

The top of the page features a photograph of green ferns. Overlaid on the left side of this image is the acronym "NCCA" in a large, light green, serif font.

NCCA

Carolina Counselor

Summer 2024

Official Newsletter of the North Carolina
Counseling Association

Carolina Counselor



Official Newsletter of the NCCA

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thank you to our 2023-2024
NCCA Officers

Counseling Compact in
Progress

Have a Contribution for the Newsletter?

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2023-2024 Executive Officers

President: Andrea Barbian

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McCullough

President-Elect-Elect: Shanita Brown

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Government Relations: Bill Stewart

Member-at-Large: Keisha Rogers

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Published June 2024

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Thanks for Reading!

Please submit to the *Carolina Counselor* when you have something to share with professional counselors in North Carolina.

Carolina Counselor Sections

Branch News:

News about the North Carolina branch of the American Counseling Association

Campus Happenings:

News concerning student projects and student work in the department, university, community, and/or professional organizations such as local chapters of CSI and/or state, regional, and national counseling organizations

Diversity and Advocacy:

Discussion of issues related to diversity, multicultural competency, and advocacy; may address the helping professions directly or indirectly

Division News:

Any news related to NCCA division projects

Higher Education in NC:

Comments on the state of higher education in North Carolina and tips for effective teaching/counseling

Legislative News:

State and national news concerning enacted and proposed policy changes related to professional counselors in any setting

Member Spotlight:

NCCA members who deserve the spotlight! Please provide a photo of the nominee, a short summary of the member's accomplishments, and contact information/photo of your nominee

Perspectives From the Field:

Professional and ethical issues in counseling, counseling theory/practice, and/or reflections on work as a student, professional counselor, counselor supervisor, and/or counselor educator

NCCA membership is required to submit articles.

Branch News

Thanks to Our Outgoing 2023-2024 NCCA Officers

2023-2024 Executive Officers

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| President: | Andrea Barbian |
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| Member-at-Large Government Relations: | Bill Stewart |
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Division News

MGCA-NC: First Responders, CEs & Students... Oh My!

By Bill Stewart

As we head into the 2024-2025 year, the MGCA-NC team is excited about our momentum. Last year, we offered 9 CEs that focused on how therapists can work with the military and first responder communities with speakers from North Carolina and across the country. In addition, we hosted a panel on working with military at the annual NCCA meeting. Our goal is to help our members understand the unique needs of the military and first responder populations so we can better assist them.

For North Carolinians, these populations are extremely important. North Carolina has the fourth largest active-duty military population and the 7th largest population of veterans. These veterans are dying by suicide at a 55% higher rate than non-military civilians. Although statistics around first responders are not as well publicized, our first responders are showing some of the same mental health challenges as our military given the trauma they are exposed to on a regular basis. We owe it to these communities to provide the best care possible.

A few things about joining MGCA-NC. First, you do not have to be a current or former member of the military or first responder communities. The focus of this

Bill Stewart is a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor – Associate who works in private practice where he spends part of his time working with the military community. Bill is a former president of the Military and Government Counseling Association of North Carolina and the former Member-at-Large for Government Affairs for NCCA. Prior to becoming a counselor, Bill served as a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne followed by a career at Johnson & Johnson. Bill also holds an MBA from Duke University.



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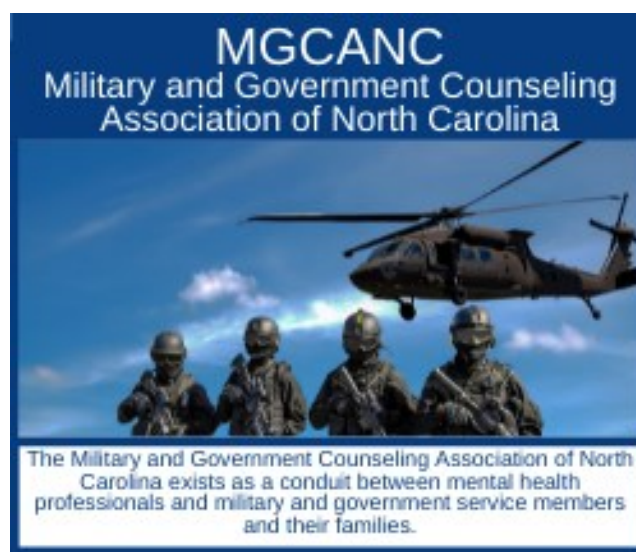
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MGCA-NC: First Responders, CEs & Students... Oh My!

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group is on counselors who are well-prepared to support the unique needs of these communities who experience so much trauma in the course of their duties. Our programs last year focused on PTSD treatments, the impact of PTSD on family members, and understanding pharmaceutical options for clients with anxiety, depression, or PTSD. We are actively preparing a slate of CE courses for the NCCA membership in 2024 and 2025, which will continue to include more training on working with first responders. As a reminder, these courses are discounted for NCCA members and free for MGCA-NC members.

