

# Year-In-Review 2008

Plus a preview of new member benefits for 2009



This year has seen landmark public policy successes for the profession of counseling, a major subcontract awarded to ACA for providing counseling to returning soldiers, an outpouring of disaster mental health assistance from ACA members, and the introduction of many new or improved member benefits and services. The Association and its 40,000+ members and dedicated volunteer leaders remain focused on its core mission to: enhance the quality of life in society by promoting the development of professional counselors, advancing the counseling profession, and using the profession and practice of counseling to promote respect for human dignity and diversity. This report highlights some of the year's achievements and previews several new initiatives planned for 2009.

## **Mental Health and Addictive Disorder Parity Legislation Finally Passes; Loan Forgiveness for School Counselors Achieved**

A huge victory for the profession—and an estimated 113 million Americans—was achieved in October when Congress and President Bush enacted an historic law requiring most private sector health plans to establish parity of insurance coverage for mental health and addictive disorder treatments. After more than a decade of effort, ACA and other mental health advocates cheered the passage of the “Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008,” which will require coverage of mental and addictive disorder services on the same terms and conditions as other types of care.

The new law will take effect for health plan years beginning one year after the date of enactment (October 3, 2009) and will apply to private sector health plans covering more than 50 employees. Going forward, there is more work to be done to address broader managed care and consumer access issues and ACA will continue to make this a top public policy priority. [Read more](#)

In another national public policy success, school counselors working in low-income schools will be eligible for financial assistance under a new federal loan forgiveness program, to be operated under the U.S. Department of Education. [Read more](#)

## **Hawaii Counselors Gain Reimbursement**

New legislation signed in June by Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle mandates that all health insurance companies operating in the state provide reimbursement to Licensed Mental Health Counselors. The Hawaii Counseling Association, an ACA Branch, worked tirelessly since the 1990s to achieve this professional credentialing milestone.

## **Next Generation of Counselor Advocacy Leaders and Activists Meet in Washington, DC**

Forty members attended ACA's 2008 Legislative Institute in February for training on effective advocacy methods. All attendees met with the offices of their Senators and Representatives, and the event included a breakfast with Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA), the recipient of ACA's Federal Legislative Service Award for his support for Medicare coverage of counselors. Also throughout the year, more than 80 members participated in conference calls hosted by ACA to discuss advocacy needs, current issues, and best practices in contacting members of Congress.

Visit the [Public Policy section](#) for more information on these initiatives, legislative priorities for 2009, and to join the Government Relations Listserv. Many ACA members contributed to the above successes by contacting their lawmakers and the importance of this grassroots support cannot be overstated.



## **Counseling Disabled Veterans: Many ACA Members To Gain New Clients Over Next Five Years**

In October, ACA was selected as the main subcontractor for the largest contract the Veterans Administration has ever offered for mental health services. In the first year alone, more than 600 ACA members will have the opportunity to provide compensated counseling services to an estimated 32,000 disabled veterans, most of whom will be returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The figure is for the first year alone; the VA may renew the contract for up to 5 years. The new program matches vets with professional counselors who have expertise in vocational rehabilitation, employment counseling, traumatic brain injury/PTSD, and other services that will help vets re-integrate into society following severe injury, loss of limbs, or serious brain trauma. The counseling process along with the training, experience, and skills of counselors was evaluated and deemed the best match for the needs of vets. [Read more](#)

In a second initiative, ACA received a contract to provide professional counselors for teams that are notifying the family members of U.S. translators killed in Iraq. Over 30 ACA members were hired for these teams through the contract.

In addition to providing new clients for ACA members, these initiatives are positive steps forward in raising awareness nationwide of the counseling profession.



## **ACA Members Respond to Call for Disaster Mental Health Volunteers**

As an official Red Cross partner, ACA issued a call to members to assist as disaster mental health volunteers for those affected by Hurricane Gustav, which hit in early September. The Red Cross set up 334 shelters and, at its peak, had over 45,000 individuals living in these shelters. Since mental health is now a core component of Red Cross disaster services, the ARC wanted disaster mental health volunteers in every one of the 334 shelters.

ACA also organized a pro-bono initiative to provide Northern Illinois University students with counseling services over the summer to talk about the shootings that occurred on the NIU campus last spring. Ten NIU students were seen for a total of 25 counseling sessions.

## **New Podcast Series Introduced as Free Service to Members**

In July, ACA launched a [free podcast series](#) for members. Each podcast—a pre-recorded interview posted on the ACA website—can be downloaded to an iPod or MP3 player, or can be played on a personal computer. Six podcasts are now available on these topics: ethics, malpractice insurance, private practice, school counseling, counseling queer youth, and counseling law. More are planned for 2009.



