

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear colleagues,

As this is the first time that I am addressing you all formally, I thought that it might be nice to share the inaugural address from our annual business meeting for the benefit of those who were not able to attend. This speech really came from my heart and reflects our shared experience of trauma over the last several months as well as our value of genuineness and compassion for others (as well as ourselves). So without further ado:



I want to start by thanking all of you for electing me to this role. I've built my whole life around service to others and while my time here is shaping up very differently than I imagined, it really is an honor to be allowed to serve you in this way.

When I first started thinking about giving this talk, it seems like ages ago, I imagined that I would be talking to you about the things that are important to me as a professional, what I see as the future of our field and inviting you to join me in advocating for all the things we need as psychologists to bring that vision of the future into being: Integrated care – not just in PCMH, but everywhere: services for Rural Veterans, Measurement Based Care and Evidence Based therapies, and Title 38... And all of those things are still very important to me, so I don't want you to worry that I am going to forget or neglect them. We will work on those things and many more throughout the year.

But as the time came to sit down and actually write this talk, I found myself reflecting less on guild issues and more on the moment in history that is the context for everything else. This moment is unlike any other most of us have ever experienced and I sincerely hope that once it passes... and it will pass eventually, that we never face another like it.

So I decided to talk to you about what I need to hear myself.

I need to acknowledge that I'm tired. That a year and a half into this pandemic, I am bone weary in a way that I have never been in my life. That I struggle to find the compassion that usually lets me relate to just about anyone on earth, no matter who they are, what station they occupy in life, or what deeds they may have done. Compassion that makes it possible to support and care for them, to help them move closer to their own best life, whatever that looks like for them. And that it's ok for me to acknowledge that I'm exhausted, at times angry with others, and afraid of what comes next. That doesn't make me weak or a bad human being... or a bad psychologist. It's the first step on the road to remembering how to work my own way through this.

While this situation is unique... all of us have been through hard times before. We've lived through hurricanes, flooding, earthquakes, shootings, and a thousand other traumas. Sadly, we've lived through this trauma and the peaks in COVID cases in this pandemic multiple times already, the stress on our Veterans, our families, our colleagues, and our communities; and part of what makes now so darn difficult is that we thought the end was almost in sight. For a moment we felt that we could breathe again, something that we used to take for granted but for a period of time seemed almost impossible.

Our patients and our communities don't need us to be perfect people who never experience stress. (What a relief, right?) But they do need us to be resilient to lead through teaching and example so that they can also be resilient. And who better than a group of psychologists to be those leaders.

You know what it is to lead, including what it is to lead in trying times.

*(Continued on page 2)*

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

*(Continued from page 1)*

Eisenhower once said that “Leadership is the Art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.”

And Rosalyn Carter said that “A great leader takes people where they don’t necessarily want to go, but ought to be.”

You do this in small ways every day with every individual and team that you work with...

And now this larger moment in history is calling to each of us, to be the leaders our communities need us to be on an even bigger, grander scale. To hold the Vision of hope and a better tomorrow than what we have today and to share that hope for resilience and recovery with others who, like us, are struggling to remember why they/we do this and how we can go on “doing this” in the face of so much resistance. (Gosh the drive to reduce cognitive dissonance is powerful stuff).

I don’t know what actions you need to take where you are to lead and share hope but I challenge you to dig deep and find ways to renew yourself (even airlines remind us to put own masks on first). This isn’t a selfish act, it’s what you need to do so that you can be the best leader, the best psychologist, the best daughter/mom/sister/son/dad/brother you are capable of being.

I want to leave you with this last thought from Robin Sharma, “to the victim, adversity is bad. To the leader and warrior, Hard Times are life’s richest time of growth, opportunity and possibility. Use them to fly.”

Please know that I value you all as colleagues and friends. The work you do matters, you can and are making a difference in this world and if we can just hold each other up a little longer, we will get through this hard time too.

— *Kaki York, Ph.D., AVAPL President*

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## NOTE FROM HISTORY

As I mentioned in the last column, this year marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Psychology was part of VHA from the beginning so this also is our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Over the course of those 75 years, psychologists have made significant contributions to effect positive outcomes in the health of veterans. The emphasis on health in the VHA title readily allows for recognizing the contributions of psychologists providing direct health care as specialists in mental health, primary care, pain management, rehabilitation, neuropsychology, substance use disorders, and so forth. But there are other avenues outside of the direct patient care programs within VA medical centers and CBOCs through which psychologists have improved veterans' health and well-being.

