



# MFT Program Newsletter

Volume 5 June 2009

## MFT Program Update

As is the case with all healthy systems, our program is experiencing both change and continuity. In terms of change, we welcomed four new part-time faculty members this year - Dr. Joshua Madsen (Research), Dr. Ellen Stein (Law & Ethics), Dr. Steven Jella (Child Abuse), and Jessica Fodor (Self of the Therapist) - and welcomed back Dr. Don Myers (Assessment & Treatment of Child/Family). Saying hello to new faculty members was accompanied by the sadness of saying goodbye to cherished contributors to our program. Leita McIntosh-Koontz, who brilliantly taught the Child course for so many years, has left USD to devote more attention to her private practice and supervision of USD students at UCSD. Denice Davis, who somehow made Law & Ethics both engaging and less scary (my perspective), has left USD to make room for her growing divorce mediation practice.

Although the roster of full-time faculty members is intact, we've just completed three successive semesters of sabbaticals (Ana – Spring 2008, Lee – Fall 2008, Jo Ellen – Spring 2009). Fortunately, we'll be at full strength again in Fall 2009,

which will help us fully prepare for our AAMFT reaccreditation in 2010. In addition to preparing for national reaccreditation, the full-time faculty is discussing anticipated changes in California MFT curriculum requirements, which will likely require that programs expand to 60 units. In preparation for these changes, Ana will be teaching our newly revised Human Diversity course in the fall, which is increasing to three units.

Another significant change this year has been a new requirement that all MFT students have an international experience. In April 2008, I took eight Family Studies students to Hong Kong for a cultural immersion with a specific focus on grief and loss in Asian culture. Ana is taking her Diversity & Family Therapy students to Costa Rica in August.

We continue to recruit and graduate outstanding students – the heart and soul of our program. We had a record number of applications this year and look forward to welcoming 32 new MFT students this fall. Have a safe and happy summer!

*-Todd Edwards, PhD  
Associate Professor  
MFT Program Director*

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*Welcome to our new students, who began this spring!*

- Erin Hanley
- Kayla Jones
- Wendy Williams
- Kristina Stanford
- Joni Woodburn

## MFT Program Specialist: A Mantra For Change

Change. It's a word we use often as clinicians. It's a complicated term, often involving excitement and fear at the same time. It can be so overwhelming that we've developed a diagnosis to describe the potential effects it can have – Adjustment Disorder. After all, as we learn in our courses and witness in the therapy room, positive stress is still indeed stress, packaged with more attractive wrapping. I write to you now as the outgoing MFT Program Specialist, having recently decided to embark on a transition of my own. I am grateful for the opportunities I have had, meeting with and interviewing prospective students, collaborating with faculty and practicum sites, and interacting with alumni and members of the surrounding community. Simultaneously, I feel a sense of sadness in leaving a position that I have loved. Over the past three years, countless prospective

students have inquired about my personal feelings towards the program. Without a doubt, my post-graduate service as the Program Specialist is a testament to how I feel about the caliber of this program, the quality of its faculty, staff, and students, and the weight of its mission - to help lead the transformation of family therapy.

But it's not simply what I'm leaving behind that sparks multiple emotions; it's the road ahead that provokes stirring dreams and sleepless nights. Having obtained my MFT license in February, I am eager for change – change in clinical setting, change in responsibilities, perhaps even change in geographical location. With a strong conviction for working with military service members and their families, and a deep yearning to work and travel abroad (having recently submitted a UK work visa application, now pending approval), the ambiguity of my next step is

unsettling, though the possibilities are inspiring. I am hopeful that despite my step away from the MFT program at this time, my relationship with USD will remain, as serving this program in a professional capacity has certainly been a privilege. Thank you, to all the students, faculty, and alumni, for the opportunities I have had to represent and serve you, and for the many contributions you have made. I am confident in the incoming Program Specialist, recent alumna Gina Bongiorno, who has a palpable passion for this program that will serve her well.

