



The Normative Times

The New North American Family Institute Monthly Newsletter

Dr. Bakal's Corner



The Culture of Conferences

Large organizations such as ours are often faced with this dual challenge:

1. How to continue and allow intimate and decentralized functions so that the different parts of the organization feel empowered and stay connected to local communities and concerns and;
2. How to remain connected and stay true to the same mission and continue to focus on the same vision.

NAFI/NFI has been quite successful in addressing these challenges. We are constantly empowering our programs to take responsibility and be innovative and we all continually strive to keep the connections alive.

The annual national Conference is one of the primary ways of keeping us connected. It provides us with the opportunity to do a lot of sharing and to learn from one another. Every year at the conference, we are also able to rediscover each other's new endeavors and ways of working with clients.

Our policy to keep presenters only who are members of the organization has yielded many benefits over the years. We've discovered time and again the level of talent that exists here, within NAFI/NFI.

It is always refreshing to see individuals from various parts of the organization find colleagues to connect and share with over the course of the three days. It is akin to a large family meeting at a reunion. Just as important, it also gives us the opportunity to recharge our batteries and get new ideas by discovering the uniqueness and strength of each other.

Celebrated since 1993, 2006 marks NAFI/NFI's 14th Annual Conference. See you all in October!!

The Importance of Regional Conferences

Jill DiChiara, Program Development and Marketing Project Manager

Like many companies, NAFI/NFI hosts an annual Conference where all facets and arms of the parent company can come together to celebrate the successes of the past year and look forward with anticipation to what is in store for the year ahead. It is a wonderful way to touch base with people we may not work with on daily, weekly or even monthly basis and also reminds us all that regardless of our particular positions, we are part of something larger than our individual department, state or region.

Just as it is important to have this annual "meeting of the minds," it is also vital that we have the opportunity to have a similar check-in with our own state or regional employee community. Where the Annual Corporate Conference is comprised of traditional conference activities, such as workshops, seminars and evening banquets, these smaller regional conferences often afford each region the opportunity to gather in celebration of their own group, usually with very creative results.

In admiration of that creative spirit, we'd like to share with the entire community, a few highlights of this year's various regional conferences:

Taking Time to Recharge at NFI North: The annual Leadership Retreat at Attitash Grand was held in early June. This two-day event has become the keystone of leadership team development and organizational strategic planning for NFI North. The group combines business with pleasure, allowing plenty of opportunity to build relationships, share events, celebrate traditions and tell stories of their history. This year, over 40 participants attended, including the Administrative team, Program Directors and Assistant Directors and other various managerial staff. The theme was "Making Meaning in your Organization." They focused on nurturing a culture that is meaningful and encourages membership. The group also looked at evidence-based practices within services and discussed how to improve data collection, report outcome measures and promote the high quality of services.

There were rave reviews from the attendees about the great energy and use of time this year. NFI North is now following up on the input and feedback generated



The recent NFI North Leadership Retreat at Attitash Mountain

to produce a report of action harnessing many of the ideas that circulated during that event. The group will use their monthly leadership meetings to build upon the momentum and synergy created at such a powerful gathering. A full regional conference is scheduled for September of 2006.

Taking Care of Self in Connecticut: Also in June, NAFI CT held its third annual conference at the Interlaken Conference Center in Lakeville, CT. This year's conference theme was "Caring for Ourselves, Caring for Others," with an emphasis on per-



A brave group of staffers participated in the NAFI CT Conference annual variety show.

sonal health and wellness. Close to one hundred employees took advantage of the two-day conference that provided informative workshops, relaxation and fun for all. Workshops focused on teambuilding, working with gay, lesbian, and transgender youth and behavior management. As in past years, the name tag competition was a hit, and this year's winner was Dover Road.

During free time, the wellness theme continued and employees were able to participate in yoga, canoeing,

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Intermediate Normative Approach Training By Arlene Camarca, Agency Supervisor NAFI Mid-Atlantic

In our ongoing efforts to enhance the skill level of our employees and to help them to develop a deeper understanding of the Normative Approach, the Training Team in the Mid-Atlantic region has been searching for ways to further develop normative leaders in our communities. With this in mind, the team has designed an innovative model to teaching the Normative Approach. The training is geared toward creating an experiential learning opportunity for participants so they can “feel” the processes and components of the Normative Approach within a broader community-based setting, such as a mall, airport or local city.