I was pleased recently to see a message to veterans from the Director of the Pacific Islands Health Care System referring to the Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Centers (GRECCs). He explained that GRECCs provide education and training on best practices, build knowledge through research, and develop innovative clinical models of care. The GRECCs were the first Centers of Excellence (CoEs) established with funding by Congress in 1975.

It is CoEs that are among the other avenues through which psychologists have been making significant contributions. The mission statements of CoEs usually include some reference to the specific area of health to be emphasized, but also describe how they combine treatment, research, and education. A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report to Congress in 2015 clearly defines what differentiates a CoE from other patient care programs. The GAO indicated that a CoE identifies gaps in research, supports provider competency, and integrates new knowledge into patient care. The GRECCs were considered to be under medicine. In 1989 the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders was funded, opening the door for CoEs to be developed under the purview of mental health. The funding from Congress for three Mental Illness Research Education and Clinical Centers (MIRECCs) in 1997 added to the emphasis on mental health which has continued as more CoEs form. CoEs may be created within the VHA under the Office of Patient Care Services, the Office of Research and Development, and the Office of Academic Affiliations.

Over the years since that first GRECC was funded in 1975 CoEs have continued to expand addressing both medically-oriented concerns (e.g., Parkinson's, dementia, TBI, headache) and primary mental health needs (e.g., suicide prevention, dual diagnosis, psychosis). As the CoEs develop in response to a targeted need, among the newer ones are those looking at unique aspects of the returning war veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. Psychologists are actively involved in research, education and training, and clinical practice within CoEs, as well as at times serving in leadership roles. With more than 70 CoEs across the VA, psychologists continue to contribute in significant ways to the healthcare of veterans and to the history of the VHA. Ψ

— *Kathleen McNamara, Ph.D., Principal Historian, AVAPL*



Dr. Kathleen McNamara

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2021 AVAPL HONOREES!

This year's awards and honorees include:

**Antonette Zeiss Distinguished  
Leadership Award**

Lisa Kearney, PhD, ABPP

**Leadership Award**

Tanya R. B. Aaen, PhD

**Professional Service Award**

Brian W. Kelley, PsyD

**Past President Award**

Kenneth Jones, PhD

Photos and additional information can be found on the AVAPL website: <https://avapl.org/index.html>.

## 24<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL VA PSYCHOLOGY LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

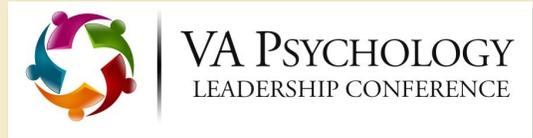
Greetings from the VA Psychology Leadership Conference Planning Committee!

We wanted to take a moment to provide some highlights from our 24th Annual VA Psychology Leadership Conference (VAPLC) which was held virtually in May 2021. Through use of virtual platforms, we increased equity in access to conference participation, resulting in record attendance. We had over 450 attendees! Not only is this the highest number of VA psychologists to participate, but also is more than double typical attendance. We hope that we were able to spark the passion and that we can continue this trajectory in 2022! A few other firsts occurred, including the first presentation from a Special Assistant to the President, through Terri Tanielian's update from the Biden Administration. There was a forum for sharing Diversity best practices, highlighting spread to other systems. We featured an opening invited address from Dr. Carolyn Clancy, as Acting Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs and featured presentations designed to promote leadership in difficult times, emphasize advocacy, and share updates from VA Central Office and Congress.

In addition to didactic content, we had multiple networking and social events occurring before and after the main event, many provided in partnership with AVAPL SIGs. It was wonderful to connect with colleagues across the country. We were able to carry on the traditions of the open plenary session and the Trainee Dinner with the APA President. Dr. Christopher Watson was awarded the Russell B. Lemle Leadership Award.

Overall feedback was overwhelmingly positive, indicating that we were able to increase access to the event while maintaining high quality and creating forums for connecting as a community. However, many of us left missing San Antonio and can't wait to get to connect with all of you in person. Hoping to see all of you in 2022.

— *Katherine M. Dollar, PhD, ABPP*



## 2022 VAPLC CONFERENCE PLANNING

The VA Psychologist Leadership Conference Planning committee is excited to be considering a number of ongoing priorities as we finalize a theme and a title (to be unveiled soon we hope!) which will include focusing on the well-being of VA psychologists during the pandemic, including a recent focus on addressing burnout.