Author Charles DuBois writes, "The important thing is this: To be able at any moment to sacrifice what we are for what we could become." Perhaps this will be my mantra for change.  
*-Brandina Morrison, '06  
Outgoing MFT Program Specialist*



## Dr. Margaret McCahill: Past Reflections and Future Directions

*Dr. Margaret McCahill, an integral member of the MFT faculty at USD, offers reflections on her many years in medicine, and her continuing role within the USD community.*

I've had the pleasure of teaching the Psychopharmacology course in the USD Marital and Family Therapy Program every semester since spring 2002. Getting to know MFT students in the classroom, and then so often meeting them again in clinical settings is a wonderfully rewarding experience, since this "small world" often enables that to happen. Now

***Congratulations to Dr. McCahill for being honored by the CA Medical Board with the 2008 Physician Humanitarian Award, recognizing her clinical work providing free care for those in need.***

I look forward to having even more time to give to my work at USD, since I've "retired" from full time service as a faculty physician at UCSD School of Medicine.

My career in medicine has enabled me to do many extraordinary things, including those you would expect, like delivering babies, assisting at surgery, treating hospitalized patients and home-bound patients, as well as doing all the tasks that a Family Physician does, plus those that a Psychiatrist does. Since I am Board Certified in both Family Medicine and Psychiatry, there have been some additional things I've been able to do, such as: providing care for both physical and mental illness to patients, as we sat on the floor of a Navajo "Hogan" in a remote part of the reservation; serving as a Psychiatrist in a U.S. Naval Hospital; working as a UCSD Faculty Physician, founding and directing a training program that enables physicians to become Board Certified in both Family Medicine and Psychiatry. I served as Medical Director at St. Vincent de Paul Village's medical clinic, providing

care for the homeless and those who live in poverty, training professionals in many health care disciplines and receiving many teaching awards along the way. It has been a busy 30 years or so, and I'll continue to do some of the teaching that I've done at UCSD, even in "retirement."

But the most exciting thing that I'm able to do today is to dedicate more time to the things that I love to do at USD – to teaching, and to providing medical consultation to the USD Wellness Services team. I look forward to continuing collaboration with USD colleagues I've known for the last decade, and to developing new relationships with those whom I have yet to meet. Of the many things it has been my privilege to do professionally, USD will top the list!

*-Margaret E. McCahill, M.D.  
Consulting Physician, USD Wellness Services  
Lecturer, USD MFT Program  
Health Sciences Clinical Professor of Family Medicine and Psychiatry, UCSD School of Medicine  
Diplomate, American Board of Family Medicine, Fellow, AAFP  
Diplomate, American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Distinguished Fellow, APA*

## Practicum Corner: UCSD Family Medicine

When Gary walked into his intake session at UCSD Family Medicine the first words out of his mouth were, "I'm going to give you three sessions and then I will determine if you're a good enough therapist to help me out." These are obviously not the words that a beginning therapist wants to hear. Gary continued his opening remarks by asking me very direct questions about my credentials, experience working with patients with his particular problem, and religious convictions (he made it clear it was important to him that he had a therapist who valued religion). My initial reaction was to search the databank in my head of all the advice I had received from our masterful instructors at USD, trying to recall what was said about working with clients who are defended and initially ask direct, personal questions. Then it came to me: what is he really saying to me right now? He's asking, "Can you help me?" The only thing I could think to do in the moment was normalize the experience for him. I told Gary that most people want to find a therapist who will help them, a therapist whom they can trust and feel

connected to. Gary's entire tone changed after that; he was more relaxed and better able to focus on himself, rather than being concerned with me.

After eight sessions of interpersonal psychotherapy, it was time to terminate with Gary. We reviewed his progress and discussed his newly-found strengths. Gary was impressed that talking about his recent role transition at work and addressing his interpersonal deficits helped decrease his

depression so quickly. I couldn't stop myself from reminding Gary that he never had a talk with me at the end of the third session, to determine whether or not I was a "good enough therapist." He laughed and said, "Oh Jenn, I had that figured out after the first ten minutes the day we met. Thanks for sticking with me." Now *that* is what a beginning therapist wants to hear!

