

# **Give Chapters a Hand: Awards of Excellence**

## **Illinois Chapter**

### **PART 2: EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION IN PROGRAMMATIC AREAS**

The AMTA-Illinois Chapter has identified eight key focus areas for the work of the Chapter that dictates the programs, products and services given to our members. These key focus areas also serve as a guideline to ensure that we are keeping with the AMTA-IL Mission "To serve AMTA Illinois Chapter Members while advancing the art, science and practice of massage therapy in the State of Illinois." Those areas are:

1. **Community Building:** to foster collegial relationships among the chapter members.
2. **Information Dissemination:** to keep the membership abreast of any news, information or knowledge that may affect their profession, roles and livelihood.
3. **Professional Development:** to assist members in acquiring the best training, skills and knowledge to meet licensing and certification requirements and to maintain the highest professional standards.
4. **Member Advocacy:** to promote and safeguard the practice and professionalism of massage therapy in Illinois.
5. **Public Awareness and Education:** to be a conduit for information regarding the profession of massage therapy to the public as a whole.
6. **Service:** to foster a regard for and involvement in service to the larger community through professional affiliations, donations and support.
7. **Leadership Development:** to provide a forum for members to grow and develop the skills to become leaders in the Association, profession and community.
8. **Recognition:** to publicly acknowledge the contributions that individuals and/or groups have made to the massage therapy profession in Illinois.

### **SERVICE TO OUR MEMBERS:**

In 2008, the AMTA-IL Chapter Members reported an 80% overall member approval rating up from 72% in 2007. This is an outstanding achievement as it far exceeds the average approval rating for non-profit membership associations of our size nationally. Here is why our members have honored the Chapter with that rating:

### **MEMBER MEET-UPS:**

During a state conference, AMTA-IL Chapter member Amy Malloy of Wilmette asked a question. "Wouldn't it be great if the Chapter could help get members together in some sort of social networking situation where we could discuss our issues, exchange ideas and information?" YES! That would be great! As a direct result of that question, the AMTA-IL Member Meet-Ups were born and have thrived and grown all over the state. These meet ups provide those networking opportunities and exchange of information and are currently being held in Belleville, Chicago, DeKalb, Oak Park, Rockford, Rock Island and Wilmette with many more to come. Average attendance at Meet-Ups range from 10-25 members and are held monthly or every other month. AMTA-IL Meet-Ups have been a huge success and will continue to be an exclusive membership benefit to AMTA-IL members.

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### **NEWSLETTER:**

Our newsletter "Keeping In Touch" is delivered to all members four times per year and to ALL licensed massage therapists at least once per year. In the recent Chapter Newsletter Reader Survey, 153 members responded to the overall quality of the newsletter with 10% Excellent, 42% Very Good and 36% Good. Some comments included "I like it a lot. Thank you for your efforts in putting out this publication. I believe it is very good for the profession." and "I like it because it is like a combo between a newspaper and a magazine. I feel like I perceive it to be more legitimate or scientific because of this format." There were also quite a few comments regarding suggested changes in format, use of color and alternative means of delivery. As a direct result of those suggestions, the Chapter formed a workgroup to review the design and delivery of the Chapter Newsletter and those suggestions are being considered and incorporated in the recommendation coming to the Board very soon.

### **EDUCATION:**

There were 60 hours of continuing education offered by the AMTA-IL Chapter from January 1, 2008 to February 28, 2009 with an average cost of \$10/CE. The AMTA-IL Chapter held two multi-day conferences as well as two stand along education events. We have consistently identified and provided for a variety of educational topics to suit the member interests based on survey responses including Advanced Modalities, Ethics, Ethics Panel Discussions, Professional Development as well as Research Literacy Courses. The Chapter held the larger conferences in areas which had a higher concentration of members, but also made a concentrated effort to hold educational opportunities where the non-member population was relatively high. This effort paid off, as many non-members soon became members as a result of their interaction with the Chapter. Local educators as well as nationally recognized presenters were either hired or donated their time to the Chapter to make these great educational opportunities happen.

### **NEW MEMBER PACKETS:**

Each new member of the AMTA-IL Chapter receives a "Welcome Packet" when they join the Chapter. The packet includes a personalized welcome letter, a chapter pin, copy of the AMTA-IL Standing Rules, copy of the Illinois Massage Licensing Act and Rules of Practice, current issue of the AMTA-IL Chapter Newsletter, an informational flyer on upcoming educational and networking opportunities, volunteer request form and a magnet with important contact information for the Chapter, the National AMTA, and regulatory agencies. This serves not only as an introduction to the Chapter but as a very valuable resource for new members to utilize the various benefits and services afforded them by their membership.

