

Long Island AASWG: Then and Now

Founded in 1994 by an organizing committee including Katy Papell, Steve Kraft, Mona Bokot, Shielas Goeckler, Eve Lodge and Sylvia Morris, an original goal of the LI chapter was to “focus on what is needed for group practice and how to get it.” The Ad Hoc Steering Committee for the Chapter included, in addition to the organizing committee above, Sylvia Aron, Judy Azzoto, Susan Bendor, Angel Campos, Lois Carey, Mel Goldstein, Larry Gum, Ivory Holmes, Andrew Malekoff, Angelina Martinez, Jacqueline Morgan, Edward Paley, David Perkins, Martin Seitz, Hillel Sternstein and Helaine Strauss. By July of 1995, the chapter became politically involved by gathering signatures for a petition addressed to then Governor Pataki opposing proposed budget cuts which would negatively affect group workers.

With the passage of time, LIAASWG made outreach to local schools and agencies seeking to both increase membership as well as awareness of the importance of group practice as part of the spectrum of social work modalities. The composition of the steering committee began to reflect this outreach and diversity of practice and came to include faculty, agency practitioners and private practitioners all of whom worked together to plan presentations that would be relevant and useful to group social workers.

Seeking to combine theory and practice in a wide range of practice settings, presentations addressed topics such as: “Social Work with Groups: What, Why, and Wherefore?,” Catherine P. Papell, “Dealing with Internal Group Obstacles,” Alex Gitterman, “Group work with Mandated Clients: Problem or Opportunity to Empower?,” a panel discussion and “Group Work and Trauma Theory,” Lois Carey.

In addition to presentations, LIAASWG has had supervision for group workers with special efforts being made after the events of 9/11 to respond to changing community needs. For a time, continuing education credits were made available for presentation attendance. At still another point in time, the upcoming annual AASWG symposium chair would make a scholarly presentation and use the opportunity to recruit potential attendees. More recently, post-presentation evaluation forms have become standard.

Three years ago, the chapter created a social work award for a BSW and an MSW student for creating and/or leading a group as part of their field practice. Students were invited to submit a written application describing their group and demonstrating how they had combined theory and practice. The award ceremonies for these prizes, including one year free chapter membership, a framed certificate and a subscription to the journal Social Work with Groups have been a source of pride and satisfaction for all involved in this unique endeavor.

The LI chapter continues to innovate as well as address current needs as they arise. Presentations have spanned the life cycle addressing Alzheimer’s disease as well as the spectrum of autism . Ethics has been covered recently with psycho-drama coming in the near future. Although our chapter is local, our members are also seeking to increase awareness of practice and issue differences on both a national and international level.

We welcome your interest and your questions.

Our current steering committee with member credentials follows:

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Steven Kraft, Symposium Liaison
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