The process itself involves bringing staff together and utilizing positive

reinforcement and the establishment and recognition of group norms. After a brief overview, we send the participants out into the community on a Normative Scavenger Hunt. During this activity, the group members seek out identified components of the Normative Approach within the community itself. Some examples of scavenger hunt items include: providing feedback to someone in the community; seeking out a mission statement and talking to an employee about their mission; observing active persuasion and using active persuasion; observing a group; looking for methods used to reinforce expectations; seeking out rules and norms, etc.

At the conclusion of this experience, we bring the group back together to discuss the process itself; what they discovered

and how they felt while participating in the normative scavenger hunt. What we have typically found is that there is a high level of cognitive dissonance among all the staff. This becomes the pivotal point for discussion.

In the end, we take it back to how this relates to how the staff engage with the youth in the programs and how they can then relate to how the youth must feel when we put them in similar situations. The cognitive dissonance becomes paramount in working with the youth. By the close of the experience, most staff generally reach this great epiphany, proving the training to be a worthwhile and rewarding experience for all.

C.A.M.P. Amesbury Opens in Massachusetts

On June 23rd, NFI Massachusetts said goodbye to what was known as the Girls Assessment Program at the Metro Youth Service Center in Dorchester and said hello to the pastoral setting of C.A.M.P. Amesbury. In addition to the name and location changes, the program has also undergone a metamorphosis in outlook and service offerings. G.A.P., the Girls Assessment Program, was just that; a 45 day residential placement program providing assessments and placement recommendations for newly adjudicated delinquent girls.

In contrast, C.A.M.P., Changing Attitudes, Making Progress, while still short-term, is a program that expands upon GAP’s premise and provides



For residents at the highest level, there is a bedroom with a television.

young women with treatment and education in a structured, well-supervised residential setting. The Program offers diagnostic assessment, treatment planning, advocacy and substance abuse assessment and treatment. It is the program model GAP was originally intended to be at its Dorchester setting. Reaching this goal was always the plan for both NFI and the State and the transition to the new setting has been a slow and steady process over the past few years.

Searching for the right property was one of the biggest hurdles for the program, but when the lakeside house that formerly housed a girls’ group home went on the market, it

quickly caught NFI’s attention. Once under agreement, the renovation process took less than four months and is truly a sight to behold. Through much hard work and dedication, the house was pulled down to the studs and rebuilt to NFI’s specifications and needs. What was once a run down and boxy building is now an open and inviting home with a spacious and cheerful design aimed at making the young women who reside there feel most comfortable.

Prior to move-in, the staff held an open house to showcase their impressive new space to the larger NAFI/NFI community.

Lydia Todd, Deputy Director for NFI MA, summed up the recent efforts. “We learned so many lessons during our time at the Metro Youth Service Center that will make us stronger as an agency, but we are so pleased to be able to serve Essex County girls in a community setting. This new location is more consistent with our mission to help people maxi-

mize their potential in the least restrictive and most natural context possible. It’s a plus that the view from the program is soothing and restorative! Theresa Conti and her crew worked very hard to make this a smooth transition--simultaneously closing one program while opening another! Bill Frankenstein and Joe Pelkey fast tracked the



C.A.M.P. Amesbury’s spectacular lake views and rolling hillsides

construction and occupancy needs--without their hard work, we’d still be waiting in the heat. Thanks also to the Department of Youth Services for funding this initiative to provide the best possible services to girls in our collective care. This will be a model program, utilizing the healing power of the arts to restore hope to the young women we serve.”



The new C.A.M.P. Amesbury

Notes From All Over—events, updates and highlights from the field

Connecticut: The Fundraising Committee coordinated our agency's **First Annual Golf Classic** on Thursday, May 18 at Tunxis Plantation. Through the hard work of the committee and several others that offered their support, the event was a success! With the money raised from the Golf Classic combined with the money raised from the sale of our NAFI/NFI wristbands, we were able to raise over **\$6,000**. These funds will be used for scholarships, special outings, and activities for the kids in our programs. We would like to thank everyone for their contributions.

Mid-Atlantic: There have been changes in the regional office with **Daniel Nakamoto** serving as the Interim Regional Director and Arlene Camarca as the Interim Director of Operations. The Thomas O'Farrell Youth Center (TOYC) survived an education standards compliance crisis with a concerted effort by all staff. John Yates is on medical leave and our thoughts are with him for a quick recovery. Upon his re-

turn, he will devote himself full time at TOYC to ensure the long term stability of our flagship program. We welcome **Donald Barrett** as the new Program Director for Harbor House. And the newest program to the region, **Sykesville Girls Shelter**, opened on July 1st under the leadership of **Angela Holland**. The Program Director, **Donna Broadnax**, began in August

Florida: We would like to welcome **Susan Kimball** to the Monticello team. Ms. Kimball has an extensive career in human services and recently joined NAFI as the Operations Director at Monticello. Welcome to NAFI Susan!