*-Jenn Mosher, '09*





### ***Congratulations MFT Class of 2009!***

- ***Tanesha Adams***
- ***Gina Bongiorno***
- ***Lindsay Cherevka***
- ***Lara Chittum***
- ***Kristina Davies***
- ***Emily Ferguson***
- ***Rebecca Grover***
- ***Alyssa Halberg***
- ***Philip Hewett***
- ***Mary Jimenez***
- ***Michaella Jinnette***
- ***Nancy Kassel***
- ***Julie Kraft***
- ***Anna Lee***
- ***Jenn Mosher***
- ***Jennyanne Parr***
- ***Natalie Pearson***
- ***Ashley Pinkeney***
- ***Kiley Ray***

- ***Minna Rogers***
- ***Anna Santangelo***
- ***Sachiyo Shiraki***
- ***Lindsay Simon***
- ***Rachael Souter***

- ***Jeehee Sung***
- ***Vicente Vargas***
- ***Theresa Viglizzo***
- ***Monica Votaw***



### ***Reflections upon Graduation from USD***

As we approach the end of our graduate career, I am both proud and appreciative of our journey here. From orientation to commencement, the two years in between have been defined by hard work, commitment, and remarkable relationships. I remember arriving from Canada, wondering if I had made the right decision to move so far from home. Would USD turn out to be more than manicured lawns and immaculate buildings? From the first week of class, though, I knew there was something about this program that set it apart from the other MFT programs across the country. The

experience of feeling connected to my peers, my professors, and to the material I was learning sparked a metamorphosis in me - a growth, both personal and professional, which was nurtured by a year of clinical experience unlike any other.

When you think about the scope of individuals we, as a graduating class, have counseled in our practicum year alone, you cannot help but be in awe of the magnitude of our reach. Combined, we have touched the lives of hundreds of clients. From those suffering with depression and anxiety, to those living with abuse and isolation; from children to the elderly;

from the homeless to the wealthy, we have each had a hand in affecting their lives. Had it not been for the wealth of knowledge we gained from our professors, the hours of therapy videos we reviewed, and the exams and papers we completed, we could not have become the highly-skilled professionals we are today. As we move our tassels from right to left, let us not forget that the foundation of our future lies in the education we received here - the fundamental values, ethics, and skills that will forever set us apart from the rest. Congratulations Class of 2009!  
-Gina Bongiorno, '09

***"Events and circumstances have their origins in ourselves. They spring from seeds which we have sown." - Henry David Thoreau***



## Practicum Corner: UCSD Pediatrics

***"Being effective in a cotherapy relationship requires a willingness to be vulnerable and acknowledge one's shadow."***

The most rewarding experience in my practicum year has been the opportunity to conduct cotherapy with my fellow trainee, Mika Nakamura. The practicum experience itself is a trial by fire. David Schnarch, in *Passionate Marriage*, has a chapter entitled "Nobody is ready for marriage." I wonder if the same is not true for doing therapy. In my experience, it is certainly true of cotherapy.

There's not a lot written about doing cotherapy and what is written isn't about trainees doing cotherapy, though some basics do apply. In doing cotherapy, tending to the relationship between the cotherapists and their process provides the foundation for effective therapeutic work.

Being effective in a cotherapy relationship requires a willingness to be vulnerable and acknowledge one's shadow. *Yes, I am thinking about how I will be viewed by my cotherapist. Yes, I feel like I'm competing with her sometimes. Yes, my insecurities get triggered in session. No, I don't feel very competent right now.* These are all things that need to be shared in the debrief; otherwise, they are likely to leak out in and/or undermine the treatment.

Being effective in a cotherapy relationship requires a willingness to listen and follow. Five times out of six, when Mika was leading a line of inquiry and a question would come to my mind, she would cover my question and more. Very

rarely would I interrupt, and when I did, I acknowledged the interruption and asked for permission.

Cotherapy gives you the opportunity to assume differentiated roles. One cotherapist can lead, while the other cotherapist pays careful attention to non-verbal communication and gains a deeper view of the process. Cotherapy allows you to model a respectful relationship to your clients. You can show clients how to apologize, how to listen, and how to regard one another. Cotherapy also provides you someone with whom to share experiences and offers avenues to give and receive validation and support.

