

MN-IAFN NEWSLETTER – January

The President's Corner:

Happy 2015 and welcome to the Minnesota Chapter newsletter! As your new president I would like to extend an invitation to all of you to attend this year's annual business meeting, Monday, January 19th. Since elections have already been held, we will network, enjoy a catered dinner from Cossetta (free to IAFN members who sign up to be state chapter members that evening), discuss the chapter events from 2014, and make plans for this year. In addition, we will offer a CEU, a SANE will talk about her personal experiences. **RSVP's needed by January 16th**, you can do so at: www.mnforensicnurses.org.

I love new beginnings - it gives us a chance to grow, to learn from our past, and experience new things! We learn from others in so many ways. In my work as a public health nurse I have witnessed how childhood trauma can manifest into numerous physical and mental health issues into adulthood. Many of you are familiar with the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) study, the research has shown a correlation. What makes me sad is knowing that many of my patients have not found a supportive environment to heal from their wounds. In our role being trauma informed caregivers, it is imperative to discuss the effects of trauma and sexual assault in our communities, to educate those about the problems and let them know that survivors need caring and compassionate providers to help them in their journey.

In 2014 I've had the opportunity to expand my forensic knowledge by working as an on-call death investigator. To date I have responded to 35 deaths, from a young baby to elderly decedents. The "cause of death" has varied: heart disease, SIDS, gunshot wounds, drowning, cancer or other co-morbidities; then there is the "manner of death" - natural, accidents, homicide, suicides, and undetermined (body found in RV motorhome in Winona last May). After 14 years working as a SANE it is exciting to branch out into new areas!

I invite you to spread your wings and keep adding to your knowledge. On Friday, April 24th, our chapter will co-host a daylong conference with the BCA, to be held at their site in St. Paul. In the newsletter I intend to have book reviews, conference information and highlight various specialties in forensics. We, as a chapter, do better when many of us work together. Please give of yourself and your time, to

attend education events, share the information that our chapter provides and empower yourself and others in the work we do to prevent violence and work with those who have suffered from it. I hope to see you soon and best wishes for 2015!

BOOK REVIEW by Paula Johns

The Boy Who Was Raised As a Dog: and Other Stories From a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook, by Bruce Perry, M.D., Ph.D. and Maia Szalavitz

(Note: In November I attended a MNCASA symposium and had the opportunity to hear local Minnesotan, Russell Strand, speak about FETI (Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview) and what happens to brain development when experiencing trauma. Russell highly recommended this book, after reading it, I do too!)

In 1996 Dr. Perry founded the Child Trauma Academy in Houston, TX creating a team of specialists to work with traumatized children. This came about after he painfully learned in his psych residency and work as a child psychiatrist that there was little research on the short and long term effects of child abuse or substantiated therapy to adequately promote healing for those who had been traumatized.

In his book Dr. Perry chronicles numerous challenging cases, describing with compassion the learning steps that he and his colleagues underwent in working with abused children and describes the neuroscience of a hyperarousal stress system, dissociate state, and the responses of the brain. For instance, the Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) describes those who are unable to empathize or create a connection with others exhibiting antisocial behaviors because of not enough close, healthy physically and emotional bonding when young. This term, RAD, as well as other labels “being difficult”, “acting out”, etc. can influence providers, the school system, and social workers involved with “problem children”, when it may not be the child’s fault but their only way of dealing with their abuse or neglect.

Like the ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) study, this book provided me a better framework in understanding how critical early childhood relationships are, and that the neuroscience behind trauma and brain development can greatly alter a child’s outlook, behavior, and physical and mental wellbeing. Children, in particular, need to be heard by others and need to feel the impact of “love, support and encouragement” (p.5) in trusting relationships, for healing to take place.

SPOTLIGHT on DEATH INVESTIGATION

Roberta Geiselhart is passionate about her work at the Hennepin County Medical Examiner's office where she is the Supervisor of the Death Investigators. She started as a nursing student at UW-Madison and spent her junior year in Gilford, England as a Rotary student. During that time she needed to dissect a full cadaver for her studies, which started her foray and earned her an additional Human Anatomy degree. Back in the States she completed her BSN and began her nursing career working in Neurology and later the ICU at Abbott Hospital.

In 1986 she started as an on-call death investigator for Hennepin. Since then she has continued to advance her career, having been involved with more than 10,000 cases and being the only RN staffed there. She admits there have been challenges as it was often viewed as the "good old boys club"; she has also been pleased to see where advancements in DNA capabilities and genetic markers have made a difference in autopsies and death investigations.

Roberta states that death investigators need to be very compassionate, when handling the decedents and when speaking to the family and friends left behind. The suicides, especially of the young, and homicides, where the decedent struggled to stay alive tend to be some of the "haunting cases"; many times families are in complete shock and anger. Roberta does not classify herself as a "forensic nurse", instead she states she is a nurse that works in the area of forensics. If interested in this fascinating area of practice, the MN Coroners and Medical Examiner's Office holds a forensic science seminar every October in the Twin Cities.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES, TRAININGS, EDUCATION

January 8, 12noon-1:30pm (CT) Webinar: SVJI (Sexual Violence Justice Institute) Designing System Improvements for Deaf Survivors/Victims of Sexual Violence: The Experience in Rice County, MN <http://www.mncasa.org/calendar>

January 13, 2-3pm (ET) Webinar: National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), U.S. Department of Justice
<https://www.nttac.org/index.cfm?event=trainingCenter.traininginfo&EventID=1011&from=upcoming>

January 26-29: Chadwick Child Abuse Conference - San Diego, CA
<http://www.sandiegoconference.org/rates.html>

February 9-11: Domestic Violence Examiner Training (Classroom-Based) - Anchorage, AK <http://www.tribalforensichealthcare.org/content/domestic-violence-examiner-training-classroom-based-anchorage-ak>

February 16-21: AAFS (American Academy of Forensic Science) – Orlando, FL
<http://www.aafs.org/meetings/2015>

March 16-18: 2015 Conference on Crimes Against Women – Dallas, TX
<https://www.cvent.com/events/2015-conference-on-crimes-against-women/registration-c10a3a7cac7a4b32b026e54fa90d291e.aspx>

March 19-21: National Conference on Health and Domestic Violence, with pre-conference – Washington, DC <http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/events-calendar/national-conference-on-health-and-domestic-violence/>

April 7-9: EVAWI (End Violence Against Women International) Annual Conference - New Orleans, LA <http://www.evawintl.org/conferences.aspx>

April 16-17: BCA (Bureau of Criminal Apprehension) Death Investigation Conference - Brainerd Area, MN
<https://cjte.x.state.mn.us/ei/cm.esp?id=3&pageid=3C20W9MNY&showpage=WELCOME&src=eiscript&cd=15933794>

April 24: MN-IAFN Chapter and the MN BCA Conference – St. Paul, MN
<http://mnforensicnurses.org>