## **Three New Interest Networks Established**

Three new interest networks were established by the ACA Governing Council at its October meeting, bringing the total of these online communities to 12. The additions are Professional Counselors in Schools, Forensic Counseling, and Wellness. [Read more](#)



## **Hawaii Conference Rated Highly; New Features Include Advanced Level Sessions**

Nearly 3,000 counseling professionals—including special guests from Singapore, Taiwan, China, the Philippines, and Australia—traveled to Honolulu in March to learn, network, and enjoy the aloha spirit. Based on past attendee feedback, ACA introduced Advanced Level Education Sessions, free individual private consultations on ethics and licensure issues, and an expanded program for graduate students and new professionals. A new general session format, redesigned program book, plus dynamic keynote speakers John Gottman and Bradford Keeney contributed to the 93% attendee satisfaction rate.



## **Journal of Counseling & Development Now Searchable Online**

A new project to enable members to access and search *JCD* articles online at no cost was completed in 2008. The issues are accessible through the ACA website. A special *JCD* issue, “Multicultural Counseling” was published in the summer, and six ACA Division journals published special issues or sections throughout the year. [Read more](#)



## **Counseling Today Becomes a Magazine**

After 50 years of publishing first as a newsletter and then a newspaper, *Counseling Today* converted to magazine format in July. New columns were introduced on best practices, technology, career stories, and graduate student/new professional issues. The staff won six awards for outstanding editorial and design for the monthly publication, which continues to be rated by members as one of the top benefits of joining ACA.



## **Three Special Focus E-newsletters Introduced**

Following the well-received format of *ACAeNews*, ACA published the first issues of three new e-newsletters in 2008: *ACAeNews for Mental Health, Private Practice and Community Agency Counselors*; *ACAeNews for School Counselors*; and *ACAeNews for Counselor Educators*. Each title will be published three times per year and they are available free to members.

## **Eight New Books Published; Online Bookstore Enhanced**

Five original titles and three new editions were published in 2008. The original titles are: *Active Interventions for Kids and Teens*; *Case Incidents in Counseling for International Transitions*; *Girls' and Women's Wellness*; *The Life and Work of Carl Rogers*; and *Counseling Multiple Heritage Individuals, Couples, and Families*. Second editions of *Suicide Prevention in the Schools* and *Solution-Focused Counseling in Schools* were published along with a third edition of *Career Counseling: Contexts, Processes, and Techniques*. In December, ACA launched a new and improved Online Bookstore, which now has a unified shopping cart. The streamlined bookstore allows you to buy a book, register for the conference, and enroll in an online course, in an all-in-one shopping experience. This and other enhancements make shopping at counseling.org a much more user-friendly experience. Test drive the new bookstore [here](#).



## **Ten New Online Continuing Education Opportunities Introduced**

Four new *Journal of Counseling & Development* articles and six ACA book chapters were added to the ACA [Online Learning section](#) of the website, where members now can access more than 50 articles, book chapters, and courses to keep up-to-date on a wide range of issues while also earning CE credit.



## **Staff Responds to More Than 1,900 Ethics Calls**

ACA staff responded to more than 1,900 ethics and professional standards inquiries from members who sought guidance on issues such as confidentiality, licensure, HIPAA, signing up with health insurance panels as well as a full range of mental health issues including client suicide and sexual abuse. The service is free to ACA members. [Read more](#)



## **Membership Survey Conducted**

An extended, in-depth research effort with members, lapsed members, nonmembers, and other key stakeholders was conducted in 2008 utilizing focus groups in different states, telephone interviews, and emailed surveys. The results are being analyzed and will be used to inform strategic decisions in 2009 and beyond.



## **Leadership Resources Developed**

Resources for the orientation of new ACA leaders, such as a special training manual for Governing Council members, were developed and posted online.



## **ACA Exhibits at Eight Conferences**

To raise awareness and visibility of ACA and the profession of counseling, staff exhibited at eight conferences including the American Psychological Association, the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, and six ACA Division and Branch events.



## **ACA Foundation Supports Students, Raises Funds for Disaster Relief**

The Foundation's Graduate Student Essay Competition attracted the highest number of submissions—and of the highest quality—ever received in its 10-year history. Catherine M. Hock, a student at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, was the first-place winner of the 2008 program,

which had nearly 130 entries.

The Foundation offered grants to cover conference registration fees for 30 graduate students, supported distribution of Counseling Corner newspaper columns, and held a donor recognition reception at the Hawaii conference. With a dedicated Board of Trustees, the Foundation continued raising funds to support programs such as the Counselors Care Fund and Growing Happy and Confident Kids. The Foundation also published *Becoming a Counselor, Second Edition*, by Sam Gladding, and added a Planned Giving section to its website along with the ability to donate in memory of an individual. [Read more](#)



## **Infrastructure Supports High Volume of Activity; Economic Measures Taken in Response to Recession**

The backbone of a large association such as ACA is the infrastructure, which must operate efficiently to ensure the prompt and accurate delivery of services and benefits. ACA upgraded its accounting system, and introduced cost-cutting measures such as reducing bank, credit card, and investment fees, while handling a large volume of transactions in 2008. To further reduce costs and cope with the economic downturn, hiring and salary freezes were put into place.