### **CHAPTER BREAKFAST:**

In 2008, the AMTA-IL Chapter hosted a "Member Breakfast" during the AMTA National Convention. Over 70 members from the Chapter were registered for the Convention and the event was a huge success. This event provides members with an opportunity to network with the Chapter Board as well as their fellow members. The chapter also invited various industry VIP's including AMTA National President MK Brennan, President-Elect Judy Stahl, Massage Therapy Foundation President Diana Thompson and President Elect Ruth Werner. It is an exciting and unique opportunity for our members to not only meet with key principals in the industry but also feel connected to the entire National Association and Foundation.

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### **RESEARCH:**

Recognizing that research in massage therapy is a crucial component to the success of massage therapists, the Chapter continues its support of the Massage Therapy Foundation \$1 Per Member Campaign, but has also begun various fundraising raffles that will help to support the work of the MTF. The Chapter also strives to provide members with educational opportunities specific to research and provides assistance to AMTA-IL members who are developing case study reports, community service grants or research grants through the Foundation. In 2008, Heather O'Leary, Chapter member and past award recipient of "Outstanding Contribution in Integrative Healthcare" (2007) received a Community Service Grant from the Foundation titled "Increasing Mother-Infant Interaction, decreasing depression: Teaching Infant Massage to Mothers with symptoms of Post Partum Depression." Great Job Heather! Also at the 2008 AMTA National Convention, AMTA-IL Chapter 3rd Vice President Dylan Lott presented a class in the Research Track on writing case reports. The class was very well received and was highly supported by the Chapter.

### **CREATING COMMUNITY BETWEEN THE ILLINOIS MASSAGE PROGRAMS AND AMTA-IL:**

The chapter has long recognized that the schools providing training for both entry-level as well as advanced education for the massage therapists are a vital piece to the success of the massage therapy profession as a whole. Illinois has the second largest number of AMTA School Members with 33 schools, yet have a total of 62 schools which teach entry level massage therapy programs. We recognized a real disconnect between the chapter and the school members and have responded with the School's Forum. As the heading suggests, the Chapter is attempting to facilitate a relationship with the school owners, directors, administrators and instructors to discuss and create an action plan as to how we can establish and maintain a mutually supportive relationship. We invite industry stakeholders including AMTA National Membership Staff, Members of the Illinois Massage Licensing Board (First Vice President Michael Hovi and Member At Large Dr. Patricia Benjamin are also members of the Illinois MLB), National Certification Board of Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork, Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards and representation from the Massage Therapy Foundation. We discuss the current industry research report, legislative issues which effect schools, benefits of school membership, teacher and student support, information dissemination and collaboration, as well as the opportunity to DIRECTLY ask questions of the organizations which represent and support the massage therapy profession. It is a unique opportunity, and to our knowledge the only program of its kind in the country. Our School's Forum was featured in the Winter 2009 Chapter Officer's Bulletin and we have reached out to and responded to requests from other state chapters as to how this program works and how to facilitate and organize it. This forum has not only enhanced the relationship between the chapter and both member and non-member schools, it has also generated new school members and volunteers.

### **VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT:**

From January 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009, the AMTA-IL Chapter has done an extensive amount of work in the area of volunteer management. We have held two ambassador trainings for Chapter volunteers, revised, reformatted and adopted a complete Board Manual which was adopted as one of the Chapter governing documents during a recent board meeting. Clear policies and procedures were outlined for the various products, programs and services offered by the Chapter, formalized and updated job descriptions for chapter board members, committee chairs, workgroups, board liaisons and other key roles for the Chapter. This manual not only serves as a clear outline for chapter management and the chapter management company, but also serves as a direct and clear methods to ensure smooth transition and succession planning for the Chapter Leadership. The board has also

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maintained its informal mentoring initiative with new officers and committee chairs and intends to formalize this mentoring plan in the coming months.

Our Awards program is strong and has served an important role to not only meet the focus areas of our Chapter, but to recognize and promote the "outstanding achievements" in the AMTA-IL massage therapy community. The development and maintenance of this program is directly attributed to the efforts of our Awards Chair, Past President and current Member At Large, Dr. Patricia Benjamin. We currently has eight awards including, Chapter Meritorious Award, Outstanding Contribution to Massage in Integrative Healthcare, Humanitarian Award, Distinguished Service Award, Rookie of the Year Award and Employer of the Year Award (less than 10 employees) and (more than 10 employees). The award recipients are recognized at our State Conference with a plaque, in the Chapter Newsletter, on the Chapter Website and through press releases sent to the recipients local newspapers. Our Meritorious Award winner is also sent to the National Convention to receive the award from the AMTA National President.