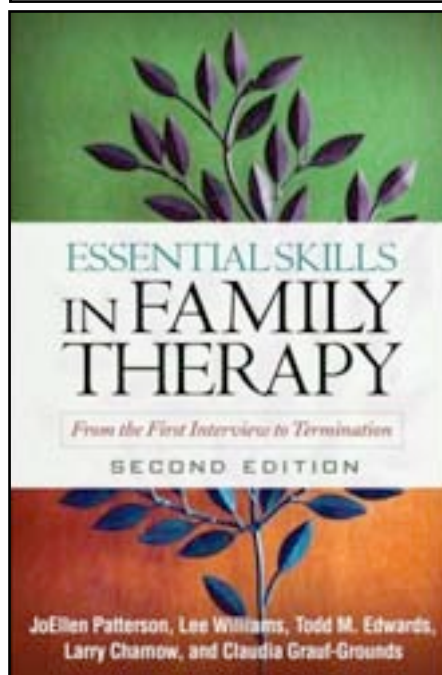
Before session, Mika and I would review where we had ended in the previous session and where the therapy might be headed. We would also agree upon our roles - who would be the lead, and who would be more of an observer. These were not hard-and-fast decisions; rather, they would provide a starting point.

After session, we would tend to our process and experiences of the therapy first. We would begin every debrief with our personal reactions and any issues that came up for us during the session. Here, we would take ownership of "unacceptable" feelings, such as jealousy or pique, and acknowledge our anxieties, feelings of incompetence, or maybe even shame. Next, we would discuss the case,

our observations, and our hypotheses, and sharpen our sense of where we are and how we might proceed.

The best and most fulfilling work I did this year was in collaboration with Mika, and I am grateful to her and for having had this opportunity. I have gained the utmost respect and admiration for my cotherapist and feel a lasting bond forged with her that I will carry with me. I wish that every practicum student could have such an opportunity. If you should find yourself in a cotherapy role, consider consulting *The art of co-therapy: How therapists work together*, by Bill Roller and Vivian Nelson (New York : Guilford Press, c1991), available in the USD Copley Library.  
-Vicente Vargas, '09

## Practicum Placements 2009-2010



### Catholic Charities

- Jennifer Galvis
- Megan Jones
- Mariana Mesnik

### Children's Outpatient Psychiatry

- Kendall McCartney (Central)
- Kelsey Peck (Escondido)
- Jessica Robledo (Oceanside)

### Harmonium

- Chelsea Keller
- Jacqueline Leong

### Phoenix House

- Katherine LaMee
- Maria Pizano
- Brianna Salinas

### San Diego Hospice

- Nathan Cressall
- Andrea Obst

### St. Vincent De Paul

- Christina Arvallo

### UCSD Family Medicine

- Leila Aftahi
- Laureen Copfer
- Tania Riosvelasco
- Laura Sudano

### UCSD Outpatient Psychiatric Services

- Shannel Busuioc
- Nicolle Clemmer

### VA Hospital

- Benjamin Inouye
- Jodi Staszak

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**Dr. Stefanie Carnes: From USD to Pine Grove Behavioral Health and Addiction**

I look back fondly on the days I worked on my Masters degree at USD in 1995 and 1996. I remember long agonizing hours of studying for comps in the library, the harrowing experience of interviewing for a practicum placement, and the even scarier experience of meeting my very first therapy client - a man who had recently been released from prison after doing hard time for manslaughter and was struggling with the adjustment to society as a convict. All of these wonderful growth experiences were outshined by the friendships made, and the incredible supervision and training I received from the faculty at USD. After completing my doctorate in 2000, I was given the opportunity to serve as adjunct faculty, an experience I treasure to this day. It was such an honor to work beside the faculty I respected so much and to work with such motivated and dedicated students. I taught classes such as family studies, gender, assessment, practicum and everyone's favorite...research!

Since leaving USD, I have specialized in working with individuals and families struggling with sexual addictions. I am the director of one of the nation's premier residential treatment programs for the treatment of sexual addiction, the Gentle

Path program, at Pine Grove Behavioral Health and Addiction Services in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Gentle Path is a voluntary program for people who have destroyed their lives with out of control sexual behavior, including everything from professional sexual boundary violations, voyeurism, exhibitionism, anonymous sex, affairs, prostitution, and of course our most common presenting problem, cybersex – in it's many forms. When working with this population everyday is a new adventure. Just when I think I have heard it all.....