### **2008 Operational Statistics At-A-Glance**

- Shipped approximately 2,000 orders from the warehouse (primarily publications)
- Processed more than \$800,000 in publication orders
- Handled accounting functions for 14 divisions plus two outside organizations
- Processed over 23,000 membership applications; mailed 36,000 membership cards
- Answered over 29,000 telephone calls, responded to more than 5,000 email and fax requests
- Processed 5,300 address changes

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## **PREVIEW OF 2009: MORE NEW BENEFITS FOR ACA MEMBERS**

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*ACA always strives to ensure that members receive the highest possible return for their membership dollars. Recognizing the challenging financial situation ahead in 2009, ACA has been even more aggressive in developing new ways to save you money and make your ACA membership more valuable than ever. These are just a few of the new benefits you will see introduced in 2009:*



## **ACA Liability Insurance to Eligible ACA Student Members and a Special Discount for All Other Members**

Coming soon, ACA will be providing student members enrolled in a master's degree program with professional liability ("malpractice") insurance as part of their membership. Recognizing that all CACREP (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs) and many non-CACREP programs require students to have professional liability insurance, ACA has successfully negotiated with the ACA-endorsed carrier—Healthcare Providers Service Organization (HPSO)—to provide eligible ACA student members with coverage for practicum and internships as a value-added benefit of membership. Students: watch your email for the official announcement!

HPSO also will announce at the March ACA Annual Conference & Exposition a special discount for all other ACA members.

## **New Counselor Education Syllabus Clearinghouse To Debut in February**

The joint ACA-ACES Syllabus Clearinghouse, a new feature of the ACA Library area of counseling.org, will launch this winter with more than 200 syllabi from across the entire spectrum of counseling courses. This unique collection will help counselor educators generate new and creative approaches for their classes while saving them precious time.



## **Members to Receive Free CEs**

ACA will soon introduce another new membership benefit—one free CE credit each month. The regular \$18 fee will be waived for a designated *JCD* article or ACA book chapter each month, allowing members to earn 12 CE credits per year at no cost—a \$216 benefit, which more than covers the cost of an ACA membership! Watch *ACAeNews* for updates on when the program will begin.



## **Submissions, Registrations Soar for 2009 Conference; CE Credits Worth \$360 Now Included**

By the June deadline, a record-breaking 1,310 submissions had been received for presenting at the [2009 ACA Conference & Exposition](#) in Charlotte, NC, March 19-23. At year-end, registration was tracking the highest of the last 5 years for the same period. More sessions were added and the scheduling was adjusted for 2009, making it possible for attendees to now earn 20 CE credits (at \$18 per credit, worth \$360) as part of their registration fee. And, the ACA Military Counseling Academy was added to the list of 16 ACA Academies now available. Members can earn one or more ACA Academy certificates at no cost by attending six full sessions within the category.

The ACA 2010 Conference & Exposition will be held March 18-22 in Pittsburgh, PA and will be co-sponsored by the Pennsylvania Counseling Association. In 2011, the ACA Conference & Exposition will be held in New Orleans, LA.



## **Public Policy Office Looks Forward to Busy Year**

The new administration and new Congress are expected to engage in serious work on an array of issues affecting counselors and their clients such as major Medicare legislation and private sector health care reform, reauthorization of education legislation including the No Child Left Behind Act, and reauthorization of programs under the Workforce Investment Act, including the state vocational rehabilitation grant programs. ACA staff are also working hard on implementation of laws enacted recently to establish recognition of counselors within the health care programs operated separately by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense; we anticipate major developments on both of these fronts in 2009. Stay tuned!



## **Fourth Special Focus e-News to Address Graduate Students/New Professionals**

*ACAeNews for Graduate Students and New Professionals* will be published in early 2009, becoming the fourth title in ACA's popular series of e-newsletters. The e-newsletters deliver topic/specialty specific information to members and provide updates on all that is happening at ACA.

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## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

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Your membership in ACA is helping to advance the profession of counseling. We hope that this report demonstrates how ACA supports you as a counseling professional. Whether you are a graduate student, a seasoned counselor or counselor educator, or retired, ACA is your association—throughout your life span. We greatly appreciate your support in 2008 and we pledge to do our very best to continue serving you and the profession in 2009. Your comments on this report and priorities you would like to see addressed in 2009 are welcome. Email us at: [annualreport@counseling.org](mailto:annualreport@counseling.org)

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