We hope you are able to join MGCA-NC or to attend one of our training events. We welcome all new members and can use more hands-on deck to support the programming for 2024-2025.



Division News

NCASGW: Rediscovering Group- A Win-Win-Win for Practitioners

By Ann Gregory

As a counselor educator, I rarely meet a future practitioner interested in group counseling. In my curiosity, I sought to find professionals in private practice who lead group, which I have found to also be rare. However, I would like to challenge you to consider the win-win-win aspect of group counseling in what is proving to be an unprecedented time in the mental health world right now. Research has been flooded with studies on the influence of the pandemic, and social anxiety is a prime factor emerging for people of all ages (Kindred & Bates, 2023). This fact, along with the de-stigmatization of mental health issues in the media, has caused a demand for services like we have never seen. As you think about your own client population, consider the impact that groups may have, particularly for those who may be school-aged children, young adults, or a part of the growing elderly population, all who are developmentally in social transition.

A win for your clients. Offering group counseling can be a great option for clients who are on a waiting list for individual therapy. This may also be a great option for those who still struggle with the stigma of mental health as it may ease them into being comfortable doing the work. Additionally, participating in group is more cost effective for those who are self-pay. The time limit helps the commitment to be manageable and they may not feel as overwhelmed; of course, with that, group has a way of uncovering the specifics that these folks may want to work on individually in the future. Ultimately, there are more practical reasons that group may work for folks, but in all seriousness, group is the practice field for life- clients will get real life experience engaging with others, which cannot be duplicated in individual therapy. While the convenience will attract them, the practical skills they develop will be life changing.

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A win for your practice. Offering group can broaden your reach in the community. Depending on the population you serve, this may even reach beyond your clients if you meet “on location” like at a school or in an independent living facility for older adults. The basic human need for belonging may spark interest in your next group. Seeing the benefit of involvement reflected in the members may also cause those in leadership in the facility, school, or organization to ask you to do a workshop or even talk about your next group to the larger population they serve.

A win for you. At the end of the day, this is your job and for some of you it is your business. Offering group can help navigate the increasing demand for help without increasing the demand on your calendar. You can serve 8-12 adults in an hour and a half weekly. While they pay a discounted rate, the amount for your time will likely increase. After your group has concluded, you may have members wanting to continue with individual therapy and you will have better insight into a good match for them and the work they want to do- whether with you or a colleague.

Overall, offering group can be a win-win-win scenario for you, your clients, and your practice. If you are interested in learning more or having more hands-on help and collaboration, please join the NCASGW [here](#). We would love to be a community to help one another as we develop into better practitioners!

Ann Gregory, PhD
President, NCASGW

Reference: Kindred, R., & Bates, G. (2023). The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on social anxiety: A systematic review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(3), 1-28.
doi:10.3390/ijerph20032362

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Higher Education in NC

Take-Aways from Implementing Service Learning in Counselor Education

By Alyx Beckwith

The counseling field is deeply committed to community engagement, as masters programs require students to complete a counseling practicum and internship in the community to graduate. These experiences typically occur at the end of a student's graduate school journey, and are pivotal capstones of their knowledge and skill development. Prior to practicum, however, there are limited opportunities for students to engage with the community directly. Service learning projects integrated into counseling courses enable faculty to “develop desired qualities in beginning counselors while giving them opportunities to network and more fully integrate material” (Langellier et al., 2020, p. 197). Such efforts have also been found to “benefit students while simultaneously fulfilling ethical obligations encompassing competency in working with diverse populations” (Gehlert et al., 2014. p. 38). Additionally, experiential learning in counselor education programming can enhance students’ commitment to social justice advocacy (Decker et al., 2016).

Offering Early Service Learning Opportunities

Although there is a need for more research on the efficacy of service learning in counselor education, the data that exist emphasize a focus on including service

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Take-Aways from Implementing Service Learning in Counselor Education

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learning early in a counselor-in-training's graduate career (Alvarado & Gonzalez, 2013; Gehlert et al., 2014; Langellier et al., 2020). Integrating service learning in introductory counseling courses allows students to engage with communities they wish to serve and to observe sociopolitical issues that community groups encounter well before students get to practicum and internship and are expected to provide counseling services (Langellier et al. 2020). In addition to these benefits, Gehlert et al. (2014) propose that offering service learning projects early in a masters program can also serve a potential gatekeeping role, as students may find that the experience either confirms their desire to become a counselor or causes them to consider whether a different field may be a better fit.

Faculty Experience of Service Learning

Having recently infused a service learning project into an introductory counseling course, I found that doing so enriches my course and provides meaningful learning experiences for students. As an Engaged Faculty Scholar with North Carolina Campus Engagement (NCCE), a network of 38 colleges and universities across the state, I received professional development from the collective, which among other projects, promotes community engaged teaching and leadership (NCCE, n.d.). I have yet to conduct research into the service learning component of my course and plan to do so in future semesters; there are, however, general take-aways and an invitation that I wish to share.