NFI North: School year highlights from Midway Shelter! Mary Ellen Pantazis shares this update. This year, the students really were able to get involved in the community through school and extracurricular activities. In science class, they learned about the body and its functions by dissecting sheep brains and the spleen and intestines of pigs. We also took a trip to St Anselm's College,

where they discovered the importance of developing healthy sleep patterns by observing a sleep lab. Art classes involved printmaking, culminating in April's very successful Family Day, which focused on highlighting students' artistic achievement through displays and culinary creations made by both staff and students. Thanks to the Bedford Rotary's mountain bike donation, we were able to take weekly bike trips as part of our Phys. Ed. program. Community Service highlights included working with the Manchester food bank and at Historic Palace Theater in Manchester, New Hampshire. The boys built props and worked as stage techs for the play "42nd Street." As a fundraiser, the students also collected used cell phones and printer cartridges to be recycled.

NFI MA: Attention all health nuts! The first **ever NFI MA Fitness Challenge** has begun! As of July 27th, 85 employees of NFI MA, as well as the NAFI Corporate office in Danvers, have answered the call and entered into the Fitness Challenge. The 16 teams will com-

pete over 16 weeks to see which team can lose the largest percentage of weight. Weigh-ins will take place three times over the course of the Challenge and the winning team will be announced on Friday, November 17th. Each member of the winning team will receive a \$125 gift card. Good luck to all!

Corporate Office: Its that time of year again! The **Annual Conference** is almost upon us. The 2006 NAFI/NFI Conference Planning Committee would like to announce that registration for this year's conference has begun! As always, the committee and workshop presenters are planning an educational and exciting three days. This year's conference theme is **Cultivating the Normative Approach** and we look forward to gathering with the larger NAFI/NFI community for a celebration of the past year's milestones and accomplishments! See you October 17-19th!

New Catering Business Opens at Riverside School

By Matthew Swartz, Vocational Coordinator, Riverside School

The Riverside School in Lowell, MA, is pleased to announce the beginning of an exciting new catering program. Matthew Swartz, the new Vocational Coordinator for the Riverside School is heading up the new venture and comes from the restaurant business, just recently selling his restaurant, Matteos, in the Newton Highlands.

This is a great opportunity for the children at the school, who will get their first taste of what the catering business entails. Swartz has found that, in his experience, cooking can be very therapeutic for the children and that they are easily drawn toward culinary arts. "I feel that this program will build confi-

dence and self-esteem for the children and also provide skills for their future."

Matthew has designed an exciting breakfast and lunch menu and began servicing the NAFI and NFI Corporate offices in Danvers at the end of June.

Matthew, along with students Angel Marte and Ramona Paulino, will be working together, creating delicious Spanish and Cuban themed cuisine. Angel's specialties include his famous Pastelillos and Cuban sandwiches. The group also creates healthy wraps and sandwiches along with fresh salads and tasty Italian dishes for the larger groups. "The children at the Riverside School are really inter-

ested in helping do some of the cooking and certainly preparing the sandwiches," says Swartz, "and teaching them new 'life skills,' will be challenging and rewarding for staff as well as the children."

Riverside School looks to serving the freshest foods to the NAFI/NFI family and we will see you soon!! Please call Matthew at 978-937-1995 Ext. 19 for more information!



Have Something to Share?

This story is another example of the many unique and original projects happening all over the NAFI/NFI map. Each month, we hope to include at least one story from the perspective of YOU, NAFI/NFI program staff (client perspectives are also encouraged!) So, put on your reporter's hat and let us know about the innovating and exciting activities taking place at your program!

Please share YOUR story with us by emailing Jill DiChiara, Managing Editor, at jilldichiara@nafi.com.

We look forward to sharing your experiences with the rest of NAFI/NFI in a future issue!

