transform their lives and themselves by enabling them to transcend limitations, real and perceived. When we bring out the BEST in Others and help them feel WHOLE, We are Healers.

In Appreciation and Gratitude:

Through all my years as a student; practitioner and professor, I have been enriched by my colleagues and by my own teachers and mentors. It has been my good fortune to have benefited from having had Dr. Doris Berryman of N.Y.U.'s Program in Leisure Studies and TR as my teacher and mentor. I will always be grateful for the faith she showed in me. Dr. Robin Kunstler of Lehman College has been a supportive colleague throughout my academic career, opening opportunities for me. To all the wonderful people with whom I've worked over all these 44 years and to all the great students who have passed through my classrooms (and hopefully, passed my courses!) over these years; to all the Board members of METRO, past and present and to my friends at NYSTRA and NYSRPS, I thank you for your support, your generous sharing of yourselves with me over the years. It has been my great pleasure to have worked with you!

I look forward to continuing to share with you and to help to advance our wonderful profession and the important work we do.

I can be contacted at: grLevine76@aol.com

Gail Levine

P.S. On Sunday October 16, 2011 colleagues and friends joined Gail and her husband at Moran's Restaurant for the first of several Retirement Celebrations.

STRESS

By Galina Podluzskaya, CTRS

Joseph Pilates, the founder of Pilate's fitness believed that in order to relieve stress, people needed extra energy by participating in a variety of recreational programs. He felt if people were physically and mentally fit, they would be better prepared to handle every day stressors. As Recreational Therapists and Recreational Professionals we can equip our clients with the tools and techniques to effectively respond to everyday stressors.

Stress is the physiological response to everyday stressors. It can be a good stress "eustress" (like getting a new job) or negative stress or "distress" (like getting downsized from a job). During a stress response, your body releases a burst of hormones that allow you to respond. This has been labeled as the "flight or fight" response. The adrenaline rush can make you experience rapid breathing, tense muscles, cold hands and feet, dry mouth, feelings of nausea, and butterflies in your stomach. Once the stressor or the stressful situation passes your body is supposed to return to a "natural" resting state. But in today's ever hectic world busy lifestyles our bodies might never return to a natural resting state, unless we know how to effectively respond our bodies might continue to function as they do under a stressful situation, long after the stressful situation passes. Continuous tension in the body may lead to numerous health problems. We may think that an illness is to blame for a headache, or something you ate is contributing to that stomach ache. High blood pressure or even cancer may run in your family, but in reality it can all be caused by negative effects of prolonged and unresolved stress.

That is why stress management is so important. As Recreational Therapists we can provide tools for our clients and for ourselves, to be able to effectively deal with stress. Don't wait until stress has a negative impact on your health, relationships or quality of life. Start practicing a variety of stress management techniques today. Something as simple as deep breathing, keeping a stress journal, getting together with friends, meditation, various forms of exercises, aroma therapy, music therapy, pet therapy, relaxation group can have a major positive impact on how you handle stress. Don't wait until tomorrow start doing something, and keep reminding your clients how important stress management is.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MIRROR

TO: METRO Members & to the friends we hope to have as members in the near future.

The Fall Season captures us with its colorful kaleidoscope of color as we welcome another year of learning and growth. Metro is celebrating its 40th year of serving the professionals who work in all aspects of Recreation.

As the Current President of the Metro Executive Board, I have learned more about Lester Rhodes, our founder. The stories tell of how he was able to see attributes in the people around him and "recruit" them to serve on the board and thereby promote the growth of METRO. It's a tradition I guess. A tradition that is needed to remind those of us of the potential we have as professionals.

My connection to METRO began in the mid-nineties when I was working on my Bachelor's degree at Lehman College. My earliest mentor, Professor Kunstler, urged all of us students to "get involved", to join professional organizations so we would always stay in touch with peers who would keep us grounded in what would become our future work. As the years rolled by I benefited from the opportunity to learn and I gained enrichment, validation and insight into the "mission" of our field.

At times I found myself questioning what my contribution was worth in this challenging field . Maybe self-doubt was lurking in my psyche. It was at one of these challenging moments that I experienced something I am able to now call "an act of fate or faith". I was professionally and academically adrift and had taken a "break" from my graduate studies (maybe I was contemplating dropping out). The loss of a parent had shaken my equilibrium . On one of my long walks in my neighborhood with my beloved black lab, I came across a bright pink object imbedded in the deep grass. Labs eat everything so I had to investigate. When I looked down I found a weathered pen, one of the "vintage" bright pink pens from METRO!! Exactly like one of those pens I used to hoard from all those 'mini' workshops that I had stopped attending. This finding startled me, I looked around as if the owner was about to show up.

My mind raced with questions how could this pen be here on my street where I was not aware of any other Therapeutic Recreation personal in my mist. I could not see how the pen was mine. It had been a long while since I had attended and acquired such a pen. I took the pen and could not ignore the power of it in my hand. As a person who believes in signs, I must admit I was driven to tears. This pen was a "bright" pink reminder that I needed to come back to my calling. I needed to come back to the warmth of METRO.

So I returned, completed my work at Lehman College and rejoined METRO, I think of that pen and think on the irony that while engaging in a "leisurely walk" how I found METRO'S pen. It was the serendipitous finding of a pink pen that "redirected" me to be so close to what I consider the heart of the matter. Being chosen to head the charge, to champion the cause of Prof. Rhoades and promote continued education in the field of Leisure/Therapeutic Recreation services. They say the power is in the pen, I hope this rings true for me in my service as President of the Metro Board and to all of metro's members.

On behalf of the faithful METRO we look forward to seeing everyone at our annual Membership meeting on November 30th, which will present as our guest speaker Dr. Gail Levine, Metro Board Member. A CEU has been approved and is available. Metro is planning a full day conference in April (more info will follow) .

Best to all,
Theresa Hernandez-Ward
CTRS, President of the Metro Board

The Metro Board wishes everyone a happy holiday season