Dr. Laura Eaton was recently announced as the new Conference Chair-Elect for the 2024 and 2025 VA Psychology Leadership Conferences. Dr. Eaton has been very involved in VAPLC, serving on the Planning Committee for the past five years. She is passionate about the support and education of VA psychologists and is dedicated to creating a community experience to inspire and inform psychologists at the VAPLC conferences. She will work with the committee in all aspects of conference planning, lead the weekly planning call, and participate in the monthly Division 18 VA section and all VA Psychology calls.

- ◆ Remember, **2022 VAPLC is June 1st to June 3rd** --- Please save the date!
- ◆ This is a wonderful conference motivated by the dedication, expertise, and vision of VA psychologists nationwide.
- ◆ I am certain that you will find it both informative and, I hope, inspiring.
- ◆ We hope to return to an in-person conference in San Antonio in 2022! AND due to past conference feedback, we are looking at options to include opportunities for virtual participation as well.
- ◆ The website for ongoing updates is <https://conference.avapl.org>
- ◆ Questions? Please email Dr. Kaily Clark (VAPLC Chair) at [conference.chair@avapl.org](mailto:conference.chair@avapl.org)

## SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (SIG) SPOTLIGHT

### *Psychologists of Color (POC) & Allies*

The AVAPL Psychologists of Color (POC) & Allies SIG continues to dedicate efforts to bridge the gaps adversely impacting communities of color within VA. We gather monthly to share updates, innovative and strong practices, and provide space for community during these challenging times.

Efforts include:

- ◆ Collaboration with VA's Office of Resolution, Management, Diversity & Inclusion (ORMDI) Committee, including leadership by Dr. Danielle Lespinasse of the [VA DEI Committee Resource Library](#)
- ◆ Participation on OMHSP's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Resources SharePoint Subject Matter Expert (SME) Panel
- ◆ Partnership with VHA NCOD on a DEI Leadership Consultation Program with POC SIG members serving as DEI SME consultants to VA leaders
- ◆ Panel Presentation at the 2021 VA Psychology Leadership Conference (VA PLC): DEI Strong and Innovative Practices led by Drs. Maurice Endsley, Danielle Lespinasse, & Nikki Panasci
- ◆ Consultation with AVAPL ECP SIG for "Diversity & Career Advancement" webinar featuring Drs. Chebon Porter, Arnold James, & Ariel Reid
- ◆ National recognition of POC SIG leaders:
  - ⇒ American Psychological Association Presidential Citation for dedication to DEI in research and clinical practice: Dr. Gayle Iwamasa
  - ⇒ VA PLC Russell Lemle Leadership Award: Dr. Christopher Watson
  - ⇒ APA Division 18 VA Section Excellence in Service Award: Dr. Charlotte McCloskey
  - ⇒ APA Division 18 VA Section Excellence in Mentoring Award: Dr. Christopher Watson
- ◆ Dissemination of DEI Committee efforts on the OMHSP First Friday MH Leadership call: Drs. Maurice Endsley & Annie Tang
- ◆ Participation in the OMHSP BIPOC Mental Health Month Panel and VHA's DEI Committee
- ◆ Invited presenters for APA Division 18's Webinar Series: Drs. Ines Campoverde and Marie Mesidor
- ◆ AVAPL Mentorship Program partnership to connect POC with Mentors of Color

#### *Did you know?*

- ◇ There is a VA Black Psychologists Microsoft Teams group – contact Dr. Ariel Reid ([ariel.reid@va.gov](mailto:ariel.reid@va.gov)) or Dr. Shana Napier ([shana.napier@va.gov](mailto:shana.napier@va.gov)) to join the Teams group
- ◇ The OMHSP DEI Sharepoint is available to share D&I innovative projects and strong practices: <https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VACOMentalHealth/OMSHP%20BDER/SitePages/Home.aspx>
- ◇ Resources to share to the VA DEI Committee Resource Library can be submitted to [VHADICommSME@va.gov](mailto:VHADICommSME@va.gov)
- ◇ The Executive Order on DEI & Accessibility in the Federal Workforce repeals the previous administration's ban on DEI trainings in the federal workforce:  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/06/25/executive-order-on-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility-in-the-federal-workforce/>

Visit our page: <https://avapl.org/poca.html>

## AVAPL SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIG) UPDATES

### *SIG Update: Women in Leadership*

Members of AVAPL are invited to join the Women in Leadership (WiL) Special Interest Group (SIG) focusing on developing and supporting women psychologists in VA. Updates on WiL SIG activity since the last newsletter include continued conversation and support around issues that were presented during the VAPLC Social Hour and via our listserv.

