

*by Jason Rivkin, NAADAC Special Projects Officer*

From October 6-8, 2004, clinicians, managers and others working in the addiction profession gathered in Mason, Ohio to address the current workforce crisis in the addictions profession. The regional summit was organized by the Ohio Workforce Development Center and held in conjunction with the Ohio Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors' (OAADAC) annual conference. OAADAC's annual conference ordinarily brings together addiction professionals from throughout Ohio, but with NAADAC and OAADAC working closely on promotion, the workforce summit attracted people from throughout the Midwest.

This summit was made possible by the first phase of funding for the Workforce Project appropriation established by Congress. Congressional support for the funding is directly attributable to hard work from Senators George Voinovich and Mike DeWine and Representatives Ralph Regula, David Hobson and Deborah Pryce, all from Ohio. Hope Taft, Ohio's First Lady, also worked hard behind the scenes for congressional support.

Summit attendees included frontline treatment professionals, treatment providers, prevention specialists, educational institutions, the Ohio Certification Board and the Office of the Director of the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services (ODADAS). The summit offered a national perspective on the workforce crisis and SAMHSA's agenda for addressing the issue at a federal level.

Ms. Melanie Whitter, former Illinois State Alcohol and Drug Services Director, was one of the featured speakers. Ms. Whitter now serves as a consultant to SAMHSA's CSAT and to the *Partners for Recovery* program. One of the highlights of the conference was the presentation by ODADAS Director Gary Q. Tester. Tester discussed his department's current reorganization and agenda for the upcoming year. He also reinforced the need for professional membership organizations saying that "the power and future of NAADAC, OAADAC, and the Workforce Development Center truly rely in the hands of the addiction profession population."

The summit aimed to produce practical solutions to some of the major issues within the workforce crisis; particularly education and credentialing. With the recent passage of Ohio's addictions counseling licensure law on July 1, 2004, there is an even greater need for counselors' professional development. An expert panel consisting of Dr. Lawrence Anthony, Academic Director of the Addictions Studies and Treatment Programs at the University of

Cincinnati, Amanda Ferguson, Acting Director of the Ohio Licensure/Certification Board, and Pat Bridgman, Assistant Director of The Ohio Council of Behavioral Healthcare Providers discussed these issues and the future trends in the addiction profession. Participants also discussed the licensure process, challenges in the workforce and new educational opportunities.

This meeting, the first in a series around the state, is showing the early dividends from the Ohio Workforce Project. NAADAC, OAADAC and our partners look forward to accomplishing more in 2005.

**The Ohio Workforce Development Center is a joint project of NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals, the Ohio Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors (OAADAC) and the Ohio Council for Behavioral Healthcare Providers.**