The chapter has also recognized the value of networking and training opportunities offered by the AMTA National Association and sends the entire Chapter Board of Directors to the AMTA National Convention for leadership training. The Chapter President also attends all National Board of Director meetings, Chapter President Council Meetings and develops future leaders through the Chapter Volunteer Orientation Program. The emphasis on Leadership Development of our Chapter volunteers is an area identified as a key focus of the Chapter and we are pleased and proud to see those efforts pay off as our Chapter President Christopher Alvarado was elected as the AMTA National Board of Directors Member At Large in December 2008. While our Chapter will no longer be blessed in a direct fashion with Chris' outstanding leadership, we are thrilled that he will be providing those skills to the National Board and the National Membership.

### **COMMUNITY BUILDING AND OUTREACH:**

On February 14, 2008, the tragic shooting at Northern Illinois University called the AMTA-IL Chapter membership into action. Due to the efforts of several Chapter members led by AMTA-IL Chapter 2nd Vice President Jennifer Butler and Outreach Team Coordinator Denise Kozel, the chapter was able to provide massage therapy to the relief workers and grief counselors of the University on campus in DeKalb, IL. Cyndy Wollenweber shared her experiences of the event with the National Office and was featured in the Winter 2009 Edition of the Chapter Officers Bulletin as well as on the Volunteer Experiences page located on the AMTA National Website.

We also participated in two massage therapy awareness days at the Illinois Capitol Building in Springfield, IL. Chapter members provided chair massage, fostered new and nurtured existing relationships with various legislators and staff as well as educated them about the massage therapy profession and the AMTA-IL Chapter specifically.

The chapter also provided massage therapy volunteers to the American Legislative Exchange Council, the American Heart Association event Start! Heart Walk in Grant Park (Chicago) as well as supporting various other outreach efforts that our members become involved in individually.

### **MEMBER RECRUITMENT:**

As we are all well aware, an association, particularly a non-profit association is only as strong as it's members. It is not only important to retain members, but to consistently provide an attractive culture which is fun, inclusive and professional but also responsive to the needs of the members. We have

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strengthened the relationship with our professional members as evidenced by our recent approval rating. In looking to the future of the chapter, and the Association as a whole, we focused a significant amount of effort in student recruitment. At the 2008 National Convention, then First Vice President Angela Palmier sat on the Student Recruitment Designee Training Program Panel to discuss the various experiences, successes as well as challenges that our Chapter had experienced with Student Recruitment. The Chapter also sent four additional volunteers to experience this training. The focus and attention paid to this effort resulted in the AMTA-IL Chapter winning the "Race To The Top" challenge. In a few short months, the chapter recruited 442 NEW student members, representing a 28% growth in the student member category. The Chapter efforts will be recognized in the April 2009 Issue of the Chapter Officer's Bulletin. We have also experienced an influx of new volunteers which is vital to the future growth of the chapter.

### **ADVOCACY:**

The State of Illinois passed the Massage Therapy Licensing Act in 2005 and have had relatively little issues to contend with regarding legislation or municipality ordinance issues....until 2008/2009. In 2008 several members reported issues with municipality ordinances which either prohibited or severely restricted or impeded their ability to practice. In addition, two pieces of legislation was introduced in both the Illinois House and Senate which could significantly effect not only the need for massage therapy training, but the actual practice of the profession itself. As the Chapter had little experience with these issues, we identified a real need to clearly define not only a strategy to deal with immediate unforeseen issues, but to dedicate resources to the development of a pro-active legislative agenda. The Chapter Lobbyist and AMTA-IL Chapter Member Maureen Mulhall, Government Relations Committee Chair Tracy Smodilla, and Government Relations Consultant Sally Hacking with the assistance of Bill Brown, National Government Relations Director are the key members of the "AMTA-IL Government Relations Dream Team." They have actively sought the support and activation of chapter members and have reached out to the Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals Organization to empower ALL massage therapists in Illinois to not only protect their profession but to become active participants in the efforts. While these issues are far from over, there has been some significant successes.

### **PART 3: OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO MEMBERS:**

John Quincy Adams said, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." The AMTA-IL Chapter embodies the sentiment of that quote and we would be proud to receive recognition for the activities of the Chapters on behalf of and because of our members.

**WEBSITE ADDRESS:** [www.amta-il.org](http://www.amta-il.org)

**NEWSLETTER ADDRESS:** [http://www.amta-il.org/about\\_news.htm](http://www.amta-il.org/about_news.htm)