Due to the fact that I had systemic principals permanently etched into my brain back in 1995, we have a strong family therapy component to our treatment process. The families of our patients come in for one week of intensive family therapy during their stay. As you can imagine, the families are devastated and struggling with feelings of betrayal, shame, and pain. It was these families that inspired me to write my first book, "Mending a Shattered Heart: A Guide for Partners of Sex Addicts." Navigating family therapy with this population is a minefield and requires special training. Currently I serve as a faculty member and supervisor for the

***"...the families are devastated and struggling with feelings of betrayal, shame, and pain...Navigating family therapy with this population is a minefield."***

certified sex addiction therapist training process.

When I look back at my experience and training from USD, the foundation of my clinical experience was so strong and really assisted me in becoming the clinician I am today. I use so much of the training from USD that I learned way back in 1995 on a daily basis (especially boundaries!). Congratulations to all of the 2009 graduates! You can rest assured that you will reap the benefits of your education for years to come!

*-Stefanie Carnes, PhD*

**April 2009 International Immersion: MFT Students in Hong Kong**



## USD MFT Alumni: Where Are They Now?

**Katherine Reeve Balls, '02:** Lives in San Diego, and is a stay-at-home mom for her twin daughters. Plans to return to clinical work in the future.

**Michelle (Bipat) Behrooznia, '05:** Working for the Anxiety & Traumatic Stress Disorders Program through UCSD Department of Psychiatry. Collaborating on three treatment outcome studies: 1) brain imaging for GAD and Panic Disorder; 2) collaborative care for children with anxiety disorders; and 3) PTSD and domestic violence.

**Neena (Gokli) Brammer, '03:** Works as a school-based counselor at Pine Hill School in San Jose, CA, providing individual therapy and IEP assistance to children with emotional disturbances and special needs, ranging in age from 1st-12th grade.

**Hernando Chavez, '03:** In private practice in Beverly Hills, CA, focusing on the treatment of sexual minorities and sexual issues. Also a college professor teaching human sexuality, lectures nationally and internationally on sexuality issues, leads workshops and educational seminars, and writes website articles for VHI's *The Pick-Up Artist*.

**Joshua Cruz, '06:** Working at Summit Oaks Hospital in Summit, NJ, a private psychiatric and chemical dependency facility. Practices as a crisis and assessment clinician, and is looking ahead professionally to becoming certified as a Jungian Analyst with the Assisi Institute in Vermont.

**Ana (Molina) Day, '05:** In addition to caring for her 11-month old, works in Eugene, OR, for OSLC Community Programs, an agency dedicated to evidence-based Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC). Serves as a program supervisor, coordinating the treatment team for a caseload of 5 youths and providing foster parent support and crisis management.

**Kristin Donahue, '07:** Working for the Fleet and Family Support Center in San Diego, providing therapy to active duty and retired military personnel and their families. Also teaches in the Return to Reunion program, providing support to sailors as they return home from deployment.

**Todd Huisken, '94:** Director of LDS Family Services, a counseling and adoption agency in Orange and San Diego Counties.

**Bindu Khurana, '05:** Working as a Care Advocate at United Behavioral Health, serving in Utilization Management to ensure proper utilization of Medi-Cal funds for mental health services. Also a Social Worker at a group home, and a clinician in private practice, specializing in grief, domestic violence, and eating disorders. Will serve as President of SD CAMFT beginning this fall.

**Andrea (Boylan) Laurenzano, '06:** Until December 2008, had been practicing Functional Family Therapy (FFT) with Greater Lakes Mental Health Care in Tacoma, WA, providing FFT to adolescents on probation and their families. Currently a full-time mom.

**Emily Naughton Lindley, '04:** Currently married with a 9-month old daughter, and working part-time for PsyCare in Poway, CA. Also working on her dissertation for her PsyD in MFT from Alliant, with a focus on Bowen Theory and Parenting.

**Jennifer Lundy, '02:** In private practice at Positive Change Counseling Center in La Mesa, CA, providing support to adolescents and adults struggling with anxiety, depression, PTSD and relationship issues. Also works part-time as a Research Therapist at the VA, providing Prolonged Exposure therapy for Veterans with PTSD.