Topics of discussion included expressing appreciation for Drs. Fennell and Raza's article on career advancement and motherhood (especially the various voices and perspectives represented); the statistics presented at VAPLC regarding psychologists onboarded by GS level, gender, and race/ethnicity; the pandemic's impact on women in the workforce including the consideration of telework as a social justice issue; special pay bands and the current psychologist career ladder; the value of the AVAPL Mentoring Program; and prescription privileges.

The WiL SIG has also been exploring ways to sustain a forum to continue the discussion of these topics. The forum is in addition to the listserv and focuses on real time support and debate, as well as the identification and delegation of advocacy action steps. Members are encouraged to contact the SIG Co-Chairs (Mary Beth Shea, PhD, [mary.shea@va.gov](mailto:mary.shea@va.gov); Nicole Shiber, PsyD [Nicole.shiber@va.gov](mailto:Nicole.shiber@va.gov)) or post your thoughts and questions on the listserv, including ways the SIG can better support, advocate, and educate.

### *SIG Update: Telehealth*

The AVAPL TeleMental Health Special Interest Group (TMH SIG) is a community of psychologists working in telehealth in the VA. We continue to meet the growing need for TMH providers, which has blossomed significantly since the start of the pandemic. The TMH SIG offers educational and networking opportunities, consultation, and mentoring to VA providers in their use of technology to facilitate mental health treatment. In addition, TMH SIG works with the AVAPL mentoring workgroup to help support psychologists in their professional growth. The SIG connects members to resources for TMH guidelines, best practices, and policy.

The TMH SIG creates workgroups across the AVAPL as interest dictates and welcomes new workgroup proposals. In the past, we've collaborated with the Psychologists of Color and Allies SIG to expand resources on diversity and anti-racism for telehealth. The Tele-Supervision workgroup addressed the intersection of psychology training and TMH. The co-chairs continue to be active members in the AVAPL Mentorship program, pairing psychologists for yearly mentoring dyads.

TMH SIG invites new members at all levels of telehealth familiarity. We meet via Zoom on the first Thursday of each month at 3pm ET/12pm PT. In addition, the TMH SIG offers the opportunity for psychologists to present to a laid-back and supportive national audience on Tele-related topics. If you are interested in becoming a member and/or presenting on one of our monthly calls, please email our co-chairs at [drginaraza@gmail.com](mailto:drginaraza@gmail.com) or [annsmithphd@yahoo.com](mailto:annsmithphd@yahoo.com). Welcome!

## AVAPL SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIG) UPDATES

### *SIG Update: Early Career Psychologists*

The Early Career Psychologists SIG is welcoming incoming members of the leadership team and saying farewell to departing members. We are grateful to Paul Korte (previous Past-Chair) and Brian Apple (previous Conference Liaison) for their service as they “graduate” beyond Early Career status. Heather Kacos now moves to Past-Chair, Jennifer Presnall-Shvorin to Current Chair, and Christina Vair is our new Chair-Elect. Additionally, we welcome Tyonna Adams and Ariel Ried (SIG Liaisons) and Laura Zambrano-Vazquez (Social Media Lead) into their new roles. We are excited to have such a vibrant and involved team, and we anticipate additional growth in the near future.

The ECP SIG was pleased to be involved in VAPLC and had lots of fun during our happy hour, sharing stories and beverages of choice. We have presented webinars on Diversity & Leadership and Obtaining a Detail. We also held our first open-members meeting and we were pleased with the enthusiastic response. We are hopeful about the prospects of the coming year!

If you are interested in increasing your involvement with the ECP SIG, please contact Jennifer Presnall-Shvorin: [jennifer.presnall-shvorin@va.gov](mailto:jennifer.presnall-shvorin@va.gov)

### *SIG Update: Mid-Career Psychologists*

Members of AVAPL are warmly invited to join the Mid-Career SIG! Our MCP SIG group meets to provide mutual support, opportunities for networking, and a focus on work/life balance for psychologists who have been working in the field for 10+ years.