Regional Conferences story continued from page 1

swimming or just relaxing on the grounds. The third annual variety show proved to be a success. Seven programs braved the crowd and performed a variety of talents. Whether it was dancing, a slide show or a top ten list, all were entertained. The conference always ends with an awards ceremony. Staff Choice awards went to: Hattie Petteway, Thomaston; Jaime Atkinson, Dover Road; Martin Augelli, Touchstone; Theresa Mete, Bristol; Antonio Eason, Stepping Stone; Nikia Newkirk, PPP; Kristen Diekmann, MST; all team members from O&T and Tress Road. The Program Director's Choice award went to: Sarah Burns, Dover Road; Princess Oloyede, Tress Road; Kristen Moran, Touchstone; D.J. Lemoine, Bristol; Judy Malcolm, Stepping Stone; Nikia Newkirk, O&T; Lauren Quaggin, PPP; Matt Waugh, MST.

Celebrating the Olympic Spirit with NFI MA: It was a beautiful sunny day in late May and NFI Massachusetts employees from all over the state converged on the campus of Gordon College for their third annual Conference. The theme of this year's conference was, **"Celebrating humanity through fun and games,"** brought to life by an NFI version of the Olympics, complete with flag, opening ceremonies, anthems and team competitions.

Being organized into a variety of teams gave participants an opportunity to work and play with those they don't regularly have the chance to see. Many thought this to be one of the best aspects of this year's conference. Joel Aufiero of the Riverside school summed up the thought perfectly. "It is a reminder to us that we are not isolated in

our programs, and that we are a part of a larger family that is ready and able to support us in our efforts to help our clients. The camaraderie that I saw was inspiring. It is amazing how quickly a group of people will bond to play Capture the Flag or NFI Trivia. Most important, we had fun while working as teams to compete *with*, not *against*, our coworkers."



The Winning Team—Violet!!

The Olympic spirit is one of friendly competition and the planning committee believed that much could be learned about striving to excel at your job through friendly, team building competitions like this NFI Olympics. The group came together to be supportive of each other, to celebrate achievements and to acknowledge success. Many were pleased to say that the Special Events Committee far surpassed their goal of hosting a successful conference, leaving the group looking forward to what will be in store for next year!

NFI Vermont's Road to Wellville: On May 24th, NFI Vermont held their 4th annual Staff Retreat. Once again,



The view of Lake Champlain from Camp Abnaki

the focus was on Well-

ness. Over 120 staff came from programs across the state to gather at beautiful Camp Abnaki on the shores of Lake Champlain. Spending a day in the sun was a welcomed change from the rain they had recently received. In the morning, staff shared their considerable and varied talents and led workshops embracing mind, body and spirit. Staff explored their dreams, shared perspective through digital photography, created personal mandalas, learned to enhance groups with tarot and created their own CD in a songwriting group! After a cookout, workshops were given by local professionals on meditation, personal fitness, yoga and craniosacral work. Cara Caparelli had this to say. "It was a great day of learning and rejuvenation and one way that we stop to appreciate the challenging work we do and the amazing staff we have to do it."

Here We Grow Again—The Rhode Island Network: *"Much education today is monumentally ineffective. All too often we are giving people cut flowers when we should be teaching them to grow their own plants."*

John W. Gardner

The above is a quote that did not necessarily inspire the theme of the second annual RI Conference, but certainly captures the essence of what they were striving to instill and inspire in those that attended. The theme of this year's conference was **"Here We Grow Again"** and the intent was to symbolize not only the region's growth in numbers as a network, but also individual growth, both personally and professionally. The first day of the conference began with various workshops, including Diversity and Using Community Resources. As the day progressed, however, participants were slowly introduced to plans for day two of the conference. Each participant received a T-shirt and the

color of the T-shirt represented the team that he or she would be a part of the following day. The expectation was set that each team would be together for the entire second day and work together as a team on a variety of activities. There was some apprehension and discussion at first, but as the day came to an end, those feelings were replaced with excitement and anticipation.

Day two began with "team" breakfast—a great ice breaker for the activities ahead which included four physical competitions and four sets of mind challenging questions. Every winning answer or point earned the teams "money." The second half of the day allowed the teams to use their "money" to buy plots of designated land, giving them exclusive rights to these areas during the scavenger hunt that would wrap up the day's activities. Although one team was the "winner," all the participants gained a great deal from the day's activities.



Trust and teamwork prevail in RI

In processing the event, it was clear that people truly enjoyed the second day's activities. By pushing oneself for the good of the team, participants learned to work with a new community of people and follow a completely new set of norms and expectations. The mission was that everyone left the conference with something to bring back to pass on to other residents and staff—the seeds to help grow their own plants. Mission Accomplished.