For my Introduction to Clinical Mental Health Counseling course, students were required to (1) complete a minimum of 6 hours of volunteer work at a community partner organization over the course of the semester, (2) create a presentation about their experiences and the organization with whom they volunteered, and (3) write a reflection paper. Because students enter counselor education programs

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with such a variety of professional and academic backgrounds, I believe that it is essential to offer several choices for service learning projects to accommodate the interests and experience levels of as many students as possible. Providing choice in assignments is also in line with trauma-informed teaching practices (McMurtrie, 2020).

It was important to me that I build a relationship with a community partner organization before the student began their volunteer work there. As such, I required that students choose among existing community partners, rather than finding their own site. The most significant challenge that I experienced in implementing a service learning project was: finding community partners who were interested in welcoming short-term volunteers and had enough openings to accommodate more than one student. Despite the challenges, I was successful in building strong partnerships with the National Alliance on Mental Illness North Carolina (NAMI NC), the Licensed Clinical Counselors of North Carolina (LCCNC), and strengthening a partnership with my own counselor education program's Eagle Counseling, Consultation, and Research Clinic (ECCRC) at North Carolina Central University.

To be successful in implementing service learning as a counselor educator, I always need more partnerships! In my online class, students attend from across the state and as such, there is a need for partner organizations across NC. I invite counselors working in communities throughout the state to consider how graduate student volunteers could support your work. Service learning in counselor education represents a real opportunity to further strengthen the ties between universities and community partners, an opportunity that is mutually beneficial. If you are interested in having a masters student support your work, I

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invite you to contact me or a counselor education program in your area to discuss possible service learning opportunities.

One important take-away I have learned from using service learning in my class is the importance of collective reflection to the service learning process (Guthrie & McCracken, 2010). As adult learners in an online class, students often work independently and engage in service learning in an individual capacity according to their own busy schedules. Providing space to reflect and synthesize with classmates on their experiences, feelings that came up, ideas that were generated, problems overcome, and challenges experienced during their respective volunteer projects is a valuable component of quality service learning (Guthrie & McCracken, 2010). Thus far, I have included only individual reflection in my class and will work to change that in future. Additionally with regard to strengthening the student experience, I suspect that providing a platform for students to share their presentations about the work they have done in their community with an audience beyond the class could be useful and satisfying to students. I am considering ways to showcase their work to broader audiences.

Conclusion

Counselor educators are tasked with building the self-efficacy of our students, as well as enhancing their counseling knowledge and skills. One possible way to enhance the self-efficacy of counselors-in-training is by promoting a sense of mattering. Mattering has been defined as “the experience of feeling valued and adding value” (Prilleltensky, 2019, p. 2). Focusing on ways to facilitate how much counseling students matter by providing opportunities to meaningfully engage with communities in mental health prevention, outreach, or education work, as

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they build professional skills and knowledge, is worthwhile for counselors and counselor educators alike.

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Thanks for Reading!

Do you have a contribution for the
Carolina Counselor?
Would you like to discuss a potential idea for this
newsletter?

email Nicole Stargell at nccounselingassociationweb@gmail.com

NCCA membership is required to submit articles to the *Carolina Counselor*.

Submission Deadlines

Spring: February 28

Summer: May 31

Fall: August 31

Winter: November 30

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Carolina Counselor Editor



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Carolina Counselor Assistant Editor



Vanessa Doran, MAEd, LCMHC, NCC currently works at Jodi Province Counseling Services, PLLC in Jefferson, NC serving a rural community with an array of mental health needs. As a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor and National Certified Counselor, she works with children as young as 2 years old to adults ages 40+, and everyone in between. Vanessa thoroughly enjoys working with middle and high school age kids and utilizing CBT, Person Centered, and Existential Theory in her counseling office. She graduated with an MAEd in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from the University of North Carolina Pembroke in 2016, and her BA in Psychology with a minor in Sociology from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Vanessa enjoys learning about Expressive Arts therapy, Animal Assisted Therapy, and Play Therapy.

Wrapping up the School Year

“Dedicated to the growth and development of the counseling profession and those who are served.”

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- The fundamental purposes of the North Carolina Counseling Association shall be:
- To provide a united organization through which all persons engaged or interested in any phase of the counseling profession can exchange ideas, seek solutions to common problems, and stimulate their professional growth.
 - To promote professional standards and advocacy for the counseling profession.
 - To promote high standards of professional conduct among counselors.
 - To promote the acceptance and value of individual differences and the well-being of all individuals.
 - To conduct professional, educational, and scientific meetings and conferences for counselors.
 - To encourage scientific research and creative activity in the field of counseling.
 - To become an effective voice for professional counseling by disseminating information on, and promoting, legislation affecting counseling.
 - To encourage and support the divisions and chapters.

NCCA Board of Directors: <https://www.n2ca.org/board-of-directors>

Join NCCA: <https://n2ca.memberclicks.net/join>

The NC Counseling Association, a state branch of the American Counseling Association, represents professional counselors in various work settings.

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The North Carolina Counseling Association represents diverse interests of its membership through an Executive Council, geographically located members, specialty organizations, and committees.

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