This SIG was developed to create a community of VA Psychologists to network, create new opportunities for professional support, and share resources for job satisfaction. With the ultimate goal of retaining mid-career psychologists in VA, the SIG focuses on sharing opportunities for growth and career advancement. We have a shared leadership structure with a small planning committee.

Our monthly meetings are a combination of presentation and open discussion. Our calls are the second Tuesday of the month from 2-3 pm Eastern.

For more information, please contact co-chairs Shanyn Aysta [DrShanyn@gmail.com](mailto:DrShanyn@gmail.com) or Charlotte McCloskey [CharlotteMcCloskey@Ymail.com](mailto:CharlotteMcCloskey@Ymail.com) . If you are not a member and would like to join us, please email the webmaster at [webmaster@avalp.org](mailto:webmaster@avalp.org) to be added. Psychologists are welcome to join our group anytime they feel ready!

## WELCOME TO THE NEW AVAPL NEWSLETTER TEAM!

### **Layne Goble, PhD | Editor-in-Chief**

Dr. Layne Goble received a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and completed an APA accredited pre-doctoral internship and post-doctoral fellowship at the VA Connecticut Healthcare System. He works with the Interdisciplinary Pain Team at the Charleston VA Medical Center in Charleston, South Carolina. He is also serving as a trainer for the VA Evidence-Based Psychotherapy Program for the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Chronic Pain training. In his free time he likes to spend time with his wife and children doing outdoor activities.



### **Angela Enlow, PhD | Editor-in-Chief**

Angela Enlow, PhD is a Staff Psychologist with the Boise VAMC. She has worked within VHA for 11 years, starting at the Asheville VAMC. She has experience working with trauma, substance use disorders, general mental health, and serves as an ACT consultant. She is also an Associate Training Director for the psychology internship and postdoctoral fellowships at the Boise VAMC.

### **Kaily Clark, PsyD | Content Editor**

Dr. Kaily Clark is a licensed Psychologist in the state of Colorado and has been serving our Nation's Veterans through the Department of Veteran (VA) since October 2012. She currently serves as part of the Suicide Prevention 2.0 Telemental Health VISN 19 HUB for the VA. Previously, she worked as part of the Clinical Core at VA's Rocky Mountain MIRECC for Suicide Prevention.



### **Teri Madura Connelly, PhD | Content Editor**

Teri Madura Connelly, PhD is a Staff Psychologist at the Erie VAMC. She earned a PhD from the University of Akron and completed a Post-Doctoral Fellowship in PTSD at the Tennessee Valley Healthcare System VA, Nashville, TN. She has worked within VHA since 2011 and has substantial work experience in the treatment of PTSD, suicide prevention, and mindfulness-based care. Dr. Connelly has been extensively trained and certified in the delivery of Evidenced-Based Practices for PTSD, including Prolonged Exposure, Cognitive Processing Therapy, Written Exposure Therapy, and Skills Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation. She is currently the PTSD Lead Clinician at the Erie VAMC and heads the local PTSD clinical team.

### **Natasha Mroczek, PsyD | Copy Editor**

Natasha Mroczek, PsyD, is a Staff Psychologist at the Central Virginia VA Health Care System in Richmond, VA. She completed her graduate training at Florida Institute of Technology, predoctoral internship at the Phoenix VAMC, and postdoctoral fellowship in clinical health psychology at the Memphis VAMC. She has worked within VHA since 2013, and presently works as a Primary Care-Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI) Psychologist within the VISN 6 TelePrimary Care Hub.



## FAREWELL FROM THE EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

We would like to express our gratitude to Dr. Bill Dycus for his contributions to the AVAPL Newsletter as the Copy Editor.

He joined the newsletter team in the Fall of 2016 and has had a huge role in the development of the newsletter over the past five years. We all appreciate the professional presentation that he's given to the newsletter. Thank you for contributing your time and talents to the AVAPL newsletter over the years!



Dr. Bill Dycus



Interested in submitting an article to the AVAPL Newsletter?

*Do you have a suggestion for a topic to be included in an upcoming edition?*

Please contact:

Layne Goble ([Layne.Goble@va.gov](mailto:Layne.Goble@va.gov)) or  
Angela Enlow ([Angela.Enlow@va.gov](mailto:Angela.Enlow@va.gov))