**Victoria Matney, '08:** Working full-time as an MFT Registered Intern at Center for Community Solutions, a non-profit organization dedicated to healing and preventing Sexual Assault & Relationship Violence. Also expecting twins in November!

**Karen Mehringer, '01:** Is the author of *Sail Into Your Dreams: 8 Steps to Living a More Purposeful Life*, an inspirational speaker, psychotherapist, life coach and the founder of Creative Transformations. Lives in Parker, CO and practices therapy in the greater Denver area. Specialties include life purpose and direction, life transitions, personal empowerment, and relationship issues. [www.LiveAPurposefulLife.com](http://www.LiveAPurposefulLife.com)

**Christina Neumeyer, '95:** In private practice in Carlsbad, CA. Also working on a VA/UCSD research study to provide telemedicine for veterans with PTSD, using

Prolonged Exposure Therapy. Teaches a Beginning Meditation Course for San Diego Adult Ed, and volunteers as a Breastfeeding Educator, conducting monthly support groups for pregnant women and new mothers.

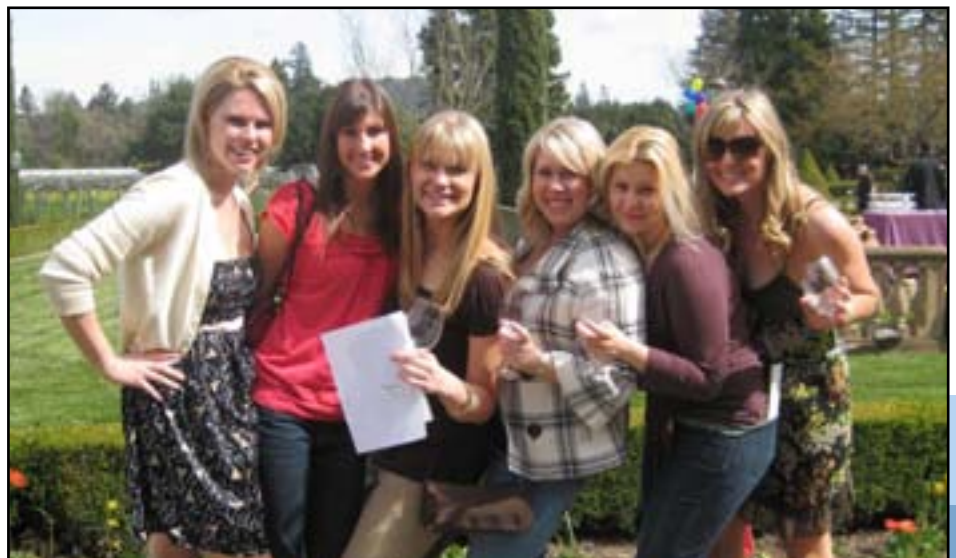
**Stephanie Rebhan, '06:** Working in North Texas at an intensive outpatient counseling center for senior adults, a collaborative program that services patients from nursing homes, assisted living, or private residences. Provides therapy to patients with mood disorders and mild dementia/early onset Alzheimer's, and is currently working towards MFT licensure in Texas.

**Juliet Schmitt, '94:** Practicing clinically at Psychiatric Centers of San Diego, in San Marcos, CA. Specializes in working with families with children, typically presenting with issues such as ADHD, parenting, couples with marital discord, women with Bipolar Disorder, children and adults with anxiety, and teens with depression and self-injurious behavior.

**Phaedra Scoortis, '03:** Working in private practice in Mission Valley, primarily with foster youth and their families, presenting with attachment disorders, adjustment problems, depression, anxiety, ADHD, and ODD. Also supervises MFT Interns, and teaches a county/Grossmont college class to therapists, social workers, and parents, entitled "Attachment Parenting," focusing on attachment-building techniques and parenting skills in relation to foster/adopted children.

**Shari Soll, '08:** Currently working at the Alcott Center for Mental Health Services, an outpatient community mental health clinic in Los Angeles. Conducting case management and therapy with severely mentally ill adults.

*Thank you to the above-named contributing alumni! Congratulations on all of your endeavors and accomplishments.*



Above: MFT Alumnae and friends at Barrel Tasting Weekend in the Russian River Valley